

ECO-THEOLOGY: *AIGA* – THE HOUSEHOLD OF LIFE

**A PERSPECTIVE
FROM LIVING MYTHS
AND TRADITIONS OF SAMOA**

Ama'amalele Tofaeono

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0. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

0.1. Identification and Exposition of the Eco-Theological Problem

The development of new religious and scientific ideas to address the world's growing ecological problems has accelerated since the claims of Lynn White, Jr. and others¹ that the glorious success of Christianity over so-called paganism/heathenism, as well as the monotheistic faith orientation of the Judeo-Christian tradition, are at the root of ecological disasters. Central to the commitments of concerned people such as theologians, lay people, scientists, social activists and religious organisations is the attempt to redefine the relationship between God, humanity, and the whole of God's creation, as well as to discover sustainable means to minimize ecological destruction.

White sees Christianity as a religion that establishes a dualism of human and nature and insists that it was God's will that humankind exploit nature for its own ends.² This argument recalls the intention of the Genesis creation account (Gen. 1:28) for humankind to have dominion over the earth (*dominium terrae*), as traditionally interpreted in the West. Dominion in this context was largely understood along the following lines, as summarised by Daisetz T. Suzuki:

The Nature-Man dichotomy issues ... from the Biblical account in which the creator is said to have given mankind the power to dominate over all creation. It is fundamentally due to this story that the Western people talk so much about conquering Nature. When they invent a flying machine, they say they have conquered the air, when they climbed up to the top of Mt. Everest, they make a loud announcement that they have succeeded in conquering the mountain.³

Theologically, humankind justifies its acquisition of power to divide and control by seeing power as the 'primary attribute of God,' following Jürgen Moltmann. Striving to achieve one's own divinity has blinded one to God's life-embracing attributes.⁴

Accusations proceed even further to identify the Jewish God and Biblical religion as

- 1 Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Ecology and Life: Accepting Our Environmental Responsibility*, Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, ed. (Waco: Word Books Publisher, 1988), 125-137. *Ver-söhnung mit der Natur?* Jürgen Moltmann, ed. (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1986), and *Ökologische Theologie: Perspektiven zur Orientierung*, Günther Altner, ed. (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1989). David Kinsley, *Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1995), 103-114.
- 2 White, 132. Cf. Charles Birch, "Nature, Humanity and God in Ecological Perspective," 62-73; Gerhard Liedke, "Solidarity in Conflict," 73-80; and Vitaly Borovoy, "Christian Perspectives on Creation in a Time of Ecological Unsustainability," 80-87, in: *Faith and Science in an Unjust World: Report of the WCC's Conference on Faith, Science and the Future*, Roger L. Shinn, ed. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1980).
- 3 Daisetz T. Suzuki cited by David Kinsley, *Ecology and Religion*, 104. Cf. Udo Krolzik, "Die Wirkungsgeschichte von Genesis 1,28," *Ökologische Theologie: Perspektiven zur Orientierung*, 149-164. A form of radical anthropocentrism leading to the exploitation of nature in the sense of *dominus et possessor* – in mastery and ownership terms.
- 4 Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and Spirit of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 26ff. See also, "Ökologie," *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Band XXV, Gerhard Müller, ed. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 36-46; *Gott im Projekt der modernen Welt* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1997), 165-168. Reference is made here to the conception of the "Allmacht Gottes" during Auschwitz.

sharing part of the responsibility for ecological disasters. Some have argued that the notion of 'progress', with its destructive consequences to the life systems of our planet earth, emerges out of Biblical religion.⁵ In relation to this allegation, Sallie McFague has claimed that the problem lies primarily in an "idolatrously one-sided masculine idea of God." With a long tradition that was shaped by images of a masculine God, the Christian religion operates within the framework of a patriarchy that preaches domination and exclusivism.⁶ Such attitudes are firmly intertwined with the Western mechanistic model of life, with its individualistic views of nature and other forms of life. God in this model operates on the basis of a dualism which constantly stimulates distinctions between spirit and flesh, human and non-human, objective and subjective, reason and passion, natural and supernatural, and so forth. This is in contrast with the "organic model" which defies such distinctions.⁷

The male-oriented culture of Biblical religion, together with the emphasis on Linear progress in the scientific-technological age, promotes hierarchical distinctions amongst various components of the created world. For example, along with feminist claims of their subjective and secondary status and roles, which have long been associated with ecological disasters,⁸ as rooted in the perception of God as Father, Judge, King, Lord, (etc.),⁹ it is suggested that the experiences of oppression and poverty around the world are promoted by the desire for gain (greed) and abusive forms of domination. Certainly, the rich rule and have authority over the affairs of the poor. These attitudes are deeply imbedded in the process and progress of modern industrialization and technological developments.

In her book, *Patriarchy as a Conceptual Trap*, Elizabeth Dodson Gray argues that, since all people live within a social construct of reality which is generated totally from the point of view of male experiences, or "Adam's world," people naturally accept a hierarchically-socialized order as the way the world should be. Patriarchy is therefore a "problem

5 Wendel Berry cited by Yitzhak I. Hayutman, "Eco-Antisemitism, Eco-Paganism and Hebrew-Biblical Eco-Logics," *Internet Information* No: y[e?]rusalem@actcom.co.il (Mar 1997), 1. Cf. Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988).

6 Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (New York: Fortress Press, 1987), 8. Also, David Hallman, "Science, Religion and Development: Sources of Destruction, Seeds of Hope," *Ecology: A Theological Response*, Andreas Nehring, ed. (Madras: Navashakthi Production and Printing, 1994), 173-185.

7 McFague, 10f. Cf. Ofelia Ortega, "Feminist Theology," 5-8; and Rosemary R. Reuther, "Feminist Critique and Revisioning of God Language," 18-21, in: *A Reader in Feminist Theology*, Prasanna Kumari, ed. (Madras: Navashakthi Graphics Arts, 1993).

8 See Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), 1-12. Reuther sees that the "domination of women has provided a key link, both socially and symbolically, to the domination of the earth, hence the tendency in patriarchal cultures to link women with earth, matter, and nature, while identifying males with sky, intellect, and transcendent spirit ..."

9 See, for example, Wendel Moltmann, *Humanity in God* (London: SCM Press, 1983), Letty Russell, ed. *Inheriting Our Mother's Gardens: Feminist Theology in the Third World Perspective* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988), Athalya Brenner, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative* (London: SCM Press, 1985), and Rebecca Chopp, *The Power to Speak: Feminism, Language, God* (New York: SCM Press, 1991). Katherine Doop Sakenfeld, "Feminist Biblical Interpretation," *Interpretation* Vol. II, No. 49 (1989): 161-162.

related to the ecological crisis, because it has been the seedbed of the fatal need to rank diversity.”¹⁰

Along the same lines, it is suggested that the Western scientific mind-set is at the root of the problem. In this worldview, nature must be bound into service and made a slave put in constraints and moulded by the mechanical arts. In the scientific mind’s reductionist view of life, everything is objectively observed, evaluated and appropriated for the use of humankind. Utilization as such means that priorities are assessed according to the historical recognition of things in relation to their distinctive uses. The secrets of nature are to be discovered by a disciplined ‘man’ of science and apprehended as part of one’s own life.¹¹ The union of humankind and nature is then violated and turned into human dominion over nature. Knowledge in this destructive sense is seen as a vehicle of the enslavement of nature. Hierarchical distinction is informed by the pursuits of specific human interests which are progressively actualized through technologies and natural sciences.¹² With the unlimited will to dominate, the human developments of “modern civilization are one-sidedly programmed for development, growth, expansion and conquest.”¹³

Identifying the root of the theological problem from another perspective, Wesley Grandberg-Michealson contends that theology has mostly been dictated and influenced by Western thought. Besides disclosing the failures of the Church, theological challenges such as the rediscovery of the truths of the Gospel in other religious and cultural expressions, and a serious rethinking of Christianity’s roots and branches, are suggested.¹⁴ With the realisation of these claims, the inhabitants of the earth experience the outpouring of divine love and providence in their own religio-cultural traditions, while openly engaging in theological dialogues toward the restoration of justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

0.2. A Jewish Perspective

The theological problem from a Jewish perspective, as Yitzhak I. Hayutman argues, is rooted in the rejection of the Jewish Biblical tradition by Western civilization, as well as the divorce of Christianity from Judaism. The Jewish Biblical tradition contains “the very seeds needed to save all mankind – the true *Adam* – and nurture the living planet – the *Adamah*.”¹⁵ Eric Katz argues along the same lines, emphasizing the fact that there is no reliance on abstractions in the worldview of Judaism. As Judaism operates on specifics

10 Elizabeth Dodson Gray, *Patriarchy as a Conceptual Trap* (New York: SCM Press, 1992), 121 f. Cf. Elisabeth Wendel Moltmann, “Christ in Feminist Context,” *Christ and Context*, H. Regan and A. J. Torrance, eds. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 103-116.

11 John Milbank, *Theology & Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1990 – Reprint, 1997), 269. Cf. Aruna Gnanadason, “Towards a Feminist Eco-Theology for India,” *Ecology and Development: Theological Perspective* D.D. Chetti, ed. (Madras: Navashakthi Production and Printing, 1996), 32 f.

12 Jürgen Moltmann, “Ecological Crisis: Peace with Nature,” *Colloquium: The Australian and New Zealand Theological Review* Vol. 20. No. 2 (May 1988), 2. Also, “Menschenbild zwischen Evolution und Schöpfung,” in: *Ökologische Theologie: Perspektiven zur Orientierung*, 196-212.

13 Moltmann, 2. Also, *Creating a Just Future* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 53.

14 Wesley Grandberg-Michaelson, “Why Are We in This Mess?,” *Ecology and Life*, 29-45.

15 Yitzhak I. Hayutman, 1-9.

(specific rules, principles and ethical guidelines) or concrete realities informed by the Bible's commandments, the philosophical orientation toward creation therefore arises out of the praxis of daily activity.

In this respect, nature is recognized in its concreteness and considered as one of the realms in which humans interact with God. With the affirmation of Judaism as a theocentric religion, in which the world belongs to God, Katz concludes that, while nature has value independent of human interests, and expresses the creative power of God, human values must be seen in the light of servanthood and stewardship, co-partnering with God in the work of God's creation.¹⁶

It is also argued that the emphasis of orthodox Christianity on the doctrine of Original Sin, as theologically expounded by St. Paul and the gentile Church Fathers, and later dogmatized and adopted by the Church during the rule of the Roman Emperors, also contributes to the crisis. The problem lies in the equation of good with the spiritual and evil with the material (as epitomized in Adam's exile from Eden). In this dualism, the Laws of Moses are considered as the practical and material commandments that point to the temptations of humankind and demonstrate its innate lusts and sinful desires. From a Jewish point of view:

... the original sin of Western Civilization happened, then, with their cutting off the shoots of the trees of Knowledge and of Life, forsaking the Torah (which is the Tree of Life according to the Jewish tradition) and rejecting the Jewish knowledge of the Bible to mask it in Gnostic and dualistic, ascetic Greek notions that sever spirit from matter. In this process, the earth became regarded as a dead matter and the greatest veneration was diverted to the Tree of Golgotha – the cross, the instrument of death.¹⁷

In contrast to the Pauline doctrine of Original Sin and the absolute dependence of sinful humanity on grace for perfection, Judaism offers a paradoxical conception of humankind.¹⁸ As an active agent of the Creator, Adam was offered the unique opportunity to work either for the perfection or the curse of creation. Viewing humankind in the context of this paradox, both the perfection and condemnation of the whole creation is at the core of our human vocation. While the Pauline doctrine places humankind in a helpless situation (as sinners and passive recipients of grace), the Jewish conception of humankind seeks to maintain the balance between grace and works of merit. Rabbi David Saperstein comments:

Jewish theology teaches us that, when God created the universe, He (sic) chose to allow one part of creation to remain undone. That component of creation was justice, social justice. Then God gave humanity the ability to understand the difference between right and wrong, between good and evil, between blessing and curse. God gave to us the rules of the Torah as the

16 Eric Katz, "Judaism and the Ecological Crisis," *Worldviews and Ecology: Religion, Philosophy, and the Environment*, Mary E. Tucker & John A. Grim, eds. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), 55-70.

17 Hayutman, 2f.

18 The constitution of mankind, *Adam*, is seen not only as male and female (Gen. 1:27), but also both as individual and collective, concrete and conceptual.

blueprint of how to complete creation. So, in the work of caring for what God has entrusted to us, we are engaged in holy work.¹⁹

The concept of humanity's dominion over nature was not intended to be exercised in the context of subduing the earth but of replenishing the earth. Humankind, as protector and guardian of the earth, has certain limitations already set by God.²⁰ To subdue the earth is simultaneously an acknowledgement that humankind has no rights of ownership or authority over creation. Rabbi Hayim Perelmuter points out that many theologians and Biblical scholars do not exegete the Jewish Scriptures from rabbinic sources. In so doing, most fail to have a wholistic interpretation of Biblical texts (e.g. "rule over it," Gen. 1:29).²¹ With these misinterpretations of Biblical texts, the command to 'rule over' has often been accompanied by misrepresentations of dominance such as "slash and burn" (Lynn White), "a license and an incentive for mechanization and pollution" (Arnold Toynbee), and "conquering nature, the enemy of Jehovah" (L. McHage).²²

Perelmuter argues that, while the Old Testament has often been interpreted legalistically and one-sidedly – such that the world has been considered as violent, nasty, and thus ruled by an angry God whose vengeful image is portrayed in its relationship with nature – virtues such as compassion, gentleness, caring, love of the fellow human, and forgiveness have been detached from the "hard-hearted" Jewish Scriptures. By emphasizing these virtues as belonging to the New Testament only, Perelmuter contends that such interpretations nurture negative views of the human-nature relation.²³

In this regard, he cites Bernhard Anderson's interpretation of the Scriptures as one example. To Anderson, when the Biblical motif of human domination over nature is understood in the full context of Israel's creation theology, then the present practices of exploitation are called into question, thus summoning people to new responsibility.²⁴ An emphasis on the concept of the stewardship of Creation in Judaism therefore advocates conservation and sustainability, in contrast to domination of the natural environment.

In addition, the Jewish argumentation challenges the predisposition toward the male-oriented Christian understanding of God. Here the root of the problem is seen not in the Jewish perception of Jahweh, but in the synthesis of the Judaic religion and Greek science. This synthesis took the male aspects of both cultures and deposed female aspects.²⁵ In the Jewish interpretation, the Fall of Jerusalem and the Destruction of the Temple in 70 B.C. led to the exile of the feminine aspect of the deity. Thus, "the Feminine aspect of God, the Shekhina, became exile and the Holy Land, and the whole earth, be-

19 Woodstock Report, "Religious Community Looks Toward the 1992 Earth Summit" No. 28 (December, 1991 – Updated: March, 1996): 1-19.

20 Kratz, 56f. Eric Kratz follows the argument of Norman Lamm, who points out that humans were restricted to a vegetarian diet as stated in the Bible text (Gen. 1:29), a fact usually ignored.

21 Hayim G. Perelmuter, "Do not Destroy – Ecology in the Fabric of Judaism," *The Ecological Challenge: Ethical, Liturgical, and Spiritual Responses*, Richard N. Fragomeni, ed. (Minneapolis: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 129-138. Cf. Norman Solomon, "Judaism and the Environment," *Judaism and Ecology*, Aubrey Rose, ed. (London: Cassell Publishers Ltd., 1992), 27ff.

22 Perelmuter, 130.

23 Perelmuter, 130f.

24 Bernhard Anderson cited by Perelmuter, 131.

25 Woodstock Report, 3.

came cursed.”²⁶ The violation of the harmonious synthesis of the character of the Jewish God – YHWH and the denial of the feminine aspects of related symbols in the Judaic cultic tradition, such as the Torah, Land, Shabbat, etc., are therefore viewed as contributors to the ecological crisis.

0.3. Thesis Statements

Apart from the allegations posed by both traditions exposed above, it is my contention that the detachment of the traditional doctrines of the indigenous religion in Samoa from the teachings of the Christian religion lies at the heart of the theo-ecological problem in that context. In other words, the misappropriation of indigenous beliefs and the insensitivity to religio-cultural values in developing an understanding of the relation of God to human beings, and to all parts of creation, is the basis of the ecological crisis in Samoa.

When the religio-cultural system was encountered by Christianity, in with its Western cultural packaging, almost everything indigenous to the experiences of Samoa was looked upon with suspicion. The acceptance of Christianity meant adaptation and adjustment to a monotheistic faith orientation that was expressed and clothed in foreign conceptions. The theological problem was determined, not only by the disintegration of indigenous polytheistic beliefs, but also by the resistance of the missionaries to considering the local context as the framework for doing mission. On the other hand, Samoans themselves, as the receiving partners of the process, did not fully examine the content of this faith before adopting it in the religio-cultural lifeway.

Samoa, like other countries, has been caught in the midst of these influential forces. When Samoan traditional beliefs and value-systems encountered foreign forces, many new changes took place. To a significant extent, the overthrow of the theological conceptions and the gradual erosion of the value-system have contributed to the problems Samoans are facing today. Besides the overthrow of divinities as the foremost characteristic of the religious encounters, other generative foreign forces included international models of trade, industry, capitalism and democracy. These tended to corrode and undermine beliefs and practises which Samoans had followed for thousands of years, and which had sustained their habitation.

The sequence of determining events in the course of Samoan history can clearly be glimpsed, with the exception of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Indeed, neo-colonialism is a continuing phenomenon which, in most instances, has been engineered by destructive forces channelled in and through ‘development’. It should be noted that, although the Christian religion is separately identified in the sequence of dominant transforming events, one can never separate religion from the social, political and economic aspects contributing to ecological destruction. As Nicholas Wolterstorff has noted, Christianity, more than any other religion, is “not an avertive religion, but a world-formative religion,” and the Christian mission was, and still is to some extent, “a history-making force.”²⁷

In Samoa, the *Lotu* (Church) is an active catalyst and influential agent for many positive

26 Woodstock Report, 3.

27 Nicholas Wolterstorff, (1983: 3-22) and (1966: 81-100), as cited by Avid J. Bosch, *Believing in the Future: Toward a Missiology of Western Culture* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1995), 34.

developments in the life of the society. At the same time, one can observe from her institutional development that she simultaneously participates in promoting symbols of status and prestige. In this sense, the *Lotu* can be categorized as a history-making force. If the Church assumes this role, then how can she also be an agent of God in the struggles for peace and integrity of creation to minimize ecological and other disasters? If the Church remains as a history-making force, then what kind of mission will she have, and how is she going to perform God's mission in Samoa, for the sake of the whole creation?

It is my contention that the Church can also be a life-enhancing agent through her commitment to the ecological issue in doing theology and participating in the mission of God. If she has overlooked significant components of the religio-cultural context, she can yet rediscover some remaining ingredients to enrich her mission amidst the ecological crisis. Additionally, if the monotheistic faith orientation tends to be deductive, then it must be counter-balanced by positive elements of the polytheistic faith-orientation of the ancestral heritage conveyed in myths and oral traditions, as a means of faith-enriching activity in her commitment to the welfare of all of God's creation.

To reform and rethink Christianity so that it can naturally take root and prosperously grow in the stimulating tropical climate and the fertile soil of Oceania remains a challenge. This may be one way to dismantle the dualistic attitudes inherited from outside influences while, at the same time, an effort is made to rediscover the sense of oneness with all of God's creation. This quest is grounded in the deep awareness that life can only be lived honourably in harmonious relationships within the community of the whole creation.

0.4. Aim of the Dissertation

The aim of this work is to construct a contextual eco-theology. By ecology, we mean *ecos* – household or *aiga* in Samoan. Since ecology and economy are closely related in terms of sharing a common root, *logos* – the structure of the household – and *nomos* – rule or administration of the household – are incorporated as two inseparable aspects of the reality of the household. In Samoan, *aiga* – household structure – and *ta-maoaiga* – economic welfare and its administrative or parenting principles – are intimately related.

The aim of this construction is to explore theological perspectives as well as moral and ethical challenges, in order to address the interrelated crises of ecological destruction. As a means and medium through which Creation and Redemption are both contextually realized to be at the centre of the mission of God,²⁸ the construction invites the author to read

28 The teachings of the London Missionary Society in Samoan in her early establishment identified four main emphases in understanding theology. In Samoan, these are as follows: *O Mataupu Silisili ua iloga ai: – Ua masani ona vaevaeina Mataupu Silisili i vaega tetele e 4: (a) O Mataupu tau le Atua. (e) O Mataupu tau tagata. (i) O Mataupu tau le Olataga. (o) O Mataupu tau le Ola-Atali*. Translated into English: Theology is usually divided into four major parts: (i) The Teachings about God. (ii) The Teachings about Humankind. (iii) The Teachings about Salvation. (iv) The Teachings about Eternity or Life after Death. It is noted that the doctrine of Creation or Nature is eliminated from this categorization. See, for example, “*O le Faavae o Mataupu Silisili a le Ekalesia*”: transl. – *The Foundation of the Theological Doctrines of the Church* (Malua: LMS Printing Press, n.d.), 8f. Author's Translation.

anew the message of Creator God, Christ the Savior and Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit – the Energy²⁹ that permeates all creation.

Besides reconstituting Creation and Salvation as the central locus of the mission of God, our theological construction seeks to discover a new kind of Christian identity that bears witness to the creating and redeeming love of God in all creation. The option for life thus demands a rediscovery of an ethical spirituality and a consciousness that graciously participates in healing, caring for, and always being ready to pay attention to the very components of creation that are on the verge of degradation or extinction. Overtones and traces of the divine are made manifest in the religio-cultural heritage, related through the evolutions of mythical expressions and oral traditions.

The call to respond to the ecologically critical situation is the primary concern of this work, although it is not seriously taken into consideration by most Samoans, and is yet to be effectively taken up by the Church as one of the principle mandates of the mission of God. The very existence of a community that anticipates a hope for an ecologically sustainable future depends on the living witness and proclamation of the Church.

0.5. Scope of the Research

Primary research for this work covers three transitional periods and major determining events in the history of Samoa. Based on the understanding that the “transpositional process in history”³⁰ is always accompanied by changing beliefs and values, the work focuses on three major historical phases, namely: (i). the pre-European contact era; (ii). the early missionary and colonial activities; and (iii). the contemporary situation. Within these historical and transitional shifts, a survey of the roots and manifestations of the creational issue will be explored in detail, while at the same time unveiling the accompanying myths that underlie the processes that are informing or shaping the transitional changes.

Geographically, the study covers the Samoan islands as a whole. Although Samoa has been politically and religiously divided, the strength of the *fa'a-Samoa* (religio-cultural lifeways) and the sharing of a single *Gagana Samoa* (language) affirm and consolidate cultural unity. Our comprehensive approach pays serious attention to the cultural resources, particularly as they relate to the land, sea, and the whole of creation. The sharing of a common experience of the smallness and precarity of island existence, and the constant exploitation of resources to sustain the rapidly growing population, are duly considered in the theological construction.

29 Cf. Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth* (London: Anchor Books, 1988), 34ff. The term ‘energy’ and not ‘power’ is employed to define the activity of the Holy Spirit, due to the understanding that the application of *power* has, to a certain extent, oppressive and negative overtones. *Energy* sounds more appropriate when we consider the work of the Holy Spirit as an enabling force that permeates life and enables its continuity, the *transcendent-immanent energy*.

30 C.S. Song, *The Compassionate God: An Exercise in the Theology of Transposition* (London: SCM Press, 1982), 5-17. Song refers to the transitional process not only as a shift in space and time but, more importantly, the realisation of ideas and beliefs that change the human understanding of life and the world. In his theological application of the term, he tries to examine, in the context of transposition, how historical and human experiences of the people (Asians) reveal the “heart of God in agony and compassion.” Transpositional experiences accordingly bring about changes in theological developments.

0.6. Approach of the Theological Construction

Theology can be done on the basis of “faith seeking understanding, *fides quaerens intellectum*.”³¹ Here, one attempts to do theology objectively, by collecting data, developing theories of knowledge, and finding a language of discourse to express it. This is an approach which is typically identified with the theologies of the Euro-Americans. On the other hand, one can construct theology by immersing oneself in the religio-cultural ethos of a society, engaging in dialogue with the community and participating in its ordinary living conditions. This approach is mostly taken up by Two-Thirds World theologies and the so-called minority communities. Here experiential-understanding assumes primary status over against reasoned-faith. In our view, praxis and faith are seen to be poles of a single process of doing theology and understanding mission.

This work has affinities with a subjective-participatory approach toward constructing theology, as well as a focus on perceiving how the mission of God in one’s context can most authentically be interpreted. It is a theology constructed out of the stories of the people, whether in the form of myths, legends and oral traditions, or in the sharing of their ordinary experiences, be they sacred or profane, past or present, exciting or sorrowful. By taking the Samoan religio-cultural heritage as a point of departure, an understanding of the living content of faith takes priority. Such an understanding of faith is deeply rooted in a cultural context and is the lens through which one views the Gospel as part of one’s own life and identity.

In rethinking theology from a Samoan perspective, one must be sensitive to the shifting paradigms not only in the cultural processes, but also in the thinking processes. Weaving these into a wholistic approach can provide the Church with a relevant contextualized approach to theologizing and also a fruitful way of imbuing the mission of God with accountability and sustainability. The construction of this work therefore takes into account historical, hermeneutical, textual, contemporal and poetical methods. Accompanied by the awareness that the use of inclusive language (which remains a challenge for the Church) is a contemporary demand for theology and the mission of God, inclusive and wholistic expressions are employed.

In the form and structure of this work, the history of Samoa is interpreted and critically studied according to major periods of change and transformation. Historical events both in the mission of the Church and the State are visited in order to disclose the underlying cultural and religious structures and concepts that have contributed to present ecological disasters. In our textual approach, reference to the Biblical tradition is necessary to provide a solid basis for the theological construction. Further, in order for such a theology to be relevant, it must take the contemporary experiences of Samoans into consideration. The poetical approach is applied as a medium through which the good news of the God of all Creation and Redemption is accommodated into the religio-cultural lifeway. As a story-oriented community (the majority of whom are not interested in writing and reading books), the narrating of stories is an effective means of bringing theology home. This is an approach whereby cultural symbolism, metaphors, as well as signs of the time are interwoven into a single eco-theological understanding.

31 Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 75.

0.7. Research Method

The dissertation is based primarily on observations of the experiences of local situations, together with insights gathered from *discussions* with the local people. As an effective way of exploring the depths of the reality of local experiences and expressions, the term *interview*, which is typically associated with academic projects, and which has been employed by many academic researchers, finds no special place in this work. In actual fact, one cannot touch the reality of the Samoan way of life when research is carried out in terms of formal interviews, as Samoans are prone to say what they think the researchers want to hear. This is mostly misleading, as the responses to interviews are fundamentally guided by people's norms of respect and formality. The gathered information from interviews, then, remains only on the surface or on an abstract level, and does not really touch the roots of human experiences and perceptions in real life.

Four main islands of Samoa were visited in researching this work. The intention was not only to observe the social organisation and settlement patterns in differing geographical settings, but it was an opportunity to witness most of the historical remains of the Samoan ancestral traditions. The choice of villages where discussions with people were carried out varied from towns to villages. The sharing of peoples' ideas and worldviews, the way they see and understand faith and the role of the Church in the face of contemporary changes, and specifically how they perceive issues related to the ecological crisis, were observed and heard with serious attention. In addition to these personal experiences and local information-gathering, great attention is also given to old writings on Samoa, including Church records about the missions, especially archival materials recorded by early missionaries. A wealth of theories, ideas, and approaches to the ecological issue which are internationally available in religious, scientific, and theological literature are also considered and integrated into this work.

0.8. Definitions of Concepts

To work out a theological construction in a contextually-oriented manner, a revitalization of the traditional worldviews, with specific focus on the *aiga*, is chosen as the fundamental concept or symbol whereby Creation as well as Redemption gains prominence in the theology of the mission of God. Being shaped and defined through the evolution of myths and oral traditions, religio-cultural symbols speak a language that is clearly heard and informs a praxis which stimulates solidarity for the common good of all. Defining the Samoan concepts not only allows a departure from foreign conceptions and subjectivities, but also provides interpretations based on the ways Samoans see and comprehend reality.

