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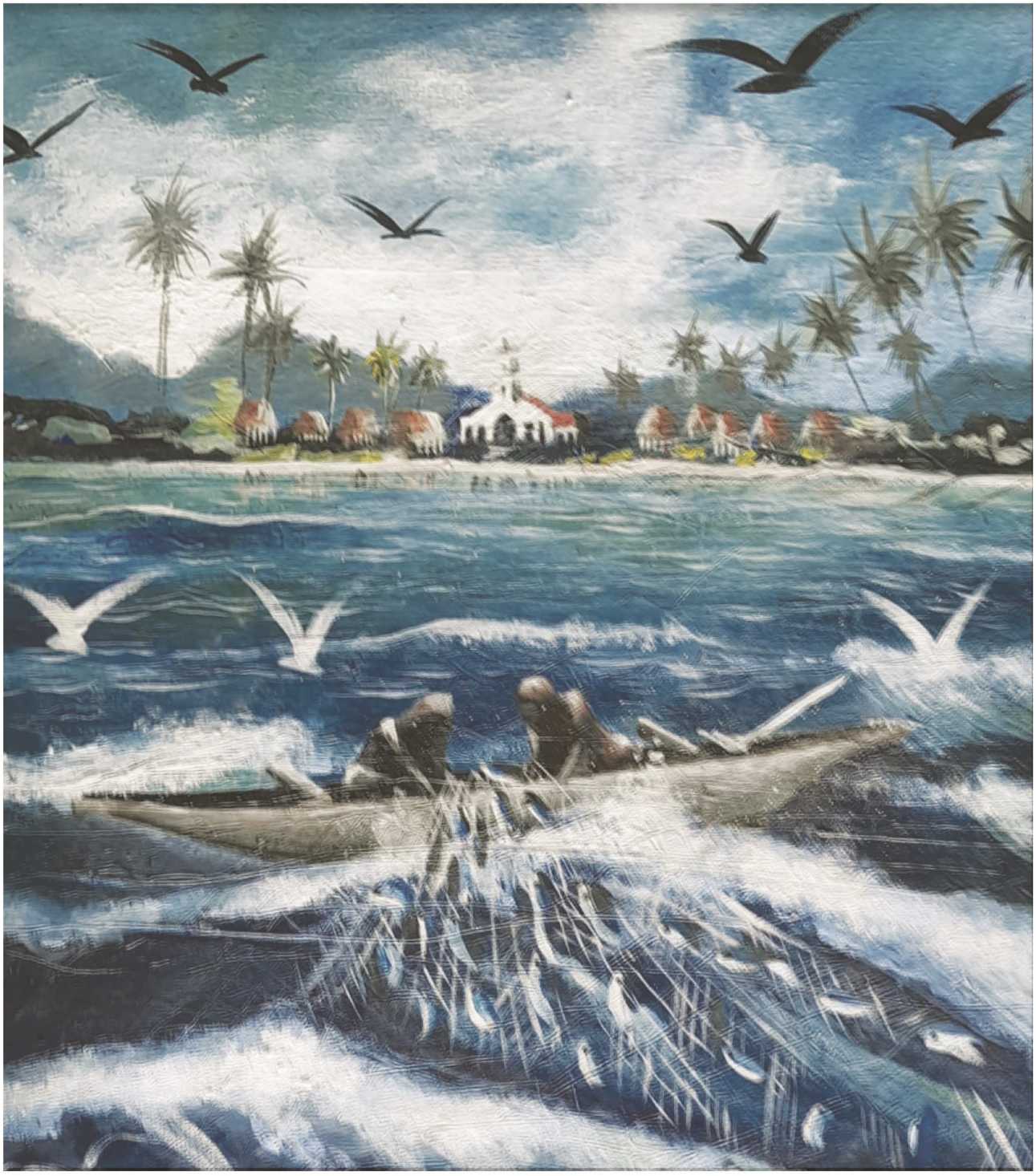

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CONTENTS

Anthropogenic Climate Change Un-creates God's Creation in Genesis 1

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Abstract

The impact of Climate Change is evident around the world today and is affecting us all. As a Christian, I see the adverse effects of this anthropogenic phenomenon, as humanity's way of undoing certain elements of God's physical creation as documented in Genesis 1. To argue my point, this paper attempts to re-read Genesis 1, mainly the first ten verses of Genesis 1 in light of the impact of Climate Change. This paper therefore follows a twofold structure. Firstly, I will briefly explore Climate Change and its impact to develop a hermeneutical perspective to re-read Gen 1: 1–10. This is not an attempt to thoroughly detail the science associated with Climate Change, but through a brief overview, to put us into perspective and develop a hermeneutical lens/es for reading the biblical text. Secondly, I will interpret Gen 1:1–10 to highlight the primordial conditions and God's creational activities in the first two and a half days of creation through the lenses of my Climate Change hermeneutics. In this endeavour, I will reenvisage Gen. 1:1–10 through the mechanics of Hebrew Poetry (following Gordon J. Wenham and a few others.)[1]*. Rather than simply reading Genesis 1 as Hebrew Poetry, this essay is more interested in perceiving the poetic features present in the text. To unravel these poetic features, I propose to use the Samoan method of autalaga, a Samoan approach to the text of peeling and sorting the layers of a text.*

Key Words: Climate Change, Genesis1, Creation, *Autalaga* (Samoan) Biblical Criticism, Contextual Hermeneutics.

Introduction

The notion of unwinding creation is evident throughout the Old Testament. The story of the flood in Genesis 7, Jeremiah 4 and Hosea 4 are some of the occasions that testify to it.[2] In these occasions the un-creating is divinely instituted as part of God's judgment on humanity. However, this paper proposes the contrary in consideration of the activities of creation in light of the anthropogenic Climate Change. In other words, it is humanity who is the culprit behind the un-creating of God's creation. To illustrate my point here, this paper offers a literary reading of the text using the premises of Climate Change as a hermeneutical perspective and a Samoan method of *autalaga* as a literary critical tool to read the Genesis 1 creation account. This *autalaga* approach is for the purpose of identifying and highlighting the poetic elements in the text for literary analysis. In hindsight this paper categorically will not engage with the historical elements of the text

[1] Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15,* WBC (Dallas: Word, 1987), 10. Also see, Clare Amos, *The Book of Genesis* (Peterborough, Eng.: Epworth, 2004), 1-14; Creighton W. Marlowe, "Patterns, Parallels, and Poetics in Genesis 1," *JIBS* 3/1 (2016): 6-27 and Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture: An Agrarian Research of the Bible* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). These Old Testament scholars claim that the Genesis 1 creation account is highly poetic in nature. This view is appealing to me since we Samoans also have an ancient creation account preserved in the form of a poem. This creation poem is known as *"Solo o le Va,"* meaning Poem about the Space (primordial space).

[2] I admit that there is no textual evidence of un-creating creation in Genesis 1. However, Norman Habel identifies a potential for disaster by claiming that the creation of humanity in Gen. 1: 26-28 subdues and disempowers Earth and the creatures of Earth. Norman Habel, *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth: An Ecological Reading of Genesis 1 -11* (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2011), 37-38.

since the Priestly editors of Genesis 1 may know nothing of Climate Change as defined by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and as we know it today. In saying this, it is my hope here that engaging with the Genesis 1 creation account in light of Climate Change will offer a Christian and biblical sense to Climate Change and its adverse effects.

Impact of Climate Change

In a nutshell, Climate Change refers to any alteration in climate over time as a result of human activity. This definition was adopted by the UNFCCC, where Climate Change refers to a change of climate that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and that is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time frame.[3] Nonetheless, the UNFCC put more weight on human activities and claim that "Warming of the climate system is unequivocal and can now be firmly attributed to human activity."[4] In this sense, Climate Change therefore can be seen as a human origination.

More emphasis is put on anthropogenic causes since human activities have caused a sudden shift in the global climate by releasing billion of tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO2) and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere adding substantially to the 'greenhouse effect'. Atmospheric gases such as CO2 and water vapour act as a 'green house' canopying over the Earth to trap some of the outgoing energy so that the Earth could retain more heat. So, the sudden boom of CO2 and other greenhouse gases emitted from human activities means more heat is trapped by the Earth's atmosphere leading to a substantial increase in global temperatures. Between 1901 and 2012 there has been an increase in global temperature of approximately one degree and if we continue on releasing greenhouse gases at the same rate as we are doing then it is projected that the world could be 4 degrees warmer or more by the end of the century.[5]

A one-degree rise in global temperature may sound insignificant; however, such increase leads to physical changes to the environment we are experiencing today. This includes a decrease in snow cover, sea ice shrinkage in the Polar Regions, heat waves, heavy rainfall causing flooding and runoffs, sea level rising, coastal erosions, intense natural disasters, extreme weather events and so forth. In addition, Climate Change also has repercussions for every animal species including humanity, such as food shortages and loss of habitations.

Moreover, this understanding of Climate Change and its impact allows me to raise the following questions that can be used as hermeneutical lenses to read Gen. 1:1–10. How does Climate Change affect God's creation presented in the text? What does the text say concerning the condition of the Earth prior to and after God's creation activities? Does Climate Change alter creation as God intended it to be? These questions will be melded with my *autalaga* interpretive approach to guide my analysis of the text.

Autalaga Interpretive Approach

The Samoan term *autalaga* designates the process of peeling off the layers of an object. According to George Pratt the term derives from the Samoan verb *autala* that refers to the process of picking away the bones of a fish to make it edible for the sick and

[3] https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/agricultural-and-biological-sciences/united-nations-framework-convention-on-climate-change, accessed 14 November, 2021.

[4] https://www.sciencedirect.

[5] USGCRP, 2017: Climate Science Special Report: Fourth National Climate Assessment, vol. I, eds. Wuebbles, D.J., D.W. Fahey, K.A. Hibbard, D.J. Dokken, B.C. Stewart, and T.K. Maycock, (Washington: U.S. Global Change Research Program, 2017), 14-15.

elderly.[6] Similarly, G. B. Milner also sees the term *autalaga* as a noun that derives from the verb *autala* that refers to the removing of thorns from pandanus leaves in the process of mat making.[7] Papalii Semisi Maiai agrees with Milner that the noun *autalaga* is a derivative of the verb *autala* providing a similar explanation where *autalaga* involves the taking away of the thorns and the unwanted parts of a leaf.[8] So judging from the views of the three grammarians it seems that the term *autalaga* involves a dual task. First, the term designates the process of 'picking out' as suggested by Pratt, and second, the term refers to the peeling away of the thorns of a pandanus or other spikey leaves.

The dual task of *autalaga* is also apparent through a consideration of the construction of the term. The term is a compound word made up of two words; *au* and *talaga*. On the one hand is the short word *au* which means pick, sort or reach as a verb.[9] On the other hand, is the term *talaga*, which is a noun, derived from the verb *tala* that means untying, dismantle, unfold or peel.[10] Etymologically speaking, it is clear that the method of *autalaga* involves a dual task. That is, it encompasses the act of peeling and unfolding of an object and the act of sorting and organising the dismantle components into categories.

In the Samoan context of a *falelalaga* (house of weaving) the process of *autalaga* is an important step in the processing of pandanus leaves to ensure good quality pandanus leaves for the weaving of household items. To control the quality of pandanus leaves, one not only needs to carefully remove (*tala*) all the thorns from the leaves but to sort (*au*) the leaves according to quality.[11]

When using the method of *autalaga* as an interpretive tool to interpret literary texts, it requires the interpreter to carry out two related steps. Firstly, the interpreter is required to *tala* (dismantle or peel) the text into different layers. Secondly, the interpreter must *au* (pick and sort) the dismantled components of the text into groups. These two tasks can aid in identifying and highlighting various features of a text that are important for its interpretation. In this sense, using *autalaga* to interpret texts means the interpreter must approach a text with the supposition that a text is made of various parts that needs to be *tala* (peel) and categorised to reveal the meaning of a text. Also, the various term within the text contains various meanings that need to be *autala* (unfold) to reveal its multiple nuances.

Moreover, the Samoan method of *autalaga* suits the aim of this study. Since, I am intending to treat Gen. 1:1–10 as poetry, I will peel off the different layers (or special features) of the text and categorise them into a poetic formation to reveal its poetic characteristics. Furthermore, I will also *autala* selected terms from the text to reveal their multiple meanings that could assist in the construction of an alternative view of the primordial situation and God's creational motifs and activities in the first two and half days of creation as presented in Genesis 1. Insights from this undertaking will provide further implications for the above questions regarding Climate Change.

[6] George Pratt, *Pratt's Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1960), 17.

[7] G. B. Milner, *Samoan Dictionary* (Auckland: Pasifika Press, 1966), 36.

[8] Papalii Dr Semisi Maiai, *Samoan Dictionary*, *Samoan to English* (Grey Lynn NZ: Little Island Press, 2010).

[9] Milner, *Samoan Dictionary*, 29-30.

[10] Milner, *Samoan Dictionary,* 233-234; Pratt, *Samoan Language*, 233.

[11] Applying the term *autalaga* as a literary tool for interpreting text does not imply that texts contain thorns or blemishes that need to be *autala* or removed. Instead, texts are perceived as having numerous parts that need to be *autala* dismantled and sorted for interpretive purposes.

Autalaga of Gen. 1:1–10

The genre of the Genesis 1 creation account is generally accepted by Old Testament scholars as elevated prose.[12] Its elevated form is due mainly to the integration of poetic overtones to capture the imagination of the audience to move them emotionally. Consequently, this means that there are repetitions, metaphors and parallelisms in the structural layout of Genesis 1.[13] Therefore, I will commence my literary analysis by fulfilling the first task of *autalaga*, that is, to *tala* (peeling) the text and *au* (gather) it into a poetic formation to manifest features pertaining to Hebrew Poetry.

The Primordial Conditions Gen. 1:1–2

A In [the] beginning God created the heavens and the earth,
B And the earth was without form and empty
B' And darkness was upon the face of the deep,
A' And the spirit of God hovers upon the face of the waters.[14]

The *autalaga* of Gen. 1:1–2 reveals that the first two verses of the Genesis 1 creation account can be looked at as a four cola stanza, which depicts a probable chiastic parallelism describing God's creative activities and the grimness of the primordial condition. The first line parallels the fourth line in the sense that *A* makes a statement while *A'* explains the fulfilling action. Specifically, *A* makes the bold statement that God created the heavens and the earth while *A'* hints at how God initiated the creation activities. In addition, *A'* also compliments *A* in the sense that it verifies the attribution of creation to God as stated in *A* by testifying to the precreation existence of God. The presence of God is described through the use of the Hebrew terms רוח (*rûaḥ*) and רחף (*rāḥap*). The term, רוח carries the nuances 'wind', 'breath' or 'spirit'[15] while רחף can be translated as hover or swept. The two terms bring movement to the primordial scenes and together depict God already in action in the creation process.

Moreover, AA' frames the BB' parallelism. The BB' parallelism explains the pre-created condition explicitly through the use of a series of near synonymous Hebrew terms that carry multiple nuances that need to be *autala*. In colon B are the terms תהו (*tōhû*) meaning 'formless', 'confusion', 'unreality' or 'emptiness'[16] and בהו (*bōhû*) translatable as 'void' or 'emptiness'.[17] These two terms can be seen as a paronomasia and a hendiadys. Not only do they share a semantic relationship, but they also yield similar sounds and together they portray a chaotic primordial situation that is difficult to comprehend. Scholars have made attempts to visualize the portrait of Earth depicted by the two terms. For example, Wenham argues that the two terms perceive Earth in a state

[12] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 10. Also see Bill T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 23. Arnold attributed the elevated style of the Genesis 1 creation account to the poetic style of the narrative.

[13] Frank H. Polak, "Poetic Style and Parallelism in the Creation Account (Genesis 1.1-2.3)," in *Creation in Jewish and Christian Tradition*, eds. Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 2-31. Polak identifies the presence of what he calls as near full parallelisms in the Gen. 1 creation account. I agree with Polak here and see the pairings in Gen. 1 as probable parallelisms.

[14] Translations of Biblical passages in this article are the author's own translations.

[15] Francis Brown, et. al. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Coded with the Numbering System from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Peabody: Hendrickson Pub, 1996), 924.

[16] Brown, et. al. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon,* 1062. Also see, Laird R. Harris, and Archer L. Gleason & Bruce K. Waltke, *TWOT, originally published by Moody Press of Chicago* (*Illinois, Electronic Version by BibleWorks*, 1998).

[17] Brown, et. al. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 96.

of 'total chaos'[18] like a desert wilderness where someone could get lost and vanish.[19] This portrait of Earth resonates with my Climate Change hermeneutical perspective, as it reminds me of the projected chaotic situation of the Earth if the current rate of greenhouse gases emission continues.

On the other hand, B' corresponds to B by adding to the dramatic description of pre-creation Earth through the use of the terms חשך (*ḥōšek*) meaning 'darkness' or 'obscurity' and תהום (*t^{e}hôm*) meaning 'deep', 'sea' or 'abyss'.[20] The term *ḥōšek* depicts a situation where vision is obscure thus depicting Earth as invisible in the primordial stage. In addition, the term can also refer to a plague as the plague of darkness in Exod. 10: 21-22 and Ps. 105:28. Reading this nuance of *ḥōšek* adds another dimension to the primordial conditions, depicting Earth covered with a plague. Viewing this image of a plague-ridden Earth from my Climate Change perspective reverberates with the plague ridden world we are experiencing today.

The other term *t^{e}hôm* depicts a situation where Earth is surrounded, submerged and covered by water.[21] This description of Earth's watery condition is enhanced by the term מים (*mayim*) meaning 'waters'.[22] The term *mayim* is synonymous in meaning to the term *t^{e}hôm* thus enhancing the depiction of the watery condition of the pre-created Earth. Ellen Van Wolde vividly describes the situation revealed in v. 2 as Earth covered by the waters extending to all sides.[23] Viewing the watery image of Earth through the lens of my Climate Change hermeneutical perspective echoes the rising sea levels that submerged islands such as Tuvalu, Tokelau, Kiribati and the Marshall Islands are experiencing and flash flooding due to shifting climatic conditions and changing weather patterns.

In summation, the *autalaga* of the Gen. 1:1–2 reveals a four-line poetic arrangement of the two verses. The first line is dependent on the last three lines where the last three lines reveal the Earth's situation prior to God's creative activities alluded to in the first line. In addition, the last three lines complement each other. They all contribute to the chaotic-watery portrait of the Earth prior to creation. Observing this representation from the lens of my Climate Change perspective reveals the pre-created conditions of the Earth envisioned in Gen. 1: 1-2 that echo the impact of Climate Change.

[18] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 14. Also see; Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary, eds. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia: The JPS, 1989), 6.

[19] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 14. Also see, Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 76. He translates the term as a 'desert waste'.

[20] Brown, et. al. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 1062; *TWOT*.

[21] According to historical critics, the term תהום also echoes the Babylonian myth *Enuma Elish* on the grounds that there are semantic and phonological resemblances between תהום and the proper name of the goddess *Tiamat* This view was proposed by Hermann Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12*, trans. William K. Whitney Jr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 78-80. Also see, R. J. Clifford and J. J. Collins, eds., "Creation in the Biblical Traditions," *CBQ*, Monograph Series 24 (1992): 32- 33; R. J. Clifford, "Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible," *CBQ*, Monograph Series 26, ed. Michael L. Barré (Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America 1994). These scholars also uphold that this description of the pre-created condition in Gen. 1:2 sympathizes with the *Chaoskampf* tradition that sees the creation process as a battle between the creator god and the forces of chaos. So in this sense God's creative activities are equated with a battle and rescue operation where God conquers the forces of chaos including תהום to free Earth from suppression.

[22] Brown, et. al. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 565.

[23] Ellen Van Wolde, *Stories of the Beginning: Genesis 1-11 and other Creation Stories* (London: SCM, 1996), 20.

God's Creative Activities Gen. 1:3–10

Creation of Light Gen. 1:3–5

God's first creation act is the creation of light mentioned in vv. 3–5. *Autalaga* of these verses reveal a poetic formation as follow.

A And God said, let there be light; and there was light.
B And God saw that the light was good;
C And God separated the light from the darkness.
D And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.
E And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

The above *autalaga* of vv 3–5 reveals probable parallelisms and repetitions in the literary structure of these verses. The lines *AB* can be looked at as a bicola witnessing the appearance of light in God's creative activities. Here colon *B* compliments colon *A* where *A* posts the command and its fulfillment and *B* confirms it by boldly stating God's assessment of the created entity. Another plausible parallelism is a tricola parallelism marked as *CDE* above. Colon *C* states God's creative act of separating between light and darkness while *D* and *E* make inferences to the extension of God's creative act. Consequently, God's separation of light and darkness is further distinguished in creation through the process of naming, "Day" and "Night."

Furthermore, the *autalaga* of vv. 3-5 reveals the repetitive occurrence of the term אור (*ʾôr*) meaning 'light'.[24] This suggests the creation of light to be the emphasis of God's first creative act. Apparently 'light' here does not refer to sunlight, moonlight or starlight since these particular light sources are yet to be created. So what is this light referring to then? We can answer through the *autalaga* of the multiple usages of אור. The term is often used as a metaphor throughout the Old Testament for life, salvation and the presence of God.[25] In the context of vv. 3-5 these meanings seem applicable. The term אור as life echoes that God, in creating light, brings Earth into life. Moreover, translating אור as salvation alludes to the idea that in creating light, God redeems Earth from bondage, suggesting that Earth was in bondage to the primordial condition. Finally, interpreting the term as an indication of God's presence simply affirms God's participation in creation. Integrating the three nuances of אור reveals the creation of light as a major phase in the evolving of Earth. It is a divine act of life-giving salvation to redeem Earth from a lifeless existence and from the bondage of darkness. God maintained this status of Earth, after creating the light and declaring it good, then separated it from the already existing darkness through the use of the creative act בדל (*bādal*), which means 'to separate' or 'to divide'.[26] The term indicates that the light and darkness are intended to be kept separate, having their own space and time. This separation is further defined in the naming process in v.5 where God reiterates the purposes of the light and darkness in creation as indicators of day and night.

[24] Brown, et. al. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 21.

[25] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 18. Also see Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academics, 2001), 62.61; M. Sæbø, "אור," *TLOT*, eds. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1997), 1: 63-1267. For examples of Light; as salvation see Exod. 14:24, 1 Kgs. 19:35 and Isa. 37:26; as judgment see Zeph. 3:5, Psa. 37:6, Hos. 6:5; as Life see Psa. 56:14, Isa. 58:8; and depicting God's presence see Psa. 104:2.

[26] Brown, et. al. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 95; *TWOT*.

Viewing God's creative acts in the creation of light through the lens of my Climate Change perspective implies that God through the creational activities redeems the Earth from the bondage of Climate Change. This is apparent by visualizing that, without light, Earth could not function as it was in a lifeless and non-life-sustaining pre-created situation when it was veiled by darkness.

Creation of the Firmament Gen 1:6–8

The second creation act by God is the formation of the Firmament to separate the waters in Gen. 1:6–8. An *autalaga* of vv. 6-8 discloses the following poetic structure.

> *A* And God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."
> *B* And God made the firmament and separated the waters that were under the firmament from the waters that were above the firmament.
> And it was so.
> And God called the firmament Sky.
> And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

This *autalaga* of vv. 6-8 also reveals a probable parallelism mark *AB* above and the repetitive use of the term 'firmament'. The probable balance *AB* is also complimentary in nature, that is, *A* reveals God's creative speech or the divine command desiring the creation of the firmament and *B* describes the fulfillment of the divine command. Ironically, God attends to the fulfillment of the divine command which implies that the creation of the firmament was solely the work of God.

The repetitive term firmament is identified in Gen. 1:6–8 by the use of the word רקיע (*rāqîʾa*) meaning 'expanse' or 'extended surface'.[27] The text does not explicitly reveal the components and nature of this expanse, yet, elsewhere in the Old Testament, its various descriptions offer us a few possibilities. In ancient Hebrew traditions, the expanse is analogically described as a shiny mirror, a tent or a layer of ice crystal.[28] These depictions present the firmament as a solid base canopying over Earth which speaks to its function in God's creation – i.e., to separate the waters present in the pre-created world creating space in between.

The purpose of the firmament as a separator of water is depicted through the repetitive use of the verb בדל (to separate/divide) in vv.6–7. In v.6 God directs the expanse to בדל the waters. On the other hand, in v.7, God perform the division of the waters by using the newly made firmament. In this sense, the firmament is seen as a tool used by God to divide the waters.[29] The firmament therefore can be seen as a creation of God to divide and distinguish the waters above from the waters below. In accordance with the Climate Change perspective, this interpretation of the creation of the firmament

[27] Brown, et. al. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 956.

[28] Brown, et. al. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 956. Also see Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 62. They identify the nuances 'mirror' and 'canopy' in view of Job. 37:18 and Isa. 42:22 respectively. Also see Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The JPS, 1989), 9. Sarna identifies the firmament as a 'gigantic sheet of metal' or layer of 'congealed ice' with reference to Ezek. 1:22.

[29] The *mamanu* occurs in v.6 in the *Hiphil* participle translatable as 'cause to divide'. While it occurs in v.7 in the *Hiphil* imperfect meaning 'cause to divide'. In the Hebrew grammar the *Hiphil* stem expresses 'causative action'. Hence, it is used in this section to identify the firmament in v.6 and God in v.7 as the cause of the division. This rendition suggests the division of the waters as a collaborative action between God and the firmament.

and the expanse reflects the existence of the atmosphere and the ozone that cover as a greenhouse above the earth. Thus, the destruction of the atmosphere and the ozone layers due to Climate Change and gas emission by humanity hints at the un-creating of God's creation.

Separation of Waters and Dry Land Gen. 1:9–10

The third creative act of God involves the separation of waters and the dry land in Gen. 1: 9–10. An *autalaga* of these verses manifests a poetic structure as the one below.

> And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear."
> And it was so.
> And God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas.
> And God saw that it was good.

Similar to the previous creation activities this one also commences with a creation speech of God. But unlike the last two creation acts, I make the point that ironically, there is nothing new created here. What actually occurs here, as Norman Habel alludes to, is the revelation of the *Erets* that was subdued in the primordial waters.[30] So there is no new creation but the appearance of an entity that was already in existence. A revelation, not a creation. The first half of the command is directed to the waters below the Sky, ordering them to gather into one place. The Hebrew term used here to describe the modification of the waters is קוה (*qāwāh*) which means 'be collected' in the Niphal stem.

The second half of God's creative speech is directed to the יבשה (*yabāšāh*) 'dry land'; ordering the dry land to appear from its locality beneath the waters. The Hebrew term that describes the appearance of the dry land is ראה meaning 'be seen' or 'to appear'. Considering these meanings, we can suggest that the creative speech invites the dry land to show itself so that it is visible in creation.

In addition, the nature of the emerging land can be seen through a closer look at the Hebrew term יבשה (*yabāšāh*). It is employed elsewhere in the Old Testament to describe God's miracles, as in the case of the Flood, the Crossing of the Sea of Reeds and the Jordan River narratives.[31] In these cases, the dry land is considered to be a miracle for the salvation of the people. Reading this depiction into Genesis 1 portrays the appearance of the dry land as a miraculous event for the betterment of the rest of creation. Furthermore, God's act of distinguishing the dry land and the waters is cemented by naming the dry land Earth and the waters Seas. This reading resonates with the Climate Change perspective to the degree that it reveals the distinction of land and sea by God. This distinction is now being destroyed by the rising sea level associated with Climate Change, which in turn submerges the dry land. In this sense what God has created is uncreated by Climate Change.

In summary, the *autalaga* of God's creative activities studied here reveal God through the creative process brings life and order to the chaotic existence of the earth. God brings life to creation by calling light into existence while the divine acts of separating and naming draws distinction between the components of the earth. However,

[30] Habel, *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth*, 31-32.

[31] The Flood Narrative can be found in Gen. 6-9. In Gen. 8:7 and 14, יבשה is used to depict the subsiding of the waters. In Jos. 4:23 יבשה is used to describe God's drying up of the Jordan River and the Sea of Reed to allow Israel's crossings.

viewing these divine creations from the perspective of Climate Change disclose that under Climate Change God's creation is at risk. The impact of Climate Change is evidence of the undoing of God's creative work and return to the watery-chaotic existence of the pre-created earth.

Conclusion

Reading Gen. 1:1–10 in light of Climate Change and its impact through the use of the Samoan *autalaga* reading approach has revealed insights to the Genesis 1 creation account. First, the chaotic existence of the pre-created earth reflects a state that requires reorganizing and reconditioning. This pre-created sight resonates with a world in need of reorganizing and re-creation as a result of Climate Change. Alternatively, God's creative actions in the creation of light, the firmament and the land can be viewed as the divine attempt to bring order into this chaotic existence can be viewed as the way God intends creation to be. An existence that is heavily jeopardized due to the adverse effects of the Anthropogenic Climate Change. Although the Priestly writers of Genesis 1 may not have understood Climate Change in its current existence, it is hard to ignore that there are indeed ethical dilemmas in relation to the creation brought about as a result of androcentric tendencies in reading. To that, this essay serves as a response to those ethical considerations. It is my hope that viewing the Genesis 1 creation account in light of the Anthropogenic Climate Change and vice versa could prompt us to actions through the realization that contributing to Climate Change is contrary to the divine intention for creation.

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The Political Unconscious and the Book of Haggai: Text as a Symbolic Resolution

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Abstract

The term "political unconscious" (henceforth – PU) was coined by American Marxist Fredric Jameson as the way to express the relationship between creative works and their political dimensions. For Jameson, political interpretation should be "the absolute horizon of all reading and interpretation."[1] *In formulating of PU, Jameson appropriates Freud's psychoanalytical proposals concerning the role of the unconscious*[2] *and Lévi-Strauss's anthropological method for interpreting the facial decorations of the Caduveo Indigenous people of South America. For Jameson, creative and artistic works can be seen as symbolic solutions to social and cultural tensions and conflicts. In other words, the text is perceived to symbolically resolve real social, political and historical problems.*

This article is the first segment of two which applies Jameson's textual theory for a critical reading of the book of the prophet Haggai. The reading explores and exposes tensions and conflicts at the socio-economic context of the prophet which are represented in the text. While the text is dominated by the idea that the work was carried out smoothly with no interruptions, fragments of an earlier way of life and voices against the grain are identifiable which show that the task – handed to the golah community – of rebuilding the temple was not as straight-forward as some may have alleged it to be. This will lead to the second point of discussion which is to expose this line of thought as a consequence of how the text is assumed to have a resolving influence over social tensions and conflicts. This segment will concentrate on the initial horizon of Jameson's theory – which is the Political phase – focussing on the tensions and possible resolution(s) specifically in the form and structure of the text.

Key Words: Marxism, Haggai, Poetry, Prose, Fredric Jameson, Old Testament Prophets, Ideologies.

Method & Methodology

PU has become a popular theory in the works of Marxist scholars,[3] however, the most detailed presentation of Jameson's three-tier method for interpreting (biblical) texts is found in Boer's *Jameson and Jeroboam.*[4] For Jameson, seeing texts as "symbolic acts"

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[1] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), 17.

[2] Freud's psychoanalytical theory argues that our behaviours are driven by all sorts of things that happened in our past in which are often not at all conscious in our present. For Freud, this unconscious mind was the primary source of human behaviour. This is highlighted in the analogy of the iceberg, where the most important part of the mind is the part that cannot be seen. Sigmund Freud, *General Psychological Thought: Papers on Metapsychology* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1963), 116-150.

[3] Jameson's textual theory of *PU* is no easy endeavour to comprehend especially when compared to the works of fellow Marxist scholars such as Eagleton, Yee, Sneed, Clines, Penchansky, and many others. Whilst the theory may have been popular in the United States, the lack of attention it received in Europe is mainly due to difficulty in trying to comprehend. See Sean Homer, *Fredric Jameson: Marxism, Hermeneutics, Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 2.

[4] Roland Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 43-98.

can be regarded as the "resolution" of a "contradiction."[5] Jameson draws this concept from Levi-Strauss' study of the Caduveo facial paintings in which symbols had become an imaginary response to real social problems.[6]

The PU's interpretive methodology consists of three levels or horizons of analysis. It commences with the political phase where the text is perceived as a symbolic act designed to resolve contradictions.[7] The task at this level will be to identify tensions and contradictions in the form and structure of the text. This article will deal with the forms of poetry and prose where these formal contradictions will then be mediated to the realm of ideologies in preparation for the discussion of tensions on a more social level. Another important element that appears here is the discussion on containment strategies[8] and how the text provides the illusion of completeness and harmonious relationships.

The second stage is the social phase in which the question of ideologies and social class become the focal point. The phase commences with the identifying fragments that represent certain ideologies known as "ideologemes."[9] If the biblical text is perceived as a symbolic act responding to resolve social tensions and contradictions, the presence of opposing ideologemes should be evident, even if they may only exist in traces and fragments. So, we aim to identify units representing the dominant ideology of the ruling class and traces of a utopian view of the ruled class.

The final stage is the historical phase which is defined in terms of the economic context and focuses on modes of production. The task is to trace signs of coexisting modes of production.[10] Boer refers to these signs under the label "figurations," which denotes how "various forms represent their respective modes of production." The conflicting nature of these figurations in the text move to totally disrupt any illusion of completeness and harmony one may have perceived of the text.

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[5] To perceive literature as a socially symbolic act is inspired by Kenneth Burke's literary theory. Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1966), vii – ix.

[6] The Caduveo tribe of Brazil existed in a three-class social hierarchy where relations of domination and political power portray tensions and conflicts between men and the inferior women, the youth in subordination to the elders, and the development of the hereditary aristocratic class. Unlike the neighbouring tribes, the Caduveo tribe did not have a form of resolution to these social problems. This meant that there was only a continuous dream which was articulated and remained within the people as real social resolutions never formulated in reality. This yearning reached a state in which imagining the resolution began to have an impact on the people. For Lévi-Strauss, the facial paintings of the Caduveo women can be perceived as a "phantasm created by a society whose object was to give symbolic form to the institutions it might have had in reality. Focussing on the aesthetic structure, the painting on the face occurred on a different axis to that of the face itself and symbolically represented a resolution to social contradiction. The oblique symmetrical patterns reflected a formal resolution to the social conflict and tension. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John Russell (New York: Criterion Books, 1961), 160-180; William C. Dowling, *Jameson, Althusser, Marx: An Introduction to The Political Unconscious*, Routledge Library Editions: Marxism, Vol.4 (London: Routledge, 2015), 119-122.

[7] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 75; Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 44; Mark Sneed, "Qohelet and his "vulgar" critics," *The Bible and Critical Theory* Vol. 1 No. 1 (2004): 3; David Jobling, "Deconstruction and the Political Analysis of Biblical Texts: A Jamesonian Reading of Psalm 72," *Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts* (1992): 95-127.

[8] Jameson's understanding of this concept "refers to the power of a narrative ideology to project the illusion that it has said all there is to say, that the account is complete." Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 52-53. See also Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 49.

[9] Ideologeme is defined as "the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes." These ideologemes have two major functions, "legitimation and subversion." Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 76; Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 54-57.

[10] Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 80.

This work will present only the initial horizon to discuss tensions between prosaic and poetic forms in the book of Haggai. It will also aim to expose how the text functions as a symbolic resolution to these conflicts.

The Form of the book of Haggai – The Political Phase

From the outset, redaction and form critical analysis have been the central foci in studies of the book of Haggai. There was a general agreement amongst scholars concerning the different layers in the book, and respectively, a variety of forms which were possibly associated with the various stages of the material's transmission.[11] Within the prophetic arena, this concerns the transformation from oracles to narrative or chronicle form. Furthermore, in these early stages, redaction strategies meant a breaking down of the text into units which are then separately analysed.[12] A key modification was realized in the works of Childs, who offers theological and hermeneutical implications; (1) concludes that there is a slight balance between political action and the *eschaton*. Haggai is perceived as a political activist committed to the political programme of the restoration of the temple. At the same time this political message is situated within a larger theological context. (2) The dangers of focussing too much on historical reconstruction tend to overwhelm the theological thrust of the canonical shape. An example is the focus on the Samaritan tension and its theological implications despite its absence in the text. (3) The prophetic word should be the criterion to which history should be judged and not the other way around which is the common practice in historical critical scholarship.[13] Furthermore, Meyers and Meyersdo not refute the standing layers but argue for an analysis of the text as a coherent whole to be more fruitful today.[14] This work will therefore emphasize the canonical shape, final form and the final redactor of the text. Many scholars have built on this approach.[15] Whilst historical-critical[16] methods remain

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[11] Peter R. Ackroyd is to be credited as the main contributor for putting forward four chief phases in the transmission process, i.e. (1) oral deliveries or the original prophecies of the prophet, (2) the oral transmission of these prophecies, (3) an early written collection of the prophecies which may have occurred during or shortly after the ministry of Haggai, and (4) a final editor who expanded and reinterpreted the writings 1 - 2 centuries later. For Ackroyd, the final editor's purpose was to repudiate Samaritan claims during the Second temple period. Peter R. Ackroyd, "Studies in the Book of Haggai," *Journal of Jewish Studies* (1951): 163-76.

[12] W. A. Beuken deals specifically with the final redactors who converted the prophetic oracles to "scene sketches." The first redactor is perceived as a Judean conservative who condemn any form of Jewish syncretism. The final redactor is known as the Chronistic editor who shares the anti-Samaritan perspective. W. A. M Beuken, "Haggai-Sacharja 1-8," *Scottish Journal of Theology* Vol. 22 (1967): 221-22.

[13] Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 470 – 471.

[14] Carol L. Myers and Eric M. Myers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), lxx.

[15] Seth Sykes, "Time and Space in Haggai-Zechariah 1-8: A Bakhtinian Analysis of a Prophetic Chronicle," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 76 (1997): 97-124; Ray L. Huntington, "Consider Your Ways: The Book of Haggai and the Responsibilities and Blessings of Temple Work," in *Sperry Symposium Classics: The Old Testament*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Salt Lake City: Brigham Young University, 2005), 236–244; Max Rogland, "Two Philological Notes on Haggai 2:15–19," *Hebrew Studies* 54 (2013): 69 –77.

[16] The following are other works that utilize the traditional historical-critical analysis. Peter C. Craigie, *The Twelve Prophets: Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi* (Philadelphia / Edinburgh: Westminster / Saint Andrew Press, 1985); J. Alberto Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament: From its Origins to the Closing of the Alexandria Canon* (London: SCM Press, 1976).

an essential element of biblical studies, attention has shifted to the revival of literary critical analysis in conjunction with the emerging importance of social sciences.[17]

In this brief history of the Haggai debate, the major movement is the adjustment from the studying of separate units to examining the text as a cohesive whole. Nevertheless, the individuality of each unit remain vital as they are parts which make up the whole.

Prose & Poetry – Tensions and Conflicts

We shall commence with a brief mention of the existing debate in form. The literary surface of Haggai has been difficult to characterize and critical opinions remain divided. It is evident however, that two formal features have dominated discussions over the years till now. The debate as to whether the book is 'prose' or 'poetry' originated from comparative studies carried out on the Hebrew texts of Haggai. O. Procksch's (1937) assessment in *BHK* – Kittel's edition of the Masoretic text – has the book of Haggai printed as prose. K. Elliger (1970), in his editorial work for *BHS* – Stuttgart edition – decided to present most of Haggai's speeches as poetry (1:3–11; 1:15b; 2:3-9; 2:14–19; 2:20–23).[18] Roughly 30 percent of the book is prose (Hag 1:1–2, 12–15a; 2:1–2, 10–13), but let us not be misled by this figure as the prose characteristics and elements[19] loudly demand attention for themselves as we shall see. Our rhetorical discussion will move to highlight tensions that may exist in this relationship and discuss how they are resolved by the text.

בשנת שתים לדריוש המלך בחדש הששי ביום אחד לחדש היה דבר יהוה ביד חגי הנביא אל
זרבבל בן שאלתיאל פחת יהודה ואל יהושע בן יהוצדק הכהן הגדול לאמר

> In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest: (Hag 1:1)

The first talking point of this verse is the precision in the dating. It is worth noting that the inclusion of the month and day in dating is a development of the mid sixth century B.C.E. The normal practice prior to the seventh century B.C.E. was the sole use of the year (1 Kgs 15:9; 16:10, etc; Isa 14:28; Amos 1:1) whereas the more precise dating would vary with the incorporation of the month and day. At times the full date would be given with year, month and day (2 Kgs 25:1, 8, 27; Jer 39:2; 52:4, 12; Ezek 1:1; 20:1, etc). On other occasions only the year and month were reported (Jer 28:1, 17; 36:9; 39:1), and finally other dating would include only the month and day (2 Kgs 25:3; Jer 52:

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[17] Noelle McAfee, *Democracy and the Political Unconscious* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2008); Stefan Hawling, "Love Among the Political Ruins: 1848 and the Political Unconscious of Men and Women," *Victorian Poetry* Vol. 50 No. 4 (2012): 503 – 520.

[18] Duane L. Christensen, "Impulse and Design in the Book of Haggai," *JETS* 35/4 (1992): 445-456; David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8: A Commentary* TOTL, eds. Peter Ackroyd, James Barr, Bernhard W. Anderson, and James L. Mayes (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 32.

[19] In prose conversations we find that 'characteristic' is usually used synonymously with 'elements.' In this work I wish to use them distinctively. 'Prose characteristic' focuses strictly on the literary situation, i.e. language, grammar, syntax, etc. 'Prose elements' shall focus more on the narrative-related questions such as characters, plot, setting, themes, etc...

6).[20] In addition, the precise dating became a typical feature in the works of the scribes from the late exilic period onwards. The postexilic prophets including Haggai also showed the popularity of this feature – *"...second year... sixth month... first day."*[21] Petersen states that dating is an element of prose[22] which may fall in line with Ackroyd's claim that dating was evidence of later insertions.[23] This article upholds the popular prosaic nature of the dating; but considering their function in the narrative, it would be useful to analyse all four dates (Hag 1:1, 15; 2:1, 2:10) within the proposed prosaic sections.

The specific arrangement of year, month and day is of interest. With the exception of the omitted year in 1:15, we find an alternating pattern; i.e. year, month, day (Hag 1:1); day, month (1:15); year, month, day (2:1); and day, month, year (2:10). Once again from a prosaic perspective, the case could be made for these dates functioning as an envelope to bring a sense of totality to the entire text. Kessler notes how the sequence of the dates reflect a transformation and transition in the political and social situation of the people of Yehud, i.e. while the year, month, day order represented an older Judean date formula, the reversed day, month, year represented a typical Persian arrangement.[24] Rhetorically, while the system of referring to dates resembles that of pre-exilic prophets, the displacement of the kings of Judah and Israel by the Persian monarch also highlights the shift from an older order to the new.

Our next point is the syntactical use of the words ביד *"in the hand of.../through"* and אל*"to"* to make clear distinction between the mediator and the recipient of Yahweh's word. First, the phrase ביד*"in the hand of.../through"* is a common Hebrew idiom normally used to describe the prophetic mediation of Moses in the Pentateuch (Lev 8:36, 10:11; Num. 4:37-45; Jos. 14:2; etc.).[25] Only occasionally is it used to refer to mediation of prophets in general (2 Kgs 12:13; Ezek 38:17; Zech 7:7, 12; 2 Sam 2:25; 1 Kgs 12:15; Isa 20:2; Jer 37:2, 50:1; Mal 1:1). It is quite possible that the author(s) intended message (s) were closely associated with the Deuteronomic pattern of blessings and curses[26] which is clearly portrayed in the narrative, but that at this time it is the temple that acts as the main criterion. Second, going back to the word combination, Redditt sees the lack of concern for genealogy and other elements typical of the prophetic superscriptions[27] as a sign of the writer's – referred to as the chronicler – sole purpose to highlight Haggai's role as mediator of the word.[28] Again we have no problem with making the prosaic connection, in fact, based on further biblical occurrences (1 Kgs 16:7, 12; Jer 50:1), Wolff observes that the combination is "chroniclelike."[29]

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[20] John Kessler, *The Book of Haggai: Prophecy & Society in Early Persian Yehud* (Leiden/Boston/Koln: Brill, 2002), 42-44.

[21] Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 42-44, 115.

[22] Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, 42.

[23] Peter Ackroyd, "Two Old Testament Historical Problems of the Early Persian Period," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* Vol .17 no. 1 (1958): 13-27; Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 44.

[24] See Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 45-48 for a detail discussion of the order in dating.

[25] Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary* The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D. J. Wiseman (London: The Tyndale Press, 1972), 38.

[26] The "Deuteronomistic Principle" in its simplest explanation is; obedience to Yahweh's commands brings blessing. Disobedience brings a curse and destruction.

[27] Sweeney appropriately refers to the "superscriptions" as "narrative introductions" which is their main function. See Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Prophetic Literature* IBT (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 33.

[28] Paul L, Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. The New Century Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 17. See also Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, xiii – lxvii.

[29] Hans Walter Wolff, *Haggai: A Commentary,* trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 31.

At this point we must note the occurrence of ביד *"in the hand of.../through"* in Hag 1:3, which according to our breakdown is part of the poetic element of the text. For Wolff, this combined with the היה דבר יהוה *"the coming of the word of Yahweh..."* resembles the formula of the opening verse.[30] Both verses portray the "prophetic word formula" which functioned to introduce a private communication from Yahweh to the prophet. While the formula is later applied to introduce collections of prophetic oracles (Jer 2:1: 14:1: 24:4: 25:1; 30:1), it is influenced by the earlier narrative introduction of prophetic words (2 Sam 7:4; 1 Kgs 16:1; 17:2; 18:1).[31] While the repetition of this formula (Hag 1:1, 3, 2:1, 10) may highlight prosaic influence, it can just as well represent poetic resistance. The repetition indicates that Hag 1:1 is not a heading for the entire book but rather for the first oracle alone. This would mean that despite a very visible and dominant prosaic framework, it does not rid the text of poetic elements. In other words, the oracles are still distinct through this introductory formula.[32] In this case we see tension between prose and poetry in the opening verse itself.

The use of epithets also plays a role in the tension. Redditt argues that the mention of the two leaders with their epithets is necessary as it represents for the redactor the three establishments which he contemplated belonged to the restoration, i.e. prophecy, monarchy and priesthood.[33] While this may have a narrative feel to it, we may also take note of how Haggai's use of epithets for Darius, Zerubbabel and Joshua forms a structural parallelism,[34] which is a poetic rhetorical feature.

Finally the name Haggai, חגי (*hagai*) – meaning *"festal,"* is believed to derive from חג (*hag*) "*feast, holiday."*[35] In historical terms, Meyers and Meyers argue that the name had no symbolic connection with the festivals and celebrations associated with the temple of the time.[36] While this position is understandable at one level, it is also possible to analyse the text from a rhetorical perspective, in terms of the presumed emphasis of the author(s) or final editor of the book. Thus, the affiliation between the prophet's name and the Jewish annual festivals may have been intended by the author to urge the rebuilding of the temple.[37] Although wordplay is common in both poetry and prose, here, the rhetoric appears more effective – in this case – as part of the narrative.

כה אמר יהוה צבאות לאמר העם הזה אמרו לא עת בא עת בית יהוה להבנות

> Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord's house. (Hag 1:2)

The messenger formula כה אמר יהוה *"thus says Yahweh,"* a core feature of the Hebrew prophetic material is the identification by the speaker of the one who ordered the

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[30] Wolff, *Haggai*, 32.

[31] Burke O. Long, *1 Kings: With an Introduction to Historical Literature* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company,1984), 265.

[32] For Meyers and Meyers, Haggai demonstrates patterns in Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah where this phrase begins oracular units. See Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8,* 7-8*;* Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi,* 17; Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, 44-45.

[33] Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 18-19.

[34] Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 118.

[35] Although other sources for Haggai's name have been suggested, - חָגָא"reeling" and חגיה "feast of Yah" – they still relate back to the root **חג**. *"feast, holiday."* See Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8,* 8.

[36] Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8,* 8-9.

[37] Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi,* 17. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, 44-45.

transmitting of the message.[38] The formula projects a very close relationship between the oracles of Haggai and the word of Yahweh. Given the prophet's status as mediator, the formula authenticates his message. In other words when the prophet speaks, Yahweh is also speaking. This was one way to validate a message in the days of oral delivery, which continued to be as effective in written form.[39] Although this section is presumably prose, we see yet again, the ongoing struggle between prose and poetry.

The latter part of the sentence expresses the people's perception of time and rebuilding the temple. We take note especially of the repetition of the word "time" (עת) which has been at the root of textual debates; i.e.[40] *"the time has not come..."* as opposed to *"it is not time to come."* In Hag 1:2, time is the subject of the verb in the former but not in the latter as the subject is not mentioned, leaving room for speculation. The main assumption is that the people – who are also mentioned in Hag 2:14 – are the subjects.[41] Seen in conjunction with the occurrence in Hag 1:4, threefold repetition draws the attention of the audience – both listener and reader[42] – to the special relationship of the concept of time and the temple.[43] Intriguingly, while the poetic material contains the single use in Hag 1:4, the redactional activities have added the double use, to emphasis time. Thus, we encounter an example of poetic material is utilized in prose and moulds it for its purposes.

To further display the tension between the competing forms, we will move to a rhetorical analysis of the structure. We will make use of an ancient structural technique that employs reverse parallelism, i.e. "chiasmus" or "chiasm." [44]

A 1. In the second year of King Darius
2. ...in the sixth month
3. ...on the first day of month (1:1a)

B 1. Haggai the Prophet
2. Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel – governor of Judah
3. Joshua son of Jehozadak – the high priest
4. These people.
5. "...the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord" (i.e. the people do not work) (1:1b -2)

C "...your panelled houses... (1:4a)

D "... this house lies in ruins."(1:4b)

X 1. "Thus says the Lord..." (1:5a, 7a)
2. "Consider how you have fared..." (1:5b, 7b)
3. "... sowed much... harvest little..." (1:6, 9a)

D' "...my house lies in ruins..." (1:9c)

C' "... hurry off to your own houses."(1:9d)

B' 1. Haggai the messenger
2. Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel – governor of Judah
3. Joshua son of Jehozadak – the high priest

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[38] Long, *1 Kings*, 265.

[39] Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 122. Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 18.

[40] See Kessler on a detailed discussion of the textual debate, *The Book of Haggai*, 103-104.

[41] Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 103-104.

[42] I mention both listener and reader above as this repetitive strategy would be effective in both oral and written material.

[43] Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 103-104. Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8,* 20.

[44] While the first chiasm is inspired by the work of Swinburnson on Haggai 1:1-15, I have continued with three more chiastic analyses, each representing the final three messages and in effect form a series of rolling chiasms. Our intentions here are not only to pin down the individual central-points of each message, but more importantly to assess a possible overarching significance of the narrative they present as a collective. Benjamin W. Swinburnson, "The Rhetoric of the Post-Exilic Prophetic Reversal: Chiasmus in Haggai 1:1-15. A Structural and Biblical-Theological Analysis," *K:NWTS* 23/3 (2008): 54-74.

4. These people.
5. "...and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of host..." (i.e. the people work) (1:13-14)

A' 1. "... on the twenty-fourth day of the month,"
2. " ...in the sixth month..."
3. "In the second year of King Darius..." (1:15–2:1)

At the centre of the first message (Hag 1:1–2:1) is the call for the people to consider how they have fared, their journey and especially their current status. Their toils and labours amount to nothing, as revealed in the corresponding BB' CC' and DD.' The phrase שימו לבבכם על דרכיכם *consider your ways"* occurs 2 times (Hag 1:5, 7) with an edited version *"consider"* occurring 3 times (Hag 2:15, 18(2x)). The full phrase is rare in the Bible and the closest to it outside of Haggai are the words of Moses urging the people to consider the words of the law (Deut 32:45). Here Haggai admonishes the people to reflect what they have been doing, and to respond accordingly. There is no doubt that the text – in either oral or written form – emphasizes the need for the people to seriously reflect on their situation and to respond. [45]

The structure highlights progression from the peoples' idleness to being active. This is also the main message of the poetic section (Hag 1:3–11) which is embedded in this narrative unit. It is maintained by the redactor(s) with the addition of a superscription (1:1–2) and epilogue (1:12–15a), which not only serve to provide context for the reader, but – the epilogue in particular – totally reverses the negative situation. In other words, the epilogue appears to resolve the issues and tensions among Yahweh, the people and the temple. On a formal level, the tension continues in prose's use of the poetic section. Furthermore, the epilogue almost undermines the content of the central message.

A 1. "In the second year of King Darius..."
2. " ...in the seventh month..."
3. "... on the twenty-first day of the month,"
4. "The word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai saying..." (2:1)

B Latter house is a disappointment compared to the former (2:3)

C Zerubbabel, Joshua, the people of the land encouraged to work on temple (2:4a)

X "... I am with you ... do not fear." (2:4b-5)

C' God works to fill the temple with splendour (2:6-8)

B' The splendour of the latter house shall be greater than the former (2:9)

A' 1. "On the twenty-fourth day..."
2. " ...of the ninth month..."
3. "...in the second year of King Darius..."
4. "The word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai saying..." (2:10)

In the second message (Hag 2:1–2:10), progression is seen in the status of the latter house when compared to the former. Evident is the movement from being a disappointment to having more splendour than the old. Moreover, the people are initially encouraged to do the work; yet, it is actually Yahweh that does the works. At the centre of message two is the assurance of Yahweh's presence amongst his people... "I am with you... do not fear." The question here is: why did the people need reassurance of

[45] On an intertextual relationship is concerned, connection with the Mosaic traditions is an appeal that the people should not only remember and reflect on their past but also hopefully to perceive their situation in light of the Deuteronomic pattern of blessing and cursing.

Yahweh's presence? Were they beginning to lose faith? We note Assis' theory of how the structure plays a role in trying to resolve the peoples' struggle to accept the disappointing postexilic reality.[46] As we know from the long history of Yahweh's relationship with his people, questioning Yahweh's presence had become a norm and major characteristic of the people. Thus, returning to the message above, the decline in faith clearly plays a role in the work on Yahweh's house coming to a halt. The initial work may have already indicated to the people that this building lacked the greatness and splendour of the past temple. However, the turning point is the reassurance that as from then on, it is Yahweh that guides them to complete the task. It will be Yahweh that brings the splendour to the building and in effect exceed the magnificence of the former. Once again, the redactor(s) framework provides context like the first message

A 1. "On the twenty-fourth day..."
2. "...of the ninth month..."
3. "The word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai saying..." (2:10)
B The rewards of the unclean (2:12-17)
X "Consider from this day on... Since the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid..." (2:18)
B' The rewards for the blessed (2:19)
A' 1. "The word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai ..."
2. "...on the twenty-fourth day..."
3. "...of the month..." (2:20)

The corresponding BB' in the third message (Hag 2:10-2:20) discusses two different outcomes for two different statuses. The products from the toils of the unclean are struck by natural disasters, while the blessed thrive and, with them, their produce. The focal point is the importance of the laying of the foundations of the temple. Commencing the work on the temple is obviously the turning point. Alternatively, working on the temple can be the criterion that defines what is unclean and thus destined for hardship and what is blessed and fated for good things. The context provided by the redactor(s) to this discussion is Hag 2:11-13, which is also the last section commonly designated as prose in the text. Priestly laws like the Mosaic connection mentioned above also provides context to comprehend the futile nature of the work of the people's hands. In effect, it strongly endorses the need to re-erect the temple.

A Zerubbabel – governor of Judah (2:21a)
X The Lord intervenes to bring victory (2:21b-22)
A' Zerubbabel – like a signet ring, the Lord's chosen (2:23)

Finally, the fourth message (2:20-23) makes it obvious that its major concern is with the person of Zerubbabel who at first is referred to as the governor of Judah and then progresses to be Yahweh*'s* signet ring. At the core of this short message is divine intervention: it is once again Yahweh who will bring change and raise Zerubbabel's status as the future leader. The redactor(s) may have seen no reason to add further to this message and employed it as is.

Overall, the redactor(s) hand is clear in each of the four messages, with a distinct impact from a rhetorical point of view. In the first three chiasms, the redactor(s) intervenes in the text, refocussing the emphasis of the message, while in the final

[46] Assis's theory is discussed further in the next section. Elie Assis, "Haggai: Structure and Meaning," *Biblica* 87 no. 4 (2006): 531-41.

chiasm, the redactor(s) draws back, allowing the original message to speak. So, despite the overarching nature of prose in these texts, there is clear significance to the poetic elements as noted in the discussions above.

The next step is to assess the four messages, focussing on the four focal points to construct an opinion.

X 1. "Thus says the Lord..." (1:5a, 7a)
2. "Consider how you have fared..." (1:5b, 7b)
3. "... sowed much... harvest little..." (1:6, 9a)

X "... I am with you ... do not fear." (2:4b-5)

X "Consider from this day on... Since the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid..." (2:18)

X The Lord intervenes to bring victory (2:21b-22)

We commence by considering the status of their efforts. They sow much but do not gather the rewards, as the takings are few. Considering what follows, it appears that Yahweh's presence and affiliation with the people had great effect on their social and economic struggles. Yet, it is from such unfavourable conditions that the people are reassured of Yahweh's presence and encouraged to work on the temple. Finally, they are emboldened that the moment they continue the work, Yahweh will be active and ensure a victorious future for them.

The whole framework maintains the core messages and emphasis of each oracle. Yet while the messages within their distinct focal points appear disconnected, the impact of the redactor(s) is optimised through the weaving of the oracles together within the narrative to address contemporary issues. Indeed, the temple is the key that initiates the turn-around for the people. The whole future for the people relies on their response towards the temple. If they decide to work, they will be blessed, if they remain immobile and continue to neglect the work required for the temple, they will ultimately suffer the consequences.

To reiterate an important point, a casual observation of the locations of the prose-allocated verses would immediately indicate support for the familiar claim that the original oracles of the prophet were moulded into a narrative framework by a redactor (s).[47] As for the tension between poetry and prose, it is obvious that despite the dominance of the prosaic form, it is in constant tension with poetic elements. Although the latter appear to be undermined, they never truly disappear. Furthermore, the fact that the prose frame requires at times the raw rhetorical power of poetry, this may represent a flaw in its controlling efforts. This tension is highlighted in a constant interchange in the text with prose often appearing poetic and vice versa. Further, prose elements show up in poetic sections poetry in prose. Poetry is well known for its rich language and imagery which portrays the emotion of the speaker. Accordingly, it appears that the fragments of poetry embedded in prose narratives may serve that very purpose – taking advantage of the emotional power of poetry to assist with the intended message.

The idea that these formal contradictions may represent social and ideological

[47] Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 31. See also Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi,* 11-12.

conflict and tension are discussions for the final two phases of Jameson's approach. For our purpose, we shall move to complete the first phase and discuss possible resolutions to these issues.

Brief Apologetic Historical Account – A Symbolic Resolution

At this point, we move to the question of how the text attempts to resolve this tension between poetry and prose. We pick up on the conclusion by Andersen and Freedman who developed the "prose particle count"[48] to distinguish between prose and poetry – that the majority of the prophetic literature cannot be confined to either poetry or prose, thus suggesting "an intermediate mode."[49] Notwithstanding this suggestion, the 'intermediate mode' represents a form of resolution on a formal level.

The "prose-particle counts" theory is that certain particles – namely, the relative pronoun אשר *"which,"* accusative marker את and definite article הָ *"the"* – are used eight times as often in classical Hebrew prose texts than they are in classical Hebrew poetry. Freedman – in comparing the book of Haggai to other poetry and prose in the biblical text – suggests that the first two particles occur more than they do in poetic texts such as Psalms, Job and Proverbs. Conversely, they are used less often than they occur in prose texts such as Genesis, Deuteronomy and Joshua.[50] This then appears to place Haggai between OT texts which are definite prose and those that are obviously poetic. In other words, elevated or oracular prose characteristically portrays significant features of poetry, but at the same time maintain fundamentals of prose literature.[51] We shall now discuss this conjunction under the label – brief apologetic historical account.

While the most basic division of the text of Haggai would be by section,[52] the most popular division closely follows the conspicuous chronological staging of the book's four messages or oracles.[53]

Hag. 1:1-15 – 1st day of 6th month, 2nd year of Darius.
Hag. 2:1 – 9 – 21st day of 7th month, 2nd year of Darius.
Hag. 2:10 – 19 – 24th day of 9th month, 2nd year of Darius.
Hag. 2:20–23 – 24th of 9th month, 2nd year of Darius.

