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Giving – Should it Hurt?

A study of the giving of the Samoan people to the Church

By

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A research project

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Acknowledgements:

Father God, thank you for trusting and releasing me to this topic. I hope it makes you proud! Jesus, this one is for you – Holy Spirit I was never alone, ma lo’u loto atoa – FA’AFETAI!!

To Samoa and all things Samoan, I pray this informs and begins to set us free, ina ia tatou talatalanoa fa’atasi!

Mum and all my family, your patience and perseverance propel me to want to do greater things, thank you for trusting me beyond reason and loving me regardless, this is all of us. I pray we will all bow the knee together. Love you, always!

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Introduction

Talofa Lava.

Giving, should it hurt? This research hopes to address the long and much debated issue of Samoan people financially giving to the church. I was born in Aotearoa, New Zealand and raised in the church, as were many of my peers. There are several motives to this topic that are personal and for the good of my generation of Samoans.

I aspire to provide a tangible explanation to answer the issue of why financial giving to the church by the Samoan people is right and whether it should hurt. I realise that such an assured answer may cause offence; that, however is not my intention. Rather, it is to see a generation of old and young released into a truth of giving to the church in its original intention. I aim to illustrate how things used to be and how they have developed into the practise we see in the church today, and how that has affected the view of young Samoans and their financial contributions to the church or lack thereof.

My personal reason for this topic is so that I myself may gain an understanding of this practise which I have seen cripple my people and cause such a rebellion amongst my peers towards the church. The church is a major part of my culture and my upbringing and, although the purpose of giving to the church was not explained it was assumed that I would realise by watching and therefore not need to be directly told. This was often the pattern of learning that I was exposed to, especially in matters concerning the church. So it is my hope to bring a revelation of truth to this practice of giving.

The old customs prior to the arrival of the church to Samoa have been documented in literature that has been provided by early missionary manuscripts, historical documents and also from the treasured source of oral tradition. The origin of giving to the church is found in the Old
Testament and so the study into the Jewish tradition of tithes is essential to this research to establish whether the practise bought to the Samoans by the Victorian Protestant missionaries was an interpretation of the biblical practise or not.

This historical foundation will be used to establish why and where our people have come from in terms of our current practise of giving to the church and hopefully shed light for our generation to make better-informed decisions to not only give because it is all we have seen and known but to understand the original intention and choose in knowledge and not arrogance or, worse still, ignorance.

Interviews were also undertaken from a small sampling due to the restrictions of the size of this research: three from the older community whom I have affectionately named *au matatua*, the elders, who range from 60-68 years old; and 4 younger participants whom I have named *le lumana'i* the future, who range from 20-30 years. The former group are essential in providing an oral interpretation of how things used to be. The *le lumana'i* will hopefully provide some insight into the practise of our young people, what they believe are the reasons for giving. I also hope to provide a space for the *au lumana'i* to express how they feel about this practise and to honestly agree or disagree.

A summation of my findings will explore the literary results and information collated from the interviews, and will be followed by the conclusion.
Methodology – Process Matters

We have a saying, “e iloa le Samoa i lana savali, ma lana tautala”, you can tell a Samoan by their walk and by their talk. Therefore, my intention is to carry out this research project so that it may be recognized to be Samoan by its walk and its talk. Smith (1999) wrote that, “Some methodologies regard the values and belief practices and customs of communities as ‘barriers’ to research or as exotic customs with which researchers need to be familiar in order to carry out their work without causing offence. Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values and behaviours as an integral part of methodology.”

Hence the reason such protocols, values and behaviours will be explained in this section.

One of the most sacred concepts of the Samoan culture is ‘relationships’ between people, between families and between communities. For the Samoan, whenever there is a coming together of two people or groups for a purpose, it is the beginnings of a relationship. The length and depth of the relationship are determined by the purpose for which they have met. The far-reaching effects are also an indication of the importance relationships have in the culture. Relationships are guarded with the highest regard, importance and are governed by a concept known as the ‘Va Fealoaloa’i’, which refers to the space and place in which Samoan people interact. The va is where each person knows their place in the relationship and acts accordingly in that role. It is the essence of the va that recognizes that people are sacred. By engaging in several relationships with the purpose of seeking knowledge and understanding from elders and peers alike, I am compelled to discover and know my place and role in order to conduct myself accordingly and be able to ‘teu le va’, meaning to respect and guard that space.

There are several guiding principles for conducting ethical research relationships with Pacific peoples, and more specifically in my case, Samoan people. The Health Research Council of New Zealand in their recent publication, “Guidelines on Pacific Health Research 2003,” outline 10 guiding principles:

- Respect
- Cultural Competency
- Meaningful engagement
- Reciprocity
- Utility
- Rights
- Balance
- Protection
- Capacity Building
- Participation

I am a product of two environments, natural and conditioned. My natural environment is being born Samoan and therefore encompasses all things Samoan; my conditioned environment is greatly influenced by a western education system. I acknowledge the privilege of being a party to both environments, yet realize the stakes of being accountable to both. I have chosen for the purpose of this project to write from my natural environment; however, both my natural and conditioned environments are not mutually exclusive.

It would be ideal not to exclude any part of our Samoan community from contributing to this topic, as I believe that we all have a part to play in understanding the causes and potential solution to this issue. However, given the limited scope of this project, I have chosen to conduct extensive, in-depth individual interviews with a small representative sampling of 7 Samoans. Male and female participants will be divided into two groups, 'au matatua, elders, aged 60+, and le lumana'i, the future,

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aged 20-30 years. The original sample group consisted of 4 in each group; however, one elder had left New Zealand unexpectedly and was unable to continue his participation. A smaller group was selected as my aim was not to generalise and I envisioned this project as a start and definitely not an end to this topic. It was essential for this project to have few but very intense and in-depth discussions with my participants rather than having 30-40 general surface interviews. This smaller sample group allowed for several meetings between myself and each participant so to continue to *teu le va* (respect the space/gap).

It was also essential that I had a cultural advisor to assist with customs and protocol as I conducted the interviews and the written Samoan used in this project. I selected a close female relative as my primary cultural advisor.

**The Recruitment:**

For the *'au matatua'*, a list of possible candidates was compiled by my cultural advisor who on my behalf, approached two elder groups of different churches, *Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa* (EFKS - Congregational Christian Church of Samoa) and Pacific Island Presbyterian Church (PIPC) in Auckland. One from each congregation agreed to participate, and the third elder was a relative. It was also my cultural advisor who made the initial individual contact with the participant, outlining my purpose and topic. Once successful, we organized a time and place to meet with the participant and my cultural advisor was present during each of the interviews.

For *'le lumana'i*, I contacted local Samoan churches in Auckland that I was familiar with and also those associated with the Pacific Island Centre at the University of Otago. I outlined my topic and invited people to respond; seven people initially responded. However, five were able to commit the time required and after outlining the questions one did not
feel comfortable answering all the questions and was later asked to be excused.

**Methods and Procedures:**

Much research done on the Pacific has had the best of intentions but has unfortunately followed some bad practice. There are many barriers to doing research among Pacific Islanders, even by those who are Pacific Islanders. "There are issues of Pacific peoples feeling over-researched, issues of research not being valued as a useful tool by some members of the community." Developing and maintaining relationships is highly important, as stated earlier. Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese articulates this well,

> "I am not an individual because
> I share a tofi with my family, my village, and my nation.
> I belong to my family and my family belongs to me.
> I belong to a village and my village belongs to me.
> I belong to my nation and my nation belongs to me.
> This is the essence of my sense of belonging."\(^3\)

The guidelines suggest that to build and maintain relationships one should understand your role in relation to who the participants are, and within the context of the reality of their social and cultural environments, by observing the etiquette of language and behaviour appropriate to the place and the participant’s community. It is with these things in mind that I approach my elders and peers.

For the *au matatua*, obtaining written consent posed a problem as it is inappropriate and disrespectful to ask for written consent. It would be seen as a sign of mistrust on my behalf and all those I represent, placing me in a difficult situation as the *au matatua* are part of my community. With the approval of the University Human Ethics committee my


alternative method (compiled with my cultural advisor and others) was approved, which was in accord with Samoan protocols and with the spirit of the University's ethics process. The relationship between the participant and myself is based on respect for the essential value of each person, and for this reason I have entitled the process, Consent via 'Faaaloalo' (Respect)

a) A list of appropriate elders to be compiled by the researcher and cultural advisors;
b) Cultural advisors to contact each elder to discuss the research topic and to ask if they would be willing to participate and meet the researcher;
c) If willing, the advisors would organise the meeting between the researcher and the elder. If not willing, the advisors would thank them in a culturally appropriate way;
d) The cultural advisor would accompany the researcher to the meeting;
e) The researcher then would explain face to face the topic to the elder, explaining verbally the information about the procedures and emphasise the elder’s right not to answer questions or to withdraw from the meeting at any time. The discussion would be conducted at the elder’s home and would be witnessed by those family members who would be present for each interview. Family members invariably accompany elders in Samoan society when outsiders/visitors (such as myself, the researcher) are visiting;
f) The researcher would then talk with the elder, using the open questioning technique, where questions are openly posed so that the participant encouraged to give more than a 'yes' or 'no' response and be able to freely expand on their answer;
g) No taping or recording of the interview would take place at the meeting. This procedure would be discussed at step (e).

For le lumanai, once written consent is gained I would proceed to interview each person individually using an open questioning technique
on the participant. These interviews would be tape recorded and transcribed. These transcriptions would be returned for comment and/or correction to each interviewee.

The Interview

According to Health Research Council (HRC) Guidelines on Pacific Health Research, 3.1, to practice in a culturally competent manner, the researcher must have awareness of his or her own cultural beliefs, values and practices, and an awareness of how this impacts upon their interaction with others. In guideline 3.4, researchers are encouraged to create a safe and enabling research environment that supports culturally competent practice.