0.8.1. *Tala o le Vavau – Myths*

Myth means, “a tale, speech, or a story”. The concept is popularly rendered to point to something unreal, primitive, irrational and meaningless. However, although there is no universal definition of myth, we can say that a myth is a narrative that relates truth/s (or meanings) which are the foundation of an existential reality. Mircea Eliade, for example,

states that: “Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the beginnings.”³² It describes how existence came to be through the deeds of Supernatural beings, who also sometimes break through into the world and make it sacred.³³ Their sacred interventions generate feelings of wonder, excitement, fear or doubt. These feelings shape and inform what existence looks like, and what humankind is today, “a mortal, sexed, and cultural being.”³⁴ Moreso, myths reveal how reality is constructed, and how human conduct is shaped by such revelations. A myth expresses a living reality or something eternal in temporal terms, and gives evidence to the “spiritual potentialities of human beings.”³⁵

Myths refer to past historical events regulated by God/s or cultural Heroes, but they also have meanings for us today. As Theodor Ahrens asserts, a myth is *erzählte Geschichte* – narrated history/story.³⁶ Although indigenous mythological traditions have been considered pagan by Christian missions, contemporary studies disclose that they are a systemic rationale that describes worldviews and realities.³⁷ Myth explains and relates relationships of things or realities, and how a web of relationships produce the wholeness of an event.³⁸

Our reference to myth in this work not only implies a sacred living reality which originated in the distant past, but also points to ordinary religio-cultural existence, as well as to the timeless-imaginable reality beyond existence. *Tala o le vavau* usually refers to stories of the ancient times. This is due to the rendering of *vavau* to mean ‘olden times’,³⁹ overlooking other meanings such as: lasting, perpetuating, and conjoining. This means that myth is a sacred narrative that conjoins the *va* (distance, space, gap) between eternity and ordinary, divine spirit and matter, past and present, time and place, and so forth. Myth as employed in this work is theologically oriented and points to a story that narrates and informs the reality of our existence founded by the God/s,⁴⁰ Supernatural Agents, Heroes,

32 Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, translated from French by Willard R. Trask. (London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1963), 6.

33 See Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 1-20. Also, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism* (Princeton University Press, 1991) 34, 57 ff; Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth: With Bill Moyers* (London: Anchor Books, 1988), 1-43. Also “The Historical Development of Mythology,” in: *Myth and Mythmaking*, Henry A. Murray, ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), 19-45; Denise Lardner Carmody, *Mythological Woman: Contemporary Reflections on Ancient Religious Stories* (New York: Crossroads, 1992), 1-11.

34 Eliade, 6.

35 Campbell, 5.

36 Cf. Theodor Ahrens, *Unterwegs nach der verlorenen Heimat: Studien zur Identitätsproblematik in Melanesien* Band 4 (Erlangen: Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission, 1986), 14-28.

37 Cf. Kurt Hübner, *Die Wahrheit des Mythos* (München: C.H. Beck, 1985), 27-33. Cf. “Die Biblische Schöpfungsgeschichte im Licht moderner Evolutionstheorien,” *Naturwissenschaft und Glaube*, Helmut A. Müller, ed. (Bern: Scherz, 1988), 173-193.

38 Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker cited by Thomas Bargatzky, “Achilles in Samoa: Liturgie, Genealogie und mythische Identität,” *Anthropos* 86 (1991): 414. Translation of: *Mythos zeigt den Zusammenhang der Dinge, indem er eine Geschichte erzählt*.

39 G. Pratt, *Grammar & Dictionary of the Samoan Language* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1911), 362.

40 God/s is a shortened form for the multiplicity of divine attributes. There is a diversity of Gods, but they are one in union. But as a way to harmonize the monotheistic and the polytheistic conceptions of God, the author prefers to remain with the singular spelling, *God*, although we are conscious of the diverse nature of the divine. The use of the collective plural for the divine concept is a means of respecting and recognizing both the oneness, unity, corporateness, diversity and distinctive attributes of God.

or Ancestors. Specifically, myth relates how ecological systems of life in creation are created by the Gods, and how we continually experience God in our respective religio-cultural lifeways. In short, myth continually relates the totality of a reality where the Supernaturals, Gods, Ancestors, humankind and cosmic components co-existentially live.

In identifying the functions of myth, Joseph Campbell suggests four main aspects which are worth taking into account. First, a myth opens the world to the dimension of mystery that is manifest through all things, “to the realization of the mystery that underlies all forms.” Through such a realization, the transcendent mystery is addressed via the conditions of world actualities. Second is the cosmological dimension, which deals with scientific presumptions and how the mystery is related to them. It focuses on defining the world and how the mystery can be made known and explained to the human mind. Third, in the sociological dimension, a myth validates social orders and functions, depending on religio-cultural contexts. Fourth, a myth informs and shapes ethical and behavioural laws of a society. This is linked with a pedagogical function which orients humankind on “how to live a lifetime under any circumstances.”⁴¹ These functions are worth considering in our theological quest.

0.8.2. *Tala Tuu – Oral Traditions*

Oral tradition is a whole complex of religio-cultural teachings, practises, norms of behavior, and lifeways handed down from the beginning. In Samoan, *tala tuu* (oral traditions) literally refers to stories which had been told and are left to be retold in perpetuity. Such stories are influenced mostly by the living experiences of people in a particular time and place. The Samoan term, *tala tuutuu gutu* (stories carried down by word of mouth) bespeaks the passing of people’s stories about their traditions, life experiences, dreams, and hopes of the past, the present, and the future.

The Oxford Learner’s Dictionary defines tradition as “a passing of beliefs or customs from one generation to the next, especially without writing.” Stressing the “passing of beliefs that are not written”⁴² encompasses a continuation of religio-cultural traditions of Samoans (Polynesians). It is the art of storytelling that orients us about our lifeways. While the oral relaying of customs and traditions is a dynamic and ever-evolving process, oral traditions also undergo modifications in narration.

0.8.3. *Religio-Cultural Heritage*

Religion and culture will be discussed based on their indigenous meanings and understandings, followed by a discussion in relation to broader theories. It is our contention that the concepts of religion and culture have been largely defined by foreign scholars as two

41 Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, 8 f. Cf. Hans-Peter Müller, “Mythos und Kerygma: Anthropologische und theologische Aspekte”, *Mythos – Kerygma – Wahrheit, Gesammelte Aufsätze zum Alten Testament in seiner Umwelt und zur Biblischen Theologie* BZAW 200 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), 188-219. “Wo Mythos lebendig ist, stellt er sich die Welt, das heißt, die Gesamtwirklichkeit, nicht als Bild vor, sondern als Auswirkung eines Gott bzw. Götter und Menschen umgreifenden Urzeitgeschehens, als ursprungsorientiert erzählbare Handlung.”

42 See Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary.

separate entities, thus placing indigenous definitions as appendages subjectively assimilated to foreign definitions. Religion and culture are interwoven and inseparable in the Samoan worldview. This inseparability will be explored later in this section in detail.

0.8.3.1. *Tapua'iga* – Religion

Tapua'iga is formed from two syllables: *tapu* – to make sacred, or to place (something) under restriction; and, *aiga*, which means a family, a relative, a cohabitation, or people who are bounded in and through relations.⁴³ Here there is no reference to private or personal worship; rather, the *tapua'iga* is performed within the context of the community, including the bio-cosmic community.

Tapua'iga in short is *tapua'i*, which, in its sociological dimension, presents meanings such as “...to abstain from (certain activities such as) all work and sports; to sit waiting for success in war or in sickness; to give something to bring success; (and), to offer religious worship.”⁴⁴ Pratt contends that *tapua'iga* refers specifically to “certain villages which did not engage in war, but served as a refuge to those who fled on defeat.”⁴⁵ The act of remaining in peace and finding security are the anticipating goals of the religious act in this context.

One can extrapolate that this meaning is based on the religious experiences associated with traditional warfare, whereby the gods were called upon for victory and success. Yet those who participated in the *tapua'iga* also remained neutral; in other words, they mediated and offered security by fostering harmony between the two opposing parties. The goals were not only to seek and create peace, but also to heal and comfort the victimized, broken and defeated party, both spiritually and physically.

Tapua'iga also encompasses human and natural relationships. For instance, the term *tapunuu* or *tapufanua* resembles the *pule* (authority) of sacred chiefs over the *aiga*. This includes dutiful commitments to the land and the sea. This role was regarded as divinely sanctioned and therefore it must be carried out on good terms. Apart from that, the root syllable *tapu* (referring to sacred, restriction) contains several other meanings which are related to the natural world. For example, the word *tapu'e* provides meanings such as: “to heap up earth round a yam,” or simply to nurture and give stability and growth to the trees, and “to catch,” which in this sense specifically refers to the catching of animals and birds (mainly pigeons), which was a religious sport of Samoan chiefs in former times. Another aspect of the word *tapui* is “something hung up to denote trees from which fruit is not to be picked, ... (or) to prohibit from picking fruit by hanging the *tapui* on the tree.”⁴⁶ The prohibition act is aimed at regaining the fertility of the trees. This act is sometimes accompanied by a *sa* (interdict) whereby the whole village would refrain from harvesting certain food crops until they are fully matured. The taking off of the *tapui* on trees is called *tapuimau* – to neutralize the taboo; or sometimes *tapuinoa* – to reduce the prohibition.

From these meanings, one can observe that, in *tapuaiga*, human cultivation plays an

43 Pratt, 322.

44 Pratt, 322.

45 Pratt, 322.

46 Pratt, 322.

important role. Additionally, the concept includes both the divine and human relations, which are affirmed, performed and observed in social engagements and interactions of people, land, trees, animals, birds, and so forth. The *tapua'iga* in this sense morally and ethically shapes the society's distinctive way of life.

0.8.3.2. Religion in Universal Theories

Religion simply means to reunite, or to bind together what has been broken. Derived from the Latin root-word *relegere* (to summon, bring together), *religere* (to observe with thoughtful attention or consideration), and *relagere* (to reunite, to hold fast together or to be in communion with),⁴⁷ the concept can also be defined as recreating links or relationships between separated parts.⁴⁸ Etymologically, the term suggests an acknowledgement of brokenness, the insecurity of separateness or being estranged from *Otherness* or, specifically, the *Holy Other*.⁴⁹ It can also portray the insecure and finite condition of human beings yearning to find peace in the present life and continuity after death. Besides the anticipation of the life beyond, religious consciousness implies a longing or inner urge to be in constant and everlasting communion with the Holy Other, through commitments to participate in rituals, cults and ethics that serve the religious purpose.⁵⁰

The concept of religion cannot be confined to any one definition, since scholars of religious studies view religion from their own distinct fields of interest. To use Hargrove's visual illustration as an example, religion is like a mountain in the midst of many observers, who, viewing it from different angles, do not see exactly the same configurations. The mountain is perceived based on the way one looks at it. Thus, a theologian describes the 'mountain' differently from a sociologist, anthropologist or psychologist.⁵¹ The point of concern, then, is whether to take religion as "a human phenomenon and a human construction, or whether it has some kind of transcendent origin and reference point."⁵²

We can immediately identify the human construction of religion with the sociological and the anthropological approaches, which are well represented by figures such as Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim. Marx once said that religion does not make man, rather, religion is a man-made entity. Hence, the social "being" determines the consciousness of a person and not vice versa. From his analysis of the secular economic order of his time and context, he concluded that religion is simply a reflection of the social order. It is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless

47 Theo Sundermeier, "Religion, Religionen," *Lexikon missionstheologischer Grundbegriffe*, Karl Müller, ed. (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1987), 411. The English rendering of the German terms: "... wieder zusammennehmen, rücksichtsvoll beachten, und anbinden, festbinden, oder abgeleitet werden." Author's translation.

48 R. Ellwood, *Introducing Religion: From Inside and Outside* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1983), 45 f.

49 Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen* (München: C.H. Beck Verlag, 1936).

50 Cf. Sundermeier, 414. He states: "*Religion ist die Antwort des Menschen auf Transzendenzenerfahrung, die im Ritus, in Kult und Ethik in einer Gemeinschaft Gestalt annimmt.*"

51 Barbara Hargrove, *The Sociology of Religion: Classical and Contemporary Approaches*, 2nd Edition (Arlington Heights: Harland Davidson, Inc., 1989), 20f.

52 Ninian Smart, "Religion," *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, Alan Richardson and John Bowden, eds. (London: SCM Press. 1989), 496-498.

situation. It is the ‘opium of the people’.⁵³ The danger in this interpretation is that religion is reduced to social, economic and cultural processes.

As a sociologist interested in religious studies, Durkheim seems to agree with Marx but differs in certain aspects. For Durkheim, religion is essential to form a society through a set of unifying systems of beliefs and practises regarding sacred things.⁵⁴ Adhering to specific rituals and sets of beliefs culminates in the unity of people to form a single moral community which he calls the Church. Durkheim sees religion as creating the grounds for an ideal social order which is constantly empowered by a sanctified moral system. Thus, the role of religion is not for individuals “to be enriched intellectually, rather, it is for the enablement of people to act in order to cope with life.”⁵⁵ The emphasis is on the community rather than the individual. With this emphasis on the social functions of religion, Durkheim contends that religion, for traditional communities, creates, affirms and sustains a common sense of identity. This means that when a community worships its God/s, it is really affirming and embracing its commonality. Religion bespeaks commonness.⁵⁶

The other side of religion focuses on the inner character. This approach is influenced mostly by theologians. Karl Barth in defining religion, for example, sought to recover neglected truths of orthodoxy. He contended that “revelation” stands over against religion, and it is the “alien one,” or the “wholly other” who is unknowable by human beings which directs human responses. Religion to a certain extent, therefore, is unbelief. What human beings feel and think, experience and detect, has nothing at all to do with God, but is a projection of their own wishes and dreams. The reality of God transcends human concepts and feelings. However, God reveals and speaks to all humanity in His Word, that is Christ.⁵⁷ The Word of God reveals Godself to humanity.

If religion is “a human phenomenon that unites cultural, social and personality systems into a meaningful whole,”⁵⁸ then there is no way in which religion and culture can be treated separately. This sociological definition of *religion* seems to contradict theological expositions. Paul Tillich, for example, sees religion as the encounter of people with the numinous, or that which is beyond their conception of ordinary reality. The experience of the encounter with the power or extraordinary force beyond compels human beings to ac-

53 See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Über Religion* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1976). Following: “*Der Mensch macht die Religion, die Religion macht nicht den Menschen. Und zwar ist die Religion das Selbstbewußtsein und das Selbstgefühl des Menschen, der sich selbst entweder noch nicht erworben oder schon wieder verloren hat.*” Cf. Robin Gill, “Sociology of Religion,” *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 541-545. Cf. Peter Lawrence, “Daughter of Time,” *Cultures of the Pacific*, Thomas G. Harding, ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Inc., 1970), 267-283.

54 Emile Durkheim, *Die elementaren Formen des religiösen Lebens* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), 61-68. Following the German version: “*Die Glaubensüberzeugungen und die Riten.*” *Die ersten sind Meinungen: sie bestehen aus Vorstellungen; die zweiten sind bestimmte Handlungsweisen. Zwischen diesen beiden Klassen liegt derselbe Abstand wie zwischen dem Denken und Tun.*” Author’s translation.

55 Durkheim cited by Lawrence, 273.

56 Durkheim, 65 f. Cf. Steve Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults* (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), 43-46.

57 Karl Barth, *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion*, Erster Band, Hannelotte Reiffen, ed. (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1985), Chapters 1-3. Cf. Theo Sundermeier, *Religion, Religionen*, 411- 422.

58 Hargrove, 29.

knowledge that they have an ultimate concern.⁵⁹ The human always has a desire to experience the other side beyond ordinary life, a realm set apart from everyday experience. Religion in this category is referred to the experiencing of the sacred and the breaking in of the divine, or revelation.

0.8.3.3. *Aganu'u* – Culture

The word itself contains two distinctive characteristics. The word *aga* refers to the moral and social or behavioural character of a *nuu* (village or a community). *Aga* bespeaks the spiritual (when interpreted from *agaga* – spirits) character of the community, including the thinking process or the philosophy and psychology of a certain 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 spiritual and social behaviors of the community are intimately interwoven to foster a specific ethos and a way of life of a society.

From this brief definition, one can comprehend that the culture of Samoan society functions in communal terms. In fact, there exist individual *aga* (behaviors), but these can only be validated in and through participation in the community. There is a certain respect for the individual self; however, the totality of one's integrity is found and rooted in the corporate, interrelated and interdependent behaviors, rhythms and flow of the life of the society.

0.8.3.4. Culture in Universal Theories

Leslie Newbigin defines culture as “the sum total of ways of living built up by a human community and transmitted from one generation to another.”⁶⁰ Culture is the total sum of formulas or patterns (including laws of nature) peculiar for human survival. Culture therefore includes the whole life of human beings insofar as it is a shared life.⁶¹ The Latin root “*colere*,”⁶² suggests that culture is human policy in the widest sense. It is a human activity which implies an awareness of tasks and human social deliberations in the changing society.⁶³ This statement implies that culture is a human construction, or simply a result of the work of human minds and hands, as Richard H. Niebuhr puts it.⁶⁴ Since culture is man-made, it therefore presumes social responsibilities and thus adjusts to timely changes. To be human means to be social and cultural,⁶⁵ or in other words, “if there is to be human culture, there must be human society, which not only expresses this culture but transmits it.”⁶⁶

59 Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1 (London: SCM Press, 1953), 14 ff. Cf. Alan Richardson and John Bowden, eds. *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 496 f.

60 Leslie Newbigin, *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Churches* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1984), 5.

61 Newbigin, 5.

62 The Latin word *colere* means to take care of, to preserve, or to cultivate. The meanings connote human activity, and a shift from agriculture to religious cult.

63 Philip Potter, “WCC and the World of Religions and Cultures,” *Ecumenical Review* Vol. 41, No. 1 (January, 1989): 4-12. Cf. C.A. van Peursen, *Ecumenical Review* Vol. 39, No. 2 (April 1987): 187-191.

64 Richard H. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: SCM Press, 1975), 32 f.

65 Niebuhr, 33.

66 Eugene A. Nida, *Customs and Cultures – Anthropology for Christian Mission* (Evaston: Harper & Row Publishers, 1954), 28.

Louis J. Luzbetak metaphorically presents culture as a map or blueprint according to which a society adapts itself to its physical, social and ideational environment.⁶⁷ He summarises: “Culture is a plan, consisting of a set of norms, standards and associated notions and beliefs for coping with the various demands of life, shared by a social group, learned by the individual from the society, and organized into a dynamic system of control.”⁶⁸

Although we are given a variety of definitions, it is clear that culture has to do with “shared life” or the “corporate expressions” (or unexpressed accounts) of human activities in a given time by a specific generation.⁶⁹ Culture changes as it evolves in time and space; hence, every new generation learns and produces its own cultural patterns that fit the age. It is “a plan for living that is always in the process of ... adjustment. It is a code for action, for survival, and for success in life.”⁷⁰ To mediate and communicate both religion and culture demands a language of cultivation and expression. Language in whatever form, whether verbal or non-verbal, plays a very important role for it is the primary medium of communication. Language is the most prominent element of culture and religion, for it not only expresses the intentions and ideologies of a community, but it also initiates mutual understanding and authorizes communication.

0.8.3.5. Religio-Cultural Lifeway

Although sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists and theologians have different approaches to what religion and culture are, one cannot alienate the transcendental experience – *Transcendenzerfahrung*⁷¹ as a guiding principle of every religion. As a human phenomenon, religion contains “a community of believers who share a common myth that interprets the abstractions of cultural values into historic reality through ritual behavior, which makes possible personal participation in a dimension of experience recognized as encompassing something more than everyday reality – the holy.”⁷² These elements are united into recognizable institutional structures that undergo changes, developments and deteriorations in the processes of life.

It is observed, however, from the previous definitions of religion and culture, that “nature” or the participating components of bio-spheric communities, tend to be left out of human comprehensions. This reveals the ways in which concepts are studied and given abstracted definitions. When the aforementioned definitions are analyzed from an ecological point of view, we continue to see a manipulative treatment of the biotic-communities as objects of human undertakings. This perpetuates the dualism of human/world, which is one of our main challenges in this work.

To draw a demarcation line between *tapuaiga* and *aganuu* in the Samoan worldview is impossible, due to the fact that the whole sphere of its traditional lifeway was (and is to a

67 Louis J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), 157.

68 Luzbetak, 156.

69 Cf. Report of a Consultation on Gospel and Culture, “Der Willowbank-Report” No. 2, by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (Stuttgart, 1980): 36-106.

70 Luzbetak, 156.

71 Sundermeier, 412 ff.

72 Hargrove, 29.

certain extent) experienced as an interaction of religious and cultural elements. Religious and secular experiences were/are woven together and outwardly expressed by Samoan culture. Religion in Samoa, as Elia Taase states, "... is deeply imbedded in culture. This can be amply proved in the highly ceremonial life of Samoa, in which almost all the ceremonies represented a ritual aspect of religion. But it is the association of religion and the ranks of chiefs which has most intricately woven the two together."⁷³ Taase has pointed out the significance of Samoan chiefly status and roles in the religio-cultural heritage. This is due to the fact that the roles of the *matai* are uniquely accountable for the administration of Samoan religio-cultural life. However, the whole system of life of the traditional Samoan society also functioned in reciprocal and interdependent relations. Ranks and roles of chiefs are only part of the whole system, for every member of the created world has its own role to play.

The tendency to separate religion and culture only became a part of the Samoan life when the Christian religion came to dominate the whole cultural order and setting. Aiono Fanaafi has clearly pointed out, for instance, that it is difficult to separate the secular from the sacred in the *tapua'iga* of Samoa. Only when the new religion finally took over the *tapua'iga* did it introduce, knowingly or unconsciously, the secularism of Victorian England.⁷⁴

In the traditional cultural setting, almost every sphere of life was dominated by an awareness of the divine association, and the *tapua'iga* was held always prior, during and after a communal activity. For example, when a group of villagers prepared to go hunting, a *tapu'aiga* would take place before they left, and while they were engaged in this activity the *tapuaiga* was held by other members, led especially by the elders, including chiefs and others present. The villagers would remain silent, patiently awaiting the return of the group. During this moment of silence no one was allowed to walk in front of the chiefs or the place where the worship was held, unless urgently needed. The same went for other activities such as sports, fishing, or even driving a car in the contemporary setting.⁷⁵

0.8.4. *Aiga: An Eco-Religio-Cultural Metaphor*⁷⁶

The concept *aiga* constitutes the wholeness of Samoan life. It has bonded the divine and the ordinary into a synthesis of existence. As has already been mentioned, *aiga* means a family and a household community in blood, close or distant relations. On the simplest

73 Elia T. Taase, "Beyond Samoan Christianity: A Study of the Siovili Cult and the Problems Facing the Church in Samoa Today," *BD Thesis*, Pacific Theological College (October, 1971): 25. Cf. Aiono Fanaafi Le-Tagaloa, "Gospel, Culture and Communication," *An Unpublished Paper presented to the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools Piula Theological College* (October 1993): 1-9. Aiono was Professor of Samoan Cultural Studies at the University of Samoa.

74 Le-Tagaloa, "Gospel, Culture and Communication," 3.

75 Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1987), 35. The present example of the secular aspect of the Samoan *tapuaiga* (worship) when Samoans travel is portrayed by the colloquial saying: *Malo le faauli* – "Congratulations on your steering" (said by the worshippers/travellers, etc.; and the proper response from the driver (or the one who is doing the job) should be: *Malo le tapuai* – "Congratulations on your spiritual encouragement."

76 *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. The sense in which metaphor is employed here refers to words or phrases which are used to indicate something different from the literal meaning.

level, it signifies relationships of people, a social unit in a village where a *matai* (chief) directs its religious, economic, and political activities. Each family unit is a self-sustaining economic group, the members of which, including the head, cooperatively contribute the products of their labor for the common good of the whole family.⁷⁷

In a more extensive sense, *aiga* incorporates the communal ties with the Gods, the ancestors, as well as the divine heritages, the sea, land, and the sky. In its inclusive sense, *aiga* could be conceived as a descent group or kinship in all its dimensions. Etymologically, *aiga* implies three main emphases. First, it means cohabitations, which is a neutral relational concept,⁷⁸ referring to a community of members being blended into a single whole. In an immediate sense, *aiga* refers to a relational web of human generations who trace the origin of their existence to the ancestors, and to the family of the Gods, Spirits, or the Divinities. Such an existence is sanctified by the presence of the Gods, and is also legitimated by their representations in nature, including human beings, most importantly the *matai*. Every *aiga* has a *matai* who acts as the custodian of the family. Additionally, each *aiga* has a *faalupega*, a formal expression of recognition associated with chiefly titles.

Secondly, *aiga* contains biospheric overtones. For instance, when the word is pronounced with an emphasis on the first syllable *a'i* and the vowel *â* at the end *a'igâ*, the term recalls geographical meanings such as being settled, inhabited, or being at home in a definite space and place. This means a community of living beings and their bio-geographical place which are blended into a network of relations, communicating and interacting in natural ways. In this sense, they are not only related to the roots of their existence, but they find familiarity and comfort in the ground of their belongingness. *Aiga* is rooted in a certain locality called the *fanua* (land, sea, and space. See chapter 5). The unity of a variety of *aiga* and *fanua* form the *nuu* (village),⁷⁹ a group of villages form *itumalo* (districts), and a confederation of districts form the *atunuu* – a sequence/chain of villages, or the country.

The use of the word '*aiga*' (with an apostrophe emphasis at the beginning) further changes the meaning of the word from cohabitation to the act of eating.⁸⁰ '*Aiga* refers to the eating culture of Samoa. It suggests the collection and redistribution of food or sharing in a ceremonial meal. This recalls a ritualistic aspect of *tapua'iga* in the sense of offering and celebration. To engage in the act of eating means principally to participate in the essential act and process of life. Here, every member of a cohabitation needs to eat and to drink⁸¹ in order to maintain life. The *aiga* in this category refers not only to the nurturing,

77 Cf. Margret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (London: Cox and Wyman Ltd, 1977), 32, 23, 40. Cf. Noa Vera Zanolli, "Margaret Mead (1901-1978)," *Klassiker der Kulturanthropologie: Von Montaigne bis Margaret Mead*, Wolfgang Marschall, ed. (München: C.H. Beck Verlag, 1990), 293-314. Also R.P. Gilson, *Samoa 1830-1900* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1970), 1-64.

78 *Cohabitation* means an existence of two or more things together. The term contains overtones of coherence, unity, wholeness, and the like. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

79 Some writings on Samoa refer to the *nuu* as the central unit of Samoan life. For our purposes, both the *aiga* and *nuu* are treated as inseparable parts of the ecology of Samoan life.

80 Pratt, 6. Note that the two syllables *tapu* and *aiga* are combined to form the concept *tapua'iga*.

81 There is an inclusive use of the word '*aiga*' in Samoan formal expressions. The words *taumafa* and *tausami* are interchangeably used to replace '*aiga*'. The latter, *taumafa* (collect/harvest; *mafa* – beyond house settlements or

sustaining and continuity of the life of the whole habitation, but also to a commemoration and celebration of the gifts of life through festivities and feasting. In other words, *aiga* is a centre for nourishment and sustenance whereby every member comes into relational and sustaining fellowships. Every part of the *aiga* is sustained and generated by an interdependent web of sustaining richness of a specific locality, and every member is entitled to share in its blessings. All of these units, ranging from the individual to the whole of Samoa, as the creation myths proclaim, trace their existence to the Deities, Spirits, ancestral Gods, or the wellsprings of life.