The four oracles are clearly identified by introductory statements or superscriptions that

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[48]The 'prose particle count' method "aims at distinguishing prose and poetry based on the density of certain grammatical words that are recognized as being common in prose narrative and infrequent in unambiguous poetic texts." Extraction from John A. Cook, "Hebrew Language," *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, eds. J. G. McConville and Mark J. Boda (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 307.

[49] Francis Anderson and David Noel Freedman, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 145.

[50] David Noel Freedman, "Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: An Essay on Biblical Poetry," *JBL* 96/1 (1997): 5-26.

[51] The conjunction between prose and poetry has been discussed under various labels. Initially this juxtaposition was referred to as poetic prose. Hill – who uses the prose-particle count to assess the book of Malachi – simply refers to the form as prose; despite the presence of poetic features. Meyers and Meyers deemed such a description insufficient – when dealing with the books of Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 – and prefer the terms "oracular prose" or even ''elevated prose." Andrew Hill, *Malachi*, *A New Translation with Introduction Commentary* AB, Vol. 25, eds. William F. Albright, David N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc, 1998), 23-25. Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, lxiii – lxvii.

[52]Some basically divide the book of Haggai according to the two chapters. See Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, xii.

[53] Every structural proposal is unique in its own right, but, they do not wander too far from this backbone.

serve as boundary markers (Hag 1:1–2; 2:1–2; 10–11; 20–21). As noted earlier in this section, these prophetic superscriptions usually state the prophet, his ancestry and place of origin. Furthermore, names of kings during whose reign(s) the prophet was active are declared and concluded by an indication of the subject matter of the prophecy (Isa 1:1; Jer. 1:1-3; Ezek 1:2-3; Hos1:1; Amos 1:1; Mic 1:1; Zeph 1:1; Zech 1:1). Others such as Daniel, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Malachi however do not employ all these characteristics,. Although the question of ideology will be the core of the next phase, initial ideological discussions will be unavoidable in our attempt to explain the layout of the text, with its ideological form aimed to resolve social contradictions.[54] While we have already begun the analysis concerning the organization of the oracles, or "raw material," further structural analysis is still needed.

Elie Assis proposes a possible significance of the text's structure. Assis argues that the book's unified structure is part of the prophet's rhetoric to "resolve" the people's struggle to come to terms with a disappointing postexilic reality.[55] Although no reference is made to Jameson, we may argue that Assis' conclusion appears to be somewhat unconsciously Jamesonian in nature. At this point, Assis correctly points out that structural patterns are deliberate and serve specific purposes for the author(s). In the four messages, Assis reveals a "progression" of thought from "admonition to consolation"[56] in the first two oracles and a repetition of the progression in the final two messages.

To bring into perspective Assis' findings it would be appropriate to introduce Kessler's alternative description, A/B/A/B.[57] In a stricter pattern, Assis' findings resembles A-B/A-B, showing the progression in the two subsections. However, the key to Assis' analysis is that the book of Haggai is treated as a unified literary work. Progression in its most basic sense normally gives forth the impression of moving to a more advanced state, whether the outcome awaiting at the end of the journey be favourable or not. For instance a favourable progression can be perceived as getting closer to achieving a degree while an unfavourable form of progression would be the progression in the state of a disease. Thus, the focus then should be on understanding the concept of progression, as initial instincts would perceive a conflict between the claim of a "progression" throughout both structures and the "alternating" patterns.

The alternating pattern does not necessarily have to contradict progression, but is rather part of a wider understanding of the concept. In other words, tensions and struggles occur in order for an advance in movement. Progression to a more advanced state is not about smooth and unchallenged journeys, for they are full of struggles, mistakes and setbacks which are all part of the learning process and moving forward. Rhetorically, the structural movement back and forth can symbolize friction, tension and struggle. We may take note that such an examination can easily be categorised in the unfavourable structural analysis of "binary opposition," nonetheless, as Boer has concluded, even though Jameson labours to avoid this method in search of the initial contradiction, Jameson himself was not always successful.[58]

Building on these structural discussions, we now move into the discussion of form. Here, we wish to explore a specific form initially called the "historical short account," which is later referred to as a "brief apologetic historical account."[59] N. Lohfink has been credited with the identifying of this genre in his study of Jeremiah 26, 36; and 37-41 (1978). Although Lohfink does not discuss in detail distinct features of the

[54] Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam,* 44.
[55] Elie Assis, "Haggai: Structure and Meaning," *Biblica* 87 no. 4 (2006): 531-41.
[56] Assis, "Haggai: Structure and Meaning," 536.
[57] Kessler, *The Book of Haggai,* 251.
[58] Boer, *Jameson and Jeroboam*, 44.
[59] Petersen renames the genre with the addition of "apologetic" as he feels that each of the texts Lohfink studies appears to be making very specific points. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, 34-35.

genre, Petersen has been able to identify a list of characteristics from Lohfink's work:

1. It is a relatively short prose narrative; the longest example runs some four sections.

2. The narrative focuses on an important person or persons.

3. These accounts are narratives that purport to be history, i.e., they provide a sequence of events often with chronological or other explicit time markers.

4. The stories are made up of several different scenes.

5. Dates regularly mark the boundaries between the individual scenes.

6. The scenes comprising the accounts are often of unequal length.

7. Such accounts often have a virtual apologetic focus, e.g., the Egyptian *gola* is wrong or Josiah's reforms are good.[60]

The book of Haggai satisfies most of these criteria. It is brief, with 38 verses divided into two sections. The narrative focuses on the Yehud community during the Persian reign, in particular the leaders and the prophet who are called by name in the narrative; namely, Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the High Priest, and Haggai the prophet. Darius the Persian monarch is also mentioned three times. Although the occurrences of the Persian's name may appear an indirect reference, his influence on his empire and subjects – including the Yehud community – should not be taken lightly, let alone the influence on the literature.[61] Finally, given that texts normally contain more than one point of view either co-existing with or against one another, the book of Haggai definitely has apologetic goal(s) especially in relation with the importance of the temple.

We are now left with the dilemma: how do we consider this intermediate mode? Do we consider this conjunction as a third genre or as a party locked in struggle for dominance with prose and poetry? Or do we consider it an attempted resolution? While the Hebrew style of the book of Haggai is characterized by certain awkwardness, at times we do find an effective use of certain rhetorical devices. Specifically, the book maintains some of the oral flavour of its sermons, while also indicating a more intricate style that is characteristic of a literary work. The intermediate mode can also be seen in terms of formal resolution to the conflict, i.e. the existence and acceptance of this form –

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[60] This list is an extraction from Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, 34-35.

[61] King Darius' influence on the cultures of his subjects are both direct and indirect. Directly, the king not only instructed the return of his subjects to build their temples, but another Persian policy was the codification of traditional laws; meaning that the imperial rule had direct participation in the legal activities of the province to ensure that the behaviour of their subjects remained within the precincts of the Persian interests. Samuel Balentine, "The Politics of Religion in the Persian Period," in *After the Exile: Essays in the Honour of Rex Mason*, eds. John Barton and David J. Reimer (Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1996), 139. On a more indirect note, we can assume that a percentage of the Persian interests being inscribed in the cultures and literatures of their subjects.

as in distinct from genre – draws the attention of the audience and readers away from the underlying conflict, in other words, this form papers over the tension between poetry and prose. The brief apologetic historical account can be seen thus as a formal closure or containment of the continuing conflict.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the conflicts and attempted resolution at this formal level indicate tensions on a socio-economic level and will be the task of the social and historical phases to reveal. However, to return to the discussion on the political phase, its literary nature alone provides fundamental insights in our approach to real life situations.

Unique to Jameson is the methodological approach in which the text functions as a response to symbolically resolve a social situation. Others merely see the text as reflecting the social and historical situation of its time, either the actual time identified by the text or the context of the text's production – or both. By contrast, this reading exposes the text on another level. That is, the fundamental truth uncovered through Jameson's perception of the text, is that containment strategies and efforts at closure have redrawn our attention to the illusions of our real-life situations. It raises awareness but also scepticism, not to uncritically accept what we are told. Furthermore, the relation between an idea, a belief, a text (and so on) is more complicated than we often assume. As Jameson argues, while these may at times be relatively direct reflections, more often they are indirect and mediated as responses to specific problems and questions.

Contextually, the significance of literature and all forms of text in the Pacific and especially the Samoan context comes into the spotlight. A PU approach would invite the re-evaluating and revisiting of these many forms of literature and art. What tensions would we find if we were to breakdown the structures that project the illusion of harmonious relationships? What struggles would be revealed when we remove the many beautiful facades we face in life?

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The Dead and Land in the Old Testament: A perspective on land and land rights from the work of the dead in Samoa

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Abstract

Land, as in most indigenous communities, is a significant part in the life of its people. The same can be said for the Samoan people. Samoans believed, in pre-Christian times, that their land is a gift from their gods. Their theological belief regarding land has not changed, even though the Christian God has now replaced their traditional gods. This is why land disputes in Samoa are very common especially among family members and also villages. They believe it is their duty to protect their rights to land under any circumstance. Evidence of one's claim on land includes some aspects of Samoan traditions such as lineage and mavaega (death will). Another aspect that also has a strong claim to land is the dead (ancestors), especially the location of their graves. It is this aspect regarding the dead and their influence on land claims that will be explored in this paper. To begin with, this article will explore the dead and their influences in the Old Testament before turning to the Samoan context. A synthesis and dialogue will then be carried out to highlight some aspects that will help address Samoan land disputes and issues regarding land ownership, claims and rights to land in contemporary Samoa.

Key words – land, land claims, land rights, customary land, dead, cult of the dead.

Introduction

In a context like Samoa, where the majority of land is classified as customary land, issues regarding land ownership are common between individuals, families, and even villages.[1] The majority of land disputes on customary land are mainly to contest the *pule* or authority. The paper will explore an aspect of Samoan Culture that Samoans consider as a marker of *pule* or authority over land. Moreover, as Christians, Samoans usually look to the Bible for guidance to all their problems. Therefore, this paper will also explore the issue of land and land claims in the Old Testament to help Samoans address their land issues.

One of the main aspects of Samoan Culture that strengthens a Samoan's claim to land is the significance of the dead (ancestors), especially the locations of their graves.

[1] Samoa lands are classified under three categories and are stipulated in the Samoan constitution. They are: Freehold Land, Government Land, and Customary Land. The main difference between these categories is that Freehold Land (owned by individuals and companies etc) and Government Land (owned by the Government and are administered by some Government Ministries and Corporations) are allowed to be sold out. However, customary land is not allowed to be alienated and it is stipulated in the Samoa Constitution. These lands are owned and administered by extended family or *aiga* through *matai* or high chiefs of the family according to Samoa law and customs. See Article 102 of the Constitution of the Independent State of Samoa.

Samoans believe that the dead and their work impact on the living and most importantly on claims to land. The paper will argue and highlight this Samoan claim in the Samoan context. It will also argue that this claim about the dead and their influences are reflected in the Old Testament. Lastly, I will attempt a dialogue between the two contexts to give some suggestions and guidance to address Samoan land disputes.

Given the above, the following discussion will be structured as follows. It will firstly look at the Old Testament and some of its view of the dead (ancestors), and also their relationship with land claims.[2] Secondly, the discussion of the same issues will move to the Samoan context. Finally, a synthesis through dialogue between the two contexts will highlight some aspects to help address Samoans' land disputes.

Ancestral (Patriarchal) Tradition

Before delving into the dead and their influences in Samoa, this section will look at the Old Testament for an ancestral tradition to inform us of its treatment of the dead and more importantly their relationship to land and claims to land. Identifying a distinct ancestral (patriarchal) tradition within the Old Testament, especially within the Book of Genesis (Genesis 12–50), is still a contentious issue. On one side, there are scholars who are skeptical and argue that there is not enough evidence in the Genesis narratives of old materials to sketch a genuine patriarchal tradition. The narratives in their final form are greatly affected by the author/writer's own religious agenda; Julius Wellhausen clarifies this point, "[W]e attain to no historical knowledge of the patriarchs, but only of the time when the stories about them arose in the Israelite people; this later age is here unconsciously projected, in its inner and its outward features, into hoar antiquity, and is reflected there like a glorified mirage."[3]

On the other hand, a number of scholars maintain that it is still possible to sketch an old and distinct tradition of the Patriarchs in the Book of Genesis (especially Genesis 12–50). That is, even though the final form of these Genesis narratives were narrated and written by someone from a later period, there still exist some old elements that are different from later Mosaic Tradition or the Yahwistic Tradition. Gordon J. Wenham suggests, after reviewing the historical setting of the patriarchs, that "we are dealing with old traditions refracted through the lens of a later period."[4] In addition, with regards to the religion of the patriarchs in Genesis, he argues that the pre-Mosaic religion is described from a post-Mosaic perspective.[5] W. Moberly similarly argues that the patriarchal narratives are told from a Yahwistic writer at a later period but a patriarchal tradition can still be drawn from it.[6] This later tradition is based on the belief in a monotheistic Yahweh deity and was enforced by the monarchy and later the Deuteronomistic school and the Priestly school.

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[2] Throughout the Old Testament there are multiple perspectives and attitudes towards land and land claims. For an overview of these different perspectives see Norman Habel, *The Land is Mine* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). In this essay I will focus mainly on ancestral claims as presented in the patriarchal stories in Genesis and the responses towards them as reflected in later traditions (such as P and D) in the Old Testament.

[3] Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* Reprint (Cleveland: World, 1965), 318-19. Gordon. J. Wenham claims some current scholars still maintain this view. See Gordon J. Wenham, *Gen 16–50,* WBC vol 1 (Dallas Texas: Word Books, 1994), xxxi.

[4] Wenham, *Gen 16–50,* xxx.

[5] Wenham, *Gen 16–50*, xxxi.

[6] R.W.L. Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament: Patriarchal Narratives and Mosaic Yahwism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 79-104.

Even though there are still some sceptic voices against the historicity of the patriarchs and their traditions, Wenham believes, the "dominant view this century [20th century] is that there are some old elements within Genesis that enable us to sketch the basics of patriarchal religion."[7]

Residues of Ancestral Religion

One of the most debatable issues with regards to the religion of the patriarchs is the revelation of the divine name. In Exodus 3:12–15, the name of God, YHWH, is said to have been revealed for the first time to Moses. Exodus 6:3 also maintains this and it reveals much more. This same God was also known to the patriarchs but by a different name, El Shaddai. The main problem regarding this is the appearance of YHWH as a divine name for God in the Genesis narratives. The statement that this is the first time God's name YHWH is revealed contradicts its appearances found in Genesis.

The problem initially was less significant as it was understood mainly in terms of sources, that is, the E (Exod 3:13–15) and P (Exod 6:2–3) layers are to be rejected on the basis that they are much later. The J version, which uses YHWH in Genesis, is the earliest and should take priority and thus be given more credit than those of E and P.[8] It therefore appears, in this case, the patriarchs knew the name Yahweh before the encounter with Moses.

The connection of the patriarchs to God as El or El Shaddai maintains the idea that old elements of the religion of the patriarchs are being preserved in Genesis. According to Smith, the original god of Israel was El, and probably sometime early in Israel's history, El was identified with Yahweh. Smith gives two points of primary information to support his claim. First, the name of Israel is an El name not a Yahwistic one. Second, in Genesis 49:24–25, a series of El epithets are given which are not associated with Yahweh.[9]

To further highlight these old elements of patriarchal tradition, most of the personal and place names of the Patriarchal era have an "El" in them. Names such as Israel, Ishmael, Bethel, Peniel, and others witness to this claim. Wenham also draws attention to the names Jacob and Isaac as abbreviations of 'El" type names of Jacobel and Isaacel respectively.[10] Furthermore, there are a lot of El epithets found in Genesis, such as El Elyon (14:18–22), El Roi (16:13), El Olam (21:33), El of Bethel (31:13) and El of Israel (33:18–20).

These Canaanite influences on the naming of the patriarchal deity prompt Wenham to conclude that, "the 'El' names and their Canaanite parallels give a better insight into the differences between patriarchal and later Israelite religion."[11] Wenham's conclusion is a rebuttal of Albrecht Alt's attempt to draw this distinction on the basis of titles such as "God of your fathers."[12] Wenham's view also runs contra to

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[7] Wenham, *Gen 16–50*, xxxi. It seems this view is still dominant early this century as well. Also see Mark G. Brett, *Decolonizing God: The Bible in the Tides of Empire* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), 44-61 and Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2002).

[8] Wenham, *Gen 16–50*, xxxi.

[9] Smith, *The Early History of God*, 32. For more discussion on the identification of El and Yahweh see Smith, *The Early History of God*, 32-62.

[10] Wenham, *Gen 16-50*, xxxii.

[11] Wenham, *Gen 16–50*, xxxiii.

[12] Albrecht Alt, "The God of the Fathers," in *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), 3-77.

Moberly who excludes the name of God in his discussion of the nature of patriarchal religion. Moberly claims that the name of God is less significant, if we want to sketch a clear distinction between the patriarchal tradition and that of Mosaic Yahwism, because it is still an unresolved issue.[13]

One other major issue when discussing patriarchal religion is its continuity and/or discontinuity with Mosaic Yahwism. Wenham lists some of these practices that show a fundamental continuity between the religion of the patriarchs and post-Mosaic religion. These include: building altars and offering sacrifices, offering tithes, and practicing circumcision.[14] However, the most interesting observation comes in the form of discontinuity or differences between the two traditions. The patriarchal tradition does not refer to or imply any knowledge or influence of other Canaanite deities such as Baal. However, it is generally contested that Baalism became dominant in later Canaanite religion. In this regard, some scholars rightly observe this absence of knowledge as another indication of the antiquity of a patriarchal tradition.[15]

The patriarchs also erected pillars, poured libations over them, and planted trees as part of their worship practices. However, such practices were later condemned in Deut 12:2–3.[16] Furthermore, the patriarchs were identified with multiple sanctuaries, connecting themselves to sites such as Schechem, Bethel, Hebron, and Beersheba. Such identification with multiple sanctuaries seems to go against the idea of later Yahwism which emphasizes the centralization of the worship site. In other words, there is no explicit mention of Jerusalem as the only place of worship in the patriarchal narratives.

The relationship with the inhabitants of Canaan provides another clear distinction. Moberly claims that, "Genesis depicts no antagonism between the patriarchs and the religious practices of the native inhabitants of Canaan."[17] Wenham concurs saying, "There is an air of ecumenical bonhomie about patriarchal religion, which contrasts with the sectarian exclusiveness of the Mosaic age and later prophetic demands."[18] This perception of the patriarchs against the inhabitants of Canaan is further maintained in recent studies of Israel's origin. These studies promote the origin of Israel as closely connected to the land of Canaan. Smith also in his study of the deities in Israel claims, "Israelite and Canaanite cultures shared a great deal in common, and religion was no exception. Deities and their cults in Iron Age Israel represented aspects of the cultural continuity with the indigenous Late Bronze Age culture and the contemporary urban culture on the coast and in the valleys."[19]

With regards to morality, Moberly argues that "patriarchal religion lacks moral content or at least in a way that contrasts with the strong moral content enjoined upon Israel by the covenant at Sinai."[20] The promises of blessings made to the patriarchs seem to be unconditional when compared to the covenant blessing in Deut 28:1–14. In other words, "the relationship between this blessing and the life-style of the patriarchs is left entirely unspecified, except in the case of Abraham (esp. Gen 18:19; 22:16; 26:5)."[21]

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[13] Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament*, 86-87.

[14] Wenham, *Gen 16–50*, xxxiii.

[15] For an example see T.N.D. Mettinger, *In Search of God: The Meaning and Message of the Everlasting Names* trans. F. H. Cryer (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 53.

[16] Also see Exod 23:24; 34:13; Lev 26:1; and Deut 16:21.

[17] Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament*, 89.

[18] Wenham, *Gen 16–50*, xxxiv.

[19] Smith, *The Early History of God*, 31. For a brief discussion of Israel's "Canaanite" heritage from the study of deities' perspective see Smith, *The Early History of God*, 19-31.

[20] Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament*, 97.

[21] Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament*, 98.

Wenham remains cautious in accepting this unconditional aspect of the promises to the Patriarchs. He points out that there are cases where "God's words contain commands as well as promises (e.g. 12:1; 17:1; 22:2)."[22]

The concept of holiness also plays an important part in this distinction. According to Moberly, the patriarch tradition lacks this notion of holiness.[23] However, it is one of the main criteria that define the relationship between Yahweh and Israel in the Mosaic Tradition. As Moberly clearly expresses, "The concept of holiness, from Exod. 3:5 onward, focuses the exclusive, demanding, regulated, mediated, and sanctuary-centered relationship between YHWH and Israel, while the absence of holiness in the patriarchal religion equally epitomizes its open, unstructured, and non-located unaggressive nature, its 'ecumenical bonhomie.'" [24]

Ancestral Cult of the Dead

The preceding discussion maintains that there is a distinct Ancestral (Patriarchal) Tradition as preserved and revealed in the Book of Genesis (Genesis 12–50). This Ancestral Tradition, while demonstrating continuity with the later Mosaic Tradition, shows a lot of dissimilarities with the later dominant Yahwistic Tradition and religion of Israel. One other area which draws this distinction is the concern for the (ancestral) dead.

T.J. Lewis poses the question, "Was there a cult of the dead in ancient Israel?" In addressing this question, Lewis focuses on the Deuteronomistic legal materials and Holiness Code. In his analysis, Lewis discovers that there are some restrictions on consultation and connection to the dead (Lev 19:28, 31; 20:6, 27; Deut 26:14). In other words, these legal materials in both codes seem to be responses to existing practices concerning the dead. If this is correct, then the practice of a cult of the dead was still ongoing during the time of the composition of these legal materials. In this regard, Lewis states, "we may safely infer that cults of the dead existed and flourished in ancient Palestine to the extent that they were considered a threat to what eventually emerged as normative Yahwism."[25]

Generally speaking, the dead lies in the domain of the family, that is, "The whole realm of funerals and care for the dead belonged to the family religion and had nothing to do with the official cult of YHWH."[26] Old Testament texts present the care of the dead as a major part of family activities. The dead family members were revered; this is underlined by the positive connotation used by biblical and extra-biblical sources when referring to them.[27] Such positive connotations include the designation of the dead as *'aelohim* (divinized ancestors), *rapi'uma/repha'ym* (healing ones) and *yid'onym* (knowing ones). Mark Brett in relation to this vocabulary study associated with the ancestor cult of the dead argues that, "It seems that the term *'elohim* might in some cases

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[22] Wenham, *Gen 16–50*, xxxv.

[23] Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament*, 99.

[24] Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament*, 104.

[25] T. J. Lewis, "Dead", in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible,* eds. K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, P. W. Van der Horst (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 435. Also see T. J. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit,* Harvard Semitic Monographs 89 (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1989), especially 99-127 and 161-165.

[26] Herbert Niehr, "The Changed Status of the Dead in Yehud" in *Yahweh After the Exile: Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Era*, eds. Albertz Rainer and Bob Becking (Assen: Van Gorum, 2003), 136.

[27] Niehr, "The Changed Status of the Dead in Yehud," 137.

[28] Brett, *Decolonizing God*, 52.

also refer to 'divinized' ancestors of the underworld, or 'spirits'."[28] Elizabeth Bloch-Smith also makes a similar observation in her discussion of the tithe offered to the dead. She claims, "The dead were 'divine beings' (*'ĕlōhîm*), and so consecrated, tithed food was considered their due."[29] Bloch-Smith in agreeing with B. Halevi,[30] understands Jacob and Laban's covenant in Gen 31:52–54 as sworn upon their divine ancestors (*'ĕlōhîm*).[31] Alan Cooper and Bernard Goldstein also highlight this understanding of *'elohim* as deified ancestors in their study of the cult of the dead and possession of land.[32]

Necromancy is one other practice relating to the dead that Old Testament texts (1 Sam 28:3–19; Isa 8:19) often allude to. However, the Deuteronomistic legal materials and the Holiness Code prohibit and condemn such practice (For examples see Deut 26:14 and Lev 19:31). According to Smith, necromancy and other practices pertaining to the dead were common in Israel before 750 BCE. These practices of veneration of the dead include "funerary mourning for the dead, feeding the dead, and invoking the dead as sources of divine information and perhaps aid."[33] Similarly Bloch-Smith claim that the powers of the dead include foretelling the future, create and revive life, and exact vengeance.[34] Bloch-Smith gives as an example 1 Sam 28:19, where the woman of En-Dor raised the deceased Samuel, who predicted the defeat of Israel and the fall of Saul and his sons (1 Sam 28:19). In this light, the living continued to appease the dead by providing nourishment. The dead are also treated as divine beings, as discussed above, therefore, tithed food was considered their due.[35]

Ancestral Land Claims

Most of the discussions about ancestral claim to land revolve around Gen 23 and family religion. Under family religion, the concern about the dead is very important especially its significance to ownership of land. Brett claims, "The dead were often seen in family religion as benefactors of their descendants, particularly in the bequest of ancestral land."[36] The story of Naboth's rejection of the king's offer to buy his land in 1 Kings 21:3 is a significant example of this view. According to Brett, Naboth's claim that the land is 'the inheritance of my fathers', simply acknowledges the land as his ancestral estate. Brett adds, "This 'inheritance' can be seen as traditional land that is inalienable because it is a gift of divinized ancestors."[37] This inalienable nature of the ancestral landholding is also apparent in Prov. 22:27–28, in which the reader is warned not to remove the ancient landmarks set up by his ancestors in order to pay off his debts by selling his ancestral estate and its family tomb (here reading משכב as 'grave', rather than 'bed').[38]

The dead (ancestors) also "can mark, and claim land for the living."[39]

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[29] Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 123.

[30] B. Halevi, *'qbwt nwspym Ipwlhn 'bwt', Beth Mikra* 64.1 (1975): 101-117.

[31] Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead*, 123.

[32] B. R. Goldstein and A. Cooper, "The Cult of the Dead and the Theme of Entry in the Land," *Biblical Interpretation* 1 (1993): 285-303. See especially 294-297.

[33] Smith, *The Early History of God*, 164.

[34] Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead*, 121.

[35] Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead*, 123.

[36] Brett, *Decolonizing God*, 53.

[37] Brett, *Decolonizing God*, 53.

[38] Francesca Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers: The Roles of Ancestor Veneration in Biblical Land Claims* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 11. Also see Habel, *The Land is Mine*, 65.

[39] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 3.

[40] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 3.

Stavrakopoulou maintains that the burial of the dead reflects an ideology where the burial site also functions as a territorial marker.[40] Cooper and Goldstein's study about setting up of a *matsebah* (pillar), stele and altar share a similar understanding. According to Cooper and Goldstein, the erecting of pillars and stones not only determines the presence of the deified ancestors but more importantly marks and affirms their ownership in perpetuity of the marked land.[41] Cooper and Goldstein also draw attention to the close connection of setting up of a *matsebah*, kinship ties with the (dead) ancestors, and possession of the land. Stavrakopoulou raises concerns about this claim by Cooper and Goldstein criticizing it to be an over-interpretation of complex traditions. Stravakopoulou adds, Cooper and Goldstein put too much emphasis on their assumptions about *matsebah* as representing a deified ancestor in almost any key texts, and the word *'elohim* to refer to ancestors. However, she agrees to their emphasis on the territoriality of memorials.[42]

Stavrakopoulou argues that in Genesis 23, "the primary concern of the story has not been Sarah's burial (whose death is merely the hook on which the land deal is hung), nor the processes of negotiation, but the possession of hereditary land, constructed around the territorial function of a tomb."[43] She further argues that the dynamics of the narrative about land appropriation accommodate two concepts of territorial possession: "[O]ne is the idea that land can be bought, and the other is the idea that land is ancestral."[44] Abraham's buying of Machpelah accommodates these two concepts, that is, "purchased land and ancestral land are mapped onto one another: the narrator turns a purchased plot into an ancestral landholding, transforming Abraham from a resident incomer into a perpetual land owner."[45]

Ancestral Land Claim and P and D Traditions

The cult of the ancestors, and especially their relationship with their dead, clearly formed the foundation for traditional land claims up until the time of Hezekiah. However, other traditions, such as D and P later on in Israel's history, undermines this relationship by thedenouncement of some practices concerning the dead, and this has a significant impact upon land claims. In other words, D and P undermine the ancestors' indigenous claim to the land. However, these later traditions like P still allude to these indigenous claims by claiming that the dead ancestors will be "gathered to their kin," a language that alludes a residual sense of indigenous connection to the land. In light of this ambivalence in P, it seems that there was no intention to eliminate entirely the indigenous elements.

One of the most important aspects of the ancestral cult is its connection to land ownership and land bestowment. It appears that this (dead) ancestral power to give land to their living descendants is one main reason it is rejected in P and mostly in D circles. Instead of proposing a localized system of ancestral land tenure, the ancestral narratives of Genesis draw attention to the importance of Abraham as the ancestor of all the clans of Israel, because the ancestors of individual clans are all genealogically connected to Abraham. "Within this process, the land rights of the clans have been preserved."[46] In

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[41] Goldstein and Cooper, "The Cult of the Dead and the Theme of Entry in the Land," 297.

[42] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 17.

[43] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 36-37.

[44] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 37.

[45] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 38. This topic of Abraham as a paradigmatic incomer will be further discussed in P's relation to the Ancestor Tradition.

[46] Brett, *Decolonizing God*, 59.

[47] Brett, *Decolonizing God*, 59.

other words, "Israelite clans had indefinite claims on particular pieces of land, in spite of periods of dislocation and exile."[47] This puts emphasis on the importance of this genealogical connection to the ancestors. Furthermore, "the identity of Israel ... rests on an adequate genealogical derivation."[48] That is, the connection to one of the twelve tribes becomes one of the important markers for this identity.[49]

Given the (dead) ancestors power to influence the living by giving and affirming their claim to land, there is therefore a strong tension with the Yahwistic monotheism movement, since this movement now insists that Yahweh is the sole owner and giver of land. To disempower the (dead) ancestors, later traditions such as P and D formulate legislations rendering any connection to the dead as unclean and impure. Stavrakopoulou critically comments,

> After all, to brand the dead as impure is nonetheless to assert their continued potency by casting them as a powerful threat – and so the ancestors are not rendered harmless, but harmful.
> Indeed, the ongoing power of the dead is acknowledged in those regulations concerning corpse contamination that allow the burial places of the dead to remain undisturbed. ... Thus although the Hebrew Bible's distancing of the dead from the living might well play a part in Yhwh's appropriation of their roles *and even their lands*, it nonetheless also implicitly endorses the 'traditional' consignment of the deceased to their tombs, to dwell at the boundaries of the living community, within the mortuary landscape. There, the dead maintain their place.[50]

In this statement, Stavrakopoulou reasserts the role of the dead regardless of the attempt to displace the dead as impure. If there is an appropriation of ancestral land by Yahweh, the dead can maintain "their place" at the boundaries, even if cultically impure. In other words, the ancestral connection to the land still remains.

Brief summary

Given the above discussion, we could say that even though the overarching theology of land in the Old Testament says that God (Yahweh especially, or Elohim, El Shaddai) owns the land, the ancestors also remain a crucial part in these land allotments. All Israelites have a claim to land and their rights and claim to the land are not only secured by God, but also by their ancestral connections.

Burials and Graves of the Dead in the Samoan context

A recent article by Malama Meleisea and Penelope Schoeffel about the work of the dead in Samoa highlights three main aspects of how the dead (and their graves) continue to influence the living. These three aspects are rank, status, and claims to property (land).[51] According to Meleisea and Schoeffel,

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[48] "The genealogical organization has graduated levels: the tribes are composed of clans, houses of fathers, and families." See Konrad Schmid, Ge*nesis and the Moses Story: Israel's Dual Origins in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 112.

[49] This emphasis on the number twelve points to a creation of a later period.

[50] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 148.

[51] Malama Meleisea and Penelope Schoeffel, "The Work of the Dead in Samoa: Rank, Status and Property," *Journal of Pacific Studies (JPS)* 125/2 (2016): 149-170. This article will form the basis of this section since this is the first detailed discussion on the dead and their influences done in the Samoan context.

> Graves convey more than sentiment; the selection of burial sites and the type of monuments chosen make visible statements about traditional rank, family status and claims to property, so that the dead continue to work for the living in spirit and by the location of their mortal remains.[52]

The following discussion will focus mainly on the third aspect where the dead impact on claims to property (land), but will also include other aspects to further understand claims to land.

Samoans, as most of the Oceania island nations, have great respect for the dead. This is seen in the cultural rituals and rites surrounding the burial of the dead. The higher the status and ranking of the dead person, the more significant the burial rites become. Moreover, the level and number of people gathered and involved in these rites also increases.

Meleisea and Schoeffel's study identifies significant changes in burial practices, the location of graves and the manner in which they were marked, throughout the history of Samoa. These changes mainly came about during Samoa's shifting political and social environment. In other words, burial practices in pre-colonial Samoa have experienced changes mainly due to the impact and influence of Christianity, the political change especially under colonial rule and administrations, and 20th-century settlement patterns and practices. [53]

In light of the changing political and social environment of Samoa, "the location of graves or burial sites have come full circle."[54] Initially the burial sites usually were close to residential houses, that is, near and under the houses, especially during pre-colonial Samoa.[55] Colonial administrations regulated that burials be at a cemetery. Hence, the introduction of cemeteries both in villages and on Government and freehold land. However, the return to the older practice of burial near and around residential homes was revived during the 1960's, especially when Samoa became independent.[56]

The impact of the colonial period of Samoan history resulted in the loss of customary connection and ownership to some land. These lands are now under Government control and the rest are freehold lands. Fortunately, the colonial administrations, especially the German administration, later regulated the selling and buying of customary land when they realized that this practice had become out of control. The return to burial practices during pre-colonial Samoa revived the Samoan understanding that the graves of ancestors are markers of land ownership. As Meleisea and Schoeffel assert, "the location of One of these changes was the significance of graves as a means of asserting ownership over portions of customary land by individuals and their immediate relatives."[57] In the present Samoan society, burials in family land especially close to homes are signs of affection for dead family members, but they also serve to define "claims to property in an environment of uncertainty about customary rights."[58] However, these close burials to family homes have recently become an area of disputation among family members. Family members whether staying within the same

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[52] Meleisea and Schoeffel, "The Work of the Dead," 149.
[53] Meleisea and Schoeffel, "The Work of the Dead," 149.
[54] Meleisea and Schoeffel, "The Work of the Dead," 149.
[55] There were graves found to be under *paepae* (close surroundings of family homes usually covered with little stones or coral) or houses in Samoa.
[56] Meleisea and Schoeffel, "The Work of the Dead," 149.
[57] Meleisea and Schoeffel, "The Work of the Dead," 149.
[58] Meleisea and Schoeffel, "The Work of the Dead," 159 and 165.

village, or another village, or even overseas, have the authority to stop the burial. These other family members know full well the impact of burying the dead on family land and that it will enhance the claim of the close living relatives on the respective land. These disputations usually end up at the Lands and Titles Court when traditional ways of resolving family issues fail.[59] What is becoming clear is the fact that the graves of the dead can strengthen the claims of some family members to customary family land. In other words, "graves, especially those located in front of houses, could provide a strong statement that the house and the land on which it is built belong to the descendants of the person or persons buried there."[60]

Normally, only the grave of the Sa'o or the main *matai* of a family could be located at the *maota* or the main plot of land of the extended family in the village *malae*.[61] Other lesser rank *matai* or members of the family may be buried on other family lands within or just outside the village.

From the brief discussion above, the dead still work from their graves to influence the living in Samoa. With regards to land claims, the dead, especially the location of their graves, provide statements about their claim/right and/or *pule* on these specific portions of customary land. In other words, "lying in their graves, the dead safeguard rights to property in times of changing land tenure norms and uncertainty about traditional inheritance rule."[62]

Conclusion

The preceding discussion highlights the close relationship of the work of the dead both in the Samoan context and ancestral tradition and religion. The dead ancestors strengthen the claim to specific portion of land. Even though there is obviously an attempt by some traditions in the Old Testament (especially D and in some degree P) to suppress ancestral claim and influence to allot land, this study highlights that there are enough materials that tell us the dead still hold on to their place. In other words, and as stated above, all Israelites have a claim to land and their rights and claim to the land are not only secured by God but also by their ancestral connections.

As previously mentioned, Samoans look to the Bible for guidance on how to address their problems. Recently, most Samoans have expressed grave concern towards some of the Government's new policies and laws.[63] The people see these laws as a threat to their claim and ownership of customary land, that is, they believe these laws will lead to the alienation of customary land.

In light of the discussion of the Old Testament above, a Samoan's claim to their

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[59] Lands and Titles Court deals with matters concerning *matai* titles and customary land disputes.

[60] Meleisea and Schoeffel, "The Work of the Dead", 161. If a family member is buried in front of a family house and no other member from the extended family protests, then it may signify that the *pule* (authority) of that specific portion of land lies with the deceased descendants who are living in the house.

[61] The village *malae* is the space in front or middle of the village surrounded by *maota* or main guest houses of each extended family of the village. The *matai* or *matais* (chiefly title holders) are only custodians of family properties (*matai* titles and land). Therefore, their *pule* or authority on family properties depend on the extended family

[62] Meleisea and Schoeffel, "The Work of the Dead," 168.

[63] The most recent and controversial Government law is the Lands and Titles Registration Act 2008 (LTRA 2008). This Act allows the *matai Sa'o* or the Head High Chief of a family (without the consent of the extended family) to lease out customary land for economic purposes. For most Samoans, these leases will eventually alienate their customary land even though the Samoa Government strongly argued otherwise.

customary land can now be strengthened, knowing that the Bible and especially God, sympathizes with ancestral claims to land. In other words, whoever and/or whatever (whether be individuals, communities, laws and policies, or even Governments) tries to sever the people's claim to their customary land, God and the (dead) ancestors would protect their rights.

Samoans, I believe, are similar to ancient Israelites who, from the beginning believe their land is a gift from their traditional god. Therefore, every Samoan has a claim to a portion of these lands. Even though Samoans now believe in the Christian God, their understanding remains the same, and that is, land has always been a gift from God. Furthermore, land is inherited through their ancestors, and therefore, Samoans claim to land through the (dead) ancestors has also been secured by both the Christian God as well as their ancestors.

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The Politics of Divine Names in the language of Chronicles

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Abstract

The several names of God have been studied intensively in biblical research, and in the case of Chronicles, the choice of divine names may reflect a particular theology, as it does in the case of P in Genesis, but this claim will be examined in this paper. The great mixture of divine names and epithets in the books of Chronicles includes Lord, God, Lord God, Lord the God of our/their ancestors, Lord God of Israel, God of Israel, Lord of hosts, Lord God of heaven, and God in heaven. An exhaustive explanation of how the book has woven and rewoven all these divine names is a task beyond this paper's reach. However, this paper will argue that some of these major epithets of God may have been deliberately chosen by the author of Chronicles to allow room for any readers to relate to the same God from the viewpoint of the different communities in the postexilic period.

Key Words: epithets, Yhwh, *'ĕlōhîm*, *'ĕlōhîm* of Israel, *'ĕlōhîm* of ancestors, Yhwh *'ĕlōhîm*.

Introduction

The first rendering of the divine name (as Yhwh) in Chronicles (1 Chr 2:3b)[1] draws on information from Genesis rather than from Samuel-Kings.[2] This will be a fruitful place to begin an investigation not just because Chronicles starts and ends with the national name Yhwh for God (1 Chr 2:3b and 2 Chr 36:23), but also because the name Yhwh is often joined with other names like *'ĕlōhîm* of Israel, *'ēl šadday,* and the like.[3] Of many divine names, Yhwh appears frequently in Chronicles. Why is this so in Chronicles or generally in the Hebrew Bible? I will explore the reasons for this further in the paper. The second iteration of the divine name (as *'ĕlōhîm*) in Chronicles is found in 1 Chr 4:10, which also has a direct link to Genesis (Priestly material)[4] as many scholars have identified, rather than to Samuel-Kings, even though 1 Chr 4:9–10 is unique to Chronicles.[5]

The main argument in this paper is that the politics of divine names in the language of Chronicles may reflect a particular theology from the P tradition rather than

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[1] 1 Chro 2:3b *And Er, the firstborn of Judah, was wicked in the eyes of Yhwh and he caused to put him to death.* (self trans.).

[2] Gen 38:7 *And Er, the firstborn of Judah, was wicked in the eyes of Yhwh and Yhwh caused to put him to death.* (self trans.).

[3] Having mentioned these divine names, I have to acknowledge that of course, there are several other divine names mentioned in Chronicles.

[4] See Samasoni Moleli, "Jabez in Context: A Multidimensional Approach to Identity and Landholdings in Chronicles" (PhD Thesis, University of Divinity, 2018).

[5] To mention some, see R. Christopher Heard, "Echoes of Genesis in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10: An Intertextual and Contextual Reading of Jabez's Prayer," *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 4/2 (2002): 1-28; Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1-9* (Toronto: The Anchor Bible, 2004), 346; Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles* (London: SCM Press, 1993), 105; Scott W. Hahn, *The Kingdom of God as Liturgical Empire: A Theological Commentary on 1-2 Chronicles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 40; Julie Kelso, "The Transgression of Maacah in 2 Chronicles 15:16: A Simple Case of Idolatry or the Threatening Poesis of Maternal Speech?," *The Bible and Critical Theory* 3 (2007): 1-18.

D from Samuel-Kings. Perhaps there is no surprise in its use of *'ĕlōhîm*, if there is an implied allusion to Genesis. What is intriguing however is how the Chronicler has inserted the divine name "God of Israel" in 1 Chr 4:9–10, which has no antecedent in Genesis. Why not just God *'ĕlōhîm* as in Genesis? Sara Japhet has suggested that the sequence in which the divine names are being used in the Chronistic genealogies is of no special significance. For instance, Japhet states that "the stories from Genesis place only Er in a chronological context, but the matter is of no importance, really. It would be possible to mention Yhwh, God of Israel, at any point in the genealogies, and the reference would have no special significance."[6]

In contrast to Japhet's argument, this paper focuses particularly on the significance of the theological concept of "God or *'ĕlōhîm* of Israel" which is aligned with the broad approach of Chronicles as a whole. In this paper, I will argue that the Chronicler has deliberately used this divine name, along with other epithets, not only to evoke the Genesis themes of land and blessings, but also to introduce the issue of the possible inclusion of Northerners as well as foreigners, through the insertion of the epithet such as "God of Israel" (or "Yhwh God of Israel"). But how exactly has the Chronicler used these divine names to develop themes of particular significance in the postexilic context?

The access of foreigners to Yhwh is suggested quite clearly in the case of King Cyrus in 2 Chr 36. Cyrus, despite his foreignness, is portrayed positively when the Chronicler announces "…the fulfillment of the word of Yhwh…Yhwh stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus… King Cyrus even proclaims "Yhwh, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth…" (2 Chr 36:22–23).[7] This portrayal of the foreign monarch's access to Yhwh *'ĕlōhîm* may not only suggest a gateway for foreigners to Israel's Yahwistic identity, but may also highlight the Chronicler's emphasis on the theme of inclusiveness during the postexilic context. The same theme is reflected at the beginning of Chronicles (1 Chr 4:9–10) where someone with limited connections to Israel "called on the God of Israel." Like Cyrus, he may well be a foreigner. However, Jabez found a way forward when he was engaged and recognized by the God of Israel. This would explain why the Chronicler consistently employs divine names in such a way as to blend foreignness as an acceptable characteristic in the postexilic redefinition of Israel's identity. But what does "God" mean to the Chronicler? How does the use of divine names contribute to the development of the concept of God in Chronicles? In addressing these questions and some more that are directly connected to divine names, I will start with outlining the significance of divine names in the Chronicler's retelling history.

Divine Names in Chronicles

Of many prominent scholars of Chronicles, Sara Japhet provides an extensive analysis of divine names in Chronicles.[8] Japhet contends however that the broad theological understanding of the concept of God can only be perceived in the "literary work as a whole."[9] This obliges a search to revisit the biblical sources that are relevant to Chronicles, especially Genesis and Samuel-Kings. The aim here is to understand how the Chronicler may have adopted the Priestly or Deuteronomistic theology of divine names for developing the theme of inclusion of "others" in his own writings. Our inquiry will

[6] Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1989), 117.

[7] Note that these closing verses of Chronicles appear in almost identical form to the opening verses of Ezra 1:1-3. William Dumbrell in particular has suggested this connection as a sign of continuity between the two works. See William J. Dumbrell, "The Purpose of the Books of Chronicles," *JETS* 27/3 (1984): 257-66.

[8] Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 12-37.

[9] Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 12.

begin however, with a focus on the divine name "*'ĕlōhîm* of Israel."

'ĕlōhîm of Israel: Who are the *'ĕlōhîm?*

Within the Pentateuchal source, *'ĕlōhîm* is first used in Genesis 1. This word as it stands, is grammatically plural in form and is generally believed to be built up from a singular word *'ēl.* As many commentators have observed, this root word *'ēl* appears to be a proper Semitic name for "god" in the Ancient Near East.[10] Its plural form often seems to point to the "gods of the nations,"[11] whereas its singular form seems to refer to a single local deity.[12] And this clearly indicates that *'ĕlōhîm* is also a generic divine name used to describe "other" religious deities, rather than for a unique name for Israel's God. The early Israelite tradition assumes that every nation has its own god or gods, especially in the ancient Near Eastern world.[13]

This existence of "other gods" is also evident in Chronicles, with the use of the plural *'ĕlōhîm* which appears twenty-three times in a variety of contexts.[14] Of these Chronistic occurrences, only six have parallel accounts in the book's sources, leaving the majority as the Chronicler's own creation.[15] In that regard, Sara Japhet suggests that the use of *'ĕlōhîm* in Chronicles as the God of Israel is "no different from the epithets of other deities in Chronicles."[16] Walther Eichrodt argued long ago that the plural form of *'ĕlōhîm* is not the result of "unification of all deities, but rather the summing up of the whole divine power in a personal unity."[17] Both Japhet and Eichrodt seem to be making different points rather than competing points. Japhet says that the term *'ĕlōhîm* is a common term used for gods, not unique to Israel's gods and Eichrodt argues that the term itself is not about a plurality of gods as the same but about the power itself.

More precisely, the Priestly tradition developed a scheme of divine names which assumed an inclusive monotheism. In the "primeval history," God is known and consistently addressed as *'ĕlōhîm* especially in Priestly texts.[18] The use of *'ĕlōhîm* some twenty times within Gen 1:1–2:3 perhaps also emphasizes God *'ĕlōhîm* as the creator

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[10] T. Desmond Alexander & David W. Baker, ed. *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 2003), 360; G. Johannes Botterweck, et al. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 271; Mark S. Smith, *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 11-12.

[11] A number of instances include: the gods of Egypt (Exod 12:12); the gods of the Amorites (Josh 24:15; Jud 6:10); the gods of Syria, Sidon, Moab, Ammonites and the Philistines (Jud 10:6); and so on.

[12] For instance, Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron (2 Kgs 1:2, 6, 16); Ashtoreth, the deity of the Sidonians (1 Kgs 11:33); and the like.

[13] As evidently recorded in Micah 4:5; Jonah 1:5; 2 Kgs 17:29.

[14] For instance, "gods of the peoples of the land" (1 Chr 5:25; 2 Chr 32:19); "their gods" (1 Chr 10:10; 14:12); "all gods" (1 Chr 16:25, 26); "other gods" (2 Chr 2:5; 7:19, 22; 28:25; 34:25); "peoples' gods" (2 Chr 25:15); "the gods of Edom" (2 Chr 25:20); "the gods of Damascus" (2 Chr 28:23); "the gods of the kings of Aram"(2 Chr 28:23); "the gods of the people of Seir" (2 Chr 25:14 x2); "gods for you" (2 Chr 13:8); "the gods of the nations" (2 Chr 32:13, 14, 17) and "foreign gods" (2 Chr 33:15).

[15] 1 Chr 14:12//2 Sam 5:21; 1 Chr 16:25, 26//Psa 96:4, 5; 2 Chr 7:19, 22//1 Kgs 9:6, 9; 2 Chr 32:19//2 Kgs 18:33; 2 Chr 34:25//2 Kgs 22:17.

[16] Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 20.

[17] Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1978), 185.

[18] The primeval history here is particularly referring to the creation story (Gen 1:1–2:3; 5:1–28, 30–32); the flood story (Gen 6:9–22; 7:13–16a; 8:14–19; 9:1–17); and the post-flood genealogy (Gen 11:10–26; Gen 10). See David M. Carr, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: Sacred Texts and Imperial Contexts of the Hebrew Bible* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 196-98.

and sustainer of the universe. By the ancestral period, we find that God appeared to Abraham as *'ēl šadday* (God Almighty) and the covenant is now marked with circumcision and passed on by Abraham's heirs, Isaac then Jacob.[19] Here we find a special group of people, the descendants of Abraham, addressing God mainly as *'ēl šadday*.

In the Mosaic period however, the divine name for Israel's God was changed to Yhwh as the divine appeared to Moses and the rest of the Israelites (Exod 6:2–8).[20] This transitional treatment of divine names – from *'ĕlōhîm* to *'ēl šadday* then to Yhwh – pinpoints the Priestly theology of divine names where God may be regarded universally when taking a retrospective look at the beginning of creation. Here, God can also be seen in a local context and is very much a part of Israel's history when tracing ancestral links and their development as a nation. [21]

The names Yhwh and *'ĕlōhîm* appear to be used consistently by the Chronicler: Yhwh occurs 430 times and *'ĕlōhîm* occurs 267 times including their combinations such as Yhwh *'ĕlōhîm,* Yhwh *'ĕlōhîm* of Israel, and the like. These statistics may tempt us to assume that the Chronicler adopted the Priestly theology of divine names. However, the complete avoidance of the name *'ēl šadday*, despite its importance in the Priestly theology, suggests that such an assumption is unfounded.

As mentioned above, an exhaustive explanation of how the Chronicler has woven and rewoven all these divine names is a task beyond this paper's reach. Here I will focus mainly on how the Chronicler employed the divine epithet "God of Israel" as a foreigner's "security check" to access Israelite identity and land. But before we turn specifically to the phrase "God of Israel," we need to advance further the hypothesis raised by Japhet that the Chronicler wants to emphasize the two epithets ("God of Israel" and "God of the fathers"), over the other names.[22] Why are these two identifications important in Chronicles? How can we reconcile this argument with the fact that Yhwh appears with much greater frequency? And if Japhet's hypothesis is true about these two epithets, why does the Chronicler mention Yhwh at all? Before addressing these questions, we need to firstly get an overall picture of how the Chronicler employs these two divine titles in his own context.

God of the Fathers

Briefly, the epithet "God of the ancestors (fathers) / LORD God of the fathers/ ancestors" appears twenty-eight times, including the two references attributed to the patriarchs in Chronicles.[23]

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[19] Starting from Abraham's calling in Gen 11:27-32; 12:4–5; 13:6, and the covenant of circumcision in Gen 17, then on to Abraham's heirs in the rest of Genesis (Gen 21–50).

[20] Carr, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 196-98.

[21] Mark G. Brett, "Yhwh among the Nations: The Politics of Divine Names in Genesis 15 and 24," in *The Politics of the Ancestors: Exegetical and Historical Perspectives on Genesis 12-36*, eds. Mark G. Brett and Jakob Wöhrle (Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen, 2018): 113–30.

[22] Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 13–14. For Japhet, the most frequent epithets that occur in Chronicles are "God of the fathers" and "God of Israel." She goes on to say that the Chronicler avoids certain epithets like "God of heaven," "Lord of hosts," and "Adonay," apart from the single exception in 2 Chr 36: 23 for the "God of heaven" and three times for the "Lord of hosts" (1 Chr 11:9; 17:7). For full details of these two divine epithets in Chronicles, see especially Samasoni Moleli, "Jabez in Context: A Multidimensional Approach to Identity and Landholdings in Chronicles," 46–55.

[23] "God of the fathers": 1 Chr 5:25; 12:17; 2 Chr 33:12; 34:32; "LORD God of the fathers": 1 Chr 29:20; 2 Chr 7:22; 11:16; 13:12, 18; 14:4; 15:12; 19:4; 20:6, 33; 21:10; 24:18, 24; 28:6, 9, 25; 29:5; 30:7, 19, 22; 34:33; 36:15; "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob": 1 Chr 29:18; 2 Chr 30:6.

This may suggest that this particular epithet is especially significant to the Chronicler. Having a closer look however, there are two aspects of the name "God of the ancestors" which are obvious throughout Chronicles.

First, kings are the main users of the epithet: on the one hand, it is presented eight times in the form of direct speech by kings starting from David to Hezekiah in the context of prayer;[24] on the other hand, it is used by the narrator eighteen times to designate the context of worship, from King David to King Zedekiah.[25] The frequency and the interchangeability of this epithet is distinctive of the Chronicler's style.

Second, it appears that the Chronicler only employs the name "God of the ancestors" when dealing with kings and the people of Israel. Every occurrence of this epithet was inserted as an addition to the parallel source material, indicating that the Chronicler has done so only in scenarios that directly involve the people of Israel. Judging from the language of Chronicles, this feature draws attention to the possibility that the Chronicler reserves the name "God of the ancestors" to be used only with the descendants of Abraham and them alone. In so doing, the significance of the continuity of the relationship between God and the people of Israel throughout the generations has become paramount in the Chronicler's material.

Could this imply that "God of the ancestors" is deliberately blended in by the Chronicler as a possible alternative to the later Priestly use of *'ēl šadday?* If "God of the fathers" is characteristically unique to Chronicles in terms of reserving it for the descendants of Abraham or the native people of Israel, what does "the God of Israel" mean for the purpose of Chronicles?

God of Israel

As mentioned earlier, Japhet has stressed the importance of the interrelationship between God and Israel in her discussion of this epithet in Chronicles. Both construct forms: "God of Israel" and "YHWH, (the) God of Israel" occur thirty-four times in Chronicles including the absolute form: "Israel's God" in 1 Chron 17:24.[26] These occurrences are made up of two groups: nineteen times in direct speech[27] and fifteen times by the narrator.[28]

In terms of a synoptic comparison of the book's sources, ten occurrences of the "God of Israel" in Chronicles are paralleled in its biblical sources;[29] there are three

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[24] Under the category of Direct speeches: King David's prayer in 1 Chr 29:20; twice by king Abijah's prayers in 2 Chr 13:12, 18; King Jehoshaphat's prayer in 2 Chr 20:6; and King Hezekiah's sanctification of the Levites for the Passover festival in 2 Chr 29:5.

[25] For example, it mentions by King David's prayer in 1 Chr 29:18; 2 times by King Asa in 2 Chr 14:4; 15:12; once by King Jehoshaphat in 2 Chr 19:4; 3 times by King Ahaz in 2 Chr 28:6, 9, 25; 4 times by King Hezekiah in 2 Chr 30:6, 7, 19, 22; once by King Josiah in 2 Chr 34:33 and also once by King Zedekiah in 2 Chr 36:15.

[26] "God of Israel": 1 Chr 4:10; 5:26; 17:24 (twice); 2 Chr 29:7; "Lord God of Israel": 1 Chr 15:12, 14; 16:4, 36; 22:6; 23:25; 24:19; 28:4; 2 Chr 2:12; 6:4, 7, 10, 14, 16, 17; 11:16; 13:5; 15:4, 13; 20:19; 29:10; 30:1,5; 32:17; 33:16,18; 34:23,26; 36:13. I have to acknowledge the inclusion of the absolute form; "God for/to Israel" or "Israel's God" in 1 Chr 17:24 for this is unique to Chronicles compare to his source (2 Sam 7:26).

[27] 1 Chr 15:12; 17:24 (x2); 16:36; 23:25; 28:4; 2 Chr 2:12; 6:4, 7, 10, 14, 16, 17; 13:5; 15:4; 29:7, 10; 34:23, 26.

[28] 1 Chr 4:10; 5:26; 15:14; 16:4; 22:6; 24:19; 2 Chr 11:16; 15:13; 20:19; 30:1, 5; 32:17; 33:16, 18; 36:13.

[29] 1 Chr 16:36//Ps 106:48; 1 Chr 17:24//2 Sam 7:27; 2 Chr 6: 4, 7, 10, 14, 16, 17//1 Kgs 8:15, 17, 20, 23, 25, 26; 2 Chr 34:23, 26//2 Kgs 22:15, 18. All of these parallel accounts are copied word for word from each of these book sources (with a minor changes particularly between 2 Chr 6: 17//1 Kgs 8:26 in which the Chronicler omits "my father").

parallel accounts in which the "God of Israel" is not mentioned in the sources;[30] and the rest are unique to Chronicles. It is clear therefore that most parallel accounts in Chronicles are from the Deuteronomistic history (Samuel-Kings), used in the context of temple construction during the reign of Solomon.[31] Do foreigners refer to Yhwh in Chronicles or only to *'ĕlōhîm*?

As previously noted with "God of the fathers," the epithet is distinctive because it appears to be commonly used in association with kings. Of the thirty-four occurrences of this epithet in Chronicles, twenty-seven of them are associated with kings: nineteen times in direct speech, and fifteen times by the narrator. Also noted is that the name is used twice in the direct speech of prophets, and it is used three times by Levites and priests. Most of these occurrences across Chronicles have been inserted by the Chronicler. The epithet "LORD God of Israel" is therefore placed on the lips of a very limited group of people – kings, prophets, singers, Levites and priests. Is the Chronicler therefore implying that the epithet is only employed by kings and religious figures in the Israelite community?

Although the epithet "God of Israel" (that is, without the prefix LORD) is often associated with kings as with "LORD God of Israel," we find an interesting pattern from the first two occurrences of "God of Israel." The first occurrence is with Jabez who "… called on the God of Israel…" (1 Chr 4:10a) – an honourable "someone" with unknown links to the people of Israel. The second occurrence is with Pul, king of Assyria "… the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, king of Assyria..." (1 Chr 5:26) – a foreign king divinely aroused to be an agent to initiate the exile. Three common threads are found here: (1) both occurrences of the epithets are added by the Chronicler; (2) both Jabez and Pul could be regarded as honourable; and (3) both appear to be foreign with no direct Israelite ties, yet the Chronicler somehow seems to approve of associating them with the "God of Israel."

I propose that this divine name, although specific to those of high regard in society, is yet more generally available to anyone regardless of their origin. Although not Israelite's kings, Jabez and Pul stand out oddly against all the kings as unknown yet honourable characters. The majority of prayers in Chronicles are said by kings and elites (such as prophets/Levites and kings: David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah),[32] yet it seems these unknown characters (or foreigners) also qualify to approach the "God of Israel." Julie Kelso has an interesting expression of Jabez in particular as someone "who seems to dangle without a clear paternal line" in the midst of Judahite genealogies, yet the blurred mention of his nameless mother and her bearing him in pain, is enough detail for the Chronicler to link him to God *'ĕlōhîm*.[33] Our earlier analysis on the development of the epithet *'ĕlōhîm* and its universal association with the Priestly vision assists us to locate the Chronicler's inclusive stance with regards to the employment of the name "God of Israel."

God of Israel: Who is Israel?

The scholarly consensus, starting from the Swedish scholar Gustaf Adolf Danell, argue

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[30] (1) 1 Chr 5:26//2 Kgs 18:11-12; (2) 2 Chr 2:12//1 Kgs 5:7; (3) 2 Chr 33:18//2 Kgs 21:17.

[31] For instance see 2 Chr 6:4, 7, 10, 14, 16, 17//1 Kgs 8:15, 17, 20, 23, 25, 26.

[32] These kings are also listed by Beentjes in his book. See Pancratius C. Beentjes, *Tradition and Transformation in the Book of Chronicles* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 12.

