SAMOA
Manfred Ernst

Basic Information

The Land

The independent nation of Samoa (called Western Samoa until 1997) consists of two large islands of recent volcanic origin — Upolu (1,100 sq km) and Savai’i (1,700 sq km) — and five other very small islets. The total land area is just 2,820 sq km (United Nations and Government of Samoa 1998:8). Compared to that of other South Pacific island nations, Samoa’s Exclusive Economic Zone (98,500 sq km) is quite small. Another difference from most of the other island nations is that the land area is not spread over a large area of water. Communication between the people is thus relatively easy.

For many generations the forests have provided wood for a variety of purposes, rare food delicacies such as a giant taro variety, and, last but not least, traditional medicines. Despite this abundance Samoa’s natural resource base is considered by economists to be fragile because there are no oil deposits (causing a dependence on fuel imports) and no valuable minerals. According to a report written in 1993 (South Pacific Regional Environment Programme/SPREP 1993:7), 43 per cent of the land is arable but just over 13 per cent of this comprises moderate to high fertile soils formed from basaltic volcanic flows.

Population growth and the development of a cash economy have led to intensified cropping that does not leave enough time for the soil to regenerate as it did under the traditional shifting subsistence agricultural system. Due to a growing shortage of flat and fertile land the steeper slopes and higher grounds are increasingly cleared for farming, bringing vulnerability to erosion and increased water runoff rates, as experienced in the two highly destructive cyclones Ofa (1990) and Val (December 1991). As a result of all these impacts the permanency of rivers and streams is decreasing.

Land Ownership and Tenure

As in other Pacific Islands, land is the source of family identity and security. Any attempt to change land-holding customs will therefore have a severe impact on family systems. According to the Samoa Land Corporation, 81 per cent of the land is customary, with the chiefs (matai) holding it in trust for their family groups (aiga) and allocating it in a fair and equal way. Eleven per cent is owned by the government, 5 per cent is held by private owners and churches, and 3 per cent is freehold (United Nations and Government of Samoa 1998:15). The demand on the land is increasing because of urban population growth and the loss of forest from logging or land clearance for gardens. There is much discussion of the
land issue in Samoa, and the government faces the difficult task of finding a way of maintaining the security of the subsistence sector on the one hand, and, on the other, of ensuring that long term projects for extensive agriculture or forestry developments that need heavy investment are not blocked by the traditional landholding system.

The People

According to the latest census of population and housing taken on 5 November 2001, the population of Samoa is 176,848 (Government of Samoa, Department of Statistics 2001). This figure does not take into account the large Samoan population (more than 100,000) living in New Zealand, or the many thousands living in the USA and Australia. In Samoa itself the population has almost doubled in the last 45 years from an estimated 97,000 in 1956 to the current figure. The natural rate of population increase over the past 40 years has been 1.3 per cent per annum. Samoa does not experience all the negative effects of rapid population expansion, because migration serves as a ‘safety valve’ with regard to unemployment, while remittances from migrants put substantial amounts of money into the communities. On the other hand, ongoing migration promotes fragmentation of family units, culture and tradition, and the negative effects of the ‘brain drain’ are felt.

A distinctive feature of Samoa is the homogeneity of its population: about 89 per cent are Samoans, 10 per cent part-Samoans and only 1 per cent others (Europeans, Chinese and Pacific Islanders). The distribution of the population is quite uneven, with almost three quarters of the people living on the island of Upolu. The majority of the people live in small villages spread along the narrow coastal plains. The most densely populated area is the capital Apia, with 569 people per sq km compared to a national average of 58 people (United Nations and Government of Samoa 1998:23). There has been a marked increase in the size of the urban population of Apia, especially since the mid 1980s, accompanied by an ongoing decrease in the basically rural population of Savai‘i. The attraction of the greater Apia area, which hosts 90 per cent of paid employment, government funded primary and secondary schools, tertiary institutions and opportunities for sports and recreation, is obvious. For many rural Samoans, moving to Apia means freedom from close family and village supervision. The steady movement to the town adversely affects rural life, producing a shortage of labour, a decline in agricultural production, and a decreasing community capacity to deal with village development.

Language

There are no marked dialectal variations and all Samoans can communicate easily with each other. Through migration and related contacts, and through education in schools, English is widely spoken and understood, except by some older people and in remoter areas.

Health

A survey conducted in the late 1990s stated: “Samoa has a sound health basis with low infant mortality, relatively high life expectancies, and a high immunization rate” (United Nations and Government of Samoa 1998:49). While the overall health situation is improving, there is a change in the pattern of illness and death, related to the effects of ongoing modernization. For example, diseases spread by infections are giving way to diseases caused by
changes in lifestyle, such as lack of exercise and excessive consumption of alcohol and tobacco.

One feature of the health system in Samoa is the excellent co-operation between the government and communities. The Department of Health operates 5 hospitals, 12 health centres and 17 sub-centres (United Nations and Government of Samoa 1998:53). Complicated cases are usually referred to New Zealand for treatment. In addition, non-governmental organizations and the private sector provide a range of health services, with one private hospital, eight medical clinics, two dental clinics and doctors who work on a 'fee for service' basis. There are two pharmacies, a Health Association for Family Planning, and NGOs that provide counseling and services for victims of domestic violence (Mapusaga o Aiga) or cater for teenage pregnancies (Adoptus Centre).


Under normal circumstances Samoa has enough food to feed its population but there are indications that food supply will become a problem because of a decrease in fish landings due to over-fishing, the destruction of mangroves, changing market prices, and urbanization. Cyclones and pests pose a constant threat to food security, as demonstrated in the past 15 years.

As stated in the Samoa Situation Analysis of Human Development (United Nations and Government of Samoa 1998:56), in order to retain Samoa's relatively good health care system the government needs to address several issues: the severe shortage of health professionals, the trend of lifestyle-related diseases, and the declining resources for health care. Community education needs to be continued, and there is a need to address modern and complex health issues such as HIV/AIDS, STDs, and the increasing nutrition and age-related diseases.

