What is the effect of migration and being in diaspora on theology? The practice worldwide has often been to consider this question from a more sociological perspective. Here this issue is addressed from the perspective of a generational criticism. How does being in the liminal state of a second generation inform an understanding of Christology?

For the past several years I have been exploring the theme of ‘Following the Hyphenated Jesus-Christ’. That rather intriguing title has to do with how the person and work of Christ is understood in a situation of migration and the construction of hybrid identities in a new land. It represents a departure away from the usual, often troublesome settlement issues of establishing congregations, recognising ministers, sharing buildings, and negotiating the lines of relationship between sending and receiving denominations in different countries. This focus is explicitly theological and is at a critical remove from the more common sociological study of diasporic matters. In this instance those new beings joined together by so seemingly an innocent small dash include Korean-Australians, Tongan-Australians, Vietnamese- or Sinhalese-Australians – and in the not so distant past New Zealand-born Samoans. In this ideological setting the bearers of this hyphen are self-consciously Christian.

The origins of this interest lay in a subject I taught in the final year of the ecumenical Faculty of Theology in the University of Otago. In a rather small class there were three New Zealand-born Samoans. Even in a relatively intimate environment the usual dynamics of silence were at work. In the midst of the course one of these three explained that their silence was cultural: it should not be confused with a lack of interest. Teaching on Christ and context I sensed that the subject matter – the theme of the course itself – was raising an acute pedagogical issue. The situation in
front of me represented by these students was not being addressed. They were being constrained to live off the spiritual capital of others whose contexts were not their own. They were being exposed to a range of contemporary theologies from Latin America to Asia, from Europe to Africa. How would this silent front row map their cultural space and allow it to be addressed by the Christ event? How might the intersection between their quests of a cultural and Christian identity be negotiated?

Suspecting that these students might be on the edge of some previously unexplored terrain, we agreed to meet once a week in my study over and above the usual class time. On reflection our meetings observed a certain logical structure. The first task was to describe their experience of the human condition. Rather than expressing the salvific work of Christ in terms of generic human needs, the intention was much more specific. It was assumed that their stories, their personal narratives of presence, would reveal very particular lines of fracture, the desire for healing, reconciliation, meaning, wholeness, and integration. The next step was to identify the various biblical images, titles, and metaphors employed in this cultural discourse of Christ. The question was put as to how helpful were these received understandings. If they were not, then what? This silent front row was asked to go away and identify Jesus ‘stories’, narratives, and events that somehow resonated with their experience. They were then asked to imagine cultural images or practices that likewise furnished a vehicle for their emerging understandings of who Christ might be for them in the midst of this dislocation. Each stage took several weeks and the various suggestions were played with in a common discussion. At the completion of the course these three presented what they had discovered to a room packed with their peers and members of the wider cultural and theological communities. It was the first public description of a second generation migrant Pacific theology.

The most articulate front rower was Risatisone Ete. His subsequent dissertation, entitled ‘A Bridge in My Father’s House’, exemplifies this emerging Christology (Ete, 1996). At the time of its submission Ete’s work broke new ground, for there were not as yet any published accounts of what it was like to grow up second generation ‘PI’ (Pacific Islander). It quickly became clear that from a theological point of view he is a pioneer. These Christological adventures of his plumb the depths of his own identity and the identity of those like him. The overarching task involves exploring how being ‘neither migrant majority nor the indigenous people of the land’ informs identity and shapes an emergent theology.

The method Ete devised and the issues this dissertation raised have
played a pivotal role in the further development of a diasporic and cross-cultural theology on both sides of the Tasman. The title situated Ete’s filial bridge inside a broader raft of experience and an agenda that surfaced in a conference organised around the theme of ‘Drifting Seeds’ held in Sydney in May 2000. This particular image was taken from a familiar metaphor employed by the Tahitian weaver of Christian identity, Celine Hoiore, at an earlier conference that marked the fiftieth anniversary and close of the Otago Faculty. The reference point was to the traditional custom of burying the placenta or the umbilical cord at a significant site for the family on the home island. In terms of the contemporary concern for identity the implication is clear: there is a part of the person whose identity is then forever earthed in the site of one’s birth. The language of being a ‘drifting seed’, a *hoto painu*, attends the individual’s leaving the home island for another, or indeed, the ‘liquid continent’ (Oceania) altogether.

Strictly speaking, Ete is a product of diaspora, a seed adrift, on account of the decisions of others to migrate. His cultural memory is not of leaving one place for another: there is no arrested childhood to which some one-point-fivers (born in one country, mainly raised and educated in another) testify. The theological *habitus* which he and his fellow front rowers occupy as a result lies at the critical engagement of a fractured cultural experience and an emerging form of generational criticism. This second generational cohort is deeply conscious of difference and an alternative formational life-script it must negotiate. It embodies in the very act of coming to birth the dilemma concerning the relationship between cultural and Christian identity in a particularly pressing manner. Can the close interweaving of faith and the parental island culture migrate easily to a more complex society? Or does it need to be reconfigured – and, if so, what role might select theological doctrines play?