[33] Julie Kelso, "The Transgression of Maacah in 2 Chronicles 15:16: A Simple Case of Idolatry or the Threatening Poesis of Maternal Speech?," *The Bible and Critical Theory* 3 (2007): 1-18.

that the term "Israel" is never the name of one particular tribe. It was from the patriarchal period, "the ideal designation of the total confederation or amphictyony of which Judah also was a part."[34] This means that Israel, from the beginning in the patriarchal traditions, was more than the name of an individual tribe but a "union of tribes." For Danell, this meaning of "Israel" with a sense of inclusiveness also occurs in some of the prophetic books of the Old Testament that present the image of a "pan-Israelite." Here, "Israel denotes the ideal totality of the northern and southern kingdoms and not the former alone."[35] Danell continues to argue that there are also times that the northern kingdom adopted the name "Israel" only, but that is because it wished to identify itself with the idealized total entity.

"Pan-Israel" in Chronicles

The idea of a "Pan-Israel" developed by Danell provides the better account of Israel as "the united monarchy" in 1 Chronicles 10 to 2 Chronicles 9 under the reigns of David and Solomon. Julius Wellhausen, despite his exclusive approach to the northerners, firstly links the concept of "all Israel" to the establishment of the Davidic dynasty in Chronicles. Different from how David is expressed in Kings, the Chronicler presents David as an idealistic figure, as Wellhausen states:

> The founder of the kingdom has become the founder of the temple and the public worship, the king and hero at the head of his companions in arms has become the singer and master of ceremonies at the head of a swarm of priests and Levites;[36]

From the above, the Chronicler seems to put more emphasis upon David as an ideal king for "all Israel" – a leader who has responsibilities towards the united Israel, and this is underlined by the way in which the Chronicler represents David.[37] According to Wellhausen, such a positive image of David in Chronicles reflects the Chronistic worldview which "is clericalized in the taste of the post-exilian time."[38]

Similarly, Welch's argument seems to affirm this idea of "all Israel" under the Davidic dynasty. However, he goes further to include the tribes of the Northern Kingdom in the context of Chronicles. For Welch, the impression of "all Israel" from the Chronicles' general outlook is attributed to "all segments of the people" including the northerners.[39] It is noteworthy that despite the fact that Welch's contribution is earlier than Danell, his application of "all Israel" seems to amalgamate Wellhausen's and Danell's arguments in saying that the Chronicler has linked the idea of all Israel by a thread which runs through David's records as a successful king.[40]

In addition to these classic contributions, Williamson, Japhet, Jonker, and Knoppers in particular have also placed more emphasis on this concept of "pan-Israelism/all Israel" from the positive perspective. These scholars believe that the essence

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[34] Gustaf Adolf Danell, *Studies in the Name of Israel in the Old Testament* (Uppsala: Appelbergs, 1946), 80, 89, 288.

[35] Danell proposes the idea of pan-Israelite identity in these prophetic books in relation to the Davidic hope for the future generations of Israel. For instance, Ezekiel and Jeremiah in particular describe the exiled people who are to become the people of the future, but these people are from the northern and southern kingdoms. See Danell, *Studies in the Name of Israel*, 270, 280, 281 and 289.

[36] Wellhausen, *Prolegomena,* 188.

[37] See Chapter 5 below for more information about the Chronicler's presentation of David.

[38] Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 182.

[39] Adam C. Welch, *The Work of the Chronicler: Its Purpose and Its Date* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 11.

[40] Welch, *The Work of the Chronicler*, 42.

of this positive aspect of all Israel including the northerners is fundamental to the book of Chronicles as a whole.[41]

The Chronicler maintains the relevance of the Northern Kingdom which still remains part of Israel despite the divided monarchy. That is, the Chronicler's positive reinforcement of the united kingdom as opposed to the divided monarchy as a whole reflects that both kingdoms, regardless of their differences and separation, qualify to be called Israel, and even more so in the postexilic context as both kingdoms come under one foreign rule.

This broad definition of an entire people can be described in three ways: first, by noting the inconsistent use of "all Israel" across Chronicles;[42] second, by recognizing the inclusion of people from Ephraim, Manasseh and Zebulun who are invited to participate in the Passover festival during the reign of Hezekiah (2 Chr 30:10); and third, by the mention of the extension of boundaries "…from all the territory that belonged to the people of Israel…" from Simeon to Naphtali during the reign of Josiah (2 Chr 34:6–7).

All in all, these influential contributions combine to show that the concept of Israel in Chronicles is mainly of a pan-Israel frame including both kingdoms, and could also be more widely understood to include those who live outside the Palestinian region. In saying that, we are still left with the question of why Yhwh appears a lot more frequently.

Yhwh in Chronicles

As mentioned earlier, the name Yhwh (LORD) by itself occurs 430 times in Chronicles.[43] It is the first divine name we find in Chronicles (1 Chr 2:3) and likewise, we also find Yhwh to be the last divine name at the closing of the book (2 Chr 36:22–23): "…the fulfillment of the word of Yhwh…Yhwh stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus…." So why is the name Yhwh used so frequently in Chronicles?

The frequency of both epithets ("God of the ancestors" and "God of Israel") are low compared to Yhwh and *'ĕlōhîm* in the genealogical section (1 Chr 1–9). Of seven references to Yhwh, only the very first one (1 Chr 2:3) has a parallel account in Gen 38:7, with the other six being the Chronicler's own insertions. From the twenty references in the genealogical chapters (1 Chr 1–9), eighteen of them seem to have been added by the Chronicler.[44] The first of these Chronistic divine names is found in 1 Chr 4:9–10 under the name the "God of Israel." Surely, the Chronicler has inserted this epithet for a purpose. Perhaps we can suggest that the writer(s) uses the genealogies of Genesis and starts with Yhwh but is not interested in telling how they arrive at this name Yhwh, though the Exodus account does, as observed above. That is, Chronicles starts off its retelling of history with Adam before engaging with Samuel-Kings in terms of divine names.

Even the combination of Yhwh and *'ĕlōhîm* is distinctive in Chronicles. In fact,

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[41] Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 13–14; Williamson, *Israel in the Books of Chronicles*, 87-140; Louis C. Jonker, *Defining All-Israel in Chronicles* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), esp154-160; Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, 11-12. Under the study of "all-Israel" in Chronicles, see also Peniamina Leota, "Ethnic Tensions in Persian-Period Yehud: A Samoan Postcolonial Hermeneutic" (PhD thesis, University of Divinity, 2005), 141-75, esp.141 n.24.

[42] That is the term "all Israel" sometimes refers to the Southern Kingdom (e.g., 2 Chr 12:1; 24:8; 28:23); to the Northern Kingdom (e.g., 2 Chr 11:13; 13:4, 15; 30:1,6); or even to the entire people (e.g., 2 Chr 29:24; 30:5; 35:3). See also Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 270-71.

[43] But the combination of Yhwh and other epithets such as "Yhwh God," "Yhwh God of Israel," and others is mentioned more than five hundred times in Chronicles.

[44] The other two are 1 Chr 2:3//Gen 38:7 (LORD) and 1 Chr 9:11//Neh 11:11 (God).

Yhwh *'ĕlōhîm* appears to be an odd combination in comparison with Genesis 1 where *'ĕlōhîm* means universal and Yhwh is often regarded as the personal God for Israel.[45] Thus, Yhwh *'ĕlōhîm* expresses a profound understanding, where Israel's identity and universal imagination are woven together (i.e., national God + universal God = same God). This same God has been described by Cassuto as "the God of Israel is the God of the entire universe." Here, the names Yhwh and *'ĕlōhîm* represent two different aspects of God's activity, or two different ways in which God "reveals to the children of men."[46]

These two aspects of God in Chronicles are described by Jonker as a particular understanding of the relationship between God and his people. That is, "Judah and Israel (and even other nations and empires) form part of an All-Israel only insofar as they seek this God and humble themselves before this God."[47] Taking Jonker's view into consideration, if the Chronicler's outlook was to be more ecumenical (pan-Israelite), the Chronicler could well have used *'ēl šadday* to include all the descendants of Abraham. However, the Chronicler has adopted the amalgamation of Yhwh *'ĕlōhîm* as expressing pan-Israelite identity (i.e., national (Yhwh) + international God (*'ĕlōhîm*)) which is more inclusive of all humanity. [48]

Furthermore, the Chronicler seems to be consistent in using Yhwh *'ĕlōhîm* which coheres with Chronicles' attitude toward non-Israelite groups living in Judah such as the resident aliens (*gerim*) including foreigners and even foreign women. This notion of *gerim* in Chronicles is described by Japhet as:

> A member of a foreign people who has joined the people of Israel, adopted their religion, and thus lost his (sic) foreign identity. As we have seen, the term "*gerim*" describes two groups in Chronicles: the remnant of the Canaanite population mentioned during Solomon's reign and the people who come from around the country to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah. In the book of Kings, too, the reigns of Solomon and Hezekiah are the only periods (during the First Commonwealth) in which non-Israelites living in the land are expressly mentioned. Chronicles describes these members of foreign peoples as "*gerim*" and thereby transforms them into a segment of the Israelite community. As a result of this transformation, there are no longer any foreigners living in the land of Israel.[49]

Japhet also provides the different accounts of intermarriages within the

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[45] Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis,* 19.

[46] Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis*, 33.

[47] Jonker, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, 314.

[48] Of course this idea of "pan-Israel" and "ecumenism" in Chronicles does not mean that the Chronicler is inclusive in every respect. For example, gender equality is not part of the Chronicler's inclusiveness, as has been argued by other scholars such as Kelso and Mitchell. See Julie Kelso, "O Mother, Where Art Thou?" in *An Irigarayan Reading of the Book of Chronicles* (London: Equinox, 2007); Kelso, "The Transgression of Maacah in 2 Chronicles 15:16," 1-18; Christine Mitchell, "Otherness and Historiography in Chronicles, in *Historiography and Identity (Re)Formation in Second Temple Historiographical Literature*, ed. Louis C. Jonker (New York: T&T Clark International, 2010), 92-109; Christian Frevel, ed. *Mixed Marriages Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2011). However, this paper merely deals with historical questions: What kind of inclusiveness did the Chronicler have in mind? What kind of ecumenical perspective is the author trying to articulate?

[49] Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 346. See above section where this point is first made in detail.

genealogies of Chronicles as supporting evidence of foreigners transforming into Israelites through marriage (1 Chr 2:3, 17, 34–35; 4:18; 7:14).[50] Such an inclusive approach brings to light the complex reality of the various communities fused together as "all-Israel" during the postexilic period. Perhaps a challenge for the Chronicler was addressing all these people in an inclusive manner yet being mindful of their differences in society.

Could this be why the Chronicler employs Yhwh more frequently but sprinkled with occasional use of *'ĕlōhîm* and other epithets? Aware that although the majority of the postexilic communities may belong to Israel by genealogical descent and thus comfortable with the Israel specific "Yhwh," the Chronicler may have also deliberately merged the Priestly divine names such as *'ĕlōhîm* and YHWH *'ĕlōhîm* to develop a sense of inclusiveness of others.

Conclusion

Having Yhwh as the primary epithet in the book may on the surface cause us to believe that it is the preferred epithet in Chronicles. However, this analysis suggests that the consistent employment of *'ĕlōhîm* and Yhwh *'ĕlōhîm* appears to be a major tool used by the Chronicler to develop the theme of inclusiveness in the postexilic context. While the deliberate insertion of epithets such as "God of the fathers" and "God of Israel" relate more specifically to Israelites in the broadest sense, we also find the Chronicler ensuring that foreigners are seen as part of "all Israel," where they have a share in this access to Yhwh through the universal umbrella of the Priestly *'ĕlōhîm*. That is, a foreigner may not pray to the God of the ancestors, given the ancestors were Israelites.

The Priestly idea of inclusive monotheism may relate as well to the nature of Chronicles as a cultic history of Israel. Considering Yehud as a new postexilic community, with the temple rebuilt in Jerusalem under Persian authority, Chronicles offers a distinctive hope for all Israel in response to the exclusive approach of Ezra-Nehemiah.

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[50] Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 347. Note that this point of intermarriage in the genealogical chapters (1 Chr 1-9) has also been argued by Knoppers in particular. See Knoppers, "Intermarriage, Social Complexity," 15-30; Gary N. Knoppers, "Great among His Brothers but Who Is He? Heterogeneity in the Composition of Judah," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 3 (2001): 1-7; Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1-9*.

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The Gracious Torah of Christ in the Gospel of Matthew: Christ in the Parable of the Sower as an Example (13:1–23)

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Abstract

The main task of the prophets in the history of Israel was to deliver the message of 'obedience to God' to God's chosen nation – obedience as the expected-response from the people of Israel to show their abiding by the Law (Torah). Jesus in his ministry in the Gospel of Matthew continues that task in and through his teachings, preaching, and healing. This essay looks upon the Gracious Torah of Christ in Matthew's Gospel as Jesus Christ's proclamation of the message of obedience to God in his ministry where the response of the listener is important. For the scope of this essay, I will focus only on exploring the parable of the sower (13:1–23) as an example of Jesus' teachings showing the fulfillment of the law and the prophets (mentioned in Matt 5:17) as the Gracious[1] Torah of Christ in the Gospel of Matthew.

Key Words: Matthew, Torah (Law), Crowd, Disciple, Discipleship, Listen/Hear, Fulfillment, Basileia, Parable of the Sower.

Introduction

Matthew's view of Jesus' words in 5:17 about the coming of Jesus as fulfillment of the law and prophets continues to divide scholarship on the First Gospel. The disagreement revolves around the interpretation of the verb *plēroō* (to fulfill). Does Matthew intend to signify the salvation-historical fulfillment of the law so that it no longer requires keeping? Or does Matthew's Jesus use *plēroō* synonymously with *poieō* (to do Matt 5:19)? This essay considers both arguments important, by regarding both words (*plēroō* and *poieō* (to do)) as depicting the importance of putting into action God's teachings and instructions as revealed in Jesus' ministry. It is action to be carried out by anyone regardless of status and role in a community. Also important to consider is Jesus' mention of *'the law or the prophets*' which shows that the law as Torah and the prophets are deeply embedded in one another and represent a blended approach to belief and action in first century Judaism and emerging Christianity.[2] In other words, the words of the prophets in the history of Israel were the law and continued to be the law fulfilled by Jesus in his ministry. For example in Matt 13:1–23 (Parable of the Sower), a part of Jesus' answer to his disciples' question (v.10) of why he speaks to the crowd in parables

[1] The meaning of the adjective 'Gracious' that describes the noun 'Torah' relates to the theological meaning of the Greek word *karis* (grace). *Karis* depicts the favour done by God for the sinful humankind in and through Jesus Christ's ministry, death, and resurrection. The word *Torah* is looked at in this essay as simply God's teachings or instructions that guide how a human being shall live life. Thus, the phrase *The Gracious Torah* expresses the teachings of Jesus as shown in his words and actions as fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah to save the world from sin. For example, these words of Jesus in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount say: *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish but to fulfill* (Mt 5:17)*."*

[2] For example, the law as Torah includes 313 commandments and ordinances (according to later Rabbis), which include detailed instructions about all kinds of offerings and sacrifices. The prophets, in contrast, include such statement as, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" as they challenge people to be obedient to Torah.

is a prophecy. Jesus says:

> With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says:
> "You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn – and I would heal them." (Matt 13:14–15)

This essay will give an interpretation of the parable of the sower using the sociorhetorical approach[3] to show that Jesus' teachings in parables reveal Jesus' fulfillment of the law and the prophets. The parable of the sower is a parable about listening. Listening is one of the characteristics of becoming a disciple in Matthew's gospel. The person who responds positively to Jesus' teachings, preaching, and showing of the fulfillment of the law and the prophets is considered in this essay a disciple of Jesus.[4] It is the purpose of this essay to show that Jesus' relationship to the crowds in the Gospel of Matthew reveals one of the ways of Jesus' fulfillment of the law and the prophets: to make the crowds as disciples.

The Sociorhetorical approach

There are five stages of the sociorhetorical approach.[5] I will draw upon two stages in this essay: innertextual and intertextual. The innertexture stage will show how the language of the Matthean Gospel in chapter 13 communicates that Jesus' teachings reveal Jesus' fulfillment of the law or the prophets as Gracious Torah of Christ. The analysis of the intertexture aims to view how Isaiah 6:9–10 functions in Matt 13:1–23 and how Isaiah's prophecy elaborates the meaning and significance of Jesus' answer to his disciples' question (13:10–1) in light of the Gracious Torah of Christ. The intertextual reading will be made under these three modes of intertextuality: recitation, recontextualisation, and reconfiguration.

Nature of Discipleship in Matthew

Michael J. Wilkins suggests that Matthew's presentation of Jesus' ministry shows more clearly than any other gospel the nature of discipleship and this is manifestly told in the beginning and ending of Matthew's account.[6] It begins with the calling of the first

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[3] Another example of the use of this method to explore Matthews Gospel, see Vaitusi Nofoaiga, *A Samoan Reading of Discipleship in Matthew* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017).

[4] Responding positively to Jesus' teachings as a characteristic of becoming a disciple of Jesus is made from the meaning of discipleship proposed by Fernando F. Segovia. For Segovia, the many interpretations and claims of what discipleship means to Matthew ultimately lead to two general definitions. First, discipleship (in the narrow sense) is a tradition of following Jesus in accordance with the historical master-disciple relationship between and his followers. Second, discipleship (in the broader sense) is the self-understanding of a Christian believer in relation to his or her daily practicing of the teachings of Jesus. Segovia's second definition points to the importance of anyone's positive response to Jesus' teachings. See Fernando F. Segovia, "Introduction: Call and Discipleship – Toward a Re-examination of the Shape and Character of Christian Existence in the New Testament," in *Discipleship in the New Testament,* ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 2.

[5] Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to the Socio-rhetorical Interpretation* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1996), 1-7; Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 21.

[6] Michael J. Wilkins, *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel: As Reflected in the use of the Term μαθητης* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 2.

disciples (Matt 4:18–23), and concludes with the great commission (Matt 28:16–20). In this context of discipleship in Matthew's account, the Gracious Torah of Christ will be explored. So this essay aims to show that the Gracious Torah of Christ in the Gospel of Matthew is Jesus' bringing of every one (collectively as the crowd) to becoming a disciple of Christ; but also to bring them into God's *basileia*. This is shown in some moments of Jesus' ministry where Jesus had compassion for the crowd (Matt 9:36; 14:14; 15:32).

From the perspective of Matthew's Gospel, the nature of Christian discipleship requires self-attestation through good works. In the Matthean Gospel, the disciple is characterized as a *doer* of the will of God (Matt 12:46–50) – someone who is seen in and through his or her conspicuous lifestyle as the fulfillment of the law and the prophets which Jesus taught. This emphasis on obedience in actions is evident from the beginning of Jesus' ministry, as seen in John the Baptist's call for deeds befitting true repentance (3:8) as well as Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:29); it comes to full expression at the climax of Jesus' ministry in (27:45–28:10); and it constitutes the final exhortation shown in Jesus' commissioning of the disciples (28:16–20).

Crowd character role in the Gospel of Matthew

There are moments in the ministry of Jesus where Jesus' disciples are shown as a separate group from the crowd and the more distinctive character group than the crowd. Jesus' words as mentioned about fulfilling the law and abolishing ways that hinder the practicing of the law is to break those barriers separating his disciples from the crowd. It is simply calling anyone to become a disciple of Jesus. Thus, Gracious Torah of Christ in the Gospel of Matthew is Jesus' showing the egalitarian love of God in and through his teachings and healings to those following his ministry. It is a revelation of the nature of Christian discipleship that requires self-attestation through good listening and good works.

The Matthean scholars who have studied 'crowds' have not reached a consensus in relation to the crowds' role, character and function. The disagreement is caused by the ambivalent portrait of the crowds in the Matthean story and the scholars' use of different interpretational methodologies. Warren Carter and J. R. Cousland's interpretations suggest that the crowds are not Jesus' disciples[7] because they lack faith. Conversely, S. Van Tilborg contends that the crowds accepted Jesus' proclamation which suggests the crowds' possessed faith and were worthy of being Jesus' disciples. Paul Minear considers the crowds as laymen of Matthew's church who are preached to and taught by the Christian leaders of Matthew's community. Kingsbury espouses distinguishing of the twelve disciples as a special group. Kingsbury's interpretation focuses on Matthew 13 where Jesus and the crowds are considered as the principal parties (vv.1–3). Kingsbury argues that there is significance in the placement of Chapter 13 in the structure of the Matthean story as the 'turning point' of Jesus' relationship with the crowd[8] Structurally, this 'turning point' occurs after the account of Jesus' ministry in chapters 4–12 where the

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[7] For the disciples' character and role in the First Gospel, see the following scholars works: Ulrich Luz, "The Disciples in the Gospel according to Matthew," in *The Interpretation of Matthew,* ed. Graham Stanton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 115; Wilkins, *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel*, 171-72; David B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 53; Warren Carter, "Matthew 4:18-22 and Matthean Discipleship: An Audience-Oriented Perspective," *CBQ* 59 (1997): 58-75; Richard A. Edwards, *Matthew's Narrative Portrait of Disciples: How the Text Connoted Reader is Informed* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997), 19-22.

[8] Jack D. Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13: A Study in Redaction Criticism* (London: SPCK, 198), 130.

Jewish leaders challenged Jesus' ministry but not the crowds. According to Kingsbury, from this point onwards Jesus uses parables as ways of concealing his message from the crowds while teaching the twelve disciples.[9] In spite of Kingsbury's clear backing of disciples, he suggests that the Matthean Gospel also speaks highly of the crowds. In contrast to Kingsbury, this essay considers important the placement of Matthew 13 to amplify Jesus' consideration of the crowd as disciples. The notion of the crowds as disciples might be seen as part of Jesus' fulfillment of the law and the prophets mentioned in 5:17. The following interpretation will attempt to show such a claim.

Crowds as disciples in Matthew 13:1–23: An Example of the Gracious Torah of Christ

Innertextual Analysis of Matt 13:1–23

There are various structures of the Matthean Gospel by which to make sense of the Matthean emphases. I have chosen Charles H. Lohr's structure[10] because it signifies Chapter 13 as the central part of the Matthean narrative. For Lohr, the 'parable of the sower' is generally seen as an illustration of the different types of learners Jesus encountered in the first part of the Matthean story. Placing the 'parable of the sower' as the first parable in Chapter 13 has significance in identifying the members of the crowds who have decided to be learners of Jesus' ministry.

The first appearance of disciples as members of the crowd is mentioned in 5:1. As new members of the crowd, their character, therefore, should be bringing a new function into the characterization of the crowds. That new function is a literary construct designating crowd members who respond positively to Jesus' ministry. Thus, disciples are not a separate group but a part of the crowd that follow Jesus. The following interpretation is made in the light of that crowd relationship to Jesus.

The crowd as designated listeners must go near Jesus in order to hear and do Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of heaven. When Jesus finishes his Sermon on the Mount the narrative states that the crowds were astounded at his teaching as the one having authority rather than their scribes (7:28– 29). The crowd's response implies that firstly, the disciples in 5:1 were part of the crowds. It blurs the line between the crowd and disciple mentioned in 5:1 in relation to the sermon. Secondly, the narrator makes the

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[9] Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13,* 16, 130.

[10] Charles H. Lohr's structure of Matthew's gospel is called "The Chiastic Structure." See Charles H. Lohr, "Oral Techniques in the Gospel of Matthew," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 23 (1961): 427.

The chiastic Structure by C. H. Lohr

"*A 1-4 Birth and beginnings* *Narrative*
B 5-7 Blessings, entering the kingdom *Discourse*
C 8-9 Authority and invitation *Narrative*
D 10 Mission Discourse *Discourse*
E 11-12 Rejection by this generation *Narrative*
F 13 Parables of the kingdom *Discourse*
E' 14-17 Acknowledgement by disciples *Narrative*
D' 18 Community discourse *Discourse*
C' 19-22 Authority and invitation *Narrative*
B' 23-25 Woes, coming of the kingdom *Discourse*
A' 26-28 Death and rebirth *Narrative*

This structure is part of Lohr's attempt to identify the oral techniques Matthew used in the actual composition of Matthew's gospel.

distinction here between Jesus' authority and the scribes. Jesus' teaching is considered better than the scribes. The crowds' response anticipates similar responses from the crowds in the next part of the structure.

Matt 13:1–23 (Parable of the Sower) as a rhetorical unit[11]

Discipleship is the product of Jesus' proclamation of God's kingdom or Jesus' fulfillment of the law (Torah) and the prophets. According to the Matthean Gospel, discipleship demands a number of things. It has to be initiated by Jesus (Matt 9:9). It requires immediate submission to the authority of Jesus (8:15). It involves commitment (8:18). It is a call to the mission (10:1–4) and forms the community that Jesus Christ leads (5:17–20). These references reveal a part of the nature of discipleship as an immediate mission full of struggle and challenges. In other words, a follower of Christ's part in fulfilling the law and the prophets is not an easy task. The placement of Chapter 13 in the middle of Matthew's story is significant in elucidating the inclusion of crowd members who have fulfilled those expectations in the first part of Jesus' ministry.

As noted above, discipleship has to be initiated by Jesus. The first part of that initiation is Jesus' proclamation of God's *basileia* which is the key purpose of Jesus' ministry and also the main task for his disciples. John the Baptist first proclaimed the kingdom of heaven (3:2) and when he got arrested (4:12–17), Jesus took over the responsibility of continuing that proclamation. Intrinsically, the placement of the parable of the sower is to identify crowd members who have believed in that proclamation and those who have not. The analysis of the rhetorical unit[12] (13:1–23) is based on the following threefold structure:

(i). Beginning (vv.1–9): Parable of the Sower
(ii) Middle (vv.10–17): Reaffirmation of Jesus' disciples
(iii) End (vv.18–23): Explanation of parable of sower

The unit begins with Jesus' telling the parable of the sower, followed by a conversation between Jesus and the disciples regarding Jesus' reason for speaking in parables to the crowds. The unit finishes with an explanation of the parable. In this unit, there is a rhetorical situation that suggests social and cultural codes of the environment that shapes the meaning of the text.[13] What follows is a question of Jesus' response to the disciples' inquiry (13:10): whether it designates the twelve apostles as the only disciples or that it includes all crowd members who believed in Jesus' proclamation. The situation evokes a rhetorical problem[14] defined by an uncertainty in the text as to who Jesus refers as the people who have not been given the understanding of God's *basileia.* This dilemma is

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[11] A rhetorical unit has "a beginning, a middle, and an end." See George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 33-34.

[12] The rhetorical unit is attributed to Jesus. The narrator, in the beginning of the unit, establishes Jesus as the main character who will narrate the parable and its meaning. Thus, the parable cannot be interpreted as a text isolated from its explanation (13:10-23). Combining them forms the rhetorical unit which has a beginning (13:1-9), a middle (13:10-17) and an end (13:18-23). For the meaning of the 'rhetorical unit', see Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 33-34.

[13] According to Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation,*35; the rhetorical situation "is a situation under which an individual is called upon to make some response: the response made is conditioned by the situation and in turn has some possibility of affecting the situation of what follows from it."

[14] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation,* 36.

caused by the direct considering of whole crowds as non-listeners (13:11).[15] Obviously, there are people who do not want to listen to Jesus' teaching but the question is: 'Who are they?' The answer to this question will indicate whether the crowds are included as becoming disciples.

The rhetorical unit is arranged to clearly show the significance of the differentiation between the crowd members who listen and those who do not, representing the two main responses Jesus encountered in the first part of his ministry. The arrangement begins with the common-place and its description (13:1– 3). The place is outside and is described as near the sea, where Jesus as the speaker sits on a boat separating him from the audience. The arrangement attributes both the main action and preaching of the parable of the sower to Jesus. The attributions identify Jesus as the competent speaker and character who has moral excellence and passion, and possesses the power of knowledge. The action (13:2) is shown by Jesus' getting into a boat and speaking from a distance while the crowds are standing on the shore. The narrator, through this arrangement, persuades the hearers/readers that the main actor and speaker of this event is Jesus. Thus, the message of the parable he preaches is important.

The next part (13:10–17) focuses on the purpose of the parable indicated by the disciples' question. The disciples' concern is not what the parable means but why Jesus speaks in parables. The disciples' question, and the first part of Jesus' answer (13:11–12) conceive a statement which is the purpose of the whole rhetorical unit. Jesus' answer amplified by Isaiah's prophecy strengthens the logical reason of the conversation between Jesus and the disciples. The final part (13:18–23) elaborates the parable, referring to the parable of sower as containing examples of various listeners.

Beginning vv1–9: Parable of the Sower

These verses embody the event which is Jesus' telling of the parable of the sower, the time of the event, the setting of where the event took place and the event's characters, as well as the parable itself. The words 'That same day' (13:11) indicate that the day Jesus told the 'parable of the sower' is the same day Jesus declares his true family (12:46–50),[16] where he distinguishes between insiders and outsiders. On this day, Jesus came out of the house in 12:46–50 and went and sat near the sea. The great crowds gathered around him and were told the parable of the sower (13:2–3). Before Jesus entered the house where he declared his true family (12:46–50), he was in the grainfields and synagogue where he was confronted by other members of the crowds, namely the Jewish leaders, about the Sabbath law (12:1–8; 9–14). The confrontation resulted in the leader's plot to destroy him. If the Jewish leaders planned to find a way to accuse Jesus, they would never leave Jesus. Thus, they could be assumed to be part of the crowd that gathered to hear Jesus near the sea (13:2). In other words, part of Jesus' fulfillment of the law and the prophets is to bring the Jewish leaders as well into God's *basileia*.

The Jewish leaders' plot to accuse Jesus foreshadows Jesus' reply in 13:11 where he said that there were people who were not given knowledge of God's *basileia*. However, Jesus' coming out of the house expresses God's breaking barriers and boundaries marking the distinction between insiders and outsiders (12:46–50). In other words, Jesus' coming out of his house (13:11) represents his saving action of seeking

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[15] The crowds in the parable of the sower are predominantly interpreted as non-listeners but I question this interpretation, especially when considering the crowds' response to Jesus in the first part of his ministry as positive. The crowds did not do anything wrong in that part of story (4:17–12:50). I wonder if this sentence should be moved into the main body. This is an important statement!

[16] This interpretation refers to those who do not do the will of God as outsiders and those who do the will of God as insiders.

outsiders who had not been given knowledge of God's *basileia*, namely the sinners, sick, poor, and non-believers both men and women to become members of his declared family. It is another example of Jesus' practicing of the Gracious Torah.

Jesus' preaching of the parable of the sower opens with the word; *Behold!* (13:3) and ends with the concluding formula; *Let anyone with ears listen!* (13:9). These opening and closing signs in the parable of the sower could be interpreted as an indirect *'*inclusio'[17] in the sense that the words *behold* and *listen* draw attention of the hearer/ reader to the parable of the sower. They are both imperative calling the listeners (great crowds[18]) gathering around Jesus near the sea (13:2) to listen to the parable of the sower. It also indicates an open and inclusive invitation to all crowd members near the sea to hear the parable. The implied author, through this *'*inclusio' invites hearers/readers to understand the kinds of listeners Jesus encountered in the first part of his ministry and what God would do for them. Thus, the word *listen* is important because it defines the function of the crowds as listeners.

The command *listen* in v.9 is *akouetō* in Greek.[19] It is of the verb *akouō* which means 'I listen or hear.'[20] *Akouetō* is present imperative active, 3rd person singular. It is translated 'let him or her listen.'[21] The imperative impresses a command. The present tense in Greek closely corresponds to the English present continuous tense. It is sometimes considered to be a linear tense, conveying single continuous actions or repeated actions. Thus, the word *akouetō* in the Gospel of Matthew can mean 'let him/ her continue to listen/continue to hear'. This means that the above indirect *'inclusio'* signifies the ongoing nature of Jesus' inclusive invitation to all crowd members to seek understanding of God's *basileia*. The parable of the sower can, therefore, be understood as an illustration of different kinds of listeners (vv.18– 23). The following middle section of the rhetorical unit will indicate how the narrator, through Jesus, distinguishes the listeners/insiders from the non-listeners/outsiders.

Middle vv.10–17: Elucidation of the inclusion of crowds to become Jesus disciples

The use of the command *listen* to conclude the parable of the sower is a rhetorical anticipation of the conversation between Jesus and his disciples in the middle part of the rhetorical unit, the purpose of the parable (13:10–17). Various Matthean scholars have interpreted this part of the unit as a Matthean literary construction to elucidate the contrast between disciples (twelve apostles) and crowds where disciples are considered chosen disciples of Jesus.[22] Their interpretations were mostly based on the use of the antithetic parallelism in v.11. Interpreting the crowds' non-listening as an expression to identify them as members outside God's salvation, does not cohere to the positive

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[17] *Inclusio* is "signs of opening and closure." See Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation,* 34, 82. For an example of how this language device is used in the first gospel see Lohr, "Oral Techniques in Gospel of Matthew," 408-10. Lohr claims that Matthew is very fond of this device.

[18] The people Jesus healed and who believed in Jesus' proclamation in the first part of Jesus' ministry are assumed to follow Jesus, hence the great crowds here in the parable of the sower are comprised of those people as well.

[19] B. G. Scheinder, "ἀκουω", *EDNT* 1:53.

[20] J. W. Wenham, *The Elements of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)*,* 73.

[21] Wenham, *The Elements of New Testament Greek,* 54.

[22] Examples of some scholars who made such interpretations are: Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus*, 38 and J. R. C. Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 5-53.

response of other crowd members and more importantly the Matthean point of view of God's salvation theory.[23] Such a problem is caused by treating the antithetic parallelism (13:11–12) literally only in the literary or historical contexts of the parable itself (13:1–23). This limits the interpretation of the function and role of the crowds. However, using the rhetorical function of arrangement to explore the placement of 'the purpose of the parable' (13:10–17) and reading it in relation to the narrative context of the first part of Jesus' ministry — as shown in the chiastic structure — evokes another meaning of the parable of the sower which is the basis of this essay.[24] Jesus has never blamed crowds in the first part of his ministry. The crowds have been astounded at Jesus' teaching and healing. They were subjects of Jesus' proclamation. So, Jesus' reply to the disciples' question, indicating those who do not listen (13:13), should not be interpreted as a collective or singular function of the crowds. Obviously, there were crowd members who believed in Jesus' proclamation and as a result they were healed (8:1–15; 9:18–34). These were the ones that Jesus praised and blessed for understanding God's *basileia* (13:11–12, 16-17). On the other hand, there were members of the crowd who did not accept Jesus' vision of God's *basileia* (13:13–15). Despite their failure to listen, they were given a chance to be healed if they repented ("*…and turn – and I would heal them."* (13:15b). That chance bears Jesus' compassion for the crowds shown in the first part of his ministry (9:36). Thus, both disciples and crowds are recipients of the mysteries of God's kingdom.

The use of the demonstrative pronoun *ekeinos* in Jesus' reply (13:11) shows crowd members who do not listen.[25] The demonstrative pronoun *ekeinos* is used in this verse to demonstrate *them* as 'that group there' and *autois,* as the term commonly used throughout the unit, demonstrates 'this group here.'[26] Considering the function of the Jewish leaders as opponents of Jesus' ministry may well be the crowd members designated as 'that group there'. The Jewish leaders were planning to destroy Jesus (12:4) just prior to the day Jesus preached the parable of the sower near the sea and so the narrative leaves open the possibility that the Jewish leaders were also present amongst the crowds near the sea. Comparing Jesus' compassion for the crowds to the Jewish leaders disputing earlier in the narrative, the implied author's use of *ekeinos* in Jesus' answer (13:11) in the middle of the Matthean Gospel can function to identify Jewish leaders as crowd members who have not been given understanding of God's *basileia* or have refused the gift. Thus, Jesus' answer to the disciples' question may demonstrate the Jewish leaders as the crowd members who did not hear, see and understand, as that is the choice they have made in the gospel to this point.

Furthermore, Jesus' answer to the disciples' question indicates Jesus' affirmation of crowd members who have and who will become members of his alternative community of disciples. Manifestly, the affirmation suggests continuation of Jesus' mission for those who do not listen. The first words of Jesus reply in v.11, *To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given,* could be understood as not a direct answer to the disciples' question but an

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[23] I mentioned above in the characterization of crowds the Matthean Gospel's main point of view, which is God's Salvation history.

[24] The Matthean Gospel's presentation of Jesus' proclamation of God's *basileia* shows the inclusion of crowds to become Jesus' disciples or listeners of God's *basileia* as another example of Jesus' fulfillment of the law or the prophets.

[25] From a redaction point of view, considering Mark as the main source of the Matthean Gospel, the Matthean text changes Markan use of *exō* (Mark 4:11) which shows clearly the separateness of those outside from the inside, to *ekeinos* to express the main point of view of the Matthean Gospel. That is, *ekeinos* demonstrates the non-listening of the crowd members who do not listen but are still part of the saved group; they are outsiders.

[26] Wenham, *The Elements of New Testament,* 57-58.

indirect compassionate response of Jesus to remind his disciples that there are members of the crowds that need to be given understanding. Jesus' direct answer to the question comes in vv.13–17 where he states the reason why the mission needs to continue. Obviously, some crowd members see but do not perceive, they hear but do not listen and understand. This means that Jesus' answer suggests that he does not have to speak to his disciples in parables because they have been given understanding, but to those members of the crowds who need to be given understanding. This evokes another interpretation of the parable of the sower: it is not about hiding the secrets of God's *basileia* but about revealing them to the crowds. Thus, the parable of the sower is not about failure but hope.

End vv.18–23: Parable of sower explained

This section explains the different kinds of listeners in the parable of the sower. The following repetitive texture sums up the significance of listening as the primary prerogative for crowd members to become Jesus' disciples. It follows a progressive pattern of listen/hear and see/look in 13:1–23[27] and contains three parts. First, v.9 states the invitation of the listeners. Second, vv.10–17 identifies the listener and states the reward of the listener. Third, vv.18–23 shows problems of listening and a solution. The repetition of the word listen/hear in the unit shows that this is the focus of meaning and purpose of the parable.

Intertextual Analysis of Matt 13:1–23

The interpretation will show how Isaiah 6:9–10 functions in Matthew 13:1–23 and elaborates the meaning and significance of Jesus' answer to his disciples' question (13:10 –17) which clarifies the different responses of members of the crowd. I begin with a brief review of various interpretations of the function of Isaiah's text in the sower parable leading towards my intertextual reading. Secondly, I give an intertextual reading made under these three modes of intertextuality: recitation, recontextualization, and

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[27] Repetitive texture and progressive pattern of listen/hear and see/look in 13:1–23.

v.9 prophetic formula	*Let anyone with ears **listen!***
v.13 reason of parables	***seeing…**not perceive, **hearing**…not **listen** nor do they understand…*
v.14 prophecy	***listen,** but never understand, …**look,** but never perceive….*
v.15 hard hearing, shut eyes	*not **look** with their eyes, not **listen** with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn – and I will heal them.*
v.16	*blessed are your eyes, for they **see** it, and your ears for they **hear…***
v.17 Prophets and righteous	*many…did not **see** it, and to **hear** what you **hear** but did not **hear** it.*
v.18	***Hear** then the parable…*
v.19 seed on the path	*When anyone **hears** the word…and does not understand it…*
vv.20-21 seed on rockyground	*one who **hears** the word and immediately receives it with joy; but…when trouble or persecution arises…that person immediately falls away.*
v.22 seed among thorns	*one who **hears** the word, but cares of the world…yield nothing….*
v.23 seed in good soil	*one who **hears** the word and understand it, who indeed bears fruits…*

reconfiguration. The final part will state whether the intertextual elements have any impact on the inclusion of crowds as becoming disciples.

Brief review of the function of Isaiah 6:9–10 in the Matthean text

Scholars have various observations about the use of Isaiah 6:9–10 in the first gospel. Geoffery D. Robinson's interpretation of the use of Isaiah 6:9–10 is based on the motif of deafness and blindness.[28] He writes that Jesus' reply to the disciples' question is to explain the "divine principle associated with Isaiah 6:9–10, namely that where faith is present, clearer sight "is given", but that where faith is lacking, "even what he has shall be taken away from him."[29] Robinson's analysis suggests that the first gospel's use of Isaiah 6:9–10 is to express the tendency of the human heart to reject God's divine ways which lead to death. In other words, the function of Isaiah's text is a manifestation of God's judgment for human hearts that fail to respond.[30] Kingsbury, along a similar line, suggests that Isaiah's text asserts Jews under judgment. Kingsbury refers to the crowds in the parable of the sower as Jews. His interpretation is based on his consideration of Matt 13:10–17 as verses showing the disciples and the Jews in opposition to one another, regarding Jews as people who do not listen.[31] Conversely, Ivor Harold Jones compares the Matthean use of Isaiah's text to the second gospel and concludes that Isaiah 6:9–10 could be interpreted as a sustaining of a "Marcan hardening theory or as a challenge."[32] He claims that Matthew's use of Isaiah's text introduces the significance of human responsibility which is shown by their being responsible for their hardening hearts.[33] These interpretations use a source critical approach and their conclusions arise from their comparison of the studied text to outside sources. The following intertextual interpretation will use a different approach, namely intertextuality to investigate how the outside text, Isaiah 6:9–10, functions in the language environment of Matt 13:1–23.

Intertextual interpretation

The recitation of Isaiah's prophecy in Matt 13:10-17 is a part of Jesus' reply to his disciples' question (13:10). By having Jesus evoke these words of Isaiah the implied author demonstrates in this scene Jesus' actualization of his earlier words in his Sermon on the Mount where Jesus said, "*Do you think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill,"* (5:17). The actualization is the progression of Jesus' fulfillment of the law and the prophets in his teaching, preaching and healing. After the first part of Jesus' ministry, Jesus' use of the prophecy in this scene (13:1–23) is to explain clearly the differentiation between the 'insiders' and 'outsiders' (12:46–50). Jesus' declaration of his true family foreshadows his use of Isaiah's prophecy to explain the reason he spoke in parables to crowds, which is the continuation of Jesus' fulfilling of the law and prophets from the first part of his ministry. In sociorhetorical terms this use of scripture functions as a

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[28] Geoffery D. Robinson, "The Motif of Deafness and Blindness in Isaiah 6:9-10: A Contextual, Literary, and Theological Analysis," *BBR* 8 (1998): 185.

[29] Robinson, "The Motif of Deafness and Blindness in Isaiah 6:9-10," 185.

[30] Kingsbury, *The Parable of Jesus,* 38.

[31] Kingsbury, *The Parable of Jesus,* 47.

[32] Ivor Harold Jones, *The Matthean Parables: A Literary Historical Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 283.

[33] Jones, *The Matthean Disciples,* 284.

recitation, recontexualisation and reconfiguration of Isaiah 6:9–10.

Recitation

What we find in Matt 13:14–15 is a verbatim recitation of the LXX text. In the text, the narrator, through Jesus, attributes the prophecy to Isaiah. Such an attribution of a text draws a Matthean audience into the work of the prophet Isaiah in order to assist the hearers and readers to understand why he spoke in parables. The recitation reflects the variability of the crowds' response to Jesus' ministry where some crowd members listen and some do not. The recitation reminds hearers/readers that not listening, not seeing and not perceiving are not new and they characterize the negative response of some crowd members who do not accept Jesus' proclamation.

The arrangement of the rhetorical unit indicates how the recitation functions in the progression of narration of the parable of the sower, its purpose and explanation. The recitation is a part of the middle section (13:10–17) of the rhetorical unit which connects the sower parable (13:3–9) to its explanation (13:18–23). So, the recitation helps clarify the function of that connection, which is to identify kinds of listeners illustrated in the parable of the sower. In doing so, the recitation is used in the text as an 'enthymeme'.[34] An 'enthymeme' begins with a main premise, followed by a minor premise and a conclusion. The main premise of the recitation is;

> "You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never receive." (13:14b)

The use of the conjunction *and* in the beginning of verse 14 links 13:10–17 to the parable of the sower (13:1–9) as a part of the unit to show the purpose of the parable. Such a link suggests that all the second plural personal and demonstrative pronouns in 13:10–17 refer to the audience of the parable of the sower in the narrative context of the text. The main premise of the recitation is the central statement that gives the hearer/reader an image of the *autois* in verse 14. The referent of this *you* plural in the beginning of the main premise and the rest of the 'enthymeme'; is the *ekeinos* of verse 11.

The next part of the recitation is the minor premise of the 'enthymeme', which indicates the cause of the actions of the *ekeinos* shown in the main premise and their outcomes.

> "For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing,
> and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart…" (13:15a–15b)

This articulates why the *ekeinos* listen but do not understand, and look but never perceive. This is highlighted by the conjunction *for.* Their hearts have grown dull and their ears are hard of hearing. The minor premise suggests that the *ekeinos* were responsible for their own hardened hearts. However, the tone of the recitation changes in the last part of the prophecy (*"and turn – and I would heal them."* (13:15c)) which is the conclusion of the 'enthymeme'. It expresses a chance for the *ekeinos* to be included in God's saving action.

Furthermore, the 'enthymeme' is amplified by Jesus' blessing of the disciples in 13:16–17, where the differentiation between the *ekeinos* and Jesus' disciples is

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[34]An 'enthymeme' is a rhetorical syllogism that is deduced from general and special truths. See Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric,* Trans J. H. F Reese (Massachussets: Harvard, 1991), xxxvi-xxxvii.

elucidated.[35] The amplification indicates the reward of crowd members who will listen, see and understand. This means that whoever turns from not listening to listening, not seeing to seeing and not perceiving to perceiving would be healed or given the reward of God's blessing. Indeed, the recitation shows an open invitation to all crowd members to become Jesus' disciples. The enormity of the blessing is shown by the comparison of Jesus' disciples to prophets and righteous people.

Recontextualisation

The narrator, through Jesus, recontextualizes the vision of Isaiah as a prophecy fulfilled in Jesus' ministry which revolves around Jesus' proclamation of God's *basileia.* Isaiah 6 is a prophetic vision of God in the temple.[36] The use of King Uzziah (6:1) shows the contrast between the earthly king that died and the heavenly king that lives, indicating the vision as a connection to the earthly kingship which includes Israel as God's chosen nation.[37] The vision is set in the temple where the enthronement of God is placed and is surrounded by seraphs who called out the holiness and the glory of God (6:2–3). The seraphim are the host of the heavens who gather around God's throne to participate in God's judgment of human's response (1 King 2:22:19–3). It shows the might of God's kingdom. The seraphs' action of shaking doors of the temple and filling the house with smoke symbolizes the sovereignty of God who is sitting on the throne (6:4). According to Lind, the prophetic vision of Isaiah 6 focuses on the earth to show that God's kingship is universal and full of God's glory.[38]

The Matthean text recontextualises this vision bearing God's kingship (earthly and heavenly) into the setting of Jesus' telling of the parable of the sower. In the Matthean story, Jesus is portrayed as king; the Son of David (12:23). The rhetorical unit demonstrates Jesus' kingship by his getting into a boat and sitting at a distance from the crowds (13:2). The word *sat* used for Jesus' sitting explains Jesus as a person of honour.[39] In this event, Jesus is presented as fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy in this day near the sea as he had done previously where he taught, preached, and healed the crowds. The setting of Jesus preaching near the sea reflects the image of God's kingship as universal, which implies that Jesus' utterance of Isaiah's words in that setting indicates that they are truly words of God. Thus, the Matthean recontextualisation identifies Jesus as king and prophet.

The recontextualisation is indicated also in comparison of Jesus' audience to Isaiah's audience. Jesus refers to *this people* (13:15a) not as Israel but as the crowds in his ministry. In this way, the narrator through Jesus draws hearers/readers' attention to the prophecy as a reminder of the story of Israel and their relationship with God in the time of Isaiah. It necessitates the connection between Jesus' and Isaiah's actions and also the connection between Israel's response in Isaiah's time and the crowds' response in

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[35] According to Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric,* xxxix; amplification as a rhetorical element is used to compare the person or people that is and are supposed to be praised to known people.

[36] Isaiah 6 is considered by Millard C. Lind as the centre of the Book of Isaiah because it contains the calling of Isaiah into his prophetic mission, God's judgment and salvation of his people and the whole picture of God's kingdom. See Millard C. Lind, "Political Implications of Isaiah 6," in *Writing Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition,* eds. Craig C. Broyles & Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 317, this is an interesting point because it indicates a comparison to the consideration of Matthew 13 as the centre of Matthew's Gospel.

[37] Lind, "The Political Implications of Isaiah 6," 318-19.

[38] Lind, "The Political Implications of Isaiah 6," 319.

[39] Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus,* 23.

Jesus' ministry. The Matthean recontextualisation of Isaiah 6:9–10 will be further extrapolated in the following discussion of the reconfiguration of the recitation.

Reconfiguration

The narrator recites the LXX text of Isa 6:9–10 which is a reconfiguration of the Masoretic text. The NRSV, which translates the Masoretic text, reads as:

Verse 9 And he said, "Go and say to his people: 'Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand.'

Verse 10 Make the mind of this people dull, and stop their ears, and shut their eyes, so that they may not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and comprehend with their minds, and turned and be healed ." (NRSV)

The same translation of Matt 13:14-15 which includes the LXX text of Isaiah 6:9-10 reads as:

Verse 14 With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says:
'You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive

Verse 15 For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing,and they have shut their eyes, so that they might not look with heir eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn and– I would heal them.' (NRSV)

Two observations can be made from the reconfiguration of the Masoretic text. First, the LXX text has reconfigured the Hebrew imperatives and infinitive absolute[40] of the verbs *keep listening* and *keep looking* to the future actives; *you will indeed listen* and *you will indeed look.* The reconfiguration indicates that people's listening and seeing will happen in the future and suggests a sense of hope. On the other hand, the sense of continuity in the Hebrew text shows that the people have been listening over a long period of time but without positive results. Intrinsically, there is a sense of a coming judgment felt in the words of the Hebrew text and in that sense, the Hebrew imperatives and infinitive absolute could be understood as an expression of a coming judgment. If the text is about God's judgment, obviously the reconfiguration softens the judgmental tone.

Second, the LXX has reconfigured the Hebrew imperative of the verbs *make, stop and shut* (Isa 6:10) to aorist passive; *has grown dull.* Two observations should be made from this change. First, the action of making is accomplished by the prophets' preaching indicating God as the subject of making fat the people's heart. Second, the reconfiguration shows that the people are the subject of their hardened hearts. Furthermore, the use of aorist passive suggests that the present hardened state of people's hearts is a result of a past action. This is emphasized by the use of the conjunction *for*[41] which expresses the cause of people's deafness and blindness. Thus, the people are

[40] In Hebrew, the infinitive absolute indicates continuation. See J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew* (Oxford: University Press, 1959), 79.

[41] The use of this conjunction in Matthew contrasts with Mark's use of *in order.* Mark as the main source of Matthew's story utilized *in order* in 4:1 to show the reason for not giving the understanding to crowds which is; they should not know and understand it.

responsible for their own incompetence to perceive and to understand God's will.

These reconfigurations express a toning down of the severity of the judgmental tone of the Masoretic text which shows God's hardening of people to new manifestations of human responsibility before God.[42] In the narrative context of the Matthean story, the shift means that people need to initiate positive response to God by turning themselves away from evils of the world such as self-righteousness (5:20), adultery (5:27–30) and self-centeredness (6:1–4). Turning away means repentance and it is the way of entering God's *basileia.* Hence, the reconfigurations in the intertext that reiterates the LXX have shown that one of the functions of Isaiah's text in the Matthean Gospel is to bring in the repentance factor or a possibility of another chance or hope in salvation. Carter speaks of the Matthean citation of Isaiah prophecy as words of hope.[43] He writes that despite people's rejecting the message of Jesus, God will eventually heal them as indicated in the last phrase *"And I will heal them"* (13:15). This means that all crowd members who were present when Jesus preached the parable of the sower have been given chances to become Jesus' disciples and will be given them into the future.

Conclusion

The reading of the innertexture of Matthew 13:1–23 has shown the crowds from the outset as a collective body that is comprised of all characters in the story and even Jesus as a member of the crowd. The characterization of the crowds clarifies that the narrator could not separate the disciples from the crowds. They learned together side by side and such close nurturing implies that the disciples are part of the crowds. For that reason, the disciples should be identified with the crowds. It is argued that the use of the word 'disciple' in the story is to designate members of the crowds who have responded positively to Jesus' ministry.

The intertextual interpretation understands the Matthean text's recitation as a prophecy to express one of the realities of Jesus' proclamation of God's *basileia*, that is, to clarify the kind of listeners who can become his disciples. The intertextual interpretation has shown the function of Isa 6:9–10 in the Matthean text can function to persuade hearers/readers that there is a chance of becoming Jesus' disciples and that it is an open invitation. This means that even the Jewish leaders as *ekeinos* are invited to become Jesus' disciples. The inclusive invitation also suggests that not becoming Jesus' disciples is not God's fault but personal accountability. The inclusive invitation indicates that whatever or whoever is represented by crowd members, such as their collective status, their social or political power and control, and their religious beliefs, all are invited to turn and become Jesus' community of disciples. Intriguingly, Jesus' choosing of his alternative community of disciples indicates 'inclusion' of crowd members to become Jesus' disciples.

In Matthew 13:1–13 Jesus fulfills the law and the prophets through his teachings, preaching, and healing. His teaching of how to be a listener of God's *basileia* using parables reflects the Gracious Torah of Christ. It is the inclusive love of God to bring every one into salvation. Thus, the Gracious Torah of Christ is simply Jesus' putting into actions his proclamation of the love of God or Jesus' fulfillment of the law and the prophets.

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[42] Jones, *The Matthean Parables,* 285.

[43] Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Socio-Political and Religious Reading* (Sheffield: Academic. 2000), 285.

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Who gets what, when, and how: Appropriating the political economic context of Luke 18:18–30 with implications on the political economies of the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs)

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Abstract

Political theorist Harold D. Lasswell describes politics as the study of influence, the influential. Using this understanding, I re-read the encounter between Jesus and the ruler in Luke 18:18-30. Is it possible to re-situate the Lucan narrative in the context of who gets what when and how? What are the implications for the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs)? This paper argues for a re-situated view of the institutional system that shapes and influences who gets what, when, and how in contemporary society. Some aspects for further talanoa are proposed.

Key Words: Contextual biblical interpretation, political economy, Pacific Island Countries and Territories, household, institutional approach.

Who Gets What, When, and How

Harold D. Lasswell in his political classic with the aforementioned title writes that politics is the study of influence and the influential.[1] The influential get the most from the distribution of what is there to get; the "mass" the rest. Lasswell's description of the institutional systems for the political economy[2] of society intersects with this author's keen interest in the confluence of political economy, religion and family. Grounding biblical interpretations in the political economic context of contemporary society is an ambitious, yet inevitable task. What has Luke got to say about who gets what when and how?

Taking Lasswell further, I add that it is not just the case of the few getting the most. Influence is concretized in our institutional systems. Ideology permeates the very institutions that govern and shape social, political, and economic interactions. Using Douglass C. North's analogy of sports, institutions are the rules of the games shaping how players perform and play on the field.[3] They provide the framework for human interactions, shaping relations or interactions between people, organizations, and countries. Incorporating institutional and political economic understanding, this paper seeks to resituate Luke 18:18–30. I argue that the Lucan story is better understood within the institutional system that governs social, political, and economic relations of the day.

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[1] Harold D. Lasswell, *Politics: Who gets What, When, How* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1936).

[2] I am using the term political economy to refer to the nexus between politics and economics. This reflects my bias towards political institutions as I see the economy shaped and influenced by political institutions. It highlights the critical juncture that exists between politics and economy.

[3] Douglass C. North, *Institutions, institutional change and economic performance* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3.

The aim is to explore the possibility that the ruler is part of the *aiga*, the household.

I begin with an overview of the political-economic context in the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs).[4] Next, I discuss the basis for a "re-situated" view of wealth in Luke 18:18–30 followed by an exploration of the innertexture and intertexture of the text. Using my own experience and lived reality as a Samoan, I re-situate the ruler within a Samoan *aiga*, exploring the possibilities. Implications on the Pacific Island Countries and Territories are offered in conclusion.

The Political-Economic Context in the PICTs

The PICTs remains a strategic arena in global geopolitics, part of the prevailing political economic system of global and multinational capitalism. The Pacific Ocean covers one-third of the earth's surface. Spanning the Pacific Ocean are the 7,500 islands which comprise the 22 PICTs. For the 12 million people[5] that consider the PICTs home, the Pacific Ocean represents an oxymoron. Rich in natural resources and blessed with vast territorial waters and seabed rights, the Pacific Ocean is also a boundary isolating and insulating the region from the outside world. Its impact on the quality of life varies. PICTs to a large extent represent a strategically significant constituency in the global political economy. One can only go back in recent history to find evidence.

Historically, the Pacific Island region was a strategic location for the allied forces to win against Japan in World War II.[6] Critical battles waged in Guadalcanal, Midway, Wake Island, Guam and Saipan saw the Pacific Island people fighting and working alongside the Americans. Even during the Cold War, the Pacific Island people continued to side with the Americans and the west. It is a relationship that has not always been mutually beneficial. Insulated and surrounded by the wide Pacific Ocean, the small island nations are subject to exploitation by the developed countries.

A case in point was how the U.S. after World War II determined that it was obviously dangerous to explode atomic bombs in the continental United States. A place far and away was needed. Overall, the U.S. exploded some 67 nuclear bombs in the Marshall Islands including the explosion of the first ever hydrogen bomb. Known as the Bravo Shot, it was measured as a 15-megaton nuclear device, a thousand times more powerful than the atom bombs that the U.S. dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[7]

The recent growing presence of China has reignited interest in the region. A recent Congressional Research Service (CRS) report to the U.S. Congress noted that Chinese domination of the South China Seas (SCS) and East China Seas (ECS) could substantially affect U.S. strategic, political and economic interests in the Indo-Pacific region and elsewhere.[8] Given the dire economic needs of the many island nations, China

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[4] I am drawn to the term PICTs as it also recognizes those Pacific Island people that are still under territorial authority of some other foreign country. This consists of the U.S. Insular Areas including American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Guam, Palau, and the Federated States of the Marshall Islands (FSM) in the Pacific region, as well as New Caledonia and Tahiti under French rule and West Papua under the rule of the Indonesian government.

[5] South Pacific Commission, "Economic Social Impact Indicators " (2020).

[6] Eni Faleomavaega Hunkin, "Recognizing and Welcoming the Leaders of the Pacific Islands," *Congressional Record* 153, no. 74 (2007): H 4991.

[7] Hunkin, "Recognizing and Welcoming the Leaders of the Pacific Islands," H 4991.

[8] Ronald O'Rourke, *U.S.-China Strategic Competition in South and East China Seas: Background and Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service (Washington D.C., July 13, 2021), 1.

has the resources to potentially further its interests in the region.

Recent numbers from the World Bank show a region hit hard by COVID-19.[9] Tourism, the mainstay for Pacific Island economies like Tonga and Samoa, is feeling severe effects. Even before the current pandemic, some were still recovering from the adverse effects of natural disasters like the Tropical Cyclone Harold that hit Tonga, Vanuatu and Fiji in April 2020.[10] Samoa in late 2019 also struggled with the measles plague.[11]

These recent and ongoing calamities have weakened the economies of many of the PICTs.[12] The reality is they are most vulnerable given the large scale of dependency on the tourism industries and other service-related industries. Others depend on single-industry.[13] The outlook depends significantly on when COVID-19 related travel restrictions are lifted. Diversification to achieve sustainable growth and development is imminent.

The uncertainties in the current political economy context of the PICTs are not new. The challenges of COVID-19 only highlight the unstable nature of political economies in the region. Existing institutional constraints based on location, geopolitics, population size, susceptibility to natural disasters and so forth, continue to threaten the livelihoods of the people in the region. That Pacific Island people have managed to navigate these threats over time is testimony to their resourcefulness and resilience. Traditional institutions have also helped. That many have migrated to their more developed neighbors in New Zealand, Australia, and Hawaii seeking a chance for a better life is also part of the lived experience of the Pacific Island people. Perhaps it is also a reflection of their identity as navigators of oceans and boundaries. Yet it is also a reminder that a certain re-situating of the Pacific mindset is inevitable. As a Pacific Islander by birth, I read to adapt. As a Christian Islander, I read to re-situate. I read to transform and be transformed.