**Economy**

Like most other Pacific Island nations Samoa has a fragile resource base; it has no known minerals and one of the smallest Exclusive Economic Zones in the region. The dependence on agriculture and agro-processing industries makes the economy vulnerable to natural disasters. Samoa's remoteness from large trade centres and the limitations of a small domestic market, together with tough competition from countries offering similar products, constrain the nation's development options. Nevertheless, during the past 10 years Samoa experienced good economic growth rates (between 3 and 6 per cent annually) and has frequently been praised as a model for other Pacific Islands in terms of stability and foresight planning (Keith-Reid 2002:25). Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, who was re-elected in 2001 for another 5-year term, has a good regional and international reputation as a business-like economist and seasoned politician.

The primary sector (agriculture, forestry and fishing) contributed 35.7 per cent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1995. The secondary sector (manufacturing, electricity and construction) contributed 26.6 per cent to the GDP, and the tertiary sector (services such as restaurants, transport and others) a total of 27.5 per cent (United Nations and
Government of Samoa 1998:30). Over the past two decades there has been a clear trend away from agricultural production and a rise in the importance of the service sector. For example, tourism has shown a marked increase in recent years, profiting from the political crisis of neighbouring Fiji in the aftermath of the coup of 2000, as well as from the terrorist bombing in Bali, Indonesia.

Remittances from overseas are still important and mainly used for the improvement of housing conditions and for social needs such as education, funerals, and household goods.

According to the most recent census, of the 15 years and older population (104,814), 23.4 per cent have paid employment, 22.3 per cent work in family based agriculture, 30 per cent are housewives, 12 per cent attend school and 7.5 per cent stated no activity (Government of Samoa, Department of Statistics 2001:Table 22). In other words, the total population of the economically active is 50,377 people or 28.5 per cent. Leading sectors are agriculture and hunting with 34.8 per cent, manufacturing 10.7 per cent, public administration 6.5 per cent, and wholesale and retail 5.5 per cent. A detail that is interesting because it is quite different from countries outside the region is that 25 per cent of Samoans identified religious work as their main activity, according to the 1991 census.

In traditional societies such as Samoa, where people are expected to give money, goods and services to meet the social obligations of their families (fā'ālavelave), and where the family chief (matatāi) is responsible for the distribution of these items, it is difficult to determine the distribution of wealth, and even more so in semi-subsistence societies such as Samoa where a substantial amount of money is received from remittances. But there is no doubt that there are certain groups vulnerable to poverty, people who have an insufficient cash income to meet their basic human needs or “who are not realizing their full potential due to a mixture of structural and social factors and are not able to partake in the life of the community” (United Nations and Government of Samoa 1998: 84). Villages with limited land for subsistence production or rural families with few cash earning opportunities or chances to market their goods are increasingly vulnerable to poverty.

External aid in the form of projects, cash and commodity grants contributed about 40 per cent of the GDP in 1991–92. Aid also comes from informal assistance organizations such as NGOs (including churches), but there is little reliable data available on this. Overall, Samoa is still known as a nation receiving aid at one of the highest per capita rates in the world.

**Education**

The introduction of formal schooling in Samoa began with the evangelizing activities of the early missionaries from the London Missionary Society (LMS). In 1841 Thomas Heath, a LMS missionary, wrote: “I do not know a village in Samoa in which we have not a chapel and a school” (Garrett 1982:125). Without the ability to read and write the people would not be able to study the Bible of course. Besides, education was seen as a key to personal and community development. In the early denominational schools of the LMS, Methodists and Catholics, Samoans were trained in literacy and numeracy, health and hygiene, and, of course, biblical studies. Practical skills in house building, furniture making, domestic pursuits, handicrafts and childcare followed.

Today the education system in Samoa is largely state operated. There are 63 centres for pre-school education, 157 schools for primary education, 25 junior secondary schools, 18 senior secondary schools, 4 schools for special education for the disabled, blind or
intellectually handicapped, and 4 vocational schools in non-formal education (United Nations and Government of Samoa 1998:9–44). Tertiary education is available right up to university level. In accordance with the nation’s bilingual language policy, Samoan is the language of instruction in schools for years 1–6. Most schools are administered by the government, some by religious denominations, and a number are fee-paying private institutions. The government’s allocation to the education system accounts for 19 per cent of the current expenditure in the national budget. According to the Situation Analysis of Human Development Report (United Nations and Government of Samoa 1998:39) education and training absorbs almost 75 per cent of all aid received, mainly from bilateral donors.

The official literacy rate is 98 per cent. This is quite high but an in-depth UNESCO study that tested reading, writing and numerical skills gave lower rates (United Nations and Government of Samoa 1998:44). While the educational system as a whole is quite good, problematic areas are declining primary school enrolments and high drop-out rates of approximately 16 per cent, mainly after primary level (United Nations and Government of Samoa 1998:44).

**Government**

Samoans take great pride in being the first country in the South Pacific to gain independence in 1962. The constitution is based on the British model of democracy, with substantial adjustments made to accommodate traditional Samoan customs. The Head of State, for example, has a similar function to that of the British Queen as constitutional monarch. The national governing body, the Fono (Legislative Assembly), which is made up of 47 members, elects the Prime Minister. Voting by commoners was first introduced in 1992. Until then the traditional heads of Samoan family groups (matai) elected 45 members, and citizens of foreign ancestry chose two members. There is no formal local government. Local community affairs are handled traditionally by an autonomous village fono (Council of Chiefs), with a pulenu‘u (mayor or head chief) in each village representing the government. As is shown later, this system has led in recent years to many quarrels arising when village government was not in line with the constitution as interpreted by the central government.

Samoa is a member of the Commonwealth, UN, South Pacific Commission, and the South Pacific Forum. Because of its smallness and for cultural reasons, Samoa is one of the very few nations worldwide that does not maintain a military force.