0.8.5. *Aiga: Eco-Theological Symbolisms*⁸²

The concept *aiga* can not be confined to a single symbolic definition. In the religio-cultural tradition, however, the most immediate symbols associated with the concept *aiga* were *fale* (house – See App:i) and *vaa* (canoe or a long boat). Traditions disclose the origin of these arts as associated with the Creator God, – *Tagaloalagi* (sometimes shortened as *Tagaloa*), who gathered a family, ‘the circle of chiefs on high,’ to a *fono* (council), planned and decided on the size and the type of *fale vaa*, then drank their *ava*, before leaving with the carpenters to start the work.⁸³ These arts were both technologically and sociologically important elements in Samoan culture. They were legitimized by the belief in spirits and sanctioned by a variety of religious ceremonies and rituals. The two arts in formal speech are called *sa* (tabooed/sacred, and/or belongingness). The *fale* which Samoans use today for church worship, for instance, is called *fale sa* (sacred house).

Houses were built specifically for *vaa* (*fale vaa*).⁸⁴ *Vaa* was one of the most important vehicles of communication in oceanic migrations, besides its ordinary use in the operation of the subsistence fishing economy. Since success and failure in these activities were connected to beliefs in spiritual guardians, the *vaa* was, as well, conceived as one of the significant arts of life. A *fale* symbolizes and expresses *aiga*. It bespeaks the order, character and confines of the world of *aiga*. The existence of *fale* recalls the status and rank, history and meaning of a certain unit, ranging from the deity/ies that inherit the locality, the name and the story of the place, the family title related to it, family members, together with the account of living components (like stones, trees, rivers, mountains, etc.) that define the boundaries of the settlements. In Samoan traditions, the decision to build a *fale* depended primarily on the approval of the hosts of Gods. The Gods were consulted not only for the

agricultural land and forest), represents food items from the land harvests, whereas the former *tausami* (*tau* – collect/harvest, and *sami* – sea) means the foods which are obtained from the sea. The combination of the words then presents a double meaning for eating and drinking, or the consumption of solid and liquid foods.

82 Symbolism refers to the use of objects or images to refer to something. They suggest particular meanings and characteristics to individuals or to a certain group of people. For example, the Cross is the symbol of Christianity. See *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*.

83 See R.W. Williamson, *Religion and Social Organisation in Central Polynesia* (Cambridge: University Press, 1937), 43.

84 See Te Rangi Hiroa P.H. Buck, *Samoan Material Culture* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum, 1930), 13-30. Buck describes different kinds of houses, their constructions, and the ritual ceremonies that surround them. The two main types of formal *fale* known to Samoans were the *fale tele* (round shape) and the *fale afolau* (long shape). The latter – *afolau* (literally to travel by sea) – is supposedly a name adapted from sea journeys, and the name for houses built for boats was used to apply to this kind of house.

authorization of the sites/house foundations, the materials used in the work (such as trees, stones, etc.), but were also called upon for the impartation of the divine gifts of wisdom and strength to the *matua o faiva* (leading builders – usually old men) and the *aiga sa le malama* (sacred family of wise-builders). Calling upon the gods involved the providential blessings of the land and sea, and the wish for fine weather for the success of the work.

Traditionally, *fale* were built on a raised stone foundation, in oval-round-shapes, and with openness of spaces inside and outside. The construction of *fale* coincides with the act of worship. This means that while the builders and able members of the community participate in the building work, other members, especially elderly members, simultaneously offer worship, calling upon the blessings of the gods for guidance, protection and strength. Besides the ordinary worship, official ceremonial acts of worship were offered after each main part of the *fale* was completed. The deities of the *aiga* were sought after while the community obediently cooperated in the construction.

Jovili Meo⁸⁵ has contributed to the interpretation of the *fale* as a symbol of village life and Samoan community. From its construction and the functions it serves, the “community unity, community relationship, community participation and partnership”⁸⁶ remain at its centre. Its round and oval shape represents an unbroken unity, and its openness symbolizes the idea of inclusiveness: “the extension of what goes on inside the house reflects the life outside and the well-being of the whole community.”⁸⁷

0.8.6. Embodiment – Aiga in Imagery Terms

Aiga, being existentially symbolized by *fale*, is imaginatively conceived and expressed in terms which are identical with *tino* (body). Like the interlinking parts of a house structure, the *aiga* is conceived as a body, with diverse and complex parts, each performing its respective function and purpose for the welfare of the whole *aiga*. Building materials as well as sections of the *fale* share common names with parts of the *tino*.⁸⁸ Relations, whether divine, human or natural, are categorized, respected and recognized as one body. Again, in a broad and inclusive sense, one can say the *aiga* is my *tino*, and *tino* is my *aiga*. This implies the connectedness and relational ties of an individual part to all other parts of the heritage to which one belongs. The identification of *aiga* with *tino* and *fale*, as has already been stated, has informed a strong sense of Samoan identity. The synthesis of the three aspects builds an ethos whereby one finds the central meaning of one’s personal and communal integrity, identity and orientation to life. It shapes a creational-based philosophy which is embodied in the religio-cultural expressions of the Samoan lifeway.

To say *Leai se aiga* (have no family) or *E le’i nofo i se fale tele* (not live and settle in a chiefly house) to someone, for instance, is taken almost as an unredeemable accusation. It

85 Jovili Meo, “Gems of Pacific Communities: Sharing and Service,” *Pacific Journal of Theology* Series II, No. 16 (1996): 84-101. See also, *Ecumenical Review* Vol. 46, No. 3 (August, 1994): 292-230. Jovili Meo is an Oceanian theologian and the current principal of the Pacific Theological College.

86 Meo, 86-101.

87 Meo, 86-101.

88 To name a few, for example, ‘*iviivi* for the house – bones for body, ‘*aso* for the house, ribs for the body, *taualuga* for the house – head for the body, etc.

is one of the most disparaging taunts that causes social conflicts, rivalries and natural destruction. Accusing someone in such a way touches the very central nerve of one's being, for it is comprehended not only to mean homelessness, landlessness and rootlessness, but it also means annihilation of living relations, poverty in material security, deprivation in rational thinking, and, more importantly, a collapse of the ethical orientation. It involves the erosion of religio-cultural consciousness, the forgottenness of the divine, and a sign of the divine's very absence in bodily-relations. Hence, disembodiment of the *aiga* means the breakdown of the whole cyclical life-supporting system.

In conclusion, the synthesis of *aiga*, *fale* and *tino* has helped in shaping our communal earth-based worldview, as well as our religio-cultural orientation to life. The concept *aiga* in its ecological sense bespeaks an existential orientation: though bounded to a certain contemporary locality, it extends its horizons to the well-springs of life (God, Spirits and Ancestors), and simultaneously anticipates the continuity and the future of the life of the *aiga*. *Aiga* defines a collective identity and character of a habitation, sharing in common the gifts of creation, that is, intimately connected with God and Spirits. *Aiga*, therefore, is the basic arena where the Samoan religio-cultural lifeway is cultivated and continues to be nurtured. It is an institution and a concept which informs the life of the community in all dimensions.⁸⁹

In institutional and conceptual terms, *aiga* is depicted as a microcosm, a complex of interacting eco-systems yet with a variety of levels of integration, and a sense of unity, diversity and identity that sustains its very livelihood. Its life depends on a web of interdependent relationships that permeate, sustain, reconcile, and progressively generate the cyclical process of life. It manifests a consecrated consciousness and practises for the nurturing of life which is validated by intimate affiliations of God and all members of the created world. In short, *aiga* is like a growing tree, including the newly emerging off-shoots and leaves, branches, stems and roots, which find strength from life-giving and nurturing *parent earth*.⁹⁰ An exploration of this concept will be developed further in detail as we proceed in the development of our theological construction.

89 In ceremonial occasions, for instance, the exchange of chiefly speeches addressing sacred places and the chiefly titles related to it in terms such as; *aiga sa* (sacred family), *aiga paia* (holy family), *aiga mamalu* (glorified family), *aiga tamalii* (chiefly/noble family), *aiga Lotu* (a religious family in its moral sense), and so forth, resemble not only links to the divine, but also the communal association with the land, sea, and the sky.

90 See Chapter 5. The concept *parent – earth*, in contrast to *mother earth* is employed here intentionally. This is not to discredit the meaning of the latter; rather, it is based on the bilineal nature of the Samoan ancestral society. This is evident in some creation narratives which also include the founding and naming of the islands.

1. THE THREATENED HOUSE – OIKOS

1.1. The Ecological Crisis

Ecological threats can be confined to a certain locale or particularized to a certain group of people. Yet at the same time, they transcend contexts. Their effects are global, regional and local. They are caused by local practises, yet they are universally experienced and have far-reaching consequences. Hence ecological problems in the local and the global contexts cannot stand in isolation from one another. The threats to ecological life-systems are an interrelated complex affecting different parts of the whole world as God's creation in many ways and to varying degrees. In theo-ecological constructions, therefore, the "global theological flows" must be taken into account.¹

Since the ecological problems in Samoa and among the islands of Oceania have more commonalities than contrasts, it will be more helpful to summarize briefly the grave issues which are affecting the life-supporting eco-systems of the oceanic islands as well as the responses of Samoans (and other Oceanians) to these ecological issues. As a region, Oceania has been called the Liquid Continent. The characterization is apt due to the limited and scattered land-areas that are conjoined and dominated by a vastness of space filled by many waters. This watery-geographic identification of oceanic homeplaces has been historically taken for granted. Thus the progressive alienation of the significance of the sea from the traditional lifeways, for example, has undeniably led to abuses related to the sea which have affected its resources and people.

Before proceeding to the core issues, at stake in Oceania, it is necessary to view the ecological crisis from a global perspective. From there, we can sketch the double-frame of contexts, namely the ecological and economical, within and around which the problems evolve in the region and macro-nations of Oceania.

1.1.1. A Global Reality

The "Search for the New Heavens and the New Earth" is an urgent call for responsible measures by the global society to a jeopardized home, the earth which is on the verge of self-destruction.² With a goal of searching for a sustainable future in a sustainable creation, the Rio Earth Summit calls for a reconsideration of humanity's responsible vocations in God's creation. The global society is summoned to a complex of inter-related ecological and economic deficiencies/injustices, to be combated with visions that will ensure a sustainable future.

Aram Keshishian defines the ecological crisis as not being confined just to environmental pollution nor to social technological problems, but rather, "...a crisis of the whole life system. The destruction of natural resources, ozone shields and forests, the pollution

1 See, for example, Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), 17-27. Cf. John D'Arcy May, *Inter-cultural Theology – Christus Initiator: Theologie im Pazifik*, (Dusseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1990), 94-128, and, Horst Rzepkowski, "Stepping Stones to a Pacific Theology: A Report," *Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies* Vol. IX, No. 17 (1992): 40-61.

2 Granberg-Michaelson, *Redeeming the Creation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992), 70.

of water and environment are symptoms and consequences of the problem ...”³ The problem is “essentially a theological-ethical one related to humanity’s role in the creation.”⁴ The ecological crisis affects the whole living habitation, the planet earth which all living creatures share. This means that humanity’s role in creation is complex, diverse, and must be redefined.

The progress of technological and economic developments determines the destiny of the whole planet earth. Advantages and life-promoting aspects, or the so-called technological and economical messianisms, are embraced as positive constructs of modern development. But advantages are accompanied by the ills of exclusion and impoverishment of the majority of the global populations, at the expense of natural degradation. The majority of bio-communities are being pushed to the periphery by the few who have the power to control and determine global affairs. Stan Skreslet identifies some key developments in global affairs. For example, the attempt of the United States to become a new Superpower, after the fall of Communist Russia, has been advanced by a promise of hope for international security and peace.⁵ Such hope depends on the strengthening of collaboration among the world community of nations, with the American “moral standing and the means to back it up.”⁶

Confronted with the world’s pressing problems such as hunger, poverty, and a mass movements of refugees, which cannot be dealt with by a single superpower, there is a call for a “multilateral global governance”⁷ (e.g. United Nations) to deal internationally with problems. This is necessary to combat unbearable social ills.

Samuel P. Huntington’s theory on the wars of (religious) cultures is also identified as one of the determining forces of the new world order. Huntington asserts that world conflicts are rooted in cultures rather than economic and/or ideological differences.⁸ He states: “Nation States will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principle conflicts of global politics will occur between nation groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics.”⁹ Current problems focus on tribalization and regionalization. As nation states are frequently fragmentized and replaced “by a jagged-glass pattern of city-states, shanty states, nebulous and anarchic regionalisms, ... ethnic and religious tensions or impending conditions of economic scarcity are insidiously undermining the bases of national unity.”¹⁰ Thus, the political and econ-

3 Aram Keshishian, “Eco-Theology: Toward an Ecumenical Ethic for a Responsible Society in a Sustainable Creation,” *Window Quarterly* Vol. IV, No. 4 (1994): 2. See also “Central Committee Johannesburg Report of the Moderator,” *Ecumenical Review* Vol. 46, No. 2 (February, 1994): 214-229.

4 Keshishian, 215.

5 President Joseph Bush’s term explicated by Stan Skreslet, “Emerging Trends in a Shifting Global Context: Mission in the New World Order,” *Theology Today* Vol. 54, No. 2 (July, 1997): 150-164. Cf. Bob Goudzwaard and Harry de Lange, *Beyond Poverty and Affluence: Toward an Economy of Care* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1986), 1-40. Reference is given here to the six unfolding paradoxes of the global economic developments. Also, Hans Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics* (London: SCM Press, 1997), 3-10, and Ulrich Beck, *Was ist Globalisierung?* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1999).

6 Skreslet, 151. Cf. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 20-31.

7 Skreslet, 151.

8 Skreslet, 152. Cf. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 21-34, 40-55, and Ulrich Beck, *Was ist Globalisierung?* 150-183.

9 Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilization,” *Foreign Affairs* 72 (Summer, 1993): 22.

10 Robert D. Kaplan cited by Skreslet, 153.

omic power of national governments is diversified by the increasing emergence of Non-Government Organizations.

Amidst the aforementioned realities, “religious revivalism as an end to secularism” becomes a “religiously colored new world order.”¹¹ The limited capacity of the global economic and technological developments to solve ecological devastation has led many to seek refuge through the revival of religion. Secular religion with its privatized faith orientation is challenged by the preaching of a social spirituality that can transform personal and public life.¹² Inseparably related to the revival of the social gospel movement is the growing engagement in missionary work and institutions. Thus, ‘tent-maker missionaries’ are always on the way. However, missionaries are on the way together with the “economic (political and military warfare) refugees.” A missionary is counted “no more as a *Gastarbeiter* (literally, guest worker); but a suspect immigrant in Western European eyes.”¹³ A multitude of people leave their homelands to seek relief and salvation in other countries due to socio-economic, political, military and ecological deficits. This is an existential reality to which the Church is called as a new field of mission. The political, social, religious and economic issues and realities of the new world order affect all life systems.

Economic and technological developments of the powerful dictate international and national affairs. While means of attaining socio-economic, political and religious goals are increasingly informed by the destructive spirit of competitiveness and individualistic ambitions, a sense of self-exaltation is sought after through the use of exploitative and manipulative measures. The monopolization of international world trade and the opening of the global market has constantly led to the denial of life-sustaining systems which function well in other continents and civilizations. Adaptations and integrations of local and regional life-supporting measures into the global system are mostly overlooked and/or neglected. These weaknesses pose further critiques on Huntington’s regionalizing and religiousizing theories, falsify and even challenge his claims for not being aware of the existence of other lifeways and civilizations in other continents such as Oceania.

This dominating mentality is enshrined to some extent in the life of the Church, and especially in the way Churches of the so-called North and South, East and West have dealt with theological issues of life and faith and doing mission. For instance, a European carpenter sent to a TwoThirds-World¹⁴ country is addressed as a missionary, whereas an ordained pastor from such countries working in Europe is called an exchange pastor.

11 Skreslet, 155. Cf. Schreiter, “Die neue Kontextualität – Globalisierung und Fragmentierung als Herausforderung an Theologie und Kirche”, *Glaube und Globalität*. Jahrbuch Mission (Hamburg: Frank Kürschner-Pelkmann, 1999), 29-49, and, *Die neue Katholizität: Globalisierung und die Theologie* (Frankfurt: IKO-Verlag für interkulturelle Kommunikation, 1997), 33-52.

12 Skreslet, 155. Cf. P. Löffler, “Die missionarisch-ökumenische Bewegung im Globalisierungsprozess,” *Glaube und Globalität*. Jahrbuch Mission (1999): 67-81.

13 Skreslet, 157 f. Cf. Goudzwaard and Lange, 2-10. Also, Rob van Drimmelen, *Faith in a Global Economy: A Primer for Christians* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), 11-28.

14 The author prefers to use Two-Thirds World as it presents a more positive and inclusive connotation. The so-called First World countries consist of only one-third of the world and the so-called Third-World countries make up Two-Thirds of the world.

1.1.2. The Endangered and Broken Eco-Systems

The unlimited consumption of fossil fuels and the reluctance to minimize the emissions of greenhouse gases have create unfavourable changes in the climate. These cause great damage to the earth's eco-systems, driving many societies and their life-resources to suffer from a complex of inter-related crises. The environmentalists Herbert F. Bornmann and Stephen R. Kellert have pointed out that acid rain, a mixture of pollutants which have fallen on some parts of North America, Europe, and Asia, have had grave effects on lakes, forests, and manmade structures. There is fear that the thinning of the ozone layer "will increase the amount of biologically destructive ultraviolet radiation reaching the earth's surface, with unknown consequences."¹⁵

Disclosing the root causes of ecological destruction, Bormann and Kellert state that the human ability to control and shape the human environment to human needs has seemed to be without limits. Humanity's short-term self-interests have taken priority over against the interests of the diversity of the whole creation. "Humankind might be subtly but cumulatively destroying the very life-support systems upon whose function all humans are ultimately dependent."¹⁶ This violation is due to humanity's failure to appreciate its interrelatedness to all other organisms and natural cycles, and its failure to calculate the real costs for altering our environment.¹⁷

Some world economists have posited that, above all ecological deficits, there lies at the heart of the Climate Change issue the fact that the crisis has widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Masses of the human population have been excluded from their means of survival and are left to bear the consequential burdens of the misdeeds of a minority. The developed and less developed countries face the same side effects of climate changes.¹⁸ The only point of contrast is that the developed nations can manage to salvage life from ecological miseries in a short period of time whereas, for the so-called poor, almost every facet of life is filled with experiences of poverty and deterioration of habitats.

1.1.3. Global Warming

Within the last century a Swedish chemist, Svante Arrhenius,¹⁹ suggested that the increase of atmospheric carbon dioxide from the burning of coal would result in an increase of the

15 F. Herbert Bormann and Stephen R. Kellert, eds. "The Global Environmental Deficit," *Ecology, Economics, Ethics: The Broken Circle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), ix-xv. Cf. Goudzwaard and de Lange, *Beyond Poverty and Affluence*, 22f.

16 Bormann and Kellert, x.

17 Bormann and Kellert, x. Cf. Holmes Rolston III, "Environmental Values: Environmental Ethics: Values in and Duties to the Natural World," 73-97, in the same publication.

18 Specific reference here is given to the work of economists such as Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb, *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy Toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994); Bob Goudzwaard and Harry de Lange, *Beyond Poverty and Affluence*, and Sean McDonough, *Passion for the Earth: The Christian Vocation to Promote Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994).

19 See "Climate Change: Need for Global Partnership – What is the Greenhouse Effect?," *United Nations Environment Programme* (June, 1991): 6-28.

average global temperature.²⁰ As early as the 1950s, scientists revealed that there was a great concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere over a period of years which was consistently on the rise.²¹ Scientific findings disclose that the ozone layer is becoming thinner and thinner, and the ozone hole will be enlarged, thus exposing the whole earth to great ecological dangers.

The warming of the atmosphere to an average increase of 1.5 to 4.5 degree Celsius has alarming effects such as the consistent rising of the sea-level, which leads to massive coastal erosion, destruction of marine eco-systems, and ruin to human infrastructures such as roads and houses. These have already been experienced in many parts of the world. For example, the World Resource Institute reports that skin cancer and cataracts²² are on the increase, besides damage to crops, great harm to food chains, and the diminishing of the durability of outdoor materials.²³

Climatologists and environmentalists have revealed that the warming of the globe's atmospheric system by greenhouse gases (Chlorofluorocarbons – CFCs)²⁴ has contributed to the depletion of the ozone layer and drastic changes in climate. These CFCs are released from industry, changing patterns of land-use and agriculture and trapping the heat in the earth's atmosphere.²⁵ The release of these energy gases is growing at an exponential rate, projected to increase by 40 % to 90 % by the year 2020. The industrialized countries, which contain 23 % of the world's population, burn about 85 % of the earth's coal and consume 70 % of commercial energy-productions that contribute 50 % of CO₂ – the climate-killer.²⁶

1.1.4. Climate Change and Rising Sea-Level

Oceanographers state that the circulation of sea-waters is generated by the oceanic atmosphere through the exchange and transfer of heat generated by the ocean surface. In re-

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- 20 See Robert S. Mc Gee and Donald W. Sapaugh, *The Search for Peace: Release from the Torments of Toxic Unforgiveness* (Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1996).
 - 21 Paula Di Perna, "The Climate Negotiations: Politics and Posturing: A Report from Geneva," *The Earth Times* (July 31- August 15, 1996): 16.
 - 22 World Resource Institute, *The 1993 Information Please Environmental Almanac* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1993), 303 f.
 - 23 World Resource Institute, 304.
 - 24 Monica Kappus, recalling the scientific findings of Hans-Friedrich Graf, Klimaforscher am Max-Planck-Institut für Meteorologie in Hamburg, and Ulf Köhler vom meteorologischen Observatorium Hohenpeißenberg des Deutschen Wetterdienstes, in "Umwelt und Wissenschaft: Der Treibhauseffekt als Ozonkiller im Verdacht," *Frankfurt Zeitung* (11 November, 1996): 5. See also Daniel J. Shepard, "After Rio: Role of International Monitor: Global Environment Facility, Vilified by Some at Times, Becomes Crucial Player," *The Earth Times – Climate* (July 31 – August 15, 1996): 20. Also, Jemima Garrett, "Australia's Greenhouse," *Pacific Islands Monthly* (June, 1996): 22. CFCs are gases such as "inter alia carbon dioxide or climate killers (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O)"
 - 25 Some scientific researches revealed that 'nitrous oxide' is released in great quantities from modern farming practises such as the use of fertilisers, fossil fuel, burning, and biomass burning. Thus, the concentration of 8 % of N₂O (greater than pre-industrial era) in the atmosphere is evident, and is consistently increasing at the rate of 0.25 % per year. Cited from the "Greenpeace Pacific Campaign – Climate Change in the Pacific," *Fact Sheet PC1* (January, 1991).
 - 26 Taken from figures released by the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) experts' report on Climate Change entitled, "Evangelische Kirche verlangt drastische Maßnahmen."

search on Ocean and Climate carried out by the University of Paris, it was found that the absorption of heat as well as the absorption of the surface water alters the normal regulating patterns of ocean currents. Since the winds' frictional interactions with the surface waters produce additional mechanical energy, the oceans therefore circulate at an active speed, measuring in Sverdrups.²⁷ The ocean circulation redistributes the heat worldwide and makes the ocean a powerful regulator of climate, tempering the zonal temperature gradients. It makes up for unbalanced thermal flows by transporting as much heat from the equatorial regions to the poles as the atmosphere.²⁸

Oceanian scientists further state that the constant warming of the ocean has caused a rising of the sea-level. Since Oceania covers a vastness of space and has a tropical climate, the rising sea-level is evident and continues to be an ever-present threat. A SPREP report discloses that the sea-level rise is a dangerous phenomenon, and it is projected that it could rise up to 4.5 metres at the end of the next century.²⁹ The rise in sea-level will produce permanent coastal inundation, episodic coastal flooding, changes to coastlines, intrusion of sea water into estuaries, rise in water tables, changes in coastal vegetation, animal and fish species, increase in mud and sediment in productive waters, and so forth.³⁰

Climate Change was taken up as a vital topic of government agendas and policies and a notable theme of global conferences starting in 1988, when the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) established the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change. Being well attended by climatologists, scientists and government officials from over 100 nations, it was unfortunate that many climatologists and scientists now see this conference as the last occasion where scientific opinions on climate change gained recognition before being overshadowed by the political and socio-economic interests of the world's ruling governments.³¹

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro addressed Climate Change as a central issue of global concerns, sealed by the signing of the Framework Convention on Global Climate Change by international government officials. Recently, this Framework Convention has been criticized as vague and insufficient, due to the fact that:

The agreement itself took as its objective the stabilization of the concentration of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide in the atmosphere at levels which would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the earth's climate system. What might constitute dangerous was not spelled out, and the initial target of stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000 was left voluntary.³²

27 "Ocean and Climate," Pascale DELECLUSE* Laboratoire d'Océanographie Dynamique et de Climatologie, University of Paris, 1992, *The Courier* (May/June, 1992): 70-72.

28 "Ocean and Climate," 70-72.

29 Peter Hulm, *A Climate of Crisis: Global Warming and the Island South Pacific* (Port Moresby: Association of South Pacific Environmental Institutions, 1989), 4. See also, "Climate Change in the Pacific," *Greenpeace Pacific Campaign – Fact Sheet PCI* (January, 1991).

30 Hulm, 4.

31 DiPerna, 16

32 DiPerna, 15.

The Parties to the Rio Convention have met three times since 1992 – in Berlin in 1995, Geneva in 1996, and in Kyoto, Japan in 1997. The government representatives at the Berlin Climate Change Conference adopted a legal agreement (protocol) as a supplement to the Convention, based on a general consensus to strengthen the commitment of developed countries to reduce emissions beyond the voluntary guidelines of the Rio Summit. The Geneva Convention further consolidated the objectives of the Berlin Convention on international cooperation by setting up a timetable for emissions reductions.

However, critics of the Geneva Convention have noted that, regardless of the progress in inter-governmental efforts, there is still a failure to clearly spell out what such targets might be.³³ Furthermore, the disappointment of the so-called less developed and vulnerable nations, due to the detrimental effects of Global Climate Change, was felt after the Kyoto Convention when Al Gore, Vice President of the United States, and some leading government representatives showed less willingness to sign the agreement on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Oceanian delegates to the Climate Change Conferences voiced deep concerns about the suffering they are experiencing from ecological catastrophies. Great disappointment was expressed due to the ignorance of leading industrialized countries to listen to their plea. To the delegates from Oceania, such an inconsiderate attitude was simply “nothing less than denial of their rights to exist as part of the global society and of the human race.”³⁴

Oceanic regional scientists have confirmed that the cause of global warming is directly associated with the human-enhanced greenhouse effect or the anthropogenic factor,³⁵ as has previously been discussed. They state:

We have been sustained by the ocean for two million years, and it has been bountiful and continues to yield to us its bounty. We have now learned that this harmony could be interrupted by the actions of the nations very distant from our shores. We, the peoples of the South Pacific Region, appeal to you in a common voice, the voice of those who may be the first victims of global warming to ensure the survival of our cultures and our very existence and to prevent us from becoming endangered species or the dinosaurs of the next century ...”³⁶

In short, rising sea-levels affect the whole life-system of a community. A knock-on on one part of the whole system affects relations with other parts. Sea-level rising alters not only the existing social and physical structures, but also damages the moral and spiritual re-

33 DiPerna, 15.

34 “Kyoto Climate Change Conference,” *Pacific News Bulletin* (December, 1997): 7-10. See also, “Americanish Charm-Offensive in Kyoto: Unveränderte Position der USA an der Klimakonferenz,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (09 November, 1997): 1-2. Sister Dorothy Ortega of the Phillipines, who was a participant at the Kyoto Conference, also shared with the author her disappointment with the ignorant reaction of the world leaders present at the Conference. She was a guest speaker at an ecumenical Seminar ‘Theologia Mund’ held at Rummelsberg, Germany in September 1998.

35 Patrick D. Nunn, “Recent Warming of the Pacific Region,” *Climate and Agriculture in the Pacific Islands: Future Perspective* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1993), 7.