A "Re-situated" view of Wealth in Luke 18:18–30

The story of the rich ruler is a familiar one. Preserved in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 19:16-30; Mark 10:17–31; Luke 18:18–30) it continues to garner scholarly interests. For Gerald McKenny[14] there are two distinctive interpretive tracks: one interprets Jesus' demand to sell everything as an allusion to doing more than simply keeping the commandments; the second is an exposition on the rich ruler's failure to keep Jesus'

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[9] World Bank, *East Asia and the Pacific: Macro Poverty Outlook, Country by Country Analysis and Projections for the Developing World*, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (Washington DC, 2020), 32.

[10] "Tropical Cyclone Harold and Covid-19: a double blow to the Pacific Islands," Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, 2020, accessed August 22, 2021, https://www.internal-displacement.org/expert-opinion/tropical-cyclone-harold-and-covid-19-a-double-blow-to-the-pacific-islands.

[11] Georgia Forrester, "Why measles has 'spread like wildfire' in Samoa," *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney, Australia), accessed August 22, 2021, https://www.smh.com.au/world/oceania/why-measles-has-spread-like-wildfire-in-samoa-20191206-p53hhj.html.

[12] Samoa's economy contracted by 3.5 percent in FY2020, while Fiji and Papua New Guinea contracted by 1.3 and 3.3 percent respectively. Around the same time, some of the island nations like the Federated State of Micronesia shows a steady increase over the past five years (1.4 percent increase through September 2019)

[13] American Samoa largely depends on its tuna canning industry, Solomon Islands on its logging industry, and Kiribati and Tuvalu on fishing licenses.

[14] Gerald McKenny, "The Rich Young Ruler and Christian Ethics: A Proposal," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 40, no. 1 (2020), 59.

directives.[15] Some see Luke's version as an illustration of the Third Gospel's emphasis on wealth and possessions.[16] Others draw attention to Luke's showcasing of alternating responses to Jesus. The response of the disbelieving rich ruler is contrasted with Zacchaeus' trust in Jesus.[17] Others read the rich ruler narrative through the prism of status reversal.[18] Moreover, others refer to it as an illustration of Luke's intertextual use of the Old Testament, in particular the theme of justice and the socio-economic setting in first-century Palestine. [19]

In many of these and other interpretations, the prevailing interest has been on the ruler's apparent refusal to give up wealth and possessions.[20] Such readings often condemn the ruler. As a Samoan I seek to disrupt the text arguing that it needs de-centering. A re-reading of the political economic context of the text looks at the institutional system that leads to the distributive mechanism of who gets what when and how. I look to the text for any possible evidence of institutional constraints in the social, cultural, ideological, and political economic context of the text. The assumption is Luke's depiction of the ruler is much more nuanced and complex. The ruler represents a negotiation of a situational space between the community of believers and their lived reality. In his re-contextualization of the Gospel tradition, Luke massages the Gospel narrative to re-situate it within the extant institutional reality of the day.

Framing this against the theoretical background of who gets what, when, and how, I ask whether there are aspects of that in the encounter between Jesus and the rich ruler. Could it be that Luke is saying something about the "institutional system" and the institutional constraints that shapes who gets what when and how?

I get the sense that Luke in his "re-situating" of the rich ruler story is also drawing from his own lived reality with institutions precluding hospitality and generosity. In that regard, it is reasonable to argue that Luke may have also experienced and benefitted from the wealthy and rich patrons and householders in the Christian community. The question then for Luke is how to resituate the Jesus tradition within his own context. I argue that the rich ruler represents Luke's intent to show another form of "following" by possibly "living responsibly with wealth". This re-situation warrants re-appropriating the institutional system to allow for an "Abrahamic" model of "following." That is, someone who is known to be "hospitable" and willing to "share his wealth" even with strangers.

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[15] McKenny, "The Rich Young Ruler and Christian Ethics: A Proposal," 59.

[16] Edwina Murphy, "Sell your possessions: Cyprian, Luke and Wealth," *Colloquium: The Australian & New Zealand Theological Review* 49, no. 2 (2017): 11; R. Alan Culpepper, "The Gospel of Luke: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & Reflections for each Book of the Bible including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books in Twelve Volumes*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 12.

[17] Dan Lioy, "One Savior and Two Responses: A Comparison and Analysis of Luke 18:18-30 and 19: 1-10," *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 23, no. 1 (2017): 125.

[18] Joel B. Green, "The Gospel According to Luke," in *The New Interpreter's Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*, ed. Walter J. Harrelson (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 1888.

[19] J. Daniel Hays, "Sell everything you have and give to the poor": The Old Testament prophetic theme of justice as the connecting motif of Luke 18:1-19:10," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 55, no. 1 (2012): 43.

[20] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington S.J., Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 277.

Innertextual and Intertextual of the Luke 18:18–30

There are several possibilities to approaching the text for analysis and interpretation. I choose though to focus on a key aspect of the innertexture of the biblical text, its opening -middle-closing texture.[21] Luke 18:18–30 showcases a clear strand of opening-middle-closing texture: opening in verses 18–21; middle in verses 22-25; and closing in verses 26-30 (see Table 1). My intent is to correlate the analysis of the opening, middle, and closing subunits with the analysis of the overall passage "to define their function in relation to one another"[22]. In the process of correlating, I am also able to steer my interpretive canoe to engage other possible intertextual materials.

The opening subunit begins in verse 18 with the ruler enquiring about eternal life and ends with him giving a positive response in verse 21. In the middle, Jesus says that "God alone is good." But then as Jesus proceeds, he ends with the commandment to "honor your father and your mother." I am drawn to the possibility that the ruler is trying to live out this commandment—honoring one's father and mother. It is reasonable to conjecture that the ruler may have situated "inheritance" of eternal life with "honoring one's father and mother."

Table 1: Opening-Middle-Closing of Luke 18:18–30

In the middle subunit, Jesus shifts the topic to the ruler's wealth in verse 22 and then adds a call to the discipleship of "following." This is a critical juncture in the conversation. The changing of the subject concerns an uncertainty about a tenet or institution of Jewish belief (eternal life) for a person who is wealthy. To steer around the dominant negative perception of the ruler I ask whether Luke instead may have had in

Opening [O] 18 A certain ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" [M] 19 Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 20 You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother.'" [C] 21 He [the ruler] replied, "I have kept all these since my youth."
Middle [O] 22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." [M] 23 But when he heard this, he became sad; for he was very rich. [C] 24 Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! 25 Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."
Closing [O] 26 Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" 27 He replied, "What is impossible for mortals is possible for God." [M] 28 Then Peter said, "Look, we have left our homes and followed you." [C] 29 And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, 30 who will not get back very much more in this age, and in the age to come eternal life." (Luke 18:18-30, NRSV)

[21] Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the texture of the texts: a guide to socio-rhetorical interpretations* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 50.

[22] Robbins, *Exploring the texture of the texts*, 50.

mind someone like Abraham. In this regard, I find possible intertextuality in the *Testament of Abraham*. Blessed by God with "a large livelihood and many possessions", Abraham "is very rich. But above all others he is righteous in all goodness, (having been) hospitable and loving until the end of his life".[23] I ask then whether the ruler may be trying to live out a form of discipleship that "honors one's father and mother", possibly by trying to continue to live responsibly with the wealth he has acquired and perhaps inherited through the stewardship of his parents and himself.

In the closing, the people who overhear the conversation move the discussion decisively back to "being called into special discipleship of following" in v. 22, and Jesus confirms that this "special" kind of discipleship does indeed promise eternal life. I ask then where this leaves the ruler. Is there no possibility of his being a responsible disciple in the context of not giving everything away? What about the prosperous Christian? Could this be part of Luke's overall message regarding the confluence of political economy, household (family life) and faith? Seeking an answer, I ask whether Luke's "re-situating" of the rich ruler is better understood in connection to other stories like Zacchaeus in 19:1–10 and Jesus' sermon on the plain in 6:35. Let us digress here. It could be argued that Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1–10 fulfills an alternative form of "responsible discipleship with wealth." He represents a "rich person who has understood something of Jesus' ministry and message and concern for the poor and the cheated".[24] In this regard, the Zacchaeus story possibly provides one kind of answer for the political economic aspects pursued in the story of the rich ruler. In the rich ruler story, Jesus does not say it is impossible for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. Rather, he emphasizes that it is very, very difficult (v. 24). Is it possible to think that Luke could have envisioned the ruler as living another way of responsible discipleship with his wealth? Perhaps the rich ruler is sad (v. 23), because he now faces the reality that there is no easy and sure way for him to keep his wealth and receive eternal life. He must now commit himself to multiple ways of leading a responsible life with his wealth in order for there to be a possibility of receiving eternal life. It will be as difficult as a camel going "through the eye of a needle," but perhaps it will not be impossible in a world where "what is impossible for mortals is possible with God" (18:27). Perhaps there is a possibility that the rich ruler might be saved, just as Zacchaeus presented an alternative form of responsible discipleship with wealth by giving up half of his wealth and Jesus proclaims that he is saved "because he too is a son of Abraham" (Luke 19:9 NRSV).

Joel Green's assertion that Zacchaeus, unlike the rich ruler, "does not employ his wealth so as to procure honor and friends" and that he is also a "social outcast who puts his possessions in the service of the needy and of justice",[25] adds clarity. I ask whether Luke in both stories may be steering a "re-situating" narrative on "following" for a "son of Abraham". Thus if, as Green claims Zacchaeus is vindicated because he is a son of Abraham, namely one of "those whose lives (dispositions and behavior) are oriented toward God",[26] then for the same reason perhaps there is vindication for the rich ruler. Luke in the rich ruler story is possibly showing a different form of discipleship, one that recognizes the political-economic aspect of one's lived reality, and seeks to re-situate discipleship by trying to live responsibly with wealth that honors his father and mother. But if this is the case, how then can we make sense of the call to sell everything?

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[23] T. Ab. A1.5.

[24] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)* (Garden City, NY: DoubleDay & Company Inc., 1985), 1222.

[25] Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 672.

[26] Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, footnote 216.

The controversial exchange between Zacchaeus and Jesus in Luke 19:8[27] sheds light on Jesus' demand to sell everything and give to the poor. Weighing the possibilities, I side with the claim that the present forms of δίδωμι (give) (Luke 19:8 UBS4) and ἀποδίδωμι (give up) (Luke 19:8 UBS4) in the Lucan text have iterative meaning and that Zacchaeus is defending himself before Jesus. Zacchaeus does not say that he "will in the future" give and pay back, but he says that he regularly does give half of his possessions to the poor and when he discovers he has defrauded anyone of anything he pays them back four times as much. Understanding the context in the Zacchaeus story in this way may provide helpful information for us to expand our understanding of the story of the rich ruler. In other words, the greatest need may be for better distribution of resources and sharing of wealth. The question of who gets what when and how comes to mind. Perhaps then Luke is describing for the followers of Christ the notion of living responsibly with wealth as an acceptable form of discipleship, as well as a mode of leaving everything and following Jesus.

I find support for this "responsible view of wealth" in Luke's account of the sermon on the plain. It looks reasonable to think that the idea of "lending" and "expecting nothing in return" in Luke 6:35 makes best sense if the lender is rich. People who have given everything away would not be in a position to "lend" something to the poor. This is perhaps another moment when Jesus provides a responsible way for the wealthy to live a responsible life of discipleship in society. And perhaps this way of "living responsibly with wealth" is present in the "political economic aspects" of the story of the rich ruler.

The ruler (ἄρχων) and lack of *aiga* (family)

As an Islander, I ask if it might be possible to learn something about the "ruler" (ἄρχων) and his *aiga* (family) from my Samoan context and also from what I have learned from the scholarship on Mediterranean society in the first-century. In this regard, I envision someone in the capacity similar to the *matai sa'o* (primary chief) in the Samoan context. Despite the lack of explicit mention of family, I ask whether the text already presupposes the reader will be familiar with the social environment of the "ruler" (ἄρχων). This is inferred from the use of "home" (ἴδιος) in verse 28 which has within its range of meanings, home or possessions (BDAG s.v. "ἴδιος"). By referring to "our homes", Peter clarifies and concretizes the social situation surrounding the "ruler" (ἄρχων). I am also buoyed by John H. Elliott's[28] claim that part of Luke's emphasis is on human interaction. Luke's purpose is not just to give background to an "independent message", but more significantly, "to give that message concrete content and shape in space and time and human interaction."[29] Luke is a historiographer as well as a theologian whose aim is "to convince his Christian audience of the certainty of the things they have been taught (Luke 1:1–4) so as to strengthen faith and commitment."[30] For these reasons, the "ruler" (ἄρχων) should be treated not as an isolated individual but as a person who has relations and interactions with others, possibly within a family.

It is also revealing that attempts to draw parallels between the "ruler" (ἄρχων) and Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1–10[31] seem to overlook a familial element in the analysis. Bruno

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[27] Michael Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke*, Baylor-Mohr Siebeck studies in early Christianity, (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 347.

[28] John H. Elliott, "Temple versus household in Luke-Acts: a contrast in social institutions," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1991), 221.

[29] Elliott, "Temple versus household in Luke-Acts: a contrast in social institutions," 221.

[30] Elliott, "Temple versus household in Luke-Acts: a contrast in social institutions," 221.

[31] Hays, "Sell everything you have and give to the poor": The Old Testament prophetic theme of justice as the connecting motif of Luke 18:1-19:10," 60.

Dyck's[32] correlation between the "ruler" (ἄρχων) and the "household" (οἶκος) is compelling. The word οἶκος is significant in Luke's Gospel, with variations in its usage appearing more than 50 times. This emphasis on the οἶκος places a great premium on organizational management,[33] which includes not only managing relationships within the household but also relationships between one's own οἶκος and other people's households. Dyck notes that:

In the first century, this arena of management was regulated by the norms and customs associated with patron-client relationships. In simple terms this meant trying to develop long-term relationships so that other *oikoi* would become subservient to your *oikos*. For example, if a peasant *oikos* received a loan from an elite *oikos*, the peasant *oikos* would thereby become the long-term client of the richer patron [34]

This statement adds further context to the relationship between the "ruler" (ἄρχων) and the "household" (οἶκος). It calls attention to the importance of rules, norms and customs that mold and shape intra-household and inter-household relationships. Re-situating these relationships and interactions appear to be at the heart of the conundrum confronting members of the emerging community of faith.

While the story of the rich ruler does not explicitly exhibit the relation of this "ruler" (ἄρχων) to his "household" (οἶκος), the story of Zacchaeus does. Indeed, Jesus implicitly insists on participating in Zacchaeus' family when he says "it is necessary" (δεῖ) for him to stay in his house with him (19:5). Here the Lucan narrative seems to include explicitly the requirement of the "ruler" (ἄρχων) to navigate the perpetual interface between his own household and the growing faith developing community among those who follow Jesus. It may be that the emphasis in the Zacchaeus story is on the rich tax collector's repentance from the idolatry of Mammon.[35] In contrast, the story of the rich ruler may offer yet another form of "following" Christ, one that is possible by living responsibly with wealth, even within the context of "*aiga*". In particular, the rich ruler story shows how institutional systems are precluding better distribution of resources and sharing of materials in emerging communities who claim to follow Christ faithfully.

Proposition for Further *Talanoa*

Living responsibly with wealth has significant implications for the political economic context of the Pacific Island region. Hampered by covid restrictions, the island nations are facing a new norm. Coupled with the ongoing challenges of climate change, environmental crisis, and economies of scale, PICTs are at a disadvantage in the global context. Many of the Island economies are based also on single-industry making it imperative for the PICTs to engage in regional agreements for a reasonable sharing of resources and wealth.

Living responsibly with wealth calls for a "hospitable" attitude that is based on the notion that the region is part of the Pacific "*aiga*". And as such, each should have the mindset of being responsible to one another. This has to start with the rich economies in the region. Living responsibly with wealth warrants "lending" without any expected

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[32] Bruno Dyck, *Management and the Gospel: Luke's Radical Message for the First and Twenty-First Centuries* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 56.

[33] Dyck, *Management and the Gospel*, 4.

[34] Dyck, *Management and the Gospel*, 5.

[35] Seyoon Kim, *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 142.

returns which in turn could build trust and openness in dialogue and for a better distribution of resources and sharing of wealth in the region.

Living responsibly with wealth can also be an underpinning principle in the ongoing discussion at the global level on how to address the imminent threat of climate change. The prevailing economic global system underpins an interconnectedness that warrants a re-situating of the global mindset. While the smaller Pacific Island nations like Tuvalu, Tokelau and Kiribati are literally sinking, the big economies including USA, China, and the European nations could do a lot more for the sake of the global household by offering to live responsibly with wealth by reducing the over-exploitation of the environment and the pursuit of excessive profiting. New models of economic development that promote prudence and living responsibly with wealth could do much to help rein in the deterioration of the global ecosystem and the harm they may cause to our lived reality. This warrants a re-situating of the mindset and a commitment at the global level to undo some of the institutional constraints that continue to permeate the lived reality of the local communities.

I read to survive. To survive is to adapt, to re-situate. I read to decenter biblical reading, to resituate a mooring point for biblical studies that is also conducive to the particular needs of the respective cultures and contexts. For the Pacific Island region, one of the distinctive aspects of Pacific Island life is the lived reality of Pacific Island people. We live in connection to the vast *moana* that serves as boundaries between us as well as pathways linking our islands, our people. Given the growing interests in the region in geopolitics and global political economy, as well as the increasingly gloomy forecast of the impact of climate change, and given that the majority of its people identify as Christians, grounding biblical reading in the lived reality of the Pacific Island people is potentially a great fit.

Be that as it may, I think it important to bear in mind that by decentering biblical studies, I am also anticipating perhaps having multiple centers with multiple peripherals. Could it be then that value is established by having cross-centered discussions and deliberations? Thus, to re-verse and to de-center institutional barriers that marginalize the majority while prioritizing the few, the focus then is to create multiple centers talking and sharing resources with one another. To make this possible, though, would require the few with resources to have a “hospitable” mindset. This would also mean the willingness to “lend” without expecting anything in return.

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Salvation as a Gift of God to be Received Through Faith Alone: An EFKS Perspective

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Abstract

The EFKS (Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa – Congregational Christian Church Samoa) today faces a theological dilemma. Those who had left the EFKS and experienced the altar-call and assurance of salvation in the new religious movements now claimed that they are saved and being born again, and are now preaching the end of the world and the second coming of Christ. The EFKS, however, has been acknowledging salvation implicitly as a reality that started from within the Sacrament of Baptism, assured during the Confirmation, and experienced within the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as faithful Christians celebrate the real presence of Christ amongst his people in the beginning of the everlasting feast of his Kingdom. The problem, therefore, is obviously the overshadowing of the implicit theological understanding of salvation as a gift through faith in relation to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, by the overwhelming and explicit preaching of salvation as a reward for the good works people do. Death, therefore, is regarded as an entrance into heaven where salvation is found in the beyond. Such an understanding is a total contradiction of the biblical message of the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ through faith alone.

This research, therefore, seeks to develop a clear understanding of salvation from an EFKS perspective in relation to the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, with a special emphasis on the importance of Confirmation as the vital link between the two. The centrality of faith in both sacraments as well as in the spiritual life of the Church itself will be highlighted. This would lead to a theological conclusion, that the EFKS believes in the gift of salvation in the grace of God through faith alone, which was revealed fully in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This gift is assured in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper seen as a foretaste of the fullness of life with God in his future.

Key Words: Salvation, Gift, Faith, Baptism, Lord's Supper.

Introduction

Salvation[1] was at the heart of the Gospel message brought over by the missionaries of

[1] Salvation is understood in many ways in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Any dictionary of the Bible and Theology contains so much information on the variety of meanings and interpretations of salvation. See I. H. Marshall et al., eds, *New Bible Dictionary*, Third Edition, (Inter–Varsity Press, England, 1996), 1046–1050. This paper, however, sees salvation as being saved from the power of sin and its consequences. It means new life in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) or eternal life (John 3:16), the new life that is given freely as a gift in God's grace through faith. In Rom. 3:21 – 22 Paul talks of justification or salvation through faith alone, the text that started Martin Luther's movement which resulted in the Reformation of the Church in the 16th century. Salvation for the Samoans before the arrival of Christianity, however, was understood as an everyday experience before death. One example is being saved from an enemy or tragedy. Another is someone being forgiven by the *Fono a Matai* (council of chiefs and orators) after fulfilling a punishment for disobeying the laws of the village. This is called *faaa'ega* or *toe faaa'e* (re-admitting into the village).

the LMS (London Missionary Society) when they came to the Pacific, firstly to the islands of Tahiti and later on to the islands of Samoa in 1830. The Methodists and the Roman Catholics arrived later and the Christian Church started to grow rapidly throughout the Samoan archipelago, both Western and American Samoa. The need to develop the Church in its physical life was obvious as villages throughout Samoa accepted the new *Lotu* (church), which meant the diminishing of their old religion. The new *Lotu* for the Congregationalists (LMS) was called the *Lotu* Taiti (Tahitian Church) because the missionaries from Tahiti assisted John Williams in its establishment. The development of the Church physically as mentioned, started with the construction of Church buildings and taking care of the foreign missionaries. One can imagine the need for a solid message to motivate the people to commit their lives and give their money for the work of God through the Church. The message was: There would be great rewards in heaven, including salvation, awaiting those who serve the Lord through giving to the Church. Hence, giving to the Church was considered a way to attain salvation in heaven[2] at the end of time.

The LMS Church became the EFKS/CCCS (Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Samoa/ Congregational Christian Church Samoa) in 1962, and it became the dominant Church, which was known for the way people gave to the Church, and still do, through donations for the main Church in the *Taulaga Samoa* (offering for the Church in general) and *Taulaga o le Talalelei* (offering for the missionary work), on top of each local church's financial affairs such as *Sene* (offering) every Sunday, *Atina'e* (for development), and *Alofa* (stipend for the minister and family). The message of salvation through good works got stuck in the minds of the people as they continued to worship God and give wholeheartedly to Him through the Church. This was and still is the main understanding of the message of salvation for most people, if not all, of the mainline Churches in Samoa, the Methodist, the Roman Catholic and the EFKS.

The influx of changes marked the beginning of modernity, especially in the middle and latter parts of the 20th century, which influenced the people of Samoa in all aspects of life – sociologically, economically, culturally and religiously. Part of this influx was the arrival of the new religious movements and their literal interpretation of the Bible and their usually aggressive preaching on theological concepts such as salvation, Kingdom of God and eternal life. In particular is their emphasis on the eschatological explanation of the *Parousia* (second coming of Christ), and the events associated with the end times. Their preaching on the immanent second coming of Christ attracted many people from the EFKS, the Methodist and the Roman Catholic.

It is also seen in a murder case, when the culprit's family performed the *ifoga* (bowing), the chief kneeling or sitting at the forefront, covered with a fine mat (*ietoga* known as covering or hat for life) for the purpose of fulfilling the act called *leleiga* (reconciliation). The chief of the victim's family would take off the fine mat as a sign of acceptance for a reconciliation, which means forgiveness and even salvation for the offender. This concrete meaning of salvation to the public life of the Samoans and also in the context of the ecological crisis will certainly be a task of a future article for this journal.

[2]. The concept of heaven with all the debates involved will not be covered due to limitations of this work. But it will certainly be a topic for the future. See Jurgen Moltmann, *God in Creation*: *An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1985), 158 – 184. Moltmann gives a study of the development of the concept of heaven in the theology of the Church ending with an ecological view of God's creation as necessarily a double world of heaven and earth, where heaven is the open side of creation opened to God. The Samoans understood heaven as part of the environment together with land and sea, where their gods (*atua* which were things of the environment and even spirits or *aitu*) existed and the supreme god Tagaloa resided in the ninth heaven located in the eastern side of the island of Upolu.

Why? Not because of any sincere excitement for the chance to meet the Lord in his glory, but because they wanted to be assured of being saved from their sins before the sudden end of the world which would begin with the event of the second coming of Christ.

Unfortunately, this has created confusion and doubt in the minds of many. After responding to the altar-calls during worship in these new religious movements, and then the prayer for salvation,[3] they are then declared saved through faith. Despite this assurance of salvation, the new religious movements continue to put so much emphasis on the second coming and going to heaven that Christianity seems to be escapism from the reality of life we live today. Which means, the EFKS, the Methodist and the Roman Catholic Churches and the new religious movements need to understand the truth of the Gospel of Salvation; that it is a gift to be received through faith alone. A gift that had already been given in and through Christ in God's grace, which can only become ours through faith. A gift that is introduced to the life of a child at Baptism through the faith of faithful parents, then assured at the confirmation where the matured child declared his/her own faith in accepting Christ as his/her Lord and Savior, and finally at the Lord's Supper participating in the beginning of the feast of the Kingdom. A gift that can be enjoyed and experienced in the concreteness of our lives today, while anticipating its final culmination in God himself in the fullness of time, when all of evil and its power is finally annihilated, as creation will finally be renewed for the glory of God.

The following discussion on the sacraments of the Church[4] is important for the purpose of this paper. It aims to clarify the theological argument that the concept of salvation through faith alone is relevant and must be part of the teachings of the Church about its sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. From previous research about the nature and meaning of the sacraments, as well as personal experience in the pastoral ministry for six years, it is perceptively clear that a deeper understanding of the sacraments must be related to the people's everyday life of faith in Christ. The discussion will start with the sacrament of Baptism, then the confirmation service which is considered a part of Baptism, and finally the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Salvation in Baptism: A Gift through Faith

The EFKS continues to observe the traditional Protestant practice of the two sacraments of the Church, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It is based on the belief that these were the only two sacraments instituted by the Lord during his life and ministry for his disciples and followers to administer. Baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is central in the great commission in Matt. 28:19, while the Lord's Supper is

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[3] An altar-call is a part of worship in the new religious movements, when people are asked to come forward if they want to confess their sins and receive salvation, followed with a prayer for salvation. A personal experience when I was attending a Worship Center church service in Australia in 1980. Some students of Malua also shared similar experiences while attending Assembly of God church services in Samoa.

[4] See World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: Faith and Order Paper No. 111, WCC, 1982), for any discussion on the meaning and significance of Baptism and the Lord's Supper in this paper. See also, William H. Lazareth, *Growing together in Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: A Study Guide* (Faith and Order Paper No. 114, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1982). Taipisia Leilua, "Christian Baptism, a Sacrament of Unity: Some Theological reflections on its meaning in relation to the cultural initiation rites in Samoa, and also to the situation among the Churches from the viewpoint of a Congregationalist, with a special reference to the challenge of the BEM Document (Statement of Faith)" (BD Thesis, Suva: Pacific Theological College, 1988). Leilua elaborates on the different meanings of Baptism highlighted in the BEM document – Participation in Christ's death and resurrection, Conversion Pardoning and Cleansing, the Gift of the Holy Spirit, Incorporation into the Body of Christ, a Sign of the Kingdom.

instructed by Christ to be done in remembrance of him whenever Christians come together to worship, as reported in 1 Cor. 11:25. Central in both sacraments is faith which holds the key in one's response in receiving the gift of salvation. It means that those who are baptized are saved through faith alone. This is particularly significant in infant baptism where faith is not of the infant but that of the parents and the congregation. The infant, therefore, is gifted in baptism with a life together with Christ, which is a gift of salvation, even with the faith of its parents and that of the congregation. Moreover, baptism itself is a gift of God, administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.[5]

The question on why the Church baptizes is made clear as being one of the two sacraments instituted by the Lord himself. But the Church understands that the New Testament portrays much more about the origin and basis of Christian Baptism. As Hans Kung highlights the fact that the Church baptizes not only in memory of John's baptism, but also in memory of Jesus himself who approved and accepted this baptism.[6] Thus, the baptism of Jesus by John reveals the fact that he not only approved of John's baptism but also his preaching of the word and the obvious prophetic nature of the activities in his mission. This led to Jesus' acceptance of John's eschatological call for penitence and therefore approving his 'baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin' (Mark 1:4).[7] In his baptism by John, Jesus identified himself with the people in need of forgiveness. He entered into solidarity with lost humanity, described by Daniel L. Migliore as sinners and outcasts of this world; a self-identification with sinful humanity that was met with God's identification of Jesus as his beloved Son, and the Holy Spirit of God descending upon him (Mark 1:9–11).[8]

The opening of heaven symbolizes God's direct intervention into the history of humanity and of creation in Jesus Christ. At the very point where Jesus was standing amongst the sinners seeking forgiveness of sins, and in the river of Jordan within the wilderness of Judea, God decided to reveal himself as the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, revealing the truth about the salvation he has brought in Jesus Christ. It is the coming of God himself to save humanity from sin. G. B. Caird[9] notices the composite nature of the voice from heaven as references from Ps. 2:7 and Isa. 42:1. Ps. 2 points to the anointed king who would rule with a rod of iron, and Isa. 42 talks about the Servant of the Lord chosen to bring true religion to the people of the world, a mission that would end in sufferings, rejection and even death. In hearing the voice, Jesus understood his role and mission as the anointed, sent out to establish the kingdom of God, not as a king like one of this world, but as the Servant of God who offers his life in humility and love. The words from heaven, therefore, signified Jesus' divine appointment, as well as his divine approval, to be the representative of the sinful world in the course that he committed himself into when he accepted baptism. It was exactly because of this that God declared him as his beloved Son, and in whom he was well pleased. Jesus is now fully declared as the Son of God, the anointed King from God, and the Servant of God.

The descending of the Holy Spirit marked the baptism of Jesus by the eschatological Spirit of God. A baptism by God himself, which initiated the presence of the eschatological Spirit not only in the life and ministry of Jesus but also in creation itself. It was a decisive shift in the *aeons* taking place in Jesus. It is the *kairos* of God, the

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[5] William H. Lazareth, *Growing together in Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: A Study Guide* (Geneva: Faith and Order Paper No. 114, World Council of Churches, 1982), 17.

[6] Hans Kung, *The Church* (Wellwood: Search Press Limited, 1968), 205f. See also Leilua, "Christian Baptism, a Sacrament of Unity".

[7] Kung, *The Church*, 205.

[8] Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*(Grand Rapids: William B, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 294.

[9] G. B. Caird, *Saint Luke* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1985), 76 – 75.

opportune time of God, the fulfilled time because the eschatological Spirit has come.[10] It is the beginning of new life in the eternity of God. Thus, in baptism, the children are baptized not only in water but in the Spirit also, which makes them participants of the eschatological community of the Spirit, and that in faith they are saved and have eternal life in the *kairos* of God.

When baptism is understood as participation in Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–11; Col. 2:12), those baptized are "fully identified with the death of Christ, they are buried with him and raised here and now to a new life in the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ."[11] There is a change on the eschatological understanding being noted here. The baptized have begun to enjoy new life in Christ here and now. Frank Thielman develops this view as he discusses the theology of the Gospel of John, believing that John has modified the eschatological tradition.[12] This, for Thielman, is found in the words of Jesus himself in John 5:24–25 where he says, "Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life. Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." John is here affirming the future resurrection and at the same time asserting that the coming of Jesus and his teachings on eternal life and resurrection had made it "possible to move – in the present – out of the state of death into the state of life by hearing and believing Jesus' word".[13] From this perspective, the baptized is being blessed with the gift of salvation and eternal life, a life of participation now in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, a life in the eternity of God being transformed anew. This has become the everyday life experience of the one baptized, while awaiting the future culmination of all things in God in the fullness of time. Such reality of the eschatological salvation, for Hans Kung, has taken place in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Though baptism is still the 'baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins', it has taken on a new meaning because Jesus has been made both Lord and Christ by the Father (Acts 2:36). This means that God has given the world the promised salvation through Christ and has created the new eschatological community of salvation and bestowed on it his Holy Spirit.[14]

The centrality of faith in the life of the Church is undeniably clear. It has been mentioned consistently from the beginning of this paper as the only response from Christians in receiving salvation in the grace of God. It is appropriate, therefore, to highlight the central aspects of faith as a concept and why it is important in the sacraments of the Church and Christian living. It is clearly stated in the BEM document, "Baptism is God's gift and our human response to that gift." (B8) Hence faith and baptism are linked in the eschatological saving act of God in Christ. Thus, Kung says, "On this common basis the two are linked: baptism comes from faith, and faith leads to baptism."[15] The BEM document goes further to say that faith is necessary "for the reception of the salvation embodied and set forth in baptism." (B8) This faith, however, is possible only because it is God's gift. Humans as sinners cannot have faith on their own unless given by God. As D. M. Ballie sums up his discussion of faith saying, "His graciousness overcomes our mistrust, His grace creates our faith, so that when we come

[10] J. D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 26f. See also Leilua, "Christian Baptism: A Sacrament of Unity", 55.

[11] Lazareth, *Growing together in Baptism*, 17.

[12] Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 172.

[13] Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 173.

[14] Kung, *The Church*, 206.

[15] Kung, *The Church*, 207.

to Him, it is really our faith, and we come willingly."[16] Faith is, therefore, the initiative of God in his grace, enabling sinners to respond to his gift of salvation. The author of the letter to the Hebrews defines faith by saying, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Heb. 11:1) This clearly reveals the truth about the life that Christians live in Christ. They are assured of all the promises of God from the very beginning including salvation. These promises have always been part of their lives. Some have already been fulfilled as in the death and resurrection of Christ, and so many more are to be realized in the future, yet Christians have already been assured of their fulfillment in God's future. It simply means that in faith all the promises of God have become certain realities even though they are unseen. This is how important faith is in the sacraments of the Church and especially in the gift of salvation being received.

The Practice of Confirmation and Salvation through Faith proclaimed

The practice of confirmation (*Faaaofiaga*)[17] in the EFKS takes place every month. Young children who have been baptized need to be confirmed at the age of 12–14 years, depending on the minister's approval after undergoing classes to learn the meaning of baptism, faith, salvation, eternal life, being a Christian, etc. During this special service, the children are asked to proclaim their faith in Jesus Christ, accepting him as their Lord and Savior, and promising to abide with him in worship and in all other Church activities. This becomes a very important moment in the lives of the children as they now take responsibility for their own faith and life in Jesus Christ. The faith during their baptism was that of the parents and the congregation, but it is now their moment to submit their lives to Jesus Christ through faith, in acknowledging with gratitude the gift of salvation and eternal life bestowed upon them in the grace of God alone. Nothing of their own makes them deserve God's gift of salvation, for it was always in the heart of God to save them in his grace through faith. Salvation, therefore, is assured for the baptized in the confirmation of their faith. Thus, confirmation can be looked at as an integral part of baptism, for the faith now proclaimed by the children plays an important part in their journey as Christians and as children of God.

One of the meanings of baptism discussed in the BEM document is conversion, pardoning and cleansing. It means that "those baptized are pardoned, cleansed and sanctified by Christ and are given as part of their baptismal experience a new ethical orientation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit."[18] This is always the reality of the life that is lived by the one baptized and had confirmed his or her faith in the *Faaaofiaga* service. The ministers in their role as leaders of the Church are responsible for guiding and educating the parishioners in the nature of their being baptized into the Church, and their faith being confirmed which clearly assured them of their own salvation in the grace of God through faith. This truth about the meaning of baptism and the gift of salvation through Christ's death and resurrection is always part of the worship when baptism is administered, as well as the service for confirmation.

Confirmation holds the link between baptism and the Lord's Supper because of the need for the children to proclaim their faith in Christ publicly as they prepare to participate in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This is the purpose of confirmation that makes it so significant in the lives of the young people of the Church, and it also serves as a reminder to the rest of the congregation of their own faith. Thus, the Christians, as children of God and members of the Body of Christ, enjoy the blessings of God's gifts of faith, the sacraments, salvation and eternal life here and now. In response,

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[17] The word "confirmation" is simply called *Faaaofiaga* in Samoan, which means the acceptance or welcoming of new members into the fellowship of those who celebrate the Lord's Supper.

[18] Lazareth, *Growing Together*, 18.

they offer worship and thanksgiving and praises to God as they celebrate the Lord's Supper and continue to bear fruits of faith in good works for the glory of God while living in hope.

The Lord's Supper as a celebration of God's gift of Salvation

The EFKS celebrates the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of every month. Those who have been confirmed in the *Faaaofiaga* become eligible to participate in the celebration.[19] Which means that faith becomes central in the people's response to the gift of the Lord's Supper.[20] The main reason for the service of confirmation as seen earlier is for the young ones to understand what it means to have faith in Christ, and to accept them into the family of God, the Body of Christ. Thus, everyone celebrating the Lord's Supper has proclaimed his/her faith in Christ accepting him as Lord and Savior. The coming together of those celebrating the Lord's Supper, therefore, becomes a gathering of the faithful people of God who have been given the gift of salvation and have responded in thanksgiving (*eucharist*). It means that the Lord's Supper is the sacrament where the gift of salvation is celebrated through communion in the body and blood of Christ.[21] Hence, the people celebrate the Lord's Supper, knowing that they are saved andtherefore have eternal life in God. They receive in the Lord's Supper "the assurance of the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28) and the pledge of eternal life (John 6:51 – 58)".[22]

Migliore speaks of the Lord's Supper as the sacrament of the sustaining of Christian life in the grace of God. It is the sacrament of growth and nourishment for Christian living because it "marks the triune God's ever new sharing of life and love that draws us more deeply into communion with God and each other and strengthens us for service in the world"[23]. As Christians come together to celebrate the Lord's Supper, they partake of the bread and wine not merely as signs of the body and blood of Christ, but as spiritual food for the nourishment of their being, physical and spiritual. Their wellbeing in all aspects of life is being sustained through faith knowing that the triune God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ is present in and through the Holy Spirit amongst his people all the time, especially in celebration of the Lord's Supper.

In Lazareth's discussion on the Faith and Order Paper No. 114, four main points about the meaning of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper are highlighted, and each of these defines the significance of this sacrament in the lives of Christians. It communicates the love of Christ to the community of God's people who have received the gift of salvation through faith.[24]

Firstly, when the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is looked at as thanksgiving, it sets out the spirit of celebration of the greatness of God being revealed in all that he did, does, and will do, not just for creation and all things that have been created, but for what he had done in and through Jesus Christ. It is thanksgiving for the love and care for the wellbeing of the whole creation including humanity; for the salvation provided

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[19] The Lord's Supper is used in this paper as a name for this sacrament, although it acquires other names – Eucharist, Holy Communion, the Breaking of Bread, the Divine Liturgy, and the Mass. See Lazareth, *Growing Together*, 49.

[20] Lazareth, *Growing Together*, 49.Lazareth highlights the fact that the Lord's Supper is a gift from the Lord for his Church. He refers to Paul's reference to the gift he received from the Lord and he is now giving to the Church and Christians in Corinth.

[21] Lazareth, *Growing Together*, 49.

[22] Lazareth, *Growing Together*, 49.

[23] Migliore, *Faith seeking Understanding*, 300.

[24] Lazareth, *Growing Together*, 50 – 66. These meanings of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper capture the main significance of this sacrament to the life of the Church and every Christian who has been saved in God's grace through faith.

in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; for the Holy Spirit who continues to nurture and nourish creation and the Church; for the communion of his people as they share in the fellowship of love and unity; for the presence of the sovereignty and the kingly rule of God in the lives of his people and of creation; for the fulfillment of all his promises from the beginning and for the final consummation of all things into himself. The Church in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper becomes the voice and action of the whole universe, of heaven and earth and everything therein, to give praises to God using the fruits of the earth in the bread and the wine, the words of our mouths, and all the meditations of our hearts and minds. But all this can only be possible in Christ through faith. It was Christ as fully human that offered the sacrifice for our sins, and so enabling the whole of creation to be an "offering and hymn of praise to the Creator, a universal communion in the Body of Christ, a kingdom of justice, love and peace in the Holy Spirit".[25]

Secondly, the Lord's Supper is believed to be a foretaste of the Meal of the Kingdom. Meaning that the signs of the Kingdom have already begun in the life and ministry of Christ and continues on in the activities of the Holy Spirit. All the miracles and signs seen in the ministry of Jesus are understood as the impact of the sovereign rule of God in the lives of those he touched. Furthermore, the preaching and teaching of Christ centered on the Kingdom or the kingly rule of God, which in numerous ways was taking place in his person and work.[26] Thus at the Lord's Supper, Christians participate in the celebration of the beginning of God's rule in and through Jesus Christ and in the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, anticipating its full realization in the consummation of all things in God himself. In the above discussion on the baptism of Jesus we noted the descending of the Spirit as a sign of the coming of the eschatological Spirit of God, initiating the presence of the eschatological community here and now. It marked the beginning of the eschatological meal in celebration of God's gifts of salvation and eternal life in the kingdom of God.

Thirdly, as a memorial of Christ, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is really a re-enactment of the sacrifice that Christ offered through his death and resurrection, a once and for all sacrifice for the salvation of the world. It is never a repeat of what Christ did, but always a remembrance of His great love that was offered freely for our salvation. In the words of the Paper No. 114 of the Faith and Order, "The biblical idea of memorial (*anamnesis*) as applied to the [Lord's Supper] refers to this present efficacy of God's work when it is celebrated by God's people in a liturgy". It goes on to say that "Christ himself with all that he has accomplished for [humanity] and for all creation … is present in this memorial, granting communion with himself".[27] It is not, therefore, just remembering something that happened in the past, but it is also an effective proclamation of God's mighty acts of salvation, and beseeching God for the benefits of these acts to every human being celebrating the Lord's Supper, with the assurance that the Lord himself is present. [28]

Lastly, the Invocation of the Spirit is very significant in the life of the community of believers as they celebrate the Lord's Supper and partaking of the signs of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. It is significant for the fact that it is not the faith of the

[25] Lazareth, *Growing Together*, 50.
[26] Marshall, et al., eds., *New Bible Dictionary*, 647 – 650.
[27] Lazareth, *Growing Together*, 59.
[28] Lazareth, *Growing Together*, 59.

participants that qualifies for the real presence of Jesus Christ in the sacrament.[29] It was Christ who promised to be with his people to the end of the world. But it is the Holy Spirit that "makes the crucified and risen Christ really present to us in the [Lord's Supper]". The Lima document insists that it is the Father who is the primary origin of the Lord's Supper, and the incarnate Son of God is its living centre, and the Holy Spirit is seen as the immeasurable strength and power of love which makes it possible and continues to make it effective and meaningful in the life of the Church.[30] It is, therefore, the Holy Spirit that (i) makes the historical words of Jesus present and alive; (ii) makes the bread and wine as sacramental signs of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Thus, the invocation of the Spirit in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper would lead to the sanctification and renewal of the Church as it seeks justice, promotes truth and unity, and fulfils its mission of proclaiming the Good News of God's gift of salvation to the ends of the world.

Salvation as a Gift: Here and Not Yet

The understanding of salvation as found only in the future in the end time which is commonly accepted by many as biblical and therefore theologically true, is somehow contradictory with the biblical message in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is also found limited and problematic for the basic understanding of the sacraments of Baptism and Lord's Supper, taught and administered by the Church as foundational in its faith. The main cause of this problem is the uncertainty of whether salvation is a gift out of God's grace, or a reward of human effort. This is the reason why this paper is given the topic that it has, and also why it focuses on the heart of the life of worship and faith of the Church, in the sacraments it observed and held so highly and dearly. The emphasis is for a deeper understanding of salvation as a gift in the grace of God, which can only be received through faith alone, and a reality that can be experienced by the Church in the present (here) as a foretaste of its final consummation (not yet).

A gift is never regarded as a gift if it is not received and enjoyed. It is more relevant when it is called a present which means it is received and enjoyed right then and there without hesitation. This is often illustrated as someone gifting another with a car. Somehow the recipient would never be able to enjoy the car if it is not turned on and started driving it. Salvation is profoundly acknowledged as the gift of God through grace that can only be received through faith, not only in the preaching and teaching of the Church but also in the testimony of every Christian. The only problem though, is how salvation is understood. As pointed out earlier, so many Christians see salvation as

[29] See Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 301-303, on his discussion on the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. The Roman Catholics believe that after the prayer, the bread and wine become the real body and real blood of Jesus Christ. This is known as *Transubstantiation.* Martin Luther rejected the Roman Catholic view and believed that Christ is present 'in, with and under' the elements of bread and wine after the prayer. This is sometimes called *Consubstantiation.* Calvin and the Reformed tradition, however, see the presence of Christ as real like in the Roman Catholics and Luther, but only because of the uniting power of the Holy Spirit and received by faith. Then there is another view called the 'memorialist doctrine' where the language of lively and vivid 'memory' replaces the language of 'real presence'. The sacraments are given the name 'ordinances' which are understood as acts of commitment and obedience.

[30] Lazareth, *Growing Together*, 65.

something that is awaiting them beyond death.[31] Death is, therefore, interpreted as a door through which Christians enter into salvation. Others along the same line believe salvation is the final reward for the faithful children of God after judgment day. There are still others who believe that salvation is found only in heaven, understood as somewhere up there beyond this earth. Common in these views is the emphasis on the future and therefore see salvation as a reward waiting in the end time. Several questions started arising: How did the people get to believe these different interpretations or understanding of salvation? Why are these views on salvation as a reward of our work and effort awaiting us in the end time, still strong today?

There is no doubt about the existence of these futuristic elements in relation to salvation throughout the Bible. After all, the Old Testament talks about reaping the fruits of your own labor, which means that doing good will be rewarded with blessings from God, and doing evil will bring disaster and even death. In the New Testament we find parables of the talents and the farmer who sows seeds which fall upon different places, which are futuristic. But these stories and parables are not talking about salvation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They simply reveal the true nature of life that when we do good works, we will be rewarded and so forth. Even in the time of Jesus, people understood life in the same logical explanation of cause and effect. So, the people got different interpretations of the Bible from others whilst putting emphases on their own personal opinions and understanding.

The question on why salvation found only in the future is still strong today is caused by the teachings of the Church on the doctrine of the last things. Eschatology is known in the study of theology as the doctrine of the 'last things' or of the 'end.' The Church had been teaching this doctrine focusing on different events that will break into the history of the world in the future which will signify the end time. The second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment, and the kingdom of God were the central themes in this doctrine. Jurgen Moltmann discusses these events as end events which were to break into this world from somewhere beyond history, putting an end to the history in which all things live and move. This has relegated these events to the 'last days' and therefore "robbed them of their directive, uplifting and critical significance for all the days which are spent here, in this side of the end, in history".[32] As a result, these teachings about the end became like an appendix without any relevance in the theology of the Church, and had no bearing in relation to the doctrines of the cross and resurrection, the exaltation and sovereignty of Christ. The Church started focusing on discipleship and life in the here and now, while

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[31] A gift is never regarded as a gift if it is not received and enjoyed. It is more relevant when it is called a present which means it is received and enjoyed right then and there without hesitation. This is often illustrated as someone gifting another with a car. Somehow the recipient would never be able to enjoy the car if it is not turned on and started driving it. Salvation is profoundly acknowledged as the gift of God through grace that can only be received through faith, not only in the preaching and teaching of the Church but also in the testimony of every Christian. The only problem though, is how salvation is understood. As pointed out earlier, so many Christians see salvation as something that is awaiting them beyond death. went back to the abode of their gods, the enviroment. There was also the belief in Pulotu, a place in the far west beyond the furthest point of the island of Savaii, believed to be the place where the Samoans originated from, and at death their souls went back to Pulotu, the chiefs and orators in one chamber and the rest in the other chamber. E. Schultz refers to Pulotu as an underworld (E. Schultz, *Alagaupu Faa Samoa, Samoan Proverbial Expressions* (Auckland: Pasifika Press, 1953), 110. See footnote 1 above for the Samoan understanding of salvation before the arrival of Christianity. But salvation as going back to Pulotu at death meant going back to the origin of life and being as Samoans.

[32] Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (London: SCM Press, 1967), 15.

"eschatology with its mobilizing, revolutionizing, and critical effects upon history … were left to fanatical sects and revolutionary groups". This led to the problem of over emphasizing the end events like the second coming of Christ, the final judgment etc. as amplified by the new religious movements. Thus, the Church has "banished from its life the future hope by which it is upheld, and relegated the future to a beyond, or to eternity".[33] This has become the problem of eschatology throughout the Church for a long period of time.

Moltmann, however, argues that eschatology is indeed the doctrine of the Christian hope. "Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present." Meaning that Christian faith for Moltmann lives from what God had done in the death and resurrection of Christ, and strives for the fulfillment of the promises of the universal future of Christ.[34] Thus, Christians are assured of salvation and eternal life through faith 'here and now', as they continue to live in anticipation of the fulfillment of all the promises of God in the 'not yet' future. This is Christian hope. Central in Moltmann's view on Christian hope is faith when he talks about the believing hope. He emphasizes the truth that faith makes Christians strong when the word of promise faces the reality of suffering and death. It means faith never overstep the realities of life into a heavenly *utopia*, or dream of something different. He even sees faith as what binds Christians to Christ as hope opens that faith to the future of Christ.[35]

In the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as seen earlier, salvation is understood as God's gift out of his grace that can only be received through faith. This has been the implicit understanding of the EFKS in its teachings on these sacraments. It was and still is the core of its theological understanding of salvation as a gift of God founded on the once and for all sacrifice offered by Christ in his death and resurrection; a gift which we have received through faith alone. The life that Christians live is, therefore, a life of faith here and now facing all the realities of life including death, but with hope for the fulfillment of all that God has promised. Paul identifies Christ as the head of the body, the church. Thus, the resurrected Christ becomes the life from the head to the body, which means it is the actual resurrected life of Christ that is flowing and permeating throughout his body, the church (Col. 1:18). In the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the Church continues to nurture the saved life, the new life in Christ of the faithful children of God, in the reality of life as it is, in suffering and injustices, and even death, as all await the final consummation of all things in God. Paul speaks of Christ as one through whom "the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross (Col. 1:19 – 20).

Conclusion

The EFKS needs to take up this challenge of revisiting its theological teachings on the meaning of salvation as a gift rather than a reward, a gift to be received through faith alone, as found central in its sacraments. Throughout the development of this study, especially the discussions on Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and how salvation is implicitly foundational in its theological findings, the fact that God initiates everything

[33] Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 15.

[34] Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16. See also Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 347 – 373, in his thorough discussion on Christian Hope where he elaborates on the problem of eschatology as also seen by Moltmann. How the doctrine was neglected by the Church and therefore lost touch with vitally important teachings on the themes of judgment, *parousia* (coming of Christ), resurrection of the dead. Migliore gives a study on these themes and their relevancy to our faith today as people living in expectant faith.

[35] Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 20.

and even faith, informs us of our inadequacy and inability to achieve salvation. It means that salvation as a gift received through faith was always in the preaching and teachings of the EFKS as it administers the sacraments from the very beginning of its existence. After all, the theology of salvation through faith was central in the teachings of Martin Luther, the reformer of the Church. The problem of interpretation particularly the doctrine of eschatology was a universal failure of the Church to recognize the presence of salvation 'here' and its final consummation in the 'not yet' of God when creation is fully renewed.

Serious effort must be given to educating the young people, in their preparation for the *Faaaofiaga*, where they would actually proclaim their faith in Jesus Christ, accepting him as their Lord and Savior. The positioning of this confirmation service between Baptism and the Lord's Supper is vitally significant to the children when they fully understand its purpose. In knowing that after confirmation they are fully responsible for their own life of faith in relationship with God and with others, and the fact that they are saved through faith and called children of God, the young people of the EFKS would know how to respond to the lure of the new religious movements and their emphasis on the sudden end of the world when the Lord returns. When they become stronger in faith, assured of their intimate relationship with their Lord and Savior, they would without fear face all the challenges of sin and evil and even death.

This paper has made it clear that the people of the EFKS and the Church as a whole need to understand the nature of our true being as Christians. We are given the gift of salvation which we have received through faith, and we are called into this world as sons and daughters of God, to bear witness to the love, peace and righteousness of God. The ugly face of war and the darkness of covid-19 are real and are part of our everyday life. We are being baptized into a world under the threat of nuclear war, our faith is being confirmed in the complexity of cultures and multiplicity of beliefs and religions, and we are indeed celebrating the Lord's Supper in the face of a world in danger of annihilation. But this is the world which Christ died to save. It is here that we are called to love and to care for others and for all things of God's creation. It is where "Suffering touches the heart of God as well as the hearts of human beings."[36] Yet awaiting the final consummation of all things in heaven and on earth, things that had already been reconciled by God in the blood of Jesus Christ, HERE and NOT YET!!!

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[36] C. S. Song, "The Cross and Lotus" in *Third World Liberation Theologies: A Reader,* ed. Dean William Fern (New York: Orbis Books, 1986), 300.

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Weeping Together at Jesus' Feet in Luke 7:38: A Theological Rejoinder to the Plight of Mothers and Children of Samoa

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Abstract

The familiar story of the woman pouring an expensive jar of ointment on Jesus' feet is told in all four gospels (Matt 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; Luke 7:36–50; John 12:3–8). The Gospel of Luke, however, has highlighted an incident that seldom draws the attention of both preacher and reader, that of the un-named woman weeping and bathing Jesus' feet with her tears, and to dry them with her hair (Luke 7:38). This paper acknowledges the various hermeneutical approaches and nuances accorded to Luke's own arrangement of this tradition such as the affluence of sin, repentance and forgiveness, and the Messianic nature of the anointment. However, this theological rejoinder looks at the essence of weeping and tears of a woman with a wounded heart and how Luke's account resonates with mothers and children of Samoa who themselves are constant victims of violence and abuse. Though made in the image of God, the suffering and loss experienced by the un-named woman in Luke can only be expressed in an awe-inspiring pouring out of tears, and the holding out of hope. In our own context, such tears of hurt and sorrow ought to rouse theological discourses as violence and abuse against women and children in Samoa continues to take centre stage

Key Words: Weeping, Tears, Image of God, Anointing, Violence, Hope

My interest in this topic grew out of being able to reflect upon the stories of women in Luke's gospel, whilst teaching a course for Year 4 wives of students of Malua Theological College in 2021. The story of the un-named woman in Luke 7:36–30, and in particular the presence of tears in the pericope, moved me to explore this theological message further.[1] Furthermore, the never-ending media reports of domestic incidents involving women and children who have been violently abused added fuel to this desire to add to the theological dialogues, thus this attempt.[2]

A tragic note indeed, but accepting the reality of violence oriented towards our women and children as a common phenomenon in Samoa, warrants our attention. I

[1] NT 040 Women in Luke's Gospel. I was fortunate to teach this course during Term 3 2021, for wives of Malua Theological College Year 4 students.

[2] Sina Retzlaff, "Husband Arrested and Charged with Murder of Pregnant Wife," Samoa Global News, December 01, 2021. www.samoaglobalnews.ws (21/2/22). A pregnant mother was brutally murdered by her husband, who was deemed to be intoxicated at the time. The 34-year-old husband has been charged with murder for allegedly causing her death, and the death of their unborn child. See also Staff Writer, "SVSG Team Surround 7 Year Old Survivor as She Makes Her Way to Court," Samoa Global News, December 7, 2021. www.samoaglobalnews.ws (21/2/22). A 47-year-old father had originally denied sexual violation charges against his daughter, who was just 7 years old at the time of the offending. When the matter was called, the defendant changed his plea. He pleaded guilty to 2 counts of sexual assault with a child under 12 years old. The guilty plea has saved the victim from having to give evidence and relive the ordeal in Court.

present this paper as complimentary to the initiatives and tireless efforts of various organizations such as *Faataua le Ola,* (FLO)[3] *Samoa Victim Support Group* (SVSG),[4] various denominational and non-Government organizations, in their search for resolutions. Through educational seminars, workshops, and awareness programs, their efforts act as reminders of the need to seriously address this issue.[5] This paper duly endorses such efforts, as we open our hearts, to hear, and to listen, to the plight of victims of domestic violence, and abuse. As a community of faith, confronting the injustices suffered by our women and children is an imperative, weeping together with them, just as the un-named woman did in the presence of Jesus. In doing so, our women and children embrace the opportunity 'to raise their voices in unison, and hope in Christ.'[6]

This paper is divided into three sections. The first section explores some of the peculiarities in Luke's presentation of this anointing scene. Highlighting the significance of these Lukan variants, compared to what is presented by Matthew (Matthew 26:6–13), Mark (Mark 14:3–9), and John (John 12:3–8) adds more to the purpose of this paper, particularly the actions of the un-named woman. The following section looks at the element of tears, and how weeping matters in Luke's theological presentation of this tradition. The final section deals with one of the most talked-about issues of this anointing tradition – that of the woman described as a sinner. My claim is that there is much more to this un-named woman than just being labelled a 'sinner,' for she became a central figure in Luke's theological presentation of a woman looking for shelter, in the presence of Jesus.

The Anointing of Jesus as told by Luke (Luke 7:36–50)

The story of a woman who anointed Jesus is told in all four gospels.[7] Jesus is invited by a Pharisee named Simon, to share a meal with him. An uninvited guest, a woman without a name entered the house with an alabaster jar of ointment, and stood at Jesus' feet, weeping, then bathed His feet with her tears, and dried them with her hair. In Matthew and Mark's accounts, this un-named woman poured a jar of expensive

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[3] *Faataua le Ola* or *Value Life* is a local non-profit organization that caters for the spiritual needs of those who may consider giving up on life. In one of their awareness campaigns, *Faataua le Ola* highlighted its emphasis, being raising one's awareness that life ought to be treasured as a gift from God. Every human being therefore must treasure that life and take care and have respect for the human body because it is the Temple of God's Holy Spirit. See Unknown Author, "Value life, Faataua le Ola reminds Aleipata," *Samoa Observer*, 04 May 2016. www.samoaobserver.ws (21/2/22).

[4] The *Samoa Victim Support Group* (SVSG) is a non-governmental organization set up in Samoa in 2005 to support victims of crimes and the most vulnerable populations through advocacy, casework, shelter for children, community awareness and violence prevention programs. SVSG seeks to protect and promote the rights of victims and the most vulnerable populations such as women and children, specifically the right to be free from abuse. http:// www.samoavictimsupport.org (21/2/22).

[5] One such awareness campaign strategy came through a flyer propelled by the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, which reads in Samoan, "*O le Taofia o Sauaga, o le Tiute o Tagata Uma*." In English, it translates to, 'The Prevention of Domestic Violence is Everyone's Responsibility.' (Author's own translation)

[6] Rosangela Soares de Oliveira, "God's Time Breaks into our Time in Tears and Laughter," *International Review of Mission*, 79 No. 315, July 1990: 290-291.

[7] Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, Luke 7:36-50, and John 12:3-8.

ointment over Jesus' head while he is at table with the disciples just prior to his crucifixion. There is no weeping at his feet, no unbound hair, and no hint that she is known to be a sinner.[8] The Gospel of John differs in that it duly names this woman as Mary, who was present at Lazarus' house.

Similar to Matthew and Mark, the uninvited guest in Luke's anointing scene is also without a name. This may not seem odd to those who are familiar with Luke's presentation of other un-named women in his narratives. Simon's mother-in-law who was healed by Jesus (Luke 4:38–39), the widow from Nain whose son was raised from the dead (Luke 7:11–17), and the woman suffering from hemorrhage (Luke 8:43–48.) are but a few examples of un-named women in Luke's narratives.[9] It is beyond the scope of this paper to present a critical analysis of the reasoning behind Luke's editorial choices in presenting these characters without formal identification. Though they may be silent by their being nameless, their actions speak volumes of the faith they had in Christ. This is my personal conviction and perseverance behind this paper. A similar claim is made by Bashaw who asserted that 'the anonymity of these women need not indicate that Luke is silencing them.'[10] Jesus only had to hear the sound of her weeping and feel the stream of her tears to embrace her identity. That is of a woman in pain and sorrow, yet someone who belongs in God's banquet giving her time and space to reflect on whatever reasons that made her weep.

One of the most interesting aspects of this anointing tradition is that Luke parallels Matthew and Mark in not revealing to their readers the place where the anointing took place. John's gospel, however, identifies Bethany, the home of Lazarus, as the anointing scene. John also identifies the woman who anointed Jesus as Mary. Mary does not weep but she took a pound of costly perfume and anointed Jesus' feet, wiping them with her hair. It is comforting therefore to know that Mary is at her usual place of residence, a place where all women ought to call home. It is a secured dwelling place under which she and her family are safe and sound.