**The Religious Landscape and Contemporary Developments**

**Data Analysis**

The information provided in Table 1: Religious Affiliation in Samoa 1961–2001 was compiled from statistics produced by the Government of Samoa (Department of Statistics 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001). The latest census of population and housing was taken on 5 November 2001. On that day every person in the country was counted and a wide range of social, economic and demographic information about each individual was collected. Recognizing the emergence of a variety of different new Christian groups and denominations, the Department of Statistics provided enumerators for the first time with codes for a detailed breakdown of 20 different Christian denominations, as well as a space for writing down the name of any other church (Enumerator's Code Booklet, Department of Statistics 2001:4).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congregationalists</td>
<td>61,218</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>74,814</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>74,481</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>68,651</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>61,444</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholics</td>
<td>24,716</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>39,961</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>33,997</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>33,548</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>34,754</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodists</td>
<td>18,194</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>23,013</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>25,292</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>27,190</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>26,460</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latter-day Saints</td>
<td>7,209</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>11,380</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>12,469</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>16,394</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>22,535</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assemblies of God</td>
<td>5,500</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>11,751</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventists</td>
<td>1,488</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2,556</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3,618</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>4,685</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>6,198</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship Centre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,356</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCJS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,793</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Gospel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,440</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah’s Witnesses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,362</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baha’i</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>902</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nazarenes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>744</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aoga Tusi Paia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>653</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice of Christ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>629</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Church</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>563</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptists</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>436</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apia Protestants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>392</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace Chapel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>380</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglicans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>335</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoan Evangelism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>226</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elim Church</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>132</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1,490</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1,834</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>5,726</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>9,460</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>1,102</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>213</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>114,427</strong></td>
<td><strong>146,627</strong></td>
<td><strong>156,349</strong></td>
<td><strong>161,178</strong></td>
<td><strong>176,848</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In previous censuses taken between 1961 and 1991, the Department of Statistics named only the five numerically biggest churches and published detailed figures for those churches only. All other smaller Christian denominations were grouped together under the category ‘Others.’ With the new approach taken by the Department of Statistics in 2001, there is now a clearer picture of the real situation regarding religious affiliation in Samoa and the changes that have taken place (and are still continuing). The category ‘Other’ still exists in the 2001 census but our field research carried out in June/July 2002 suggested that it includes a number of Christian denominations and groups, namely the New Apostolic Church, Aofa Tunoa Pentecostal Church, Faith Christian Fellowship, Free Church of Tonga, Independence Church of Tonga, Word of Life, New Hope Centre, and Samoa Independent SDA. Some of these have only a few families attached to them and so are not listed separately.

The 2001 census confirms the trend of growing diversification with regard to religious affiliation in Samoa, as previously revealed by Ernst (1994:160–178). Most striking is the rapid ongoing decline in the number of adherents of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS).

In 1961 there were 61,218 adherents of the CCCS, representing 53.5 per cent of the Samoan population. Forty years later the total number of adherents has increased by only 226 people, representing a historical low of 34.7 per cent. While the population of Samoa grew by a total of 62,421 or 54.5 per cent between 1961 and 2001, the CCCS grew only by 226 or 0.3 per cent in the same period. This means, beyond doubt, that a massive movement of people from the CCCS to other Christian denominations has taken place. If we look at growth rates during the past 10 years only, the picture is even more dramatic: the CCCS lost a total of 7,207 adherents in these 10 years and dropped from 42.6 per cent in 1991 to 34.7 per cent in 2001. There are no indications that this negative trend, a huge movement out of the CCCS, will come to an end in the foreseeable future. It seems more likely that the trend will continue, which means that in another 40 years from now the CCCS will have lost its dominant status in the country and will have become just a medium-sized church amongst others.

The other two historic mainline churches, the Roman Catholic Church and the Methodist Church in Samoa, have also experienced some loss over the past 40 years, but it is almost insignificant compared to the rapid decline of the CCCS. The Roman Catholic Church represented 19.7 per cent of the Samoan population in 2001, compared to 21.6 per cent in 1961, and the Methodist Church dropped from 15.9 per cent in 1961 to 15.0 per cent in 2001. Why the CCCS has experienced losses so much more dramatically than the other two large historic mainline churches can obviously not be explained by modernization processes only: that factor should have had an effect on other historic churches too, as will be pointed out later on.

Where there are ‘losers’ there are always ‘winners’ too. Over the past four decades the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day-Saints in particular has experienced a remarkable growth, from 6.3 per cent in 1961 to 12.7 per cent in 2001, with a tripled total number of adherents in that period. This increase is surpassed only by the rapid growth of the Assemblies of God, which doubled its membership in the past 10 years alone and now represents 6.6 per cent of the population. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has grown steadily, increasing from 1.3 per cent in 1961 to 3.5 per cent in 2001. For all the other smaller denominations comparisons are difficult because of a lack of statistical data from previous years. Most remarkable, nevertheless, is the emergence and growth of a variety of newer Christian
denominations of a pentecostal or neo-pentecostal type. A good example is the ‘Worship Christian Centre’ that started less than 10 years ago and has already attracted 2,356 adherents, who represented 1.3 per cent of the population in 2001.

Though these facts are interesting and to some extent speak for themselves, we will try to identify the underlying reasons and factors that have caused and are causing the ongoing diversification in the religious landscape of Samoa as described and summarized in the statistics above. A closer look at the different denominations and religious groups in Samoa with regard to their history, development, struggles and successes will open the way for understanding the final analytical chapter of this book.

**RELIGION IN SAMOA: CHURCHES**

**Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS)**

It would be hard to find any other nation in the world where society and the churches are so closely interwoven, and where the historic mainline churches have had and still have such a great impact on nearly every aspect of life, as Samoa. The motto *Fā'āvae i le Atua* (founded in God), which appears on Samoa’s national emblem, reflects and expresses the country’s close association with Christianity.

The Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS) started in Samoa in 1830 when John Williams of the London Missionary Society arrived on the famous ship *Messenger of Peace* at Sapapali’i on the island of Savai’i. With him were a group of teachers from Tahiti and a Samoan chief who was already Christian. John Williams knew that he and his group were not the very first missionaries: Wesleyan missionaries in Tonga, Tahitians on passing ships, and beachcombers had already taught some of the Samoans about the new religion (Garrett 1982:121). Williams was received by a prominent high chief, Malietoa Vai’inupo, whom he baptized and renamed Malietoa Tavita. Malietoa declared the *Lotu Tahiti* (Church from Tahiti), as the LMS was known in Samoa, to be the new religion for Samoa. Williams left his teachers under the protection of Malietoa and returned several times in the following years, bringing more personnel and making possible the first systematic mission work to be done in Samoa. In 1835 Peter Turner, a Methodist missionary, was sent to Samoa at the invitation of Malietoa’s rivals. In a short time he too converted many Samoans, this time for the Wesleyan Methodist Church. After an agreement signed in London by the LMS and the Methodist Church, however, Turner was withdrawn from Samoa in 1839. The two mission boards agreed to reserve Samoa as a mission field for the LMS and, in return, Fiji and Tonga would be allocated to the Methodists. Until 1845 when the first Catholic priests arrived, the Samoan mission field belonged solely to the LMS. The Methodists did not return until 1857, and with the field open only to the LMS in the crucial early years the LMS could take root early and become the dominant church. In 1844 Malua Theological College was established by the LMS (preceded in the Pacific only by Takamo Theological College in the Cook Islands). It became one of the best-known and most prestigious institutions for theological education in the whole Pacific Islands region.

While the organization of the LMS church in its founding years was under the firm control of European missionaries, it quickly began to develop towards its present status of a basically self-governing and financially independent church. According to Forman
the Samoan branch of the LMS became the first mission church in the world in which foreign missionaries were entirely supported by funds raised locally. The church remained under the authority of foreign missionaries for many years, but in 1942 a disagreement of influential elders with control by foreigners led to the first breakaway when the Congregational Christian Church of Jesus was established, claiming to be “the first Samoan church established by Samoans” (Sanerivi 2002, interview by author).

The final stage of the church’s transition from an LMS mission to a locally independent church took place in May 1961, when the mission authorities came to the conclusion “that the ministers of the churches in Samoa were able to lead, guide and control their own affairs” (Armosa 1991:23). The church assembly voted to change the name of the organization to Congregational Christian Church in Samoa.

One of the church’s major problems in the following years was that it had to look after the people of both (Western) Samoa, an independent state since 1962, and of American Samoa, an unincorporated territory of the United States of America. Despite a common pre-colonial history, a common language and a common tradition and value system, the church members in the two countries lived in quite different socio-political-economic environments. In the early 1960s feelings grew among church members in American Samoa that they could have their own separate administration without breaking the unity of the church. In an excellent thesis Eleasaro Fa’ataa (1988) provides a detailed analysis of the historical, political and social factors that led to the final schism of the Congregational Church of Samoa in 1980, when the church District of American Samoa decided to become an independent national church. One major factor in this is summarized by Forman: “the American Samoans were dissatisfied with the way their increasing contributions, derived from their members’ connections with the USA, were being used by the central offices and institutions of the church, which were all in Western Samoa” (Forman 1992:27). It can be said that the split caused great bitterness on both sides and it took many years to heal the wounds and to restore normal relations. A sense of rivalry resulted and can still be felt today.

The highest decision-making body of the CCCS is the General Assembly, which is held annually and receives reports from the six main permanent committees, namely the Elders Committee, General Purposes Committee, Education Committee, Land Development Committee, Missionary Committee and Finance Committee. Under the General Assembly there are currently seven Districts in Samoa and nine Districts overseas.

According to General Secretary Paulo Koria, anything that a District would like to be discussed at the national level may be brought to the General Assembly (2002, interview by author). The 17 Districts have their own meetings, as do the Sub-Districts and the local congregations, so that, ideally, any motion or concern can be brought up from the grassroots level to the highest decision making level. In 1992 there were approximately 200 parishes and 200 ministers of the CCCS in Samoa itself. Congregations of various sizes are also to be found in New Zealand, Australia, Hawaii, mainland USA and some Pacific Islands. Lay preachers who have completed formal theological education or private studies and passed an examination usually assist the ordained ministers. Also important at all levels of church affairs are the lay deacons.

The General Assembly in its annual meetings usually discusses issues in a corporate business manner. Matters discussed include the improvement of the general services of the church and its infrastructure, the state of its schools, the operations of its central office, its institutions (Malua Theological College and others, which consume ever larger amounts of
the annual budget), missionary work, and the ongoing decline in membership (Koria 2002, interview by author). Over the years a good number of CCCS ministers have written theses at Malua Theological College or at the regional Pacific Theological College in which they sometimes quite openly criticize certain aspects of the life and running of the CCCS. Some examples out of many are the following quotations taken from a BD thesis written at the Pacific Theological College in 1982:

“In this critical situation in the life of the people, one easily sees the failure of the ministry and the mission of the church.”

“...the ministry is rather more institutionalized and complacent.”

“...the church somehow has become an extra burden in demanding too much from the people without helping them to find security...”

“...the ministry is evidently, for instance, falling behind the speed and tempo of changes today.”

“The ministry of the church in Samoa is already appearing old fashioned, and out-of-touch with the majority of the population.”

“The church has become resistant to change.”

“The church is not aware of everyday problems of our people.”

“Another major problem in the church is the influence of favoritism.”

“...the church always fails to acknowledge other talented people in the local villages.”

“The time has come for the church to revise its ministry and mission in ways and methods applicable and relevant to the changes of the modern life.” (Epati 1982: 96–98).

When confronted with this kind of frequently expressed critical view, from inside or outside the church, some church leaders have tended to deny any such problems, while others, especially younger ministers, are more self-critical or analytical. One important reason for the kind of problems faced by the CCCS for many years (if not from the very beginning) has been its decentralized structure: each local congregation is a complete unit on its own and it is entirely up to the minister and the deacons, without much interference from anyone else, to determine what they do and the kind of programmes they provide to cater for the needs of the parishioners (Koria 2002, interview by author).