**THE POETICS OF TESTIMONY**

Living in diaspora is a complex business. The Australian writer David Tacey reckons that even at the best of times migration is a trauma (Tacey, 1995: 36). There is loss of place, status, markers of identity and a basic rupture in personal narrative. There is an inward need to invent a new sense of identity and construct a new sociality. The language is more inclined to be that of ‘Where is home?’ and ‘Who are we?’

For those facing first-hand this theological task the experience of the Korean born and bred Jung Young Lee has served as a template. On his arrival in the United States Lee found himself no longer inside a culture whose language and way of organising itself were understood as a matter
of course. Being a newcomer to this society, Lee experienced the dichotomy of living inside its highly intentional language of freedom and equality and the practical reality of marginality and not fitting in. In due course Lee became a hyphenated being, a Korean-American, rather than a sojourner. For the sake of the multicultural theology that emerged out of his subsequent quest for identity Lee drew upon this autobiographical context. That he should then think in terms of Jesus-Christ is a good example of how his personal experience has filtered his theology. Jesus-Christ is the divine emigrant. The prologue to John's gospel and the Philippians' hymn in which Christ humbles himself, taking on human form and becoming like a slave, are interpreted in the light of leaving behind a heavenly existence for the sake of life on the earthly, human margins of God. Once the Incarnation has, in effect, run its course, the hyphen binds the risen and ascended Christ's new identity to the crucifixion. The analogy between Jesus-Christ and the Korean-American, of course, must necessarily break down, but its symbolism and the grammar of the hyphen resonate very strongly with this body of personal experience (Lee, 1995: 7-27).

For those for whom this turn to the subjective might be a worry, Lee makes an important distinction between autobiography and the autobiographical. There is no desire in Lee’s method to collapse theology into little more than the telling of one’s own story. For theology, then, to be too closely bound to a naive understanding of autobiography runs the risk of making the subject of theology not God, but one’s self. Faced with this potential criticism Lee argues that the story of my life is a ‘basis for theology’ and ‘the primary context for doing my theology’. To make the claim that theology is autobiographical is to place one’s life alongside the purposes of God in ‘my faith journey in the world’. Lee argues that an autobiographical theology is ‘my story of how God formed me, nurtures me, guides me, loves me, allows me to age, and will end my life’ (Lee, 1995: 7).

That reference to God being the subject resets this autobiographical turn. The narrative is embedded in an act of faith. For David Ng the events of an individual life become a 'lifestory' that is woven in and through a doctrine of providence.9 The risk of eisegesis, of reading too much providence into one’s own lifestory, is never far away, of course, but this does not necessarily rule out of court the role of the autobiographical. One diasporic theologian who recognises both the tension and the possibility inherent in the position is Peter Phan. This self-confessed ‘accidental theologian’ believes that ‘we are thrown into this world’ and ‘very few
momentous and decisive things which shape one's destiny are within one's planning and control'. In retrospect, looking at his flight from Vietnam to the United States and becoming eventually a theologian, Phan acknowledges that he 'could say that the hand of Divine providence was guiding my life, but that is a faith statement'. It is not a claim that is susceptible to rational verification. It is something he would be prepared to wager 'only in fits of poetry'.10

One way of interpreting this subjective turn is via Rebecca Chopp's theory concerning the poetics of testimony (Chopp, 2001: 56-70). The language of the autobiographical is never employed, but it is, in a sense, assumed. To testify is to witness, to tell, to speak forth in a way that is both public and private. The analogy Chopp draws is with the art of poetry, which, she suggests, 'witnesses us'. The testimony of which she writes bears witness 'in and to the public space ... about what one has seen, what one has experienced, what one knows to have really happened'. The narratives are 'from someone to someone about something' that should not have been. The testimony is subjective; it is autobiographical, but this poetic testimony is also public at the same time and carries a moral and theological imperative. The testimony needs to be made. It is 'summoned'. The testimonies themselves are not made along the lines of a personal altar-call. They are told for the sake of life, the mending of life, and for witness to survival and the possibility of overcoming extremity. Those for whom Chopp writes are not migrants and a generation who inhabit quite specifically the liminal space in between cultures. The link is more indirect. This genre is more general: 'it speaks of the unspeakable and tells of the suffering and hope of particular communities'. It lends itself all the same to Lee's more autobiographical approach to theology insofar as he is seeking to speak forth what it has been like to be a migrant and find oneself on the margins of the public domain. To all intents and purposes Lee's template is a testimony. It creates space for other equally telling stories that break silence and evoke a theological summons.