Au matatua

Appropriate protocol and practice was undertaken from my own knowledge and understanding of faasamoa, (the Samoan way) and guidance from my cultural advisor. These included appropriate dress, wearing an ie lavalava (a wrap around cloth, full-length, worn around the waist), and taking my seat in a position that was always lower than that of any of my elders. My cultural advisor informed me prior to the interview of the appropriate titles and how to address each of my elder participants. Accompanied by my cultural advisor I conducted my interviews at the participant’s home with their family. We proceeded to introduce ourselves and the purpose of our visit, and then food was shared (we had also come with a contribution to the supper). I then continued to explain in Samoan the information sheet and the elder’s right to not answer a question or stop the meeting at any time. We then carried on using open questions; almost all of the dialogue was conducted in Samoan and my advisor was crucial when I struggled to translate a word from English into Samoan.
I was aware that a certain ‘power distance’ may have been an issue during these interviews because of the rules of respect between older and younger Samoans and the gender difference. However, I continued to prevail as I believed it would be a good opportunity to attempt to bridge the generations. So as young Samoans, we open a door and illustrate a desire to know and glean from our living sources an important part of our history. I had also hoped to provide our older generation an opportunity to pass on the baton of our heritage.

Le lumana’i

I met with each participant on a separate occasion before distributing the topic and interview questions. I explained my topic and the purpose (both academic and personal) for my research. As previously stated, I believe relationships are of the utmost importance and needed each of my participants to feel free to ask any questions and to have the opportunity to say no without feeling guilty.

Upon their agreement, I arranged times to sit and meet together to hear their perspectives on the issue. Where possible and when it was convenient, I would allow the participant to choose where they would like to conduct the interview. This was important so that they felt at ease and therefore were able to speak freely and feel comfortable to discuss things so personal and dear to our people. Selecting the right environment was essential and always involved food that I would provide, wherever the interview was conducted, either in my home or at a café.

The interviews allowed me to communicate with each person face to face, so as to better capture what each one wanted to communicate, both verbally and non-verbally. The interview questions were designed to be open-ended so that there is room for discussion and clarification if required; interviews were recorded and transcribed for le lumana'i.
the *au matatua* I took notes after the meeting and then returned with my notes to have them verified and/or corrected by the participants.

The consultation process that I undertook was taken from the guidelines provided by the HRC\(^5\), as consultation involves several stages.

![Consultation Process Diagram]

There is a lot of small talk & sharing that happens before 'asking'. A connection must be made in order to enhance the first meeting.

Elements of *monitoring & evaluating* inevitably deepen this cycle as the relationship forms over time.

One cannot disregard the importance of food in the Samoan culture. I therefore found it appropriate during or at the end of the interviews to share a hot drink, biscuits or, where suitable, a meal. Discussion continued 'off the record' so to speak, and developed into a variety of related topics, talking about childhood experiences and family connections – the importance of relationship. These post-interview discussions were often extremely valuable and helped in fleshing out the participants' responses to the more formal open interview questions.

Following the transcription of all the interviews and collating of the necessary information from the questionnaires, the findings have been summarized. These findings will be highlighted in the following section.

The literary review will be in three parts, looking at

1. Jewish tradition of Tithes;

2. How things used to be' in Samoa;
3. Introduction of tithes to Samoa from missionaries.

The information from the interviews will inform 'How things used to be' and also today's practice and understanding of tithing by young Samoans. These findings will be collated and expressed. A summary and conclusion will then follow.
Literary Review

Giving to the Lord began in early Bible times. It is therefore essential that we discover how and why it was done. The desired result is to determine how Samoans' practice currently aligns with the original intention.

Jewish Tradition of Tithes

According to the Old Testament, tithing is a very ancient custom, a practice initiated by the Father of the Faith, Abraham. The word tithe means a tenth or payment of a tenth. The first mention of this custom is in Genesis 14:20. Abram, after his successful attempt to rescue his nephew Lot, is met by Melchizedek, king of Salem and also a priest of God Most High. He brings out bread and wine and says a blessing over Abram - in response, Abram acknowledges and honours the God-fearing king and priest and gives him a tenth of everything.

There are several theories surrounding the character of King Melchizedek:

1. He was a respected king in the region and Abram showed respect he deserved.\(^6\)

2. The name Melshizedek may have been a standing title for all the kings of Salem.

3. Melshizedek was a type of Christ (is also mentioned in Hebrews 7:3). A type is an event or teaching that is so closely related to what Christ did that it illustrates a lesson about Christ.

4. Melchizedek was the appearance on earth of the pre-incarnate Christ in a temporary bodily form.

From the above we see at the origin of this practice that submitting a tenth was not compulsory nor forced, but rather a response of respect

\(^6\) Abram's name is changed in Genesis 17:5 to Abraham.

and honour. The king did not expect nor demand the tenth of all Abram had, rather the giver, Abram himself, instigated the action.

Jacob in Genesis 28:20 makes a vow to God, stating:

“If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father’s house, then the Lord will be my God and this stone I have set up as a pillar will be God’s house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.”

The second account of tithing/offering is the volunteering of a tenth - God did not demand it nor was he compelled to render the tenth. It was a response to God, in whom Jacob had confidence, to one day bring him safely back to his father’s home, as we see in Genesis 31:3,

“Then the Lord said to Jacob, “Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you.””

It was only later by Mosaic Law that the tithe was obligatory upon the Israelites.

- Leviticus 27:30-33

“A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord. The entire tithe of the herd and flock – every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd’s rod – will be holy to the Lord.”

A tenth from the land was required as the first fruits belonged to God and every tenth animal for those that had livestock.

- Numbers 18:21-24

“I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meetings... It is the Levites who are to do the work at the Tent of Meeting and bear the responsibility for offences against it. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come... Instead, I give the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the Lord.”
The recipients of part of the tithe, as ordered by God, were to go to those who did the work of the Lord. According to Walton & Matthews\(^8\), the practice of assigning a tenth of all produce as a type of wage for the priesthood was unique to the Israelites. And because the Levites were not given land they were to be supported by the tithes of the people; however, there is a distinction between the Levites and Aaron's priesthood line as the Levites were also expected to give a tithe to the Priesthood.

The following passages illustrate how the tithes were to be presented and consumed:

- **Deuteronomy 12:6,7, 17-19, 14:22, 28-29, 26:9-11,12-15**

  "To that place you must go; there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts. What you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings and the first born of your herds and flocks. There, in the presence of the Lord you God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the Lord your God has blessed you"

  "You must not eat in your own towns the tithe of your grain and new wine and oil, or the firstborn of your herds and flocks, or whatever you have vowed to give, or your freewill offerings or special gifts. Instead, you are to eat them in the presence of the Lord your God at the place the Lord your God will choose...Be careful not to neglect the Levites as long as you live in your land"

The above mentioned scripture demonstrates a desire of God for the people to be in communion with Him and to care for those who do His work.

"Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields' produce each year."

"At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be

satisfied, and so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.”

The tithe was to also care for those in society who were not as fortunate. This caused the people to look after and adequately provide for those in their community as He would continue to bless them.

“Then you shall declare before the Lord your God, “... He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and now I bring the first fruits of the soil that you, O Lord, have given me.” Place the basket before the Lord your God and bow down before Him.”

This was to be a thankful response for where the Lord had brought them from and honouring Him accordingly and without strain.

“When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in you towns and be satisfied. Then say to the Lord your God, “...Look down from heaven, your holy dwelling place, and bless your people Israel and the land you have given us as you promised on oath to our forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey.”

The practice of tithing, as seen from the above scriptures, had a direct relationship with a blessing from God. The collection and distribution of the different tithes ensured that those who were in need were cared for—and in caring for others and recognizing God first, with the first fruits of your labour, the blessing was already taking place.

The Jewish practice of tithes is much more complex than the more modern and common Christian belief that it is merely giving a tenth to the church. The complexity is due to the several types; however, the recipient of a particular tithe can distinguish the difference.

Tithing by biblical law is given from corn, wine and oil. And Rabbinic (relating to rabbis and their teachings) law gives it from fruit and
vegetables. Until the tithes had been separated the produce was strictly forbidden. As the tithes were separated the actual distribution could be postponed and the farmer could choose which Kohen or Levite he gave his tithe to.

Jacobs\textsuperscript{9} highlights the several tithes, of which explanations will follow:

1. A farmer separates a part or portion of the yield at his own discretion this is known as a \textit{terumah} – meaning a heave offering or gift. This offering is given to the \textit{Kohen} – priest, who is a descendant of Aaron. Aaron is the brother of Moses who was given the mandate to be the Priest of the Israelites, and it was instructed by God that his descendants would be the priestly order for the Israelites. The \textit{terumah} cannot be eaten if the \textit{Kohen} or \textit{terumah} is in a state of contamination. And it also cannot be eaten by a non-\textit{Kohen}.

The first person to occupy the office of the \textit{Kohen} was Aaron, who was appointed by God by instruction to Moses, Exodus 28:1\textsuperscript{10}. This offering is given to the Kohen and the amount is determined by the giver. There is no required amount.

2. A tenth of the remainder is known as \textit{Maaser rishon} – the first tithe, this is given to a \textit{Levite} – who are members of the tribe of Levi who was the third son of Jacob. Members of this tribe are either \textit{Kohen} or \textit{Levites}, no sacrificed food can be eaten by any Israelite.

The \textit{Levites}’ function was to provide musical accompaniment to the sacrifices, vocally and with instruments. They were to act as gatekeepers and a general guard. In this day and age the \textit{Levites}’ functions have changed and now act as a second to the \textit{Kohen}. They are given the privilege to read the Torah in the synagogue and wash the

\textsuperscript{10} All bible references are made from the New International Version, Life Application Bible.
hands of the Kohanim before they give the priestly blessing. This tithe was received by those who worked in the temple.