This is a complete contrast to the unfortunate situation faced by the un-named woman. Luke's woman is initially denied the right to be at the comfort of her own home, when he solemnly declared that she is from the city, and was a sinner. (Luke 7:37). Furthermore, she is found intruding into someone else's home, the home of a Pharisee, whose first impression is that she is an outcast. When seen in the context of Luke's theological message, ignoring the safety of a Bethany resident, or a home of her own fits in well with what transpired. Rather than facing another bout of rejection, Jesus offered her a new home, a home that is safe from constant abuse and violence, a home where tears are replaced by joy and hope. God's grace offered the woman with a grieving heart, the experience of a new 'Bethany,' a home she can then truly call her own. She was 'neither dismissed nor degraded at all, but rather set as an exemplar of a Christian disciple'[11] who then introduce others to experience the same grace.

Considered by scholars as one of the richest narratives in Luke's gospel, full of vivid imagery, deeply complex social interactions, and a clear proclamation of the gospel,[12] Luke highlights two significant variants of this tradition. Firstly, the anointing

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[8] Jennifer A. English, "Which Woman? Reimagining the Woman Who Anoints Jesus in Luke 7:36-50," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 39:6 (2012): 435-441.

[9] Jairus' daughter raised by Jesus in Luke 8:40-56, and the woman healed on the Sabbath in Luke 13:10-17 are also un-named.

[10] Jennifer Garcia Bashaw, "When Jesus saw her…" A Hermeneutical Response to #MeToo and #ChurchToo," *Review and Expositor*, vol. 117/2 (2020): 288-297.

[11] English, "Which Woman?" 436.

[12] English, "Which Woman?" 435.

takes place much earlier in Jesus' ministry, rather than just prior to His crucifixion.[13] Secondly, the un-named woman in Luke parallels John's account, whereby the woman anoints Jesus' feet rather than His head as told in Matthew and Mark. According to English, this editorial choice by Luke and John 'removes any sense of a royal anointing from the scene. Anointing of the feet in this way was rare, though not completely unheard of, in the ancient world.'[14]

The woman's actions signifies a clear theological message, for presenting herself to Jesus full of emotions, seeking shelter and peace, and found them at the feet of the 'merciful representative of God.'[15] The anointing of Jesus' feet has also raised doubts amongst readers, with some particularly uncomfortable at such 'erotic overtones of the story.[16] Nevertheless, the woman's actions, according to English denotes a sense of 'absolute humility,' and that 'things are not entirely as they might appear, for this position of humble service is not intended to be demeaning. In Luke's gospel, this is exactly the position of a disciple.[17] Luke records the host Simon the Pharisee's reaction to the situation at hand, alleging that the woman wiping Jesus' feet with her tears is a sinner (7:39). This embodies a clear distinction between the way that Jesus sees a person who is in dire need, and the way that we judge others. Whenever a story about a vicious beating or domestic violence upon our women and children is heard, one cannot think of a more valid reason to resonate Simon's narrow-mindedness with the perpetrators of violence and abuse.

Luke's anointing scene, therefore is not intended to sully the image of the anointing woman, but to reveal Jesus as the Messiah, the prophetic Messiah, whose primary purpose is the ministry of release.[18] In the words of Bertschmann, wiping Jesus' feet is either a clear expression of repentance and joy, or simply sorrow and distress.[19] Had the woman managed to anoint both our Lord's head and his feet that would not have matter Jesus in any sense in my humble opinion. Seeing the way that she approached Jesus, she knew in her heart that the Savior was at hand, a person who in the words of Farley, 'cherishes even those whom trauma has defiled and left for dead.' Her 'afflictive suffering is not an obstacle to God's love, but a path to it.'[20] Such gestures of love and giving as if she was the host by anointing his feet, is kindly received by Jesus. Jesus in turn honors her as a resourceful host whose gifts he gladly receives.[21]

Taking over from Simon as the role of a divine host, Jesus extended God's hospitality to one who has been marginalized, abused and set upon by her own. His command that she go in 'peace,' for her faith has saved her (7:50) however, highlights the fact that this woman with a broken heart 'is sent back out into the community in

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[13] Wendy Farley, "Between Text and Sermon: Luke 7:36-50," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*, vol. 69/1 (2015): 76-77. According to Farley, the anointing scene occurs toward the close of Jesus' ministry in John, and the woman's act carries different meaning there; still, if one were to imagine that this is the woman Luke depicts in 7:36-50, their meeting in the Pharisee's house would mark the beginning of a close friendship. In Luke's account, Jesus later stays in the house Mary shares with her sister, identifies her as a close disciple, and defends her presence in his inner circle (Luke 10:38-42).

[14] English, "Which Woman?" 437.

[15] Anni Pesonen, "The Weeping Sinner: A Short Story by Luke?" *Neotestamentica* 34.1 (2000): 87-102. 92.

[16] Dorothea H. Bertschmann, "Hosting Jesus: Revisiting Luke's 'Sinful Woman' (Luke 7.36-50) as a Tale of Two Hosts," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, vol. 40.1 (2017): 30-50.

[17] English, "Which Woman?" 439.

[18] English, "Which Woman?" 436.

[19] Bertschmann, "Hosting Jesus:" 36.a

[20] Farley, "Between Text and Sermon," 76.

[21] Bertschmann, "Hosting Jesus:" 36-37.

"peace" or "shalom," meaning "wholeness."[22] Forgiveness or 'release' is regarded as one of the primary themes in Luke's gospel. The words of comfort that the un-named woman heard from Jesus, echoes the promises of Luke 4:18–21, where Jesus 'proclaimed release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.'[23] Luke makes it clear that the timing cannot be more appropriate, for this woman to be released from bondage of whatever life has thrown at her. But what an awe-inspiring message that might turn out to be, for women and children of our own time! For our affected mothers, they are granted the opportunity to rejoin their children, their families and faith communities, not as a battered spouses or abused women, but as children of God who have been released, with their true identities intact. For English,

> People are forgiven (released) by God not only to experience a restored relationship with God, but also so that they will be fully included in the community. Luke portrays both forgiveness and healing in social terms. Release for Luke signifies wholeness, freedom from diabolic and social chains, acceptance. This type of release is not just a psychological adjustment in which one no longer feels guilt over one's sin; rather, this type of release is something that the individual and the society experience in very real terms. [24]

Interesting to note how the woman found it in her heart to simply let go of Simon's accusations. Though burdened with tears of sorrow, how comforting it was for her to hear Jesus declared that she was free. For the un-named woman, both Luke and John see in her radically open heart a love that challenges Jesus to reveal not merely the fact but the true essence of incarnation. [25]

Un-named Woman Labelled a Sinner?

In John 8:3–11, a woman caught in the act of adultery is brought by the Pharisees to Jesus. They reminded Jesus that, according to Moses' law, she should be stoned because she has been caught in the act of sinning. The un-named woman at the centre of Luke's account (and likewise John), however, did not go through such an ordeal. All that Luke reveals is that while Jesus was having dinner with his host, Simon the Pharisee, a woman interrupts the occasion by appearing at the table weeping and bathing Jesus' feet with her tears. Now, although the un-named woman in Luke is not recorded as being "on trial by stoning," she is still going through an ordeal of significance, as Simon's immediate reaction was to label this intruder as a sinner. The 'sinful' woman of John and the 'alleged sinful' woman in Luke both revealed the theological essence of a person(s) on

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[22] English, "Which Woman?" 437. See also Bertschmann, "Hosting Jesus: Revisiting Luke's 'Sinful Woman' (Luke 7.36-50)." Bertschmann noted how some exegetes see the emphasis in Jesus' words and deeds as generously stretching the mantle of God's mercy to include even those who are from the margins. See also Margaret Elizabeth Kostenberger, *Jesus and the Feminists: Who Do They Say That He Is.?* (Illinois: Crossway Books, 2008), 194. For Köstenberger, Jesus' response is compassionate, kind, and supportive, and instead of condemning her, He forgives her and commends her for her faith.

[23] English, "Which Woman?" 437. Jesus declares "the year of the Lord's favor," the Jubilee described in Leviticus 25. The Jubilee year was intended to be a time in which all debts would be forgiven, people would be returned to their own land, and slaves would be made free. This year of release would restore the community to one of equality, each with their own land, none beholden to another. This type of release is not just a psychological adjustment in which one no longer feels guilt over one's sin; rather, this type of release is something that the individual and the society experience in very real terms.

[24] English, "Which Woman?" 437.

[25] Farley, "Between Text and Sermon," 76.

the verge of 'being granted release by Jesus, in order to become a fully restored member of the community.'[26] The question that closely links both John's narrative and Luke's account is how we as readers see the effect of Jesus' ministry of release on the woman, and the meaning of Jesus' call to servant discipleship.[27] More often than not, readers and listeners alike have failed to see her as anything other than someone unworthy of a place in society. Sadly enough, this stigma has garnered impetus in both academic and preaching circles, which is inevitable.

A typical example is touched upon by Bertschmann noting that even if she is not a professional provider of erotic or sexual services her actions, including loosening her hair in public, touching, kissing and perfuming Jesus' feet, likely have erotic and certainly intimate connotations.[28] In contrast, Cosgrove[29] suggests otherwise that the combination of open hair, tears and kneeling is a gesture of deep reverence and love towards a deity or high-status person.[30] The latter is probably the most likely since, in Luke's wider gospel, ***χλαίειν*** is always an expression of grief which is usually met with the promise of salvation (Lk. 6.21; 8.52; 7.13).[31]

Many exegetes, though not all, tend to think she is a prostitute (thus Simon is right) because of her urban working environment and her ability to buy perfumed oil.[32] Russell begs to differ arguing that 'adultery for Jewish women could consist merely in speaking to a male alone.[33] Could this be the lens that Simon was using whilst observing the un-named woman bathe Jesus' feet with her tears? Having the honor of traversing the significance of these prior arguments and many others still does not deny us the opportunity to ask the following questions; 'Was the un-named woman in Luke really a sinner? Was the accusation appropriate or even valid? In stressing a point, and re-emphasizing the focus of this paper, I make note of the following observations given by Fiorenza on the perception of a sinner:

> The notion of sinner can have a whole range of meanings. It can characterize people who did not keep the Torah, whether in the stricter Sadducaic or the wider Pharisaic senses; those, who, in our terms were criminals [in Israel, political and religious law were one and the same] or those who worked in disreputable jobs such as fruit-sellers, swineherders, garlic peddlers, bartenders, seamen, public announcers, tax collectors, pimps, prostitutes, servants, and other service occupations, all of which were deemed "polluting," or "unclean" by theologians and interpreters of the Torah. All categories of sinners were in one way or another marginal people, who were badly paid and often abused.[34]

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[26] English, "Which Woman?" 441.

[27] English, "Which Woman?" 441.

[28] Bertschmann, "Hosting Jesus," 36.

[29] Bertschmann, "Hosting Jesus," 36. Bertschmann quoted from Charles H. Cosgrove, "A Woman's Unbound Hair in the Greco-Roman World, with Special Reference to the Story of the "Sinful Woman" in Luke 7:36-50," *JBL* 12.4 (2005): 675-92.

[30] Bertschmann, "Hosting Jesus" 36.

[31] Bertschmann, "Hosting Jesus" 37.

[32] Bertschmann, "Hosting Jesus" 40. See also Anni Pesonen, "The Weeping Sinner: A Short Story by Luke?" *Neotestamentica,* 34.1 (2000): 95. Pesonen believes that the un-named woman is not 'a prostitute', something to put off the respectable reader. A sinner calls to mind the people Jesus has protected and chosen at Levi's feast (Luke 5.27-32) and whom He is said to befriend (Luke 7.34).

[33] Letty M. Russell, ed., *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 101-102.

[34] Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins,* Tenth Anniversary Edition (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), 128.

When referring to the 'sinful' woman in Luke and John's anointing scenes, Fiorenza also reiterated the fact that the story adopted by Luke does not say what kind of sinner the woman was for she could have been a criminal, a ritually unclean, or morally bad person, a prostitute, or simply the wife of a "notorious sinner."[35]

For a Jewish society, being patriarchal as it were, there is no escaping the fact that Simon's instant reaction to her presence is a clear reflection of his agenda — keeping the society's status quo intact. This bereft woman, condemned by her own people, however, at last has found a man who is without prejudice and holds any malicious intentions. She and others, according to Fiorenza, who were categorized as 'sinners,' were duly invited to join Jesus at His fellowship table.[36] Much to the dismay of the real host, Jesus exalts a woman from the city to the status of host extraordinaire.[37] She came with tears and left the scene with her dignity restored after encountering the Savior. According to Farley, this demonstrates the true essence of 'how redemptive it is to be seen by Jesus. This "seeing" is particularly healing for someone who has been savaged by trauma.'[38] The challenge by the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development for us to become responsible partners in preventing violence cannot be met by us holding back. As Church leaders and theologians, we must lead by example and in order to do that, it is imperative that we ought to be seen weeping alongside our affected mothers and our children.

Weeping the Tears of Sorrow and Joy

People cry for various reasons. We share in tears of sadness when we farewell our loved ones who have passed on, or if a mother has lost a child or husband. Emotions that dwell within us sometimes bring tears into our eyes. Just recently, I had to wipe a few tears witnessing Ukrainian children say goodbye to their fathers, who are required by law to remain and fight the war against the Russians. Just as we cry because of feelings of sadness, joy also brings tears in our eyes. When our children, family members, or any of our close relatives achieve success, academic or otherwise, we gladly share with them the tears of joy, acknowledging their hard work and determination to succeed. There are countless times when we see sports men and women openly crying as they reflect on the sacrifices one has taken in order to achieve success.

As stated earlier, my fascination with Luke's anointing pericope came about mainly because of the evangelist's decision to give the un-named a 'voice' through weeping and subsequent bathing of Jesus feet with her tears. Though there was oil meant for the anointing as per norm, the presence of tears, and how it supplemented the perfumed oil, is a source of theological inspiration for us readers. Again, it is beyond the scope of this paper to make a sound critical analysis of Luke's editorial choices. Yet, the question has to be asked, 'why the weeping and the tears? Perhaps Luke had experienced a similar situation within his own family or his community of faith?

Regardless of what transpired that gave rise to Luke's choice of adding a

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[35] Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her,* 129. See also Kostenberger, *Jesus and the Feminists: Who Do They Say That He Is.?*, 123. Kostenberger says that the sinful woman in Luke 7:36-50 ought to be viewed not as a sexual sinner, but as a potential disciple and even a Christological prefiguration.

[36] Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 129.

[37] Bashaw, "When Jesus saw her," 293.

[38] Farley, "Between Text and Sermon," 76.

woman's tears to the anointing scene, the fact remains that as humans, we do cry. According to Kremer, 'our tears are reminders that below life's seemingly ordinary surface is a great ocean of meaning. Each tiny tear is expressive of the foundation of who we are. Each tear reveals our fundamental values.'[39] Our tears are shed 'because of the unbearable pain and unfathomable joy. We cry happy tears, tears of frustration and of unutterable sorrow.'[40] As we weep, others will see through our pain or joy, when we let go of our emotions, for tears are meant to be seen by others.[41]

The choice made by Luke resonates with the common theological conviction that communicating with God can be made through prayers or silent meditation. Complementing these spiritual longings for God, Luke introduces the theological essence of tears, acting as a reminder for all of us that 'our tears are a sign of God's love, symbols of open-ness to God's compassion.[42] As the story unfolds, the un-named woman broke through many barriers, social, cultural, and physical, just to let Jesus see, and feel her tears. To escape the grasps of abuse, violence and whatever problems she may have suffered, she solemnly sought refuge with tears in the warmth of a God 'who takes every one of our tears and every one of your sorrows as His own.'[43] In the face of opposition, the woman poured out her heart in sorrow and experiencing healing. The tears born of tragedy actually contain poisons. When you weep in woe and grief, you are literally being cleansed in body and in mind. When you are moved to sob in sadness there is a physical release of the tensions and the toxins so that your body can begin to heal.[44]

Just as the Israelites wept in the presence of God, after suffering a defeat by the Amorites, hopelessly expecting to be heard by God (Deut 1:45),[45] the un-named woman wept and wiped Jesus's feet with her tears, in anticipation of being comforted by Jesus.

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[39] Richard Kremer, "The Diverse Reality of Tears: John 11:30-38," *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, 46 no 2 (2019): 149-153. See also David A. Bosworth, "Weeping in the Psalms," *Vêtus Testamentum* 62 (2013): 36-46. Bosworth touches upon the issue of crying as a behavior motivated by the need for relationship and care-giving and that tears generate powerful reactions in those who witness them. The un-named women ensured that Jesus not only sees her, but also feels the warmth of her tears.

[40] Barbara, S. Blaisdell, "The Tears in God's Bottle: A Sermon Psalm 56:1-13," *Encounter,* 69.2 (2008): 86.

[41] David A. Bosworth, "The Tears of God in the Book of Jeremiah," *Biblica*, 94 no. 1 (2013): 24-46.

[42] Kremer, 152. For Kremer, tears are a sign from God that we were not meant to hold onto our grief and bear it forever, more and more weighed down, tension built up until we explode from the stress of carrying it alone. Tears are God's sign that our sorrows are meant to roll away, the poisons of grief and pain are meant to be poured out of us that we might be filled with pure waters of God's love in its place, that we might begin healing.

[43] Blaisdell, "The Tears in God's Bottle," 93. See also Jordan Wessling, "God Wipes Every Tear," *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie*, 58, no. 4 (2016): 505-524. Wessling tells the story of a widow, who was a member of the Revival Movement, who was exhorted not to cry or grieve because this would demonstrate lack of faith in Jesus Christ. This exhortation would be taken as though it were the gospel truth. The women would discover, however, that withholding their tears and not expressing their grief would not cause the pain to go away. Some ended up doubting their faith in God, since grieving was equated with lack of faith. Some felt that the church had let them down at the time of great need.

[44] Blaisdell, "The Tears in God's Bottle," 92.

[45] Amitai Baruchi-Unna, "The Story of the Zeal of Phinehas and Congregational Weeping at Bethel," *Vetus Testamentum* 65 (2015): 505-515.

For Blaisdell, this woman was more than willing to stand up and pray what was on her mind.'[46] She literally has gone out of her way to remind us that we too, should be brave enough to follow suit. Taking a stand with our weeping mothers and our children is what Jesus had longed to see in us, and as Kremer has alluded to, 'each tiny tear is expressive of the foundation of who we are.'[47]

The crucial role that the un-named woman's tears play in Luke's anointing scene, warrants a close attention to another Old Testament passage that talks about tears, that of Psalm 56:8-9.[48] Commenting on this text, Bosworth says that 'weeping is a powerful sign that a person is in crisis and needs help. A person in tears is impossible to ignore, since their distress is literally written on their face. The onewho weeps typically feels a sense of isolation or abandonment that the tears seek to rectify, and the expected and hoped-for response is empathy, concern, and relationship.'[49] The Psalmist acknowledges that his life is in danger, but he is counting on Yahweh to put his tears in His bottle. Keeping bottles of tears is a custom that is common in many ancient middle-eastern cultures.[50] Thus, when faced with fear and anxiety, the Psalmist 'trusted Yahweh to keep count of those tears and treasure them.'[51] Furthermore, the Psalmist provides one of the most pertinent messages for our women and our children, and all of us that 'we too can count on God to gather up our tears, tears of sadness and tears of joy. God gathers them all gently from our wet cheeks and treasures them.'[52] The weeping woman was reassured by Jesus that she was free to go in peace, and she left knowing in her heart that God has filled up His bottle with her tears. God not only hears and feels our pain and suffering, but He also shares in our tears of sorrow, counting them as if were His own.

There is no denying the reality of the many risks faced by our women and children today, which includes physical violence and abuse, with some ending in death. As noted earlier, husbands, partners, fathers, and sometimes close relatives, are the customary perpetrators. The incidents quoted for the purpose of this paper are just a few examples of violent behaviour unnecessarily imposed upon our most vulnerable. The latest attempt at raising awareness calls for everyone to take action and to put an end to this unnecessary evil. This paper is my humble response to this call whereby the theological message presented by the un-named woman weeping at Jesus' feet becomes more relevant than ever to this cause. Weeping in sorrow that leads to joy is one motivation that ought to be expressed and be at the core of any theological discourses. Jürgen Moltmann once made a comment that I feel reflects the focus of this theological rejoinder saying, 'if love is the acceptance of the other without regard to one's own well-being, then it contains within itself the possibility of sharing in

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[46] Barbara S. Blaisdell, "The Tears in God's Bottle: A Sermon Psalm 56:1-13," *Encounter* 69.2 (2008): 85-95.

[47] Richard Kremer, "The Diverse Reality of Tears: John 11:30-38," *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, 46 no. 2 (2019): 149-153. See also Jessie Gutgsell, "The Gift of Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination of Western Medieval Christianity," *Anglican Theological Review*, 36 no 3 (1993): 355-373. Gutgsell maintains that tears are a universal, ineffable, and complex paralanguage, defined scientifically as "the observable actions that accompany internal states.' They communicate physical distress, nostalgia, attachment, redemption, release, joy, anger, and so much more…They thus function as a "symbolic vehicle for the full load of the human experience.

[48] '*You have kept count of my tossings, put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your record? Then my enemies will retreat in the day when I call. This, I know, that God is for me.'* NRSV.

[49] Bosworth, "Weeping in the Psalms," *Vêtus Testamentum*. 62 (2013): 36-46. 37.

[50] Blaisdell, "The Tears in God's Bottle," 89.

[51] Blaisdell, "The Tears in God's Bottle," 91.

[52] Blaisdell, "The Tears in God's Bottle," 91.

suffering,'[53]

In her own experiences and whatever has caused her much distress, the un-named woman in Luke came to Jesus, not as a sinner, but a woman with hidden pains caused by whatever reasons there be. She took the best possible alternative towards regaining her dignity, her self-composure, and her true identity as a mother. Deep inside, she knew that Jesus would heal her wounded heart. Her story becomes our own, and according to Bashaw, 'the stories of these nameless women are as relatable today as they were to the women in Luke's audience…Jesus vindicates the so-called "sinful woman" and brings down the powerful man at the head of the table.'[54]

The anointing scene in Luke presents us with a real challenge, that we need to be seen before Jesus, and to ***weep together*** for the sake of our mothers, our sisters, and our children, for the tears that we weep are precious to God. It is also a challenge for the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS) and others to continue Jesus' ministry of looking out for those in need. We ought to follow the footsteps of the un-named woman who sought out Jesus, knowing that our Lord will give her comfort. Beilby and Eddie had this to say as a timely reminder for all of us referring to the Jesus tradition as full of accounts where people sought out Jesus because they recognized that He was able to provide things that they have been deprived of.[55] The un-named woman, deprived of her right to live a normal life, brought her tears to Jesus, and she was rewarded with 'peace,' as Jesus 'reaffirmed her dignity and humanity as a person created in His image.'[56]

The call is to gather at Jesus' feet, and weep, in prayer and in hope, that the message of liberation, wholeness, and healing, governed by principles of love and justice[57] shall prevail amongst our women and children. Sometimes, it is disheartening to hear and learn of the 'Church and society alike, losing that chance to listen to the many voices expressed in tears and deep sighs too painful for words.'[58] Blaisdell recommends that 'may our tears mingle with the tears of one another and the very tears of God, that together they might become a mighty river, rolling down upon this world, to cleanse, to soften and to reshape this hardened earth, that it might one day be called the Kingdom of our God.[59]

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[53] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 230.

[54] Bashaw, "When Jesus saw her," 297. Bashaw maintains a strong stance against abuse of women, noting that broad positive-descriptive hermeneutics consider Luke's treatment of women to be positive and counter-cultural in its contexts. Furthermore, Jesus's ministry brought a degree of social and spiritual liberation for women in the first-century Church.

[55] James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, *The Historical Jesus: Five Views* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 262-263.

[56] Nyambura Njoroge, "Woman, Why Are You Weeping?" *The Ecumenical Review*, 49 no 4, (1997): 427-438.

[57] W. Dennis Tucker Jr, "Women in the Old Testament: Issues of Authority, Power and Justice," *Expository Times,* Volume 119, no. 10: 481-486.

[58] Njoroge, "Woman, Why Are You Weeping?" 428.

[59] Blaisdell, "The Tears in God's Bottle," 95. See also Rosangela Soares de Oliveira, "God's Time Breaks into our Time in Tears and Laughter," *International Review of Mission*, 79 no 315, July 1990: 290-291. Oliveira asserts that weeping harmoniously presents a real challenge to the Churches, for we must not introduce disharmony into the song of those who are aware of their pain, and give themselves body and soul to the way of liberation. See also Wessling, "God Wipes Every Tear," 505. Wessling adds to the conversation, noting that a passible God would forever grieve the loss of those who are damned.

Conclusion

Our women and our children are crying out from the depths of misery, and we can ill-afford to ignore their struggles. As fellow Christians, the body of Christ acting in unison, it is our duty and responsibility to weep together with them in solidarity, and in hope! The CCCS may begin by allocating certain Sundays throughout the year, for parishioners to share the message of liberation and hope for victims and their families. Furthermore, given the fact that the CCCS and Malua Theological College continue to provide pastoral and financial support to the SVSG and other organizations, isn't it the right time now to consider setting up our own 'City of Refuge' manned by our own Church Ministers who not only provides spiritual support, but can also engage in shared learning as part of our moral and ethical responsibility? The challenge is for our Church leaders as influential members of society to become active messengers of peace and harmony, and to contribute to the proclamation and embodiment of a message of hope. The prophetic voice of the Church needs to materialize in the form of a 'shelter' where our battered mothers and children can find refuge.

I conclude by quoting these influential words from one Judith F. Van Heukelem, who has reminded us all that our Lord Jesus, 'besides displaying freedom in expressing his own stress through crying, He accepted and, at times, even participated in the tears of those around him. Crying, thus, is seen as a legitimate expression for the Christian.

God grant us as helpers to be people who can weep with those who weep.'[60] That is indeed our calling, and it is an imperative that now is the time to stand together, for the sake of our affected mothers and our children.

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[60] Judith F. Van Heukelem, "Weep With Those Who Weep: Understanding and Helping the Crying Person," *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 7 no 2, Summer 1979: 83-91.

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Land, Ecotheology, and Identity in Samoa

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Abstract

The environmental crisis is arguably the most pressing issue the world faces today. Secular and religious institutions, together and respectfully, for quite some time and to a great extent, have spearheaded the fight for eco-justice. A fight to save our plundering planet. Theological discourse in particular, stresses the importance of the relationship people have with the non-human world. Precisely, to care for the natural environment as an integral part of a person's faithful practice—becoming stewards of creation. This article aims to contribute to eco-justice from a Samoan perspective that prioritises the importance of the fanua or land. The fanua marks the identity of the Samoan people, both the cultural and religious identity. The article argues that such an identity should also consider the fanua as an ecological symbol that advocates for nature's care.

Keywords: *Fanua* (Land), identity, ecological symbols.

Introduction

In the heyday of ecotheology, there were a lot of finger pointing. Theologians and non-theologians were in a continuous debate. Lynn White in 1970 struck a nerve that is still felt by the Christian church today. In short, White blamed the anthropocentric nature of the Christian faith as the cause of the ecological crisis.[1] The aim of this article is to reiterate the importance of the *fanua* (land) that is couched within the Samoan cultural and religious context. The article argues that the various ecological symbols identifying the Christian church in Samoa should also create avenue that will allow the people to embrace more of the ecological surrounding. I begin with describing a connection between an aspect of ecology, and Christian Identity in the Samoan context. This is followed by a discussion of the value of land to the Samoan people, as well as its significance within the Bible. Finally, the article ends with a theological reflection that will highlight the significance of ecological symbols within the Samoan Christian context.

Ecological Symbols and Christian Identity in Samoa

The Christian churches of Samoa are often identified according to the *malae* [2] or land in which the mission initially contacted. For instance, the *malae* at the village of Sapapalii

[1] For a detailed read on this debate, look up Peet Van Dyk, "Challenges in the Search for an Ecotheology," *Old Testament Essays* 22, no. 1 (2009). See also Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967). What I mean about 'environmental crisis' here and throughout the essay is a crisis that includes 'us' humans as part of the environment. The overused phrase has somewhat situated the crisis as something 'external' to humanity, portraying humans as 'hero's' assigned to save the helpless environment. As raised by one concerned theologian, "[f]or too long we have remained complacent, seeing more space allocated to environmental issues in newspaper columns, on television channels, on book store shelves, and increasingly eve in school and university curricula,[…]as such it [environmental crisis] has remained a peripheral and secondary concern". Look up Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam, *Creation in Crisis: Science, Ethics, Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 2014), 1.

[2] A *malae* is a piece of land or *fanua*. *Malae* and *fanua* are interchangeable words in the Samoan language; however, *malae* is often used as a formal reference of a particular family/ village *fanua*.

in the island of Savaii known as *Mataniu feagai ma le Ata*, is the landing site of John Williams and the early London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries that came to Samoa in 1830.[3] To this day, the arrival of the LMS mission is known as the *taeao nai matāniu feagai ma le ata* (the event at *matāniu feagai ma le ata*).[4]

The name *matāniu feagai ma le ata* however, originates from a Samoan folk story about King (not the god) Tagaloa, who ruled in some parts of Samoa.[5] It is told that he travelled across Savaii and came through the village of Sapapalii in the early hours of the morning. Because of the long trip, Tagaloa was thirsty and needed a drink. His servants quickly fetched a *niu* (coconut) and gave it to him to quench his thirst. Tagaloa decided to call that place *matāniu* (eye of the coconut), the place that quenched his thirst. Just as soon as they set out again, Tagaloa and his traveling party gazed upon the *ata* (light) from the horizon, which signalled the dawn of a new day. Hence, Tagaloa called the opposite piece of land, *ata*. To this day, that exact area in the village of Sapapalii is called, *matāniu feagai ma le ata* (*matāniu* opposite/corresponds with *ata*). Thus, today, the event at *Mataniu feagai ma le ata* marks the dawn of a new era for Samoa—the coming of Christianity.

Notably, one cannot miss the obvious connection the *malae* has with the evangelization of Samoa. That is, the *malae* that was once a representation only of a historical/cultural event, is now also an important historical landmark for the Christian church. A further implication is that the *malae* has now become a symbol of both a Christian and cultural identity in Samoa. An ecological connection that appreciates both the *tuaoi* (boundaries) of culture and Gospel, and when to *si'i* (shift) the *tuaoi* so that there is an interconnectedness of life in all of its multiplicity.[6] A place with great historical value as well as theological significance. Such "place" or land according to Walter Brueggemann is:

> Where some things have happened which are now remembered and which provide continuity and identity across generations…Place is space in which vows have been exchanged, promises have been made and demands have been issued.[7]

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[3] In 1835, the Methodist mission landed at Manono Island, at a *malae* called '*Faleū ma Utuagiagi*'. In 1845, the Roman Catholic mission arrived at Lealatele, at a *malae* called '*Malaeola ma Gafoaga*'. Similar to the LMS mission, the Methodist and the Catholic missions are now known according to the *malae* it landed upon. See John Garrett, *To Live among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982), 121-29. Sapapalii however is a village situated in the Eastern part of Savaii, the bigger Island of the two main Islands of Samoa.

[4] The usage of the historical event to refer to the arrival of Christianity is often the case in Samoan oratory speeches.

[5] Today, the Church denomination is no longer called the LMS, but the *Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa* (Congregational Christian Church in Samoa/CCCS).
In ancient Samoan mythology, the creator god is known as *Tagaloalagi* (or shortened to *Tagaloa*). The name *Tagaloa* also shares a common divine address with the name *atua*, which is a "non-gender term used to address the original gods". See Ama'amalele Tofaeono, *Eco Theology: Aiga - the Household of Life: A Perspective from the Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa* (Erlangen: World Mission Script; 7, 2000), 32, 67, 163. See also Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 24-40. *Tagaloa* as King is perhaps the lesser usage of the name, but should be differentiated from the god *Tagaloa*.

[6] Faafetai Aiavā, "*Si'i Le Tuaoi:* Shifting Perceptions on Exodus 1:8-2:10 through a Samoan/Pasefika Reading," *The Pacific Journal of Theology*, no. 58 (2020): 97-99.

[7] Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Biblical Overtures* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 5.

In the Samoan context, therefore, the *malae* of *matāniu feagai ma le ata*, and all other *malae* that bear the historical significance of hosting the early Christian missions, is certainly such a "place" and more for the Samoan people. It is possible to say that such a *malae* has become 'ground zero' for the Christian missions. In Samoa today, the identification of the arrival of the Church according to the *malae* well expresses a 'gospel and culture' relationship, often heard in the rhetoric's of oratory speeches by the *matai* (chiefs).

However, an ignored fact about this Christian identification is that these sacred grounds not only represent a cultural identity, but an ecological symbol. A symbol that the story of life, not just as relics of a historical event. In this article, nature is represented by land. A land that Ilaitia Sevati Tuwere rightfully claims has significance in its value.[8]

This article argues that we need to revitalise the many *malae* or ecological spaces that are symbolic of our cultural and Christian identity. One of these ecological symbols is the *fanua*. Let us first highlight the significance of the *fanua* to the people of Samoa.

The Value of *Fanua* to the Samoan People

Land to the Samoan people holds significant values that are deeply entrenched within its culture. It is a source of life that represents their identity, heritage, and sense of belonging. Land in the Samoan language is *fanua* or *'ele'ele*. The word *fanua* can also be used to refer to the placenta or umbilical cord of an unborn baby; the source of life for the child while still in the mother's womb. The word *'ele'ele* can also mean blood, which biological life is dependent upon.[9] These two Samoan translations explain the sacred connection the Samoan people have with the land. *Fanua* (womb) is where life is formed; *'ele'ele* (blood) is what sustains life. Without *fanua* or *'ele'ele* there is no life. Most importantly, since land is the 'life-blood' of the community, it can be said that land is intrinsically part of the people, not separate; just as God is inseparably part of creation. Tuwere echoes a similar sentiment when he talks about the *vanua*[10] saying that "without the people, the *vanua* is like a body without a soul."[11] He highlights the interconnected relationship the Fijian people have with land, a commonality shared amongst Pacific Islands including Samoa.

Therefore, the connection between the Samoan and the land is asserted as a deeply embedded sense of identity, which is primordial in nature, and cosmologically-based where it enlightens the connection between the heavens, the earth and humanity.[12] Iutisone Salevao explains that the Samoan cosmology as "Earth-centred", where heaven is never a far awar understanding but always in reach.[13] In other words, the earth is considered a sacred and very important aspect in the lives of the people. This renders a sense of duty the Samoan has towards the land. A duty that is advocated by the *faa*-Samoa or the Samoan way of life.

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[8] Ilaitia S. Tuwere, *Vanua: Towards a Fijian Theology of Place* (Fiji, Suva: University of the South Pacific, 2002), 19.

[9] For an extensive read on the connection between the person and land in the Samoan context, see Tofaeono, *Eco Theology: Aiga - the Household of Life: A Perspective from the Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa*, 180-81. See also Iutisone Salevao, "'Burning the Land': An Ecojustice Reading of Hebrews 6:7–8," in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, ed. Norman Habel (London: Sheffield Publishing Company, 2000), 222.

[10] Fijian word for 'land'

[11] Tuwere, *Vanua: Towards a Fijian Theology of Place*, 35.

[12] Tofaeono, *Eco Theology: Aiga - the Household of Life*, 180-81.

[13] Salevao, "'Burning the Land': An Ecojustice Reading of Hebrews 6:7–8," 224.

The Samoan view of land and how it is intimately connected to the person is no different from biblical and theological reflections on land. This is where land gives a people their location, a sense of place where people have a historical, cultural, social, political and religious grounding. Hence, it is important that the land is looked after by the current generation, not only for their benefit, but also for future generations. This understanding of land as life sustaining, should not be understood only within a 'one-way' mentality where land is seen only to offer life, but rather a mutual coexistence where we offer security in return. Therefore, there is a reciprocal relationship that needs to be taken into great consideration. For instance in economic affairs, such a relationship can only exist when we vitalize life-giving practices and values that sustain life for both the land and the person.

In this regard, the livelihood and sustainability of life for a Samoan is reliant upon the mutual connectedness of the person and the land. In a Samoan setting, the appointed *pule* (authoriser) of the land on behalf of the family, the *matai* (chief), must ensure that all members of the extended family share the riches of the land. Not just the material wealth of it, but the life-giving values that the land offers. The leasing of land and the potential loss through government Acts and policies means that such a connection to the land is also affected.[14]

From a Samoan indigenous perspective, there is interconnectedness in creation between the human being and the non-human world. Prior to the introduction of Christianity, Samoans afforded great prominence to the human-environment relationship, as it was one of the four pillars that founded "harmony" within the society.[15] Though ancient Samoa were very much dependent on the environment for consumption, rituals and ceremonies connected with the land, animals, and the sea made hunting, gathering, and fishing a "complex undertaking."[16] In other words, the relationship Samoans had with the environment, made evident through particular rituals, aided the protection and conservation of the natural environment. Put differently, it formulated 'constraints' and advocated an ethic of contentment amongst the society. This indigenous Samoan practice is similar to how Ellen Davis explains the Genesis story of the Garden of Eden from the perspective of "restraint, as a condition for justice."[17] To Davis, if the first humans could not restrain themselves, what does this mean for us and the many apple trees we fail to conserve? Knowing our place in

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[14] For a detailed discussion of the implications of a traditional understanding of land on the Samoan 'Lands and Titles' court, see Suaalii-Sauni et al. *Su'esu'e Manogi: In Search of Fragrance: Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi and the Samoan Indigenous Reference* (Apia: National University of Samoa, 2009), 153-72.

[15] The other pillars are 'harmony between man and the cosmos'; 'harmony between fellow men'; and 'harmony between man and self'. Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, "In Search of Harmony: Peace in the Samoan Indigenous Religion," in *Su'esu'e Manogi: In Search of Fragrance: Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi and the Samoan Indigenous Reference*, ed. Tamasailau M. Suaalii-Sauni, et al. (Apia: National University of Samoa, 2009), 106-14.

[16] An example of such rituals is explained by Efi in the tree cutting process. Before the tree is cut, a 'prayer chant' which seeks forgiveness from the tree for having to cause pain to it is done. In hunting and fishing exhibitions, there were certain birds and fishes that were regarded as *sa* or sacred, and were forbidden under a *tapu* (taboo) to be killed. This was due to the belief that such birds/fishes were earthly manifestations of village or family gods ibid., 107-08..

[17] "Learning Our Place: The Agrarian Perspective of the Bible," *Word and World Lecture* 29, no. 2 (2009): 115-17.

[18] Katerina Friesen, "A Sabbath Rest Remains: Finding Hope in the Face of Ecological Crisis," *Vision (Winnipeg-Man): A Journal for Church and Theology* 15, no. 1 (2015): 24.

creation is learning how to restrain ourselves from our over consuming nature.

Davis' argument also resonates with the Old Testament concept of the 'Sabbath and rest' (Lev 25). This concept of 'rest' was rendered to the Israelites during their long journey to the promise land. The Sabbath tradition according to Leviticus 25 portrays four key elements important in our discussion. That is 'rest', 'release', 'liberate', and 'remember'. 'Rest' is not so much a relaxing time, nor a time to labor, but rather to practice "restorative labor."[18] A kind of labour that is ultimately modelled through Jesus Christ when he healed people and picked food on the Sabbath, the kind of labor that is not life diminishing, but life affirming. In his critique of 'Time and Economic Development in Samoa', Kiliona Mafaufau states that, "In Samoa itself we can easily see the conflict that arises when we join the race for economic development…Our [Samoan] identity can only be retained by doing things not just in our way but in our own 'good' time."[19]

Mafaufau refers to how development in Samoa has become a 'race' to catch up with economic heavyweights, and as a consequence, the 'smallness' of our Island and resources will only end the race badly for us. To Mafaufau, it is analogous to a 'David versus Goliath' sort of story, where the Pacific Islands and Islanders are the 'underdog.' Unlike the biblical narrative, David does not end up victorious but rather a prisoner of the elite. Similar to the biblical story, David tries on heavy armoury, but this only wears him out. Mafaufau emphasises the need for development that is in accordance with such a 'Pacific Time' mentality.

'Release' and 'Liberate' according to the Sabbath concept is to free not only the slaves, but the land. The freeing of slaves together with the land in this sense can arguably be claimed as the 'personification' of land. In other words, it is giving land the same treatment afforded human beings. Therefore, using Davis' point of view, since land is embodied within the person, the integrity of the people is dependent upon the health of the land. Finally, 'remember', is a reminder to Israel that God brought them out of bondage in Egypt. Walter Brueggemann explains the entire history of Israel using the 'land' concept, where Israel's exit from Egypt, 'landlessness,' and entry into Canaan—towards 'landedness'—is dependent upon their willingness to remember the covenant that was forged in Mt Sinai.[20] Brueggemann thus calls the above tradition as a 'speaking/ hearing moment.' [21] Moving back to our 'Sabbath and rest' discussion, it is not so much what we as humans have to act out, but rather about learning to listen to the cry of the earth.

This listening act is similar to what Jay McDaniel claims as listening to the hills and rivers, animals and plants, so that they can have the space to themselves.[22] In other words, God's creation done in grace, which we ought to embody, is not just an act of caring as in stewards and protectors of creation. But it is also a practice of listening and resting—restraining ourselves and taking a step back so that the earth, rivers, and oceans could live in their own unique way, regenerate and replenish by themselves. It is about giving the natural environment the space and time for self-healing. Moreover, it is the recognition of the 'spirituality' of nature as part of creation, just as we as human beings are spiritually part of nature.

What is being highlighted from the above discussion is the ideal understanding of how a Samoan values the *fanua*. The significance of the *fanua* is interconnected to all

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[19] "Pacific Time and the Times: A Theological Reflection," *The Pacific Journal of Theology* Series II, no. 6 (1991): 27.

[20] Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 44.

[21] Brueggemann, *The land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith.*

[22] "In the Beginning Is the Listening," in *Theology That Matters: Ecology, Economy, and God*, ed. Darby Kathleen Ray (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 27.

aspects of life. *Fanua* not only has a cultural, social, and economic value; most importantly, a religious significance represented by the various theological implications the *fanua* portrays.

Land and Sabbath Rest

Much can be learnt from the theological implications of the Sabbath as a day of rest. As a starting point of discussion, let us look first at the Sabbath law as expressed through the Bible. Exodus 20:8– 11 states:

> Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work - you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.

In the Hebrew tradition, the Sabbath is a day of rest and reconciliation. As we can see from the Exodus commandment, it was not only a day of rest but a day of being in solidarity with the other—those whom are despised and left at the margins by economic oppression. According to Tomas Sedlacek, "[t]he observance of the Sabbath bears the message that the purpose of creation was not just creating but that it had an end, a goal".[23] The goal is for humanity to rest, contemplate and to enjoy the work of their hands.

Furthermore, it is not just a rest for humanity, but a rest for land according to the Sabbatical Year in Leviticus 25. This means that there should be a time that the accumulation of wealth is paused, debts erased (though highly impractical today), and land returned to their original owners. This also has significant implications on the notion of limited resources which also intersects with concerns of sustainability. Especially in Samoa where natural resources are limited, the need for 'rest' underscores a certain degree of awareness for economic growth that is sustainable and fits the level of natural resources available. According to Darby Kathleen Ray, the "Sabbath practice is any act of "sacred interest", anything that gives us refuge from the dehumanizing pace and aims of consumer culture".[24] Economic growth and how it is implemented through development should learn from this understanding of the Sabbath as 'rest'.

In his discussion of the "burning the land" issue in Hebrews 6:7-8, Salevao implies that there are manifestations of rest (regeneration, growth, and restoration), rather than destroy, in the act of burning the land in some contexts. However, in the Samoan context, "the land is always in us, with us and around us…We cannot destroy the land without destroying ourselves".[25] In other words, we are the land. Ignorant acts towards the *fanua*, is ignoring our livelihood as well. Therefore, rest for the land is subsequently a growth and restorative process for the people. Interestingly, such a mutual coexistence of the

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[23] Tomas Sedlacek, *Economics of Good and Evil: The Quest for Economic Meaning from Gilgamesh to Wall Street* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 244.

[24] Darby Kathleen Ray, "It's About Time: Reflections on a Theology of Rest," in *Theology That Matters: Ecology, Economy, and God*, ed. Darby Kathleen Ray (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 160.

[25] Salevao, "'Burning the Land': An Ecojustice Reading of Hebrews 6:7–8," 227-28. Salevao explains that in some indigenous communities of Australia, burning the land is necessary for breaking and growth of seed pods.

land and the people in the Sabbath rest understanding underscores an aspect of the Jubilee Year of Leviticus 25. In an overview, a mutual rest for the land and the people means that the understanding of "land reclamation" is not only beneficial for the peasants and the minority, but for the land as well.[26] Hence, land reclamation in this regard not only stands for social justice, but advocates eco-justice as well.

There is a message of being content that is echoed through the law of the Sabbath. Underscoring rest is the sense of content, of fulfilment. Not that it signals an ending, but it conveys the sense that God has accorded us "this day our daily bread." This is also connected to the growing consumerism that has further fuelled the capitalist desire for economic growth, based on the insatiable desire for profit. God, through the Sabbath, teaches us contentment and fulfilment, based on what God has given us.

The notion of Sabbath rest also challenges the conventional understanding of the *fanua* as a commodity to be used all the time. Any *fanua* lying idle is considered a liability and a waste of economic worth. However, while idle, the *fanua* at rest is symbolic of its 'sacredness'. Economic development has belittled, or even annihilated the sacredness of the *fanua*. Therefore, the *fanua* as an ecological symbol is to revitalize the sacredness that was once afforded to the land by our ancestors. The concept of Sabbath rest emphasizes the sacredness of the *fanua*.

A Theological Reflection: *Matāniu Feagai ma le Ata* as an Ecological Symbol and Genesis 1:3–5a

> *[3]Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. [4]And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. [5]God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.*

Reflecting on the ecological symbol mentioned earlier, I use *matāniu* and *ata* as symbolic of two separate and dichotomous entities. This means that *matāniu* and *ata* can symbolize 'nature' and 'humanity' respectfully; it can also symbolize 'local' and 'foreign'; 'bad' and 'good'; 'earth' and 'heaven'; 'culture' and 'Gospel', and with respect to our selected text, *matāniu* symbolizes 'darkness', while *ata* symbolizes 'light'.

In retrospect, the *malae* at *Matāniu* can be said to be the place that quenched the thirst of the *Tagaloa* in the dawn of a new day. A similar interpretation can be applied to the arrival of the LMS mission in 1830. The gospel that was brought by the missionaries has quenched the 'spiritual' thirst of the Samoan people, allowing them to see the light of new day—"the light of life" (John 8:12). The implication being is that the culture and values of the local people—the *matāniu*, can only be 'quenched of thirst' by foreign values and understanding of the gospel—the *ata*. In accordance with the main argument, *ata* can be equated to our Christian identity while *mataniu* is the *fanua* or the ecological symbol. The problem with this kind of thinking is that it has presented the gospel and the message of the Kingdom of God as something abstract, which is unrelated to Island Christian spirituality. In regards to the *matāniu feagai ma le ata* reading, there is an implication that what has been brought *into* Samoa by the *ata* was primarily purposed to save the *matāniu* from its deceit and sinful way of life. Such a mentality 'heavenizes' *ata* away from an earthly *matāniu*. In other words, elevating the Christian significance of the *fanua* from its cultural and ecological value.

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[26] Norman C. Habel, *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 97-113. Habel provides insights of an ideal traditional social holding of Leviticus 25-27, and how it benefits the peasant farmer rather than the members of the urban elite.

This kind of mentality is also echoed in what Sallie McFague calls the "arrogant eye" perspective. It is how we look at things as being secondary to our existence, or inferior to our superior beings. McDaniel elaborates on McFague's point of view, using the analogy of how humans look at animals within a zoo, as "curious spectacles for human viewing, but not as subjects of their own lives".[27] Put differently, *matāniu* is being looked upon by *ata* with an 'arrogant eye'—the ecological environment is secondary to our human superior beings.

In regards to scriptural interpretation, islanders are often perceived as commentators of the interpretive game being played only by the so called "big dogs" of theology, as if "natives [islanders] can't read."[28] This negative perception of islanders 'sitting in the commentators booth' resembles how Faafetai Aiavā explains the conventional way of interpretation as "standing behind a camera," where the camera woman—the *matāniu*, is anonymous and hidden in the interpretive dialogue, while *ata* controls interpretation. Like a tennis match being watched by *matāniu* while *ata* and the text play endless sets. The alternative Aiavā offers is to step in front of the camera—to take a 'selfie.' This is not so that the camera woman could dominate the photo, but rather to engage in a mutual relationship where the sacredness of the other and the community to which the other belongs is acknowledged and embraced. Aiava likens this act to "saving face".[29]

This is primarily the purpose behind this reflection, so that *matāniu* could take a selfie with *ata*; a 'saving face' act of "*matāniu feagai ma le ata*". That is, to acknowledge the importance of the ecological nature alongside (not below) humanity in this world; and to embrace the importance of the Samoan indigenous spirituality, values, and culture in how Samoans relate to God, and to the 'other' (human and non-human). Furthermore, it is to revitalize the value of the *fanua* as an ecological symbol not only of our Christian identity, but a symbol of hope for the ecological environment. I shall now interpret Genesis 1:3–5a in the light of what has been discussed.

In verse 4, the words "And God saw that the light was good" obviously implies that God made light and that everything God made was good. This is a resounding notion throughout Genesis 1. After each day where God creates something, the author of Genesis adds, "God saw that it was good" (1:12; 1:18; 1:21; 1:25). Even though there is an exception in the second day of creation when God created the sky (1:6-8), this was reassured to be good in the sixth day before God rested, which says that "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was good" (1:31). Evidently from these references, there is an undeniable implication that only things God created is considered good. More importantly there is no written evidence that God made darkness. Therefore, since God did not make darkness, and the implication that only 'things' God created were good, does this mean that darkness should be considered as 'not good'? Even though darkness is not directly mentioned, we would often equate the 'dark' as being evil and inferior to the 'light.'

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[27] Cited in McDaniel, "In the Beginning Is the Listening," 39.

[28] This was a comment jokingly made, but deeply insulting, to well-known Pacific theologian Jione Havea in several conferences. See Steed Vernyl Davidson, Margaret Aymer, and Jione Havea, "Ruminations," in *Islands, Islanders, and the Bible: Ruminations*, eds. Jione Havea, Margaret Aymer, and Steed Vernyl Davidson (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 1.

[29] Faafetai Aiavā, "Taking Selfies: Honouring Faces (Alo) in Theology and Hermeneutics," in *The Relational Self: Decolonizing Personhood in the Pacific*, eds. Upolu Vaai and Unaisi Nabobo-Baba (Suva, Fiji: The University of the South Pacific & The Pacific Theological College, 2017), 258.

At this point of discussion, I wish to base my critique on Rosemary Radford Ruether's claim on the impact of creation stories in societies:

> Creation stories not only reflect current science, that is, the assumptions about the nature of the world, physical processes, and their relationships; but they are also *blueprints for society*. They reflect the assumptions about how the divine and the mortal, the mental and the physical, humans and other humans, male and female, humans, plants, animals, lands, waters, and stars are related to each other. They both reflect the worldview of the culture and mandate that worldview to its ongoing heirs.[30]

In regards to the first Christian creation story (Gen 1), Ruether claims that the priestly authors of the Hebrew creation stories composed their own story both to reflect their culture, and to counter the existing Babylonian creation story, *Enuma Elish*.[31] Therefore, it is arguable to say that the Genesis creation stories blueprints priestly traditions of the time. Hence as Christians, we can also draw blueprints of our own societies from the Genesis 1 creation story.

Therefore, based on Ruether's argument above, what sort of blueprints can we detect from the creation of 'day and night'? Perhaps the most obvious blueprint is the problematic dualistic perspective of darkness and light as referring to race and colour of skin—that is, 'black and white'. Throughout history white supremacy prevailed on the understanding that white coloured people were associated with 'light' while black and 'coloured' people as 'dark'. The recent 'Black Lives Matter' movement in America is evidence of such a dichotomy.

Similarly, a resounding blueprint also obtained from the text is that *ata* stands as superior over *matāniu*. That is humanity over nature. This understanding is most evident in the "crown" interpretation of Genesis 1:28. Associated with the 'stewardship' model, the 'crown' mentality situates humanity—*ata*, in the centre of creation, pushing all else to exist in the periphery; not only in principle but in reality. The continuous human regard of nature as only for extraction and development is the manifestation of such a 'crown' mentality in contemporary society. Therefore, how are we to interpret such a text in order to offer an alternative blueprint that embraces a 'saving face' act? I propose a *matāniu feagai ma le ata* reading.

A *matāniu feagai ma le ata* reading asserts that the *ata* could never exist without the *matāniu*. That is, the coming of Christianity in Samoa could never have been possible if it was not for the religious nature and spirituality of the people whom accepted the gospel with *faaaloalo* (respect) and open arms. Similarly, humanity could not exist without the resources of nature. A similar regard can be used to interpret our text; 'light' could never have existed without "darkness."

In Genesis 1:2, only "darkness covered the face of the deep, while the *wind* from God swept over the face of the waters". We have discussed earlier the prospect of God not creating darkness. However, Genesis 1:2 says otherwise. Though there was only darkness before creation, God was also present within that darkness. The "wind" mentioned is transliterated into Hebrew as "*ruach*"—the breadth of God. It is the same term that is used in Psalm 104:30 to denote God's Spirit, which reads, "When you send forth your spirit [*ruach*], they are created; and you renew the face of the ground." Therefore, in relation to the spirit/breadth of God, '*ruach*', that was present in darkness before light was created, we can say that the phrase "And God saw that the light was good" (1:4) already presumes that darkness is good. On a different note, if God is the

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[30] *Emphasis* added. See Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (London: SCM Press, 1993), 15.

[31] Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, 15-16.

God of light (according to the Johannine Jesus; 8:12), then the light was with God during the darkness of the world. Light and dark can therefore be said to be two inseparable aspects of creation. Furthermore, if we are to consider the dialogue in verse 3, we may ask, "Who did God address?" An implication would be that God was asking darkness to let light come out. Affirming that light is already part of darkness.

Joseph Sittler's assertion that "God creates his creation in Grace provides clarity. The creation itself is a realm of grace".[32] God's grace is none other than his work of salvation manifested through Jesus Christ. Thus, salvation is incomplete if it is only the resurrection of Jesus that is emphasised in our theologies. The same nature is applied when we only consider the death of Jesus. Life and death in this regard are two inseparable concepts; one cannot exist without the other—the 'Soteriological' event. Similarly, light and darkness are mutually interconnected.

Theological Implications of a *Mataniu Feagai ma le Ata* Reading

What can we learn from such a reading? The inseparability of light and darkness accentuates the notion that light and darkness are two mutual but distinct concepts. While an ecological *matāniu* exists distinctively from a human *ata*, the reading asserts that *matāniu* is already *feagai ma le ata*. As human beings, we can only fully respond to the ecological crisis, only if we embrace and consider our mutual existence with nature in this world, not only as stewards but as part of interconnected web of creation. In a Samoan context, it implies that it is vital to consider that the *fanua* as an aspect of our Samoan Christian identity, is also an ecological symbol—a beacon of hope for the environment and our ecological surrounding. The *fanua* should embody a symbol of hope in the Samoan context.

If and only if we accomplish such a transformation, we can become truly aware that our destruction of the earth is committing suicide. As Salevao puts it, burning the land is burning ourselves. As McFague rightfully argues:

> Rather than picturing the world as a machine we manage for human betterment, we should see it as a body, a highly complex one with millions of different parts, living as a community. It is a body able in principle to renew and sustain itself indefinitely. We humans are part of this organic community—the conscious part—dependent on everything else in the body but also responsible for learning how to make it flourish and committing ourselves to do so.[33]

At the heart of McFague's argument is the message that humanity should learn how to be in solidarity with the rest of creation. Being in solidarity implies that our theology and understanding of God should also take into consideration the ecological symbols that identify us as a Christian people.

Conclusion

In the Samoan context, the many cultural *malae* that now stands as symbol of Christianization has been afforded reverence and respect amongst the people. We have discussed this in the value in which the Samoan people revere the *fanua*. Indeed a fitting and well deserved articulation of the *fanua* as a cultural aspect that advocates for the Gospel message of Christ. As highlighted in the core of the article, the *fanua* is both a

[32] See Willis Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 17.

[33] Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 44.

cultural and ecological symbol that solidifies our Christian identity. However, there is a need for a mutual co-existence of a Samoan Christian identity symbolised by the *fanua*, and the *fanua* as a symbol for ecological significance within a Christian narrative. We have discussed this in the rereading of Genesis 1:3-5a. Revitalizing the *malae* or the *fanua* within our Christian narratives means that the many ecological symbols within our own respective contexts should be a beacon of hope for the care of nature. It should be a hope that pushes people to consider that the care for the environment is a crucial part of our faithful practices.

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Three-Dimensional Triangular Roles of the Samoan Church Minister—*Faife'au* (Church Minister), Social Worker, and Counsellor

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Abstract

The Samoan church minister (faife'au) has become involved in what can be labelled as 'triangular roles'— a triad of roles that include being a faife'au, social worker, and counsellor. This paper addresses the importance of these triad of roles for faifeau, drawing upon insights from some parishioners about what is expected of the faife'au. With the inclusion of the church minister's wife (faletua) and the significant roles that she plays in their shared ministry, the triangular roles are reconfigured to be represented as a three-dimensional triangular prism. Such a representation demonstrates that faife'au and faletua are both included as social workers and counsellors, alongside their primary roles as faife'au and faletua. This visual presentation as a three-dimensional triangular prism demonstrates how faife'au and faletua can begin to conceptualise these important roles. Given the triad of roles that occupy these servants of God, this paper proposes the levels of support necessary to assist faife'au and faletua in the work they are called to do in the villages and in the parishes.

Keywords
Pastoral counselling, church minister *(faife'au)*, church minister's wife *(faletua)*, social worker.

Introduction

> It's like, you know, like a triangle. I go and share with the [church minister], the [church minister] takes [the problem] to God, and then God helps the person with the problem. […] Like I said, that is the three-sides, the triangle, and you take [your problems] to the church minister. (Sarafina, young adult Samoan woman)[1]

From the excerpt above, Sarafina identified the process involved when a person seeks help from a Samoan *faife'au* (church minister) as being similar to a 'triangular-union' involving three key participants: the troubled person, the *faife'au*, and God. This paper examines the symbolic triangular-union representation further by proposing that the roles undertaken by Samoan church ministers are also three-fold: as a *faife'au*, a social worker, and a counsellor (Figure 1). The triangular roles of a *faife'au* are supplemented and supported by the *faletua* (church minister's wife) as a co-social worker, co-counsellor, and for her, as a *faletua* (Figure 2). The addition of the supplementary roles of *faletua* helps to reconfigure the triangular representation of the roles for *faife'au* to a three-dimensional triangular figure inclusive of *faletua* roles (Figure 3). This paper explores how a troubled person can access the triune of roles offered by *faife'au*, and equally as important, how *faife'au* navigate effectively between these roles expected of them by church members.[2] It is, therefore, necessary to describe these significant roles in detail as

[1] Alesana Pala'amo, "Fetu'utu'una'i Le Va Navigating Relational Space: An Exploration of Pastoral Counselling Practices for Samoans" (2017), 189-90. Extracts presented in this paper are taken from data collected for my doctoral research, with pseudonyms assigned to protect the identities of my research participants.