LIVING INSIDE A HYPHEN

For the sake of a theology that lies 'betwixt and between' two different cultures there is seemingly a need for this autobiographical turn. At the best of times the diasporic location is a liminal space. It is one in which the idea of home has frequently become deterritorialised and a sense of identity must be negotiated or invented.11 The present pressing concern for identity is itself a witness to that breaking down of previously experienced coherent communities. The subsequent search is established in a
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desire to map a new terrain and identify and name where the diasporic self now fits. There is something irreducibly personal about this quest which is, at the same time, a global flow that shapes the lives of millions of people in a period of mass migrations from one part of the world to another.

For Robert Schreiter the issue at stake is partly one of a tension between two competing concepts of culture. The presence of the hyphen signifies the relative demise of an integrated society that is ‘relatively self-enclosed and self-sufficient, and [usually] governed by a rule-bound tradition’. It is more inclined to be defined by ‘moments of stasis’. Identity here is received and discovered rather than constructed. The alternative Schreiter diagnoses is a globalised concept of culture. This pattern of being is the product of movement, change, and multiple belongings. It is highly relational, necessarily fluid, and is practically concerned with ‘cobbling together new identities out of old’. It is almost by definition oriented towards the future breaking in upon the present rather than backward looking. Schreiter thinks in categories of surprises, the unexpected, and ‘small victories’ (Schreiter, 1997: 47–57).

The rhetoric that surrounds this globalised concept of culture lends itself to a kind of optimism and a conviction that time is on its side. It is sometimes claimed that ‘the truest eye’ and the way ahead lies with the migrant’s ‘double vision’. The benefits of this postcolonial optic should not be underestimated, but the reality of living in this space is frequently rather different. It is marked by considerable confusion, great anxiety, and the perceived need to act out sets of contradictory cultural codes. The temptation is to ignore exploring the encompassing dislocated space. The sociological study of migration and settlement has clarified how there can emerge instead a tendency for ‘freezing points’ which convert themselves into a desire merely to replicate what has been left behind. What is known from the past is deemed to be normative and may well be valorised by an authority structure into which the divine has been co-opted. The beliefs and values of ‘back home’ are looked upon as the one and only way of God’s way with the world. The alternative at the other extreme is to let go the received, birth culture and assimilate as far as possible to the dominant, acquired new.

These opposing strategies reflect the extent to which this small dash – the hyphen – is always ambiguous. It is employed because it seems to join into one the culture and place of origin with the core culture of a new site. The dilemma lies in the extent to which this bridge is constructed through what has been described as a double refusal. The hyphen acts like a sign of exit for the first term; for the second the hyphen can act like a conduit,
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an arrow, pointing in a direction that will never be fully realised. It creates a sense of not-belongingness while at the same time pointing towards the need for a new way of being. The hyphen does not allow the diasporic self to rest content with the cultural familiarity of the originating home; it is also likely to set the individual concerned at a critical remove from the mainstream receiving culture.

To focus the cultural gaze on the hyphen itself and not the terms at either end of this bridging dash is to emphasise a third space. The theological task in this kind of setting is daunting. It means inhabiting a space that Fumitaka Matsuoka has named as being one of ‘holy insecurity’ (Matsuoka, 1995: 61–5). The politics of ethnicity and citizenship might pull the diasporic self to either one of the two poles joined together by the hyphen. The call to a holy insecurity is an invitation to explore the space in between and betwixt despite the pressures to conform and assimilate either way. The reason for this adventure is not now merely sociological and personal. It is theological. The underlying assumption is that faith is also a bearer of identity. The label ‘Christian’ might well help map the quest as well as signify the way in which the person and work of Christ beckons to a future not confined by the cultural codes bound by the hyphen. This task then is both exploratory and a theological imperative if faith is to be good news and possess what Jürgen Moltmann described as its therapeutic relevance (Moltmann, 1990: 43–6).

UGLY DUCKLING OR QUACKING SWAN?
The generic question around which Ete organised his emerging theology is the now familiar question, ‘Who is Jesus Christ for us today?’ In this case the ‘us’ Ete defines is a ‘young Samoan generation’ that is New Zealand-born. This peer group is plagued by a sense of ‘instability’ and ‘disorientation’. It is accustomed to being spoken for or represented by others. For the sake of this basic question to do with Christ Ete must then find his voice and let the poetics of his testimony bear witness to a particular experience of dislocation. Those for whom Ete speaks are both a product of migration and are post-migrant. It is a generation that never experienced first hand the process of being ‘uprooted’ and ‘replanted’. It is a derived experience. By birthright Aotearoa-New Zealand is home, and yet there is a continuing dualism of identity.

The extent to which such a theology is dependent upon a hermeneutics of generational criticism situates it inside a recognised turn to cultural studies in the discipline (Davaney, 2001: 3–16). The implications are far-reaching. For most of theological history the ‘mass of religious persons
and their lives were not interpreted as the location of constructive theological production. There was no perceived need to consult their experience. In this new situation for theology Sheila Davaney explains that ‘the people’ are no longer just ‘passive consumers of meaning, values and practices’ devised by the powerful and the elite. They also create culture on multiple levels. The consequences for theology are radical. This turn to culture is likely to be more aware of the value-laden nature of our theological perspectives. It will demonstrate more of an interest in the power relationships at work in our knowing and who lays claims to authority and on what basis. It will be more committed to taking seriously the autobiographical and social location sides of the act of believing. Phan will argue that a hyphenated theology of ‘betwixt and between’ emerges precisely out of the critical intersection of such social analysis and introspection (Phan and Lee, 1999: xiv–xv).