3. The **Levite** then takes a tenth of his tithe, *Maaser rishon*, and gives it to **Kohen**. This tithe is called the *Terumat maser*; it is to be treated with the same sanctity as the original *Terumah*.

The Levites too were expected to tithe, again at their own discretion, to the Kohen.

4. The farmer then separates a tenth of the remainder known as *Maaser sheni* – *second tithe*. This tithe is taken to Jerusalem and consumed in a spirit of sanctity. Because some Jews had to come from a distance, allowances were made due to transporting difficulties. Substituting it for money could redeem the maaser sheni. This money is then taken to Jerusalem to buy food and drink to be consumed there.

This tithe demonstrated that it was not just about goods or the money to be consumed by the giver but about consuming and communing with the Lord. Every third and sixth year of the cycle, concluding in the Sabbatical year – the seventh year, the *maaser sheni* is given to the poor and is known as the *maaser ani* – *the poor man’s tithe*. On the sabbatical year the fields were to be left uncultivated\(^\text{11}\) and all debts were to be released.\(^\text{12}\)

After the destruction of Solomon’s temple the *maaser sheni* was redeemed for a small amount and the farmer could consume this tithe wherever he lived. This demonstrates that even in biblical times alterations were made to adjust to the times, yet the spirit or motive of the tithe was to be consistent.

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\(^\text{11}\) Leviticus 25:1-7.
\(^\text{12}\) Deuteronomy 15:1-11.
New Testament Practice

The principle of giving to the temple or church continued and was encouraged in the New Testament by Jesus and also the Early Church teachings of the Apostle Paul.

Although the term tithe is not mentioned in the New Testament there was still a type of offering that was taken up. Jews living outside of Jerusalem still gave their temple tax, and Jesus himself made a point of giving to this as was his duty and obligation, as recorded in Matthew 17:24. For many of the Gentile churches several were committed to assisting the church in Jerusalem. Also it was encouraged to be generous and provide for the poor, as Paul wrote to the several churches concerning the needs of other parts of the body. Several house churches blessed the men of God with whom they came into contact. For much of the New Testament the formula and model of what to give was not stressed as much as the reasons and motives of what and how to give.

Jesus teaches in the temple of one's attitude when bringing an offering to the Lord as he comments when a widow humbly places her offering in the temple treasury in Mark 12:41-44. It is not the amount that the Lord sees, as Jesus comments that she gave more than anyone else that day, including those of great wealth who were in the temple that day.

According to the Corinth Christians of the New Testament (2 Corinthians 8), offering was more about giving yourself first to the Lord, and then to them as ministers of the gospel according to God’s will. “All we give for charitable uses, will not be accepted by God, nor turn to our advantage, unless we first give ourselves to the Lord.”\(^\text{13}\) Paul himself made it a personal choice not to ask for funds for the work he believed God had called him to. However, the church in other parts, namely the church in Jerusalem, was in poverty. The Corinth church had wanted to pay Paul.

for his teaching but instead he stated the needs of the poorer parts of the body. These poorer parts, however, in Macedonia had given money even though they were poor and had given more than expected: “For I testify they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints” (2 Corinthians 8:3-4). This was sacrificial giving – they were poor themselves but they wanted to help.

According to the New Testament church in Corinth, one was to give according to one’s ability, and not out of coercion. “I am not commanding you, but I want to test your sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others” (2 Corinthians 8:8). Christian loving is a loving response to the self-giving of Jesus Christ, as it was for Abraham. It is faith that pleases God, as stated in Hebrews 11:6. The Corinth church excelled in many things and Paul wanted them to excel in the giving to those in need as well.

The greatest motives for Christian duties are drawn from the love and grace of God. “For the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have” (2 Corinthians 8:12), again stressing the importance of the motive to give, not the content. “Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality” (2 Corinthians 8:13), so that the church is not left in need but supported in times of need by the greater body of the Church. The Apostle Paul continues to exemplify giving generously but makes particular reference so that, “Each man should give what he has decided to give in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7)

**How things used to be**
A brief background on the political and social background of Samoa prior to the arrival of Christianity is essential to understand how and why the gospel was so well received and adopted by the people.

**Social & Political perspective:**

Samoans, unlike many of their Pacific neighbours, were not politically centralized. It was not till the threat of foreign rule or interference that the nation's leaders saw the need to politically unite to protect themselves. The social and political organization was vastly localized and divided.

John Williams on his first visit to Samoa took particular note of the structure of the Samoan people, "The whole population is divided into settlements which line the whole coast at about from two to three miles apart. These settlements or tribes are governed entirely by one or two principal Chiefs."\(^{14}\) Villages were physically well defined and the political authority of Samoa was localized within them. Village communities were independent and each village had several extended families. However, villages did not operate in isolation as individuals and families had all manner of kin and other relationships with people in nearby villages and far, so there were regular and frequent visits of friends as well as enemies.\(^{15}\)

A matai chief, who was chosen or elected by their family, headed each family. There are two types of matai, the ali'i and the tulafale. The ali'i is known as the high chief, who received his status from a real or proclaimed line of descent. The closer the ali'i was to the major genealogical branches going far back to Samoa's ancestral gods, the greater their status, although an ali'i title could be self-made in some circumstances.\(^{16}\) The office of the tulafale was the orator, the spokesperson for the ali'i. Because Samoan politics is concerned with

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status, which comes from a genealogical background, those who held the knowledge and interpretation of the past could influence the present. These matali were highly respected and very influential but their power was not autocratic; decisions were arrived via extensive consultations. These consultations often took place in the fono, which is an assembly for dialogue in which no one had the right to impose a particular decision. Each member was given their space to speak with the intention that all would arrive to a consensus; once a consensus was made each matali was expected to follow through or be banished. Therefore, should a new belief system be successfully implicated to the people it would require the consensus of the matali and the fono.

Fono(s) also happened on a district level, which concerned the relationships among the most powerful families, who could claim the most important lineages in Samoa. There were three main districts in Upolu (A’ana, Tuamasaga, Atua) while Savaii had six, each with its own capital village, supreme titles and elite orators. The two great families who had a central role in nineteenth century politics were Sa-Tupua and Sa-Malietoa (Sa-Malietoa had several important connections in Savaii and Tutuila). The idea of kingship was present in Samoa but, unlike their neighbours in Tahiti, Hawai‘i and Tonga, Samoa did not have one priestly class and no state religion. It is key to note that the gospel was first received on the shores of Malietoa, one of the two great political families in Samoa.

Fulfilling of Nafanua’s Prophesy:

The well-known story among the Samoan people concerning the coming of the Good News to the shores of Savai‘i has been retold throughout the generations and recorded. It is seen as a bridge of the old religion into the new, where it acknowledges and respects the place of the old

ways as it introduces and commends the place of the new – without fear or loss, in that it allows the coming of the Good News for the good of the people.

Titles and wars between paramount families continued. When John Williams’ ship, Messenger of Peace, arrived, Vaiinupo had the Malietoa title but others did not accept him, and a new leader rose up from Aana (Upolu area) and was given the name Tamafaiga.

At the time Nafanua prophesied that another god would soon supersede the dynasty of the old gods, and that a new god would rule all of Samoa. When Malietoa Vaiinupo asked her advice she replied, “Talofa ua e sau ae ua mavae ao o malo, ae ui i lea faatali i le lagi sou malo”, “Alas you have come, but the ruling title is gone. Nevertheless, you will receive a kingdom from heaven and you will be its ruler.” “The coming of John Williams with his Christian message seemed to fit perfectly with Nafanua’s prophecy and appeared to Malietoa as a command to support the new religion.”

When John Williams came upon the shores of Savaii, Malietoa was at war with Tamafaiga. The death of Tamafaiga was seen as an open door for the prophecy and the coming of the proclamation of the new god was the fulfilment as noted by Nafanua. The old ways did indeed change but not all at once, as wars continued and old customs were kept alive.

Missionary Input:

Observations of the indigenous people’s concept of offerings and giving practices were noted in journals and other records. According to Turner and Williams the timing of Christianity arriving on the shores of Savai’i was divine. The people of Upolu had killed a chief, Tamafaiga,

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20 Turner, George, 1861, Nineteen Years in Polynesia, John Snow Publishers, London.
whom Turner equated with the Emperor Nero, had he lived. It was believed that he had within him the spirit of one of the main war gods and reigned as he willed, killing those he wished and sparing others. Faauea (a Samoan missionary who arrived with Williams), exclaimed upon hearing of his death, “*Ua lotu lo tatou fanua, ua mate le tevolo*”: Our land is converted, the devil is dead.  

The Samoan people had in place a structured religion, often likened to the practice of Greeks. However, Williams in his journals note that “From what we could learn the Samoans have no idols but pay some kind of worship to some invisible spirits.... Pigs, vegetables, cloth mats were articles presented to these Divinities.” 

Samoa had no bureaucracy, no priestly class, and no state religion. Prayers and offerings were frequently offered to household gods and promised any offering that particular god required if he should, for example, preserve the life of a newborn. Sometimes the offerings to the gods were regulated by the impulse and greed of the priest. The father of the family was seen as the high priest and would offer a prayer during the evening meal to avoid all fines, sickness or war. Sometimes feasts would be held to honour that god and an ‘*ava*’ (ceremonial drink) would be poured out as a drink offering.

There were also many village gods, so everyone born in that particular village was said to be the property of that god. There was often a small house consecrated to the deity of that place. If one had not been erected the great house in which the village chiefs would assemble would be used when the occasion arose.

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The priests were sometimes the chiefs but generally a particular family would claim the office and it was hereditary.\textsuperscript{26} They were able to choose the feast days to honour the gods, receive the offerings, and thank the people on the god's behalf. He also was said to decide if the people went to war.

The offerings were mainly cooked food. The first cup, as noted earlier, was in honour of the god. The chiefs then drank from the same cup in order of rank. Then the food that was offered was divided and eaten. The feast was often annual and around the month of May.\textsuperscript{27} Some villages celebrated it with games and night dances while it was not a huge event for others.