36 Ernst Bani, IPCC Responding Working Group, Geneva 1989, cited in “Climate Change in the Pacific,” *Fact Sheet PCI* (January, 1991): 4-7. Cf. Ian Williams, “Success for Pacific Nations at Rio: Now to Put That into Action,” *Pacific Island Monthly* (July 1992): 25.

lations and the value-systems of communities. The lifeways of small island nations of Oceania have been shaped by an orientation to limited land areas and a vast amount of ocean waters. The destruction of natural strongholds is at the same time a systemic way of impoverishing the majority of Oceanian communities. Human and natural species have been impoverished because they have been deminished of their intrinsic values and rights to life, and are therefore defenseless.³⁷ Their natural life fortresses and strongholds, such as coral reefs, mangrove eco-systems, coastal plains and agricultural lands that protect and sustain life, are constantly being destroyed and eroded due to the aggressive power of changing climates such as frequent cyclones, tidal waves, and rising seas.³⁸

1.1.5. Globalized Centre-Periphery Model³⁹

The adoption of various western administrative, medical, legal, educational and technological institutions by Oceanic nations has caused most to assume a culture of dependency.⁴⁰ Responsible commitments to the ecological crisis are framed and shaped by the culture of economic dependence. From the findings of a field research on the impact of Transnational Corporations on Pacific Islands, James A. Winkler explains the problems affecting the islands of Oceania by analysing them in terms of the Centre-Periphery Model. Viewing the local, regional and global problems in their interrelatedness, Winkler identifies the islands of Oceania with the Third-World (Two-Thirds World) nations as being pushed to the periphery, and yet “tied to the Centre, the industrialized nations, by a web of vested economic (and sociopolitical) interests which have taken root over centuries of colonialism and remain intact today, despite the fact that many of the Periphery nations have regained their independence in a formal, political sense.”⁴¹

Winkler further identifies three pillars which support the subservient roles of the nations on the periphery. Firstly, he notes that the “international division of labour,” with nations at the Centre specializing in advanced technology and high profit activities,⁴² has generated imbalances and widened the gap between the developed and the underdeveloped countries. Developed countries are supplied by the underdeveloped countries not only in terms of raw materials, but also by the provision of cheap labour for automobiles, steel, electronics assembly and textile industries.⁴³

37 The author employs the meaning of the French word *demuni* (poor) in this sense. The concept is founded on the French military understanding that when the fortifications of an enemy are destroyed, their means of survival are exposed to great danger. The concept of poverty means the absence of essential strongholds of life by way of removing and taking them away. Poverty is therefore a result of a social process in which, when people and eco-systems have been deprived of their rights to life by taking away (in exploitative ways) their essential needs, they are left without any means of protection for survival. Cited from Seminar Notes – “Economy and Theology,” Bossey Ecumenical Institute (August 04-14, 1998).

38 Cf. Anni Watkins, “Potential Effects of Global Warming on Coral Reef Systems,” *Climate and Agriculture in the Pacific Islands: Future Perspectives* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1993), 33-46.

39 James E. Winkler, *Losing Control: Towards an Understanding of Transnational Corporations in the Pacific Islands Context* (Suva: Lotu Pasefika Productions, 1982), 10.

40 T. Williams, “Towards Pacific Solidarity,” *South Pacific Journal of Mission Studies* (July, 1989): 4-7.

41 Winkler, 10. Cf. Daly and Cobb, *For the Common Good*, 209-315.

42 Winkler refers here to “bio-engineering, finance, energy and micro-electronics” as examples of advanced technology and high profit activities.

43 Winkler, 10f.

Secondly, due to an unequal system of communications between the Centre and the Periphery, it is difficult to find close cooperation between the two. Technologically advanced countries, in terms of information and transportation infrastructures, have good opportunities to remain in close contact, and can therefore manage to develop and progress in a successful way. In contrast, the less industrialized nations with less well-developed connections remain subjugated and estranged from global resources.

Thirdly, the major supports for the Centre-Periphery Model are the local elites who are in the Periphery. The emerging local elite class, namely the “politicians, civil servants, intellectuals, property owners, businessmen, the army,”⁴⁴ and others, including local chiefs and religious leaders, can be mentioned in this category. “Their interests coincide with those of their counterparts in the Centre nations. They are honored, titled, and bankrolled, and their positions are secured through aid – military, financial, and in other hidden ways. As the world power game intensifies, no nation is deemed unimportant for one reason or another, to the strategic designs of the Centre nations.”⁴⁵ The world then becomes “culturally homogenous,” as Epeli Hau’ofa explains.⁴⁶ It has created a gap between the “privileged group which shares a single dominant culture, with increasingly marginalized local sub-cultures shared by (the commoners) the poorer classes.”⁴⁷

Control and management of human and natural resources for the sake of capitalist economic growth is the common denominator of the three pillars mentioned above. Thus, the common vital natural resources⁴⁸ are systematically transformed into commodities for generating profits and revenues. In short, the “transformation of commons into commodities”⁴⁹ has led to exploitation and the depletion of life-resources which are considered the backbone of oceanic life. These are generated mostly by socio-economic forces, mediated notably by English and French as languages of communication, which become consciously or unconsciously a form of cultural colonialism.

As the Centre-Periphery Model reveals, the social, political, economic and religious designs are mostly stipulated by the nations at the Centre, whereas those at the Periphery

44 Winkler, 11.

45 Winkler, 11

46 Epeli Hau’ofa, “The New South Pacific Society: Integration and Independence,” *Class and Culture in the South Pacific*, ed. Anthony Hooper (Auckland: Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Auckland, 1987), 1. Hau’ofa refers to cultural homogeneity as a common pattern or lifeway shared by a minority group of people with common interests, especially in business. This elitist group shares their ideologies with centres of power (economic) or overseas partners which help in building up their local control and power. These people construct for themselves a dominant culture as they are privileged and share English as a common language of trade, education, communication, jurisdictions, and so forth. They have easy access to overseas education and travel. The elite group has a culture of their own and such culture dominates every aspect of the nation’s lifeway.

47 Hau’ofa, 1.

48 See introductory notes by Jim Anthony, *The Pacific: Peace, Security & the Nuclear Issues*. Ranginui Walker & William Sutherland, eds. (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1988), xvi. Preference here is given to the extensive definitions of “natural resources” cited by Jim Anthony (Director of the Pacific Research and Information Network-Hawaii) from the documents of the United Nations University, to mean: (i). those that have been opened up by science and technology (outer space, the sea-bed); (ii). those that go beyond the traditional physical resources concept (climate, weather, culture, informations); (iii). those that do not lend themselves to physical appropriation (radio frequencies spectrum, geo-stationary orbit); (iv). those that require a long term perspective (the environment).

49 Vandana Shiva, *Ecology and the Politics of Survival*, cited by David Hallman in “Science, Religion and Development: Sources of Destruction, Seeds of Hope,” *Ecology: A Theological Response*, 174-185.

including the island-nations of Oceania appear to react and continue to obediently follow the rules of the game. An internal force, represented by the local as well as the regional elite-group, is also an active determinant and controller of the operating system.

1.2. Samoa (Oceania) – A Double-Context of Eco-Dangers

Oceania is, to a great extent, a defenseless region in the midst of a double-context of eco-dangers where a paradox of grave realities of warnings and/or no warnings rules. This Continent is known internationally as a region of grave warnings from the threatening effects of the ecological crisis. The geographical identification of the Oceanic region as such sparks the interests of far-off industrialized countries and their multinational corporations. The more industrialized countries give warnings, but do less to minimize the economic, technological, climatic and unsustainable developments which are faced by the island states.

1.2.1. A Defenseless Context

The Archbishop of Wellington, Thomas Cardinal Williams, states that, being settled by small and scattered island populations of about 6 million, covering over 12 million square miles, Oceania is sometimes referred to as the forgotten part of the world.⁵⁰ Williams affirms that “the impact of such isolated peoples on the rest of the world has been slight, but the impact of the technologically advanced world upon the Pacific people has been, and continues to be, widespread and profound.”⁵¹ The political and economic importance of the mini-nations is mostly ignored, as has been shown by the continued denial of the nuclear issue protests.⁵²

Specifically, warnings are given when there is an imminent possibility of danger or unpleasant consequences. Grave warnings are issued based either on past and already unfavourable experiences, or on the predictable misfortunes that might affect the welfare of a specific living community. Normally, these warnings create fears, doubts, psychological or mental stresses or disorders, demoralization, sickness, and even death to individuals or a certain community. The Oceanic regional situation has already suffered from many warnings. They are, indeed, grave and serious warnings of frequent cyclones, floods, droughts, loss of agricultural and coastal land-areas, loss of biodiversity, high tides and tidal waves, and coastal areas sinking or even disappearing forever. Island inhabitants, for example, have already suffered greatly from the frequent resurgence of the El Nino effect.⁵³

The ‘no warning,’ as a contrasting side of the climate change paradox, reveals that hu-

50 Thomas Williams, “Toward Pacific Solidarity,” *South Pacific Journal of Mission Studies* Vol. 1, No. 1 (July, 1989): 4-7.

51 Williams, 4.

52 Williams, 4.

53 American weather scientists have warned the Pacific Islands that when westward-blowing winds slacken along the equator, allowing ocean warmth from the Western Pacific to spread east, the effect causes torrential rain in some regions, droughts in others and produces hurricanes in areas such as Tahiti that are normally free of them. *Pacific Report*. (Dec, 1994): 39 f.

mankind can only predict but cannot control natural disasters. In this sense, scientific studies and human abilities are limited to only a degree of control of nature itself. When natural disasters strike there are usually no warnings at all. This kind of situation is even worse, for when there is a sudden outbreak of natural catastrophes without alarms or warnings, people are left in shock, feeling indignity, despair and grief, in addition to the breakdown and losses in life-supporting eco-systems.

The inhabitants of low-lying atolls such as the Marshalls, Tuvalu, Niue, Kiribati, and Tonga have reported some features of no warning experiences they have experienced due to rising sea levels.⁵⁴ Volumes of reports state that huge waves, without any storm, or any winds at all, have come inland and destroyed many houses, and have forced many to abandon their island homes. The case of tidal waves, as recently in Papua New Guinea, affirm the devastation of no-warning experiences. Without notice, the rushing power of the tidal wave of 1998 killed over 3,000 people, leaving over 6,000 homeless, besides the loss of food and commercial crops animals, as well as the destruction of coral reefs and marine eco-systems.⁵⁵

1.2.1.1. Land and Human Resources

There is a myriad of literature on the issue of land and land tenure in Oceania. The specific issue of the inter-relation of people and the land is the main focus here. Land issues in most cases cannot be treated separately from involvements of people and living communities. To most Oceanians, land is life and more. However, land as a life-supporting resource is uncomparably limited, except in the case of a few island groups such as Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and New Caledonia which are relatively larger in size.

1.2.1.1.1. Population Mobility

The islanders in Oceania are confronted not only by the limitedness of their land (and sea) resources, but also by the life-changes and the complexity of defects which accompany this problem. Ron Crocombe of the University of the South Pacific identifies the trends and conditions that are brought about by the pressures of the money economy on the islands, which lead to increasing urbanisation and commercial agriculture.⁵⁶ Normally, land tenure is shaped by the society it serves and by some external forces. The tenure system is also one of the forces which shapes the society. Land and societies in this sense are two complementary sides of island reality, interacting in a continuing process.⁵⁷

Regional and overseas experts on land-tenure systems contend that the adaptations of

54 Ian Williams, "Success for Pacific Nations at Rio: Now to Put that into Action," *Pacific Island Monthly* (July 1992): 25.

55 See for instance, "Über 3000 Tode durch Flutwellen," *Fränkische Landeszeitung – Ansbacher Tageblatt in Zusammenhang mit den Nürnberger Nachrichten*. Nummer 165 (Dienstag, 21. Juli, 1998).

56 Crocombe, 1-17. See also a set of essays presented in *Land Issues in the Pacific* which feature some of the characteristics of land problems. Cf. Ben Acquaye and Ron Crocombe, eds. *Land Tenure and Rural Productivity in the Pacific Islands* (Suva: Fiji Times and Herald Ltd, 1984 – reprint 1987).

57 Ron Crocombe, "Trends and Issues in Pacific Land Tenures," *Land Issues in the Pacific*, Ron Crocombe and Malama Meleisea, eds. (Canterbury: MacMillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, 1994), 1-17.

Oceanic societies to new changes have more unfavourable social, political, economic and ecological side-effects today as compared with some thirty or forty years ago. For example, the concentration of island populations in town areas is usually accompanied by negative rates of productivity, a high level of consumerism, an increase of unemployment, health deficiencies, crime, violence, and so on.

The researchers have recently come to a general agreement that there is a danger of breakdown of the links in life's ecological systems, if no alterations and proper precautions are made to the above patterns affecting micro-island nations and their resources. The high demand for social services for the growing populations, the pressures on health and education standards, and ecological constraints are inseparable aspects of the dangers that are already at hand. High mortality rates and a short life expectancy are commonly found in the region. The nature of diseases is also changing from rampant infectious diseases (like malaria and diarrhoea) to chronic, degenerative diseases (diabetes, cancer) more characteristic of an urban, cash-based economy as well as unhealthy and polluted ecological conditions.⁵⁸

Urbanization in Oceania is a relatively new phenomenon, and the constant movement of people from rural villages to urban areas (or to overseas countries) is an active process. Certain advantages of urbanisation are unquestionable. The movement of people to towns, however, has not only led to a gradual erosion of their religio-cultural lifeways, but has also determined the patterns upon which the land must be shaped, commercially utilized, and developed for human purposes.

Additionally, the concentration of people in urban areas has led to the high consumption of technological and natural resources. In certain circumstances, this causes ecological problems such as soil erosion, contamination of springs and rivers, and rampant destruction of the rainforests, which directly causes migration, degradation, and extinction of some habitable species, besides environmental pollution, as has already been stated.

Related to this phenomenon are issues of indigenous land rights. For lands identified to be of great worth, such as those with mineral resources, attraction sites for tourism and so forth, rivalries and competition among landowners, local chiefs and clans who have rights to these land-areas provoke endless conflicts. These also affect communal rights to land-ownership and encourage the privatization of land as a property and a commodity of profit.

1.2.1.1.2. Agriculture

The issue of land is intimately linked to agriculture. In most island societies, agriculture was and is a communal-based activity. 80 percent of the 5.8 million Oceanic island population depends on agricultural production for livelihood.⁵⁹ With the extensive expansion in commercial agriculture, some of the islands have faced problems such as an increasing

58 See Grant McCall, ed. *Sydney Talk: Australia in the South Pacific*, v-x.

59 "The Pacific Way: Bericht der Entwicklungsländer im Pazifik für die Konferenz der Vereinten Nationen zur Umwelt und Entwicklung (UNCED)," 27.

rate of the opening up of virgin lands, intensive soil erosion, as well as the infertility of some agra-lands due to their over-use.⁶⁰

The transition of agriculture from a communal to a more privatized activity that is informed by technological developments and for economic growth⁶¹ tends to push agriculture in the direction of mono-culture.⁶² This tendency has gradually hindered not only the increase in agricultural products, but has also created greater destruction to the land, the vegetation, the elimination of birds and insect species, as well as threats to other life-supporting eco-systems.

Caught up in these forces, most islands have been facing an escalating decrease in agricultural products as the land gradually has lost its fertility due to over-use, as well as the application of artificial chemicals and pesticides. For example, in a Greenpeace research on pesticides used by farmers in most islands, it is reported that most of the imported pesticides are banned in industrial countries in the sense that they are not only unfit for local soils, but are also not fit for tropical climates.⁶³ One example of the consequential effects of pesticides is that of taro-blight, the main food and economic crop in Samoa, which has plagued the nations for a period of almost ten years, and is anticipated to carry into the future. Scientific treatments have been applied but there seems to be no cure for this devastating blight.

It has been observed, in addition, that the spread of insects and other species from one island to the other has a deteriorating effect on ecological systems. This is due either to overt agricultural intentions or sometimes to human ignorance and carelessness. When the livestock agriculture in some islands in Samoa was affected by a disease caused by an insect that feeds on their skins, the livestock experts decided to import a foreign bird-species that eats and kills the insects in a short period of time. As a consequence, this foreign species not only aided in eliminating the killer insects but also many of the local bird-species. The agricultural intention was proper, but the consequential effects were overlooked. The spread of the African snail through illegal and careless measures in the transportation of goods has also caused agricultural problems in some islands, as the African snails breed on plants.

Degradation in agriculture which affects the patterns of production and consumption also cannot be isolated from the effects of global warming, rising sea-levels, and climate

60 The Pacific Way, 27f.

61 See Penelope Schoeffel, "Where are all the Farmers? Agriculture, Land Tenure and Development in the Pacific Islands," *Land Issues in the Pacific*, Ron Crocombe and Malama Meleisea, eds. (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1994), 35-42. The author agrees with Schoeffel's argument that the stagnation of agriculture in most islands of Oceania is due to the fact that there is no consideration given to the customary land-based tenure-systems by modern developers and economists. She states that the overthrow of values of traditional and customary systems of communal agriculture during the late nineteenth century by a foreign system, with its emphasis on being industrious, hard work, accumulation of wealth, individual rights, private property and many other Victorian values, has intensified the problems of agriculture faced by most Oceanians. The traditional system was even worse, due to the fact that: "... such a system hindered the march to progress and the path of evolution from small scale economically stratified systems which they referred to as civilisation ... In the name of progress, they argued that traditional communal institutions should be modified by colonial governments."

62 Crocombe, 15.

63 Pene Lefale, "Greenpeace in the Pacific," *Seventh Seminar of the Europe Pacific Solidarity Network: Report of the Seminar in Neuendettelsau* (14-16 October, 1994): 20.

change. The experiences of frequent tropical cyclones, floods and droughts in some parts, inundation and salinization of agricultural lands because of the rising sea-level, the occurrence of pests, and so forth have hindered staple-food and cash-crops.⁶⁴ This means that the majority bear the double burden of food scarcity and economic insufficiency. To remedy such problems requires adjustments in the structures and methods of agriculture.

1.2.1.1.3. Deforestation

It has been widely affirmed that the key to survival and health of the earth and all its inhabitants is the forests.⁶⁵ The forest is not only a source of life, producing oxygen, energy through firewoods and oils, medications, and many other uses; but it is also a home to the majority of the earth's living communities. The forest is the stronghold of our living human household. And the abuses heaped on the forests with their communities of habitations are, in actual fact, progressive deeds impinging on our own human fate.⁶⁶

Deforestation, whether through land clearance for agriculture, logging and timber productions, damage from cyclones and fires, or the constant desertifications of land-areas, is indeed a deliberate misdeed that denies life, security and the survival of the whole creation.⁶⁷ Besides providing a wealth of tree habitats for living creatures, forests are important in absorbing carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, and in protecting soil, flora and fauna from climate extremes and erosion.⁶⁸ As recyclers of nutrients for the land, forests deserve attention and serious preservation efforts for the survival of the whole habitation.⁶⁹

In a research on deforestation in Papua New Guinea by the Malaysian logging companies, and their attempt to deny the realities of ecological destruction via their media publications, it is clearly reported that the promising economic worth of timber logging is counter-balanced by the mass destruction of the rainforest's rich eco-systems. A typical forest in Papua New Guinea contains 10,000 types of animal and plant species with 2,000

64 Taken from the results of researches done by Professors of the University of the South Pacific: for example, Asesela Ravuvu, "Climate Change, Ecosystems, and People in the Pacific Islands," 1-6; Patrick D. Nunn, "Recent Warming of the South Pacific Region," 7-20; and William Aalbersberg, "Agriculture and Climate Change: Double Feedback," 21-26, in: *Climate and Agriculture in the Pacific Islands: Future Perspective* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1993).

65 Cf. "Challenges after Rio: The Churches' Role Post-UNCED," *Ecology: A Theological Response*, 159-185.

66 The extinction of bird-species (like the flying fox), for example, means the disruption of the polination process. Flying foxes are fed on fruit-trees, which then carry seeds to other parts of the land-forest. This was a very natural process of nurturing eco-systems and enriching the forest ecosystems. See Geoff Park, "The Polynesian Forest: Customs and Conservation of Biological Diversity," *Science of Pacific Peoples: Land Use and Agriculture*. Vol. 2 (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1994), 131-154.

67 "The Pacific Way: Bericht der Entwicklungsländer im Pazifik für die Konferenz der Vereinten Nationen zur Umwelt und Entwicklung (UNCED)," *South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) (Noumea: South Pacific Commission, 1992.*

68 "Ökologie: Politik," *Das ödp-Journal* No. 80 (August, 1997): 13.

69 Biologists generally agree that the nutrients which are recycled by forests are richer than the artificial inputs of nutrients which are used by modern farmers or agriculturalists today. One important use of forests in this sense is to preserve and sustain the fertility of the land by recycling nutrients.

kinds of tree arts, and a great variety of mangrove forests which are promising natural comforts for the inhabitants.⁷⁰

Economically, the report further states that 15 million quarter-acres of the rainforest is estimated at a worth of 200 hundred million Deutsch Marks, which is a very high sum for a land with only 4 million inhabitants.⁷¹ The report also discloses the fact that although there is a general idealization of hope as presented in official estimations and figures, the reality is that only a small minority, namely owners of logging companies and the international banking corporations, some local government officials, business leaders, and land-owners benefit at the exclusion of the majority, namely, the adaptable-inhabitants and the indigenous people ⁷²

Attempts to address the problem have already been fostered, to a certain extent, through reforestation. However, the losses of the rainforests are irreplaceable. In addition, it has been found out that the replacement of indigenous trees with commercialized timber-trees imported from outside countries, normally upon the advice of forestry experts, has also yielded some deficiencies. The reality is that deforestation and its defects are already felt by Oceanians. Almost everywhere in the region, international timber companies are rushing in. With uncontrolled destruction through logging, a complex of catastrophies have been experienced. Ecological problems related to deforestation involve the breakdown of the whole ecological system, ranging from loss to land and sea communities of resources, to the deficits to the climate, and exploitation of people and their cultures.

1.2.1.1.4. Mining

The islands of Oceania where the mining of gold, copper, phosphate, and other minerals takes place, such as Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, Solomon Islands, Fiji, New Caledonia, and Nauru, have already faced a multiplicity of internal and external problems. Numerous problems range from human exploitation of labourers, underpaid wages, the break-down of religio-cultural values and social structures, to health defects on both human and life-supporting eco-systems. With poor environmental controls, the communities of both nature and humans have been affected by pollution caused from disposing mining debris into rivers. Apart from the defects on the rivers' eco-systems themselves, people who live near the mining areas, and especially those around nearby rivers have been affected, mostly by diseases.

70 "Unsere Bäume sind weg, und alles Wild ist verschwunden": Urwaldzerstörung, Medienkonflikte und die Suche nach einer menschlichen Entwicklung im Pazifischen Raum. Prepared by the Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland (EMW), Brot für die Welt, Evangelische Zentralstelle für Entwicklungshilfe (EZE), Missionswerk der Evang-Luth. Kirche in Bayern (MWB), Nordelbisches Zentrum für Weltmission und kirchlichen Weltdienst (NMZ), (Breklum: Manfred Siegel KG, 1995), 46 ff.

71 "Unsere Bäume sind weg," 97-110.

72 "Unsere Bäume sind weg," 46-57.

1.2.1.2. Pollution of Ocean/Sea Resources

The labelling of Oceania as a liquid continent goes hand in hand with passive conceptualizations. The region is not only seen as a watery and remote place, but also the inhabitants are sometimes overlooked as non-existent human beings, or simply as the original pairs who inhabit the edenic-speck of islands. The liquidizing label has been employed to serve the political and economic interests of the so-called super-powers, either for dumping nuclear wastes and testing atomic bombs, or for the manouvering of marine resources through the fishing industries. Ecologically, it is the liquidizing or dissolving experiences that have deprived both human and island natures, to the extremes of degradation and extinction. This kind of interaction can be seen as a matter of subject-object relations. Since dissolving or sinking experiences are discussed in other sections, the focus here will be confined to two main anthropogenic abuses of the ocean, that is, marine pollution and fishing.

1.2.1.2.1. Marine Pollution

A meeting of Oceanic scientists in Noumea, New Caledonia warned Oceanians to pay more attention to the importance of marine and coral reef eco-systems, in terms of the danger of pollution. In a published report of the meeting, it is stated that besides the mining of sea-resources and damage caused by natural occurrences, pollution from oil spills, hazardous chemicals, and even oil-chemicals used by tourists adversely affect marine eco-systems. This could lead to the destruction of coral and reefs, thus reducing the reefs' ability to withstand storm surges. Since nearshore reefs are important for protecting human populations, the need for preservation must therefore be a high priority.⁷³ Even though the report appears to focus on the importance of reef protection for the sake of human populations, it must be emphasized from an ecological point of view that the marine resources should be respected for their own integrity and worth, and recognized for their reciprocating functions and diverse responsibilities.

Besides the aforementioned causes of marine pollution, the construction of fishing industrial infrastructures in sea-coastal settlements also contributes to the problem. While industrial wastes treated with chemicals are normally disposed into the sea, it is evident from many researches that the poor monitoring of waste systems has not only contributed to the killing of coral reefs and fish habitats, but also the direct exposure and access of the fish and sea-shell species to poisonous chemicals has led to the endangerment of fish themselves, as well as deadly diseases in human beings due to the consumption of poisonous fish. In addition, the growth of major fishing industries is impossible without engine fleets and the use of huge deep-fishing nets. Apart from catching strands of fish in great quantities, the continual transversing of the ocean by steam boats leads to dangers such as oil spills and gases.

73 Cf. *SPREP Report: Noumea – New Caledonia*, 1989.

1.2.1.2.2. Fishing

It has been generally conceded that Oceania is the richest part of the world, in terms of marine resources. There are about 3,000 different types of species which can be found on a single coral-reef and which are sustainably nurtured by the richness of mangrove, sea-grass, and lagoon ecosystems.⁷⁴ Most island societies which live in coastal areas have been partly dependent on a daily-based subsistence fish economy, while inland communities obtain fish from rivers.

Traditional methods of fishing, in most cases, were less destructive and were ecologically sound and sensitive. These had helped in sustaining local societies and communal welfare for a long time. More importantly, fishing was a spontaneous vocation to which almost every able-bodied member of the village societies was entitled. With the transition to modernity and development, however, fishing has become an object of the market. It has become more a private enterprise and a practise to be carried out by a minority of individuals and fish-trading companies, due to its accompanying high costs. Fish-nets and motor boats rule the offshore fishing grounds. The evolution of fishing technology has advanced the means of production and unlimited consumption.

Besides natural catastrophies such as cyclones, floods, tidal waves, and ocean warmings that harm the coral-reefs and the habitations of fish and sea-shell species, socio-economic pressures on communities have caused many abuses to marine resources. Many people are driven to either overfish the sea grounds or carelessly destroy reefs and lagoons through destructive methods such as bombing by dynamite (which is illegal), as well as the use of poisonous roots and chemicals.

One of the major threats to the marine eco-systems is the fishing-trade industry.⁷⁵ Commercial fish like tuna, yellow fin and big-eyed tuna are caught in great quantities by foreign fishing fleets of nations such as the United States, Japan, Korea and Taiwan. Although most of these commercial fish are contained within the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) of the Oceanian nations, it is evident that the pressure of selling fishing rights to, and in many instances the violation of such rights by, foreign entities contributes to the consistent exploitation of commercial fish.⁷⁶ In addition to the institutions of fish-trading and industry, scientists believe that a rise in sea level temperature of just one or two degrees could change ocean currents and therefore change the distribution of economically important fish.⁷⁷ The migration of the internationally recognized commercial fish-species to other parts of the ocean probably means the elimination of some major resources which were the backbones of the island economies.

74 *The Pacific Way*, 33f.

75 Evidently, the operations of fishing industries are accompanied not only by the cheap labour market, but also under poor working conditions whereby most of them are women and children.

76 Geoff Waugh and Jack Brown, "Strategies for the Development of Fisheries Policy in the South Pacific," *Sydney Talk: Australia in the South Pacific* (Kensington: University Centre for South Pacific Studies, 1990), 30-42. Waugh is a former senior economist at Forum Fisheries Agency, consultant to the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research on fisheries policies, and Lecturer of Economics, University of New South Wales. Brown is also a Lecturer in the Economic Department at the University of New South Wales.