[2] Any reference to 'church' in this paper refers to the largest mainline denomination in Samoa at present — *Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa* (EFKS) translated as Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS).

expected of the clergy leaders — as *faife'au*, social worker, and counsellor.[3]

Church Minister—*Faife'au*

The triune roles for *faife'au* and the different dimensions of the person these roles target are presented diagrammatically in Figure 1:

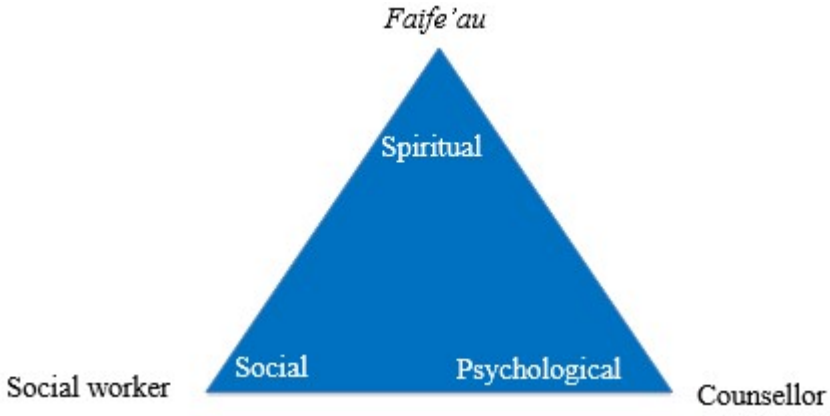

Figure 1: Triangular Representation of the Roles of *faife'au*

Beginning from the top of the triangle, the primary role of a *faife'au* targets the 'spiritual' dimension of individuals under his care. This role sees a *faife'au* teaching the members of his congregation about doctrines of the Christian faith,[4] accompanied by instructions on living moral and ethical Christian lives. A *faife'au* can be considered as a teacher of God-lessons for the flock that he pastors. Such teachings are taught through weekly sermons and bible studies, Christian endeavour meetings (*Lotu Au Taumafai*), prayer meetings (*Lotu Au Leoleo*), youth groups *(Autalavou)* and Sunday school *(A'oga Aso Sā)*. Since these roles require a *faife'au* to spread the Gospel message of God's love in their work, a *faife'au* therefore needs to be well-versed and proficient in biblical knowledge and theological understandings of God. For Samoan ordained church ministers, training at one of the mainline theological colleges (e.g., Malua Theological College for EFKS church ministers) in Samoa is a prerequisite for preparing candidates to function appropriately, in their various roles within their *faife'au* designation in the villages and associated parishes.

An overarching perspective is that a *faife'au* is considered a representative of God; therefore, taking one's problem to a *faife'au*, is liken to taking one's problems to God. Suia, a Samoan participant, had this to say about the role of the *faife'au*:

> [The church minister] is a shepherd, who protects and cares for his sheep in our village and in our parish. […] There is no one else that I should go to; I want to go to the church minister with my problems because he is God's representative

[3] For the EFKS/CCCS church, the church ministers are only men, who are accompanied by their wives to the respective parishes they are called to serve.

[4] Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa, *O Le Fa'avae O Le Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa: The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa* (Apia, Samoa: Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa, 2016), 12-13.

> in our village, and in all villages. If I could put it another way, I really want to take my problems to God. And it is just like going to God to help me with my problems, when I go to the church minister. (Suia, adult Samoan woman) [5]

Faife'au are afforded positions of respect and authority by the people in the parishes. Such reverence aligns with the dying decree of king Malietoa Vainu'upo in the late 1800s. That is, Samoan people were to honour God's servants *(faife'au)* in the same manner as they had shown to him as their king.[6] From that time onwards, *faife'au* are given the best gifts and are designated the best seats whether in church worship or during Sunday *toonai* (lunch). Likewise, weddings, celebrations, or funeral services extend the same honour to *faife'au* and their *faletua* (wives). This raises an ethical issue that challenges church-based counselling settings regarding the imbalance of power which is evident from the dual relationship between parishioners and *faife'au*. Importantly, regardless of the efforts that a *faife'au* may attempt to move away from these Samoan traditions, such as returning gifts given to them by parishioners, many Samoans see this as being robbed of the opportunity to receive a God-appointed blessing. Gift-giving, particularly to one's church minister, is an important avenue to attain divine blessings.

Concerning his role as spiritual counsellor, the *faife'au* is considered endowed with Godly authority, and is, therefore, expected to have divinely-inspired wisdom to 'fix' the troubled person's problems. As a result, a *faife'au* may instruct or advise a person what they consider as the best course of action, and the troubled person finds it disrespectful to divert from such actions. There is also the situation where in the presence of the *faife'au*, parishioners concur with the advice and direction given, but fail to take action there afterwards.

The expectation and perspective by parishioners of *faife'au* as their spiritual guidance, poses an ethical issue when *faife'au* take on the role of counsellor. If the church minister's advice given is contrary to what may be deemed best for the person, then the autonomy of the "client" to act in accordance to their best interest is challenged. Understanding this type of potentially ethical concern may help *faife'au* to navigate successfully the client-church minister relationship. Personal experience of dealing with such challenges have reinforced for me the importance of segregating the *'faifeau'* role and the *'counsellor'* role during any engagement for counselling. What has assisted me in manoeuvring between these roles as a *faife'au* and as a counsellor is the Samoan concept I have identified as *fetu'utu'una'i le vā* — navigating relational space. Only until the *faife'au* is able to negotiate and navigate the relational space or *vā* between himself and the client, the power relation between the two will most often favour the *faife'au* because of his divinely-aligned role as spiritual guidance. The autonomy of the client to decide as one wishes is, therefore, challenged. Yet, if the *faife'au* is able to *fetu'utu'una'i le vā*, this concept will level out the power-displacement of client and *faife'au* to a more workable context for both involved. This concept involves the *faife'au* to discover ways to lower himself to be on-par with the client, through the use of everyday language and the omission of any *faife'au* status and positioning temporarily. For this concept to work, the client must be willing as well, to navigate relational space and allow for the *faife'au* to temporarily set aside his status as divinely-aligned spiritual guidance, to fit into his role as counsellor. This concept would also empower clients to bring forth issues about sexual assaults, violence, and neglect, with this revised perception of their *faife'au* as counsellor rather than solely being their spiritual guidance.

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[5] Pala'amo, "Fetuutuunai Le Va," 90-91.

[6] Byron Malaela Sotiata Seiuli, "Ua Tafea Le Tau-Ofe: Samoan Cultural Rituals through Death and Bereavement Experiences" (PhD Thesis, University of Waikato, 2015), 45.

Faife'au must also function in other roles in addition to being a teacher of all matters about God. The reason is that, parishioners also have social and personal issues apart from any spiritual and theological issues that must be attended to as well. *Faife'au* must, therefore, be prepared to become social workers and counsellors from time to time, within their assigned ministries.

Social Worker

The bottom left corner of the triangular representation is the role of *faife'au* (Figure 1) as a social worker. From within this positioning of social worker, the *faife'au* addresses concerns within various dimensions of individuals such as the economic, political, and cultural contexts of individuals, that align with the scope of social work.[7] For instance, economic stability and advocating for the social needs of parishioners often require *faife'au* to facilitate such needs. The role of social worker is supported by Reverend Sosaiete where he expressed:

> That is the work of the minister, sharing the Gospel, and making flat the bumps in life especially between couples, with relationship issues, and also issues within the village. That is the meaning of counselling, offering your help, spiritual help through the work of the minister. As well as any other practical assistance you can offer for issues that have arisen between people in your ministry, or between themselves. (Reverend Sosaiete, long-serving faifeau, mature aged man) [8]

Personal observation and experiences reveal, that the role of social worker among *faife'au* is one that is not clearly defined, especially within theological training institutions in Samoa. Yet, as Reverend Sosaiete allured to, attending to the needs of people — physical and spiritual — is an important part of any ministry. Specialised training in social work can add value to preparing ministerial candidates to better function in this important role. Within an adopted setting like Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) where many Samoans now live, the role of a social worker is more commonly recognised. Moreover, the need for social work training is gaining acceptance in Samoa, and it has become vital for *faife'au* to recognise the value of social work in the pastoral care extended to parishioners.

The curriculum at Malua theological college (MTC) in Samoa currently includes a one-year pastoral fieldwork programme that aligns with social work practice, with the programme's objective to expose theological students and their wives face-to-face with the many challenges of parish work. The one-year pastoral fieldwork programme involves weekend visitations to selected parishes over a short term period. The students are also exposed to leading various worship services during this time. The programme also includes daily visitations to a non-profit organisation that advocates for survivors of domestic violence called Samoa Victim Support Group (SVSG). In addition, the programme involves visitations to Tanumalala prison and Mapuifagalele Home of the elderly.

The role as a social worker, takes on a different emphasis for *faife'au* who are based in parishes of the church outside of Samoa. In a recent conversation with a *faife'au* colleague who pastors a parish in the South Island of New Zealand, an important part of his weekly duties involves advocating for parishioners at various government agencies. Immigration issues take up a lot of his time, especially considering that a large portion of

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[7] Lita Foliaki, "Social Work and the Pacific Island Community," in *Social Work in Action*, ed. R Munford and M Nash (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1994), 153.

[8] Pala'amo, "Fetuutuunai Le Va", 88-89.

his parishioners are seasonal workers from the Pacific. The paradox as attested to by this *faife'au* is that, throughout his four-year study towards becoming a *faife'au* for a Samoan parish, there was no specific course that taught how to advocate for parishioners with government agencies. Further, he had no prior knowledge, understanding, or training to prepare him for such unexpected responsibilities in the parish. Simply, he was unprepared to function in the role of a social worker as required of him as a *faife'au.*

Counsellor

Finally, the bottom right corner of the triangular representation situates the role of the *faife'au* (Figure 1) that focuses on addressing the 'psychological' dimension of the person. This function is where the *faife'au* assumes the role of counsellor for members of his congregation. Traditional counselling from a Samoan perspective generally involves advice-giving and instructions from one person to another. In traditional perspectives, a hierarchical system determines the advice-giver as the person with greater authority or seniority such as *faife'au*, *matai* (title-holders) or family elders. In the family, the parents or elders are often viewed as counsellors. In the village, the *fono a matai* or council of chiefs are perceived as village-appointed counsellors. However, in the parishes, the *faife'au* occupies the role of a counsellor. In contrast, counselling from a Western perspective often involves the counsellor-client relationship discovering alternative pathways of healing, to assist the troubled person with social, personal and private issues.

The different types of counselling found in Samoa are identified as student guidance counselling in the schools, crisis counselling through NGO's in Samoa, and pastoral counselling by *faife'au* in the parishes.[9] Seiuli articulates the Samoan practice of *meaalofa* (a thing to do with love) as what he has termed the 'gift of counselling'. Western counselling techniques and modalities can be understood as the therapeutic relationship in the Samoan setting, of advice-giving and direction by *faife'au*, *matai*, family elders and parents, to troubled persons in one's care. This process for Samoans that parallels Western counselling is proposed by Seiuli as *meaalofa*.[10]

Samoan *faife'au* are similar to Australian *palagi* (Westerner) church ministers who have been found to be reluctant and cautious to offer any counselling for parishioners, due to a lack of formal training in counselling.[11] Nevertheless, a *faife'au* is still expected to fulfil the role of a counsellor by virtue of his calling and duty as a *faife'au*. As stated earlier, Samoans view a *faife'au* as God's representative on earth. Such a belief leads towards an understanding that any advice, instructions, insights and direction offered by the *faife'au* are divinely inspired. It is for this reason that some Samoans perceive *faife'au* as capable counsellors rather than any specific counselling skillsets they may possess.

It must be noted that counselling training is provided for *faife'au* during their theological training in Samoa. For instance, the overarching curriculum taught at MTC incorporates different counselling approaches to be used by *faife'au.* Counselling practices undertaken by *faife'au* are generally referred to as pastoral counselling. These trainings are focused on Rogerian client-centred therapies,[12] together with approaches developed by Anton Boisen stemming from the emerging pastoral counselling movement

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[9] Frances Soon Schuster, "Counselling against All the Odds: The Samoan Way," *Pacific health dialog: A publication of the Pacific Basin Officers Training Program and the Fiji School of Medicine* 8, no. 1 (2001): 193-99.

[10] Byron Malaela Sotiata Seiuli, "Meaalofa," *New Zealand Journal of Counselling* 30, no. 1 (2010): 47-63.

[11] Stephen Beaumont, "Pastoral Counseling Down Under: A Survey of Australian Clergy," *Pastoral Psychology* 60, no. 1 (2011): 117-31.

[12] Carl R Rogers, *Client-Centred Therapy* (London, United Kingdom: Constable and Robinson. (Original work published 1951) 2003), 3-6.

in the 1960's.[13] Even though several of these approaches are largely from Western perspectives, these approaches train *faife'au* to empower and guide the troubled person to discover interventions towards healing, and resolve themselves. In addition to the above-mentioned approaches to counselling, the counselling work undertaken by *faife'au* today, also include biblical references and theological reflections as guides for interventions.

Traditionally, obeying the advice and guidance given by *faife'au* was common for many Samoans. The troubled person is often bombarded with several perspectives from senior family and village members, and they must respond faithfully to receive healing. Such obedience to instructions by one's elders is articulated as being core to the worldview of respect held by Samoans and Tongans, and closely aligned to *mana* (mystical and supernatural ability) and *tapu* (sacredness/holiness) of these family leaders.[14] However, a newly-discovered autonomy allows individuals to choose and decide actions themselves towards healing. Counselling has now taken on a new direction for many Samoans. As a result, parishioners are expecting more from their *faife'au* in their evolving and changing role as counsellors. Biblical references and Christian doctrine still have value, but rather than being instructed how to respond based on these teachings, some Samoans desire additional pathways towards healing.

There are several possible explanations for such a transitional shift. Influences from the global media and information readily available through the internet, have allowed Samoans access to worldviews apart from their own. A gradual shift towards individually-focused lives rather than the larger extended family setting, has also contributed to a demand for autonomy and independence. In addition, the migration of Samoans abroad and their return from countries where individuality is common, has transposed the values of individuality from countries like New Zealand, Australia, and the United States of America back to the islands. These are some examples of the changes that have made an impact on Samoans today.

Accordingly, the role of counsellor expected of the *faife'au* must align with the significant changes in the lives of parishioners today. In this regard, the *faife'au* must consider additional perspectives to the Bible, Christian doctrines, and theology, to inform his role as counsellor; the social needs, human conditions, and cultural obligations of Samoans, can also assist to inform the counselling practices undertaken by the *faife'au* at this time. This will help the *faife'au* to firstly engage the parishioner whom he works with, and allow for the troubled person the opportunity for self-discovery of interventions, that bring forth healing and personal resolve.

The Triune Roles of *Faife'au* in Action

The triune roles as *faife'au*, social worker, and counsellor are on-going undertakings that I am familiar with. Beginning from my days as a student at MTC, then becoming a lecturer thereafter followed by my ordination as a *faife'au*, I continue to occupy these roles at different times. The role of *faife'au* involves preaching, teaching, and sharing the Gospel of Christ through the exegesis of scriptures and developing sermons that inspire meaning-making for its hearers. As *faife'au* the role involves leading worship and administering the sacraments at different parishes of the church, as well as at the college. Being *faife'au* also involves providing pastoral care for our *auaiga* or pastoral family at

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[13] John Foskett, "Can Pastoral Counselling Recover Its Roots in Madness?," *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling* 29, no. 4 (2001): 403-13.

[14] Melenaite Taumoefolau, "Respect, Solidarity, and Resilence in Pacific World Views," in *Pacific Identities and Well-Being: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, eds. Margaret Agee, et al. (Dunedin, New Zealand: Otago University Press, 2013), 135-36.

the college, made up of a selection of students and their families. The role of *faife'au* has also led to assisting the senior *faife'au* at our home parishes in Sydney and Auckland, with the pastoral care of fellow parishioners. In essence, the role as *faife'au* is primary to anyone called and ordained as clergy to serve God.

The role as social worker is another important and necessary undertaking for any *faife'au*, that I was exposed to at our parish in Auckland during my doctoral studies. Several opportunities presented where I assisted church families in accessing social services for various purposes such as immigration issues, free legal advice, and the receipt of food parcels and donations when needed. Attending to the social needs of fellow parishioners meant mediating with government agencies, and advocating for their due rights and benefits they were entitled to. In the case of the Samoan *faife'au* (similar to church ministers of other ethnic backgrounds), the role as social worker also meant becoming the translator for fellow parishioners when working with government ministries and various agencies.

In terms of counselling, being a practitioner of counselling both in a church-based capacity through pastoral counselling, as well as from within an organisation-based setting, has expanded the scope of my work. For church-based counselling as a pastoral counsellor, the initial challenge I often encounter, is trying to establish rapport with parishioners I work alongside. The difficulty is convincing church clients to view me more as an equal, rather than being considered to be in a position of hierarchy as 'God's representative'. Many *faife'au* colleagues in the church share a similar challenge when undertaking counselling with their church clients.

Yet my work as a counsellor in a more organisation-based setting has been an enriching experience. Such a setting was Pasifika Health and Social Services (PHSS), an agency based at Mt Albert in Auckland that primarily supported Pacific Islander clients. Most of my counselling clients at PHSS were referred by the Department of Corrections, as mandatory components of their rehabilitation programmes. Referrals were also made to PHSS by Child Youth and Family, as well as self-referrals. Soul Talk New Zealand was another agency I worked as a counsellor, supporting Pacific Islanders of all ages from the South Auckland region. In both these contexts, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Psychodynamic approaches alongside Client-centred therapy, were counselling approaches that worked well with my clients.

From these placements an important lesson learnt is that one approach does not suit all clients, especially for Pacific Island people. The different approaches to counselling often were negotiated and considered, dependent upon the client's ethnicity and cultural background. For instance, if I was working with a middle-aged or elderly Samoan-born person, I would greet such a client with a traditional Samoan exchange called *fa'atūlima*—the sharing of hands. This verbal exchange is where the host firstly acknowledges the visitor's honorific titles, village, and family name, and the visitor responds with a similar greeting. This form of cultural exchange is necessary to establish respectful relationships between both parties—the host and the visitors. Yet if I was working with a New Zealand-born young Samoan, this traditional exchange may be omitted without any detrimental effect upon the client-counsellor relationship. The initial encounter is vital to develop client-counsellor rapport and once this client-counsellor relationship is set, only then can various counselling approaches begin to offer support and help.

The most recent and on-going role as counsellor is realised through Soul Talk Samoa Trust. This venture was conceptualised from my doctoral research and co-founded by my wife (who is the President and counsellor) and myself, and provides pastoral counselling and social services in Samoa. The demand for such an agency that focuses upon the spiritual well-being of clients through counselling, as well as their social needs, was expressed by several research participants. Soul Talk Samoa counsellors became frontline responders to the 2019 measles epidemic in Samoa that led to 83 deaths who

were predominantly children. The work carried out included emotional and spiritual support through pastoral counselling to the bereaved families and individuals.[15] The triune roles of *faife'au* and also of *faletua* as counsellors and social workers were drawn upon and activated during such tragic times for Samoa. Evidently, the easing and plateau of the Samoa measles epidemic coincided with the emerging corona virus outbreak and the beginning stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. Again, Soul Talk Samoa counsellors continue to provide emotional and spiritual support, in responding on island to the on-going global outbreak of corona virus and its evolving variants.

In addition, Soul Talk Samoa is actively involved in on-going rehabilitation programmes through certain Samoan government bodies such as the Ministry of Justice and Courts Administration. Further, counselling programmes through the Ministry of Police, Prisons, and Correction have seen work undertaken with Samoa's notorious criminals incarcerated at Tanumalala prison, as well as selected individual cases when referred. Training workshops conducted in partnership with the Ministry of Women, Culture, and Social Development, have enabled Soul Talk Samoa to work alongside Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) as well as alongside the wider community. Soul Talk Samoa continues to provide the necessary counselling work for troubled persons from all ages and various groups, through referrals from the above-mentioned government ministries of Samoa, referrals from parish ministers and their wives for troubled parish members, and self-referrals who have reached out to use our services. [16]

Faletua (Church Minister's wife)

It is necessary when discussing *faife'au* in the context of Samoa, that *faletua* — the church minister's wife — is explored and explained. *Faletua* is the Samoan word that is literally translated as the 'house at the back'. This term does not indicate a down-graded view of Samoan women,[17] but more a reflection of her supportive role in accordance to Samoan traditional understanding and function of *tautua* (service) and *aiga* (kin network). In traditional village life, a large Samoan *fale* served as a meeting place for guests and important family gatherings. The *fale tele* (large house) is generally situated at the front portion of the property, which is then surrounded by smaller *fale* that functioned as the living quarters and working areas for members of that particular *aiga*. When hosting guests, village *matai*, or family elders, and the extended family members gather in the *fale tele*, while food preparations and any accompanying *meaalofa* (gifts for guests) are prepared and delivered from the surrounding *fale*. These activities are often led and managed by the wife of the family *matai* or the most senior woman of that particular *aiga*.

The *fale* (house) *tua* (at the back) is often directly situated behind or adjacent to the *fale tele*. When requests for food and gifts for the guests are received from the *matai* located in the *fale tele*, it is the role of the wife and older women to decide how best to satisfy the request according to the family resources available at their disposal. The family *matai* or elders have complete confidence and trust in the leadership provided by these women in the 'back house' to respond appropriately in order to make such occasions a successful gathering for the *aiga*. It is from this mutual relationship of

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[15] Alesana Pala'amo and Lemau Pala'amo, "Solidarity in Crisis," *Insight* (2020): 1-12.

[16] For further information about the counselling work undertaken by Soul Talk Samoa Trust, please refer to the following website https://soultalksamoa.ws/ .

[17] Feiloaiga Taule'ale'ausumai, "Pastoral Care: A Samoan Perspective," in *Counselling Issues & South Pacific Communities*, ed. Phillip Culbertson (Auckland, New Zealand: Snedden & Cervin Publishing, 1997), 221. The role and position of women in Samoa shifted following the missionisation of Samoa around the 1830s, particularly by the London Missionary Society.

serving the *aiga* and vital exchange between the *faletua* and the *fale tele* that the Samoan church minister's wife is recognised and accorded the esteemed title '*faletua'*.

The value given to *faletua* has been articulated as stemming from the twentieth century. Such a period for Samoans viewed *faifeau* (pastors) and *faletua* as holding increasing power within the church and Samoan society, with the pastor considered as the 'convenant' *(feagaiga)* and 'wives of the convenant', a reference to *faletua*.[18] The inclusion of *faletua* in the discussions about Samoan *faife'au* presented herein is because a *faife'au* cannot be ordained as a church minister unless he is married. Faletua play a pivotal and valuable role since being married is a requirement for the ordination of *faife'au* in the mainline churches in Samoa that include the Methodist Church and *Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa* (EFKS). Further, in the event of the unfortunate and untimely passing of a *faletua*, the widowed *faife'au* must re-marry immediately in order to continue his ordination. In this regard, the wife of a *faifeau* holds an important role that supports her husband. Although her role may sometimes be perceived as subsidiary to that of her husband, she occupies significant and important roles as presented diagrammatically in Figure 2:

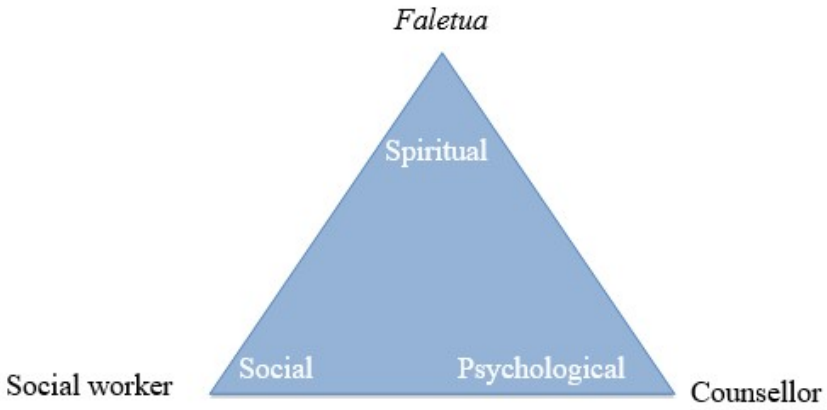

Figure 2: Triangular Representation of the Roles of *Faletua*

Assisting the roles that *faife'au* play, the three corners of the triangular representation of Figure 2 depict the roles of *faletua* (spiritual dimension), social worker (social dimension) and counsellor (psychological dimension). The roles of *faletua* target mostly women parishioners who may find it easier and more appropriate to approach the *faletua* for any assistance required as indicated by Filipo's narrative:

> I believe the *faifeau* and his *faletua* both share the same role. There are times when it is more important to not use the *faifeau*, for issues concerning women, but it is more important for the *faletua* to talk about these issues. People will open up talking to a *faletua*. Likewise, there are issues people will open up more by talking to the *faifeau*. So, to me, they both have the same role, but for different populations. Beyond that, it's one of being supportive; if the *faletua* leads, then the role of the *faifeau* is to support. When the *faifeau* leads, the role of his *faletua* is to support. (Filipo, adult Samoan man and *matai*)[19]

As expressed by Filipo in the excerpt above, the roles of the *faife'au* and *faletua* both

[18] Latu Herbert Latai, "Covenant Keepers: A History of Samoan (LMS) Missionary Wives in the Western Pacific from 1839 to 1979" (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2016), 74.

[19] Pala'amo, "Fetuutuunai Le Va", 95-96.

target different populations, with the *faife'au* and *faletua* bringing their own relevant skillsets into their shared ministry. In terms of her roles as social worker and counsellor, there are occasions when it is more culturally appropriate for the *faletua* to undertake these roles. This is particularly an important consideration, for sensitive issues that women face. When the *faletua* assumes the roles of social worker and counsellor, the *faife'au* becomes the support for his wife. Likewise, *faletua* take on supportive roles when the *faife'au* takes on the primary role of social worker or counsellor.

The title of *faletua* may appear subsidiary and secondary to that of the *faife'au*, although her triad of roles are supplementary and very important to their collective ministry. Presently in the shared ministry of *faifeau* and *faletua*, there are defined roles for each. There are the ceremonial and preaching duties and responsibilities of the *faife'au*. The *faletua* is assigned the task of teaching the children of the parish and the youth through the Sunday school and youth groups. Collectively, the *faife'au–faletua* team become a resource of strength and encouragement for each other, while working towards the overarching goals of their collective ministry.

A Three-Dimensional Triangular Representation of the Roles of *Faife'au* Inclusive of *Faletua*

A synthesis of the roles of both the *faife'au* and the *faletua*, develops into a three-dimensional triangular representation of such roles. As illustrated diagrammatically (Figure 3), the three-dimensional triangular figure fuses the triangular representation of *faife'au* roles (Figure 1) with *faletua* roles (Figure 2):

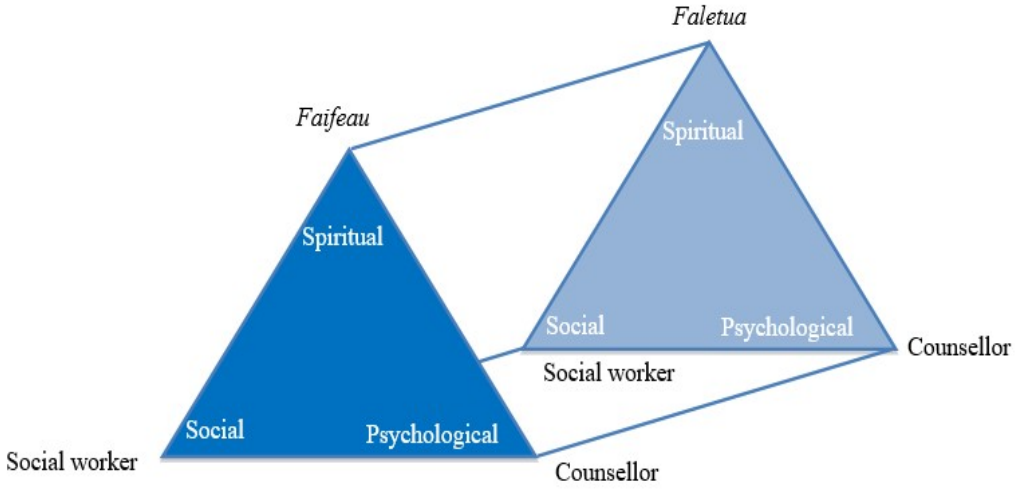

Figure 3: Three-Dimensional Triangular Representation of the Roles of *faife'au* and *faletua*

The triangular ends are interchangeable depending upon which end has been positioned into focus; the other end is moved into the background. For example, the troubled person seeking help must select which one of the triangular ends he or she wishes to engage — either to engage with the *faife'au* alone, or with the *faletua* alone, or even to engage with both *faife'au* and *faletua* at the same time. If the *faife'au* is selected by the troubled person to work with, then the *faletua* moves to the background and plays a silent, unseen, and supportive role to her husband. Similarly, when the *faletua* is selected by the troubled person to work with, the *faifeau* assumes the position of being in the background playing a supportive role. Once either the *faifeau* or *faletua* is selected, the

troubled person must then decide which role(s) the *faife'au* or *faletua* who is selected must fulfil — *faifeau* or *faletua*, social worker, or counsellor.

An important consideration is that the role(s) selected by the troubled person for the *faifeau* or *faletua* to occupy, these must align with the outcome of the pastoral assessment carried out by the *faifeau* or *faletua* at the first contact. The pastoral assessment simply is the process where the *faifeau* or *faletua* deliberates the issues presented to them, and determines the most appropriate pathway to develop therapeutic healing for the troubled person. For example, if the role of social worker is demanded by the troubled person, yet the outcome of the pastoral assessment points to spiritual concerns and wellbeing, then the *faifeau* and *faletua* must negotiate their primary roles as spiritual care-givers first before considering any other roles to play.

There is also a possibility that the troubled person may choose to engage with both the *faife'au* and the *faletua* simultaneously. The process of counselling thus, becomes a 'one-on-two' situation opposed to a common western practice of counselling as 'one-on-one'. The benefit of this type of counselling is that, now there are two perspectives from the counsellor — the *faife'au* and the *faletua* — in addition to the perspective of the troubled person. An example of ministry work that can benefit with both the *faife'au* and the *faletua* working together in counselling, is marriage/couples counselling. In terms of social work practice, again there becomes two available perspectives in addition to the sole perspective of the troubled person.

With the triad of roles that *faife'au* and *faletua* are involved in their work, there is a real danger of burnout and exhaustion. If poorly managed, the expectations of *faife'au* and *faletua* can potentially have a damaging effect upon their lives physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally. Self-care and effective management of the many roles assigned to *faife'au* and *faletua*, are crucial for a prolonged and fruitful ministry. Currently there are practices in place to help *faife'au* and *faletua* to minimise the possibility of burnout. One of the church policies is that it is mandatory for *faife'au* and *faletua* of the EFKS to take a three-month sabbatical leave for every six years of service. There is also the option for a two-week leave every year, rather than waiting six years for the sabbatical to come into effect. The point of importance here is self-care.

In addition to waiting for the six-year sabbatical or the two-week annual sabbatical options, the *faife'au* and *faletua* must improvise for themselves self-care on a more regular basis. Self-care can mean allowing one day per month to do something that pleases them — remove oneself from the normal daily activities of a *faife'au* and *faletua* and enjoy an outing for dinner, a walk on the seawall, or spending family-time with the children; anything that is not your usual routine for *faife'au* and *faletua. Faife'au* and *faletua* who reside in Samoa may find total separation from the ministry work even for one day per month challenging, due to ongoing village commitments and extended family obligations that need to be managed. A feasible alternative, therefore, would be to work on hobbies or interests that are unrelated to parish and village work. For example, working on one's taro and banana plantations, or vegetable patches, or even sports such as golf.

It is important to attend to self-care, for the threat of burnout is real especially for *faife'au* and *faletua* who are expected to be contactable and approachable at all times by parishioners. The practical side of having a 'day-off' for self-care purposes, means that lay-preachers and deacons can be utilised to attend to the pastoral care of parish members on that day, if needed. Naturally Sundays would not be advisable to set aside for self-care, as this is when *faife'au* and *faletua* are the busiest. Possibly any other day during the week could be used once a month, for the purpose of self-care.

Way forward

In light of the significant challenges to the work that *faife'au* and *faletua* are involved, in

the villages and parishes, there are three key areas that would provide support to better equip *faife'au* and *faletua* for their roles. These three areas of support include social work training, counselling training, and the establishment of a 'counselling the counsellor' network for *faifea'u* and *faletua*. These areas of support will cater for *faife'au* and *faletua* located in both the urban and rural parishes in Samoa, together with the overseas-based parishes of the church.

Social work training is proposed as a way to equip *faife'au* and *faletua* to support their parishioners with challenges they face in their economic, political, and cultural environments. Considering that the practical component of social work training is presently in place at MTC through its one-year pastoral fieldwork programme, social work theory and relevant practices applicable to the conditions of Samoans today, is where any additional social work training should target. For *faife'au* and *faletua* already placed in the villages, additional social work training could be implemented through workshops designed and facilitated by the church. *Counselling training* is another proposal to better equip *faife'au* and *faletua* for the work they are involved. Prior to the addition into the curriculum of MTC in 2021 of the course called 'pastoral care and counselling', theological students were exposed to counselling training as part of a broader practical theology course. However, responding to significant societal changes impacting parishioners, together with the after-effects of the Samoa tsunami of 2009, MTC understood the need to shift the importance of counselling training to become a core course within its curriculum. The task of designing and teaching this new course at MTC was challenging, since I discovered a paucity of research on pastoral counselling about Pacific people in general, and specifically about Samoans. The literature and models of pastoral counselling available at the time were primarily from Western/ European perspectives that were focused and reflective upon Western/European groups of people. Offering this course to students meant re-contextualising the available models of pastoral counselling into forms that were applicable to Samoans. The proposal is for counselling training today to continue with the present course being offered, and to include any recent literature about counselling Pacific people in general and Samoans in particular.

The holistic view of health of the *Te Whare Tapa Whā Māori* model[20] foundational to Māori mental health in New Zealand today, must be included in any proposed counselling training for Pacific and Samoan practitioners of counselling. *Meaalofa* must also be included as a therapeutic concept to counselling that articulates metaphoric 'gifting' from counsellor to client as a process synonymous to Pacific and Samoan clients, that supersedes intergenerational and relational aspects of the ways of life from the Pacific.[21] Relevant literature must include Pacific health models such as *Fonofale,* a holistic model that conceptualises the wellbeing of Pacific people illustrated in the integral parts of the Samoan *fale* (traditional house).[22]

Finally, a *'counselling the counsellor'* network is proposed to support *faife'au* and *faletua* for the work they are involved. When a *faife'au* and *faletua* are called to a parish, they become part of a collective of parishes that make up the sub-districts and

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[20] Mason Durie, *Whaiora: Māori Health Development*, 2nd ed. (Auckland, New Zealand: Oxford University Press, 1998), 69-72.

[21] Byron Malaela Sotiata Seiuli, "The Meaalofa Therapeutic Approach in Counselling with Pacific Clients," in *Pacific Identities and Well-Being: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, eds. Margaret Agee, et al. (Dunedin, New Zealand: Otago University Press, 2013), 130.

[22] Fuimaono Karl Pulotu-Endemann, "Fonofale Model of Health," in *Pacific Health promotion models: A partnership between the Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand and Pasifika@Massey* (Wellington, New Zealand, 2009), 3.

districts of the church. It is within these networks already in place, that a forum of church -based counselling practices can assist *faife'au* in their ministries. The proposal involves the setup of an association that supports pastoral counsellors of Samoa — *faife'au* and *faletua* — where MTC students become members upon their graduation from the college. Invitations for membership into this association are then extended to current *faife'au* and *faletua* in the parishes.

Since there is no association of counsellors in Samoa at present, affiliating such a setup with New Zealand Christian Counsellors Association (NZCCA) enables access for members of this association to resources and opportunities to develop as counsellors. The support could be in the way of providing supervision for *faife'au*, undertaken by selected elder and retired church ministers who have enjoyed lengthy service of parish work and familiar with the challenges associated with being *faife'au*. The same type of supervisory support can also be available for *faletua*, undertaken by the wives of retired elder church ministers who also understand the challenges within the ministry.

This paper has proposed the co-counsellor and co-social worker relationships of *faife'au* with their *faletua* within their shared ministries. It is therefore necessary that this 'counselling the counsellor' network include support for *faife'au* and *faletua* in the form of marriage counselling. This can ensure they understand their roles and responsibilities, as well as being able to communicate their needs as partners to one another. It is possible that better marriages would make for better *faife'au* and *faletua* doing God's work in the parishes.

Concluding remarks

In closing, the training of *faife'au* needs to consider his role as social worker and counsellor, apart from a sole emphasis upon the traditional role as *faife'au*. The primary roles expected of *faife'au* include preaching and teaching the doctrines and theologies about God as held by the church, which are still the focus of the training of *faife'au*. However, the mission fields for *faife'au* have now evolved and are shaped and influenced by global and local trends. The training of *faife'au* today therefore needs to align with the significant changes impacting many Samoans. Specifically, *faife'au* need to be trained as social worker and counsellor, in addition to their traditional training as *faife'au*. In addition, *faletua* need similar training and support for their roles that include co-social worker and co-counsellor, within the ministries shared with their husbands. The three-dimensional triangular roles of *faife'au* discussed in this paper includes the co-relationship roles of *faletua*. It is necessary for *faife'au* and *faletua* to sustain a dependence upon God through faith, to underpin all the roles expected and demanded of them in the parishes. For moments when in doubt about these roles expected of them, our Lord will show the way:

> Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:5–6 NRSV)

When *faife'au* and *faletua* struggle to find 'the way' to help parish members in their three -dimensional triangular roles, God has laid pathways to healing through Christ. God will always be a resource of strength through His Spirit, for all faithful servants working to spread the Gospel of Christ in the work they do.

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Talafā Model: A Pastoral Care Approach to Revisit the Practice of *Tausiga o Faifeau* (Caring for Pastors) in Samoa Today

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Abstract

This article uses the Samoan concept of talafā as a lens to revisit the practice, as it is predominantly performed today, of tausiga o faifeau (caring for pastors' hereafter shortened in some instances as 'tausiga'). The name of the practice is already a problem since it suggests that the care (food, accommodation, monetary gifts etc…) is only offered to the pastors. Such a one-sided misconception of the said practice has shaped the way it has been carried out by most church members towards pastors in Samoa, and perhaps elsewhere. For example, the thought that caring for the faifeau and his family is performed only by way of food, lots of it. Such food has been transformed by globalization from being a conveniently healthy and fresh food to mostly unhealthy processed food. As a result, the tausiga o faifeau is a burden to both the laity and clergy. The latter are yoked by various non-communicable diseases (NCDs) while the former are economically, socially and spiritually burdened especially when their spiritual father (faifeau) or mother (faletua) are sick for an extended period of time or suffer early deaths due to NCDs such as heart attacks, type 2 diabetes, and obesity. In light of such issues, a talafā pastoral care model seeks to revisit and (re)transform the practice of tausiga o faifeau so that it does not seem to be a liability but an occasion to nurture a healthy and wholistic relationship between laity and clergy.

Key Words: Pastoral Care, stewardship, harvest, *talafā*, *tausiga*.

Introduction

This article is divided into four section. It begins by explaining the process of *talafā* during the harvest of taro and its use in oratory. This will be followed by an exploration of key areas discussed in this article such as pastoral care, theology of stewardship and the practice of *tausiga*. An analysis of the important stages leading up to harvesting taro or *talafā* will then be explained. The two (2) phases are *totō* (plant) and *tupu* ma *ola* (grow). During *talafā* the farmer removes and peels off some of the stalk (*fā*), dirt, and roots that have provided protection, guidance and growth for the taro so as to reveal a fully matured crop for consumption. In the practice of *tausiga,* a traditional Samoan care-taking practice originally given to the *feagaiga* or unmarried girl(s), but with the acceptance of Christianity brought by London Missionaries, the practice was also directed at the pastor and his family, hence the name '*tausiga o faifeau.'* In utilizing *talafā* to inform the practice of *tausiga*, as it is practiced today, there are certain aspects such as the unhealthy food that have to be peeled off for the greater good of producing practices that in turn mould healthy disciples of Jesus Christ who are depend-able members of His church. Examined last are challenges and theological implications of *talafā*. If such a reformed relationship is well established between Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS) parishioners, clergy and ultimately God then it could have a ripple effect upon Samoa as whole.

Talafā Model

Talafā is literally the process of peeling or opening (*tala/tatala/talatala*) the multi-

layered cardboard-like stalk (*fa*) of the taro during harvest. *Talafā* starts when the taro plant is ready for consumption whereby the farmer pulls out the taro from the soil and clears all the roots and obstacles from it. This process is the final work that the farmer performs during a harvest before consumption. To use *talafā* as a traditional Samoan model is to "guide one's caregiving ministry is crucial to its effectiveness, serving like a compass on a sea voyage [that is] grounded firmly in present realities."[1] This model means a lot to me as a farmer whose family's survival for many generations depended on taro plantations. Moreover, *talafā* arguably resonate loudly to many Samoans, we all have some understanding about taro since it is a staple diet, and it is difficult to travel past a village in Samoa where there are no taro patches. However, as climactic as it sounds, *talafā* does not conclude at the yielding stage. In the words of my uncle, who has been a subsistence taro farmer for most of his 65 years, "if we stop planting taro after a harvest or *talafā*, we will have nothing to eat tomorrow." *Talafā* may be the final process for a taro crop before human use but it is certainly not the end. The journey of the taro continues, and so does *talafā.* In oratory language, *talafā* can be used as '*o lea sa talafā mai lagona ma manatu ina ia'anoa le tatou mataupu*' meaning 'we have opened or unwrapped the thoughts and opinions for our discussion to be fruitful.' The ultimate theme that resonate loudly in the *talafā* model is therefore the utmost significance of 'reaping what you sow'[2] but also to continue harvesting and producing results that is meaningful and life-giving. Because *talafā* is the final procedure of a chain of events, and the purpose of the whole exercise of taro growing is to produce the best quality taro for best results, a steady supply for the family that relies of this crop for survival, as the case is for my family, the stages leading up to *talafā* is equally important, which will be discussed later.

Talafā as a Pastoral Care Approach

A prominent analogy that best describes the role of the *faifeau* (pastor) is *leoleo mamoe* (shepherd). Although not many sheep are found in Samoa due to the tropical weather, the image of a shepherd is introduced to the psyche of most Samoan Christians at a very early age by reciting Psalm 23 in Sunday Schools and in family evening devotions. In watching documentaries[3] on TV about sheep farms in New Zealand, I learnt that a shepherd cares for the sheep. The shepherd guards, protects, feeds and helps them grow into mature animals. In return, the sheep provides for the shepherd by producing wool, meat and milk just to name a few. Pastoral care ministry is like farming; focus is placed on the best practice to generate the best output of crop. Farming taro to Samoans, is equivalent to rearing sheep to the Palestinians and other countries like New Zealand. Jesus also used farming in his teachings and alluded to it during his ministry. Can farming taro be a way to understand Christ, perhaps a Pacific Christology? Or could farming taro, especially its final stage of *talafā* be seen as a way of bringing out the best in people and their practices in order to harvest depend-able disciples for Jesus' ministry.

An example of a practice that needs to go through *talafā* for it to bring out the best in those who perform it is *tausiga*, a practice that will be discussed in the next section. In this custom, as a spiritual leader, the pastor takes care of the congregation and in return the church community takes care of the pastor and his family. This is echoed in the

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[1] Howard Clinebell, ed., *Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011), 21.

[2] A phrase adopted from Galatians 6:7-8.

[3] Science & Technology, "Wonderful New Zealand Sheep Farm, The Largest and Most Successful Ram Breeding Operation in NZ," (Accessed 18th February, 2022).

definition, for the purposes of this article, of pastoral care by Howard Clinebell, a professor in pastoral psychology and counselling, "pastoral care is a shared ministry of clergy and laypersons."[4] This notion of sharing the responsibility of care is clearly stipulated in the CCCS constitution, "the minister, lay preachers, and deacons work together in the pastoral care of the congregation…"[5]. In his ministry, Jesus Christ initiated pastoral care for human beings as a farmer would nurture his/her taro plant until it reaches the *talafā* stage. Jesus is God incarnated, which comes with the utmost prestige and honour, but he still demonstrated a life of humility and servanthood, as ultimately symbolized by the cross. Jesus' intention is to prepare those who choose to follow his ways in order to become useful crops for God's pastoral ministry on earth. Pastors and wives hold prestigious positions in Samoan society, which is not the issue, but sometimes clergy do not follow Jesus' way of humility and servanthood. Consequently, pastoral care is no longer reciprocal but a one-sided affair, whereby the giver suffers while the receiver lives in luxury. Jesus did not live in lavishness. On the contrary, Jesus' gave his life and all he asks in return are people's hearts, minds, and characters to be transformed. But we cannot say that our hearts and minds are transformed but our practices remain the same. Likewise, we cannot take care of our minds and hearts but neglect the importance of taking care of our bodies. Pastoral care is holistic care; this will be further elaborated, at least in part, in the theology of stewardship.

Pastoral care is embedded in the theology of stewardship, the belief that human responsibility is to take care of the world. People who are monotheistic (belief in one true God) believe that their obligation is to care for creation that include plants, animals, birds, the environment and everything in it. The idea that humans are to dominate the environment has its roots planted in the creation accounts in Genesis 1. In particular, is the command וְיִרְדּוּ (translated by the NRSV as 'and let them have dominion') in Gen 1:26b and repeated in verse 28. This Hebrew word derives from the root verb *radah* (רדה) which is translated as "dominion" or "to rule" and it gives humans a sense of responsibility to their environment. To explain this interpretation of *'radah'*, David Horrell puts it this way:

> the claim here is that the problem lies not with the biblical text but only the ways it was (mis)interpreted, first through the lens of essentially non-biblical Greek ideas and then much later in the context of Renaissance views of human possibilities and progress […] Biblical themes such as the placing of humanity within the community of creation, and the praise of God by all creation, offer the basis for a positive environmental ethic and a theological framework within which dominion can be much more positively interpreted. [6]

In this light, environmentalists argue that the role of humans in creation is not to rule but to be "servants," as indicated by the verbs 'to serve' or to 'to take care of' in the second creation story in Genesis 2, particularly verse 15;[7] the two verbs are significant aspect of 'stewardship.' In the New Testament, the human responsibility as stewards of creation is depicted in how Jesus cares for birds and flowers (e.g. Matt 6:25 – 34). According to Sean McDonagh, a priest and theologian, "Jesus shows an intimacy and familiarity with a variety of God's creatures and the processes of nature. He is not driven by an urge to dominate or control the world of nature. Rather he displays an appreciative and

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[4] Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care,* 9.

[5] CCCS, *The Constitution of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2016), 8.

[6] David Horrell et al., eds., "Appeals to the Bible in Ecotheology and Environmental Ethics: A Typology of Hermeneutical Stances," *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 21/2 (2008): 219-238.

[7] David Horrell et al., "Appeals to the Bible," 220.

contemplative attitude towards creation… the Gospels tell us that nature played an important role in Jesus' life."[8]

It is this (re)interpretation of biblical accounts such as the creation stories and Jesus' relationship with the environment that has somewhat shaped, and, to some extent, especially in Samoa, popularised the use of the term 'stewardship'. As experienced today in prayers during communal and family worship, '*tausimea*' (stewards) has become the most common and preferred designation of the responsibility of human beings towards creation and God. As an example, in praising and exalting God at the beginning of prayers, the preacher would say:

> *Le Atua silisili ese e lo matou matua alofa, o lau afio na faia le lagi ma le lalolagi ma mea uma ua tumu ai ile amataga, mulimuli ane ona e faia lea o le tagata i lou lava faatusa, ina ia fai ma 'tausimea' o lau foafoaga* (translated as: God Almighty our loving parent, you O Lord created heaven and earth and everything in it, then you created human beings in your image, so that they may be stewards of your creation.

In essence, stewardship calls us to serve and take good care of the environment and the environment will likewise take care of the people. Being good stewards of the environment also means being reliable stewards of our own bodies. Using contemporary knowledge of nutrition, the awareness of the colonial residue which has encroached on traditional food choices in Samoa (and other Pacific nations) and left a residue of unhealthy foods. Here, the *talafā* model can be used to propose how faithful Samoans can be faithful to both Biblical (*radah*) and Samoan (*tausiga*) traditions. Nevertheless, this does not undermine the importance of 'rule/subdue' as the translation of '*radah,'* which will be discussed later in *talafā* as tupu ma ola (grow).

Tausiga o Faifeau[9] (Practice of taking Care of the Pastor)

Traditionally, when one talks about why most Samoans take good care of the *faifeau*, the concept of *feagaiga* is hard to ignore. Latu Latai[10] and others[11] have researched and written extensively about this model. They all documented that amongst the many duties of the *taulealea* or untitled men of the villages he is also responsible to care for (such as food from the plantation, fresh meat from the domesticated animals such as pigs and chicken); but also to protect (for e.g. from other *taulealea* who seek to have an intimate relationship with her) their their *feagaiga* (covenant) or the unmarried girl(s) of the family and village. The *feagaiga*'s responsibility is to maintain the good name of the family by upholding her values and dignity; but also to carry out her domestic duties such as weeding the gardens, tidying the house, and weaving of fine mats, just to name a few. [12]

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[8] Sean McDonagh, *The Greening of the Church* (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 158.

[9] Similarity with the Māori notion of *kaitiakitanga*, care-taking (although the Māori translation of Gen 1:26b includes '*rangatiratanga*' or governorship, which has different resonances in that language and culture; still, ownership or governorship have within them the implicit assumption of taking care for the next generation).

[10] Latu Latai, "Changing Covenants in Samoa? From brothers and sisters to husbands and wives?," *Oceania* 85/1 (2015): 92-104; "Lafoga a Faifeau ma le Tete'e a le EFKS: O le Feagaiga ua Oia," *The Journal of Samoan Studies* 10 (2020): 70-79.

[11] Le Tagaloa Aiono Fanaafi., "Western Samoa: The Sacred Covenant," *Land Rights of Pacific Women.* (1986): 102-109.; Anne Edall-Robson., "Malietoa, Williams and Samoa's Embrace of Christianity," *The Journal of Pacific History* 44/1 (2009): 21-39.

[12] Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 33-34.

When the LMS missionaries arrived in Samoa (1830) they not only introduced Christianity but also brought valuable goods such as food gifts, canoes, weapons, alcohol and other goods. The paramount chiefs at the time embraced the gifts and the new Christian belief.[13] As a symbol of their acceptance of Christianity, the missionaries, who trained local Samoans to be missionaries and eventually became pastors, were also treated like the *feagaiga* and were designated the title '*faafeagaiga*.' Amongst the many things that the *faafeagaiga* are provided with such as financial assistance (*alofa*), accommodation, land for plantation, is a steady supply of food. The *tausiga* for the pastor and his family included fresh fish, new meat from the pig-sty and chicken fed in and around the traditional kitchen (*tunoa*), taro and banana from the plantations.[14] This is because the pastors use to live in a *faleo'o* or small Samoan *fale* (house) thatched with coconut leaves and did not have much to support himself and his family. The use of designations such as 'faa-fale tulu'ia' (living in a leaking house), 'faa-fale lē malu' (living in a house not fully sheltered), and 'tagata ese o loo mau ma oe' (the foreigner who resides with you) to describe the *faifeau* allude to this.[15] In return, the *faifeau* and *faletua* taught literacy or how to read and write in the so called *Aoga Faifeau* (pastor's school). Therefore, the *tausiga of faifeau* was originally a practice that demonstrated one's service (*tautua*) and genuine care for the pastor.

Like the reciprocal responsibilities of the *taulealea* and the *feagaiga* mentioned above, the clergy – laity obligations are also shared. This is because when 'pastors fail to care for the congregation and their families, this is abuse.[16] When congregations fail to care for their pastors and their families, this is also abuse. In addition to the *aoga faifeau,* other forms of services and care that is offered by the pastors are signified in some of the titles or names designated to them. Such as '*leoleo mamoe*' (shepherd), '*tausi matagaluega*' (one who cares for the ministry) and '*tausi feagaiga*' (keeper of covenant between clergy and laity). The most common title is perhaps "*tamā faa-le-agaga*" (spiritual father) whereas the *faletua* (pastor's wife) is called "spiritual mother." Such title reflects a significant aspect of pastoral care that the *faifeau* and *faletua* offer, spiritual care. This spiritual nourishment is "given to people in faith communities for the basic purpose of enabling them to live life with the maximum possible wholeness…" [17] Many Samoans as a result respond to such spiritual care by practising '*tausiga o faifeau*.'

Whether or not the responsibilities of clergy and laity in the practice of *tausiga* is reciprocated, or if it is shared, is it even-handed, is a matter that requires further research. *Tausiga* is not the issue at hand, it is the dramatic change in its content that make it troublesome. This is something that will be discussed later in this article; but the following section seeks to describe how the *talafā* model can inform the practice of *tausiga.*

Talafā as *totō* (planting)

Taking care of the taro plant until the final process of *talafā* not only requires the farmer to nurture the plant while it grows, it also entails awareness of the slightest details. Such knowledge is how to *totō* or plant the taro, which for a farmer is an art in itself. For example, how to grow the new taro offshoots (*lauvai*) and the re-used *tiapula* (stalk/ stem). Planting the '*lauvai'* is different from the re-planted '*tiapula*.' The hole for the

[13] Edall-Robson, "Malietoa, Williams and Samoa's Embrace of Christianity," 21-39; Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 54.

[14] Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 54-55.

[15] These titles or designations of faifeaus still exist today although the pastors and his family live in some of the best houses one can see in a village.

[16] Ray S. Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry: Forming Leaders for God's People* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 217.

[17] Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care*, 8.

lauvai is slightly deeper than that required for the re-used *tiapula* but both require thorough ploughing (*suasua*) with the tip of the traditional '*oso* (a straight and solid stick with a sharp edge), a tool that is used for planting. The *tiapula,* planted for a second time, will not produce the same fully-grown sized taro but will produce several new *lauvai* to maintain a steady supply of the crop.

The spacing from one plant to the other is equally important. If planted too closely together the new offshoots will interfere with the growth of the main taro plant. Little space will also be available for the farmer to walk in-between the plants to weed and clear obstacles that hinder the growth of the taro, more digging on this will be done in the second stage leading up to *talafā*, which is *tupu* (grow). As far as *totō* is concerned, this is why an experienced farmer would plant the two types in separate patches. During harvest, the farmer conveniently pulls the bigger crops, from the *lauvai*, and use it for special occasions or practices such as *tausiga* while the smaller taro from the *tiapula* can be used for everyday food.

It is also worthy to know what kind of taro shoot to plant as to avoid planting ones that do not suit the soil and may result in the end product being *susŭ* or inedible. Moreover, knowing when to harvest is critical since reaping the taro too early risks the crop being unsuitable for consumption while delaying it may result in the taro being rotten (*pala*). Recognizing these small details goes a long way in producing the kind of taro that is useful. More importantly, it develops the wisdom and character of the farmer especially in understanding the details of certain cultural practices such as *tausiga* and how it effects them and the practice itself.

***Talafā* as *tupu ma ola* (grow)**

After planting any sort of plant, the next step is to see to it that it grows into potentially useful crops. In order for the taro plant to grow properly it has to be thoroughly protected. The farmer protects the plant from various obstacles. For example, weeds, pests, diseases, wild pigs, and theft. Farmers engage with the soil and dirt on a daily basis in weeding the grass and other unwanted plants that obstruct the growth of the taro. Constructing innovative traps to capture wild hogs and creating fake human beings [18] to scare wild animals is a vital skill. The failure to protect the taro from these external factors hinders the growth of the taro and hence the food source for the farmer and his family.

In *talafā*, for the taro to *tupu* (grow) the farmer is responsible for protecting the plant from external forces and especially from itself. When young and new farmers want to start a taro plantation, they usually ask for some *lauvai* from the experienced farmer. This is part of the unstructured sharing that is allowed in taro farming. Embracing this request the experienced farmer knows that he or she is helping the new recruits; but he also receives assistance from them in weeding the current plants or starting a new taro patch. The lesson for the new recruits is that you learn from experienced persons and take advantage of the resources available to you. But more importantly removing the new and matured *lauvai* is very healthy for the taro plant. As the *lauvai* growing relatively close to the main plant develops and matures it restricts the main taro from growing to its full potential. A farmer that is not aware of such realities would marvel at the growth of the taro and its many *lauvai*, but during *talafā* the hopes of harvesting a fully-grown taro will come crashing down.

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[18] Long and straight sticks would be artistically dressed with human clothes and sprayed with perfume so that when wild pigs come to devastate the taro plants they will realize that humans are present from the scent and sight of the farmer's masterpiece.

Some farmers do not want to share the *lauvai* with others in fear of changing the status quo. Instead of sharing the *tiapula* they give them some taro enough for a day's food. This way, the people who have no plantation will continue to seek taro from the farmer, this means they will also continue to work to grow the farmer's plantation while having none of their own. In addition, removing the *lauvai* in order to improve the growth of the main taro plant during *talafā* is secondary for the farmer who embraces greed and obsession for personal growth.

In returning to the discussion of '*radah*' as 'rule/subdue,' it highlights a military or war-like context.[19] People are considered as those who have a responsibility to serve and take care of the earth so as to transform it into a better place. This is a very interesting idea that occurs 23 times in the Old Testament, and this could describe Jesus' ministry on earth, as one that seeks to transform the whole person into becoming suitable and depend -able people for his ministry. This includes taking care and transforming their practices, which could lead directly to a Pacific or Samoan Christology. As indicated by the culmination of Jesus' ministry, the dominion of Christ is led by the cross, a symbol of sacrifice and servanthood. Sacrificing one's life for others to grow and live, and serving others rather being served. Are these essential Christian values embraced in the practice of *tausiga*?

At a glance, both the recipient and giver seem to be sacrificing and serving one another during *tausiga*; but contemplating it tells a different story. The personal growth of those involved are emphasized despite the fact that both are suffering. With all due respect to those who genuinely give with good intention. However, some people who compensate the *faifeau* often do so with a sense of competing. The one who gives more gain personal praise when the congregation's secretary publicly announces each individual's contribution after a Sunday sermon. As a result of competing, those who struggle to make ends meet strive to give the same as those who have enough, although it is beyond their means. In terms of food gifts, what is generally accepted as "good food" (*meaai lelei*) are the frozen, imported, expensive, oily and greasy goods such as mutton flaps and turkey tails. Not accepting these gifts is disrespectful (*lē tali faaaloalo*) on the part of the *faifeau* and *faletua*. The acceptance of one family's gift while rejecting the other is interpreted by the latter as '*faailoga tagata*' (bias). Moreover, the way of life of being *faifeau*, the ones being cared for are living in personal luxury and growth, and not much giving back. Or giving back but in ways that have a temporary effect on those doing the caring. Therefore, sacrifice and service are just means in which one gains power and recognition. In light of such realities, the following stage is very important in rectifying some of these issues.

Talafā: Challenges that Require Peeling off

Nowadays, subsistence farming of taro is threatened by commercial farmers. Farming taro for personal sustenance is very different to commercial or large scale farming of taro. Capital invested for the purpose to generate the most profit, versus growing and farming taro to survive and put bread and butter on the table, and to sustain the family needs. This is what farmers face, and most definitely challenges the local taro farmer that has also got by growing and farming taro for the family's immediate needs. In addition, subsistence farmers, on the one hand, weed their taro plantations and use organic or natural manures such as pig and chicken droppings, "garlic, ginger, neem plants and

[19] Nahum Sarna, *Genesis: The JPS Torah Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 12-13.

chili"[20] to assist in producing the best outcome. Commercial farmers, on the other hand, use chemical pesticides and weed killers to boost their production because, as Dr. Leslie Ubaub who is an insect and plant expert, reported that many of these farmers say it is "laborious" or hard work to do otherwise. Nonetheless, Ubaub explains the frequent use of pesticides cause:

> dangers to farmers […] and the environment. The effect could be acute such as respiratory tract irritation, allergic sensitization, headaches, loss of consciousness or even death, and chronic effects such as asthma. Pesticides have also been linked to leukemia and non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma […] The effectiveness of pesticides will also encourage farmers to be dependent on these chemicals. It can cause environmental contamination and other unwanted effects due to improper application.[21]

Commercial farmers looking for ways to make more money is normal for businesses especially in times such as the covid-19 pandemic. But when it is done at the expense of the environment and others, it raises concerns. Moreover, it highlights their hesitancy to carry out laborious work that provide the much needed exercise for their wellbeing. In comparison to the practice of '*tausiga*,' not only has the practice been overhauled by foreign products due to globalization, it has also become an escalating health problem to the wellbeing of Samoans as a whole.