Offerings that were presented on war occasions were not to be partaken by women and children. It was supposed that those who were not going to war that did partake would be sick or face death; therefore, after those feasts the people were careful to bury the leftover food or throw it out to sea. Turner noted of this superstition, "The constant dread of the gods, and the numerous and extravagant demands of a cunning and avaricious priesthood, made the heathenism of Samoa a hard service."\textsuperscript{28}

Similar to the Jewish tradition, there was an idea that an offering could be presented to secure some kind of blessing or success. However, the superstition noted by the missionaries saw this pre-Christian practice as a duty that the people did in fear, not as a response of respect or honour. And, unlike the Christian practise, it did not care for others and the offerings were sometimes thrown away.

Howe states that with the proclaiming of Christianity there was attached a prosperity clause:

“The occasion was extremely significant for the LMS mission on two counts. First, Fauea’s speech to his fellow Samoans confirmed what many of them, and especially the Siovili cultists, were anticipating – that the acceptance of the European god would bring endless prosperity... Christianity was thus initially introduced to Samoa with the promise that believers would inherit the great wealth.”29

Other chiefs saw this new religion as a means of access and, according to Williams’s account, one said “I therefore think that the God who gave them all things must be good and that his religion must be superior to ours. If we receive and worship him he will in time give us all these things as well as them.”30

It is unfortunate that the missionaries did not make the distinction that acceptance of Christianity was not only about material wealth but rather a relationship with Jesus and a God that did not want them to be terrified or afraid of Him.

Williams’ divine connection with Malietoa secured his support for the new religion. During 1832 on his next visit he appreciated that a Tupu’s power was greatest during war times and at other times it was ceremonial. Malietoa monopolized most of the teachers from the London Missionary Society with the hope that he would be able to attain influence in other areas. The desire for teachers was intense, as noted by Williams:

“(it was) urgent that we should give him a teacher, and (he) pressed his claim by assuring me that he would feed him, and place himself under his instruction, and make all his people do the same... by inducing me to do so, that he would make his people place themselves under his instruction. Williams encouraged him not to force them, but set the example and encourage them to follow leaving it to their own convictions – to coerce them would be contrary to the principles of their religion.”31

Peter Turner of the Wesleyan mission landed in Samoa in the late 1830s, decided on a different approach, and was prepared to ignore powerless kings and work rather at a grassroots level with the villages throughout Samoa. He realised this was the level at which important decisions were made. The London Missionary Society noted Turner's effectiveness and, rather than going for the chiefs, as did their predecessors, concentrated on village politics. However, relations between the two groups (LMS and the Wesleyan missionaries) grew bitter and for most part the LMS had Samoa to itself.

*The Peoples' Response:*

*Hospitable Hosts –*

Malietoa received Williams and the Gospel well on their first meeting: "Malietoa informed his people, who had been gazing with wonder upon the novel proceedings, that a large quantity of valuable property had been given to him, and that the English chiefs, to whom he was indebted for it, would want something to eat in return. Upon hearing this the whole company instantly arose and scampered away.... bringing with them 15 pigs of various sizes, with a large quantity of bread-fruit, yams and other vegetables." This behaviour of intense and extravagant hospitality was the norm of the Samoan people that is still prevalent today and also noted by other missionaries. Even before they had heard the message the Samoan people were outstanding hosts. George Lundie, a missionary who arrived on Samoa's shores in 1840, noted the hospitality: "It is custom for one *falelima* or district to provide food for all the others and also to give them some to carry away. All was divided in a most orderly and friendly way – first to districts and villages and then to families."33

In response to the needs of the missionaries the Samoan people were very accommodating. Williams notices a gesture from heathens that encouraged his work, even before preaching the gospel, “four excellent dwellings were given to us, and the very best and largest house in the settlement was set apart for public worship and instruction.” This highlights the heart and willingness of the people to hear the gospel and their generous nature in bringing food and providing quality dwellings to those who brought the gospel.

Although Malietoa had accepted this new faith he did not speak for all of Samoa, due to its unique political structure. “The Samoan response to Christianity had more in common with the Maori response to Christianity in that decisions to accept or reject missionary teachings were made at a local level and for local reasons.” Even though, only 10 years after the missionaries arrived, most of Samoa were Christians it did not necessarily mean that they embraced it in a rash, inconsiderate manner. “The Chiefs of the different settlements held meeting after meeting to consult upon the propriety of changing religion of their ancestors and the case was argued on both sides with a calmness that seldom characterizes debates in more civilized countries and with an acuteness that does credit to their senses.” And still other chiefs commented, “Suppose he said we were to go to the land of the English people and propose to them to change their religion. They would not do it until they understood well the nature of the religion we proposed to them. So it is with me. I have no objection to the lotu. I think it is good but I wish to know some thing more of it before I embrace it.”

The early missionaries believed that rather than condemn the new converts, for fear they might totally dislike a religion that does not allow

35 Howe, K.R., 1984, Where the Waves Fall, Alien & Urwin, Sydney, p238.
certain practices in which their entire lives and comforts were included, Williams in particular believed that they would eventually learn for themselves from the Bible what was right and wrong.

The rationale of Christian giving

By 1839 there were 11 Papalagi missionaries in Samoa and 138 Samoan teachers (who were trained by the missionaries). These teachers were purposely sent to other villages and were therefore strangers and totally dependant on the villagers for food and shelter, placing them under the authority of the *fono*. The May offering was collected annually at missionary meetings that were taken up specifically for the Missionary Society. Prior to 1852, according to Turner, the village teachers and pastors were supported by voluntary giving of the village and an allowance from the Missionary Society, as more teachers were being demanded and trained. The latter fund, however, was grossly insufficient it was embarrassing.

In 1852 they decided to throw the entire support of the teachers onto the Samoan people themselves. "We, therefore, decided that we should call upon the people simultaneously all over the group, to fix upon the first month of every year for making a voluntary contribution for the support of their village teacher." Teaching on giving to the work of the Lord was not biblically taught to the Samoans. The local people were already in the habit of building the homes for the teachers and supplying them with food, but everything else was to be covered by him. This extra giving was encouraged from the missionaries with an interpretation of the New Testament that the man who does their work should be paid by them. The enticement of the people to give and poor interpretation of New Testament scripture led to the opposition to this extra giving, as many

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felt that the teachers should be paid out of the May collection. However, this opposition was fought off with missionaries stating they still needed to give to the Missionary Society.

This new scheme commenced in January, 1853 and the amounted given increased every year far and beyond the small token the teachers received from the Missionary Society, and the May giving was not affected. The chiefs wanted to legislate the giving and proposed a scheme whereby the women supported for one year and then the men for the next. Missionaries, however, were aware of the possible interference and asked them to leave it alone as they had the May offering. This offering to the teachers, a home and adequate supply of food, was a good quality arrangement for the London Missionary Society as they no longer had to provide for them.

For the Samoan, to be stingy and mean in the distribution or sharing of food was considered the greatest and unpardonable sin, and according to Brown this was used to show the necessary attitude to give.

“A teacher at one of our meetings used this fact with good effect; he told a story of an old couple in an adjoining village, which in a time of scarcity had got possession of a nice piece of tasty shark. This they naturally wished to keep for themselves, and so went and hid themselves, so that they may eat it in peace. An old man, however, got scent of it—perhaps he was to leeward, in which case his olfactory nerve would acquaint him with the fact that there was shark in the neighbourhood. However, to smell it was with him to desire it, and so he set off to get a piece to keep his teeth in working order. The old pair, however, who had got the prize remained hid, would not answer to his call, and ate their shark alone. The teacher, in applying his story, likened the people of the two societies in Samoa to the old couple; the shark was likened to the Word of God, which they possessed in Samoa, and the blessings resulting from it; the old man was likened to those heathen lands which have heard of the good things which they enjoyed in Samoa, and wanted to share in them. But they gave no collection to help and send the Gospel to other lands, they were like the old couple who ate their piece of shark alone, and would not share it with the man who wished to taste it also.”

Missionaries and teachers began to use these enticing accounts to encourage giving; however, their motives were not honourable as they saw themselves as primary recipients of what was collected. This highlighted intentions that were not in accordance with Old Testament principles or New Testament motives.

According to other missionaries, the level of the offerings was according to how pious the people were, and the word of the Lord verified that “it is more blessed to give than to receive.” Other accounts of how missionaries spoke and taught on the issue of giving often had a great sense of obligation and of the needs of others.

“Another speaker, in his exhortation not to give small pieces of silver and keep the large ones, told a story of an old woman who was sick. The teacher went to visit her, just then a boy of the family came in with a basketful of nuts, and so the old lady felt compelled to give the teacher one to drink. The first one she took up was a nice nut, “niu muamua” (a nut with the kernel just formed). However, she begrudged that, or wished it for herself; so she said: “Ah!” she said, “niu sami again; that won’t do for a man of God” so she tried again and that time got an old nut in reality. “Ah”, she said, “this is a nice young nut; this will do for the servant of the Lord.” So the poor teacher only got the old nut. He, however, knew a good nut as well as the old lady and told her so. This tale told well; and the burden of many of the speeches following was: don’t pass by the niu muamua (good nuts, i.e. dollars) and give niu sami (old nuts, i.e. dimes). So when a man threw in a dollar so as nearly to smash the plate, “Ah” they said, “That’s a niu muamua.”

In this account there is mention of first fruits, but it again addresses just the offering and not the heart of the one bringing the offering.

A similar story was also used to encourage the people to give to the work of missions. Those who had not yet heard of the Gospel were likened to those stuck on the reef over a cliff needing help; the Samoan

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people were the ones with the gospel and they were likened to those up on the cliff.