77 Cf. *Pacific Report* (April 1992).

1.3. Technological Age and Its Effects

Modern industrial developments with their two-handed tools of science and technology strive to control and determine the destiny of the whole of God's creation. Science and technology have helped to elevate standards of human life. On the other hand, the rationality of science and technology has been employed by many to legitimize every form of manipulation and exploitation. This has undoubtedly fostered human domestication of nature by abusive control and domination. At present, scientific and technological constructions can be seen largely as self-regulating developments that create more threats to life than freedom, security and peace.

The thrust of the following subsection is to investigate the effects of the nuclear industry through a sequence of case studies on nuclear testing programmes of the world's so-called 'major powers' and their impacts on ecological life-systems in Oceania. These reveal, as has been mentioned, the arrogant and senseless attitudes of those who strive to attain and maintain power in unethical ways.

1.3.1. Nuclear Technology: Case Studies

The Nuclear Age in Oceania coincides with the presence and growing interests of Europeans and North Americans. Due to her vital strategic and favourable economic status, Oceania has already been and is projected to be a region where a "global eyeball-to-eyeball" nuclear confrontation of the so-called 'superpowers' would once again be carried out. With the exception of Australia,⁷⁸ one of the world's main producers of uranium for nuclear powers and weapons, Oceania has been viewed as a peaceful region and non-nuclear producer. Despite this fact, the Liquid Continent is, indeed, the place where the first atomic bomb was exploded in war,⁷⁹ and has continued to be a region of nuclear testing,⁸⁰ a dumping-ground or 'womb' for nuclear-wastes,⁸¹ and a public highway for the illegal shipment of plutonium and highly-radioactive nuclear wastes.⁸²

Commenting on the ecological harm of nuclear radioactivity, Suliana Siwatibau, a Pacific environmentalist, has clearly pointed out that the whole process, from the mining

78 Suliana Siwatibau, "Nuclear Issues in the Pacific," *Pacific Conference of Churches: Report of the Assembly September 14-24, 1986*. (Suva: Lotu Pasefika Production, 1987), 232f.

79 Peter Hayes and Lyuba Zarsky, "Pacific Arms Control and Regional Initiatives," *The Pacific: Peace, Security and the Nuclear Issue*, eds. Ranginui Walker and William Sutherland (Tokyo: The United Nations University – Zed Books Ltd, 1988), 73-92.

80 One year after World War II (July 1946), the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Bikini Island. Later on, in 1954, the Bravo testing of a hydrogen bomb is still remembered as the most dramatic event in the history of nearby Marshallese islands due to the fallout that contaminated all the islands. Additionally, the presence of France in the South Pacific is known by its nuclear testings from 1966 to 1996. Great Britain had also been involved in nuclear testing.

81 *Womb* is metaphorically used by the author to portray the significance of the sea for Oceanians. The womb inclusively resembles the land, sea, sky, and all therein in the worldview of Oceanians. After the Cold War, the superpowers who fought in the war refused the return of wastes to their backyards. Most of the countries involved then decided to dump the destroyed weapons and wastes of the war on isolated islands of Oceania.

82 For example, one of the recent reports of nuclear waste shipments is the transportation of 60 containers of highly-radioactive nuclear waste, "bound from France to Japan aboard the British-flagged Pacific Swan." Hawaii was designated as a boarding place in case of an emergency. See "Nuclear Waste Shipment Possible Near Hawaii and Marshalls," *The Independent*. (March 6, 1998): 13.

of uranium (the raw material for nuclear power and weapons) to the testing and destruction of nuclear weapons cannot escape ecological threats caused by radioactivity. Once radiation enters the human environment, the food chain and the whole cycle of life are endangered. Thus the basic essentials of life such as air, water and food for all living creatures, including humankind, are contaminated.

Siwatibau further states that it takes about 600 years for strontium 90, a common pollutant from nuclear activities, and 250,000 years for plutonium before they become harmless. For humankind, she added, once radiation enters into skins and bodies, there is a high tendency for defects such as “cancer, abortions, individual lethargy, mental problems and decreased vigor of the society.”⁸³

The threatening experiences of the (post)modern technological nuclear age are endless tragic dramas of Oceanic life. Such experiences are ironically being determined by the victimizing and senseless conquests of humankind for power and control. This is evident in the case of the United States’ nuclear testing on Bikini Atoll and nuclear waste disposals on Johnston Atoll, British nuclear testing on Christmas Island and the Aboriginal lands, and French nuclear testing on Moruroa and Fangataufa Atolls in Tahiti, where the inhabitants were mostly viewed as non-human robots, and their homelands exposed to apocalyptic nuclear destruction. This is revealed by testimonies of workers on the test-sites. One such statement for example, reads:

The metropolitans regarded us as robots; fast working machines, efficient. We were often told: ‘You guys may be stronger than us but we have bigger brains, we can do very complicated work, we are educated, civilized.’ That’s why it was almost impossible for us to get promotions, we were just robots.⁸⁴

1.3.1.1. U.S. Nuclear Testings: Bikini and Johnston Atolls

The United States was engaged in nuclear testing on Bikini atoll in the Marshall Islands from 1946 to 1957. The USA tested 69 bombs on Bikini and Enwetak between 1946 and 1954, culminating with the explosion of the greatest hydrogen bomb during the 1954 Bravo test. The contaminating effects of these tests continue to be faced by the living, and it will be a continuous experience of suffering forever.⁸⁵ In addition, the case of Johnston

83 Suliana Siwatibau, “Nuclear Issues in the Pacific,” 232-237.

84 Pieter de Vries and Han Seur, *Mururoa and Us: Polynesians’ Experiences During Thirty Years of Nuclear Testing in the French Pacific*. (Lyon: Centre de Documentation et de Recherche sur la Paix et les Conflicts, 1997), 37.

85 See “Bravo – Brachte den Tod in unser Paradies,” *Die Brigitte-Reportage – Das ganz andere Leben* (1992): 85-88. Also “Marshalls Wants Nuclear Problems Resolved,” *The Independent*. (February, 1998): 14. The fallout from tests caused a tremendous increase of a variety of cancerous diseases from which the Marshallese suffered, outnumbering those who are affected in the U.S. Human predictions and control of natural causes (weather forecasts) are not always accurate. This was experienced in the 1957 testing of the US hydrogen bomb in Bikini Atoll. The predictions of the wind by the American meteorologists were reversed by the winds themselves when they changed direction. This led to the devastating effects on islanders and the contamination of the environment as the winds carried the bomb’s fallout to nearby islands. An eyewitness in the nearby atoll of Rongelap described seeing early in the morning dark clouds of smoke, followed by a thundering sound. Later on, before mid-day, they saw a white kind of powder falling on the taro leaves, the coconuts, and the whole vegetation. The water turned yellow, and finally the white powder covered their hair and their bodies. After two days, the Ameri-

Atoll, formerly used as a testing site and still used for the Disposal System and Storehouse of the US chemical weapons incinerator, currently has defects such as the extinction of birds species. It is also evident that the contamination of the ground by dioxin has led to the depletion of more than 200 species of inshore and reef fish because of the high level of plutonium polluting the lagoon waters and sediment.⁸⁶

Attempting to disclose the identity crisis and related eco-problems which are still faced by the inhabitants of Bikini, Robert C. Kiste⁸⁷ vividly reports how Bikini was destroyed by the most powerful hydrogen bomb in world history,⁸⁸ with people being sacrificed by having to leave their land in order for the United States to carry out nuclear testing. On a Sunday in early February, 1946, continues Kiste; "... several U.S. naval officers, the governor of the Marshalls, and the Bikinians' paramount chief ... landed at the atoll. The governor drew upon the Bible and compared the Bikinians to the children of Israel, whom the Lord had saved and delivered to a Promised land."⁸⁹

With the claim that the nuclear tests were "for the good of mankind and to end all wars," the relocation of the islanders and the offer of their ancestral home for the U.S. Navy tests was considered an act of honour and a sacrifice for universal peace. Being convinced that the proposed nuclear testing was a justified deed of divine sanction, one of the local chiefs who declared the handing over of the atoll said: "If the United States government and the scientists of the world want to use our island and atoll for furthering development, which with God's blessing will result in kindness and benefit to all mankind, my people will be pleased to go elsewhere."⁹⁰

Besides the American influential propaganda, which is always accompanied the grants of monetary compensation, and other reasons behind the dislocation of the Bikinians,⁹¹ Kiste sees that the governor's use of the people's deep commitment to Christianity was a shrewd manoeuvre.⁹² The primary reason for the Bikinians' offer to sacrifice was a relig-

can soldiers securely clothed themselves and tried to evacuate the inhabitants of the atoll. When the people arrived on other islands, they discovered that their hair gradually fell out.

86 Linda Bercusson, "Atoll Still Dumping Ground of the Pacific," *Auckland Star*. (November, 1989): 7.

87 See Robert C. Kiste, "Identity and Relocation: The Bikini Case," *Mobility and Identity in the Island Pacific*. Philip S. Morrison, ed. (Wellington: Department of Geography and Victoria University Press, 1985), 116-138. Robert C. Kiste is professor of geography at the University of Hawaii – Manoa. Kiste states that the Bikinians remain a discontented people. Although they have been provided with large US federal sums of money as an act of restitution, "the problems wrought by 'enforced removal from ancestral homeland' – and the monies – along with other welfare schemes – have only furthered dependency." Like native American, they remain victims of nuclear bombs.

88 Evidence states that Bravo, a fifteen-megaton behemoth designed by Edward Teller at Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, which was tested on 1 March, 1954, is 1000 times more powerful than the Hiroshima Atomic Bomb. Glenn Alcalay, "Pax Americana in the Pacific," *Covert Action* 47 (Spring 1992):47-51.

89 Kiste, 119.

90 Leonard Mason cited by Kiste, 120.

91 The Bikinians had been accustomed to the imposition of outside authorities and were also convinced (and maybe frightened) by the awareness of the superiority of the American military as they had already experienced it before from the Japanese. In addition, it is presumably due to their misinformation and may be also due to some feelings of inferiority.

92 Kiste, 120.

ious myth⁹³ that was legitimized by the appearance of the Bible and a promise of world peace.

Financial compensation and many other benefits did not and can never replace the damage done. It was only the beginning of a series of difficulties. Kiste explains that the islanders were faced with problems such as identity struggles, as well as the contaminating effects of nuclear fallout. Their being dislocated from one atoll and relocated on another from time to time, due to problems such as the shortage of food supply and diseases, has totally altered their lifeway. Accordingly, they became accustomed to the American lifeway as almost everything was provided by the American government. A longing to return to their homeland began in 1968, when a party of Bikinians accompanied American officials to survey the atoll for resettlement. This was met by great disappointment, as the islanders saw that: “The Atoll was not as they remembered – it had been denuded of coconut palms, the landscape was cluttered with massive amounts of rusting debris from the nuclear testing, and two or three small islands and parts of others had completely disappeared.”⁹⁴

A replanting process, especially coconuts palms, the main food-crop for the Bikinians, was carried out. Although they were also warned of lingering radioactive dangers on the atoll, and after some delays of the relocation, some Bikinian families began to drift back and resettle the atoll. However, in 1978, the Bikinians also faced another dislocation. The resettlement of Bikini was abandoned once again mainly due to the results of medical tests, revealing that “levels of radioactivity had reached unacceptable levels in people who were eating coconuts from the recently matured palms ...”⁹⁵

1.3.1.2. British Nuclear Testing: Monte Bello, Maralinga, and Christmas Island

British nuclear testing was carried out during the mid 1950s up until 1966 on two Aboriginal Reserve Areas – Monte Bello and Maralinga (Australia), and on Christmas Island. Like the previously mentioned cases, the contaminating sideeffects of these nuclear test are still being experienced, not only through deadly diseases to humankind but also through the extinction of birds, animals, plants, fish species, and so forth. These vulnerable conditions are due mainly to being exposed to exceptionally dangerous levels of radioactive fallout that contaminate the land and the marine eco-systems.

Accordingly, the pollution of rivers from tailings of the uranium mining has driven the Aborigines to a threatened life of poverty, disease and death. While they naturally depend on rivers for washing, drinking water and food, the disposal of tailings has led to the breakdown of the rivers’ eco-systems that helped sustain and provide their basic daily needs. Dramatically worse was the bombing of the sacred landmarks of the Aborigines. Hence, the indigenous people suffer both from the pollution of life-supporting eco-systems, as well as the violation of their sacred grounds, the very core of their worship life.

93 The term ‘religious myth’ here simply refers to a set of beliefs that is accepted without any critical evaluations. For example, the use of the Bible to justify the nuclear testing and the relocation of people had not been critically analyzed; rather, the appearance of the Bible and the promise of world peace was an unquestionable matter.

94 Kiste, 132.

95 Kiste, 133.

1.3.1.3. French Nuclear Testings: Moruroa and Fangataufa Atolls

France began testing nuclear bombs in Moruroa and Fangataufa Atolls in 1966 after a decision to shift from the deserts of Algeria's hinterland to Tahiti, her colony in the Polynesian island group. After a period of ten years, Greenpeace, in their Pacific Nuclear-Free Campaign, exposed the fact that France had exploded in the atmosphere more than 100 nuclear bombs. In 1975, nuclear testings were shifted underground.

It is recorded that, overall, 193 bombs were tested and some of these bombs were more powerful than the one that destroyed Hiroshima, and their radioactive adverse effects on both humankind and nature are even worse than that of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster in the then USSR.⁹⁶ Even though these humiliating actions of the French government were strongly opposed locally, regionally and internationally, more nuclear bombs were detonated afterward, and culminated recently in the 1995 explosions or the Chirac tests. Nuclear tests have been propagated by the French government's proclamation that there is no ecological danger of radiation in such tests.

It seems impossible to provide accurate information on the ecological impacts of France's thirty years of nuclear testings in Oceania. This is due not only to the strong control of the French military but also to heavy restrictions⁹⁷ from the French government channelled by local government officials, who refuse to undertake research on the testing sites. The government officials, represented by the current Minister of Health, for instance, deliberately deny the deteriorating effects of radioactivity on workers at test sites, as compared to the deadly experiences of Europeans after the Chernobyl disaster. To these officials, Moruroa and Fangataufa have not been endangered by radioactivity. By way of affirming their arguments, they deny and disregard the risk and enduring adverse health experiences of test site workers, rendering them as mere strange stories.⁹⁸ The secrets of Moruroa, including medical results, are strictly prohibited from workers and others affected.⁹⁹ In spite of this secrecy, however, the ecological impacts are traced and revealed by the experiential stories of people based on their experiences near the nuclear testing spots.

The establishment of the *Centre d' experimentation du Pacifique (CEP)* for the nuclear testing programme has been considered as a 'big bang' paradox in relation to social, cultural, political and environmental aspects of life.¹⁰⁰ Since the establishment of the nuclear centre on Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls, French Polynesians have experienced a pro-

96 Pacific Briefs, "Radioactivity Ignored," *Pacific News Bulletin*. (February, 1998): 3 f. For example, the second test of a bomb was measured as "20 times more powerful than that in Hiroshima, ... record(ing) radiation levels in the rainfall on Mangareva at 100,000 becquerels a litre, matching the highest levels found around Chernobyl." France tested 191 nuclear bombs between 1966 to 1995.

97 Restrictions were also applied to media publications and interviews of indigenous officials who were against the nuclear testings. John Doom, general secretary for the Pacific Desk at the World Council of Churches, is one among others who were denied public appearances on the media and press conferences. Doom, in a discussion with the author. Geneva (October, 1997).

98 Peter de Vries and Han Seur, *Moruroa and Us*, 119 f.

99 Peter de Vries and Han Seur, 29.

100 Nic MacLellan is a journalist, researcher and community development worker in the Pacific islands, and currently works with the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC) in Suva, Fiji. Jean Chesneaux is emeritus professor of Asian and Pacific History at the Sorbonne (Université de Paris VII).

found transformation of their socio-economic life. The nuclear programme created a tremendous increase in employment opportunities that consequently led to an explosion in consumption, real estate transactions and financial flows.¹⁰¹ People were provided with well-paid jobs and were drawn into the work force to build and support the nuclear interests of the colonial master.

However, the favourable side of the paradox is counter-balanced by at high cost of living for people who do not have access to or are paid from public money, as well as for villagers who produce their own means of survival.¹⁰² Many have been hypnotized by the luxurious attractions, driving them to remain passive dependents, at the expense of the colonial master's uncaring control. Further, the scientific missions of experts who were allowed to investigate the levels of radioactive contamination and the ecological state of the atoll do not fully provide reliable information on the results of their findings. The scientific missions convey different messages which legitimize political decisions and military policies.¹⁰³

Nevertheless, some findings reveal that the lagoon waters are contaminated with cesium 134 and cesium 137 leaking from underground tests, and that it takes radioactive leakage a period of less than six years to reach the surface and become exposed to the open environment.¹⁰⁴ Eyewitnesses who suffered and are suffering from the tests openly declare that they not only saw flames and mushroom clouds which burned the atoll after each explosion, but they also discovered that the lagoon reeked with dead fish, the beach was covered with a strange sand-like debris, as well as a great amount of piled-up wood.¹⁰⁵

The endangerment of the marine ecosystems as a result of nuclear testing and nuclear waste dumping has led to the increasing toxification of the fish species that provide dietary proteins for the inhabitants. Moreover, due to fish migration, other islanders have already suffered diseases from the consumption of poisonous fish. Besides cancerous diseases, contamination of the marine wildlife and fish species has caused peculiar diseases such as ciguatera,¹⁰⁶ skin and lung cancers, leukemia, and so forth. Most disappointing is

101 Nic MacLellan and Jean Chesneaux, *After Moruroa: France in the South Pacific*. (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1998), 116 ff. It is recorded that between 1961 and 1968, for example, there was an increase from 400 to 15,000 of employees in the government work-force. "Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased by a factor of 75 between 1962 and 1982, and the minimum wage by a factor of 15. This would seem to make French Polynesia one of the richest countries in the region ..." However, this type of economy is controlled from outside: according to the 1981 official report, the import of 99 % of energy and 84 % of foodstuffs has created a trade deficit of 94.4 %, which cannot be met by the limited local production and the lack of efficient human resources or vocational training. See *Colloque Chevenement sur la recherche et la technologie: Assises regionales de Polynesie Francaise*, Oct 1981, cited by Nic MacLellan and Jean Chesneaux. See also the introductory notes in: *Moruroa and Us*, 14-26.

102 Nic MacLellan and Jean Chesneaux, 116 f.

103 Experts such as Haroun Tazieff (a known French Volcanologist) were allowed 3 days of research in 1982, a team of experts from Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea 5 days in 1983, and Cousteau, an underwater explorer, was allowed in for 6 days in 1987. See Vries & Seur, 169.

104 Vries and Seur, citing Norm Buske, a researcher from the Search Technical Services (Washington based), 172.

105 Steven Staples, "Breaking Moruroa's Silence: Nuclear Test Site Workers Speak out," *Tok Blong Pasifika*. (March/June, 1997): 22.

106 Vries and Seur, 172-188.

the fact that the French government, after thirty years of testing, arrogantly declares Mururoa to be a barren land, nothing but a waste dumping zone.¹⁰⁷

1.4. Summary

Samoa and Oceania are a home created and given by the Creator God to inhabit the watery part of the planet earth. Their inhabitants commonly share the ocean and the endless space as an inheritance given to the ancestors by the gods and handed down throughout the ages by living generations. The inseparable unity of the atmospheric space, sea and land validates the common claim of being members of one body and a single household, as defined by expressions such as “watery tract of the oikoumene;”¹⁰⁸ “foundation of oceanic theological articulations,”¹⁰⁹ “our seas of islands or the ocean in us, or, We are the ocean, the Oceanians.”¹¹⁰ The theological affirmation of being Samoan or Oceanian is, indeed, an affirmation of the dignity and integrity of one part of God’s diversity of Creation which was (and continues to be) politically colonized, and which is still becoming a region of great importance for the strategic and economic interests of the North American, European and neighbouring Asian countries. The twenty-first century has been projected to be the Century of the Pacific Ocean. This means that the concentrations of industrial countries in terms of trade and security have gradually shifted to the Pacific Ocean.¹¹¹

The ecological life-threats have been disclosed, including the vulnerable effects of human practises on basic natural resources that cannot escape severe harmful effects on human beings. It has been seen that industrial and technological developments have mostly been handled through violation and exploitation of humanity and degradation of creation. The techno-nuclear age has intensified eco-problems in the region. In the face of these developments, the inhabitants are confronted with life and death issues of survival. The majority of inhabitants have been uprooted not only from their sources of life-adaptations such as the land, sea and the atmosphere, but some have also been alienated from the ground of their beings, namely their religio-cultural identities, beliefs and value-systems, sacred places, and the whole eco-system as a gift of life. Indeed, the future of the majority has already been determined by the deficit consequences of human negligence. In relation to this Oceanic uprootedness, the Oceanic feminist theologian, Lisa Meo, once

107 Robert Keith-Reid, “Breaking Down Mururoa: After the Nuclear Tests, the Atoll isn’t Much Use for Anything Else,” *Island Business*. Vol. 2 (August, 1997): 20. After great contamination, it is reported that the French government contends that Mururoa, “... being 1200 kilometres south west of Tahiti and over 4000 kilometres from any sizeable town, no other civilian or military use of the atoll is viable. They are too isolated and lacking resources, particularly fresh water.”

108 John Garrett, cited by Sevati Tuwere, “An Agenda for the Theological Task of the Church in Oceania,” *Pacific Journal of Theology*. Series II No. 13 (1995): 5-12.

109 Tuwere, 7.

110 E. Hau’ofa, “A New Oceania: Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands,” paper presented at the University of Hawaii (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1990). See also, “The Ocean in Us,” *The Contemporary Pacific: A Journal of Island Affairs*. Vol. 9, No. 1 (Fall, 1998): 391-410. ‘Our Sea of Islands’ is a concept coined and developed by Epeli Hauofa of the University of the South Pacific. In his work, he expresses the significance of the vastness of the ocean as an inheritance of the islanders. To islanders, the sea is part of their history and life, and therefore it should be treated with great respect and care.

111 In economic terms, about 40 % of tuna in the world trade comes from the oceans of Oceania. “Seventh Seminar of the Europe Pacific Solidarity Network: Neuendettelsau” (14-16 October, 1994): 20.

said: "... when a people (and all natural inhabitants) are uprooted they lose all elements of their identity; their land, sea, sacred places, sacred plants, birds, animals, fish, and artefacts. They become rootless or lost in their new habitats."¹¹²

Among other reasons, it appears that the human decisions which generate ecological deficits are influenced mostly by a kind of commodified philosophy that is stained by abstract thinking, thus visualizing Oceania as a place to be overtaken, developed, destroyed and contaminated by the testings of nuclear armaments and dumping of nuclear wastes. This thinking is validated by a stereotype of Oceania in terms of its being remote, isolated, inhabited by unimportant creatures, without respecting the gifts of life which God has bestowed upon the region and its peoples.¹¹³

Moreover, Oceania is becoming a victimized region. Her inhabitants and undoubtedly the generations to come are passive and exploited consumers of technological nuclear industries. The future of Oceania to a great extent has already been determined by economic debts, social and political manouvers, diseases and corruption. Many have been identified and defined as children of nuclear bombs, and the welfare of unborn generations has already been molded and determined by nuclear radioactivity.

These and many other dangers are undoubtedly due to the idealization of Oceania as a remote Paradise, without respecting the fact that it is a *habitat*, a *home* for other living beings and a part of the diversity of God's creation. The pains of a lost and threatened life have continuously been heard in many interceding voices, crying out in pain: "For God's sake, stop!"¹¹⁴ Are these sufferings the end result of God's command for humankind to have *dominion over* the earth, or are they the result of a misinterpretation of this commandment?

112 Lisa Meo, "Forum: Women in Society," *Women's Theology: Weavers Consultation – 26-30 November, 1995*. (Suva: Quality Print, 1996), 61.

113 See Nic MacLellan and Jean Chesneaux, *After Moruroa: France in the South Pacific*. (Melbourne: Oceanic Press, 1998), 16 ff. The statement is based on the firm convictions of Oceanic societies, including that of Polynesians, that the land and the sea is a divine gift of inheritance. There was less tendency to commodify such heritages, and even mapping them in order to impose any specific national control. Mappings and drawing distances of nuclear radiation from Moruroa atoll to the US, South America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand, were used as counter proofs of the nuclear testings. This has been an argument of France, stating; "How can you complain about the nuclear tests at Moruroa atoll when they're so far away!" Such self-centred attitudes "reduce space to an abstraction, independent of the people (and all therein) who live within it." It is a total neglect of the creational rights of not only the inhabitants but the neighboring (regional) islands who share in common the blessings of that heritage.

114 "For God's Sake Stop," a motto of the Nuclear Campaign of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the international reaction to stop the latest nuclear testing of France.

2. ECOLOGY AND RELIGIO-CULTURAL TRANSITIONS

2.1. Virginity¹ of Samoa and Some Ecological Portraits

The genesis of major shifts in worldviews and the religio-cultural heritage of Samoa can be categorized in terms of two main facets. Firstly, there was the arrival of the European (*papalagi*) with foreign ideas that altered the indigenous way of life which was ordered, shaped and sanctioned by a religious system. Consequently, foreign ideas led Samoans to question the validity of their traditional convictions² about divinities and the teachings of their ancestral religion and its social applications.

Secondly, the expansions of European colonial empires through the conquests and divisions of lands, peoples, and cultural norms provided certain forms of experience and expression that contributed to the meaningfulness, as well as the complexity and confusion, of the religio-cultural situation.

The arrival of European sailors, traders and missionaries, and the resulting exposure of some Samoans to the outside world, are considered major historical determinants that have had great impacts on Samoan mythological and traditional worldviews. These coincided with many forces that eventually led to the breaking open of closed-in and isolated Samoan life-systems to the new civilizations.

The attempt here is not only to identify various shifts in the religious beliefs and faith of Samoans, but also to see how the introduced ideas and their social applications moulded religious conceptions and ethical attitudes toward life and creation. The period to which this part of the work refers is the late 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, when European countries also underwent great changes.³

2.1.1. *The Historic-Geographical Setting*

The romantic expositions of the first explorers, such as those of Captain Cook and his crew,⁴ regarding the extraordinary beauty of the islands in the southern pole of the globe,

1 *Virginity* here refers to the unfolding drama and the history of Samoa (Oceania). Samoa, consisting of ten inhabited, scattered islands (as traditionally understood before she was divided by colonial powers), reckoning from the west *Savaii*, *Apolima*, *Manono*, *Upolu*, *Tutuila*, *Aunuu*, *Nuutele*, *Ta'u*, *Ofu* and *Olosega*, had remained unknown and had not experienced contacts and relationships with the wider world.

2 Cf. Cornelius Loew, *Myth, Sacred History and Philosophy: The Pre-Christian Religious Heritage of the West* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc, 1967), 3f. Loew's definition of the term *conviction* is employed here. Accordingly, "convictions that shape men's (humankind's) orientation to life are religious phenomena ... They are all persuasions about good and bad; about gods and devils; about representations of the ideal man (and woman), the ideal state, and the ideal society; about the meaning of history, nature, and the All." Basing his definition on the Latin root which means: *to be overcome thoroughly*, Loew refers to the process in which "someone or something does the overcoming, which is experienced as an exterior force by those who hold the conviction." This force is variously called the gods, the highest good, the Truth, the Holy Spirit, the law of nature, the nation, or the experience of ultimacy.

3 Cf. Tu Wei-ming, "Beyond the Enlightenment Mentality," *Worldviews and Ecology: Religion, Philosophy, and the Environment*, Mary E. Tucker and John A. Grim, eds. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 19-29. Also, Bernard Thorogood, ed. *The Gales of Change: Responding to a Shifting Missionary Context* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994), 1-6.