For the ‘PI front row’ Ete represents, the conflicting experience of generations demands the most immediate scrutiny. For those born in the new land it is the point at which the ‘intertwining nature of Christianity and [in this case] fa’aSamoa’ and its continuing relevance is most keenly felt. For a plausible contextual theology this is the cultural experience that requires what Douglas John Hall has dubbed the necessary ‘hard analysis’. In the circumstances Ete has discerned that this second-generation theology must consult the ‘concrete experiences’ of parents who ‘still have their hearts in the islands, with their feelings for its culture and customs’. It must also address the concerns of a rising generation who ‘do not know the depths of their mother tongue or feel the necessity of old customs to satisfy the soul’.16

The lines of tension in this ‘tug of war’ named by Jemaima Tiatiia are complex. The tendency of the autobiographical literature is to identify the parental home as the vehicle of an immediate personal nurture and ethnic custom. The home is the locus for the extended family and a network of kinship ties. It is organised along the lines of the highly valued principle of respect where it is important to know one’s place and act accordingly. From a sociological perspective the embedded politics of voice is inclined to be hierarchical (Tiatia, 1998: 80–7). The published accounts of peer group experience then testify to a close weaving together of this private domain with the practice and function of the church. For Tiatia this comes as no surprise. The church is ‘the most feasible means by which fa’aSamoa can be maintained as it is a site somewhat reflective of village life back home’. For good and for ill the church is complicit. The now well-known dilemma is that the way of life experienced in the home and at church can
stand in sharp critical tension with what happens in the public domains of education and the workplace. The practical effect of a western education is for the second generation to become more 'critical and questioning' and more individual than convention has allowed. It represents a move away from a pedagogy based upon rote leaning and 'just doing things' because they have always been done that way. Insofar as the educational system reproduces the cultural capital of the dominant majority, Tiatia argues that it intensifies the clash of cultural codes the New Zealand-born Pacific Islanders confront on a daily basis (Tiatia, 1998: 49).

The emerging discipline of generational criticism classifies those who inhabit this kind of liminal space as a strategic cohort. They share a common experience that witnesses to an evident rupture and the need for a new direction. Ete argues that migration occupies a role in the life of this generation comparable to the coming of the missionaries to the native culture. The most frequent symptom of this dislocation is the widespread complaint that 'the parents, the elders, and the ministers don't understand us' (Tiatia, 1998: 24). The cognitive dissonance represented here is mediated, in fact, through the very agency most prized by those who migrated in the first place. The expressed purpose was often described as having been for the sake of a better education and future for their children. Tiatia describes 'the pride thing' that can then accompany achievement. But there is a twist in the tale. Such education also conjures up a different reality. It allows the second generation to acquire an alternative perspective that can subvert the hierarchical nature of received cultural tradition. Its tenor is to raise a most awkward sequence of questions. Melanie Anae now wonders why western Christianity destroyed so much traditional belief and practice. At face value that question is a challenge for a European missionary history, but, at another level, it also has the potential to undermine a Pacific Christianity that has, in effect, allowed this formative encounter to determine so rigorously the subsequent pattern and expression of the gospel. Fuatagaumu presses the point further: have island cultures co-opted faith and, in a sense, reified the tradition? The dilemma as to whether 'we are Samoan Christians or Christian Samoans?' is the product of a second-generation living in diaspora. Its apparent innocence masks a complex cultural reality.

For a prospective theology this subversion is no slight matter, given the peculiar relationship between a range of Pacific Island cultures and the Christian faith. With respect to fa'aSamoa Tiatia likens the level of mutual interdependence to that which exists between Siamese twins (Tiatia, 1998: 23). These questions represent a fundamental shift in how faith is put into
practice. The intimate interweaving of a particular culture and its reading of the gospel back in the islands lends itself to an understanding of religion that is characterised by communal belief. The cultural effect Tiatia has discerned lying beyond the life of a piety narrowly conceived is to bestow meaning, a sense of identity, security, and status (Tiatia, 1998: 10). Even in a situation of diaspora these functions can still be performed for a second generation. For Taria Kingstone from the Cook Islands, for instance, the Ekalesia fulfils the role of ‘our turanga vaevae [standing place and point of identity] in New Zealand’. The narratives of presence collated by Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop and Gabrielle Makisi repeatedly testify to similar experiences emerging out of home and church. The emphasis in Tiatia’s work is rather different, though. The focus is on lines of fracture. They can make themselves felt in the decision of one or more of the new generation taking time out or no longer seeing any point in attending church. The family’s honour and appearance is immediately at stake. One variation on this theme is to leave an ethnic church for the sake of a more charismatic alternative that is somehow deemed to be more relevant. These shifts in practice are not easy for the individuals concerned to negotiate. There is ample scope for being deemed an outcast and for the whole family to be ‘looked down upon’. Both options signify a basic conviction that faith is essentially more an individual than a communal commitment. That test of relevance relies upon a relationship between God and the individual. Its perceived absence can lead to withdrawal which no amount of family or cultural pressure can prevent. The opposite effect is to initiate a quest that puts more of a priority upon Christian rather than cultural identity.