"..They say they have great love to the heathen, but their love is all in their mouths, and talk won't draw the man up; we want ropes. I liken those who got the ropes and went fishing for the men to those who love in deed and in truth – who not only say they love the heathen, but give their money, and do all they can to help God's work and save souls from death. We cannot all go to foreign lands, but we can all find ropes (contribute to the Mission work)...then God will bless us, and many, very many, will be saved...the absolute necessity of their doing their part to spread abroad."  

The separate collections could also been seen as an incentive for the teachers to work harder. Gilson notes that this backfired on the missionaries who proposed this new scheme, as the giving to the teachers soon outweighed what people were giving to the mission. This could have also been because the teachers more than the missionaries exploited the competitive spirits of the Samoans, increasing contributions by pairing one chief off against another or village against village. This was mirrored by the missionaries themselves; as one missionary movement would make advancements the other would react with another building or station or additional staff. The LMS did this when aware of Wesleyan activity; they went around to raise additional funds, and by doing so they made local collections more competitive.

This exploitation was not condemned but condoned by the missionaries as they had set a precedent in their conduct with fellow mission stations. The people suffered and teachers were exposed to wrong theology as they followed this example. Contributions and buildings were erected to impress and gain the favour of man rather than as an act of worship to God. Although some initially found this practice distasteful it was soon overridden by the immediate results seen in the offering. Lists were also

posted up or read out so their contents became public. “Over the next few years other refinements were developed, again by the more eager fund-raisers. The most lucrative was the inter-village or inter-district challenge, which was won, of course, by the side that made the larger contribution.”

Another effective feature was to reopen the collections for those who had fallen behind or for those who wanted to show off an exceedingly big offering. The appeal for funds soon became one of the main public activities of the *lotu* taken up by the LMS and was one of the main attractions. This public display continues in the church today. Once the Samoans were receiving lavish gifts from the missionaries; now the tide had turned and they did so much more lavishly with delight.

The people were deceived to believe that they would gain God’s favour according to their level of contribution and by gaining the respect of men. The reality was that God is not impressed with the amount of the offering, as seen in Mark 12:41-44, but with the attitude of the heart in which the offering is submitted.

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The Interviews - Au Matutua

I have changed the names of the participants and purposely omitted village and district affiliation. This group of 3 male participants were all born and raised in Samoa. The ages range from 62 – 70 years. However, one man was unsure of his exact year of birth, as birth records were not well kept in his area and time. Although questions were set for these interviews, the participants felt free to talk around the topic and divert the conversation as they willed. Due to cultural dynamics and protocol the conversation was directed by the participants with few interjections from me. Although extensive interviews and consultations were made, much of the content of these meetings did not always address the topic specifically; however, it was valuable on a personal and cultural level. For the purpose of this paper I will record only that which is relevant from the interviews to this topic. Due to the fact that the interviews were not recorded and therefore transcribed there were few quotes taken that were recorded in Samoan. After the interviews were done a record was taken and notes were recorded in English, with some quotes written in Samoan as was recalled.

Questions posed to the au matutua group differed from those presented to the le lumana'i. The information that the au matutua provided was to contribute to the overall picture of 'how things used to be'. The details of the previous section were sourced from recorded missionary journals and historians. This was an attempt to allow our oral history held by our elders the space to speak.

Malo was born on the east coast of Upolu and is aged 65. His father held a high chief title in his childhood village and was a resident there until the 1960s when he migrated as a single man to New Zealand for employment reasons, to help financially support the family in Samoa. Malo came to New Zealand with minimal formal education, moved in with his mother's sister and her family and worked in a factory till his retirement, last year. Malo met his wife in New Zealand and settled in
Auckland; they have 3 children, 5 grandchildren, and he currently lives in his own home with his eldest daughter and her family. Malo has visited Samoa several times since migrating but partly considers New Zealand home, as his children have established themselves here, and as head of the family believes his place is here. Even though Malo has been conferred a *tulafale* title he carries out his duties and responsibilities here in New Zealand, but Samoa will always be home.

Fala was born in Savai’i and is approximately aged 70. However he was unsure of the exact year as was his family. He later moved to his father’s village in Upolu and their family resettled in his father’s village. His father was one of two children and his younger brother had run away for bringing shame on the *aiga*. To fulfil his duties Fala’s father came back to Upolu with his own family with the hope to restore their name and house. Fala was still a young boy when his family moved from Savai’i but did not know all of his father’s family upon arrival. Now Fala has since made Upolu his home, marrying a woman two villages south of his own and raising their 6 children in Upolu. Five of their six children still remain in his village, with one currently living in Wellington with his family. Fala, although still recognising his ties in Savai’i and having been conferred a *tulafale* title from his mother’s village, which he continues to honour and fulfil his obligations, considers his village in Upolu as his place.

Ola was born in Upolu, is aged 62, and came to New Zealand when he was 16 years old, where he lived with his older brother who was already established in New Zealand with his family. Ola soon found employment with his brother at the factory along with several other young Samoans who had also come to hopefully make a better living for all those connected to them back in Samoa. Ola several years later returned back to Samoa with his wife and 2 children to care for his parents, and during this time his father fell ill and died, leaving him to care for his mother and younger siblings which he remained in Samoa to do.
Before the arrival of the missionaries what was the religion of our people?

All three participants were hesitant to describe the old religions, and so in doing so they all retold the story of when John Williams did arrive in Sapapali’i on the Messenger of Peace. Malo stated,

"o le a le mea ua e fia iloa mea na tutupu i na aso, o aso o le pogisa?"

"Why do you want to know of things that happened in those days, it was the time of darkness?"

Fala also seemed disappointed toward the question and said,

"e le o ni aso lelei, o le tele o tagata e le'i o'0 ai le malamalama"

"They were not good days, many people had not received the light/understanding."

Ola felt that I should not bring up the heathen past of our people and said,

"o le tatou atunu'u o le atunu'u lotu"

"Our nation is a church/religious nation"

How did it used to be in village life before the lotu?

All participants agreed that the structure was similar to the structure that we have today, with a few practises that are not Christian so are no longer practiced. Fala noted,

"e matua taua le aiga i tagata Samoa"

"The family is of great importance to the Samoan people."

Malo explained that each family had to contribute to the village, whether it was from their plantation or via their efforts out at sea. Ola noted that a collection of village matai would come together and an áveai (instruction) would be given to the aumaga (unmarried, untitled men) to go and fish or
gather crops and it would then be up to the council of matai to distribute. This showed a communal effort and the essential role which the council of matai held in providing for and dealing with village matters.

Are our pre-Christian stories still relevant?

Again all participants agreed that they are still relevant in terms of mea aganu'u (things that are cultural). Fala stated that many of our high titles of our nation as well as the ali'i and tulafale titles in local villages are associated with the stories and names of pagan gods. Malo pointed out that it was the war goddess Nafanua's prophecy that the new religion was going to come to the shores of Sapapali'i to Malietoa. And Ola pointed out that many old proverbial sayings that are quoted by the more skilled orators are from stories of that time. Although they are still relevant they seemingly are not meant to interfere with or detract from the lotu.

What was Tagaloa's role for the Samoan people?

Ola answered that he was the main god of the old times but that's an old story and now we believe in the One Almighty God. Malo did not respond and moved onto talk on another topic. Fala, however, said that although Tagaloa was the main god, each village and even district had their own gods, not as powerful and overriding as Tagaloa, but still they had powers and were feared by the people. People would try and do things to keep them happy so not to bring a storm or sickness on their family or crops.

Were there people who talked to or looked after these gods?

This question was only asked to Fala as the other participants were not responsive to the first question. Fala responded that there were people and sometimes families were the ones that looked after them. Some were good, but others used to do it to get things from the village people
or say things like a sickness was coming, or they know of something someone in their family had done. The family would then go and bring things to try and make peace with the god.

**Do these positions/offices still exist?**

Fala responded that sometimes they did but not for young people, just for the old people who know. Fala soon after changed the subject and no longer addressed that period of time or practise.

It was obvious that each of the au matatua felt reluctant to talk of pre-Christian times and practices. They felt uneasy and that to speak of such matters was dishonouring God. They also commented that it would not benefit me to know of our heathen practices. However, the events and characters of our heathen past are essential to the understanding of our titles, customs and parts of our language. Therefore they cannot be totally omitted from our history. The contribution of the au matatua, although at times reluctant, was successful in beginning to close a gap and engage in intergenerational transference of our history.

**The Interview - Le Lumana'i**

This group consisted of four young Samoans aged between 20-30 years. To ensure anonymity I have changed the names of the participants involved.

Selena, female aged 23, was born and raised in Samoa. Both parents are of Samoan descent, born and raised. Her family came to New Zealand as her father was called to pastor a church when she was young, and her immediate family all migrated to settle in New Zealand. Her father continues to pastor a Samoan congregation in the north. Selena was brought up in the *Ekalesia Faapotopota Keresiano i Samoa* (EFKS) the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, which is the largest and oldest denomination in Samoa, and has its roots in the
London Missionary Society (LMS). Much of Selena’s life was rooted in the church, as her grandparents were also in the ministry, and consumed much of her social life as a child and young person. She has the unique experience of being on both sides of the giving when it comes to church life. Prior to her father training at Malua (EFKS Theological College, Samoa), they too were expected to financially contribute and even still after graduating, as he had not yet been appointed to a congregation. However, for the last seven years her family have been on the receiving end of the financial contributions. Selena braves through as she shares her experience of life before and after of being part of a minister’s family in reference specifically to giving. She also shares how these experiences have influenced her view of giving and the church. Although attending a different branch of the EFKS Selena has decided to financially contribute to her local church.

Nichol, female aged 22, was born and raised in New Zealand; her parents are both of Samoan descent. While both born in Samoa they were educated and married in New Zealand where they raised their family. Nichol was bought up in the Samoan Assembly of God (AOG) Church from her youth. Her family later attended an Assembly of God Church that was not ethnic specific. Much of Nichol’s understanding of the concept of giving came via her parents speaking about the matter and financially contributing but not verbally explaining the roots or reason. Nichol is studying and currently an active member in her local church where she contributes financially to the church.