The relationship between each village congregation and its minister in Samoa (and also in some other Samoa-influenced Protestant churches) is unique. Ministers are not selected and appointed to a parish by the church headquarters. The parishioners themselves select their minister from the pool of graduates of Malua Theological College or from among ordained ministers within or outside Samoa who are not currently serving a congregation. The relationship between the fa'afe'i (minister) and the congregation is seen as a lifelong ‘kinship relationship’, called feagaiga. Within this system the minister’s income depends on the village economy and the size of the congregation. Generally, the income of a church minister of the CCCS (or the Methodist Church) is in the higher range of salaries paid in Samoa. As former General Secretary Nove Vailaua acknowledged in an interview with the author in 1992: “At the moment some fa’afei live in luxurious houses, own more than one flashy car of expensive make, and a large piece of land with, maybe, an already furnished house rented out, and their children have degrees of a high level; and all this, mostly, is at the expense of the congregation.”

Each congregation collects the money for the fa’afei every fortnight or once a month. Vailaua (1992, interview by author) described this as being “done in the competitive manner of the chiefs, under whose name the family contribution is publicly announced: the Alofa mo le fa'afei, ‘love for the pastor.’”
The national church derives about 90 per cent of its income from the congregations (Koria 2002, interview by author). Most of it is used for the running of Malua Theological College and the six schools of the CCCS, for paying the salaries for the approximately 300 employees such as teachers and administrative workers, and for the maintenance of church properties. Major fundraising campaigns for mission work take place each September in an annual event called ‘Gospel Sunday.’ In 2001 one million Tala were raised by this means (Koria 2002, interview by author). The main fundraising campaign for the overall work of the church takes place on a Sunday in November, and in 2001 about 5.7 million Tala were raised on this day (compared to approximately 2.5 million Tala 10 years ago). Only for a few special projects and programmes does the CCCS receive funds from the World Council of Churches, the Council for World Mission or the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, in all of which the CCCS has membership.

It must be said that despite a growing awareness amongst the leadership of the church, especially a recognition of the drastic decline in members, not many changes have taken place within the last 10 years and since the first critical case study on Samoa was published by the Pacific Conference of Churches (Ernst 1994). The present financial situation looks better because one of the main investment projects, a huge office building in Apia, has been paid off and the CCCS draws some rental income from it. But within the ranks of the General Assembly, which is very much dominated by males over 45, there is little sign of critical self-reflection or a sense that major changes are needed. The majority of delegates seem still to be in favour of maintaining the traditions of the church, which are closely linked with pre-Christian cultural patterns (as shown in a well written BD thesis by Leanavaotaua Sekuini Sevaetaesi (Sevaetaesi 1978). In a sense the CCCS is caught in a dilemma: should it silently accept the ongoing decline in the years to come by preserving the traditions of the church, or should it try to introduce some changes in crucial areas such as organizational structure, the participation of youth and women in decision-making processes, financial management, the role of the clergy, and the style of worship — to name the most important ones. Of course there is no guarantee that such changes would halt the decline in membership.

**Roman Catholic Church (RCC)**

The Roman Catholic Church was the third of the historic mainline churches to appear in Samoa. Sent from Uvea (Wallis), a Marist missionary group of two Samoans with their wives, a Brother from France who was a carpenter and mason, and two priests one of whom was the leader Father Gilbert Roudaire, arrived at the village of Falealupo on the island of Savai‘i on 12 August 1845 (Garrett 1982:129–30). As was normal then, they did not receive a warm welcome from the LMS and the Methodists. According to Garrett, who has written the most detailed and well researched account of Christian origins in Oceania, the Savai‘i chiefs referred Roudaire to the island of Upolu and the village of Mulini‘u near Apia, where he was received by the Protestant high chief Mata‘afa Fagamanu (Garrett 1982:130). After Mata‘afa converted to Catholicism and more priests arrived, the new church slowly took root. But animosity persisted between the Catholics and the established Protestant churches, and conflict did not end until the worldwide explosion of ecumenism and the far-reaching changes introduced by Pope John XXIII after the Second Vatican Council in 1962. During this period of change “the place of the laity and the official understanding of religious
liberty were altered with astonishing speed. The new and simplified Roman Mass was translated into Pacific vernaculars and celebrated with locally devised ceremony and music" (Garrett 1982:306).

These changes went hand in hand with a restructuring of the administration of the Roman Catholic Church in Oceania. Pio Taofinu'u, a senior indigenous Samoan priest, became Bishop of Apia in 1968 and was made a Cardinal by Pope Paul VI in 1973. He was the first Pacific Islander to be given this honour, and in 1982 he became the first Archbishop of the new Archdiocese of Samoa-Apia. Because of illness Cardinal Taofinu'u semi-retired in 2002 and was replaced as archbishop by Father Alapati Mataeliga (Pacific Islands Business 2002:8).

With 19.7 per cent of the Samoan population, the Roman Catholic Church is well established as the second biggest church in Samoa today. In recent years it has opened itself up to more participation of its members in church activities and decision-making. Enculturation of the Catholic faith is quite visible in all its church buildings, which display remarkable works by local artists, in the use of vernacular liturgies, and in the incorporating of indigenous motifs into the celebrating of the mass. Today almost all priests in Samoa are locals. The lifestyle of a Catholic priest differs markedly from that of a Congregational or Methodist minister: he receives a fixed official allowance of 200 Tala monthly, compared to 2,000–5,000 Tala for ministers of the Methodist and Congregational Churches (the latter depending on the size of the congregation). Catholic priests usually do not drive fancy cars and, of course, do not have to look after a family.

At village level finances are handled by an elected committee of six or eight lay people. Regular fully audited accounts of all archdiocesan accounts are presented to the Synod and accessible to ordinary church members (Adams 2002, interview by author).

In 2002 there were 42 religious and diocesan priests, 90 Marist Sisters and 20 Marist Brothers, as well as a total of 602 seminarians at Moamoa Theological College, the Don Bosco Technical Centre at Alafua and the Salesian Centre for early formation, in the six districts of the Archdiocese (http://www.bosconet.aust.com/samoa/hmt). There is also a large number of catechists, married laymen who lead many of the congregations.