These fracture lines were clearly present in the experience of the classroom front row. In diverse ways each one lived inside these diasporic and generational pressure points. Of pivotal importance in their mapping of this condition was Ete’s description of alienation. The primary metaphor was that of finding oneself on a ‘bridge of disorientation’. That this should have been the term selected is of considerable interest. The tendency of hyphenated theologies is to think of themselves as acting as bridges or cross-bearers. It is most unusual for the bridge to attract a qualifier that is other than positive. In Ete’s hands its construction reflects a cohort caught between two cultures, each one of which accentuates ‘our allegiance to the other’. That ever present sense of difference and displacement made itself felt in and through the sting of nicknames readily applied on both sides of the hyphen. The western saying that ‘sticks and stones can break my bones, but names can never hurt me’ could scarcely be further from the
In island culture – diasporic or otherwise – names carry honour and shame. From personal experience Ete knew what it was like to be called ‘coconut’, ‘over-stayer’, ‘bunga’, ‘nigger’, ‘F.O.B.’ (fresh off the boat), ‘F.O.P.’ (fresh off the plane), or ‘BNZ’ (Born in New Zealand, the verbal play being on the Bank of New Zealand). He had also been subjected to the reverse form of denigration from the Samoan-born. Now he is fia palagi – that is, someone who wishes to be palagi; fia poto – someone who, despite the contrary facts, believes himself/herself more enlightened than the rest; and a pakeka (potato) – that is, brown on the outside, white on the in. Faced with these put-downs, Ete is confronted with the dilemma of how to respond and find meaning. What is rather striking is the extent to which the naive options selected emerge out of the dominant culture of the birth land. Ete thus first describes his alienation in terms of insecurity, uncertainty, and low self-esteem, all of which are western psychological categories. The more poetic side to this experience of the human condition is captured in his reinterpretation of the story of the ugly duckling. Growing up ‘PI’ in Wellington, he knew he was not a ‘duck’ like the palagi in his class. The liminality of an insecure second generation is expressed through his recognition that set down in fa’aSamoa he becomes a ‘quacking swan’, not quite sure of custom and convention. The need now is to name and create a new identity that is not inhibited by critiques of being synthetic or illegitimate. In the midst of this uncertainty Ete argues that we must build our ‘concrete villages’ and articulate a ‘broken dialect’.

**Jesus Christ as the Vale**

What is distinctive about this telling tale is the consequent desire to let theology be the vehicle of what needs to be said. The more common tendency has been for the autobiographical to be employed in sociological descriptions. It is very clear that the church and the life of faith have played an extraordinary part in the diasporic and second-generation experience, but this had not led to much in the way of a constructive theology. The occasional account of ‘who God is for me’ is inclined to be brief and somewhat impressionistic. It is far removed from the highly intentional and disciplined work found in explicit theological work now being done in hyphenated communities in the United States and Sydney. Ete has, in effect, moved into ‘uncharted terrain’.

The precedent has been set by Jung Young Lee for Christology to be the hermeneutical key. That Ete should have made this choice represents an alternative to the counsel sometimes given to the New Zealand-born ‘PIs’ that ecclesiology with its strong communal sense is the most obvious
organising doctrine. The problem with this advice is that it is inclined to focus the quest on established patterns of sociality and reinforce the degree of peer group dislocation. It can fail to engage immediately with the move away from the communal to the individual that Tiatia noted in her study of second-generation churchgoing. In similar diasporic theologies elsewhere the practice is to do the Christological work first and then follow with ecclesiology and an understanding of the Christian life. The reasons are not hard to fathom. The overarching concern is one of identity. It makes itself felt at several levels, most obviously the personal and the communal. One of the effects of being in diaspora and being second generation is that the received understanding of how gospel and culture relate can be ruptured. ‘Who am I?’ becomes the most basic question. The matter can also be one of Christian identity and how the diasporic self/selves are to situate themselves inside a changed sense of being church and how one should live. Lee and others in this liminal space have found that wrestling with the question ‘Who is Jesus Christ for us today?’ invariably leads into other theological concerns, but not before some critical soteriological work has been done.