Kahlen, male aged 24, was born and raised in New Zealand; both his parents are of Samoan descent, born and raised in Samoa, met, married and settled in New Zealand. Kahlen was bought up in the Pacific Island Presbyterian Church, where his father played a major role as a deacon and also secretary for the church for several years and his mother was a superintendent of the Sunday school. Kahlen’s grandparents were in the ministry for several years in Samoa and were greatly influenced by his grandmother, who lived with them till Kahlen was 15. Kahlen, like the
other participants, grew up and spent much of his life in the church throughout the week and not just Sunday. Since leaving his parent's home Kahlen now attends another church and, although has not yet decided to give, is undergoing extensive teaching and mentoring on this very topic.

Rimoni, male aged 27, was born in New Zealand and raised in Samoa. His mother is of Samoan descent born and raised, and his father is of Chinese and European descent, born and raised in New Zealand. Rimoni was not bought up in the church until he moved to Samoa. He and his mother moved back to her homeland when he was 10 years old. Church life was very rare for him here in New Zealand, only occasionally attending Christmas and Easter services; as a family they did not attend a local church. Since shifting to Samoa it has become a regular occurrence, going with his grandmother to the EFKS in their village, as his mother did not attend. Rimoni still lives in Samoa and, although he does not contribute directly to the local church, he covers his grandmother's entire financial obligations to the church. His attendance has returned to the Christmas, Easter and the occasional family funeral or wedding services. Rimoni does not consider himself as a real part of the local church, but still calls it his church.

Each participant was asked the same series of questions; an open question technique was utilised with clarification given where required, as some participants were not familiar with the all the terminology. The interviews were done in English and Samoan, as some participants were more comfortable speaking one or the other or a mixture of both, especially when describing the different types of giving that they saw or experienced.

What is your understanding of tithing and what is it informed by?

Rimoni and Selena were not familiar with this term and so we used the term giving or offerings to the church as an alternative and then used the
terms interchangeably when conversing in English. Selena, however, upon receiving the questionnaire before the interview asked some of her peers who briefly informed her it was,

"..to do with a tenth or something like that; Methodists do it, I think".

Kahlen, through his own research and information from other Christians, believed it was

"10% of your earnings or what you've earned and that's sort of your gift to the Lord. That's my understanding of it; it's the thing you do in private with the Lord, just you and God know. I know that there is a lot of stuff in the Old Testament and the New that was a tradition back then, 10% and that's come through church and its like your personal thing, that's how I believe it is. The only time I was informed, as I didn't hear about it from Sunday school or anything, it was more like when Pastor X came (Participant's old minister from the Pacific Island Presbyterian Church). That was the first time, I was in my teens, and more so now at the church I'm at now, I mean I heard of it but didn't understand it. I mean even now, I know a little bit but not really. Not even when living with Mum and Dad".

Nichol had grown up knowing it as the sefulua'i tenth:

"..didn't really know what it really was, now my knowledge of it is 10% of what you earn and it's not one of those things where there is a choice, it's a priority you have to do. Both mum & dad did it, on our way to church mum or dad would ask, "ua fa le sefulua'i?" ("Has anyone done the tenth?") And I heard it preached over the pulpit".

Both Rimoni and Selena were asked for the alternative names they knew in association with giving to the church and several types of offerings were named and what they understood them to be. Rimoni stated that,

"I'd heard of lafoga, alofa, and atina'e and there were probably more, but I didn't pay much attention to it as a kid, when I first went over (to Samoa). I didn't really know a lot of Samoan so church was just where I'd go, sit and listen but not understand, Sunday was about the big to'ona'i (Sunday lunch) for me anyway. I guess I never knew what they were cause I didn't ask and it wasn't a matter for my tupulaga (age group/generation)."
When asked about how he understands it now as an adult, Rimoni commented,

"Oh I don't really, the alofa I think goes to the minister and the rest I dunno, I just give money to the old lady (his grandmother) and she gives it to the different types I guess. It can get a bit too much at times but when there's nothing to give, well there's nothing to give, the old lady just has to deal with it."

Selena, however, was quite well versed in some of the different types of offerings. She listed four, three of which she is familiar with: "lafoga, alofa, lafo fuatia ifo, and atina'ē."

"Lafoga is a fortnightly set amount that you give to the church if you have become a member of the ekalesia (congregation), so becoming a member of the ekalesia means that you've accepted and understood the responsibilities of being an ekalesia member."

To be part of the ekalesia there are classes one must undertake that outline the responsibility of a member. It was from these classes that Selena learnt about lafoga.

"Ou te iloa o le matou lafoga i ta'i $10 e le tagata ekalesia, a fortnight so e uma ona lafo tina ma taimaitai le vaiaso nei, and then lafo ia ali'i, tulafale and taule'ale'a next Sunday. E le o se mea e fosi, e le fa'apea a le afford so'u $10 then they look you up and say e le'i fai sou lafoga. There's part of the understanding that it's your responsibility to the church to help out."

Kahlen was also familiar with the term lafoga and alofa but not so with what it was for:

"I know the different words lafoga, and alofa, but not really what they are for. But I didn't know and I didn't ask mum or dad about the lafo and that, I just knew that there came a time when in church they read something out about how much people gave. That's all I really knew, when Pastor X
was talking he was trying to make the 2 different but even back then I didn't know.”

The other type of offering is known as the alofa. Selena explains this as follows:

“The alofa is the other biggie, being a minister’s daughter, I’m usually on the receiving end of the alofa than on the giving side.”

The alofa is what the minister receives as his compensation, as Selena explained:

| “So o le alofa la lea e fai o le alofa aua la e le totogia le faifeau, o la ua sacrifice le taimi e sau e fai le galuega” | “So the alofa was a love offering to pay the minister for his sacrifice of time to come and answer the call.” |
| “It’s reciprocal – or its supposed to be reciprocal, the concept of the alofa, but this is just talking with my grandmother because my mum’s parents were also faifeau so my grandmother would say, |
| “ia e fai mea e tatau!” | “Do the things that are necessary.” |

But, as noted earlier, there was a time when her father was not a minister:

| “O le alofa la, e leai se set amount, e le fa’apea pe fia sou earnings o le pasene e a. But e fua e oe ia.” | “The alofa, however, is not a set amount, it’s not like you earn such an amount and it’s a percentage of it. But you measure it for you.” |

The actual word that describes this offering, alofa, literally translates as love.

| “the word alofa carries the meaning o na e tou te alofa i le tou faifeau its out of love it’s not out of... you know your responsibility, as much, o la e alofa i le faifeau, o le na tu’u le latou aiga ma le latou nu’u like we left our family in Samoa and we had a life in Samoa, valaaau loa le ekalesia lea city X and we had to leave that life and move here.” | “The word alofa carries the meaning, you love your minister, it’s out of love, it’s not out of... You know your responsibility, as much as you love your minister, who left their family and their village, like we left our family in Samoa and we had a life in Samoa, the call from the congregation came from city X and we had to leave that life and move here.” |
The alofa was not always a monetary exchange, as agreed with by Rimoni:

"I remember our alofa one month when I was a kid, we went fishing with my uncle and we came back with some faisua (clams) and we took a whole heap over to the faifeau's house, and that was our alofa for the masina (month)."

The alofa in the case of the EFKS movement is collected every week but in Selena’s experience the minister receives it once a month.

On the other type of giving, the atina'e, Selena admitted she was not very familiar with this offering and the other participants were unaware of this offering as well.

However, concerning the final type that she stated, the lafo fua tia ifo:

"It’s not regular but if there is going to be like a faufalega o se falesa fou a la e fia fesoasoani atu ai matou au lotu then e faapea 'manaia pe a fai se tatou lafo fua tia ifo' that's whatever you wanna give e pule a oe

It's not regular but if there is going to be like an opening of a new church and our church wants to help out, then it's like, 'it would be nice for us to take up a freewill offering'; that's whatever you wanna give, it's up to you."

Most of Selena’s knowledge of the various types of offerings was, "from my parents and grandparents because they've been 'in the business'. If we've not understood stuff we would just ask".

The Origin of Tithes or other types of Offerings

All participants at different times doubted whether they knew where the giving practises originated from and so their responses were quite varied. For Kahlan,

"I heard the Abraham story in Salem but I haven't heard it in ages, a mate told me about it, but I looked up the Malachi 1, Mal 3:5, it's highlighted in my Bible (not much is highlighted - laughs), where God says don't cheat me of my tithe. That’s the only one I found, then that led me to other references in the Bible. I know it’s back then in Abraham's time, is that right?"

Nichol's response echoed the same hesitation:
"From the Jews, Israelites, Bible. Not sure where, not even sure if it was Moses, back in Moses’ time – not sure if, nah not during Passover. There was always this thing during harvest time, they put 10% aside of what they....actually it was with Moses, no Joseph, not sure if it’s the same thing but when he was given authority over Egypt and their harvest and it was taxed, and what I understood pretty much understood what tithing was, the concept at the time."

Rimoni shrugged and commented,

"Shucks I dunno, in the Bible, well it better be (laughs), otherwise that old lady is ripping me off!"