Financially, the Catholic Church is in a much better position today than it was 10 years ago. In 1991 only 25 per cent of the annual budget was raised locally. In 2001 this had increased to about 35 per cent, basically by the development of church-owned land and income from an endowment fund set up by proceeds from the sale of prime land in Malo'oule (Adams 2002, interview by author). Dependence on overseas partners, mostly in Germany, is still high, but because of its quite different financial and organizational structure the Catholic Church is much less demanding of its members. While a family in the CCCS or the Methodist Church might spend up to 15–20 per cent of its annual available income on their church, the contribution of a Catholic family of similar size and status will be on average much lower, approximately 5 per cent.

The Catholic Church is clearly one of the main driving forces for ecumenical cooperation in Samoa. In general, it must be said that this church is much more reflective and responsive to all different kinds of social problems, in words and actions, than its mainline Protestant counterparts.
Methodist Church in Samoa

When Peter Turner, the first official Wesleyan missionary to Samoa, arrived in 1835, 40 villages on the island of Savai'i and 25 villages on the island of Upolu already had Wesleyan congregations (Allardice 1984:2). Wesleyan mission work had started in 1828 when a Samoan by the name of Siauvaia, after visiting relatives in Tonga, became a Wesleyan Christian and on his return to Savai'i introduced his people to the new religion. Because of this background, Methodism in Samoa was known for many years as Lotu Toga. After the LMS and the Wesleyan Mission Board in London, without listening to their missionaries and members in Samoa, agreed to leave Samoa as a mission field for the LMS and Fiji as a mission field for the Wesleyans, Turner left Samoa in 1839 and a difficult period began for the relatively new denomination. The church was already quite well established with about 3,000 members, 80 chapels and 487 teachers, and survived 18 years on its own because of its very loyal members and especially the moral and practical support of Tonga's King Taufa'ahau, who visited Samoa in 1847 and sent teachers from Tonga (Allardice 1984:3).

The reopening of the official Wesleyan mission took place in 1855 after the responsibility for missionary work in the Pacific was handed over by the Methodist Church in London to the Australasian Methodist Church. With fresh energy and this new assistance the church flourished in the following years. A milestone in Methodist history in Samoa was the establishment in 1868 of Piula Theological College, where, until today, hundreds of church ministers have been trained.

The independence of the Samoan Methodist Church came in 1963, with its recognition as an autonomous Methodist Conference within the worldwide Methodist Church family. There is still a special relationship with the church in Australia, even after the Australian Methodists, together with Presbyterians and Congregationalists, formed the Uniting Church in Australia in 1977.

The Samoan Methodist Conference is subdivided into 12 synods, including one in American Samoa, two in Australia (Sydney and Queensland), two in New Zealand (New Zealand North and New Zealand South), and one in the USA. In 2002 there were 99 Methodist church buildings in Samoa, 66 on Upolu and 33 on Savai'i. Outside Samoa there are 15 churches in American Samoa, one in Queensland, one in Sydney, nine in New Zealand-North, five in New Zealand-South and three in the USA, bringing the total to 134 churches belonging to the Samoan Methodist Conference (Tiuli 2002:4). According to their own statistics there were 25,701 Methodists in Samoa in 2001, a figure that differs only slightly from the figures provided by the official census of 2001.

As well as Piula Theological College the Methodist Church in Samoa maintains one primary school and three secondary schools. For the different ministries in Samoa and overseas there are about 250 ordained ministers, supported and complemented by 1,041 lay preachers. An important role in the overall running of the churches and its decision-making is played by the 4,998 taitai (Elders or Leaders). In contrast to the CCCS the ministers of the Methodist Church in Samoa are appointed by the Appointments Committee of the annual church conference, not by the parishes. The Appointments Committee thus plays a crucial role in internal church politics. “If the Appointments Committee meets, we tremble”, I was told by a Methodist minister who prefers to remain anonymous.

Financially, the Methodist Church is quite independent and self-supporting. To support the general ministry of the church there is a main annual offering each year, the Taulaga o
Samoa. In 1997 the church collected about three million Tala by this means, but in 2001 the total amount had more than doubled to seven million Tala (Tiuli 2002). Besides the annual offering there are designated Sundays for special offerings to support mission overseas, youth work, and contributions to ecumenical organizations such as the Pacific Conference of Churches and the Bible Society. Through its links with the Uniting Church of Australia and the worldwide Methodist Church family, the Samoan Methodist Church receives grants and donations from overseas, most of them earmarked for special projects or programmes. At parish level the money is collected fortnightly or monthly to support the minister. Depending on the size of the congregation there can be huge differences, between 6,000 and 60,000 Tala, in the annual payments to a minister.

The centralized structure of the Samoan Methodist Conference, with both local and overseas churches, creates potential problems because of the huge difference in financial power between the churches in Samoa and the much richer churches in American Samoa, New Zealand, Australia and the United States, with the main decision-making power still in the hands of local Samoans. The financial burden of being under so many obligations to contribute is increasingly questioned by the church members, especially if they compare their contributions with those of their Catholic, Pentecostal or Mormon neighbours. In a thesis written in 1999 the author, who is a now a senior minister of the Samoan Methodist Church, sees a link between the decline in membership and the financial demands of the church, in particular the church’s imposition of a 10 Tala levy on all members to meet the purchase cost of a multi-million dollar building that was seen as unnecessary by members as well as by some of the ministers (Faimata Aliimalemanu 1999:77).