4 Natural scientists and artists were also on Cook's ship during his sailing expedition and exploration of the South Seas. This was the first time living creatures of nature, namely birds and plants in this part of the world, were

inspired the interest of the Western world. Such views were found in many journals written about the eastern Polynesian islands expressing the attractiveness of the habitations, friendliness of the inhabitants, and interesting qualities of the people. This apparently happy life corresponded to Rousseau-like dreams of a “back-to-nature” enthusiasm, which was, above all, the model of a dream-inspired South Seas romanticism.⁵

The discovery⁶ of Samoa by the Dutch navigator, Jacob Roggeveen (1722),⁷ promoted the romantic aspirations and interests of Western expeditions. When Roggeveen approached Manu’a (eastern islands of Samoa), he described Samoa’s geographic outlook as “a rough green carpet thrown over the whole surface – a carpet fringed with white surf on reef or iron-bound coast.”⁸ Coming nearer to the land, the explorers found that “the islands were well planted with fruit trees, (and) that the country produced roots, herbs, and corn in great plenty, and was laid out in large and regular plantations towards the coast.”⁹ They further defined the islands to be a place of recreation and healing from sicknesses and tiring voyages.

Apart from the land and natural resources, the sea is an inextricable natural resource. These have been not only good fishing grounds for the people, but also secure and pleasant for voyaging in small canoes. The sea is a source of protein for the islanders’ diets besides many other uses. Several openings in the reefs (harbours) exist, mostly on parts of the coasts where streams from the mountains flow and cut their ways into the ocean. Springs of fresh water have been abundant in several coastal areas.

Thus, natural and climatic factors were among several other causes of attraction. The

taken as objects of scientific examination. Some birds and plants were shipped to Europe and displayed in museums.

- 5 Cf. Tony Swain and Garry Trompf, *The Religions of Oceania: Library of Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge, 1995), 1-16. Also Malama Meleisea, *Lalaga: A Short History of Western Samoa* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1987), 41-50. Rousseau was deeply fascinated and called the inhabitants of the islands “children of nature or earlier primitivists living in an Eden-like state of bliss and innocence ...” The anthropologist, Margaret Mead, in her book: *The Coming of Age in Samoa* (1929), gained world-wide recognition for her writing on Samoa because she portrayed idyllic ideas of *primitiveness* although many of her theories are now criticized. The concept ‘primitive’ was positively understood. The South Seas inhabitants’ closeness to nature was a model of human orientation to his or her true nature and being in paradise, according to these Europeans.
- 6 The concept, *discovery*, needs to be reformulated due to the fact that it has negative and dominative overtones. Discovery is typically understood in a one-sided framework from the Western explorers or Europeans who, besides many other imperialistic motives, thought that other societies in remote and faraway places unknown to their civilization were uncivilized, heathens, and so forth. The author interprets that the so-called *primitiveness* of these people (refer to endnote 5) discovered the explorers who were on the search for Paradise on Earth. This, they found in the remoteness of Oceania, according to their writings. ‘Discovery’ in this sense is seen as a two-way process.
- 7 Andrew Sharp, ed. *The Journal of Jacob Roggeveen* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1970), 150-159. Cf. J.A.B. Jongeneel, “The Protestant Missionary Movement up to 1798,” *Missiology: An Ecumenical Introduction – Texts and Contexts of Global Christianity*, ed. F. J. Verstraelen (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 222-228. Sailing expeditions, especially the Dutch at the turn of the century, were influenced more by economic motives. As noted, the Dutch were well versed with steamboat technology, which was originally established for the promotion of their fishing industries, and later developed into both trading and mission enterprises.” The religion of truth” accompanied “the religion of trade.”
- 8 N.A. Rowe, *Under the Sailing Gods* (London: Putnam, 1930), 9, and J.B. Stairs, *Old Samoa* (Oxford: Religious Tract Society, 1897), 21-43. See also Brian Lockwood, *Samoa Village Economy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).
- 9 Rowe, 11.

blessings bestowed upon the land, sea and people were viewed as a surplus of nature or natural abundance. It is affirmed that these features of so-called primitive¹⁰ affluence or social comforts caused the curiosities of scientific minds to engage in more discovery expeditions.

2.1.2. *Observations of the Samoans*

The observations of the early Europeans provide a rough description of the inhabitants. In one narrative, Samoans are defined as warlike in outlook, obediently rendering services to their chiefs, who authorized societal engagements in religious and temporal activities. Governed by a “unitary system of dispersed power,”¹¹ chiefs were distinguished in ceremonial occasions where men, women and children joined in feasting, singing and dancing. Politeness to chiefs and elderly people was expressed not only in appropriate manners but also in a noble language distinct from the ordinary dialect. As observed, “neither sex wear any clothing but a girdle of leaves round their middle and had been decorated colourfully.”¹²

Being considered amongst the best specimens of the Polynesian people, men were muscular in physique with some attractive features.¹³ Women were found to be beautiful, graceful, and their manners gentle, sprightly, engaging, with an expression of gentleness and meekness. Adorning their hair with chaplets of sweet-smelling flowers and bracelets, and necklaces of flowers around their wrists and necks, the voyagers admired their exquisite natural beauty.¹⁴

Samoans were also recognized by some observers as civilized people who were morally and socially oriented to provide and care for each other. Visitors were warmly accepted and welcomed.¹⁵ Certain ethical predispositions and qualities of care and responsibility were integrated parts of their ordinary life. An eighteenth century geographer recorded the Dutch discovery which reported the physical complexions of the islanders as that of the Europeans, with the exception of their being a little sun-burnt. He also mentioned that “they appeared to be a harmless good sort of people, and very brisk and likely;

10 The evolution of language in the contemporary age provides a more negative meaning of the term ‘primitive.’ Therefore, its usage is avoided in this writing. Most anthropologists (and some missionaries) apply this term to label other societies which are said to remain in the old fashions. When the term is used in this writing, it will be put into quotation marks to suggest that the concept ought to be reshaped or totally dismantled.

11 Malama Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1987), 1 f. See also Julia A. Hecht, Martin Orans, and Craig R. Janes, “Social Settings of Contemporary Samoans,” *The Changing Samoans*, Paul T. Backer and Joel M. Hanna, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 39-61.

12 Rowe, 14 f.

13 See Augustine Krämer, *Die Samoa-Inseln* Vol. 1 and 2 (Stuttgart, Strecker und Schröder Verlag, 1902), 60-68, J.W. Ellison, *Opening and Penetration of Foreign Influence in Samoa* (Portland: Oregon State College Publication, 1938), 11-15.

14 Ellison, 14. Rowe, 15-18.

15 Andrew Sharp, 152 f, Rowe, 12. Rowe reports: “Many of the Dutch were extremely desirous of making a longer stay in so plentiful a country, and among such civilized people, as it was morally certain, that by the help of the abundance of wholesome provisions which the natives willingly furnished them, all their sick would in a month’s time have perfectly recovered.”

for they treated each other with visible marks of civility, and had nothing in their behavior that was wild or savage.”¹⁶

In taking into account the primary considerations of La Perouse’s writings, Samoans, in his view, were the happiest people on earth. They were cheerful, polite and hospitable. This was due to the fact that:

They were so wealthy, and had so few wants, that they despised our cloths and instruments of iron, and would accept only beads: abundantly supplied with articles of real utility, they desired nothing but superfluities. ... What imagination would not conceive this delightful place to be the abode of felicity! ... They have no other care, but that of bringing up birds, and, like the first man, of gathering without labour the fruits that hang over their heads.¹⁷

‘Wealthy,’ as perceived by the explorers, refers to manifold supplies of natural food and valuable resources for trading. The natural products were signs of divine fertility and providence. Self-sufficiency and the contentment of human desires with what nature provided were fundamentally appreciated and categorized as a means of being naturally wealthy.¹⁸

The good reputation of Samoans in the wider world did not remain as it was. An incident that happened on La Perouse’s ship in which the lives of some of his crew members were lost through a conflict with villagers introduced another chapter to the romance. Whatever reason or whoever was to blame is not the point of interest here. From this single incident, however, Samoans were labelled as the most barbarous people, ferocious, and the most dangerous people of the South Seas. Discovery expeditions from then on avoided the Samoan islands for a long time until the arrival of some Europeans and missionaries in the beginning of the 1800s.

2.1.3. Socio-Political Organisation and Settlements

The reports of the initial contacts of the voyagers and Samoans introduced some of the aspects of the religio-cultural and organizational arrangements. La Perouse reported the village which had welcomed him to be situated in the midst of a wood, or rather trees which were loaded with fruits. In relation to the household infrastructure, he states that:

The houses were placed in a circle, about three hundred yards in diameter, the centre of which formed a beautiful green, while the trees, with which it was shaded, kept it delightfully cool. Women, children and old men accompanied me, and invited me into their houses. They spread the finest and freshest mats upon a floor formed of little chosen pebbles, and raised

¹⁶ Rowe, 11.

¹⁷ Rowe, 16.

¹⁸ ‘Satisfaction’ in the Samoan understanding (and most of the island nations) means the availability of the basic necessities of life, which is above all, the day-to-day supply of food and water. This was shaped and influenced by the philosophy which states, *E sau a le aso ma lona ai*: ‘Each day comes with its own blessings.’ The saying portrays the sense that the basic essentials of life ought to be proportionately used and shared.

about two feet above the ground, in order to guard against humidity ... I entered into the handsomest of the huts.¹⁹

Houses were established in each settlement to form a circular type of household. The quality of the Samoans' responsive attitudes were defined by what they offered to newcomers. The picture as presented depicts the fundamental structure and form of the Samoan society existing at that time. La Perouse's mention of his entrance into the handsomest hut can be seen as an honorary form of welcome. He entered the house of the *alii paia* (sacred chief) which is, according to tradition, a meeting place or temple of the whole village settlement. Entering the house means a "guarantee of personal safety and religious freedom."²⁰

One of the paradisaical portraits mentioned was the lighting of fires either in *fale* (houses) or in the *malae* (the centre of the settlement) in the evening as an ordinary round of life activity. It is reported, for example, that besides the day-time engagements, fires were lit at sunset and maintained throughout the night. The clans and sometimes the whole community were observed gathering in a circle around the fire where the chief/s or priest/s would lead them in worship and prayers to close off the day.

The archaeological findings of the researches on Samoa, such as that of Janet M. Davidson and J. Golson reveal that the constant shifts of habitations and the movement of people to the coastal places were evident, and were probably coincidental with European contact.²¹ At the arrival of the Christian mission, some settlements had already been established on the seashore, while the majority of houses were inland. This dispersed nature of settlement along the beaches was a problem according to the missionaries, in relation to the evangelization process, as in contrast to trading interests. The shifting of settlements was determined by the influence of several related interests, foremost of which was the deep desires for more European benefits.²²

2.1.4. *Economy, Early Exchanges and Trade*

The capital-oriented ideas and acquisitive calculations of Western civilization were not initially a stimulating element, according to the fundamental principles of Samoan values and morals, in relation to her land-based economic system.²³ Anthropological and ethnological studies reveal that the dominant motives of the economic system of the West cannot be compared with the "romantic view of isolated, small-scale, face to face ceremonies-based altruism and gift giving embedded in a kinship and jura nexus ..."²⁴ of these kinds of societies. Founded on communism where sharing and distribution were the

19 See Brian Lockwood, *Samoan Village Economy*, 10.

20 Gilson, 170.

21 Wright cited by J.M. Davidson, "Settlement Patterns in Samoa Before 1840," *JPS* No. 78 (1969): 47.

22 Davidson, 46.

23 See D. Pitt, *Tradition and Economic Progress in Samoa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 15-56.

24 Pitt, 15-56. Cf. Malama Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1987), 5-12. Also, F.A. Young, *Stability and Change in Samoa*, Ph.D. dissertation, Oregon University (June, 1972): 21-55. Clinton P. Anderson, ed. *The Economic Needs of American Samoa: Study made for the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs – United States Senate* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing, 1961).

principle rules, the community managed to sustain a kind of equilibrium in social life. It was the value of reciprocity which was its stimulating principle, and which was sanctioned by the religio-cultural functions and operations of chiefly titles.²⁵ In this sense, extrinsic values in the life-cycle were considered over against intrinsic and/or inherent values.²⁶ The regulations of the land, people and nature had constantly been enveloped and carried on by religiously ordained social laws, whereby reciprocity in giving and receiving on a fair basis was prominent. Reciprocity was/is an integral part of indigenous life. Engagement in exchange affairs is part of ceremonial living.

The arrival of explorers, castaways, and later on traders made a significant impression on Samoans. It marked the beginning of another form of economic system whereby exchange-trading in the name of profit dominates.²⁷ The socio-economic institutions or models operating in Europe and North America at that time did not correlate with the traditional indigenous socio-economic system. Trading was actually a new phenomenon in Samoans' experiences, to which they had to adjust over a long period. However, the foreigners perceived the offering of local goods as an indication that Samoans were interested in trading with foreign goods. This may be true to a certain extent, but the act was foremost an expression of their hospitality or an engagement in ceremonial exchanges. Robert Louis Stevenson some years later explained this difference by saying that: "We (Europeans) are in the thick of the age of finance; they (Samoans) are in a period of communism. And this makes them hard to understand. To us, with our feudal ideas, Samoa has the first appearance of a land of despotism."²⁸

The offering of food and refreshments was part of the religio-cultural heritage. The traditional value system required the kind reception and welcoming of honorary guests who were, in this context, the foreigners. Indeed, the foreigners were initially perceived as divine spirits or gods. The responsive action was based on ceremonial motives,²⁹ contrary to the voyagers' assumptions that the islanders were demanding an exchange in the form of trading. This can be seen by the first reaction of Roggeveen when he assumed the hospitable reactions of the islanders to be a reflection of their eagerness for iron tools, which led him to exchange five or six rusty nails.³⁰ Nevertheless, after some years of exposure to the exchange ethos, as more and more Europeans appeared on the scene, Samoans began to open up to commercial trading with the Western world, which culminated in the estab-

25 Cf. Meleisea, 9.

26 David Ray Griffin, "Whitehead's Deeply Ecological Worldview," *Worldviews, and Ecology: Religion, Philosophy, and the Environment*, Mary Evelyn Tucker and John A. Grim, eds. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), 190-206. Intrinsic value is "the value that something has *in and for* itself. The only things that are for themselves are, of course, things with experience ... Extrinsic value means any kind of value something has *for anything else*." With specific reference to ecological value (value for sustaining the cycle of life) as the most important dimension of extrinsic value, other forms of value are included, such as companion value, instrumental value, aesthetic value, and medicinal value, besides values of the human being.

27 Rowe, 11.

28 R.L. Stevenson, *Footnote to History* (London: Cassell & Co., Ltd., 1892), 2. Note that 'communism' in the sense Stevenson employs must not be conceptualized in the European understanding. Samoa has a peculiar system shaped by its own distinctive practices of reciprocity and communal sharing.

29 J.B. Stairs, 23. Stairs states that with the arrival of 'spiritual visitors,' Samoans thought that it would be "well to propitiate the gods supposed to be on board by offerings of food."

30 Andrew Sharp, 151.

lishment of the German Trading and Shipping Company of John Caesar Godeffroy in the 1850s.

2.2. Samoan Perceptions and Myths of *Papalagi*

Old mythological perceptions and worldviews slowly faded from the scene given the pervasiveness of Western influence, and evolved into new permutations under the spell of introduced beliefs and ideas. The arrival of the first Europeans saw the beginning of a new living myth that made a profound imprint on religio-cultural convictions. The dawn of another age in the history of Samoa was marked by the arrival of the *papalagi*, and was reinforced by the wide spread of Christianity. Hence, the “God of the men who burst through the heavens”³¹ found a footing in the sacred soil of Samoa and began to be feared.

It is noted also that the appearance of the huge sailing boats which emerged from behind the horizon was deemed a new phenomenological happening that captured the attention and attraction of the islands’ inhabitants. Aarne A. Koskinen records the shocking experiences of the islanders by stating that:

The arrival of the first swimming island, a ship, was an event that had enormous influence on the minds of the natives. The Polynesians had, in fact, also during earlier centuries been accustomed to visitors from other islands, but the arrival of the breakers of the horizon was something quite new.³²

Old Samoan cosmological beliefs which presented a closed-in and bounded worldview had been called into question, thus challenging old as well as new religio-cultural convictions.

The very appearance of the new beings was an event that caused curiosity in the minds of many, while others were filled with doubts and fears. This was because they were convinced that the unearthly region beyond had broken open, and the new gods burst in with their heavenly habitation through the firmament to enter the Samoan world. The belief in the new reality as the revelation of the incarnated gods became effectively accepted. From the frightening experiences of some, the name *papalagi* was presumably given to commemorate the thundering sounds and flash of lightning from the strangers’ guns on their swimming islands.³³

The visit of the *papalagi* altered Samoan indigenous beliefs and ideas about the world and their perceptions of the universe. The strange event was interpreted as a miraculous act of the ancestral deities who inherited the heavenly regions. The Samoan ancestors traditionally believed in the presence of *vaaloo* / *vaa o agaga* (long boats of the spirits) as a revealed transcendent nature of the divine. The Spirits or Gods reveal their presence when

31 George Turner, *Samoa: Nineteen Years in Polynesia* (Apia: Commercial Printers Ltd, 1986), 9f.

32 Aarne A. Koskinen, *Missionary Influence as a Political Factor in the Pacific Islands* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran Kirjapainon Oy, 1952), 23f. This was based on the outlook of the huge ships together with their sails, which is similar to the views of rising trees on the land, etc. It was believed that when the Polynesians (Samoans) saw the first European ship, they called it the *floating island*.

33 Stairs, 24. This is based on Rev. Samuel Ella’s interpretation of the word *papalagi*. From the context of the time and the event, the validity of this idea is affirmed due to the fact that Samoans at this time only experienced thunderstorms and lightning as wonders (or pheophanies) of the heavens.

they travel in their *vaaloo* at night along the horizon. Their visitations were identified by flames and lightning on their long boats while journeying along. This is why fishing around the time of their presence was not a usual practice. It was then a common understanding that humans work during daytime, and the night belongs to the spirits. Hence when lights were seen along the horizon at night, the people would remain silent as the sea is sacred. This understanding contributed to the way they reacted to the arrival of the foreigners coming from the horizon.

John B. Stairs, an LMS missionary, describes the strange visit as “an arrival from the spirit-land (where the Samoans believed that) these people have either burst through the clouds with their ship; or else, lifting them up, they have passed beneath, and come to visit us.”³⁴ The unknown divine mystery which was yet to be revealed was now realized in their historical presence. As a fulfillment of the desire to enter the human world and to personally visit families and relatives, the gods attempted to break open the horizons of the heavenly region, let loose the anchors of their kingdom and sail to the earthly realm. In this way, the *papalagi* were initially looked at as the incarnation of the ancestral Gods,³⁵ which, based on prevailing religious presuppositions, meant that the Gods had revealed themselves in tangible forms and were making visitations to the land of the living.

2.2.1. *The Power of the God of the Papalagi*

The perception of the power of the God of the white man was associated with the overt happenings and wonders of the strange new realities. The sailing islands as well as the strange new beings with material goods were included in the new categorization of God’s power of fertility and blessings. The landing of such strange people on large ships was a mystery, as George Turner describes that even “the ships, the masts, the sails, the boats, the calico, the hatchets, the trinkets, and a host of other things, gave the natives high ideas of the white man’s God.”³⁶ In this encounter, the unfolding cosmological worldviews cast doubts on earlier beliefs about the power of *Tagaloalagi*, the Creator and God of the universe, as well as natural and personal gods. The divine power which functioned traditionally either for blessing or curse, mediated by the *tapu* (taboo) system and enforced by the fear of *mana* (a divine life-giving power), was confronted by the new material power of the God of the white man.

Koskinen, in addition, observes that the sudden breakdown in the beliefs about God and His (sic) power was due to the “observations that no stranger was subject to the omnipotent power of the *tapu*-system.”³⁷ Overwhelmed with technical wonders, materials, and the magical powers of guns that killed human beings and destroyed properties,³⁸ the is-

34 Stairs, 23.

35 Cf. Malama Meleisea, *Lalaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, 42f. The people of Manua were shocked with the strange visit, but they received the strangers in peace and offered them food and drinks for their voyage. Part of the Samoan ancestral worship was the offering of food and drinks to their deities.

36 Turner, 9.

37 Koskinen, 23.

38 It was the idea of the newcomers and even the missionaries to keep weapons such as firearms in their ships for the sake of protection. The fear of danger from the natives was the reason behind their readiness to resort to the use of such weapons. The use of firearms was also taken as convincing proof of the white man’s superiority, and

landers gradually came to believe that the *mana* of these people was much more powerful than theirs. The islanders assumed that all which had been revealed anew to their sight was attributed to the power of the God of the white man.

Thus, power was associated with knowledge, vis-a-vis, technical knowledge. This was evident in the statement of Fauea, the first native convert, who commented to his local people, as recorded by the pioneer missionary to Samoa, John Williams, the following remarks:

‘Can the religion of these wonderful *papalangis* be anything but wise and good?’ said our friend to his naked countrymen, who by this time had filled the deck, and who with outstretched necks and gaping mouths, were eagerly catching the words as they fell from his lips: ‘Let us look at them, and then look at ourselves; their heads are covered, while ours are exposed to the heat of the sun, and the wet of the rain; their bodies are clothed all over with beautiful cloth, while we have nothing but a bandage of leaves around our waist; they have clothes upon their very feet, while ours are like the dogs; – and then look at their axes, their scissors, and their other property, how rich they are!’³⁹

These frequently quoted words have unfortunately often been taken without serious consideration. Considering the time in which the statement was written, one wonders at how John Williams could understand the language of the people so well in such a short time, unless Fauea translated what he might have been told by the missionary to say.

Our point here is that the very appearance of Europeans precipitated major cultural and religious changes in the Samoan society. Social influences played a great role in convincing them that the God of the white man was more powerful than traditional Gods. This is affirmed by the conviction of Fauea, who himself believed that bringing the great new God of prosperity and peace was the objective of John Williams and the missionaries in coming to Samoa.⁴⁰ Furthermore, being associated with the white missionaries elevated his own status as a *matai*.

The belittlement of the power of indigenous Gods, either by the natives through their own understanding based on new experiences or by the foreigners, is a matter of endless discussion. To a certain extent, the convictions about the power of the newly arrived God were determined and stimulated by the deductive experiences of materialist-capitalist scientific mind.

2.2.2. *Deficiencies of the God of the Papalagi*

Even though the understandings about the creative and miraculous power of the God of the *papalagi* were implanted in the minds of the islanders, the islanders themselves had certain contrary perceptions about the new deities. The explorers, as mentioned earlier, ar-

the might of his God. Killing people from a distance, with a flash of lightning and claps of thunder was a miracle. This was a magical experience which could not be explained by the natives’ minds or even their religion.

39 John Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises*, 86.

40 Williams, 124.

rived with unfavourable diseases, accompanied by their incomprehensible attitudes. They were followed by castaways, escaped convicts, and shipwrecks which were mostly abandoned by sailing crews because of diseases or desperate convicts. The harmful effect of diseases,⁴¹ the use of firearms to destroy properties such as sanctuaries and houses, and to kill or injure many people in a short time were considered as part of the wrath of the gods. The incidence of death through gunfire was enormous as compared to the numbers of those killed in tribal warfare. All of these negative experiences were perceived as destructive acts of the Supernatural.

Thomas Trood recalls events told by an old Samoan man concerning how the Samoans reacted to sailing ships. He said, "Every vessel appearing in the distance was called Tuti's (Captain Cook's) ship. They were regarded as belonging to and managed by demons, of whom Tuti was the head."⁴² Additionally, the old man presented an account of his countrymen being shot down like dogs in most cases when found thieving. This was seen by the old man as an "outrageous perversion of justice."⁴³ The islanders also perceived the new beings as cannibals of an extreme type or man-eaters, due to their slaughtered animals which looked like human flesh, and were seen hanging on steamboats.⁴⁴

The lack of food supplies and the experiences of new kinds of diseases were also interpreted as being transmitted by the strange visitors. The God of the newcomers was blamed as the cause of famine, either through plant diseases or destruction by droughts and hurricanes. The widespread incidence of dangerous sicknesses, causing death in great numbers, was a new and unnatural experience.

Drawing upon the oldest anthropological notes, one notes that the appearance of a *vaa so'a i'a o Papalagi* (literally, the fish hitting or fetching ships of the white men) would cause the Samoans to be fearful and immediately proceed to seek refuge and protection through the performance of a religious ritual called *Matigi*,⁴⁵ (literally, the chasing away of evil spirits). Turner also records a fearful scene in which a Samoan priest, a *matai*, was offering a prayer around a fire to the household deities before the evening meal, interced-

41 Cf. L. Mander, *Some Dependent Peoples of the South Pacific* (Amsterdam: J. Brill, 1954), 106. Mander states that the attempt to develop an efficient health policy for the Samoans took a long time, as the people were convinced that health and diseases are life forces related to spirits which must be propitiated by appropriate ceremonies. Sickness and accident were explained by supernatural rather by natural causes.

42 Thomas Trood, *Samoa: Island Reminiscences* (Sydney: n.a. 1912), 37.

43 Trood, 37. This is a good example of the difference in understanding. What is understood as 'thieving' by the foreigners is 'sharing' in the old traditional understanding. This of course changed as the new understanding superceded.

44 Stairs, 24.

45 Quoted from the *Scattered Writings on Samoan – Anthropology*, entitled: *O Tapuaiga Fa'apaupau* or Pagan Religions of the Samoans. (Box of scattered materials available at the Archive of the London Missionary Society, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London) – unknown author and date. Translated from the Samoan writings. It is said that when a huge ship was seen, all able men and women of the village were immediately ordered to go out fishing. The fish from the catch would be tied to strings (part of certain plants), and hung on trees lining the beach. When it was evening, they would light fires and offer prayers (translated later). The principal belief behind the ritual is that, when the demons (spirit-land Gods) saw these *matigi* (decayed fish) and breathed their bad smell, they would not be able to come inland, but rather, would be afraid and return to where they came from.

ingly praying: “Drive away from us sailing gods, lest they come and cause disease and death.”⁴⁶ In another evening intercession of an old chief, he prayed:

<i>O le faamalama lenei ia te oe Moso</i> ⁴⁷	Here is light for you Moso
<i>O le faamalama lenei ia te oe Salevao</i>	Here is light for you Salevao
<i>Ia outou alolofa mai ia tei matou,</i>	Have mercy and be gracious to us
<i>Ma ia faamanuia mai.</i>	Bless us
<i>Ia foai mai ni a matou mea e ai.</i>	May you provide us food
<i>Ia matou malolo lelei</i>	And may we find peace
<i>Ia outou faamanuia mai</i>	Bless us
<i>Ma faamamalu mai ia te i matou.</i>	And protect us all
<i>I lenei po</i>	In this night
<i>Ma aso uma o lo matou ola.</i>	And all the days of our lives.
<i>I le moe ma le savali</i>	In our sleep and walking
<i>I le nofo ma le taoto.</i>	In sitting and lying down
<i>A faapea e i ai ni mala</i>	If there are disasters,
<i>ma ni faama'i,</i>	and diseases
<i>Ia outou aveina i aiga e toatele,</i>	May you cast them upon big
<i>ma le uluola</i>	and crowded families. ⁴⁸

The prayer reveals the simplicity of life and human demands. The provision of food was the only essential demand, which Samoans thought of as, above all, a means of attaining peace. Seeking divine mercy for protection from all the dangers of daily life activities was natural. In addition, the prayer discloses the inner urge for the assurance of God's presence in all walks of life, such as in sleeping, walking, sitting, lying down, and so on. Fears of diseases and disasters are also expressed. For the maintenance of family or societal relationships, worship and sacrifices were offered as a sanction from disasters and diseases. In relation to the frightening experiences from the sailing gods, Samoans interceded on their behalf to sail to other settlements where the population was greater.

2.3. New Religious Convictions and Changing Worldviews

Traditional worldviews and cosmological conceptions, as we have seen, were challenged by the myth of the arriving gods. Samoans, at the outset of these encounters, had entered into the process of religio-cultural erosion, yet at the same time, had begun to adjust and adapt to the new form of civilization which has been progressively carried down to the present.