The nature of a hyphenated theology is such that its understanding of the person and work of Christ sits in tension with the range of Christologies found on either side of the ethnic equation. The tendency is to engage first with the family of symbols to be found in the parental culture. Because of the close link between home and church it has a formative, generative power. The theology of the dominant receiving culture is inclined to make itself felt initially in terms of the language employed and a scholarly concern for how the doctrine should be shaped and what issues must be negotiated. The global experience of living in between two cultures does mean, of course, that there are others elsewhere wrestling with similar issues. Their writings constitute what have been called lines of textual kinship. The importance of these textual allies cannot be underestimated, for they furnish support for the task at hand for a relatively vulnerable body of theologians in the making.

In Ete’s case what was first required was a critical encounter with a ‘traditional Samoan Christology’. The dilemma that immediately presented itself is one of accessibility. Where is this accustomed view to be found and how is it constituted? The pressing nature of these questions is due to there being no sustained body of literature to consult. In the circumstances Ete relied upon the Congregational hymn book. The underlying assumption was that what we sing often shapes what we believe. The benefits of this strategy are multiple. One of the principles of a contextual
theology is a recognition of how different cultures express their understanding of the gospel through different media. To focus upon the lyrics found in the standard hymn book makes a great deal of sense in a society that prizes singing and assigns high value to the role of the choir. It also establishes a link between the life of piety, an embedded or implicit faith, and one which is being subject to critical scrutiny and becoming more explicit. Widening the horizon a little this concern for a Christology to be found in a traditional hymnody establishes a close connection between worship and theology. In and of itself this link is often the subject for debate in discussions on the sources for theology and its method. In this present context it acquires a fresh significance. Tiatia observed that one of the reasons there was a decline in second-generation churchgoing was a perceived lack of relevance and spiritual nurture (Tiatia, 1998: 112). Ete's conviction is that there was an element of the 'non-fit' between the Christ who was being sung about and the salvific needs of those who found themselves in this new situation.

The hymn book had dedicated nine categories of hymns to do with the person and work of Christ under the heading of *O Le Atua Le Alo*. These subdivisions dealt with Christ's sacrifice, his death, his resurrection, his ascension into heaven, his name, his names, his love, his reign, and praise to him. The general direction of this Christology emphasised the highly prized cultural virtue of sacrifice woven together with a penal substitutionary theory of the Atonement. There was little reference to the 'career of Christ'. The life and ministry of Jesus was virtually neglected or converted into the dogmatic categories of pre-existence, redemption, and the ascension. There was no mention of 'the controversial Jesus who proclaimed God's kingdom of justice and peace, who blessed the poor, healed the sick, and had table fellowship with outcasts'. The preferred titles were confined to the analogies of lord and saviour. The gospel most present was John.

The practical effect of these familiar, customary hymns is to create an 'elevated Christ' where the emphasis is on divinity. From personal experience Ete recognises one of the lessons acquired from the construction of a contextual theology. The structure of a Christian doctrine is never neutral in its intent. It releases a distinctive politic and ethic. There are downstream effects that attach themselves to the hermeneutics we employ and the confessions we make. The whole enterprise of a contextual theology relies upon this insight. In this case Ete argues that this 'elevated Christ' that is not adequately qualified by his humanity ends up being 'numb to our cries but readily anticipates our praise'. Rather than point-
ing to a Christ of freedom in this situation, the structure of belief is more likely to be oppressive and lend itself to an existential remoteness.

The problem is further compounded because of the way in which a number of cultural threads are woven into the confession. The language of lordship becomes converted into ideas of Jesus being my *matai* or chief. The difficulty here lies in the nature of an intercultural hermeneutic. It cannot be assumed that a simple correspondence of words — in this instance *kyrios*, lord, and *matai* — all do the same job. Ruth Wajnyrb warns of the risks of such ‘phrasebook’ use of language.\(^\text{24}\) Words have histories and carry networks of cultural associations. For all its attraction, *matai* is rather congenial to the hierarchical nature of Samoan society.\(^\text{25}\) The dilemma Ete confronts is how helpful is this traditional title for those perched on his bridge of disorientation. Is it likely to silence? In a similar vein the Johannine understanding of Jesus is ambiguous. It is constructed around a high view of the relationship between the Son and God the Father. Into this mix also comes the title of *matai*. Translated into *fa'aSamoa* the bond between son and father does not necessarily lead into a Chalcedonian equivalent of equal substance. Its effect can be to furnish, unwittingly, a theological justification for a continuing subservience.

On the back of this generational criticism Ete sows the seeds for a fresh diasporic hermeneutic. The now well-recognised pluralist nature of New Testament Christologies widens the range of biblical options that can be drawn upon. The trend most evident in a contextual theology is make more use of the synoptic gospels and allow a family of texts to act like markers for the task ahead. For Ete the preferred text is Luke 2:41–51, the story of the boy Jesus who remains in his heavenly father’s house, the Temple, while his parents return to the home village ignorant of where he is. By means of an implied reader-response theory it is not difficult to make an exegetical leap to the situation in life of the second generation. The text itself reflects the embodied knowledge of being the younger of two generations and hyphenated. It sets in motion a different trajectory. The bias is now towards the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth and its inclusion of those on the margins and on the underside of conventional patterns of authority. The basis has effectively been laid for an understanding of the Christ as one who is misunderstood, humiliated, and rejected. By creating more space for the career of Jesus-Christ Ete can be as boundary-breaking as James Cone was in his theological description of the ‘black Christ’. In the spirit of inversion that pervades the gospel of Luke Ete likens Jesus to a stupid coconut, a potato, a *fia poto*.