Further potential for crisis can be seen in the huge variations in the payment and status of ministers. Being a minister of a large congregation brings more wealth and status than being a minister of a small congregation, a lecturer at Piula, the head of a school or the director of a development project. Another problematic area is the number of income generating projects (such as the bookshop, the printing press, and a farming project) that do not generate any income because they are not professionally managed. As long as the church continues to appoint ordained ministers to management positions — men who have not been trained in finances, administration or management — this problem will not be resolved. On the other hand, the Methodist Church acknowledges a responsibility for its graduates and ordinands, and once a young man enters Piula he has a lifelong job guarantee with the prospect of ending up in a large congregation, if everything goes well. If there is no position vacant a minister has to wait patiently in an administrative position or as a teacher in one of the schools. Furthermore, when financial records are not kept properly the problem of lack of qualifications in management is obvious. Aliimalemanu (1999:98) quotes the auditor of the Methodist Church who, at the end of his 17 years service in the position, sternly warned that it was essential to train book-keepers and to groom them specifically for the position of treasurer. Deficiencies in the Christian Education of children and members are frequently addressed by critical minds within the church. As I observed several times, the way of worship is still largely minister-centred and does not allow much participation by members, including the women and young people who form almost two-thirds of the membership. Other critics identify the traditional leadership style of ministers as being not team-oriented and not involving much personal visitation to members’ families (Aliimalemanu 1999:100). It is not so much a lack of knowledge or analysis that prevents
the leadership of the church from addressing its many problems, but an obvious unwillingness to risk destroying the identity and traditions of Samoan Methodism by challenging what has always been done.

**Anglican Church**

In the last census of population and housing 335 people were recorded as members of the Anglican Church in Samoa. There is one well-kept church compound in Apia, consisting of a church building, the priest’s house, and a tennis court. Besides the congregation in Apia there is a small congregation on Savai‘i. The whole church is looked after by the only ordained priest of the Anglican Church in Samoa, Fr Richard Schwalger, who visits the flock on Savai‘i every six or eight weeks (Schwalger 2002, interview by author).

There is little documentation available on when exactly the Anglican Church was established in Samoa, but according to Fr Peter Bentley it started as a chaplaincy about 1958 (1992, interview by author). Organizationally, the church belongs to the Diocese of Polynesia with its headquarters in Suva, Fiji Islands, and, as such, is a part of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. The majority of members are of a mixed ethnic background. About 10 families are European. According to Fr Schwalger (2002, interview by author) the issues most discussed in Annual General Meetings are financial.

The Anglican Church in Samoa is self-supporting, with an income mainly from tithes, offerings and fundraising. The Diocese of Polynesia pays the priest but contributions from the All Saints Church in Apia to the diocesan headquarters in Suva exceed the amount required for his salary. The stipend is much lower than the average income of a Samoan Methodist or Congregational minister, who is paid by the members of his congregation and includes allowances for housing, transport, and education.

In terms of numbers the Anglican Church is neither growing nor shrinking but remains quite stable. A major development over the past 10 years is seen in the increase in charismatic, ‘born-again’ Christians, who currently make up approximately 50 per cent of the membership. While the traditional Anglicans attend the morning services, there are also services held at 5:00 p.m. for the charismatic members. According to Fr. Schwalger, the Bishop of Polynesia has licensed a layperson to cater for the needs of the charismatic members. This work includes the leading of services as well as the distribution of the sacraments (2002, interview by author). The person so appointed is Richard Meredith, a well known local businessman, who with his wife, also runs the newly established Graceland Broadcasting Network (GBN), which is a branch of Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) in the USA. Mr. Meredith sees the Anglican Church very much as a mission field. He told the author in an interview: “…I believe that the last and final move of the Spirit upon the earth will be to revive the mainline church. I see that coming. I see it in the Spirit and I believe that I am just aligning myself with where the wind is coming from. Like Nicodemus I have just decided to put myself there by the leading of the Spirit and obey God” (Meredith 2002, interview by author). The charismatic Anglicans in Samoa see themselves more as ‘born-again’ Christians than as members of a distinguished and traditional denomination. It is obvious that the charismatic members have brought a certain element of revival and renewal to the Anglican Church in Samoa. The question is, what will remain distinctively Anglican if the trend continues and the ‘born-again’ Christians form the majority of members in the foreseeable future?
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS)

LDS historian Britsch mentions 1863 as the year when the first Mormon missionaries from Hawaii arrived at the small island of Aunu’u in Samoa (Britsch 1986:349). However, their work was not approved by the authorities in Salt Lake City, therefore the official date for the start of the LDS in Samoa is 1888, when another missionary couple, Joseph and Florence Dean, arrived at Aunu’u. Soon afterwards the mission was moved to Fagali’i near Apia, and Britsch records that there were 13 missionaries and 80 baptized members in 1890 (Britsch 1986:366). During the following decades the LDS work was concentrated on mission work, the development of schools, plantations and church buildings. Samoan custom and resistance from the already established Congregational, Methodist and Roman Catholic churches prevented a fast growth in the early years.

The position of respect gained by the church during these years was important.

Samoan customary law, fa’a Samoa, allowed chiefs’ councils, fono, to determine which religions should be practised within each village. In those villages where a decision was made not to allow the Latter-day Saints, the penalty for becoming a Mormon was the destruction of one’s property (Britsch 1986:368).

In August 1902 the headquarters was again moved to Pesega near Apia, where it is still today. In 1903 the first translation of the Book of Mormon into Samoan was accomplished and in 1918 the first Samoan LDS hymnbook was completed. Despite many difficulties the LDS Church experienced a steady growth and, according to Garrett (1997:253), its membership in Samoa (including American Samoa) had risen to 7,808 by 1951. Ten years later 7,206 members of the LDS are recorded in the official census for (Western) Samoa alone. The established mainline churches viewed the growing number of LDS missionaries (148 in 1956) with alarm. Supported by New Zealand’s High Commissioner and the two highest titleholders, Tamasese and Malietoa, the mainline churches successfully instituted a ratio of one missionary to 200 church members, in order to preserve “social harmony” (Garrett 1997:252–253). But the LDS Church cleverly bypassed the restriction by bringing in teachers, building personnel and short-term workers, categories that were excluded from the official quota.

Alongside official mission activities the most effective tool for making converts must be seen in LDS educational activities. In 1984 1,584 children attended LDS elementary schools and 881 students were enrolled in the two LDS High Schools (Britsch 1986:416). The Samoan Mission consists of Samoa and American Samoa and is overseen by the Pacific Area Presidency in Sydney, Australia, which includes all other Pacific Islands as well as Australia and New Zealand. With its worldwide headquarters in Salt Lake City, USA, the LDS structure is very centralized (in some ways comparable with the centralized structure of the Roman Catholic Church).