Globalization, generally the rapid connected character of the political, economic, technical and social lives of people throughout the world,[22] has dramatically changed the eating patterns of Samoans and sadly the practice of *tausiga.* Developing countries such as Samoa moved away from locally produced root crops such as taro, vegetables, fruits, fresh meat, fish and coconut juice to the consumption of processed fatty and salty imported foods or what Lameko collectively calls a 'nutrition transition'.[23] Consequently, there is a very high incidence of non-communicable diseases like type II diabetes, heart ailments and roaring obesity rates. The number of early deaths and amputations is very alarming.[24] The detrimental impact of processed food is likened to the effect that weed killers from overseas has on the environment, but also to the livelihoods of current and future farmers.

In comparison, the effects of the 'nutrition transition' on the *tausiga o le faifeau* has also become a burden to both clergy and laity. There is an ironic twist here, the very practice that was originally intended to assist and care for the pastor and his family has turned out to be one of the major cause of early deaths and amputations of pastors and their wives due to NCDs. Moreover, as one WHO study indicated NCDs have a very close relationship with poverty, an example is quoted below:

> If those who become sick or die are the main income earners, NCDs can force a drastic cut in spending on food and education, the liquidation of family assets and a loss of care and investment on children. Where male are the primary income earners, widowhood or the burden of caring for a permanently disabled partner are routes to poverty. The high rate of disability due to NCDs is a particular burden on women and children. This may result in children losing the opportunities for

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[20] Tina Mata'afa-Tufele, "Pesticide use should be last resort, expert says," *Samoa Observer,* (September2020).https://www.samoaobserver.ws/categorysamoa, (accessed 12/02/2022).

[21] Tina Mataafa Tufele, "Pesticide use should be last resort."

[22] Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology Between the Global and the Local* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 10.

[23] Viali Lameko, "Obesity in Samoa: Culture, History and Dietary Practices," *The Journal of Samoan Studies,* vol. 10 (2020): 25-39.

[24] Viali Lameko, "Obesity in Samoa," 26.

schooling, women losing the main sustenance for their families, and families losing their stability.[25]

NCDs and other factors of globalization are amongst the many reasons why practices such as *tausiga* should be revisited, using traditional Samoan approaches such as *talafā*, so that the people involved are well aware bout the importance of transforming such practices from a life-taking and problematic custom to a life-giving and stress-free practice.

Theological Implications of *Talafā*

The culmination of *talafā* is what most people tend to oversee or ignore altogether, which is God. The revelation of God in the protection that we as 'rulers' (according to the creation narrative) employ towards creation is crucial. Likewise, the revelation of God in the care we show as 'stewards' of creation (as lived by Jesus Christ according to the Gospels), is the ultimate goal of *talafā*. Since human beings are part of creation, we need to understand that God has the ultimate dominion. God is also the supreme *tausimea*. Realizing such truth reminds us all that what humans do to the environment and to ourselves are all conducted under God's overarching stewardship. Hence, our prejudices and misconceptions that as humans we can take care of everything and that we ourselves and the status quo do not need protection should, in the language of *talafā*, be peeled off and recognize that this is God's responsibility. We are but mere farmers of God's farm, pastors of God's sheep, ministers of God's ministry. Whatever we do and the activities that are conducted in the plantation is overlooked by the ultimate steward, the pastor of pastors, the Lord God of life. As the apostle Paul rightly puts:

> 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labour of each. 9 For we are God's servants, working together, you are God's field (1 Corinthians 3:6–9 NRSV)

In this passage Paul describes God as the ultimate farmer, the farmer of farmers, the giver of life. Without God the taro or any other plant for that matter will never grow and reach the *talafā* stage. The efforts of the farmer, subsistence or commercial, the natural elements of the environment such as the rain, sunlight and air would be to no avail without divine interference. It is vital that, as God's servants, we will also receive wages or, one could argue, the results, of one's care, or lack thereof, according to the activities we carry out in God's farm.

In relation to the practice of *tausiga,* if its contents do not nurture but diminishes one's chances of living longer and healthier than God is not present. If the practice is also a burden to both clergy and laity, it is also missing God in it. Considering the fact that *talafā* is the last stage of a process to farm taro. God creates us, we grow in life, amongst the good and bad and ugly in life, and the output for God, is that when harvest is ready, when we are called back to God, God peels off the hardened lives we have lived, to

[25] There are other causes of NCDs such as the frequency of physical inactivity, daily smoking and regular alcohol consumption (WHO https://www.who.int/nmh/publications/ncd report chapter2.pdf (accessed 19th Feb 2022).

reveal a creation that is worthy of His Kingdom. The parable of the sower in Matthew 13:1–9 where Jesus uses farming to portray the "secrets of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 13:11) is paramount the *talafā* pastoral model. As an approach to read this parable, *talafā* can be used to identify which soil is best to *totō* or plant the seeds. Other places such as the 'path' (vs4), 'rocky ground' (vs5), and 'among thorns' (vs7) are peeled off to give space for the seeds to be planted on "good soil" (vs8). Only an experienced farmer knows which soil to plant the seed for it to produce fully-grown and matured crops. Likewise, only those who choose to hear and accept God's will through Jesus Christ can produce fully-grown and matured characters who in turn transform important practices for the greater good of all involved.

Concluding Remarks

In improving the practice of '*tausiga o le faifeau*' both the pastor and the congregation need to play their respective roles of caring and protecting each other. *Talafā* states that in spite of its advantages, difficulties are inevitable. The practice of '*tausiga o le faifeau*' is no exception. Issues such as the imported unhealthy food that are being given to the pastors and family need to be peeled off while the use of locally fresh and accessible cuisine is re-planted and re-emphasized. Parishioners need to be taught about the impacts that the food they are giving to the pastor is damaging not only the environment but the very person they intend to look after. All participants of '*tausiga o le faifeau*' need to take heed of the fact that we are all servants working on God's field or plantation. If life is not nurtured and protected in such traditional practices, then we seriously need to *talafā* our roles and responsibilities in it in order to reveal God's truths to guide our failures and shortcomings.

As leaders of congregations, clergy and laity can use *talafā* as an approach to critically assess their roles as leaders. In this sense, *talafā* can be used as "*talatala le tofā faaleagaga ina ia atagia ai le Atua*" (broaden or disclose the spiritual wisdom that mirrors the will of God). If their decision making does not reflect the will of God, that is to show genuine care and protection for each other and one's self, then it is not spiritual wisdom.

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Feagaiga and *Faafeagaiga*: A Historical Critique Towards Understanding the Success of Christian Mission and Church-State Relations in Samoa

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Abstract

Feagaiga (covenant) relationship is theoretically and practically paramount in the Samoan way of relating. Although it is a word for covenant which is attributed to a sister, making her status and relationship with her brother sacred, this article focuses on feagaiga as 'shared life' between opposite parties. The sister as feagaiga remains a norm in the Samoan culture and tradition but that norm was transposed to church ministers after the arrival of Christianity. These assertions seem to submit that feagaiga is neither fluid nor flexible. While there are many va (space between) – va fealoai, va nonofo, va fesootai, and va tapuia, this article takes va in another view by revisiting feagaiga (covenant) as 'shared life' existing between two opposite parties who are equally obliged to serve the feagaiga. These parties embody feagaiga to make them faafeagaiga (causing covenant). In the Samoan context only the church ministers have this designation. As sacred relationships are tantamount to Samoan cultural, social, political, and religious relationships of the past and present, they are important in navigating Christianity in Samoa, as well as social and political issues between the church and a village and between the church and state of today. Treating relationships with feagaiga as 'shared life' strengthens the notion that feagaiga has vastly contributed to the success of Christian Mission in Samoa that reflects in 192 years of Christianity. From a transit-destination perspective, the feagaiga serves as an access point. The idea is that the brother considers the feagaiga in performing his obligations towards his sister and the sister does likewise. That is, the feagaiga navigates and controls the way the brother and his sister relate to one another. The same applies to the church minister and his congregation, and church and state in which the feagaiga concept began to impact the way the two entities relate and to process their separation after State Independence in 1962. They are separated in obligations but equal because they shared the same feagaiga.

Key Words: *feagaiga*, *faafeagaiga,* embodiment, equality, Christian Mission, church-state relations, transit-destination perspective.

Introduction

As a norm that is persistent in the Samoan worldview and tradition of *feagaiga*, a brother's sister is a *feagaiga* that makes her sacred than her brother in the context of brother-sister relationship. George Pratt and G. B. Milner share that similar definition of *feagaiga* concerning sacred status. Yet, they defined the concept further to "an established relationship between parties" and "principle of social balance."[1]Neither of these definitions account for the root of *feagaiga*. While it is "an established relationship between different parties, as between brothers and sisters and their children…also between chiefs and their *tulafale*…an agreement, a covenant,"[2] other words such as "*feaga'i*" and "*feagai*" are evident in *feagaiga*. "*feaga'i*" is rooted in "*aga*" which has two meanings of "conduct, manner of acting or behaviour" and "to go up and down,

[1] George Pratt, *Pratt's grammar dictionary and Samoan language* (Apia: Malua Printing Press 1911), 39; G. B. Milner, *Samoan Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

[2] Pratt, *Pratt's grammar dictionary*, 139.

backwards and forwards" and "*feagai*" means "to be opposite to each other, to correspond, to dwell together cordially, to be on good terms: as a chief with his people, or a minister with his flock."[3] In these set of words and their meanings, *aiga* (family) is left unnoticed, yet it is the important element of the Samoan identity in which *feaga'i, feagai,* and *aga* are rooted in. It is because *aiga* is "cohabiting" and "belonging"[4], sharing and connecting, binding, linking, co-birthing and loving. Hence, *feagaiga* as 'shared life' together.

In the CCCS's context, the success of Christian Mission in Samoa is believed to be the employment of *feagaiga* between the *faifeau* (church minister) and the *aulotu* (congregation) where the sacred status of the sister has been transposed or applied to Samoan church ministers when they began to participate in Christian mission in villages or parishes.[5] The congregation views their church minister as a sister,[6] hence sacred over the congregation "as a man of divine power,"[7] like the *ilamutu* of sisters in the Samoan belief of linking with the gods.[8] As this sacred status remained unchanged, it is worrisome that the *feagaiga* concept is in full circle that one would not be able to revisit for further meanings and insights. To some extent, it is argumentative because some studies of *feagaiga* incline towards a particular person or entity,[9] leading into confining *feagaiga* to an object. That said, there is a possibility of creating partiality between parties involved. Penelope Schoeffel, for example, seems to present "the sister's curse" as a powerful phenomenon to bring curse upon the male counterpart.[10]

This is acceptable in most Samoan worldviews, but the intention to draw a historical critique of *feagaiga,* seeking in the flexibility of the concept that it is more of relationship than status. This may help avoid, perhaps to reinstate, the stagnancy of one is

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[3] Pratt, *Pratt's grammar*, 21, 139.

[4] Pratt, *Pratt's Grammar*, 6.

[5] Latu Latai, "Covenant Keepers: A history of Samoan (LMS) Missionary wives in the Western Pacific from 1839 to 1979" (PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 2016), 36 - "the transposition of the feagaiga onto the novel figure of the pastor"; Sadat Muaiava, "The Samoan parsonage family: The concepts of *feagaiga* and *tagataese,*" *Journal of New Zealand & Pacific Studies* 3/1 (2015): 74. Fanaafi Aiono Le Tagaloa, *O Motugaafa* (Apia: Le Lamepa Press, 1996), 36.

[6] Latu Latai, "Changing covenants in Samoa? From brothers to sisters to husband and wives," *Oceania* 85/1 (2015): 96.

[7] Latai "Changing covenants," 94 – 95.

[8] Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi, "In Search of Harmony: Peace in the Samoan Indigenous Religion," in *Su'esu'e manogi: In search of fragrance,* eds. Tamasailau M. Sualii-Sauni, Iuogafa Tuagalu, Tofilau Nina Kirifi-Alai, Naomi Fuamatu (National University of Samoa: The Center for Samoan Studies, 2009), 146.

[9] Latai, "Covenant Keepers", 36; Malia Ellen Mamele Lameta, "I am the apple of my brother's eye: An investigation into the evolving roles of Samoan women with particular reference to religion and gender relations" (MTh Thesis, University of Otago, 2005), 48. Mamele says, "...this sacred status, women held much power, not only over males in the political sphere, but over Samoan thought and world view"; Latai, "Changing covenants", 94 – 95, says that "...sisters as sacred beings having the power to curse" and "the traditional sacred valuation"; Maureen Fepuleai, "Feagaiga: the sacred brother-sister covenant – past, present and future" (MTh Thesis, Te Wananga o Aotearoa, 2016), 16 -19, Fepuleai reveals a variety of scholars who conform onto the idea of sacred status of the sister who "is more powerful than the brother"; Muaiava, "The Samoan parsonage family", 74, writes, "...the tuafafine is accorded a 'sacred' status while the tuagane has a 'secular' one".

[10] Penelope Schoeffel, "The Samoan Concept of *feagaiga* and its transformation," in *Tonga and Samoa: Images of gender and polity*, ed. J Huntsman (Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies: University of the South Pacific, 1995), 80-90.

more sacred than the other. Such fluidity presupposes the success in Christian Mission and proposes solutions to any malfunction in social and political issues concerning church-state relations today.

Feagaiga has been studied as status and relationship.[11] But this work focuses on relationship and explores the notion of *feagaiga* postulating more than a relationship that equally governs the relations of one party to another (between individuals or entities). Malia Ellen Mamele Lameta briefly demonstrates the idea of "two separate, but equal groups"[12]; however, she keeps holding on to *feagaiga* as sacred status. Status is not a major concern of this undertaking that various studies submit. This attempt seeks, if possible, to promote the rhetoric of *feagaiga that* evolves from the principle of social balance, where the brother and his sister, the church minister and his congregation, or the church and state, are two separate but equal groups who are obliged to serve their required obligations of their *feagaiga*.

As born and raised in the *aiga,* there was facing opposite to each other, correspondence, dwell together cordially (*feagai*), conduct and behaviour (*feaga'i, aga*), and the likes, between the *matai* (high chief/chief) and his wife, between the parents and children, and between the children themselves *(aiga*). Thus, this article contends that *feagaiga* is not a particular object like a sister but a catalyst that governs Samoan network of religious, cultural, social, economic, and political relationships. That is why cultural identity, family unity, and spiritual belief are the actuality of the Samoan way of life here and abroad. This essay will, first, locate the roots of *feagaiga* and its implications. Next is a critique that weaves cultural, theological, and biblical strands of thoughts. Finally, is concluding remarks.

Feagaiga Root and its Implications

Feagaiga is traced to Samoan myths and legends of "Old Samoa". While these specific stories shape Samoan perspectives on understanding the world, western thoughts are pessimistic of using them as historical evidence. However, Aiono Le Tagaloa considers myths and legends as "life-justification proof – the life sources of a particular statement or opinion."[13] In a similar manner, traditions of a particular context are empty if we fail to revisit their roots.[14] Hence, they are accepted in the "wider circle of scholars" and are

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[11] Roina Faatauvaa, "The status and role of women in traditional society," *Pacific Journal of Theology* 2/7 (1992): 15-27; Fanaafi Aiono Le Tagaloa, "The Samoan Culture and Government," in *Culture and Democracy in the South Pacific* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1992); R. P Gilson, *Samoa 1830-1900: The politics of a multi-cultural community* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1970); Latu Latai, "From open fale to mission house: Negotiating the boundaries of Domesticity in Samoa," in *Divine Christian Paradoxes in Asia and the Pacific,* eds. Hyaeweol Choi and Margret Jolly (Canberra: ANU Press, 2014); Lafai Sauoaiga, *O le mavaega i le tai* (Apia: The Malua Printing Press, 1988); Latu Latai, "Changing covenants in Samoa?", 92-104; Sadat Petelo Muaiava, "The feagaiga and faifeau kids' (FK): An examination of the experiences of parsonage children of the Samoan Congregational denomination in New Zealand," *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counselling* 71/1 (2017): 27-40; Michiko Kyoko Ete-Lima, "Jesus Christ the feagaiga and nofo-tane: A Christological perception of the Samoan tamaitai" (MTh Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 2001); Fepuleai, "Feagaiga: the sacred brother-sister covenant," 16-19; Schoeffel, "The Samoan Concept of *feagaiga*", 80-90; Lameta, "I am the apple of my brother's eye", 48.

[12] Lameta, "I am the apple of my brother's eye," 47 – 48.

[13] Le Tagaloa, *O Motugaafa*, 2.

[14] Faafetai Aiava, "Alofa relations: a quest for an alternative theology for the Samoan diaspora" (PhD Thesis. Suva: Pacific Theological College 2017), 95.

continued to consider as "new primary sources" in the scholarly world.[15] Taking myths and legends as life sources or living texts, I hereby attempt to highlight the root of *feagaiga* in an analysis of Samoa's creation story.

> [Tagaloalagi, alone, dwelt in the Expanse. There was no sky, country, sea, and earth. To dwell was to wander to and fro in the Expanse. When he willed to stand, where he stood evolved a Rock. There bore his first name Tagaloafaatutupunuu (cause to grow). Then he spoke to the Rock to split, and six other Rocks brought forth: Papataoto; Papasosolo; Papalauaau; Papaanoano; Papaele; Papatu; and Papaamuamu. He again struck the Rock then Earth and Sea formed. He turned to his right side and spoke to the Rock again, then Sky formed. He continued to speak to the Rock several times and Ilu (Immensity) and Mamao (Space) brought forth and were appointed to Tuiteelagi. Luao (cloud) and Luavai (water) were also formed and appointed to Sa tualagi. Avalala and Gaogaoletai (plants and creatures) were also formed. He spoke once more to the Rock and a Man, Spirit, Heart, Will and Thought brought forth. Then Tagaloa joined the Spirit, Heart, Will and Thought and planted inside the Man. The Man became intelligent and coupled to the Eleele then Fatu and Eleele began to exist as first human beings: Fatu the Man, and Eleele the Woman. Fatu and Eleele had ten boys and a girl. When Fatu grew very old and was about to die, his last wish (mavaega) was that the oldest boy would be the head of the family. Upon the death of this eldest son, his place should be taken by the next brother and so on, until there were no more brothers; whereupon the eldest son of the eldest brother should succeed to the position. The girl was made tamasa (sacred child) and the brothers were told "burn your faces" (e mu iai o outou mata), meaning that each day they should make the oven for the girl and that she should only eat hot food rather than the food cooked the day before lest their children get sick.] [16]

As mentioned earlier, *feagaiga* is an established relationship between parties and it is associated with concepts of agreement and/or covenant.[17] Others accepted this basic text as the origin of *feagaiga.*[18] Obviously, the concept is not mentioned at all in the creation story. Whether it is used ambiguously it is evident that the word is not in use. This is not to say the basic text unfolded as the origin is misleading or unreliable. Yet there are glimpses worthy of defining *feagaiga*. That is, Fatu establishes an agreement or covenant with his children. That is *feagaiga* as sacred relationship between the brothers (and their sons) and their sister. Following Aiono Le Tagaloa's "life-justification proof," we can certify the myth as the proper root of *feagaiga*. As *aiga* is evident in *feagaiga*, we may

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[15] Featunai Liuaana, "Pacific oral traditions – mythical or historical: Searching for a meaningful Pacific Interpretation" *VF 11.18* (1995): 3. Tofaeono (2000), 23, 171: "sacred history or narrative" that is temporal and spatial, regulated by God in the past but informs our modern flow of life. Tuwere (2002): time and event are bonded to land to identify the nature of a community. Havea (2004), 203: in his cross-cultural theologies of relations: relationships are born from culture. Bevan's (2002), 59-60: "cultural romanticism": the importance of culture in anthropological studies for cultural identity. He insists on Christianity not as the "importation of foreign ideas" but "a perspective on how to live one's life even more faithfully in terms of who one is as a cultural and historical subject." McMillan (2011), 33: "our own stories as key to our own autobiography."

[16] The myth below is reproduced from the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* (1982), 164-189; Tapuai (1972) and Ete-Lima (2001).

[17] Pratt, *Pratt's grammar*, 139.

[18] Muaiava, "The Feagaiga and Kids," 27-40; Latai, "Changing Covenants in Samoa," 92-104; Ete-Lima , "Jesus Christ the feagaiga and nofo-tane," 24; Faatauvaa, "The status and role of Women," 15-27.

ascertain that Fatu's wish (*mavaega*) serves as the *feagaiga* which his children (the brothers and their sister) must submit to by serving their required obligations (*feagai*). That is, the brothers are obliged to provide for their sister while the sister seems to accept and nurtures that provision appreciatively. Using *feagai* (facing/correspond) in terms of relating, the brothers must consider Fatu's wish first to relate to his sister. Put simply, the sister is a destination while Fatu's wish as *feagaiga* is an access point to relate (transit). Before reaching the destination, the brothers must consider or remember the *feagaiga* first. Simultaneously, the sister must respond at the same direction.

Fail to serve the obligations – provide and nurture – may result in the brothers failing to the position of the head of the family, or sick and death of their children. For this purpose, it is not the sacredness of the girl that makes her relationship with her brothers sacred; but it is Fatu's wish as the *feagaiga* that binds them together in the form of an *aiga*. Serving Fatu's *feagaiga* includes not only the obligations but their conduct or behaviour (*aga*) in performing those obligations. Conduct and behaviour are associated with the Samoan word for respect (*faaaloalo*). Such a potentials to serve the *feagaiga* (Fatu's wish) are substantial to honouring the father and mother before Christianity arrived. It seems that the *feagaiga* guides the way how the brothers perform their duties in relation to their sisters, and vice versa. The brothers are not to perform their duties according to their sister as a sacred child (*tamasa*) but according to their parent's wish as *feagaiga*

In those grounds, the ambiguity is interesting for it consents me to consider Johann Martin Chladenius' art of historical interpretation, to foster the contention that *feagaiga* is a catalyst of any relationship. It is the art of "knowledge of the prevailing conditions" and "experiences" of what is "intended" in the story to "understood the book completely."[19] Attentively, my knowledge of the prevailing conditions of the myth enables me to see the certain displays of *feagaiga*, not referring to a sister, but an invisible life substantially shared, through obligations, by both her and her brother.

In fact, the brothers are the head of the family, and the sister is the only sacred child (*tamasā*). The brother works or does everything for his sister and the sister does nothing for him. The former renders the brothers as superiors[20] while the latter is obligation which implies the brother's suffering and the sister's abusiveness of her sacredness. These glimpses epitomise a partial or non-egalitarian relationship between the brother and his sister, for the sister is not accountable as a head of the family and the brother can never be sacred but superior to her. Also, the story pronounces the sister a sacred child but not a *feagaiga* (covenant). These ambiguities leave me to ponder about *feagaiga* as something invisible, perhaps concealed within, that embraces both the brother and the sister but not superior or sacred one over the other. In that line of thought, placing *feagaiga* in between the brother and his sister generates the religiosity of social and political life settings of parties who oblige to be part of it (covenant). This religiosity stimulates impartial and egalitarian relationships.

To reiterate, the brother is the head of the family and sister is the only sacred child. There is a possibility of abusing either his superiority or her sacredness over the other then imbalance becomes more pronounced between parties. One might wonder on to what is holding the brother and sister together to equally relate and connect. In fact, the superiority of the brother and the sacredness of the sister symbolize two participating

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[19] Johann Martin Chladenius, "Reason and Understanding: Rational Hermeneutics," in *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German tradition from the Enlightenment to the present*, ed. Kurt Muller-Vollmer (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1985), 55.

[20] The Samoan understanding is that the brother is "*alii o aiga*" and his sister is his "*feagaiga*". In this alignment, the brother seems to be superior to his sister while his sister is sacred than him. Nowadays, the sister can be "*alii o aiga"* when the family chooses her to be the chief (*matai)* of the family.

parties playing different roles (egalitarian). There is nothing in the story to suggest that they (brother and sister) agreed or covenanted. It is Fatu's wish (*feagaiga*) that establishes the way how one is related to the other through means of obligations – provide, accept, and nurture. These required obligations determine their social-political life setting and the *feagaiga* between them guides that life setting. They both live according to this *feagaiga*; hence *feagaiga* as "shared life" together. It seems to suggest that this is plausibly a foundation of harmonious relationships that Fatu tries to communicate. It is harmonious in the sense that there are different obligations to serve one *feagaiga*. The *feagaiga* harmonises two different parties. For instance, the *faifeau* (church minister), his wife, children, and family have different roles to serve one *feagaiga* that they established between them and the congregation. The congregation responds similarly.

Christian Mission

The crucial influence of Samoans in Christianity was neither a coincidence nor chance but caused by factors of attention pressing to "the problem of illiteracy," "law of the land"[21] and "active participation of the Samoans" to the gospel.[22] Also, the insufficiency of teachers in the fields and stations accommodated these circumstances. Accordingly, Samoans refused to abandon their villages to visit the stations and they conformed to their own traditional ideas, making it easy to adapt and adopt Christianity.[23] Such issues were problematic to the missionaries and in hindsight explain why European missionaries were hesitant about the possibility of Samoans being labelled as "ministers."[24] The crux of establishing Malua in 1844, was to provide a theological trained "native agency,"[25] yet a civilizing mission of the European missionaries subtly lingering in the background. The LMS preparation of the Samoan teachers (*faifeau)* was to replace the priestly role taken up by chiefs in family and villages while injecting "Christian sacral sanction to the traditional social order."[26] This implies that the sanctity of the traditional social order can only be ascertained when a *faifeau* lends Christian sacred sanction upon it.

The conventional order has its own traditional sacredness but without Christian sanctity, it becomes null and void. Sacredness and sanctity are associated with *feagaiga* relations and spaces. Hence the "native agency" is a potential to see *fa'afeagaiga* as embodiment of *feagaiga* which later struck the mission from 1860 until today. Before 1860, the Samoans entered many mission fields under the designation of teachers under the supervision of the missionaries. It was not until in 1860, when the London Missionaries withdrew from the fields, the Samoans began to make covenant (*osi feagaiga*) with parishes and the parishes began to call them *faafeagaiga*. The relationship of the *faafeagaiga* and the parishes (congregation) applies also to the relationship of the church and state.

Church-State Relations

Historically, church-state relations in Samoa are immensely comprehensive. A chronology of events concerning church-state relations would begin with the village governance (pre-Christian), then *feagaiga* between Malietoa Vaiinupo and John Williams in 1830, to the civil war between 1843 and 1857, the era of colonialism, and State

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[21] Gilson, *Samoa 1830-1900,* 96. Refers to social and personal relationships or immoral practices and activities concerning these relationships.

[22] Gilson, *Samoa 1830-1900*, 96.

[23] Gilson, *Samoa 1830-1900*, 97-8.

[24] Gilson, *Samoa 1830-1900*, 98.

[25] G Turner, *Nineteen years in Polynesia: Missionary life, travels and researches in the Islands of the Pacific* (London: John Snow, 1861), 30.

[26] John Garret, *To live among the stars: Christian origins in Oceania* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1985), 124.

Independence in 1962. These are common in history literature. But for this purpose, the focus is on the village governance and the *feagaiga* in 1830 between Malietoa Vaiinupo and John Williams, Charles Barff, and 8 Tahitian teachers. The Samoa's pre-Christian system of governance governed by high chiefs (*matai alii*) and chiefs (*matai tulafale*) was, and still is, called *fono* (meeting). Since *feagai,*(facing opposite to each other) is evident in *feagaiga*, the *fono* is governed likewise and the necessity of *soalaupule* (pairing authorities) is paramount in governance. The combination of *feagai* and *soalaupule* interests this article to promote a rhetoric of *feagaiga*. For any matter to be discussed in the *fono*, a resolution is reached when the chiefly authorities are paired. It is not to say that every chief is *faafeagaiga*, but the essence of facing opposite each other tells us that *feagaiga* operates only in relationships than in defining status. This way of relating was neither devised nor drafted but was inherited from the *feagaiga* as shared life. Because it is inherited, the *feagaiga* began its legacy until it was enriched by Christianity in 1830 to provide social and political balances of Samoan way of life. In 1830, Samoa started to demarcate between what is spiritual and what is political. In a *feagaiga* between Malietoa Vaiinupo and the first missionaries, Malietoa willed two things – the concealment of the *tafaifa* title to earth,[27] and the obligation to protect and serve the missionaries.[28] In return, John Williams offered assurance of prosperity and eternity by proclaiming the gospel to the Samoans. In fact, history considers this as the *feagaiga* between Malietoa Vaiinupo and John Williams known widely as the Covenant at *Mataniu Feagai ma le Ata* (*Feagaiga i Mataniu Feagai ma le Ata*). This became a norm since 1830 and the *feagaiga* legacy flourished for 191 years in Samoa including the era of colonial administrations – Germany and New Zealand.

A Critique

Recent studies overwhelmingly enunciate the importance of sacred space (*va tapuia*), boundaries (*tuāoi*) or taboo (*tapu*) as critical elements that procure harmony in relationships.[29] However, space is "not void and independent, but connects and firms the relationship to one another to become one body."[30] This means spaces are not just empty worlds but allow participating parties to share and connect. Moreover, Aiava (2017) rediscovers the transfiguration episode of Jesus as an "encounter" between God and humanity, suggesting that it is not a single transfiguration but a "double transformation" -

[27] "Today, the Samoan tafa'ifa is concealed to earth. The Malietoa discharges at Poutoa as a fallen chief; but God through Jesus in heaven becomes essentially our heavenly rule, the supreme King of Samoa." Oka Fauolo, *O Vavega o le Alofa Laveai: O le Tala Faasolopito o le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2005), 31. "E amata I le asō, o le a tanu i le eleele le tafa'ifa o Samoa. O le a susū le Mālietoa I Poutoa o le tapaau faasisina; ae afio Iesu i le lagi o le Tapaau Faalelagi, o le Tupu lea o Samoa." Pratt (1911), 113, 321: *tapaau* is chief, ruling, or principal chief; and *faasisina* is drop or damage. The word *tanu* is bury which seems offensive to the *tafa'ifa*. Its English translation (conceal) is more relevant and applicable and has a sense of continuity which shows its importance in the Samoan tradition and culture.

[28] "I and my people must now go over to Upolu to the war; but immediately after my return I will become a worshiper of Jehovah and place myself under the instruction of the teachers. In the meantime, this house is yours, as a temporary place in which to teach and worship; and when we come from the war we will erect any building you may require, and all the people who remain at home can come tomorrow, if they please, and begin to learn about Jehovah and Jesus Christ" John Williams, *A narrative of missionary enterprises in the South Sea Islands; with remarks upon the natural history of the island, origins, languages, traditions, and usages of inhabitants* (London: John Snow, 1838), 345.

[29] Aiono Le Tagaloa *O Motugaafa* 1996; Ete-Lima "Jesus Christ the feagaiga," (2001).

[30] Lima "Teu le va", 80 "O lea va, e le o se laolao e tuufua. E le o se avanoa foi e tumaoti lava ia. Ao le avanoa e fesootai ai itu […] O le va, o le avanoa na te so'oa ma taofiofia itu e lua, ina ia avea ma mea e tasi."

Jesus and the disciples were transfigured. The double transformation illustrates balance between two parties that the Eucharist's "cup of the covenant" act as a catalytic agent.[31] It is embodied and all-embracing but not restricted to one party. It may be inadequate to say that *feagaiga* is transformative only to the sister and not the brother; rather, it embraces all parties. This is further clarified by Olthius and his discovery of God's revelation to us through loving relationships. He describes love as a gift that

> creates a space-which-is-meeting, inviting partnership and co-birthing and fundamentally calling into question the deconstructive idea that structures are necessarily always violent […] Connection rather than control is the dominant metaphor […] With this focus on *eros* as the desire to connect, as the passion for mutuality and right relation, we have the possibility for non-possessive, non-competitive (i.e.., non-violent) connecting, co-partnering, co birthing, in the interspaces of love and creativity.[32]

This way of relating is tantamount to *feagaiga* relations. It is not a rule book or a legalistic code of relations which can become oppressive. In a *feagaiga*-space, connection is imperative than control and it is not bound to an individual but to beings-in-relation. If *feagaiga* is shared then one could argue that the sister also views her brother as a *feagaiga* in the sense that there is a mutual (non-possessive, co-partnering) bond. It is not bound to a sister but embraces both the sister and the brother calling both parties to oblige and respect it.

As mentioned earlier, there are various *va* (space between)-*va fealoai, va fesootai, va nonofo, va tapuia*-to name a few. Taking into consideration the dimensions of relationality mentioned there is a possibility to amend the word *va* to an optimal essence. That is, instead of *va*, we may say *feagaiga fealoai* (meeting/congregational covenant), *feagaiga fesootai* (bonded covenant), *feagaiga nonofo* (inherent covenant), or *feagaiga tapu* (sacred covenant). In a certain sense, we can see that the concept of *feagaiga* has such fluid characteristics. As Anae (2010) in her *Teu le va* defines the *va* as "fatu (essence) of the faasamoa", this article adds that *feagaiga* (as shared life), instead of *va*, is the essence thereof. Having *feagaiga* in the space between the brother and his sister, between the church minister and his congregation, and between the church and state, we may suggest that it was not a transposition nor a compromise but rather enhanced or enriched by Christianity in the theological and political senses.

Embodiment and *Faafeagaiga*

As structures seem violent, according to Olthius, this undertaking takes the idea of embodiment principally essential. On that note, Tofaeono identifies *feagaiga* not as referring to a particular person or object but as an embodiment. He claims Jesus, the *logos,* as "embodied life" that links God, creation, and creatures. That is, "the Logos becoming flesh is an embodiment of a Godly life."[33] This understanding of the Logos as manifesting the shared life of the divine and temporal is like the *feagaiga* mentioned above.

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[31] In the CCCS' celebration of the Holy Communion, we say "O le ipu lea o le feagaiga fou". *Ipu* is cup and *feagaiga fou* is new covenant.

[32] James H Olthius, "Crossing the threshold," in *The Hermeneutics of Charity: Interpretations, the selfhood and Postmodern Faith*, eds. James K. A. Smith and Henry Isaac Venema (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004), 37.

[33] Amaamalele Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: AIGA – The household of life; a perspective from the living myths and traditions of Samoa* (Erlange: Erlanger Verlag fur Mission und Okumene, 2000), 222.

In Samoa, *fa'afeagaiga* refers particularly to church ministers who look after a congregation in a village. The village calls and covenants with him and he becomes the village's *fa'afeagaiga*. It is the village, not the church, that designates him *fa'afeagaiga.*[34] *Fa'afegaiga* is a composition of two words – *fa'a* and *feagaiga*. *fa'a* is a causative prefix that prefixes the root *feagaiga* to make it *fa'afeagaiga.*[35] As a causative prefix, *fa'a* is "to cause or to make", "to mark a comparison" and "nearness."[36] These meanings of *fa'a* appear plausible - to cause or to make covenant, like a covenant and near covenant. Hence *fa'afeagaiga* refers to someone who causes or makes, looks like and is near to covenant. Aiono Le-Tagaloa asserts that "*fa'afeagaiga* is to be like the covenant."[37] That contemplates *fa'afeagaiga* as embodiment of *feagaiga*. In the brother-sister formular, both can be *faafeagaiga* and their relationship is called *feagaiga*.

Noteworthy, the Samoans regarded the missionaries and the teachers as "gods" due to their provision of beads, and the *feagaiga* between the church and the village was warmer, solid, and more secured.[38] The teachers as "gods" recognize the *fa'afeagaiga* as God's "agents" and the latter shows that *feagaiga* exists in between the church minister and the village, which is characterised by warmer, solid, and secured. We may suggest that the church minister and the village are warrants of *feagaiga*; hence, both the church minister and the village are designated as *fa'afeagaiga*. After Christianity arrived, church ministers are identified as the "representatives of God"[39] (*suivaaia o le Atua*). It was and still is natural in the Samoan worldview and mindset. The Western worldviews may seem appropriate to extend this understanding of *feagaiga* as "shared life".

Western Thought: Buber and Levinas

Though Western thought regarding human relationships do not speak about *feagaiga* in the Samoan context, similar sentiments can be found in Buber's *I* and *Thou* idea of the human being.[40] The *I* refer to creatures including human, and *Thou* is the only supreme living God. The *I,* though human, exists in a relationship like that of a creature and God. The *I* live in a creaturely relationship with God. Buber's view is that any human sees another human a *Thou.* In his "Dialogical Personalism,"[41] he drew the same fundamental distinction that one is *I-It* the other is *I-You* relations. Despite the former, the latter seems appropriate to what is contended. At this point, the *I-You* relations is considered mutually connected only in the premises of "active subjects". Between these active subjects lies the "intangible and invisible bond…not a specific content, but a *Presence*, a Presence as power."[42] Such a thought can verify the contention that *feagaiga* is a catalyst of relationships. Once this is achieved, respect evolves, and reciprocity born.

Moreover, Levinas supports that "the human *I* is the reuniting of the profane and

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[34] CCCS, *The Constitution of the Congregational Church Samoa* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2016) says, "...*osi feagaiga*" (have covenanted) and "*feagaiga"* (covenant) are only mentioned without *fa'afeagaiga*. *Osi feagaiga* refers to the covenant between a *faifeau* and a village. The Constitution uses *faifeau* which tells that the village only designates its *faifeau* a *fa'afeagaiga*.

[35] Pratt, *Pratt's grammar*, 3.

[36] Pratt, *Pratt's grammar*, 76.

[37] Aiono Le Tagaloa, "The Samoan Culture and Government.," 124.

[38] Gilson, *Samoa 1830-1900*, 73, 137; Tofaeono, *Eco - Theology*, 136.

[39] Gilson, *Samoa 1830-1900,* 70, 73.

[40] Martin Buber, *Between man and man*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (1974), 44.

[41] Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 201 – 203.

[42] Buber, *Between man,* 202.

the sacred. It is not a substance but a relationship". The *I* is only unique when an attribute is added to make him/her different from other individuals[43]. Considering *feagaiga* as an attribute the sister may be different from her brother. In his *Humanism of the Other,* he addresses Heidegger's "essence of being" and "forgetting of being". That is, when a man forgets the essence of his being that means he makes himself like a monad; an ultimate man of the "psychic life" or a god.[44] Possessing *feagaiga* by the sister, in such a manner makes her ultimate or a god. This is in line with the Samoan belief that women possess a superpower than men. However, Levinas seems to suggest that when the sister forgets her essence as being a woman/female, she would fall to becoming a god instead being a woman. Forgetting being a woman due to her essence of becoming an ultimate being is perhaps irrational on the one hand or creative on the other. This is the problem with *feagaiga* when it is confined to a particular object like a sister even to the point where others refer to their brothers as *feagaiga*. Due to that difficulty in confinement, it may appropriate to consider few biblical conceptions to ascertain the nature/essence of *feagaiga*, culturally, theologically, and biblically.

A Biblical Perspective: Equality in Active Subjects

The idea of choosing a perspective from the Bible serves two purposes – recognizing (or dialoguing with) biblical strands and exploring *feagaiga* in its fluidity. Though at first sight we determine it culturally but since we became Christians, the Bible serves as the life justification proof of things pertaining a Christian world like Samoa. As a Protestant Christian in the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS), the Bible is considered as the revelation of truth. This is not to say that my Samoan worldview of *feagaiga* is untrue. Appropriately, blending two worldviews may provide either the plausibility of a fact or the truthfulness of an idea or concept. This task grabs two ideas (from many ideas) – the biblical covenant and the creation of Eve in Genesis 1: 27.

1. Covenant

As covenant is translated *feagaiga* in Samoan, Taylor asserts that the word in the Bible refers to God's covenant with His people. He claims that "to the Hebrew mind the covenant idea covered all kinds of human relationships. It is a bond which united people in mutual obligations, whether through a marriage contract, a commercial enterprise or verbal undertaking. It was only natural that people's relationship…should also have been expressed in terms of a covenant."[45] Interestingly, despite different covenants between God and His people throughout the Old Testament, it is obvious that the life of the Hebrews is categorized accordingly. Worth noting are the "bond" and the "mutual obligations" applied to a contract, a commercial enterprise, or a verbal undertaking, where the assumed parties are mutually obliged to serve the bond.

In the same context, Rabali stresses two Hebrew forms of covenant (*berith*) – the monopleuric and the dipleruic – that are appealing to this task.[46] Both are agreements but the latter serves the purpose of this paper because, in the Hebrew tradition, it is an agreement between equal parties. The monopleruic otherwise is an agreement between God and His people emphasizing the greatness of God (as the greater party) over His

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[43] Emmanuel Levinas, *Outside the subject,* eds. Werner Hamacher & David E. Wellberry (Standford California: Standford University Press, 1994), 6,156.

[44] Emmanuel Levinas. *Humanism of the other*, trans. Nidra Poller. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 61.

[45] John Taylor, "The Five Books: Genesis to Deuteronomy", in *The Lion Handbook to the Bible*, eds, Pat and David Alexander (England: Lion Publishing,1999), 110.

[46] Theofhitshithu Rabali, "The concept of the covenant in establishing and maintaining the meaning and value of the church" (MTh Thesis, North West University, 2004), 10–12.

people (as the weaker party). By means of relationship, Rabali takes the *berith* as "a contract involving the rights and duties of the partners" suggesting that the *berith* "may indicate a relationship, but more specifically, a determination, or obligation accepted by the subjects of *berith.*[47]

Considering Taylor and Rabali's views in the Samoan tradition of *feagaiga*, the church minister is covenanted with the congregation, and it is called *osi feagaiga* (covenanted). This *osi feagaiga* is a verbal undertaking which begins with the Eucharistic cup of the covenant in the church followed with the Samoan Ceremony of kava in the *faletele* (chief's house) in a rhetorical oratorial exchange. In this occasion, the covenant between the church minister and the congregation/village is warranted by the fine mat of the covenant (*ie o le feagaiga*), received and taking good care of by the church minister. After these ceremonies, the church minister is designated the *faafeagaiga*.

In the *feagaiga* relations contended in this article, the parties involved assume mutually equal in the sense that they are equally obliged to serve the *feagaiga*; hence, embody the *feagaiga*. This view seems to suggest that the Samoan *feagaiga*, as rooted in Fatu and Eleele mentioned earlier, is the pillar of social and political life setting in Samoa. The brother-sister relationship created by Fatu represents a contract, a commercial enterprise, and a verbal undertaking governed by *feagaiga* as 'shared life' promoting Samoa's fundamental nature of relating as universal and collective.

2. The creation of Eve in Genesis 1:27

The creation of Eve captures attention when discussing equality and egalitarian relationships concerning *feagaiga*. In Genesis 1: 27 God created two human beings – male and female - from "his own image". Literally, from a single image it appears that there are two separate creations of human beings. This is evident in Brown, Drivers, and Briggs' identifications of "his image" as masculine singular."[48] However, in Genesis 2:21 – 22, which is the second account, God created Eve from Adam's "rib." Despite the difference in accounts, the fact is that there are two sources of one creation.

Realizing the second account which emphasizes the "rib", one might wonder whether the rib represents the idea of equality or imbalance among the subjects – male and female. While the Hebrew word *tzela* is translated "rib" in English, the word "rib" may lead into misconceptions like inferiority and inequality between subjects, from the fact that the female was created from a part of the male body. However, the Hebrew word has a second meaning of "side"[49] which seems considerably reliable. Interestingly, according to Browns (et al), both the rib and the side are absolutes and constructs.[50] This means the two do not account for a specified part of Adam's male anatomy, but the entire body, from head to toes. Evidently, the following verse (Gen 2:23) guarantees the "side" in its entirety by connecting the bone and the flesh which finally joins Adam and Eve together to become "one flesh", in verse 24.

Accordingly, it seems that Genesis represents God's vision of equality between male and female who have different roles to play. In the *feagaiga* relations, the brother-sister relationship created by Fatu in the beginning does not account for one is power or sacred than the other. They are equal because they share the same *feagaiga* under prescribed obligations. It exemplifies the notion that *feagaiga* was not transposed to church ministers in congregations; rather, it is naturally running through the veins of any Samoan from the beginning to accept Christianity in the *feagaiga* way of relating. This helped bolster Christian Mission to its fullness in the sense that serving one *feagaiga*

[47] Rabali, "The Concept of covenant," 12.

[48] F. Brown et al., *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Massachusetts: Hendrick Publishers, 1906), 853.

[49] Brown, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs,* 854 – 855.

[50] Brown, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs*, 854.

includes all facets of life – political, social, cultural, economic, and religious. Having said that, the congregation/village is to *feagai* (facing opposite, correspond, dwell cordially) with the church minister from all aspects of life mentioned, not because the church minister is scared in his aspect of *suivaaia* (representative of God) but honoring the agreement/covenant made with the church minister before God. The church minister, his wife, children, and family must serve likewise. It seems that the success of Christian mission in Samoa, by the Samoans is by bonding with and honoring of the *feagaiga*.

Success of Christian Mission

The success of Christian Mission is reflected in 192 years of Christianity in Samoa under the employment of the *feagaiga* as 'shared life'. The CCCS upholds the 1830 covenant between Malietoa Vaiinupo and the LMS, as the guiding principle of mission in Samoa and abroad. That covenant serves as an access point of relating between a church minister and a congregation. Both parties embodied the *feagaiga*, hence called them *faafeagaiga.* Such an operation is still operating nowadays. Yet, the success is not by the sacredness of the church minister over the congregation, as seen in the transposing/applying process, but by truthfully indulging onto obligations pertaining to the covenant established with the congregation. Indulging onto obligations is honouring the covenant made by our ancestors with Christianity.

In addition, considering a transit-destination perspective, the established agreement/covenant is an access point to consider in all aspects of knowing, and the church minister or congregation as destinations. It is not a direct relationship; rather, a relationship where *feagaiga* consents how to perform the required obligations pertaining to that *feagaiga*. The way for the church minister to correspond or dwell cordially (*feagai*) with the congregation is not by force, control, rule, or domination. Rather it is by connection and bonding. The congregation must follow in the same direction. Moreover, the Eucharistic Cup of the covenant in the church and the kava ceremony at the *faletele* (big house) during the covenant ceremony (*osi feagaiga*) are taken by the CCCS as the agreement/covenant that the church minister and the congregation must submit to in performing their obligations. Failing to serve in this way leads into unacceptable consequences of dismissal, death, or curse in both sides of the *feagaiga*. The operation is applied also to the relationship between the church and state.

Church-State Relations: A Separation

In the CCCS context, the 1830 covenant at Sapapalii Savaii is a point in history that can certify the beginning of the separation of two gigantic entities in Samoa. After State Independence in 1962, it appears that that separation came into existent. This paper sees that the relation of the state to the church, and vice versa, may fall into considering the 1830 covenant as an access point (transit point), perhaps a channel, to correspond and to face opposite with the church as their destination. As Malietoa represents a form of state (*malo*) at the time and the LMS as the church, we may see that any issues pertaining to the relationship of both parties must adhere to the principle of transiting, accessing, logging in, to guarantee the way to relate or reach the destination. Under the *feagai* (correspond/opposite) concept, the two parties (church and state) have different obligations but must uphold the *feagaiga* to perform them in relation to one another. For this purpose, the church and state can be destinations while the 1830 *feagaiga* can be their access point. The state must consider that *feagaiga* in its relationship with the church, and the church must follow suit. In this way of relating, peace is always attained. For instance, supposing taxing the clergies is a direct legislation imposed by the Samoan government on *faifeau* in the parishes. Imposing without corresponding (*feagai*) brings tension between two different parties and in the public domain. Tackling this issue from

feagaiga as 'shared life', it seems to appear that tax imposition may have neglected an access point (transit) to inform or communicate with the church (as a destination). Be inconsiderate and oblivious to this Samoan way of relating is a matter of ignoring the conscience of knowing the Samoans inherited before, during, and after Christianity. This paper views that failure to adhere to *feagaiga* way of relating results in either cursing and falling, or not honoring our ancestors and forefathers who established *feagaiga* to cultivate the Samoan way of living.

Concluding Remarks

The sacredness of the sister as the *feagaiga* was transposed to church ministers making them sacred than the congregations. Weaving the strands of thoughts from various disciplines used in this undertaking, suggests that *feagaiga* is a godly linkage, a creaturely relationship and is neither a substance nor a person, but a way of relating to God and the other. Its confinement to a particular object would limit its capacity to transform the parties involved. These parties are thus designated *faafeagaiga* because they embody the *feagaiga* and work under prescribed obligations required to serve it. For one instance, between a church minister and a village the designation is not limited to one party but rendered equally to both. For another instance, between the church and state, neither of which can be sacred nor superior to the other but rendered equally to both. As it is rooted in a Samoan myth, it is unique in its own kind not possessing any stagnant characteristics but exists in many perspectives. That flexibility determines new set of meanings to help foster existing or future endeavors and/or find solutions to issues pertaining to social and political life setting. In the Samoan context, everything religious, social, cultural, and political, operates in *feagaiga* relations. Whether a Christian Mission, *feagaiga* has a potential to amplify it; or problems within the family, village, church, and society, it has the capacity to overcome them. It is because *feagaiga* relations may not be in the process of transposition (from the sister to the church minster) but it is natural tendency gifted by God to the Samoans and inherited in the beginning, augmented by the influence of Christianity, to extend His glory in the world and to promote that sacred relationship is greater than sacred status.

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Mamanu: Exploring Samoan Indigenous Patterns of Knowledge in the Pre-missionary Era

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Abstract

Before the arrival of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in 1830, the pattern of education in Samoa was based on its traditional systems. These systems were informal processes whereby people acquired skills and knowledge from childhood onwards by a practical oriented and dialogical method. Memorization and observation were crucial skills in the Samoan traditional knowledge system. It perpetuated and sustained Samoan culture or aganuu); values which are enacted and manifested in the faasamoa (Samoan way of life). The aim of this essay is to explore these traditional knowledge systems and their epistemological foundation before the arrival of the LMS in1830. Firstly, the essay elaborates the Samoan word for education 'aoga' which enables us to see the cosmological nature of Samoan education in the pre-missionary era. During this time, the Samoan people were fond of God's creation as a classroom for learning. Secondly the Samoan myth of creation will be investigated to argue that Samoa's epistemological system in the pre-missionary era was both practical and dialogical. Thirdly a discussion of Samoan culture and faasamoa will be considered as the content of the so-called indigenous curriculum.

Key Words: education, epistemological system, indigenous, *mamanu, aganuu* and *faasamoa*

Faa-tufuga-ga o le Poto: Patterning Knowledge

The word *Faa-tufuga-ga* is divided into three words. *Faa* is a causative word translated as 'to', and the word *tufuga* is a Samoan term for carpenter or tattoo marker,[1] which the '*ga*' at the end change the form of the word into a verb. *Poto* on the other hand means clever, intelligent or smart. In this sense, *Faa-tufuga-ga o le poto* simply refers to the patterning or designing of one's knowledge or educating. The Samoan word for education is *aoga.* The word derives from the root word *a'o* meaning 'to teach or to learn.'[2] The plural form of the word *a'o* is *a'oa'o*. *A'oa'o* articulates the repetitive and continuous action of learning, teaching, training and/or practising. The form also signifies a practical-based method. That means obtaining and imparting knowledge is carried out through participating, imitating and observing which leads to learning and teaching that knowledge. George Turner explains:

> Girls always, and boys for four or five years, are under the special charge of the mother and follow her in her domestic avocations. The girl is taught to draw water, gather shellfish and make mats and native cloth. The boy, after a time, follows his father, and soon is useful in planting, fishing, house-building, and all kinds of manual labour.[3]

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[1] George Pratt, *Pratt's Grammar Dictionary and Samoan Language* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1876), 213.

[2] Pratt, *Pratt's Grammar Dictionary*, 58.

[3] George Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia* (London: John Show, 1861), 177.

Turner's observation signifies interconnectedness between parents and children and with the surrounding environment, thus enabling the knowledge to be sustained within the art of teaching and learning. The practice of learning and teaching could happen everywhere and anywhere at any age. By way of delivery, oral communication or dialogical method was utilised in teaching. This was enhanced by demonstrations in the family as well as community activities. The learners, on their part, acquired knowledge and skills from participating with and emulating the elders.

Aoga then, in the Samoan understanding, is deemed as a way of initiating and relating one's character to the way of life of the society and community. To draw out another nuance of *aoga*, Konai Helu Thaman defines the Tongan equivalent of *ako* as "an introduction to a worthwhile learning and teaching."[4] Indigenous education was largely informal (unorganised, non-institutionalised, worthwhile learning) and non-formal (organised, non-institutionalised, worthwhile learning) yet worthwhile learning and teaching was achieved primarily through oral traditions, such as myths, legends, dance, poetry, songs, proverbs and certain rituals such as evening prayers or what Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagaloa calls *Fanaafi o Faamalama*.[5]

Crucially, the transmission of skills and knowledge through *aoga* for the Samoans and various islands of Polynesia are vital for cultural survival, growth and continuity. A similar notion is expressed by Thaman in the Tongan educational system in which she writes, "...early Tongan education was informal (i.e. unorganised worthwhile learning) aimed at the continuation of the social order and the maintenance of the status quo."[6] Clearly, the basic motivation for being educated was to continue and sustain our *aganuu* (culture). In fact, the content of the 'organisational structure and cultural foundation' of Samoa lies at the heart of its '*talatuu*' (ancient stories) and manifested and performed in songs, poems, *fagogo* (folktales), and rituals. In that way, a continuous performing of our *talatuu* through *fagogo*, poems and songs, articulates the nature of existentialism that is rooted in indigenous philosophies, "either by movements to the beginning (past) or the beginning [having] been transferred to the end (present) and then to the future but with the same goal."[7] This can be reflected by an on-going use of proverbial sayings derived from '*talatuu*' and used again in present political and religious ceremonies. .

The abovementioned discussion of *aoga* clarifies that *aganuu* dictates the content of the Samoan educational system in the pre-missionary era. This necessitates a proper connection between *aoga* and *aganuu*. *Aganuu,* according to Ama'amalele Tofaeono, can be understood etymologically as the makeup of two words, *aga* and *nuu*. He writes:

> The word *aga* refers to the moral and social or behavioural character of a *nuu* (village of a community). Aga bespeaks the spiritual (when interpreted from *agaga* – spirits) character of the community. It includes their visions, dreams, anticipations, fears and hopes, or the way they conceive and face the ups and downs of life. This means that [the] spiritual and social behaviours of the community are intimately interwoven to foster a specific ethos and a way of life of a society.[8]

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[4] Konai H. Thaman, *Education Ideas from Oceania* (Suva: University of South Pacific, 2003), 73.

[5] See further reading Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagaloa, "*Motugaafa*" (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1996), where Aiono defines Faanaafi o Faamalama as 'Evening Prayers.'

[6] Thaman, *Education Ideas from Oceania,* 73.

[7] Faitala Talapusi, "Institut Protestant De Theologie Faculte De Teologie De Montpellier: Eschatology in Polynesian Context" (PhD Thesis Monttpellier LE, 1990).

[8] Ama'amalele Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga-The Household of Life, A Perspective Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa* (Neuendettelsau: Freimund-Druckerei, 2000), 22.

Malama Meleisea, on the other hand, suggests, "The word for culture defines unity. *Aganuu* speaks of nature and nurture in the same breath; for *aga* is the essence of nature and things, while *nuu* represents the sum of man's learned experience."[9] In a similar manner, Thaman defines culture as "the way of life of a group of people, and is inclusive of its education system, language and worldview."[10]

In light of these perceptions of the relationships between *aoga* and *aganuu* it is clear that the Samoan epistemological system is relationally based. Thaman makes this connection as she says "education is about people and people have cultural histories which include their particular ways of knowing and understanding the world in which they live, including important beliefs and values that have been handed down to them from previous generations […]."[11] It is grounded on *faia* (kinship connection) and guided by values such as *va fealoa'i* (mutual respect). Firstly, imparting and obtaining knowledge by the Samoans cannot treat the religious (sacred) and social (secular) as separate entities. They are considered equally important as the foundation of educating and nurturing ethos for a Samoan. In that context, the behaviours and ontological notion of the sacred relational spaces have epistemological underpinnings based on the Samoan worldview.[12] As Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese rightly suggests, the Samoan and Pacific worldview is a "worldview that understands the environment, humans, the animate and inanimate – all-natural-life – as having its sources in the same divine origin, imbued with life force, interrelated and genealogically connected."[13] This way of seeing the world leads to holistic approaches and practices that seek the integration of multiple elements. The way the Samoans pictured the concept of nature, of self or society is grounded on the intimate *faia*. They regard every single matter in their surroundings as part of their life. Nothing is superior to the other, as Samoans are grounded in the belief that they are biologically brought forth from the same womb.[14]

As abovementioned, Tuiatua underscores three interrelated elements of a Samoan worldview that further elaborates on the claim of this undertaking that *aganuu* prescribes the content of the Samoan epistemological system. They are the 'cosmos' which deals with sacredness and gods; 'people' which includes social systems, *faamatai*, customs, beliefs and practices; and the physical elements concerning land, sea and sky.[15] It is a perspective that depicts a value-based way of knowledge system. Speaking about the relationships between the three elements necessitates a deliberation on the social and sacred relational spaces or '*va*' which are central to the Samoan epistemological system.

Therefore, *manuia* (peace, consciousness, blessings, intelligent) lies in the

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[9] Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa* (Suva: University of South Pacific, 1987), 177.

[10] Konai H. Thaman, "No Need to Whisper: Reclaiming Indigenous Knowledge and Education in the Pacific," in *Whispers in Vanities*, ed. Sualii Sauni and M. Tamasailau (Wellington: Huia Press, 2014), 119.

[11] Konai H. Thaman, "Towards Cultural Democracy in Pacific Education: An Imperative for the 21st Century," in *The Tree of Opportunity: re-thinking Pacific Education*, ed. Institute of Education (Suva: USP, 2002), 102.

[12] This is an important point because it is one of the consequences of the foreign mamanu of education introduced by the missionaries which separated the religious schools from secular schools.

[13] Tuiatua Tamasese Efi T.T., "Bio Ethics and the Samoan Indigenous Reference," 2007, Paper presented to Regional Pacific Ethics of Knowledge Production Workshop., Mila-Schaaf Workshop Report 2008.

[14] This will be further illustrated later under the Samoa creation story as a source of intelligence.

[15] Tuiatua Tamasese Efi. T.T., "Search for Harmony: Peace in the Samoan Indigenous Religion," in *Su'esu'e Manogi: In search for Fragrance*, ed. Sualii Sauni Tamasailau (Wellington: Huia, 2018), 138.

"harmony within oneself, with one's fellow men, with the cosmos and with the environment."[16] The knowledge of a person or "family custodian of indigenous knowledge, Tuiatua argues "is imperative to be shared in order for family members to find their roots for their *faasinomaga*.[17] Before the arrival of missionaries, Samoa did not have separate places to teach and learn. As it is contemporarily known, institutional formal schooling has transmitted faith-based religious and secular knowledge and simultaneously took place both within the *aiga* or family and *fale o matai* such as village meeting house establishments. In fact, this relational aspect of education system in Samoa before the arrival of missionaries steered this undertaking to use a Samoan concept called *Mamanu* as a Christian approach to this historical exploration.

Mamanu as a Christian Approach to History

The term "*mamanu*" refers to the patterned designs in figure work in cloth (tapa), clubs, sinnet or body art (e.g., Samoan *Sogaimiti* or tattooed untitled man). It can also refer to the architectural design used by Samoan builders for houses. *Mamanu* changes the appearance of something. The beauty of an artwork is enhanced by the variety of interrelated, interconnected or relational patterns. The relational (*faia*) nature of *mamanu* in an artwork shows that no pattern is inferior to the other. Traditionally, each particular *mamanu* is usually drawn from Samoan religion, environment, customs, and everyday life while expressing the interconnectedness of the land, sea, animals and humanity. According to Albert Wendt, *mamanu* of the Samoan tattoo (both female and male tattoos) are not just for decoration, they are scripts/texts/testimonies which have to do with relationship, order, and form.[18] In that sense, *mamanu* designed on a body, mat, club and the architecture of the Samoan *fale* articulates relationships between one's present context and the time of the ancestors; they are scripts which allow the past to speak to the present. For the *mamanu* of a *fale* in particular, Latu Latai highlights its interconnected nature by stating that;

> The *fale* is thus an embodiment not only of the openness of the family but also the relational character of the Samoan person. Like the intricate designs of the dome framework of the house, with its interwoven rafters tied and fastened together into complex patterns with coconut sinnet, the Samoan person is one who is deeply connected not only to the family, but past ancestors, land and the community.[19]

What is important to note at this point is that *mamanu* from a traditional perspective helps sustain and perpetuate our histories and stories. It was a medium which displayed (through Samoan tattoo, houses, canoes) and bridged our past to the present.