The eagerness for a new religion was greatly felt during the first half of the nineteenth

46 George Turner, *Samoa: A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before*, ix.

47 The names of family Gods were called upon for protection and blessings. Each family prayed to their own God. To name a few, for example: *Moso*, *Salevao*, *Togo*, and so forth.

48 A prayer in Samoan quoted from the scattered anthropological notes. SOAS, London University. Note that the term *fa'amalama* was used to define the Samoan religion. The same word refers to *light* or *fire*. The term is used today to mean window, transparent, or to enlighten. Translated into English by the author.

century, as more and more *papalagi* appeared on the Samoan scene. This was promoted by the curiosity to understand the content of the religious faith of the white men, which was assumed to be appealing to certain inner urges. The reluctant attitudes and the limited interests in the foreign goods had been replaced by the quest for and constant wishes to possess foreign materials. Some of these materials were convenient for social development and growth, while others were only for human gratification and for the elevation of status.

Attitudes towards these life changes, and basic to the attitudinal instinct or Samoan manner, as Charles Barff, an LMS missionary described, was “a kind of careless (indirect) contentment (that) was depicted in all their countenances.”⁴⁹ However, the assortment of the possessions of the foreigners that had reached the shores of Samoa in their sailing ships gradually became the central focus of interest. This interest was largely in things that were perceived to be useful, such as axes, chisels, knives, and most of all in muskets, the initially introduced goods.⁵⁰

It was apparent that a chief who had good relations and familiarity with the newcomers (mostly castaways) would gain more understanding of the religion of the white man, have access to his material goods, become autonomous in status and power through the aid of weapons, and would be well versed with the industrial knowledge in the manufacturing of certain valuable items. Speaking the language of the *papalagi* or even receiving a foreign name and copying his/her lifestyle were newly incorporated characteristics which were injected into the indigenous religio-cultural heritage. J.D. Freedman summarises this transitional form of change by stating: “The white man had become a prodigy to be courted, and his possessions longed-for marvels.”⁵¹

Key shifting realities, in short, were shaping the social and ideological world of Samoans. They informed a gradual change from an organic form of community to a mechanistic-oriented type of society. These shifting realities were influenced greatly by changing religious conceptions, which then contributed to the development of a new religious worldview. Some of these conceptions may have been forgotten while others have been constantly professed and cultivated by the Church throughout her historical existence.

In order to systematize this process, it is necessary to revisit the transitions, from the Samoan warfare cult, to the influential presence of the *papalagi* (mostly the runaway sailors), and the cult founded by a native Samoan. These were among the major determining events that not only confronted the Christian Mission and its formal theological formulations, but which also contained some elements which were ecologically harmful.

2.3.1. *The Samoan Warrior Cult*

The warfares of the Samoans in the past were carried out in great politeness. Prior to the slaughtering activity, the parties involved engaged in exchanges of respect sealed by the

49 Charles Barff, *JPS-LMS*, 1830.

50 J.D. Freedman, “The Joe Gimblet or Siovili Cult: An Episode in the Religious History of Early Samoa,” reprinted from: *Anthropology in the South Seas* (1959), 185-200.

51 Freedman, 186.

ava drinking ceremony, and the exchange of food when they returned to camp. The use of *ava* here indicates that traditional warfare was ceremonially ordained.

It is stated in one tradition that when a war broke out between rival parties, two chiefs went into the forest to consult the war gods. Arriving at the sacred place which was believed to be inhabited by the warfare deity, one of the chiefs sat silently in front of the grove of trees while the other went around behind. This man must cover all his body with leaves except a hole left for his eyes to see. The place must be kept clean and clear from fallen leaves, so that all the stones in the place must be seen. This was due to the belief that the *god was in the stones*. When the chiefs observed that the stones were unusually far apart and appeared separated from each other, the party would be exempted from going to war, for that was a sign of fallen-apartness, brokenness and banishment. It signified that the party was not of one heart. Otherwise, if the stones were gathered in a usual manner, this indicated victory and strength. It signified union and oneness of hearts.⁵²

The warfare of Samoans has been viewed by foreigners as a barbarous activity with great bloodshed. The loss of lives and the destruction of human habitations and resources of nature such as fruit trees is evident. The destruction of settlements and localities was an inescapable form of conferring pain and suffering on humanity. Nevertheless, Samoans understood warfare as a religio-cultural engagement that operated upon the idea of sacrifice and the reestablishment of new forms and orders of relationships. The necessity for honorary recognition, loyalty and pride in one's own divine-relational roots, which depend on association with the gods, ancestral spirits, chiefly titles and settlements (including the land, sea, and the atmospheric space) were the foremost characteristics of traditional Samoan hostilities in the past.

George Turner recalls this reality when he notes that wars were frequently caused by incidents such as "the murder of a chief, a disputed title, or a desire on the part of one, two, or more of the districts, to be considered stronger and of more importance than the rest."⁵³ Closely linked to these human reasons were matters related to land settlements,⁵⁴ even violating taboos which are related to the land and the sea, or performing an act that hurts the pride of others.⁵⁵

It must be observed that any notion of military conquest over people and land is rarely observed in the conception of traditional warfare, except in cases of payments for heroes who offered assistance in battle.⁵⁶ Moreover, in indigenous warfare there was an intimate

52 See Robert W. Williamson, *Religion and Social Organization in Central Polynesia*, Ralph Piddington, ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 1937), 42.

53 George Turner, *A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before*, 189.

54 An example is when one family claimed their right of control over a *tulaga-maota* (inherited ground associated with a chiefly title) which others believed they owned, or a village claiming lands that belong to another village. This is shared by societies which are intimately tied to the *fanua* (land and sea).

55 Even the cutting of almost all the leaves of a coconut tree (leaving a few), for example, is a cause of fights and conflicts among Samoans. To a Samoan interpretation, cutting leaves in such a manner is just like cutting off one's head.

56 See J.E. Newell, *Old Anthropological Writings: Notes on Names and Titles of Samoan Chiefs and Kings*, SOAS, University of London. It must be noted here that there were no *kings* in old Samoa, rather, sacred or paramount chiefs were honoured. The concept of king was newly introduced when the *papalagi* arrived. But one historical example is the perpetual *matupalapala* (a religio-cultural gift of inheritance) bestowed to the sacred chiefly title Tofaeono, where in any ceremonial occasion in certain districts of Samoa, a place of honour is freely offered due

relationship of the gods, trees, stones, leaves, the place, as well as the people. Human interconnection with the gods through other parts of the created world determined and influenced their very destinies.

2.3.2. *Runaway Sailors' Cult*

The presence of runaway sailors (or runaway convicts as missionaries labelled them) in the islands of Oceania, and their involvement in the traditional warfare of Samoans, was a phenomenon that further contributed to the new reality of change. Although these men were criminals of an extreme type, the fact that some of the runaway sailors offered valuable assistance to Samoan society and to the missionary work must be acknowledged. Some of them entered into Samoan society through marriages, introduced useful skills to village social and economic life, gave valuable advice to chiefs in terms of trading with Europeans, and so on. Some of these men became evangelists themselves, helpers of the missionary work, and acted as translators for the missionaries, although their knowledge of the local language was limited.⁵⁷

However, the runaway sailors and their sectarian establishments were condemned and became the most hated enemies of the missionaries.⁵⁸ From the nature of their being cast away, be that for positive or negative reasons, they were initially labelled as castaway men and later on called by the Samoans 'runaway sailors,' due to their immoral lifestyles which included the rape of women, especially the wives of the chiefs, destruction of chiefly habitations (some of which were centres of societal life), thieving and running away.⁵⁹ The murderous identifications of these men were associated with their possession of blunderbuss and small casks of powder which could blow human bodies into pieces and wound many in a short time.⁶⁰

These "ungrateful wretches," wrote John Williams, subsequently "reached the Navigators' Islands (Samoa), where they entered, with savage delight, into the wars of the natives; and having fire-arms and powder, every vengeance suffered them not to live..."⁶¹ Inheriting high status beside the chiefs, who favoured and affiliated with them, most of these men became the stronghold behind the power of chiefs in warfare.

It is apparent here that the indigenous spirit worship and the divine-dependence dimensions of the warfare-cult gradually became less popular and, according to Turner, it became the "fashion (of the time) to have a foreign religion."⁶² Traditional priests who prayed for victory were needed no more. The function of the chiefs and the priests in com-

to the heroic expertise and offer of assistance in warfares. Kingship was an introduced concept that is implied to be above or sometimes an assimilation of paramount chiefs' statuses. To avert this misunderstanding, the term *alii paia* (sacred chief) is well used and recognised.

57 See D. Pitt, *Tradition and Economic Progress in Samoa*, 16.

58 Two of these men had helped John Williams in the translation of some songs of Siovili, besides acting as mediators between Samoans and the missionaries at their initial arrival.

59 See Lalomilo Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel* (Apia: Methodist Printing Press, 1996). Cf. Sharon W. Tiffany, "The Politics of Denominational Organisation in Samoa," *Mission, Church and Sect in Oceania*, James A. Boutilier, ed. (Lanham: University Press of America, 1978), 427.

60 Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises*, 120.

61 Williams, 120.

62 Turner, *Samoa: Nineteen Years in Polynesia* (Apia: Commercial Printers Ltd., 1986), 11.

munal worship slowly dissolved, as the power of the new order of priests (the ones who did not know God or may have a limited knowledge of God) superseded the power of the traditional priesthood.

Hence, besides obtaining a foreign religion, having a white man on one's side was a stimulating force in elevating one's social and political importance. In addition, adopting a white 'son' would consequently lead to the setting up of the foreign religion, as it had already been assumed that the religion of white men must be all the same. With the understanding that any white man could set up this religion, a chief "would urge his adopted white son to be the high-priest of his family and district."⁶³

This was how the foreign religion was introduced and integrated into the Samoan religio-cultural life. The power of the white man penetrated every aspect of Samoan life. Although the sect which grew up around the runaway sailors was considered a minority group, their influence on Samoan society was great. Central places in some villages were set up whereby people from neighboring villages were invited to come together in worship and celebrations. This accelerated the spread and the preaching of the cult.

2.3.2.1. Theological Teachings

The theological teachings of the runaway sailors have not been recorded in any written documents. This may be due to the scatteredness of the foreign religions, the adopted priests having no formal theological education, the lack of writing materials and so forth. We will attempt to construct and interpret, in a summary form, the theological worldview of the runaway sailors from some of the fragmented pieces of materials which are made available from the writings of the missionaries. Attention will be directed to the understanding of God, the theological concepts surrounding the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and some related thinking about Creation and Salvation. These theological concepts, although casual and informal, became convincing and accepted by the adherents without any critical inquiries.

2.3.2.1.1. The Understanding of God

The runaway sailors' sect emphasized the idea that the God they proclaimed was good while the Gods of the Samoans were bad. John Williams, after approaching some preachers of the sect, stated the pious claim of one of them: "Why, Sir, I goes about and talks to the people and tells 'em that our God is good, and theirs is bad; and when they listen to me, I makes 'em religion ..."⁶⁴

To 'make Samoans religion' is a very mechanical expression. It conveys the sense that religion could be manufactured and imposed, rather than being something that is naturally experienced by people, who conceived of their lifeway as religious in itself.⁶⁵ Whether the

⁶³ Turner, 9.

⁶⁴ Williams, 86. Cf. Turner, *Samoa: Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, 9-13.

⁶⁵ Unlike the Western understanding and classification of religion, it is difficult to draw a demarcation line between religion and culture in the Samoan way of thinking. Dualistic conceptions of religion do not fit into the indigenous wholistic understanding of life.

understanding of God was based on the words of the foreign books, be it a Bible or any bound bundle of papers, read and spoken in a foreign language which the followers did not understand,⁶⁶ the idea of the new God being a good God became fixed in the minds of the followers. This understanding of God was made more appealing in and through good affiliations, visitations and praying for the sick.

The good God, according to the preaching of the sect, welcomed all – good or bad, righteous or sinful people. Although there is no indication of the gracious attribute of the Divine here, it appears from the method of invitation to join in the new religion that the sailors had been consciously or unconsciously aware of God as a God of love, who would receive the innocent, unknowledgeable, and sinners who were still in their heathen state, through God's boundless mercy. The good God accepted all who have faith and who abolished the bad Gods by eating their spirit-incarnated Gods or family deities. By overcoming the God-eating challenges, some adherents thought that the foreign God was more powerful and the One who could give longer life. This understanding of God of the run-away sailors was influenced not only by their engagements in the new religion, but by some mysterious conversion experiences.

2.3.2.1.2. Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Communion

The myth of commemoration of the new religious age was marked and carried out through the performance of the rituals of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, in which the eradication of Gods or divine guardians of the settlements (nature gods) was the prior condition. The act was a sign of conversion and the willingness of the so-called heathen mind to enter into and be a participant in the new religious fashion. Baptism was selectively carried out.

John Williams recalls a statement of one of the leaders of the sect concerning how they accomplished the rite of Baptism, as follows:

'Sure, I exclaimed, you baptise them do you?' 'How do you perform that?' 'Why Sir,' he answered, 'I takes water, and tips my hands in it, and cross them in their foreheads and in their breasts, and then I reads a bit of prayer to 'em in English.' 'Of course,' I said, 'they understand you.' 'No,' he rejoined, 'but they says they knows it does them good.'⁶⁷

The rite seems to have been accepted and received by the new believers due to its foreignness in nature. Water symbolism is also noted as one of the important elements of the ritual. Even though baptism was received in a comfortable manner, one can clearly interpret that the Samoans joined in the act due to personal reasons, if not the persuasion of the Holy Spirit.

66 Turner, 11. One of the examples given here is a story told by a follower of the foreigner's religion, which states: "Our great time for worship was once a year. Every day, during the whole month, we met with the white man. He sang, and we tried to catch his words and follow him; but it was in a foreign language. He read from a foreign book; we did not know a word of it. We all bowed down on our knees, ... and prayed for a few seconds, all still in an unknown tongue."

67 Williams, 421.

The sect did not place many restrictions on acts such as polygamy, night-dances, and other so-called heathen practices. The dipping of the hands in the water and the crossing over the forehead and the breasts somehow placed emphasis on religious identification, rather than on a set of demands for social or cultural suppression. Presumably, any understanding of baptism as a sign of inner repentance and a break from the sinful past to begin a new life was not greatly affirmed by the adherents. The emphasis was generally more on joining in the fashion and being baptized as a means of feeling good.

The observance of the Lord's Supper was carried out by the runaway sailor's sect, although the adherents did not know what it meant. On a certain Sunday of the month of annual communal gatherings and feasting, a special worship service was held in which, according to Turner, "... little bits of Taro, and a sip of cocoa-nut water"⁶⁸ were offered to those who were admitted, namely, "the chiefs and heads of families and their wives."⁶⁹

The attempt to indigenize the elements of the Lord's Supper reveals not only the basic sacramental understandings of the Christian tradition held by the sectarian leaders, but also their creativity in the way of employing local elements. The blessings of the land, above all, were seen as gifts of grace which demand distribution and sharing. Thus, the sacrament was spontaneously administered and freely received without understanding its real meaning. On the other hand, the sense of fellowship in the celebration, and the distinction of the society between old and the young was clear. This indicates that the receiving of the gifts of grace was something that requires personal status, age, and a bit of knowledge.

2.3.2.1.3. Creation and Salvation

No theological teaching on Creation and Salvation is found in the proclamations of the sect. Discovering certain tendencies related to these concepts requires one to analyse their thought forms in the light of their understanding of God, as well as the nature of their mission in the context of change. On the one hand, their distinction between the good and bad Gods presupposes the Divine as a source of all good providence, which to a large extent was thought to be manifested in the foreign material goods. God was thus understood in terms of a transcendent power behind all material blessings and success in temporal living encounters. The goodness of God was revealed in good human merit and represented by the material richness of the followers and the superiority of technology.

The emphasis on human salvation is vividly expressed in this respect, whereas creation appears to be recognized only through the process of forming new spiritual human beings. In this sense, creation was limited only to the sphere of humans, neglecting other parts of the created world. Hence, the attainment of foreign means to serve and fulfill physical demands was regarded as a way of saving Samoans from the bondage of association with a cyclical-structured and stagnant form of indigenous life.

⁶⁸ Turner, 12.

⁶⁹ Turner, 12f.

2.3.3. *Siovili or the Joe Gimblet*⁷⁰ Cult

This religious cult was named after the founder, Siovili, who is also known as Joe Gimblet, as the early missionaries called him. Being brought up in the village of Eva,⁷¹ in the Atua district on the island of Upolu, Siovili was assumed to inherit some form of oratory or charismatic gifts, which naturally equipped him with the Samoan knowledge of rendering *tautua* (service) to the chiefs and his community. There is also an assumption that he was a *taula aitu* (priest or spirit medium) before wandering to Tonga, and to the wider world.⁷² Some of his followers believed that Siovili visited other places like Botany Bay, Britian, the world of the white man's God Jehovah, and beyond to heaven itself, based on their interpretation of the content of a song which he composed himself (ref. App.ii).⁷³

The composition of the song reveals the oceanic wandering experiences of Siovili, together with the expressions of his excitement in foreign scenes. It also reveals that his understanding of God was centred on God's transcendence and providential nature. For him, God ruled as a king in heaven, the beautiful place of the white man, and Jehovah was the possessor and disposer of all the good things he had seen and experienced. The heaven to which Siovili refers is simply the land of the white man. Siovili was convinced that he had reached heaven, a land where the living water was found, ruled by the Governor, and a place where the king Jehovah sovereignly ruled in compassion. Such a place, as the chorus of the song *Ulai! Ulai!* (see append.) connotes, is the land of the blue beads which the Samoans at times had great desires to obtain.⁷⁴ The strings of blue beads or necklaces were symbols of the *papalagi's* material possessions.

Another composition of the Lords of the songs, as Siovili referred to chief Teoneula and himself on their journey to the otherly world, states:

*Na afio mai Sua Vili
Se Manuao e tu mai gatai
Ma le knifey ma le pulu fana
Sulusulu fai atu le fia ola
Aumai ai lo tatou lofa Iuli*

Behold Joe Vili comes
A man of war will present itself on the vaa
With knives and muskets-balls and ramrods
Run in haste to be saved
He will bring for us blue beads

70 See Aaron Buzacott, *JPS – LMS* (1866): 127. The name *Sio* – Joe; and *Vili* – to drill, was a nickname given to the Samoan by his fellow sailing crew due to the nature of his work on the ship. The missionary Aaron Buzacott stated that the name was given to him because of his expertise in the use of *vili* (to drill). Joe Gimblet is the name which was translated and generally used by the missionaries.

71 John Williams, *JSS – LMS* (1832).

72 Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesian*, 200. See also, John Williams, "Cook Islands-Rarotonga to Navigator's Island: In the Olive Branch," *JSS 1832-1833*, Microfilm No. 1637 (1978), SOAS – University of London. From Tonga, Siovili travelled to the Society Islands on a trading vessel of Captain Samuel Henry, a son of one of the pioneering missionaries to Tahiti. It is believed that Siovili spent a couple of years in the Society Islands, and then continued on to New South Wales on a trading vessel of the same company, before his return to Samoa, bringing *vai o le ola* (living water) to his home village.

73 Williams, *JSS (1832-1833)*: 10f. Cf. J. Freedman, *The Joe Gimlet or the Siovili Cult*, 188, (English translation only). There are some of the verses which need a correct rendering in relation to the Samoan understanding and conceptions. See also some variations and conceptual renderings by Richard M. Moyle, ed. *The Samoan Journals of John Williams 1830 and 1832* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1984), 110ff.

74 Freedman, 188f.

The attractions of new cultural and religious settings were instrumental in the process of Siovili's transformation and the grounding of his new religious convictions. As noted, he arrived in Tonga when the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries had already been there, and at the Society Islands at the time when the "Mamaia Cult"⁷⁶ was prominent and widely practised by the inhabitants.

The Mamaia Cult, according to J.M. Orsmond, one of the pioneering LMS missionaries in Tahiti, was a visionary or prophetic movement that emphasized the "belief in fallen spirits,"⁷⁷ which at the same time involved the buying and selling of future spirits. In his journal, he writes: "I found that they had made some arrangements for the future buying and selling of spirits. It seems that now, the Queen must buy all, and all whom she authorizes to sell must buy of her ..."⁷⁸

Against some of the teachings of the Church, the Mamaians accused the missionaries of being "all liars inasmuch as that they state that the Lord never dies." Hence, they claim that "hell fire is figurative, not real, (and had been convinced that) ... men ought to eat twice, drink abundantly (twice), take two wives they long for, that the land may be full of people."⁷⁹ As an anti-missionary movement, they rejected financial contributions to the Mission Society, prayed for the abolishment of all the mission institutions, and strongly demanded all the missionaries to leave the islands. As a heresy, in the view of the missionaries, the movement was called *Mamaia*, which in the native Tahitian tongue means rotten fruit, meaningless and nonsense.⁸⁰

Being acquainted with the knowledge of Jehovah, the God of the new heaven, and being influenced by *Mamaia*, Siovili thought of himself as the one who was sent to relate the 'good news.' Writing on this charismatic leader and the emerging cult, Elia Taase, following certain statements of Freedman, states that:

75 Williams, *JSS (1832-1833)*. There are some corrections which ought to be made to the translation of the song given by the two Englishmen to J. Williams. First, the second verse: *Se Manuao e tu mai gatai*, does not mean: "A man of war will present itself on the *vaa* (ship);" rather, it should be: "The *Manuao* (warship) has anchored on shore." The English verse would be reversely interpreted in the sense that the man of war is an island inhabitant who is coming on the ship. This rendering is affirmed by stanza 4, which refers to the running in haste to seek refuge from bullets and knives, which were kept for the security of sailing crews. Author's revision.

76 See Freedman, 189. The Mamaia Cult was an off-shoot of Christianity which emerged out of the native Church of Tahiti and then spread to other islands. It was also known to be a Prophetical Movement, and was called by the missionaries a *visionary heresy*, with her adherents a sort of *wild Antinomians*.

77 J.M. Orsmond, "Tahiti," *JSS (1832-1833)*, Microfilm No. 1632, SOAS: University of London, 1978.

78 Orsmond, "Tahiti," A prominent leader of the movement, Teau, was said to be possessed by the spirits, and during the times of inspiration, to become truly God. Thus, his seeing of visions and hearing of mysterious voices contributed to the conversion of the adherents, who then devoted themselves to become "variously possessed by the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, Saint John and Saint Paul – as well as by Oro and Tane, and other of the old Tahitian Gods." Believing in the immediate end of all things, they believed that when the millennium age arrives, heaven will be inhabited by the faithful with their renewed and infinite humanity that is boundless to eternal life.

79 Orsmond, "Tahiti."

80 Freedman, 190f.

The Samoans, especially his people at Eva, regarded Siovili as a hero. His wandering has taken him beyond the horizon into heaven itself, the heaven of the white man. Now he returned home with a deep understanding of how the Europeans lived, and as such was recognized as a leader who possessed the keys to the power of the white man. With these qualifications achieved, Siovili heralded his new religion. The final proof of his power was issued in his teachings.⁸¹

One can conclude from the previous discussion that Siovili's visitation to the other worlds had greatly influenced his religious conviction and his worldviews. For him, the world of the white man was much more beautiful and fascinating than his own, and he undoubtedly thought that the remarkable scenes he witnessed were the consequence of the creative power of the God of these people.

2.3.3.1. Theological Formulations

Besides his theological teachings, Siovili managed to incorporate some aspects of the new religion with the religio-cultural form of indigenous worship. Notable in Siovili's creativity was his attempt to bring religion to the people and for the people to feel that they were an active part of it. For example, worship took place in the meeting houses of the villages and sometimes in the *malae*, using the former arts and symbols to portray the message. As an evangelist, Siovili went from place to place to carry out his ministry. Operating within the framework of respect for the chiefly system and the communal way of life, Siovili gained enormous public attention. The theological formulation of the cult proved the claims of the followers that their semi-heathenism was the true religion, founded by Siovili, the first indigenous Christian theologian.

2.3.3.1.1. Understanding of the Godhead

Siovili felt that God could be made known through the words of any English book, and his missionary work, together with almost all of his teachings, was based on this assumption. In the founding of the cult, Siovili proclaimed Jehovah and Jesus as God, also known as "God of Heaven."⁸² The adherents, believing that this religion originated from the distant land where Jehovah was known and had inspired their leader with the knowledge of both Jehovah and Jesus, recognized Siovili as a spiritual medium through which the direct revelation of the Godhead had been communicated. Siovili was considered a spirit mediator who, at the moment of inspiration, was perceived as the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. Every follower must accept what he said, for it was seen as the absolute revelation.⁸³

81 Elia Taase, "Beyond Samoan Christianity," 50. Cf. Freedman, 187f.

82 George Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, 12. Cf. Freedmann, 190f. Reporting on one of the occasions, it was noted that "He (Siovili) would stand up with an English book before his face, pretend to be reading, mutter off some unintelligible jargon, talk a little on any subject, and pray, naming the God of heaven."

83 See J.B. Stairs, *Old Samoa*, 223. The conception of the absolute revelation contains some overtones of the traditional worship and their understanding of the role of the *Taula Aitu* – the priest or the spirit mediator. According

As the religious movement developed further, a form of *Magic-Touch-Christology* emerged out of the conviction that “the Son of God is among them, dwelling in the body of an old woman, and that whenever she is pleased, she could tell them the true mind and sayings of Jesus Christ, or *Seesoo Alaisah*.”⁸⁴ The reality of the presence of Jesus Christ was made known through the process of touch-healing, where the woman who performed the curing process claimed that Christ came in person to her house from the bush in the dark. Being identically fused with him, the sick would be healed when touched by her. The results of the healing activity were promising, and many decided to join in order to be touched.

2.3.3.1.2. Eschatological Perspective

Above all theological expositions of Siovili, the teaching about the millennium gained prominence. Siovili, after a vision of the coming reign of Christ, proclaimed that all should be prepared for the last days as they were at hand. While anticipating the day of *Seesoo Alaisah*’s coming, the people were ordered to go and weed the gravesites, as the dead were to be raised, and would like to see all tidy. The taro plants and bananas were to be destroyed, and animals such as pigs were to be killed and cooked. The desire for food would be no more as *Seesoo Alaisah* would provide an abundance of food sent down from heaven, after everything on earth was consumed by fire.⁸⁵ *Seesoo Alaisah* was the Son of God who would appear on a certain day, and would be seen walking or sliding from the sea on the top of the waves.

The expectations of adherents at this time was high. Some people had mixed feelings. Others waited with excitement and fear, while some made jokes about it. Food preparation amounted to great heaps, which, after the appointed day of coming was called off, was wasted and thrown away. People waited and gazed out to sea for several days, but *Seesoo Alaisah* never came. When the followers began to have doubts, the old woman made another announcement that Jesus Christ was angry because people had made jokes. Therefore, Jesus Christ had postponed his coming to some other day when it pleased him.⁸⁶

The prophecy of the last day was accompanied by promises of material blessings and pleasures in life. However, it left people disappointed, although some still believed and waited. Above all, the followers of Siovili set out to replant their plantations as they were conscious of the fact that food, after all, needs to be eaten while waiting for the *Seesoo Alaisah* who will appear some other day.

to J.B. Stairs, there was a certain time that the god was supposed to enter into the priest in order “to answer inquiries or to deliver demands.” When possessed, “his/her body underwent violent contortions, after which, in loud, unearthly tones, the visitor from the land of spirits was heard announcing his/her approach ...” This aspect might have taken up and revived by Siovili himself.

84 Turner, 12 f. In the description of the healing process, Turner states that a house was partitioned by a native cloth that was hung up at the corner. A patient would come and sit on one side of it, and then a cold hand came over the top of it and touched the diseased part of the body. The name *Seesoo Alaisah*, as Siovili discovered, might follow the pronunciation of the name Jesus Christ. But John Williams spelled the last name with a ‘h’ at the end. Since it is not a normal practice to end a word with ‘h’ in the Samoan language, there is a possibility that the consonant ‘h’ was put there for pronunciation.