This synoptic switch inevitably challenges the way in which the concept
of the *matai* has been used for theological purposes. In a rather bold move Ete questions the sole use of this image, which justifies hierarchy and the etymological roots of which mean ‘to be separated’, ‘to be set apart’. For those in liminal spaces this title requires at least a qualifier. The cultural concept that strikes Ete’s imagination is the idea of the *vale*. It describes the idiot, the one with no social standing, who is considered mentally inadequate, at times even spirit-possessed. No one has proposed this image of Christ before in a Samoan context. In this present context it represents a reading of the biblical traditions to do with the foolishness of Christ most overtly referred to at 1 Corinthians 1:18–21. The hermeneutical reference between scripture and the human condition in which Ete and his peer group finds itself and which requires redeeming is established. Ete concludes, ‘In proclaiming Jesus as the *vale*, New Zealand-born Samoans lay claim to the Christ who was ridiculed and rejected by his own social and religious structures and was subsequently resurrected.’ The nonsense they had ‘cast to the wind’ was resurrected ‘as *le atamai a le Atua* – Christ Jesus who has become for us the wisdom of God’. The practical consequence of the divinity of Christ is that ‘God stands with us in our marginalised location.’

**A TELLING TALE**

This remodelling of the received image of Christ has an authentic salvific feel to it. It now speaks to the situation Ete first diagnosed and opens up a prospect of further work. It is not yet a comprehensive Christology, and it still possesses an air of the provisional. There is still a raft of basic Christological concerns to be addressed, but a voice has been found. Its great strength – its liberating influence – lies in Ete’s use of the autobiographical and Chopp’s poetics of testimony for the sake of a constructive theology. That witness is always more than the subjective. Ete’s rhetorical style ensures this, for it is inclined on occasion to stand inside a cultural tradition of oratory. There are frequent references to ‘we’ and a poetic build-up of images. The tale itself transcends the individual. It resonates with the experience of a specific peer group and readily relocates itself into a wider, diasporic community of textual kinship. Hispanics and Asians in Australia and the United States identify with this dislocated story of *fa’aSamoa* in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

In its original form Christ as a *vale* is more of an imaginative response to his familial culture than it is to a dominant *palagi* theology. How this Christology might now intersect with western and Maori readings is a next step. For the second-generation cohort in Australia Ete has set up a
method. For the standard expression of theology on both sides of the Tasman his pioneering work opens up the pressing matter of empathetic hearing. It is an entry point into the wider world of diasporic scholarship and a generational criticism that has scarcely touched the formal disciplines of theology and biblical studies. In view of the changing nature of the academic classroom, experiments in theology – like this one – should become more common. The relevance of faith in a cross-cultural location is at stake.

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NOTES

1. The term 'hyphenated Jesus-Christ' with respect to matters of identity arising out of being in diaspora was coined by Jung Young Lee in his *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology*.

2. There is considerable debate over which term, hyphenated or hybrid, is most appropriate to describe the dynamics of identity formation. The language of hyphenation can be a vehicle of essentialism. It conveys the impression that the hyphen marks the linking of two discrete, homogenous, stable ethnicities. It lends itself to the myth of a second generation being 'caught between two cultures' and what has been called the 'front door syndrome'. Inside the home, the private sphere of parental influence, lies the originating ethnicity. The comparison is then made with what transpires in the public domain of education, employment, and politics, which is reckoned to be shaped by the dominant receiving culture. The term certainly depends upon a double consciousness captured in the experience of being 'in two minds'. Whether it is nuanced and accurate enough to describe the 'real' state of play is a moot point. It is now recognised that cultures are not homogenous essences. They themselves have histories of admixture. The coming together of two cultures, even more loosely defined, within the life and experience of individuals and peer groups is also more of a process. The language of hybridity can still carry 'the veiled presence of an underlying essentialism', but it may also point towards a greater fluidity. The term has been likened to 'an energy field of different forces'. See Papastergiadis, N., 'Tracing Hybridity in Theory', in *Debating Cultural Identity*, ed. Werbner, P., and Modood, T. (London: Zed Books, 1997), 258.

3. For a Christian theologian it is a salutary exercise to read a text like Hage, 2002. Here the great majority of those defined by the hyphen are obviously Muslim. There is a potential field of comparative study here.

5. For recent narratives of presence, see Fairbairn-Dunlop and Makisi, 2003, and Tiatia, 1998.

6. The oral tradition of a second generation is inclined to say that the preferred model of biculturalism in Aotearoa-New Zealand has militated against the development of diasporic and hyphenated theologies. The practice has been to focus upon the definition of Pakeha identity and its relationship to Maori beliefs and values and, to a lesser extent, a Maori theology.