Indeed, *mamanu* tells a story, and for most Samoans, part of the story speaks to their Christian heritage. According to David Bebbington, the Christian approach to history derives from the Christian belief that God intervenes in world events.[20] For Bebbington such an approach to history found its roots in the Old Testament where the Jewish writers believed that divine intervention was the norm in history. The Jewish authors wrote that Yahweh their God intervened and directed human affairs. For instance, in the Exodus event the Jewish writers recorded that Yahweh led the desert wanderings of their ancestors, engaged in a covenant with them, and even brought them to the land of

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[16] Tamasese Efi, "Searching for Harmony," 138.

[17] TamaseseEfi, "Searching for Harmony," 138.

[18] Albert Wendt, "Tatauing the Post Colonial Body," *SPAN* 42-43 (1996): 15-29.

[19] Latu Latai, "From an Open Fale to Mission House: Negotiating Boundaries of Domesticity in Samoa," in *Divine Domesticities Christian Paradoxes in Asia and the Pacific*, eds. Hyaeweol Choi and Margaret Jolly (Canberra: ANU Press, 2014), 293-323.

[20] David Bebbington, *Patterns in History* (Leicester: Apolos, 1990), 44.

Palestine that the divine had promised to them.[21] In this sense, the Christian approach to history therefore refers to the way of interpreting and recording historical *mamanu* of education in Samoa during the pre-missionary era. God is seen as the history maker who guides and intervenes in the course of history. It affirms the belief that God had long existed in Samoa and the Pacific before the arrival of missionaries.

It is an approach aimed to create space for the indigenous *mamanu* to be acknowledged as a useful design within the broader picture of blessings. In that way it may reflect how *mamanu* from both ends (indigenous and Christian) work collaboratively for the consciousness in life of the community as a whole, while providing an alternative understanding of our stories and histories.

However, it is not the purpose of this undertaking to create an 'either or' platform between indigenous and Christian *mamanu* but to generate an alternative countenance of a more complementary *mamanu*. In that sense it is the nature of *mamanu* that the modifications in the appearance of the final form of an artwork are always pleasing.

Mamanu of intelligence in the Samoan Creation Story

My analysis of the creation story of Samoa serves various aims. It will firstly attempt to discover the patterns of intelligence within the creation story. Secondly, the study is cognisant of the fact that the existing interpretation of this version of creation is very much inclined to ground the religious and theological juncture of the Samoans[22] and many others. However, the undertaking attempts to utilise the creation story as a *lagisoifua*[23] (fact) to investigate and attest to patterns of knowing and understanding (in terms of delivery mode, content and motivation to be instructed) which were explicitly rooted in the creation story. In doing so, it facilitates answers to the questions of when, how, why, what, and where these indigenous epistemologies and understandings prevailed in instructing and fashioning the pre-missionary era's worldview of being educated or instructed.

Source of Intelligence

O Tagaloa o le atua e nofo i le vanimonimo	The God Tagaloa dwelt in the Expanse
Na ia **faia** mea uma	He **created** everything
Ua na o ia e leai se lagi, leai se nuu	He alone was there, not any sky, not any country
Ua na ona **fealualua'i** i le vanimonimo	He only **walked** (went) to and fro in the Expanse
E leai foi se sami ma se laueleele	There was no sea and no earth
Ao le mea na ia **tu** ai na tupu ai le papa	At a place where he **stood** there grew up a rock

[21] Bebbington, *Patterns in History*, 44.

[22] Peletisala Lima, "Performance Seeking Understanding: An Exercise in Samoa Hermenutics" (Master Thesis Pacific Theological College, 2001); Talapusi, "Institute Protestant De Theologie Faculte De Teologie De Montpellier: Eschatology in Polynesian Context."

[23] Le Tagaloa refers to 'Lagisoifua' as life-justification proof. See Le Tagaloa, *Motugaafa*; Kramer refers to the word lagi as heavens or signing a song and soifua means life, alive (A Kramer, *The Samoa Islands: An Outline of a Monograph with Particular Consideration of German Samoa*, trans. Verhaaren (Auckland: Polynesia Press, 1994). From these perspectives, facts signify the ever substantial and freshness of a past event which proclaims life for the people and the community. Though it is not immune to changes in the way it might transform the lives of the people through the ages. It still remains authentic in history and to the communities that gave meaning to the event.

O Tagaloa-fa'a-tutupunu'u lona igoa	Tagaloa-faatutupunuu was his name
Aua e lei faia foi mea uma	All things were about to be created
E oo i le lagi ma mea mea uma e lei faia	Even the sky was not made nor anything else
Ona **tautala atu** lea o ia i le papa sa tu ai	Then Tagaloa ordered the rock which he stood on

'Mavae ia'	'Be then split'
Ona fanau ai lea o papa e fitu	Then were brought forth seven rocks
Papa-taoto, Papa-sosolo, Papa-lau-a'au,	Lying rock, creeping rock, reef rock,
Papa-'ano-'ano, Papa-'ele, Papa-tu,	thick rock, clay rock, standing rock,
Papa-'amu-'amu	coral rock

Ona toe **tautala atu** lea o Tagaloa i le papa	Then Tagaloa **spoke** again to the rock
ma **ta** i lona lima taumatau	and **struck** it with his right hand.
Ona fanau mai lea o Eleele (matua o tagata uma) ma le sami	Then the earth brought forth (the parent of all people) and the sea

Ona **faasaga** lea o Tagaloa i le itu taumatau	Tagaloa **turned** to the right side
Ona maua mai ai lea o vai	Fresh water sprang up
O Aoa-lala (tama), Gao-gao-le-tai (teine)	Was Aoa-lala(boy), Gao-gao-le-tai (girl)
o le tagata, o Agaga, Loto,	Man, Spirit, Heart,
Finagalo, ma masalo	Will and thought
Na fananau uma mai ina ua toe tautala Tagaloa i le papa	were all born from Tagaloa's **order** to the rock

Ordinance/Tofiga

1 Let the Spirit and the Heart and Will and Thought go on and join inside the Man; and they join there, and man became ***intelligent***. And this was joined to the earth ('*ele-ele'*) and it was called *Fatu-ma-le-eleele*, as couple. *Fatu* the man and '*Ele'ele*, the woman.[24]

The myth clearly shows that intelligence or *poto* was given to man [sic], which gave rise to the notion that knowledge was one of the *mamanu* of Tagaloa's creations. From this perspective, the myth clearly stated that intelligent or *poto* was bestowed by Tagaloa as a gift or tofi (ordinance) to our ancestors. As commonly interpreted by most, "[T]he god Tagaloa dwelt in the Expanse" as the sole place for intelligence.[25] This is an obvious interpretation which articulates intelligence within the story. However, this part of the

[24] J. Frazer, "Samoan Creation Story," *The Journal of Polynesia Society* 1 (1892): 164-189.
[25] Frazer, "Samoan Creation Story," 164-189.

The study considers the actions (verbs) within the story as patterns of creation, such as when Tagaloa created, walked, stood, spoke or ordered, and turned. As observed from the flow of the story every action by Tagaloa resulted in bringing forth a new *mamanu* of the creation. For instance, the rock was born where he *stood* which also brought forth his name *Tagaloa-faa-tutupunuu* (the creator). When Tagaloa ordered/spoke to the rock (which he first created by standing on it), he *mavae* it (split it up) then brought forth seven rocks. He again ordered/ spoke and struck the rock and the parents of all people from the earth and the sea came forth. Tagaloa spoke to the rock again and man, spirit, will and thought all came into being. From this perspective, an intelligent man or human is someone who considers spirit, will and thought as equally important.

Dialogical Instruction: Mode of Delivery

Tautala (order/speak) seems to be the most commonly used within the story. *Mavae* (split up) and *fanau* (bring forth) or bringing into being matters of creation were designed by the *mamanu* of speaking. The interaction between Tagaloa (through the act of speaking) and the rock was carried out through a process of parturition.[26] *Mamanu* perceives this relationship as a dialogical way of instruction. The processes of *mavae* and *fanau* functioned according to the conversation between Tagaloa and the rock. In other words, the *mamanu* of the creation depends on the instructions given by Tagaloa to the rock. Within a dialogical sphere, there is always a mutual respect between parties. This is shown by the way the rock responds to
Tagaloa's order.

It is worthwhile to note that the first word uttered by Tagaloa was *mavae*[27] (to become, to unfold, and to open) which moved the natural world. It appears from the story that the word *mavae* has a notion of "to begin, or to start" or "becoming." It happened to be the transformation process of creation. The word *mavae* also has an essence of bestowing blessings. In that sense, the rock seems to be blessed by Tagaloa's oral instruction to be the womb in order to begin and transform. This reflects a mutual dependence of both parties (Tagaloa and the rock) which depicts a parent-child relationship. On the one hand the rock's response to Tagaloa's order discloses a cosmological connection where the rock fulfils the wish of the god. On the other hand, Tagaloa's words of instruction to the rock connote a sense of *mavae* (blessing) to *fanau* (give birth) or bring into being matters of the creation. As Faalepo Tuisuga-le-taua suggests:

> Dialogical method is crucial for Samoan education and rarely any critical interchange of ideas occurs between parent and children as they believe in the repertoire of knowledge and wisdom vested in the parents and older generations, thus children could only listen and learn.[28]

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[26] It generally underpins a religious understanding in relation to the existence of the spirit (Talapusi , "Institut Protestant De Theologie Faculte," 1990).

[27] I prefer to use the translation of the word mavaega here as "to become", "to unfold" and "to open" because it is more fitting to the notion of the bestowing of blessings or last will or testament or parting words which attest to titles and land ownership. For current usage see; Lowell D. Holmes, *A Samoan Village: Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology* (New York: Holt Rhinehart and Winston Inc, 1974).

[28] Faalepo A. Tuisuga-le-taua, "O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa: A Hermeneutical Critical Analysis of the Cultural-Theological Praxis of the Samoan Context" (PhD Thesis, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2009), 98.

Distinct to this perspective is the belief that whatever comes from the mouth of an elder or parent is a blessing to a child. It echoes the relationship between Tagaloa and the rock - when the god *mavae* (bless) to *fanau* (bring forth). Therefore, instructing a child occurs within a relational space where both the child and the parent have a role to play. Cognitive learning through reading and writing is a foreign concept for Samoan people.

There is a saying that depicts this Samoan educational philosophy: '*E fafaga tama a manu i fuga o la'au, a'e fafaga tama a tagata i upu ma tala*'(Animals/birds feed their young with fish and blooms/berries of trees, but humans feed theirs with words'). This denotes the emphasis on education through oral instructions. One example of this is *fagogo* or storytelling, a dialogical practice unique to the Samoan educational experience. *Fagogo* is a way that parents/elders of the family transform and bless their children which enhances that parent-child relationship. The parents/elders, as progenitor of their children, employ *fagogo* to talk, to share, and to discuss important values with their children. As one Samoan proverbial sayings states: '*Matimati le fanau ae aua le tuufauina* (Do not neglect the children but nurture them)'. It indicates a *va-fesoota'i* (relational space) between parent and child, where a child seeks to fulfil the wish of the parent while also sustaining blessings within the family. When parents fail to undertake this role as a creator to the child, they may risk the life of the child as well as the family.

The dialogical method of *fagogo* is utilised to direct the future generation to the basic patterns of their *faasinomaga*. A well-instructed person is the one who fully understands his/her roots by learning his/her *faia* (genealogies) within the family, village and district. This is reminiscent of the purpose of *measina* (treasures of Samoan culture). The basic purpose of learning for a Samoan is to understand these patterns of his/her *faasinomaga* (matai title, place and village). Lowell Holmes states:

> A very high Talking Chief [sic] title may derive its status from the acknowledged fact that legends report that the original titleholder rendered exceptional service [Tautua] as an orator for a king or represented his village well in some historic negotiation with another village or other island kingdoms.[29]

From this perspective, getting a matai title or becoming a high chief was always the rationale within this system of education. To be the most recognisable (intelligent) person within a community is to fully understand the *faia. Faia* disregards the notion of individualism because he/she cannot dismiss the past from the present. These are the underpinning aspects of being well-instructed, the *mamanu* which stipulates and situates a person within the village as a whole. It entails roles and responsibilities which implement a praxis-oriented kind of learning. Put simply, getting a western qualification or degree does not define intelligence in the traditional Samoan context.

Considering the pattern, *tautala* (talk) accentuates the significance of words. Hence the essence of *talatuu* is echoed in stories and narratives that were orally passed from one generation to the other. It is with this essence of speaking/order that the study believes that the creation story formulates an effective system for the instruction of people. As one Samoan saying goes; '*E pala le ma'a ae le pala le tala* (The rock decays but words live forever)'. The tradition of speaking as a mode of delivery enables the sustaining of our own epistemological systems.

Practically Oriented Approach: *Tautua* as a Learning Process

The Samoan way of instruction is a practical oriented approach to learning. In that sense

[29] Lowell D. Holmes, *A Quest for the Real Samoan: The Mead/Freeman Controversy & Beyond* (Massachusetts: Bergin & Gravey Publisher Inc, 1987), 18.

a theoretical approach to obtaining the knowledge is aloof to the educational life of a Samoan. As stated by Keesing, "[During] the pre-white days, indigenous societies had definite systems of education, in the broad sense that every generation took steps to transmit the cultural heritage to the growing youth." [30] He elaborated more by stating that children mimic grown-ups and play at or assist in adult tasks, while the adults encourage, instruct, praise, admonish, and compel. In a similar manner, Tuisuga-le-taua contends: "Samoan epistemology is basically pragmatic and practical."[31] These junctures signify the transmitting of an already existing tradition by the elders of the community observing and practising in the pre-missionary era. Practical learning emphasises a community-based approach rather than being confined to a classroom-based learning experience. The learner moves beyond thinking by experimental manner and feeling to acting. Values and behaviour are identified from the interaction of the individual with the surrounding society (both humans and the environment) rather than solely on the society or the individual.

In the Samoan myth of creation, the earth (parent/ancestor of all human beings) and the sea were created through two patterns known as *ta* (struck) and *tautala* (ordered). The word '*ta*' in the Samoan context has a notion of tilling the land in terms of cultivation. "*Ta le vao*" means 'to cultivate the land', as well as in the trade of the *tautai* (fisherman) "*ta le vaa*" means 'to make a canoe' for fishing. What is worth considering at this point is the process of becoming the earth and sea through the action of *ta*. '*Ta*' at this point contemplates a reciprocal relationship between human, sea and land which at the same time connotes that humans are not central to the creation but part of it. According to Ama'ama Tofaeono, the relationship between human, sea and land is "fundamental to resources and promoters of life upon which other forms of the created order depend. […] Like blood that flows to nurture the whole body, […][32] In that light, '*ta*' suggests a mutual dependency of the two parties: human and creation. The service of the land and sea as promoters of life connotes '*ta*' as the humans' responsibility to care, to love and to treasure land and sea as part of his/her everyday existence accomplishment. During the arrival of Christianity 1830, service of the land and sea not only exhibited hospitality but the practice of caring. John Williams notes:

> Tamalelagi and his brother [sic], not knowing who we were, had brought off some pigs, bananas, and coconuts for sale: but, on seeing his relative Fauea, […] he ordered the pigs, with everything in his canoes, to be arranged on the deck, and then, presenting them to us, stated that, had they known us, they should not have brought off anything for sale; and that in the morning they would bring a more abundant supply.[33]

Significantly, land and sea in the pre-missionary era was prominently the womb of life for the Samoans. This echoes the first ordinance made by Tagaloa to *Fatu* (seed, heart, or create) and *eleele* (earth) in the creation. In that respect the *mamanu* of intelligence (spirit, heart, will and thought) cannot be divorced from defining humanity within the social, political, economic, and religious spheres of life. In other words, an intelligent person is defined by the way he/she cares, loves and treasures his/her connectedness with

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[30] Felix Maxwell Keesing, *The South Seas in the Modern World* (New York: John Day Company, 1969), 243.

[31] Tuisuga-le-taua, "O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa: A Hermeneutical Critical Analysis of the Cultural-Theological Praxis of the Samoan Context," 98.

[32] Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology,* 184.

[33] John Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprise in the South Sea Islands: with Remarks upon the Natural History of the Islands, Origin, Language, Traditions and usages of the Inhabitants* (London: John Show, 1837), 88.

the creation. However, this indigenous perception of land and sea as a source of blessings and space for existence greatly outraged foreigners. Their understanding of education is highlighted by one of their sayings: "Education is the key to success." The centrality of education, in this case, demotes the land and sea as servants to humanity.

The philosophy of a practically oriented way of learning/teaching is exclusively embedded in the Samoan creation story. The relationship between human, sea and land pertaining to the *mamanu ta* will be discussed further by one of the Samoan sayings "*O le ala i le pule o le Tautua*" which means; a path to success is through service."[34] *Tautua* is made up of two words: *tau* means to fight, work and *tua* defines as the back, as of a person, animal or house. *Tautua* simply refers to the service of untitled men and women protecting and supporting the *matai* (chief of the family) so as the whole family.

Accordingly, these junctures express the value of *tautua* from a hierarchical stance. They signify one's compassion in playing the role of *tautua* which simultaneously illustrates the complexity of the role. Furthermore, the predominant rationale of being a *tautua* is to become a high chief guided by the spiritual conviction that it is a blessing.

However, the study attempts to consider *tautua* as a process of practical learning for all Samoans. Taking *tautua* as a process of learning avoids the problem of '*tautua fiamatai*' (playing a role of *tautua* with a desire to get a *matai* title). This undertaking believes that the problem occurs when we confine the role of *tautua* to the untitled men (*aumaga*) and women (*aualuma*). However, seeing *tautua* as a learning process for all people including the *matai* avoids the imperial essence of being a pule (chief of the family) but takes the position of *pule* as an opportunity to learn more and continue the service for the betterment of the family.

The trade of *tautua* is a practice-based learning experience. Through one's persistent involvement and participation in the trade of *tautua* one acquires more experience to cope with the uncertainties of life or to become an 'expert'.[35] As Peni Leota claimed, *tautua* is "the principle which governs relationships with others. It defines the specific duties and obligations in every relationship and, therefore, strengthens the mutual dependence of the people in their corporate identity."[36] Unique to the duty and obligation of a *tautua* is his/her *faia* (relationships). Someone who is responsible for the welfare of the *matai* and the whole family must not lose sight of every single member of the family who are under his/her service. This includes the constant supplying of food, the protection of the family belongings (titles, lands, sea, *Feagaiga*[37]) as well as sustaining the family narratives. The *taulealea* (untitled man) must have a large enough plantation (land) and be an experienced fisherman (sea). The *aualuma* (untitled women), on the other hand, are responsible for inhouse chores, such as the weaving of mats, and maintaining cleanliness of the house.[38]

The success of a *tautua* to become a chief of the family is a communal agreement. It reflects a hierarchical structure of the *faasamoa* (the Samoan way of life). The Samoan hierarchical nature, according to Leota, "reflects a functional distinction which is all important for the harmonious running of the whole community."[39] Hence the bestowing of the *matai* title to someone is like a certificate (the contemporary award) or reward of

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[34] The proverb is generally translated as "A path to authority is through service" because the word "pule" means authority. But I prefer to use the word success because it is more fitting to this study.

[35] This will be discussed in detail in the next section, as Tchkezoff argues that it is a proper name given to the Polynesian matais.

[36] Peniamina Leota, "Justice in the Old Testament: A Model for Western Samoa Society" (Master Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1991), 91.

[37] *Feagaiga* means covenant. It denotes the responsibility of a brother to his sister is to serve and protect her throughout her entire life. See for further reading Latu Latai 2014.

[38] See for further reading Latu Latai's article: 'From Open Fale to Mission Houses.'

[39] Leota, "Justice in the Old Testament: A Model for Western Samoa Society," 15.

faithful *tautua*. In fact, when someone receives the *matai* title, it marks the expectations of a family that this is someone with *tofa*[40] [wisdom].[41] The performance of *tautua* as a process of learning, the wisdom or *tofa* of the future successor has been obtained from participation and experience when he/she served the *matai* and the family. It is within that *tofa* where the significance of *faia* is expected to be reflected in the way he/she talks, acts as well as in decision making. As Serge Tcherkezoff rightly suggests "the historical meaning of the term *matai* throughout Polynesia is not a 'chief' but an 'expert.'[42] He elaborated this by saying that without the living person who embodies the *matai* title, there will be no one to speak on behalf of the family and the ancestors as well to deal with the family belongings (*measina*). In that sense the succeeding *matai* of the family will evoke all the *mamanu* that had been learnt from the trade of *tautua* out of love, care, courtesy, and respect to aid him/her in time of decision making.

Within the hierarchical structure of the *faasamoa*, the parent-child relationship in the family marks the original educational space for any child. It is where boys and girls are expected to learn basic cultural values (respect, good manners, mutual relationship, courtesy) before they enter the next level of training which is the *fale o matai* (village council meeting house). The tradition of *ava* ceremony, serving the *matai* in the village council meeting, started at this level; it was carried out practically. Listening and memorising were significant skills for any learner/*tautua*. Once someone enters this level, they are expected to have learned these basic skills from his/her family. Yet while making a mistake in front of the *matai* council resulted in a stern lecture from the *matai* it was also a chance for the *tautua* to learn.

Tautua stresses both the motivation and content of being well-instructed in the Samoan context. As stressed above by Leota, *tautua* is a mutual dependence of the people in the corporate family embedded within practice-oriented strategies. It is a strategy that is enhanced by observing and practising with the *matai/*elders. The social, religious, and political knowledge of a person is obtained from being part of the community. In fact, every single aspect of *tautua* is shaped by *faia* because learning and teaching is a communal responsibility. The *mamanu* of knowledge and wisdom of oneself is enhanced by the collaborative work of humanity and the rest of creation. As it is revealed in our Samoan creation story, intelligence has been a part of us from birth. In that light, becoming a success in life is not an individual effort. In contrast, this study is not trying to suppress the importance of higher education nowadays. What is worth considering is the latency of our indigenous *mamanu* within education.

Aganuu and *Faasamoa* as the Curriculum

In the pre-missionary-era, education was key to sustaining our *aganuu*. In that context, the worthwhile subjects to learn comprised the past philosophies and worldviews entrenched in our *aganuu*. It makes a group of people or an island unique from others. As Thaman rightly states,

> Most of these [Pacific] cultures have stores of knowledge and understandings, beliefs and values developed over thousands of years and passed on from generation to generation in languages that were appropriate for living in society

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[40] *Tofa* is the respectful word for Samoan wisdom in general.

[41] Makesi Neemia, "Faasamoa/The Samoan way as a Means to Understanding Old Testament Apocalyptical as Represented in the Text of Deutro-Zechraiah" (Master Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 2002), 52.

[42] Serge Tcherkezoff, *First Contacts in Polynesian: The Samoan Case (1722-1884), Western Misunderstanding about Sexuality and Divinity* (Sydney: ANU Press, 2004), 151-90.

> and meaningful to learners. These cultures have adapted to the many changes in the past, but the main aim of learning has remained unchanged – cultural survival and continuity.[43]

Significantly, attempting to learn about our cultures, according to Thaman, prepares any generation to deal with changes in life. Aiono pictures this connection of changes and education to a mount on a free-running horse. In order to deal with changes in life, education must be the rider who controls the changes (the horse).[44] In doing that she says, "[E]ducation must set the pace, must decide and measure the steps as well as the stops, must measure the burden and weigh the load as well as map out the destination."[45] This is where *faasamoa* comes into the scene. According to Norman Goodall:

> *Faasamoa* is an unwritten body of tradition but, chiefly, it refers to something still more subtle and indefinable, an attitude, a characteristic mode of reaction to certain demands and challenges, the persistence of ancient loyalties, standards, and beliefs which remain incompatible with any other "way.[46]

Goodall is aware of the diverse understanding of the terms *aganuu* and *faasamoa*. But as discussed, the *aganuu* is the content of education, and *faasamoa,* as argued in this study, declares how the Samoans enact religious and social values, beliefs and worldviews to cope with changes in life. This matches with Meilani Anae, cited by I'uogafa Tuagalu, that *faasamo*a "is the rules and emotions that govern Samoan behaviour…"[47] The *faasamoa* anchors the belief system of the people and upholds their identity as Samoans by an on-going accomplishment of these sanctions. As Gilson contends, *faasamoa* is "an essentially conservative element within Samoan society; it should be seen as tied to preservation of a Samoan identity; [rather] than to mere opposition to change."[48] This conservative nature of the Samoan was experienced by the missionaries when Christianity appeared to be Samoanised. Participating and imitating the *faasamoa* in such a way was, in fact, an epistemological and ontological tactic in sustaining and continuing the nurturing of the younger generations about these significant entities of the *faasamoa*.

However, when missionaries arrived with formal education, things started to change. Take, for instance, the term *aoga* which was and is now regarded as a specific place consisting of school buildings, teachers, and textbooks. On the contrary, in the pre-missionary era, the teacher-student relationship was undertaken between elders (family *matais*, parents, uncles and aunties) and children. *Mamanu*-ing of one's knowledge and skill was not confined to a specialised teacher or specific place (schools) but was a collective responsibility of society. Thaman rightly differentiated this by saying that; "unlike the western, scientific traditions of inquiry, Pacific inquiry tends to be less abstract and analytical and more practical and substantive."[49] Thaman takes this understanding of the Pacific epistemological system to another level by stating that

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[43] Thaman, "Towards Cultural Democracy in Pacific Education," 4.

[44] Le Tagaloa, *Motugaafa,* (1996), 82.

[45] Le Tagaloa, *Motugaafa*, (1996), 82.

[46] Norman Goodal, *A History of the Missionary Society 1895-1945* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 378.

[47] I'uogafa Tuagalu, "Heuristic of the Va," *Alternative* (2008): 108.

[48] R. P. Gilson, *Samoa 1830 to 1900: The Politics of a Multi-Cultural Community* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1970), 14.

[49] Thaman, *Education Ideas from Oceania,* 7.

"logical thinking (as described by western philosophers) is not usually emphasised, although this does not mean that Pacific peoples are not able to think logically and abstractly." This is because our knowledge system is grounded in our ancestor's philosophies which are embedded in the everyday experience of people.

As a conclusion, the indigenous educational system is built upon *faia*. It enables a Samoan to learn about the knowledge system (philosophy, psychology, religious, social relations) stored in our sets of subjects or the *aganuu* which accustomed one's character to the way of life which is distinct to the Samoans and their *faasamoa*. In saying this, the secular perception of people cannot be dismissed from the religious (Christian) beliefs of the surroundings. The idea of obtaining and imparting knowledge is not confined between people, or a set of theories but the result of acknowledging the *faia* between humans and the spiritual blessings of elders and the surrounding cosmos. The social, political, economic and religious perspective of humans was never anthropocentric; in fact, perspective was shaped by *faia* between nature, humans and the ancestors. Furthermore, the way we react to changes in life is reversible; the present is always being informed by the ever-living philosophies of our ancestors through spoken speeches and rituals such as the village council and kava ceremony.

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Samoa's National Council of Churches and Ecumenism: Explosive Beginnings and a Crumbling Present

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Abstract

Ecumenism in Samoa was flourishing since its introduction in 1961. The inaugural conference of Pacific Churches held at Malua Theological College in 1961laid the founding stones of unity for Samoa's Christian churches and its people. The spirit of ecumenism after the Malua conference was enthusiastic enough to move the church leaders to prioritize their ecumenical aspirations. They led the way from ground up and never looked back. The Churches appreciated the support of the people, village communities, and the government of Samoa in spearheading the movement. Initial collaborations among different denominations were fruitful in meetings and friendly conversations. Church leaders gathered and planned how they would work together in serving their Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior. The ecumenical journey was successful in the beginning in many beautiful ways. However, the winds of changes transformed the churches. Christianity was reshaped with the introduction of new religious groups. Modern developments in the secular world have also shaken Christianity impacting on the lives of Christians not only in Samoa but in the Pacific. This article looks at the beginning of ecumenism in Samoa reflecting on why and how it was successful and prosperous. It also looks at the status of the movement at the present time seeking to analyse how it has changed and the possible reasons for such changes. Discussion focuses on the introduction of the movement and an evaluation of the roles and functions of Samoa's National Council of Churches with respect to member churches, government of the day and the people.

Key Words: ecumenism, oikoumene, unity, Samoa National Council of Churches, government of Samoa

Background

The advent of Ecumenism in Samoa and in the Pacific region started at Malua Theological College in 1961, when the Pacific churches gathered for its inaugural conference. It was a time that led to new changes in Pacific churches. These changes were seen in the national, social and theological levels, as churches learned to collaborate with one another through the Gospel.[1] Ecumenism is a movement towards Christian unity and collaboration. It aims to promote unity in Christian faith among different denominations in response to the unbearable growth of doctrinal differences among the various churches. In other words, ecumenism is a fight against the division within Christianity in light of challenging difficulties of a modern pluralistic world.

William Temple the Archbishop of Canterbury (1881-1944) had branded ecumenism as the great new fact of his time.[2] His words called for new thoughts to inspire Christian unity and defend further denominational leads which also separate people in the communities. However, the growth of the ecumenical movement, with its diverse meanings and expressions, has been challenged since its development. Such inconsistencies of focus have stalled constructive responses against matters of

[1] Amanaki Sione Havea, "Ecumenism in the Pacific since Malua 1961," in *PCC Consultation, Suva 12-14 February 1996* (Suva: Pacific Conference of Churches, 1996), 4.

[2] Melanie Duguid-May, "The Ecumenical Movement," in *History of Global Christianity Online*, ed. N.A. Hjelm J.H. Schjørring (First published online: 2018), 147.

theological differences as it intended accordingly.[3]

Ecumenism may have taken its course adequately at the beginning however it is now more inaudible in academic discussions and rarely recognized in churches' agendas. The decline of ecumenism with essential marks of failure in the Pacific is documented by Manfred Ernst[4] and Lydia Johnson[5] in their edited compilation, *Navigating Trouble Waters: The Ecumenical Movement in the Pacific Islands Since the 1980s.* This publication presents a technical report of a research project carried out in nine Pacific Island nations on the status of the ecumenical movement in the Pacific. In his introduction, Ernst supports a commonly established conviction that the ecumenical movement of the Pacific is in crisis and needed a revised vision.[6] The outcome of the Pacific project proved a weakened ecumenism in the Pacific islands from lack of substance, commitment, direction, and spiritual vision.[7] Such areas of weaknesses have been forecasted to continue in the course of time and concurrently the Pacific churches would need immediate reaction to respond. Samoa is not different from its Pacific Island neighbors where the decline of ecumenical spirit is unmistakably revealed.

The word Ecumenism and Arrival of the Movement

The word ecumenism comes from the Greek word Oikoumene (oikoumenh) which denotes the whole inhabited earth.[8] For the ecumenical movement, the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1951 appropriated the word to "describe everything that relates to the whole task of the church to bring the Gospel to the world."[9] Their initial focus was on the visible unity of the churches through theological and ecclesial convergence. They aimed at improving religious cooperation among different groups especially within the Christian faith.[10] However, in 1973, a clearer understanding of the oikoumene was extended to a biblical meaning of the household of God where people and all creatures of the creation were intended for the purpose of God.[11] Ecumenism was no longer about a

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[3] Aisake Casimira and Anisi Ana, "An Historical Review of Ecumenical Formation and Development," in *Navigating Trouble Waters*, eds. Manfred Earnst and Lydia Johnson (Suva: Pacific Theological College, 2016), 13.

[4] Dr Manfred Ernst worked from 1991-1994 as researcher at the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) in Suva, Fiji from 1998 -2016 as project manager Lecturer and Researcher at the Pacific Theological College (PTC) in Suva. In 2008 he was appointed as the first Director of the newly established Institute for Research and Social Analysis (IRSA) at PTC. Prof. Ernst is member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Baden Wuerttemberg, Germany. In August 2016 he returned to Germany where he enjoys retirement.

[5] Rev Dr Johnson is a theological educator for over 35 years. She is a graduate of Harvard Divinity School and Lexington Theological Seminary in the USA. She taught Practical and Pastoral Theology in Fiji, New Zealand and South Africa and has been a theological editor for many years.

[6] Manfred Ernst, "Introduction," in *Navigating Trouble Waters: The Ecumenical Movement in the Pacific Islands since the 1980s*, eds. Manfred Earnst and Lydia Johnson (Suva: Pacific Theological College, 2016), 1.

[7] Aisake Casimira and Manfred Ernst, "Ecumenism in the Pacific Islands- a Stocktaking at the Beginning of the 21st Century," in *Navigating Trouble Waters*, eds. Manfred Ernst and Lydia Johnson (Suva: Pacifc Theological College, 2016), 529.

[8] Franco Monatanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1433.

[9] Conrad Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition: A Paradigm shift in the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publication, 1989).

[10] Marlin VanElderen and Conway Martin, *Introducing the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001), 4.

[11] VanElderen and Martin, *Introducing the World Council of Churches*.

united church, but regarding "relationships between churches, between cultures, between people and society and between the world of humankind and creation."[12]

The ecumenical movement for the Pacific was introduced in Samoa in 1961 at the Pacific Churches Conference. This mission call was initiated when two Pacific church ministers responded to a proposal of the International Missionary Commission (IMC) for a regional center of the Pacific churches. Charles Forman describes that inaugural gathering of the Pacific as "an ecumenical explosion [that] shook the churches of the Pacific."[13] It was the starting point for narrowing distant waters and bridging islands in isolation. The Pacific Church Leaders met openheartedly, greeted each other, and shared the experiences, successes, and challenges of their islands' ministries.

The Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS) celebrates this event as a milestone in their history and the history of Pacific churches. It must have also been a great achievement for the International Missionary Council (IMC) and its engagement in the Pacific region, given the awakening of the global ecumenical movement at that point in time. The conference united the Pacific churches and opened opportunities to affiliate with international organizations and World Churches for support.

At the end, a Continuation Committee of six members were elected to pursue the interests of the churches on ecumenical discourses, which prompted actions to continue the ecumenical journey in good spirits.[14] Accordingly, the sustainability of the ecumenical movement was dependent on the efficiency of such a committee. Two Samoans were members of the Conference Continuation Committee. They were renowned and devoted Congregationalists with prominent reputations in Samoan society.

Rev Vavae Toma[15] was the appointed secretary of the Malua Conference and Fetaui Mataafa Faasuamaleaui[16] was a representative of the CCCS.[17] Toma was a committed servant and a "living link" in the conference at Malua. His soft-spoken nature, steady work ethic and reliability ensured that he was ideal to become the first secretary of the Pacific Churches Conference Continuation Committee.[18] Rev Dr Sione Havea of Tonga remembered Toma in his address at the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) Consultation in Suva as a "quiet servant with a simple approach that drew the Pacific churches together."[19] In his role, Toma visited the Pacific island churches and reported the progress of ecumenical activities for the Committee annual meetings. He continued in the role for five years after the Malua Conference. Fetaui Mataafa, the wife of an honored high chief and first Prime Minister of the newly independent state of Samoa, also displayed how leaders of Samoa respond to Christianity representation. Her role in the Pacific ecumenical movement was distinguished becoming the first Pacific lady to chair the PCC (1976-1981).[20]

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[12] Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition*, 87.

[13] W. Charles Forman, *The Voice of Many Waters* (Suva: Lotu Pasefika Production, 1986).

[14] Forman, *The Voice of Many Waters*, 4.

[15] One of the three Pacific church leaders who spearheaded the ecumenical movement for the Pacific islands in 1961. With Rev Tuilovoni (Fiji) and Rev Havea (Tonga) they were the forerunners of the Pacific movement.

[16] A high-profile lady of Samoa. Good lady of High Chief Mataafa Fiame Mulinuu who became the first Prime Minister of the Independent State of Western Samoa 1962. She was also an Elder Deacon of the Church. Tupua Tamasese Meaole shared Head of State with Malietoa Tanumafili II at the same time.

[17] Forman, *The Voice of Many Waters*.

[18] Forman, *The Voice of Many Waters*, 7.

[19] Havea, "Ecumenism in the Pacific," 14.

[20] Havea, "Ecumenism in the Pacific," 14.

Deacon Kasiano Leaupepe[21], the current chairman of the Samoa National Council of Churches (SNCC), recalled the beginning of the fellowship of Churches in Samoa 1961. He says, "The determination to develop an ecumenical program after the conference was great. Their first task was to establish an ecumenical group with an executive to lead an organized meeting." At the beginning, the group of churches was called a *Mafutaga a Ekalesia Kerisiano i Samoa*.[22] The church leaders seemed to prefer this early name but by their second meeting in 1967, the designation National Council of Churches emerged, which failed to win immediate favor.[23]

One could argue the ecumenical spirit moved the church leaders to use the name *Mafutaga* (Fellowship) which had a more ecumenical nuance than the word *Fono* (Council). The word *Mafutaga* signifies friendship and sharing when two or more persons come together in a friendly orientation. Communal feeling in a relational space of friendship is exhibited in *Mafutaga*. In spite of the debate around semantics, the Fellowship of Christian Churches officially changed its name in 1990 to be known as Samoa National Council of Churches (SNCC).

The spirit of ecumenism in Samoa was seen in 1962 when Pope John XXIII invited the Roman Catholic Church Samoa (RCCS) to attend the Vatican II that same year. In response, Cardinal Pio Taofinuu[24] (1923-2006), in supporting the fellowship of churches asked for Toma to travel with him. It suited Toma as the CCCS was also invited to take part in the same meeting. The invitation from the RCCS to the CCCS signaled good leadership in promoting ecumenism. In the spirit of dismantling the denominational divides, these leaders developed mutual relationships by supporting each other in the quest for a common understanding of unity in Christ for Samoa. Upon their return, Taofinuu and Toma proposed to summon the churches in Samoa for a consultation on the same year (1962) to share their learned experiences from the Vatican meeting. However, the churches were more independent and unwilling to support such initiative until 1967 when the three mainline[25] churches finally agreed to meet. Prior to the gathering however, Toma had already embraced and displayed the ecumenical spirit by attending Catholic masses in Apia.

The churches fellowship at its early stage had no office in place; and each time the group met, they changed venues by alternating among the different denominational headquarters. Despite the challenge, the churches were committed in pursuing their ecumenical agenda without retreating. The fellowship during early negotiations involved four founding members whose representatives were elected as the first executives: the CCCS, RCCS, Methodist Church of Samoa (MCS), and the Anglicans Church of Samoa. Few others joined later, among them, the Apia Protestant Church, Seventh Day Adventists (SDA), and the Church of the Nazarene. At their first ecumenical meeting at the CCCS headquarters in 1967, Rev Elder Luamanuvae Eti was elected Chairman.[26]

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[21] Deacon Kasiano Leaupepe is currently a pensioner of the RCCS. He is the longest serving member of the RCCS in the Samoa Council of Churches. He was involved in the beginning of the Fellowship of churches up to date, 1961-2020. He served in several village parishes and participated in the Fellowship of Churches affairs before he was appointed as Chairman of SCC.

[22] Fellowship of Christian Churches Samoa (translation by author)

[23] Aukilani Tuiai. "The Congregational Christian Churches Samoa, 1962 -2002: A Study of the Issues and Policies That Have Shaped the Independence Church" (PhD Thesis, Charles Sturt University, 2012), 107.

[24] A renown Samoan Catholican who became the first Pacific Cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church.

[25] Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS); Roman Catholic Church Samoa (RCCS) and the Methodist Church Samoa (MCS).

[26] Rev Oka Fauolo, "Sina Tepa i Tua: Feiloaiga Lona Fitu (7) i Le Feiloa'imauso," *Mafutaga Ekalesia Kerisiano Samoa*, (1973).

When the Fellowship of Churches met again at the residence of Archbishop Taofinuu at Vailele in 1971, the Archbishop was elected Chairman.[27]

Two other known church ministers of the CCCS took over leadership during their time at the Samoa National Council of Churches. Rev Dr Mila Sapolu was Chairman and Toma was Secretary. They were high profiled and considered the most appropriate selection for leadership at the time. Sapolu was one of the few church ministers in Samoa with higher qualifications in Theology at the time.[28] Toma, as identified earlier, was a quiet skillful church minister with a good reputation from his early post at the Malua conference in 1961. As memberships grew in the Council, leadership was mostly taken up by the representatives of the mainline churches. The next successive leaders in office included Rev Lene Milo of the MCS, Cardinal Pio Taofinuu of the RCCS, and Rev Oka Fauolo[29] of the CCCS. Fauolo was the longest serving Chairman who led the council for twenty years up until he passed in 2012. Other church leaders who served in the executives included Rev Elder Kenape Faletoese, Rev Elder Tavita Roma, Rev Elder Tautiaga Senara, Rev Dr Paulo Koria, and Rev Maauga Motu, from the CCCS; Father Patele Tovio, Archbishop Alapati Mataeliga and Deacon Leaupepe Kasiano of the RCCS; Rev Faatauvaa Tapuai, Rev Siatua Leuluaialii, Rev Faatoese Auvaa, Rev Aisoli Iuli and Rev Fepai Kolia, of the MCS.[30]

The Samoa National Council of Churches (SCC)

Since its establishment in the 1960s, the fellowship of Christian churches operated without a written constitution. It was not until 1997, that the fellowship moved to clarify its purpose, structure, functions and to legally secure its relationship with its church members.[31] The Samoa National Council of Churches established under a constitution: *O le Faavae – Fono a Ekalesia i Samoa 1997* (Constitution – Samoa National Council of Churches 1997). The constitution contains this Statement of Faith:

> We believe and have faith in one true God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. We declare that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God proclaimed through His Holy Scripture. His redeeming mission has gained our salvation. We believe and without doubt, accept the Bible to guide and lead us in faith through our mission.[32]

The council's statement of faith was to promote ecumenism among the churches and people of Samoa by aiding member churches to express common faith towards true Christian unity. The SNCC operates within a legal framework with an organizational structure, purposes, and functions amidst its political surroundings. Its responsibilities and religious roles in search of peoples' unity distinguish it from state and secular businesses.

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[27] Aukilani Tuiai, "The Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, 1962–2002."

[28] Leaupepe Kasiano, interviewed by the author, 2020, Feburary 10.

[29] A highly respected minister of his time. He served as a lecturer, Principal at Malua Theological College, and Chairman of the CCCS Fonotele (Conference) for many years. He was a Church leader, an educator, a theologian, Church history writer and Elder minister of the Church.

[30] Rev Fepai Kolia, interviewed by the author, 2020, Feburary 10

[31] Rev Kolia, interview, 2020 Feb 10.

[32] Fono Ekalesia Samoa, "O Le Faavae Fono a Ekalesia i Samoa" (Apia: Fono Ekalesia Samoa, 1997).

Membership

The founding members of the SNCC were the three mainline churches; the CCCS, MCS, and the RCCS. As such, they possessed a profound hold on executive roles. Later, the Anglican Church, Congregational Church of Jesus Samoa, Apia Protestants Church, Pentecostal, Nazarene Church, Seventh Day Adventist and the Church of Latter-Day Saints all joined.[33] Ecumenical programs were attractive to these new members however they were not able to maintain consistency in paying annual subscriptions. Consequently, the number of registered member churches fluctuated depending on the agenda of church leaders. Support for the SNCC was assured as long as those in leadership roles within the SNCC remained committed to the ecumenical agenda.

In 1986, the SNCC endorsed the registration of the its Women's Fellowship as a full member of the SNCC. The acceptance of the women's fellowship was an achievement for them after several attempts. Within few years of membership in the council, the women's fellowship proved to be the most active of all SNCC members. They represent the SNCC more effectively in ecumenism by supporting the World Day of Prayer together in shared prayer and mutual caring. Moreover, the women's fellowship holds a prayer day once a month to pray for Samoa, the Pacific and the world. Their focus on prayer shows how women have more of a grasp of the expressive meanings and spiritual values of ecumenism.[34] In 2013, after withdrawing earlier, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (LDS) re-entered the SNCC as a full member. There was controversy in the LDS's readmission due to the inconsistency in the approval process where others who applied for membership were declined. Doctrinal differences motivated the attitudes of some Christian churches who questioned the acceptance of the LDS church in the SNCC. However, the Chairman expressed gratitude to the LDS for joining the council and welcomed them with open arms. He confirmed that the LDS was a member before, but this time they have clarified their faith and beliefs to be in line with the SNCC constitution.

Understanding Ecumenism

The term ecumenism is understood at the clergy level and by those who have been involved in ecumenical activities, but not the laity. Yet there is an irony that is recognized by Konrad Raiser, where the people in the village communities received ecumenism with great support from the village council of *matai.*[35] Supporting the combined programs of the churches in the village signaled support for the ecumenical activities of the SNCC. Raiser[36] maintains the value of taking part in an ecumenical activity, saying: "Around the world a lively variety of ecumenical activity is taking place at the local level, animated by individuals … who may never use the word ecumenical."[37] Raiser's comments might suggest that participating in activities which express ecumenism is more meaningful than understanding its meaning. However, to understand why participation in these programs bridges the gap between praxis and the theological

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[33] Kasiano, "Samoa National Council of Churches."

[34] Nokise Feleterika, "Ecumenism in the Navigators Archipelago - an Elusive Reality: Samoa and American Samoa," in *Navigating Trouble Waters: The Ecumenical Movement in the Pacific Islands since the 1980s*, eds. Mansfred Ernst and Lydia Johnson (Suva: Pacific Theological College, 2016), 275, 78.

[35] A Samoan Chief or a matured male with a title-name of the family who becomes head of the household

[36] Rev Dr Konrad Raiser - Former General Secretary of WCC, 1993-2000.

[37] Conrad Raiser, *To Be the Church: Challenges and Hopes for a New Millennium* (Geneva: WCC Publication, 1997), xiii.

purposes and the spiritual feeling of unity in Gods household.

But before the dialogue about theological significance, the glaring issue lies in the lack of familiarity by the people with the concept of ecumenism, let alone the existence of the Samoa National Council of Churches. The onus is on the SNCC to be more public about its roles and functions as well as communicating the importance of ecumenism at the village level. People need to understand the deeper meaning of ecumenism as one ecumenism specialist says, "no one can assume knowledge of the modern ecumenical movement."[38] This is the dilemma in our small Christianity space where ecumenism is not a self-contained area of study, while at the same time, the churches are largely not taking the ecumenical agenda seriously.

But that does not necessarily mean the SNCC was not reaching out because SNCC seeded the idea of corporate services and other combined programs running at the villages. They have been active in providing exciting corporate programs for member churches in the past. With the capability to affiliate with regional and international organizations, they were able to build a reputation to run its operation well. Several village churches and communities responded positively and greeted all programs given by the SNCC. Corporate services and bible education became popular as the communities welcomed youth fellowships in Bible studies and children's programs.[39]

In freehold settlement areas of the urbanized townships where a village council is not presented communally, the church becomes the hub for community meetings, social gatherings, sharing and government programs. The church ministers utilize these forms of community gatherings to strengthen unity programs for people around the residential areas. This kind of communal arrangement resonates with people from the villages where ecumenical programs are practiced.

At the present times the SNCC office continues to offer refreshing seminars on several issues at their main office and community areas with financial and personnel support from the government. As they are not regulated to enforce programs upon community and church groups, they maintain an advisory role for members when required.

In sum, the involvement of the SNCC with spiritual programs at the village level highlights the enthusiasm of the early ecumenical movement. Yet despite its activities, a fair understanding of ecumenism by lay people was still missing.

The SNCC and the Government

The Government of Samoa was a great devotee to the ecumenical movement from the beginning. This is not surprising given that some of the government leaders were also executive members of member churches. Indeed, they recognized the role of the council in government and responded to all its needs appropriately.

In the year 2000, the SNCC secured land from the government at the Mulinuu Peninsula after some constructive negotiations. The SNCC built a two level building with offices and conference rooms with equipment and necessary facilities. The SNCC established good relationship with the government of Samoa sealed with a Memo of Understanding (MOU) in 1990.[40] The MOU affirmed the SNCC's rights allowing them to deal directly with the Prime Minister, opening doors for transparent dialogues between the government and the churches on all issues of interest. This also provided SNCC with an important space to convey theological advice on national policy and

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[38] F Daniel Martensen, "Introduction," in *The Teaching of Ecumenics* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987).

[39] Rev Fepai Kolia, "From My Personal Diary: The Samoa National Council of Churches," (2009).

[40] Kolia, interview.

being the prophetic voice in forums where they participate.

When things soured recently between the government and the churches, the MOU was considered by church members as a government ticket to peek into the council's affairs. Others thought that the SNCC should have been more cautious at the beginning as such relationship may impose threats at which SNCC would suffer the most. That could be possible given the low capacity of SNCC to respond clearly to government on developments that obstructs the growth of Christianity. One may presume that the government has realized the capability of the church to bring people together as shown in the Mau Movement for Independence of the 1920s.[41] With the majority of the nation being Christian, the government undoubtedly recognizes the political weight that Christianity holds. With the MOU on hand the government could utilize it generously to push its political agenda forward.

Yet, the lack of consultation through the MOU could hold significant ramifications for either side, for instance, the taxation of church ministers was an example of where the government enforced a new law without appropriate consultations. This led to the CCCS resisting the bill followed by heated exchanges on the issue.

Taxation

The enforcement of the Tax Administration Amendment Act 2014[42] on church ministers in 2019 by the government stirred intense debates in Samoa. Some churches saw the government's decision as defying biblical teachings as well as Samoan cultural values of love and respect. However, the SNCC had decided to support the government's decision while the CCCS, the member church with the largest number of members, rejected the bill. This resulted in a series of lawsuits. In the midst of heated debates, the SNCC chairman declared publicly that taxation of ministers "is something they have to consider very carefully, and it's a sensitive matter because it is not the same for all churches in Samoa"[43] His comments did not sit well with the CCCS because they felt the decision by the SNCC to step aside while one of its member churches fight its lawsuit alone was against the ecumenical spirit. Rev Vavatau Taufao, General Secretary of the CCCS interpreted the SNCC's position as misunderstanding the deeper meaning of ecumenism;[44] that as the churches have united as one body of Christ under the umbrella of SNCC, they must fight the same battle together.

The decision of the SNCC may raise questions on how the council deals with the wellbeing of its members when help is needed. On the other side of the coin, the SNCC like any other organization, had taken a transparent and unbiased stance on the issue. Supporting one member over the majority may lose the integrity of the council as the majority of members had agreed to upkeep taxation. The CCCS also knew that the SNCC's desire for a fruitful discussion of the issue was prevented because some of its members had already made individual decisions on the issue before SNCC convened to discuss taxation. Therefore, the SNCC meeting was only consultative without authority as its corporate decision making was dictated by the member churches decisions. Bernard Thorogood in his book *One Wind, Many Flames* called this effect a "Milky Way Model"

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[41] Featuna'i Ben Liuaana, "Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence, 1900 - 1962" (PhD Thesis, The Australian National University, 2001), 108.

[42] Office of Clerk of the Legislative Assembly Samoa, "Acts 2014" (Apia: The Legislative Department, 2014).

[43] News Talanei, "Samoa Council of Churches Wont Take Stand on *Faifeau* Tax," *Talanei* 2017.

[44] Rev. Vavatau Taufao, interviewed by the author, 2020, Feburary 7.

where the shared decision-taking process is governed by "an infinite number of distinct points."[45] Thus, the SNCC's final decision was a consensus agreement and transparent in terms of organizational decision makings. In supporting the government, the SNCC feels their relationship with the government is essential and must be honored at all times. Whatever agreement filled that MOU, it is likely the SNCC wants the churches to agree and work cooperatively with the government. Considering the way, the SNCC operates now, it reflects their understanding of that relationship.

The SNCC and government relationship raises a concern from the CCCS and their supporters who suggested that the SNCC is losing integrity and power to face government with its issues. And instead of advising the government, the SNCC tends to be subservient to the government's interests.

Other agreements

Traditionally, governments had asked for advice from the SNCC on several issues concerning the social development of Samoa. Conversely, the SNCC attended government meetings and consultation to offer theological guidance as the voice of the churches. In the event of heated discussion on volatile issues that may cause threats to the role of the church and Christian values, the government has the final say. Over time, the authority of the SNCC as the voice of the churches began to wane. For instance, the introduction of a Casino triggered a long debate between the church and the government. Although the voice of the church was heard, it concluded in favor of the government. The SNCC blamed the government for being prejudiced in the consultative process as "they did not support the Casino Bill from the outset."[46]

In another example of the SNCC's status as the voice of the church being compromised, the government wished to establish a Week of Prayer for Samoa in 2010 after experiencing tropical cyclones and other natural disasters in past years. In response, the SNCC agreed to move her programmed Prayer and Fasting week from November to early January in support of the government plea. The shifting of the Week of Prayers to suit government schedules angered many SNCC members as they sensed weakness by the SNCC executive. Member churches felt that the SNCC calendar of events must not be changed by government or any other organization without proper consultations. Moreover, the government asked for a united Sunday for Father's Day in Samoa. Again, the SNCC agreed without consulting its member churches.[47]

On matters regarding new religions entering Samoa, the government sought advice from the SNCC. Although the Constitution of the Independent State of Samoa 1960 prescribes the Freedom of Religion, the government remains trustful on the SNCC's advice on criterions to endorse accepted religions. The SNCC's advice was based on the constitutional statement of Faith of the SNCC. When the relationship between the state and church battered due to differences on matters pertaining religion, government began to neglect her advisory partner. The gateway for religion was opened and leading to the acceptance of non-Christian faiths.

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[45] Bernard Thorogood, *One Wind Many Flames: Church Unity and the Diversity of the Churches* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), 55.

[46] PINA, "Churches Say No to Casino," *Pacific Island News Association* 2010.

[47] Rev. Tunupopo Tunupopo, interviewed by the author, 2020, January 12.

People's Concern

At the village level, the communities have treasured ecumenical programs driven by the village councils in collaboration with the church ministers and community participation. However, this does not always work as harmoniously in reality as it is hoped for. There are challenges to ecumenism in Samoa such as the influence of the local government on village affairs. The government had set up a governing body to deal with the village affairs.[48] As the existence of that body was unrecognizable in the beginning, its roles and functions are emerging. Government is now represented in the villages by someone chosen from the village council or Women's Committee as a public relation officer for government. These changes have irritated the village councils as they feel their traditional status in the community is minimized; and if the government is unsupportive of any community program like ecumenism, they could change the mayor at any time. Furthermore, enforcing democratic rights may seem like a noble initiative by the government, yet an ironic sense of colonialism emerges as the government effectively diminishes the authority of the *matai system*[49] while at the same time denying village right for autonomy and self-determination. The village councils have already been undermined through countless lawsuits losses from those who challenge the decision-makings of the matai. The loss of solidarity in the community also indicates failure in the advisory part of the churches in protecting harmony among the people. Political influence in the communities divides the unity of families and friends which also affect religious affiliations.

The SNCC's Organizational Shape

What power does the SNCC really have given the nature of its existence? The SNCC is a corporation of churches where each member church retains autonomy. This can be a weakness with less room in decision making. As a result, it portrays the SNCC's role as that of a facilitator rather than a church adviser; a service provider but not a mediator. As a consequence, member churches expect the SNCC to fulfill their individual needs, thus portraying the SNCC as merely an avenue for obtaining outside resources. They see this function of the council as "an additional layer of the church life which some may find inspiring."[50]

Political influence compromises the mediating role of the SNCC between government and the churches by the government intruding on church matters. The churches are mostly affected because the SNCC is not able to advance a response and resist political intervention. This is discouraging to the SNCC members who watch the roles and functions of the council declining. Patelesio Finau, a known Pacific ecumenist reminds us of the role of the church in one of his addresses, as he says, "The church is not called to be the servant of government. […] Her role is to be its conscience. When people suffer, when they are hurt, the Church must speak out."[51] Finau may have realized that the church is too complacent, being lured by national politics with minimal effort to

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[48] F. L. Unasa Vaa, "Local Government in Samoa and the Search for Balance," in *Governance in Samoa, Pulega i Samoa*, eds. Elise Huffer and Asofou Soo (Suva: University of South Pacific, 2000), 162.

[49] The village council management system or *FaaSamoa*, the Samoan way of life.

[50] Thorogood, *One Wind Many Flames,* 38.

[51] Bishop Patelesio Finau, "Christian Concern for People: Politics, Economics, Social Development," in *Pacific Churches Leaders Meeting 31 May - 3 June* (Honiara, Solomon Islands: Pacific Conference of Churches, 1988).

speak for the people. But Finau also challenges the church not to stay silent as "if the government is not to be criticized but to obey" (Finau 1988). Put simply, the state should not be in control of the church. Like Cardinal Ratzinger comments on the state: "The state is not the whole of human existence and does not encompass all human hope; it is not the totality."[52]

Conclusion

The early church leaders of Samoa in the 1960s were pioneers of ecumenism and encouraged others to continue the mission. Their inspiration to restore Christian unity motivated them to establish a fellowship of Christian churches after the Pacific Churches Conference at Malua in 1961. Years later the fellowship became known as Samoa National Council of Churches with a main office and administration in Apia. Built with limited resources and financial incapability, the SNCC survived the challenges of economics and socio-political resistances. The SNCC provided ecumenical programs to the churches and the communities. Their role of providing a voice to member churches, may be adjudged as a successful part of their mission. The government of Samoa reached out in support through its national development program. The success of ecumenism in the beginning reflects the full commitment of the church leaders, village communities, the government of the time and a robust SNCC administration.

However successful the SNCC was in its initial stages, it was never free of challenges. As such, the pressure became overwhelming as the SNCC confronted many difficulties in later years to the present times. A changing context marked by the influential power of politics sought to disrupt the SNCC's mission and its ecumenical agenda. The government had provided support in the early years, but the political landscape which existed within Christian contours led to a surge in appetite for political power as the government extended its rule to the church and village councils. Subsequently, the SNCC was reluctant to respond, weak to express its prophetic voice on the message of the Gospel in ecumenical orientation. As a result, the integrity of the SNCC to protect freedom of Christianity and spiritual growth of the churches, had sadly been compromised. The ability of the SNCC to stand against political disruption from the state reveals flaws in the SNCC executive structure, indicating a submissiveness to the "friendly" relationship endorsed in the MOU. Furthermore, the SNCC may lose support of some inactive member churches, and some active registered members may soon join the queue.

The SNCC needs to revise its recruitment policy in terms of competency, ecumenically experience and qualified theologians to avoid this weakening factor. As an ecumenical organization, its human resources capacity must be sufficient and competent enough to stand against external intrusions. In view of the present situation, the churches lose togetherness while the government accumulates power and responsibilities. As the churches fail to unite in reshaping their ecumenical position, the government takes advantage of her partnership with the SNCC to consolidate political powers, that is, the power of the people.

If this happens, the once-unimaginable scenario of government leadership as the probable way to reignite ecumenism in Samoa becomes a likely reality. As a result, the church and the village councils may lose its values and identities in society. Thus, the

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[52] Ratzinger Cardinal Joseph, *Church Ecumenism and Politics: New Endeavors in Ecclessiology*, trans. Michael J Miller et al (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 144.

churches need to come together in support of the SNCC and reclaim its position as the revivers of ecumenism, in the spirit of Toma and Havea. The outcome of this work signals a wakeup call for the churches and the SNCC. Achieving a better outlook for ecumenism requires the SNCC to have a strong prophetic voice with competency to stand against political interventions. It also proposes a challenge to the state with respect to its relationship with the SNCC through a memo of understanding they endorsed. The member churches must give full support in their subsidiary role, while promoting ecumenism through teaching in the ministry and theological institutions. Ultimately, ecumenism is a theology that needs to be planted in the hearts of the people.

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