Selena however only knew the origin of the alofa,

| "With the alofa – before Christianity arrived in Samoa e tele atua o Samoa o matai la e associate ma le tele o atua. O le latalata la o lou igoa matai i le atua o le tele la o lou important i le nuu or district Faapena la le tausiga o oe e le nuu ma tagata o le itumalo because of that connection with Tagaloa or whoever the atua you are associated with. The people saw that a tausi faafelele le tagata who is like a go between the human world and the god world then e le ita they’ll be on the good side of the god/s and won’t be cursed or ma’i mai se ese. They were so superstitious that a ma’i mai se ese e faapea, ‘ae na fai se mea ua ita ai le atua’ that’s how they saw it. And then the story of Nafanua and the prophesy – na o mai loa o missionaries with the God who is above all gods and as it spread they had to train the taulealea to go and talai le tala lelei and they weren’t in their own villages so they went out to other villages and the concept was still there to be on the new Gods good side – so rather than tausi the matai, although they still do, la ua tuu le faataua e le faifeau, like some kind of chief but who holds no title so they could separate the sacred and | "With the alofa – before Christianity arrived in Samoa, there were several gods in Samoa. The chiefs were associated with several of these gods. The closer your chief title was to the god the greater your importance in the village or the district. So those in your village or district would treat you accordingly because of that connection with Tagaloa or whoever the (god) you were associated with. The people saw that if you looked after that person well, who is like a go-between, between the human world and god world; then the god would not be angered, they’ll be on the good side of the god/s and won’t be cursed or result in someone becoming sick. They were so superstitious that if someone got sick, then that person must have made that god mad, that’s how they saw it. And then the story of Nafanua and the prophesy – then the arrival of the missionaries with the God who is above all gods and as it spread they had to train the untitled men to go and proclaim the Good News; and they weren’t in their own villages so they went out faataua e le faifeau, like some kind of chief but who holds no title so they could separate the sacred and |

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Therefore, where they would *tausi* (care for) the *matai* with the alofa or offering, they now transferred this over to the new minister of religion.

**What is the purpose?**

The purposes included both a spiritual and practical focus. Kahlen felt it was more a spiritual act of obedience and a grateful response:

"For me, it's the whole thing because God's done heaps for me. So the purpose isn't to do it so God can bless you heaps, but to do it because God has done so much in my life; when he asks for 10% it should be nothing. In that Malachi bit it says you get blessed out of it, but I mean there is a wrongness in that because if that's your motive to get blessed out of that 10% then that's not right, it's like an appreciation, for me anyway".

Rimoni felt that for his grandma,

"...it was a way to get to heaven, doing the right thing, by who I dunno, but I guess the church has to run somehow".

Selena believed part of it was spiritual and practical to pay the wages for the minister and,

"it's all about the community its all about helping each other out. E leai se lotu e mafai ona survive unless there is money, because you need a set of buildings, you need stuff like that."  

Nichol felt that its purpose was two-fold, a public and personal spiritual act:

"I understood that it was something put aside for the future, for the well being of the people in the future. They probably didn't see the point of it but they did it anyway. Trusting it was for the good and it was. It tests my faith, tests my obedience, that's probably more important....trusting,
testing of faith, yeah, obedience to God. Obedience to his laws and to his commands.”

Where do you think tithes and offerings go?

Selena’s experience saw the separate offerings going to various parts of the church; the alofa went to the faifeau, the lafoga to the maintenance of the church building and amenities, and the lafo fua tia ifo for special occasions. The atiana’e she was not sure of. Rimoni knew only of the alofa and that it went to the minister. Kahlan with his different experiences thought,

“For my old church, I guess where things needed to be done, nah I don’t know, but it must go to church maintenance and it helps other groups within the church; cos I remember in youth group asking the church for money and it came from the accounts so I guess it came from the giving but I don’t really know. When I was little I used to think the faifeau got it all and got stuff like a new car.”

Nichol also was unsure:

“Good question, cos I don’t even ask, well I think it just goes to church, the works, maintenance, pastors’ wages, their house, and stuff like bringing over other ministers.”

Each participant believed that the tithes and offerings went to the work of the church, in several capacities.

Where do you think your offerings should go?

Rimoni believed that the money could go wherever,

“as long as they tell the people giving where the money is going, that’s my opinion as an outsider anyway.”

Selena felt that for her it was going to the right place but just needed to be sensible and realistic when giving. Nichol felt (as above) that it should go towards wages, church, works and providing speakers. Kahlen personally believed,

“For me, it should go to anything that has to do with taking the gospel around, i.e. hiring a van to bring people to church. Anything so that people can know about the Lord.”
What has been your personal experience of giving in the life of the church?

Several participants acknowledge that some of the experiences were first- and second-hand, nonetheless it did have an effect on their views of giving in the church. Kahlen remembers,

"Some of them have been bad for our family, it was just parents being blinded. That it had to be done, and it was done out of that, where people would see how much you gave."

Growing up in the church Kahlen saw it affect his peers:

"Other Samoan experiences were pretty bad, and (I) heard real bad horror stories, like kids not having school fees and real bad ones like that, so I know there’s been bad vibes about it. So I know there is a lot of negativity around it. Even in my own experience."

Nichol saw her parents do it, and thought it a natural part of church life:

"I had heard of stories, but didn’t really know for myself."

Rimoni described his experience:

"(I) saw it happen and would hear the olds go on about how it was too much and so many things at once, I didn’t really care though. But sometimes I thought it was all a bit too much, guess they could of said no! But that would never happen, they’d rather die than not give or be seen to give, we’re funny like that aye!"

Selena, whose parents were in a good paying job, didn’t see it as a financial strain; although there were times they went without, it was never the essentials, and giving to the church was a priority. Selena did notice the huge difference being on the receiving end though:

"With the alofa, it started off being really nice getting all that money but then you start to wonder how the people in the church are suffering. There are families who just have the necessities and it hurts to see them not in their own house, the woman is working both day and night. Kids’ education and welfare suffering because parents aren’t spending time with kids because they are working 2 to 3 jobs."

Selena witnessed for herself the extravagance and that much of the giving was outlandish and overdone:
“It’s more than what the faifeau needs. Whereas the people giving are suffering – the way I see it is unfair for the people and it’s unfair on the faifeau because it looks like the faifeau is taking the money or demanding it. In reality they should tausi (look after) so that the faifeau can live.”

Being on the receiving end allowed Selena to see the effects on the people in the congregation, and how it did detract attention, focus and financial commitment from their families. She commented,

“But it’s hard to stop them. They used to come, every family takes a turn to feed us and they overdo it. It’s like sometimes they compete.”

"Faapea a manaia le fale o le faifeau na lelei le tausiga but they are completely different things. One is about buildings, one is about people. E le ioa i le tele poo le laiti o le fale o le faifeau le maopopo o le au lotu, e mafia ona taapeape le au lotu ao lae tu lava le fale o le faifeau – e leai se aoga.”

“They are like if the minister’s house is good then they are being looked after well, but they are completely different things. One is about buildings, one is about people. You cannot tell by the size of the minister’s house, big or small, if the church is united, a church/congregation can break up and the minister’s house is still standing – it’s of no use”.

Do you financially contribute to the local church, and why?

Rimoni does not see himself part of the local church and gives, although indirectly, he gives via his grandmother. He answered,

“nah, I’d give to the old lady anyway where she puts it is her buzz.”

For Kahlen, who is undergoing a disciple course at his church, he hopes to tithe once he understands it more:

“I got like a number and an envelope so this Sunday was gonna be my first. So hopefully it’ll work out. But I’ve heard about all the blessings that come out of it, some amazing stories and testimonies. People stepping out in faith and it’s really encouraged me, but (I’ve) not yet tithed as such. I’m gonna start tithing cos I don’t want to be on the same level and God is now a lot more important to me than before.”

Selena’ perspective was that,

“I now know the sacrifice; with the money I give I’ve had to fit it into my budget before I didn’t because my parents did it for me. Now if I want to be on my own then I’m gonna have to fuafua (ration) stuff. At first it was
all right, and then I had to cut stuff out in order to do my lafoga. This is only part of what others do, and I only do my alofa if I’ve got extra then I think...

"...e manaia pe a ave se alofa mo le faifeau" and then I do it but e le o se mea ou te faia all the time."

.."it’ll be nice to give an alofa for the minister and then I do it but its not something I do all the time."

Other reasons for Selena included,

"So I need to act on my commitment. When I go home I learn so much and realise when I come down I should be doing it because all my friends are doing it.

They have jobs and ua lau mai latou igoa and I’m like did you put in and they are like, “yeah I’m working so I should put in”. Pei latou te lologa e oe lava you’re giving to something more useful when you measure what is important and what isn’t. For me right now giving and giving to the church is more important.”

They have jobs and their names are being read out and I’m like did you put in and they are like, “yeah I’m working so I should put in”. It’s like they feel for them, they’re giving to something more useful when you measure what is important and what isn’t. For me right now giving and giving to the church is more important.”

Nichol first gave when she was working in her summer jobs:

"From my first job, mum kept drilling it into us, to tithe whether we work or whatever. In the beginning it was kinda hard, cos it was alright before it was in the summer and it was like, 5 times, work about 5 weeks. But it was not until last year that it became regular, before that I only had odd jobs, but honestly it felt like it took a huge chunk out of my budget and it was like oh man, there were times when I was like tempted to stop it, and there were times when I did, you know but it really did test my faith. It was huge; it was a huge test of faith for me. Man it was hard, cos I wasn’t getting much but when I did it was good, I mean, it came out better in the end, cos there was someone else, who was supplying me as well, (who) came in and said what do you need, no questions asked or complaints what-so-ever. It was a real blessing; it was a true testament of what other people were saying, about what they say when they give you receive. But I didn’t do it so that I get something back, I just did it, I didn’t even expect to get anything back, and I did and it was like woe-zers, its true.”

For Nichol and Selena, giving to the church caused them to look carefully at their budget and where the money was going. Nichol stated,

“Well you learn to budget, you learn to budget and that whole thing about trusting God – especially when that person came thru for you, it was like a major, to put it in dumb way, a slap in the face, or a wake-up call, it was like, man, this is little, it’s like the whole thing of...how does it go, He
(God) owns the cattle of a thousand hills or whatever, yea, that pretty much came true."
Findings

The order of my findings has assisted in the progression of the outcome. The customs and origin of the practice of tithes as established in the Old Testament by Abram had been culturalised and taken on several forms. By the time it arrived on the shores of Savai'i, Samoa it looked so different that it seems the intention and method may have been misconstrued as it travelled through time and waters.