8. For a description of the emergence and nature of generational criticism within the discipline of sociology, see Edmunds and Turner, 2002.


11. It can also rather easily be spiritualised in Christian theology. On this earth, in this life, we are pilgrims on a journey, aliens and sojourners longing for our true home which is in heaven. For a Samoan reading of such, see Ioka, D., 'Sharing the Biblical Vision of Homecoming for the Lost in the World', The Pacific Journal of Theology, Series 11, 22 (1999), 55–8.

12. For a sustained discussion on this problem with reference to the experience of Chilean migrants to Australia, see Rebolledo, J., 'Christ the Mundano', unpublished BTh Hons dissertation, Charles Sturt University, 2004.


14. It is noticeable that the location of the hyphen differs between Australia and Aotearoa-New Zealand. The tendency in Australia is to speak of Tongan-Australian, Arab-Australian, etc. Across the Tasman the pattern of hyphenation is likely to link the national and geographical reference to New Zealand with the word 'born'. The other marker of ethnicity, in this instance, Samoan, stands apart. There is a reversal of order as well. The naming of New Zealand comes first in the sequence, whereas in Australia it is inclined to be second.

15. For a description of fa'aSamoa, see Mulitalo-Lauta, 2004. Fa'aSamoa 'broadly speaking ... is the total make-up of the Samoan culture, which comprises visible and invisible characteristics and in turn forms the basis of principles, values and beliefs that influence and control the behaviour and attitudes of Samoans'. Fa'aSamoa is the 'umbilical cord that attaches Samoans to their culture' (p. 15). Mulitalo-Lauta describes these 'key features' as courtesy and diplomacy; respect for elders and parents; a Samoan way of walking, talking, sitting and standing; the use of the Samoan language; an understanding of Samoan protocols; a sense of humility; a Samoan way of thinking; the social structures of the aiga [family] and matai [chiefs]. Also, see Tiatia, 1998: 21–4.

16. Ete, 1996: 3–5. The first migrants strove to establish 'a sense of belonging to this country', or 'make it'. They did not seek to sacrifice their ties with Samoa. They came in search of economic and educational opportunities; their sense of affiliation to the new land,
however, received a rude shock in the early seventies with an economic downturn which would lead to a degree of hostility during 1973–76. The most memorable event was the passage of an 'over-stayers' bill passed in March 1974. It led to the carrying out of police dawn raids in order to send back illegal migrants. This experience is part of the second generation's childhood memories. For some it is a pivotal moment in their strategic remembering.

17. Ete describes how at an early age Samoan children are taught to position themselves geographically in the background, away from those who hold senior positions of authority. The problem is compounded by the 'words of wisdom' given by Samoan parents - filemu, ma aua le pisa [sit still and be quiet].

18. The sociological study of how the faith of migrant communities settles in a new land frequently testifies to the enhanced role a local church can play. See Hendrikse, E., 'Migration and Culture: the Role of Samoan Churches in Contemporary Aotearoa-New Zealand', MSc thesis, University of Canterbury, Canterbury, 1995. Lokeni Fuatagaumu describes how the church and church activities 'quickly became symbols of the fa'aSamoa, providing a sense of identity and community and psychological comfort during these times of radical change. For migrant parents especially, church activities also allowed their children to experience, learn and reaffirm fa'aSamoa'. For many Samoan-born elders the church has become the one domain beyond the home where they could express their views in confidence. Fuatagaumu observes that this 'voice' has often been denied to them in the workplace because of the language barrier, or the low level of the post. See 'Ugly Duckling or Quacking Swan', in Fairbairn-Dunlop and Makisi, 2003: 216–17.


21. One of the most painful sites for the second generation was school. The nicknames were often employed here. Those writing in Making Our Place testify to how a sense of being different was evident in the sandwich fillings for lunch and the out-of-school commitments to church functions.

22. With reference to the practice of social work in Aotearoa-New Zealand, Mulitalo-Lauta makes use of the category of the Samoan heart to describe a person's emotional and spiritual being. It has been argued that Samoans 'think through their heart'. Of particular interest is how Mulitalo-Lauta (17–18) describes the manner in which a sense of Samoan pride can be generated. The vehicles for such are success stories and events involving Samoans in historic and modern times; role models in sport; and the use of art, drawings, exhibitions, songs, poems, legends, dances, storytelling, and tattoos. The Samoan heart is offended through a cultural taboo or protocol being breached, insult, injury, or the safety or welfare of kin being in jeopardy.


25. For a positive view of the role of the matai with reference to social work, see Mulitalo-Lauta, 2004: 135–6. For a theological reading, see Ulu, I., 'Jesus as My Matai', unpublished research essay, University of Otago, Dunedin, 1995.

26. This idea of the Christ as a fool, an idiot, would come as quite a shock in a Samoan

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