According to the Regional Manager for Temporal Affairs of the LDS in Samoa, there were 20 stakes in 2002. A stake is comparable to a church district in other denominations and consists of a number of wards (congregations). In 2002 there were 147 wards in Samoa, with 72 church buildings (Va’aaulu 2002, interview by author). Each ward is overseen by a High Priest, called Bishop, and each stake has its own president. One big difference from most other denominations is that these people are not paid for their functions as such. Salaries are paid only to permanent employees and administrative staff (Tenney 1992,
interview by author). While LDS officials usually emphasize the fact that priesthood is unpaid, it is usually not mentioned that a high number of High Priests or Presidents are paid very well as employees in the church or as teachers in the schools.

The steady growth of the LDS Church resulted in 1983 in the building of a temple, an impressive and costly structure in Pesega. Financially, the LDS Church is clearly not self-supporting. Members are encouraged to practice tithing by contributing 10 per cent of their overall income. Beyond that there is the fast offering, in which members are encouraged to fast on every first Sunday and pay the equivalent of the cost of two meals to the church. Although they do not provide details to the general public or curious researchers, LDS officials in Samoa admit that the money raised locally is far from being sufficient to cover all the expenses required for the running of the church. The income raised through tithing and the fast offering goes to special accounts, which are ultimately controlled by the presidency in Salt Lake City. The headquarters in the USA, through its Area Presidency, provides everything that is needed. In comparison to the members of other denominations, especially Protestants, LDS members in Samoa benefit from that centralized structure because the church is much less demanding of their income. Other benefits are seen in the businesslike and obviously effective management of church affairs and in the well-staffed and equipped offices. It could be said that while the traditional Protestant churches are managed like a local family business, the LDS Church is operated like a transnational corporation. Even after being in Samoa for more than 100 years, the LDS Church undeniably still looks like a foreign mission church: this is apparent in the exclusive use of English in the LDS schools, the manner of dress, and the general way of life promoted in LDS publications and educational programmes.

Recent developments in this context are the broadcasting of services via satellite and the technology to hold conferences via satellite. With all the past and ongoing infrastructure development, a payroll of approximately 400 employees, and funding made available for emergencies, scholarships and other humanitarian aid, the LDS Church in Samoa contributes significantly to the economy of the country.

The focus on mission work is clearly visible, with an impressive number of about 70 missionaries working in Samoa. Just recently 22 young Samoans were sent as missionaries to the Philippines (Va'afulu 2002, interview by author) — a number unmatched by any other denomination. The relationship of the LDS with other churches is definitely more relaxed than it was 50 years ago. Since it is the fourth biggest religious body in Samoa (with 12.7 per cent of the population), and likely to become the biggest in another 50 years if the current trend continues, the LDS Church cannot be ignored by the state or any other organization. According to the Regional Manager for Temporal Affairs, the LDS Church at one point applied for membership of the National Council of Churches but eventually did not join because it was not ready to accept certain clauses in the NCC constitution. Informally, and in villages where it is accepted, the LDS Church has joined forces with the historic mainline churches to keep out newcomers (as described in the case study of Falealupo at the end of this report).
Assemblies of God (AOG)

The commencement of an organized mission in Samoa can be traced back to 1926 when the first AOG missionary arrived in Pago Pago, American Samoa. However, it was not until 1952 that AOG mission work spread to Samoa, because, up to that time, US missionaries were not allowed to reside in then Western Samoa. It took another 15 years, until 1967, for the present structure to be established: two separate districts (Samoa and American Samoa) under a combined Council and a single General Superintendent based in Pago Pago.

Since the 1970s the AOG has recorded the highest growth rate of all churches in Samoa. It had 64 churches in 2002 (Halek 2002, interview by author). For the training of its pastors the AOG maintains two Bible Schools in Samoa, one in Upolu and another one in Savai‘i. Courses are for three years, with a BA degree offered. Financially, the AOG Church in Samoa is to a high degree self-supporting but funds, materials and other kinds of support are often given by the worldwide AOG. “If I need to build a church I will go and look for finance. Then I travel to America, New Zealand or Australia to seek help” (Halek 2002, interview by author). Members in Samoa contribute through tithing and offerings, and 10 per cent of this income is set aside for District activities. As in the Congregational and Methodist churches, the income of a pastor depends on the size of his congregation. More than 1000 Samoan AOG members are resident outside the country and are brought together in a bi-annual Samoa World Council conference. In recent years the AOG has permitted women to be trained in the Bible Schools and to be ordained. The AOG is one of the driving forces in evangelistic work in Samoa, networking with other charismatic and Pentecostal churches and like minded para-church organizations. It does not take part in the activities and programmes of the ecumenical National Council of Churches, however, because in the view of the General Superintendent “…they want to bring everyone down to one church, one world church. They want the Catholics as leaders” (Halek 2002 interview by author).

Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA)

The arrival of the schooner Pitcairn in American Samoa in 1891 marked the beginning of the SDA Church in Samoa. According to the President of the SDA in Samoa the first contact with the Samoans lasted just one week, during which the American missionaries from the Pitcairn distributed literature and then moved on to other islands (Rimone 1992, interview by author).

It took 15 years before the first Samoan became an Adventist, in 1906. Other already established churches, especially the LMS, were not very welcoming, but accepted the SDA plan to establish medical services in the islands. At the end of 1914, when New Zealand replaced Germany as the colonial power, there were only 13 SDA members recorded. By 1950 membership had reached 250 (Hay 1991:151). A faster growth took place after World War II and especially during the past 30 years, with 6,198 SDA members recorded in 2001.

The SDA headquarters for Samoa and American Samoa is located at Lolaovae, near the capital Apia. The total number of churches and worship places was 53 in 1992, with 34 in Upolu and 19 in Savai‘i. Financially, the SDA Church in Samoa is not self-supporting. Members contribute tithes and offerings as the two main sources of income from which the