Rather than trying to unpack and discover how the practice travelled through time and lands from Salem to England to Samoa to today, I have taken the liberty and tripled jumped through time and space, concentrating on how it was first done and why, how it was bought to Samoa by the English missionaries, then why and how we do it today.

The message concerning giving to the church that was brought to the Samoan people was from an English Protestant perspective. The tithing principle of the time of Abram was practised by the Israelites and continues to be practiced by the Jewish people.

As discovered from missionary journals and manuscripts, the Samoan people had a form of religion and although there was no priestly class there were keepers of certain gods or deities in each village. It was also confirmed from the au matatua that a particular family in the village often held this office. And, like the Jewish custom, gifts and offerings were bought to them in the form of produce and for the Samoan people, animals, mats and siapo (tapa cloth). Unlike the Jewish practise, though, there was no set amount or percentage. Religion did not seem to be centralised as villages and districts had different deities. There were no temples as such, therefore there was no building to maintain or to administer, as the family’s home served this purpose. Religion was very much localised, the social structure of that time was very communal, family networks were complex and rich.
The understanding of *le lumanai* has been heavily informed by the teachings of early missionaries. Many of the practices that the young participants experienced were due to these very teachings. The motivation of these offerings was not always noble in the sense that they were not biblical, but rather contextual.

In the early days of the church there was one monetary offering that was taken up in May – this was for the Mission society. As Christianity expanded on the islands and the need increased to train up teachers to share the load of teaching and preaching the gospel throughout the islands, more locals were being called into service. However, because the teachers were not to minister in their own villages the question was, who would then support them? The money from the society to distribute to the workers of the gospel came less frequently and was a small proportion once distributed to the workers. Missionaries themselves felt embarrassed to issue the teachers the pathetic remuneration, as the wage did not match the worth of the labourer. Having to share the pie with more people also meant the many missionaries had to contend with a smaller slice of the pie.

The need for monetary compensation can be seen as unnecessary as it was earlier agreed that when a teacher came to the village, as they were highly sought, it was the responsibility of the village to provide for the man of God. The villagers built houses for them and food was to be provided from different families, making sure that they were looked after as they laboured for the Lord. When missionaries initiated that they also be paid financially, some of the people disagreed and felt that, if so, then they should be paid out of the May offering. This was reprimanded as that offering was specifically for the missionary society and if the teachers were working for them then they should be responsible to pay them. It seems the fear and persuasion to now give to the God of the Papalagi was a mere transference from that family who was the gatekeeper of the old religious deities of the local people.
Those who refused or questioned the practise or motive of the additional offering were considered unholy and not supportive of the new religion that was taking over Samoa. They soon gave in and an additional collection was taken up. Unfortunately, this set a precedent in terms of not questioning church practise and polity. The guilt tactic was not only issued by the Papalagi missionaries but by the Samoan teachers themselves. Persuasive stories were used to entice people to give and the church soon played on the cultural beliefs, as the most unpardonable sin for a Samoan is to be seen as being stingy. And, worse, disgrace would befall on one who was not a good host, as showing hospitality was a huge factor. The teacher was not allowed to be from the village in which he ministered, and a special relationship was established upon him in taking up his new post. He was seen as a guest for an indefinite time and therefore was always being hosted as he served.

Today’s practise in Samoan Protestant churches is that, when a new minister is called to a congregation an exchange happens in a special service. The status of the minister upon arrival is that he is a foreigner to that place. The manner in which Samoan people look after and care for their foreigners is of the highest quality, because they are seen as guest, worthy of only the best, and no sacrifice is seen as too much. So for the minister coming in as a foreigner for an unknown time, their dwelling and upkeep are all arranged and catered for. This is called an osi ga feagaiga – which is a covenant ceremony where an exchange happens between the congregation and the minister regarding their responsibilities and both parties honour the covenant in a reciprocal relationship.

As previously noted in the structure of the Old Testament and the point of the New Testament offerings, as outlined by the apostle Paul, giving was never to be about the amount people gave but about why and how they gave. The Samoan church has continued to apply this incorrectly taught practice. As a result, the motives for giving to the church are to
the detriment of our people. God desires that we give out of a dedication to Christ, a love for fellow believers, and the joy of helping those in need.

Each young participant agreed that giving was often ‘overdone’ and one believed that “this is not how it should be, surely?” This is not at all a presumption that all ministers accept this lavish giving from their congregations but, as observed, it is seen as an offence to refuse and, although they try and place restrictions on the amounts and sorts of giving, it has been ingrained in the mindsets and beliefs of the people in the church today.

The idea behind the different tithes, as is the Jewish custom, was so that there was a part that is separated and consecrated to God, a percentage to attend to those serving in the house, and for you to consume in community. This giving was not meant to consume all your labours, but rather, acknowledging your priorities firstly to God and his house and also including your own person and house. The practise of giving to be left with nothing was never the intention. It was a response that was to bring joy not hardship, a sense of community not isolation, one of prosperity not lack or resentment.

Another strategy that the early missionaries and teachers utilised was the natural competitiveness of the Samoan people. A record was taken in the early times of the financial contributions made by families or individuals and made public. This was used within a village context but also district to district. This practise is still very common in the Samoan church today; a list is read out in the church service with the amount of the financial contributions of each ekalesia member, which continues to conjure up a spirit of competitiveness. Kahlen notes, “There came a time when in church they read something out about how much people gave. It turned into a competition, that’s what it became really”.

Rimoni remembered people complaining about giving so much all the time, and that there would be grumbling in the background as people
continued to give. Here we see the great removal of giving as an honouring response to God as in the times of Abram, in its original intent.

The concept of giving so as to be a blessing was one that encouraged the early believers to give. The association of gain that was connected with the new religion did entice many to adopt Christianity but, as noted by some of the missionaries, it was a mere profession and did not change their lifestyles accordingly. The New Testament scripture that was used by the missionaries was “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35); this was said in the context that the world is afraid of giving, unless in the hope of getting. It is therefore often for the gain that they give. Christ’s message, however, is what is more blessed, more excellent. The purpose then is to be more like God who gave to all and received from none, once again highlighting the motive. The practise of making the financial contributions public goes against Jesus’ teaching of giving, “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by men. I tell you the truth; they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” (Matthew 6:2-4)

Looking at the results from le lumana’i, their understanding of the actual tithe practise varied according to the church that they were a part of or grew up in. Only one participant was familiar with the term from her childhood, indicating that it was not only the name that had changed. Two of the participants grew up in the Ekalesia Fa’apotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa (EFKS), one in the Pacific Islands’ Presbyterian Church (PIPC) and the other in the Samoan Assembly of God (AOG).

The practises that we see in the EFKS and those that are evident in most Protestant Samoan denominations are direct parallels of those put
in place by the missionaries, even down to the recording of the contributions and making them public knowledge. The tithe system used in the AOG church is an adapted version of what was required by the Jewish people according to the Old Testament and encouraged through New Testament teaching.
Conclusion:

From the several offerings of the tithe tradition of the Old Testament, and the many that were put in place by the missionaries in the early Samoan church – who is right? The purpose of this paper is not to answer which method is right or wrong but to address the question that was asked on the outset of this journey: Giving – should it hurt?

From the research that I have carried out and by personal revelation I have concluded that the answer is NO! Yet it has and will continue to cripple our people because we are often giving ignorantly, with the wrong purpose and motive. We have looked at the different methods and examined the practise to investigate the reason behind the tithe and offering, its purpose and original intention. This included investigating how the practise was developed in Samoa, to illustrate the motivation and cultural context that was in place, and how it had obviously affected the current practise. Giving is definitely a good practise but to state that it should hurt has been proven incorrect.

The original motivation of submitting the first offering or tithe was to honour the recipient, God. Other types came in to help administer the workers and running of the house. This too is also good but it was to be proportional and not meant to hurt. Giving to the poor and those in need, again, was never meant to hurt those who were helping.

The New Testament highlights not so much the method but the attitude that should accompany the offering, whatever the sum or capacity. The motives of the offerings that were being witnessed by the young participants often did not correspond with those highlighted in the Corinth church in the times of Paul the Apostle.

For the le lumana'i, instead of seeing cheerful givers they witnessed grumbling, instead of seeing a giving according to capacity, they saw lavish and unnecessary indulgence. The blessing they waited for
according to their giving was not unfolded as the scriptures stated, as it
was not done in secret and the reward from men had already been
awarded.

Giving should therefore not hurt as it is called to meet a genuine need; it
is essential to come with a joyful heart, and this requires a giving of
oneself even before a monetary value is sought. It is right for the
Samoan people to give but it should not hurt when practised in its true
essence.

In conclusion, our people are great givers; the communal essence for
which we are often envied is a credit to our culture and people. However,
in light of financial contributions to the church, it is all about motive, what
motivates a person to give to the House and work of God. It has been
and should once again be the desire to respond in an adoration for God,
a joyful commitment to building God's kingdom, giving according to their
capacity and meeting the needs of the poor in private, not for the world
to see (that will be inevitable). What should motivate the giver is a love
for God and all things godly!

Giving – It is a JOY!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aiga</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali’i</td>
<td>High Chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Au matatua</td>
<td>Older participants group, means elders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aumaga</td>
<td>Group of unmarried, untitled men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ava</td>
<td>Ceremonial drink ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>áveai</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekalesia</td>
<td>Congregation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faasamoap</td>
<td>Samoan way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faifeau</td>
<td>minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fono</td>
<td>Assembly of chiefs etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le lumanai</td>
<td>Younger participants group, means the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotu</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matai</td>
<td>Chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to'anai</td>
<td>meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tofi</td>
<td>Position, title, place of standing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulafale</td>
<td>Orator chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tupulaga</td>
<td>age group/generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sefulua’i</td>
<td>tenth</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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