85 Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, 13 f.

86 Turner, 14.

2.3.3.1.3. Creation and Salvation

Creation and salvation are not clearly exposed by Siovili. He refers to the God of Great Britain as Creator God. The Creator God is abstract and distant from Samoa. Being aware that there are other lands beyond his former parochial worldview, Siovili was convinced that the God who had created foreign worlds provided a great many wondrous things, and was definitely most powerful and majestic. Regarding salvation, although Siovili preached Jesus Christ's death on earth, the emphasis was on saving human souls at the expense of saving the natural world. Some tendencies toward a concept of existential liberation are presented but limited to humankind, which depicts a kind of privatistic salvation.

The eschatological understanding of Siovinism has some similarities with Christian concepts such as the appearance of the Son of Man and the eschatological time of consummation of all of God's creation. In addition, one can view ideas such as the appearance from the sea, sliding on the top of waves, and the destruction of everything on earth by fire as a way of proclaiming the lordship of the coming One. This lordship is realized in His (sic) power that transcends everything on earth.

In some sense, creation in the context of lordship is considered a property owned and given by God. One can see that the emphasis on power correlates with death and destruction. Everything at the end time will be cleared away and a new form of life on earth is welcomed, wherein people were to be nourished by foods from heaven. This is an idealization of hope which has always endangered humanity. The perception of reality as evil, polluted, and therefore needing to be destroyed has usually been shaped and mobilized by the ideology of heavenly richness and divine providence.

2.4. Arrival of the New *Lotu*

The arrival of Christianity in Samoa marks a new epoch in the religio-cultural heritage of Samoa. Its arrival and reception is signified by the traditional concept *taeao*. *Taeao* can literally be translated as morning or tomorrow. The concept significantly refers to not only the opportune time but also the occasion and its religio-cultural officiation. *Taeao* not only refers to *aso* (day/s or time), but it also includes *le mea na tupu ai* (eventual happening),⁸⁷ the *malae*, an affirmation by the decision of the *fono a matai*, and is sealed by the religious ceremony of *ava* drinking, as well as celebration through feasting.⁸⁸

87 For example, the arrival of the missionaries of the London Missionary Society on 23 August, 1830 is commemorated as an opportune time when the Gospel of Light was officially accepted by Samoans. It marks the beginning of a new religious era and the history of Samoa.

88 In occasional ceremonies, such as the acceptance of the new religion, the *matai*, through expressions of opinions in formal speeches, corporately seek a general consensus on important issues concerning the life of the community. Unlike the Western method of voting, Samoans discuss matters until they finally come to a general agreement. Before a final decision is made, every *matai*, who is a representative of each respective family, must voice his or her opinions. Sometimes the process of seeking a general agreement takes many days. When all the opinions are not in one accord, the *fono* will be postponed until the next day, and the matter will be further discussed. Once a general consensus is found and all the chiefs and orators give their consent, the decision would then be ratified and recognized as a working code of the whole community. The event would be sealed by a formal ceremony, based on the decision of the *fono a matai*. The communal consensus is then voiced by an orator (normally the eldest in the council) as a representative of the whole village community in a formal speech. The exchange of speeches confirms and authorizes the acceptance of the *Lotu* into the settlement.

The arrival of the so-called mainline denominations: the London Missionary Society – LMS, the Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society (WMMS), and the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) and their acceptance into Samoan society were officially welcomed.⁸⁹ Granting the *taeao* to the new *Lotu* resembles not only the union of an event, time and place, but it has also found vital recognition in the Samoan lifeway.⁹⁰ The significance of this conception is continually disclosed by the perpetual adorations of the chiefs when they present *saunoaga ma fetalaiga* (chiefly and oratory speeches) in communal ceremonies. Referring to these *taeao*, Samoans continuously recall the turning away from the time of *pouliuli* (age of darkness) to the new epoch in history or *aso malamalama* (age of enlightenment).⁹¹

Christianity, in the context of *taeao*, as a religio-cultural occasion was embraced by a kind of consciousness that inextricably merged with certain ecological features of the indigenous lifeway. This means that the whole system of life, ranging from time, place, humans, land and sea and all inhabitants therein were affected and involved in the arrival and the celebration of the acceptance of the *Lotu* into the Samoan society. The welcoming of the *Lotu* in Samoa, its approval by the chiefly system and its accommodation into the lifeway were made possible by a process of spiritual coordination as well as the interrelations of parts of the divine creation in the spirit of celebration.⁹² This process was and still is seen as a vital force in the making of modern Samoa. In contrast, however, one missionary lamented saying:

I am afraid that from the Christian viewpoint the missions have been rather a failure in Samoa. Instead of accepting Christianity and allowing it to remould their lives to its form the Samoans have taken the religious practices taught to them and fitted them inside Samoan customs, making them a part of the native culture. Christianity has changed theology a little, that is all.

89 K.T. Faletese, *O le Tala Faasolopito o le Ekalesia Samoa: A History of the Samoan Church* (LMS) (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1959), 10f. It must be underlined that the mention of the three confessions does not intentionally imply any separatist and pious attitude towards other religious faiths; rather, they represent all *lotu* (religious faiths) in Samoa. Even the newly arrived and introduced faiths are inclusively counted.

90 See, for example, Malama Meleisea, *The Making of the Modern Samoa*, (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1978). When John Williams of the LMS arrived with other missionaries in Sapapalii (in the island of Savaii), he was warmly welcomed and granted the highest form of honour and respect. The welcome-ceremonial event was held in the *malae* (related and connected to the residential place of the paramount chief Malietoa). The name of the *malae* is *Mataniu-feagai ma Leata*. By doing so, the LMS received her associated cultural identification. When the talking chiefs present formal speeches in traditional ceremonies, they always refer to this *taeao* – *Mataniu-feagai ma Leata* as an event of historic significance. It marks the turning away from the old to the acceptance of the new way of life. The Methodist and Catholic Churches also have their *taeao* with special names.

91 Cf. Albert Wendt, *O le Pouliuli* (Auckland: Longman Paul, 1977), 144f; and Malama Meleisea, *Change and Adaptations in Western Samoa* (Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre, 1988), 20f. Also “Unpublished Writings on Samoan Proverbial Sayings” by the late Rev. Elder. Filemoni Tuigamala and Tuuu K. Tofaeono. In formal speeches of Samoan orators, there is a section which refers to *taeao*. In this part, words such as these are commonly used: *O ai a toe fia manatu i aso o le valea ma le pouliuli? Ua ao Samoa aua ua suluia e le malamalama o le Talalelei na uluai tului i Mataniu feagai ma Leata*. These can be literally translated as: “Who wants to remember the days of foolishness and darkness? Samoa is in the age of the light ever since the reception of the Good News at *Mataniu feagai ma Leata*.” Formulation and translation of the author.

92 Cf. John Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea: Christianity in Oceania to World War II* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1992), 406.

Otherwise the people are mentally arrested; there is no religious questioning or conflict – everything is easy-going. Christianity, instead of bursting the bonds of the old life, has been eaten up by it.⁹³

The missionary here voiced his concerns about the effective growth and progress of the Gospel. Fearing some negative effects of the *fa'aSamoa*, he believed that the purity of Christianity must not be associated with the receiving cultural ways. He overlooked the fact that there were also positive and valuable elements in the receiving culture which were more suitable to its context than some aspects of Christianity. Such an understanding presupposes a Christ who does not synthesize and respect other societies in their own cultural ways, but exclusively rejects them through dominative and imperialistic modes of thinking. It reveals the dualistic attitudes of Western Christianity whereby the distinctions between religion and the state, or Gospel and Culture must be clearly spelled out. Suffice it to say that, in this context, the indigenous way of life and local customs were considered pagan, evil and less important than those of the missionaries.

2.4.1. *Decision of LMS⁹⁴ Mission Fields*

The Board of LMS considered the islands of the South Seas as a field of mission-testing.⁹⁵ Such a consideration was based partly on natural features of the region which were noted to be ecologically attractive and promising. The church historian Richard Lovett recalls the favourable characteristics as following:

- (1) The climate is warm all year around – which means a limited requirement of clothes.
- (2) The supply of food could easily be obtained.
- (3) "... the natives, not harassed by labour for daily bread, or as slaves, have abundant time for instructions. (And) ... every man sitting under his cocoa or bread-fruit tree is at hand, and the very sound of a hammer, or a saw, or a smith's bellows will hardly ever fail to attract the audience ..."
- (4) The form of local governments seems "monarchical but of mildest nature ..."
- (5) There appeared to have been no religious prejudices.
- (6) The missionaries can easily acquire the language.⁹⁶

93 See Felix M. Keesing, *Modern Samoa: Its Government and Changing Life* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1978), 410.

94 Cf. *LMS Reports: Mission Regulations and Missionary Sermons*, Vols. 1 & 2, 1795-1798. See also Richard Lovett, *The History of the Missionary Society 1795-1895*, Vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1899), 3-116. LMS is "a child of the evangelical revival in England" at the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. From spiritual revivals, it is believed that God inspired the British nation to form a missionary society which, "in the fear of God, and in the love of Christ," would in a large and 'liberal plan' send ministers of Christ to preach the Gospel among the 'heathen.' The society was formed as a union of God's people of various denominations.

95 *LMS Reports & Missionary Sermons*, Vols. 1 & 2, 1796-1798; *LMS Mission Regulations*, 1795. See also Lovett, 118-123; and Sylvia Masterman, *The Origins of International Rivalry in Samoa 1845-1884* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1934), 29-44.

96 Lovett, 120f.

The attraction of the above-mentioned features and the social, political, economic and religious life of the Oceanians (Polynesians) had undoubtedly stimulated the mission's interest. The first thirty missionaries (including wives and children) were appointed by the Committee of Directors according to certain set standards.⁹⁷ Being equipped with the knowledge of Christ,⁹⁸ these men were sent to convey the "Glorious Gospel of the blessed God to the Heathen."⁹⁹ The missionaries were counselled to:

live near to God and walk in love towards one another ... and being reminded that a missionary who does not earnestly seek to entertain the most intimate communion with the Most High is as a handful of Chaff (pt) before the whirl wind ... (and) each one will seek to be lovers in the Dust before God than another ... that all may trust not in themselves but in God who raiseth the Dead.¹⁰⁰

The missionaries were instructed to be patient and submissive under disappointments, persevering under long discouragements, ready to meet suffering or even death, if such should be part of the divine appointment. Furthermore, each was commissioned to believe that "I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me."¹⁰¹ Self-denying principles expressed in humility and meekness, faith and patience, and the trust and dependence on the divine revelation for success were to be executed.

The first group of missionaries left for the South Seas and arrived in Tahiti in 1797. They established themselves, and from there they toiled to spread the Gospel to neighboring islands. From the group, only four were ordained pastors while the rest were handicraftsmen and tradesmen. These "godly mechanics"¹⁰² were particularly chosen due to the belief that "the natives would speedily see the value of European civilisation, and be glad to learn trades."¹⁰³ This reveals that the intention behind religious conversions was not purely internal conversion but, rather, a change of heart that is influenced by secular notions of progress.

97 Lovett, 43 f. Here, rules for the examination of missionaries are presented. The first three principles include the approval of a candidate whom the Board unanimously agrees to (i) "possess an eminent share of the grace of God, and appears to have a call to this particular work;" (ii) "It is not necessary that every missionary should be a learned man; but he must possess a competent measure of that kind of knowledge which the object of the mission requires;" (iii) "Godly men who understand mechanic arts may be of signal use to this undertaking as missionaries ..."

98 The sole object of the LMS was "to spread the knowledge of Christ among the heathen and other unenlightened nations."

99 Lovett, 49 f. No particular form of church organisation was designed or authorized by the society. The declared fundamental principle of the LMS is "not to send Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy, or any other form of Church Order and Government, but the Glorious Gospel of the blessed God ... and that it shall be left (as it ever ought to be left) to the minds of the persons whom God may call into the fellowship of His (sic) Son from among them to assume for themselves such form of Church Government, as to them shall appear most agreeable to the Word of God."

100 Quoted from the original text, entitled "*Counsels and Instructions for the Regulation of the Mission by the Directors*." The original document is available at the LMS Archive, SOAS, University of London.

101 Lovett, 71.

102 M. Love, *Volumes of Reports and Sermons – LMS 1796-1798*, xi. Note also Article 3, 'Rules for the Examination of Missionaries.' Cf. Lovett, 44.

103 Lovett, 127.

2.4.1.1. John Williams and the LMS Mission to Samoa

John Williams was and still is heralded as the pioneer and founder of the Christian religious era in Samoa. Although he intended to enter business, Williams became an expert in the use of hand tools. Being inspired as a teenager by the preaching of Rev. Timothy East on “What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” a new impression dawned in his mind which consequently opened his eyes and “beheld wonderful things out of God’s law.”¹⁰⁴ Presented with a Bible on the day of his commissioning, Williams was charged to employ the ability that God had given him and be faithful in the proclamation of the truth in favourable or unfavourable seasons. Beyond that, he was commanded to tell poor sinners of the love of Jesus Christ, thus giving most of his strength to the task of convincing listeners to gain admittance to God’s glory.¹⁰⁵ Speaking highly of the missionary and his vocation in the South Seas, Lovett states that: “The time in God’s providence for a rapid and wide extension of the Gospel had come, and for this purpose He (sic) had fitted and sent out John Williams, a man of restless energy, of sunny temperament, of strong self-confidence, of bold initiative, of resolute faith.”¹⁰⁶

John Williams was among the second strand of recruiting missionaries from London to the South Seas. Being known as “an industrious missionary”¹⁰⁷ and a man whose “first law was motion,”¹⁰⁸ he was not content to work as a missionary on a single island. While working for Rarotonga and Raiatea Islands, he wrote to the Directors of the Society in London demanding a ship for the extension of the mission. “One island was not enough for him. There were others beyond the horizon, where men still lived savagely and in fear of the old gods.”¹⁰⁹ In addition, determination for the progress of Christianity caused Williams to approach the LMS Deputation saying: “I cannot content myself within the narrow limits of a single reef, and if means are not afforded, a continent to me would be infinitely preferable, for there if you cannot ride you can walk, but to these isolated islands a ship must carry you.”¹¹⁰

After building a ship using local timbers from Rarotonga, Williams set sailed to Samoa via Tonga where he met a Samoan chief, Fauea, who offered to accompany him. The Samoan chief, as Williams described, was a man who possessed a “soundness of judgment and fluency of speech (in the Samoan language) as would rivet the attention of listening multitudes for hours together ...”¹¹¹ Fauea assured Williams of his commitment to their

104 Lovett, 239.

105 Ebenezer Prout, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. John Williams, 1843*, 34f.

106 Lovett, 237.

107 See, for example, *LMS Thirty-Fifth Reports: South Seas, 1829-1832*, LMS Report, 1833-1834. John Williams is known in this sense because of his conviction that engaging in mission is also at the same time being involved in industrious works. In most of the islands where he visited, it is presented in the journals and reports to the LMS centre in England that he set up either a sugar mill, or established other forms of trade. This is confirmed by his own attempt to build a boat in order for the mission to be taken to other parts of the islands.

108 Unknown author, *The Man Celebrated*, 6.

109 Unknown author, *The Man Celebrated*, 6f.

110 Lovett, 256.

111 John Williams, *A Narrative of the Missionary Enterprise*, 92.

mission, stating: “If they (Samoans) do not receive them (native teachers) kindly and treat them well, I will go to a strange land and die there.”¹¹²

Through the advice of Fauea (and his wife Puaseisei) on board the Messenger of Peace (*Savali o le Filemu*), John Williams sailed directly to Sapapalii, the residential place of Malietoa, who at the time held the four paramount titles of Samoa. The mission strategy aimed at converting the high chiefs of the Samoa Islands. This was based on their experience with other Polynesian societies (i.e. Tahiti), that once the chiefs are converted, the rest of the island groups would naturally overthrow their religious faith and eventually follow.

A sign of promise and fulfillment became evident, when some fishermen informed Fauea about the situation in Samoa as well as the death of Tamafaiga, a fearsome war hero of the time. Being excited by the news of Tamafaiga’s death, Fauea exclaimed in the presence of the white missionaries; *Ua mate le Tevolo!* (the devil is dead). The death of the devil and the instability of local politics marked an opportune time for the success of Christianity. The arrival of John Williams with a team of eight Tahitian and Cook Islands teachers, including five women and ten children, in Savaii in August 1830 was considered by many as the fulfilment of a prophecy of the Goddess Nafanua to Malietoa. She had stated that Malietoa should wait for a *malo* (kingdom) from heaven.¹¹³ This newly awaited *malo* was affirmed through the presence of the new beings from an unknown place.

2.4.1.2. LMS Mission Activity

The similarity between the LMS organisational structure and that of the Samoan society¹¹⁴ contributed greatly to the surprising and speedy conversion to the new religion. The social unitary-corporate structure and the political organisation of Samoa engineered the immediate spread of the new religion. When Malietoa gave his support to the mission, his family gradually joined in. Other chiefs followed suit. While the chiefly system authorizes and appropriates the ceremonial affairs of each family and village community, it was natural that when a *matai* accepted Christianity, all his/her family members would join in, willingly or unwillingly. In addition, the *matai* and their families soon “saw the advantage in accepting the new beliefs and the attendant material benefits.”¹¹⁵ The conversion process created religious and social changes whereby traditional beliefs, customary values and certain cultural practices were to be reshaped to meet Christian moral standards, while others were dismantled, rejected and abolished.

By way of consolidating the arrival and acceptance of the Christian religion into the Samoan society, a *fale* was presented as a gift for the missionaries, not only for accommodation and worship. Williams recorded the words of Malietoa saying:

I and my people must now go over to Upolu to the war; but immediately after my return I will become a worshipper of Jehovah, and place myself under the

¹¹² Williams, 92.

¹¹³ Cf. Malama Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 12f.

¹¹⁴ John Garrett, 121 f.

¹¹⁵ F.A. Young, *Stability and Change in Samoa*. PhD dissertation, University of Oregon (June, 1972): 74.

instructions of teachers. In the meantime this house is yours as a temporary place in which to teach and worship; and when we come from 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.¹¹⁶

The house was the centre for both religious and social associations, be it for worship, social gatherings, and so forth. Through relaying “that those who had embraced this religion could communicate their thoughts to each other at a distance while residing even at a remote island,”¹¹⁷ great interest was aroused and the inhabitants of the island flocked in to learn the new religion and way of life. This culminated in the establishment of the first Samoan congregation.¹¹⁸

John Williams, before departing, placed a small group of native teachers, under the chiefs’ protection, to instruct the people about the new religion. He promised to return with more teachers and missionaries to help in the formal missionary work. The success of the work was clearly recognized upon William’s return in 1832, when he met the people on the eastern islands of Samoa, Manua and Tutuila, asking for some missionaries to guide and teach them the new *Lotu*.¹¹⁹ The speedy spread of the Christian faith led to the immediate sending of six missionaries to supervise the work in Samoa after John William’s visit to London in 1835. New religious doctrines and practices were absorbed, and the Samoans created for themselves a synthesis of the Gospel and Culture which distinguished them in certain respects from other Polynesian islands.¹²⁰

During the 1840s, a network of mission stations was established on the main islands of Samoa, centrally administered by white missionaries. Malua Theological Institute was established in 1844 where Samoans were trained to be pastors in local villages as well as to be missionaries to neighboring islands. The LMS remained under the supervision of missionaries throughout the colonial period and became independent in 1961 when the *au toeaina* (body of elders) took over the administrative and management affairs of the Church.

116 Williams, *Narrative of the Missionary Enterprise*, 90.

117 Williams, 93. This refers to the reciprocal character of prayer, where Christians are taught to pray for one another. Hence, the people back home (Great Britain) prayed for the success of the mission, and at the same time, missionaries abroad also prayed for the welfare of those at home and for divine blessings.

118 An unpublished writing of an LMS missionary, Miscellaneous Box. SOAS, London University, 1979. He wrote that the Samoan women started/founded the first LMS congregation in Samoa.

119 See, for example, *Malua Theological College: Celebration of 100 Years*, 34. It is recorded that when John William arrived and met the people of Leone (Tutuila island), he saw people with white pieces of cloth tied to their hands symbolizing that they were Christian converts. This distinguished them from others who were still in the pagan stage.

120 John Garrett, “Ways Across the Ocean,” *Gales of Change: Responding to a Shifting Missionary Context*, Bernard Thorogood, ed. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994), 180. Cf. J.W. Davidson cited by John Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea: Christianity in Oceania to World War II* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1992), 187.

2.4.2. Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society – WMMS

We have seen that the establishment of foreign religions was a fashion of the time. Inspired by other motives such as heroism, fame, and being considered as holders of a peculiar knowledge that distinguished adherents from other local villagers, it excited Samoans who were away from their homeland and learned of the Christian religion to return and introduce new religious ideas. This spirit accounts for the establishment of Methodism in Samoa, when a Samoan who visited his Tongan relatives became a Christian. He introduced the *Lotu Toga* (Tongan Church) to his home island of Savaii when he returned in 1828. However, the arrival and influence of the *Lotu* Tonga in Samoa was not officially recognized until the arrival of Peter Turner in 1835.¹²¹

Apart from influences outside Samoa, it is believed that conflicts among chiefs caused other chiefs and villages to request and introduce new *Lotu*. For instance, when Malietoa disapproved of the placement of a white missionary in the village of Satupaitea,¹²² the chiefs of the village in response requested the WMMS in Tonga for an official missionary. This was followed by the arrival of Peter Turner in 1835. Methodism was already spreading, counting 40 village congregations in Savaii and 25 in Upolu.¹²³ However, because of oppositional claims from the LMS due to former agreements between the Mission Societies and their respective fields of mission work, Turner returned in 1839.

2.4.3. Roman Catholic Mission

The rivalries among confessions, countries and classes in Europe were transported to Oceania via Christianity. The Romish Mission¹²⁴ states that “the priests were sent to overcome the Protestant demon, and to overthrow English political influences; the one was inseparable from and essential to the other.”¹²⁵ The French gave all her efforts in support of the RCM in all parts of the world. One strong evidence of this is revealed in the writings in the *Journal des Debats*, believed to have been written by a Vicar apostolic of Oceania, which states that:

England, knowing perfectly well that an abyss more profound than the ocean separates her from Catholic Spain, takes the greatest pains to keep that country in a consuming fever, to confound its ideas, to stir up the

121 There are some reasons for this. But the agreement signed between Mission Boards of LMS and WMMS was that Samoa was to be under the LMS and Tonga under the WMMS.

122 The chiefs of Satupaitea village claimed that a missionary should be placed in their care to teach them the new faith. But due to political reasons, Malietoa disapproved the request, which accounts for the request to the WMMS.

123 R.W. Allardice, *The Methodist Story in Samoa 1828-1984* (Apia: Methodist Church Samoa, 1984), 2.

124 See Mark Wilks, *Tahiti: A Review of the Origin, Character, and Progress of French Roman Catholic Efforts: South Seas*, translated from the French. (London: John Snow, 1844), 2 f. The object of the Romish Mission Society was to “promote the revival of the Roman Catholic religion in France, and to propagate it by missions among unbelievers, or pagans.” The Society received papal sanction, by a bull of his Holiness in November 1817 and, being placed under the special protection of the Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary, missionary priests and agents received great support for the Romish mission to be carried out to all parts of the world.

125 Wilks, 4. Cf. Gilson, 168-190.

revolutionary move, that it may more safely fish up from the troubled water a treaty of commerce, that last end of all its policy.¹²⁶

Although the letter was written in Tahiti, it is clear that the same attitudes and models of the RCM were transported to other island nations, including Samoa. Such denominationalistic attitudes were evident from both Missions, as reflected in the case of their arrivals and encounters in Samoa. Accordingly, the Protestant mission exercised strong opposition when RCM entered Samoa in 1845. Accompanied by two native Samoan converts and their wives, a number of priests and two sisters arrived in Falealupo on the schooner *L'Etoile de la Mer* (Star of the Sea).¹²⁷ Although granted with a *taeao* as a means of acceptance into the *fa'aSamoa*, conflicts and ill feelings quickly emerged, mostly influenced by Eurocentric political motivations and ambitions. This became apparent during the Samoan political rivalries, when the LMS favoured supporting the claims of Malietoa Laupepa to government, and the RCM on the other hand supported Mataafa Iosefo as the opponent (1880-1900). The RCM found recognition when Mataafa Iosefo eventually became a Catholic.

As we have seen, Christian missions were not purely religious; rather, they were wrapped up with various motivations in which social, political and economic benefits lurked in the background. In this atmosphere, it did not take long for the RCM to also establish itself in Samoa. Although the faith had been integrated into the life of the local communities, segregating attitudes had already been inherited by Samoans on the village and national level. It was characteristic of the RCM to exercise direct authority over people. Priests were placed in the districts to supervise religious matters and were recognized as spiritual fathers. Strong emphasis was placed on acquiring confirmation of worshippers, strict disciplines of faith and the observance of religious rules.

2.4.4. Missions and Religio-Cultural Transitions

Like all societies, Samoans during the initial contacts with the Western world were facing pressures of religious and cultural developments. Attempts to adapt to new religious and social circumstances, and basically to meet social needs, led to changes in beliefs, customs and values. While undergoing changes, aspects of the religio-cultural heritage which helped maintain the equilibrium of living relations of both people and other forms of creation came to be considered inferior and less valuable by Samoans themselves. In the evolution of changes, Samoans were tempted to succumb to the ideologies and practises of the Western world as a means of fulfilling their innate needs, as well as to meet social demands. Other adjustments naturally took place to meet the demands of time and space. But changes are always accompanied by both advantages and disadvantages.

The conversion of the Samoans to Christianity was an immediate process. Apart from the divine work of the Holy Spirit, the missionaries employed a political strategy whereby the spread of the Christian faith throughout Samoa happened within a short period of time. The political operation of the mission in its earliest phase also influenced the theo-

¹²⁶ Wilks, 5.

¹²⁷ John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, 129.

logical formation of the Church from the beginning. Given the attractiveness of material goods brought by the missionaries, many were curious, and some wanted to have access to these goods. This materialism convinced many to leave their traditional faith in order to become believers of the Christian faith. Changes of values were welcomed or resisted depending on perceivable advantages or disadvantages. The acceptance of Christianity, then, meant both an adaptation to theological concepts, norms and values, and also new practises designed to achieve human freedom, private salvation, and as a means of obtaining material wealth.

2.5. Summary

In the context discussed above, unfavourable conditions, negative customs and behaviors of Samoans naturally existed. Nevertheless, the brief survey reveals the centrality of a reverence for and sustainability of nature. The climate was generally healthy and comfortable, and the natural rhythm of life was harmoniously woven into a pattern that perpetuated, restored and sustained the balance of life-supporting systems. The way in which Samoans viewed, experienced and related to the world could be seen as an equivalent of Eden before the Fall of humankind, and the lifestyle can be described as a self-sufficient and reciprocal kind of communal living. This was organically nurtured by a cyclical process in which the divinities, nature and people related interdependently. Animals and birds were companions of humankind, and were nurtured by sufficient produce from the land and sea.

Christianity, as we have seen, was introduced and rapidly integrated into the Samoan religio-cultural life. The power of the white man and his/her God found recognition in almost every aspect of Samoan life. The intercessions to and dependency on the ancestral Gods were replaced by confidence in the power of the newly arrived God. The traditional understanding of the power of fertility and reliance on a sufficient supply of local products was frequently replaced by the supply of foreign material goods. Further, as a means of consolidating control, security, and maintaining the status of reigning paramount chiefs, villagers, and settlements, primary interests were drastically shifted to a confidence in the mighty power of foreign weapons. Conquest was handed over to the military power of Europeans that was stimulated by their technological knowledge and regulated by the effectiveness of their destructive weapons.

Christianity also offered new ideologies and understandings of the world. Samoans became convinced that the God from the other-world, the heaven or the faraway place, was majestic, rich and powerful. From the preaching of the runaway sailors' sect, and the theological orientation of the Siovili cult, people became convinced that the traditional Samoan divinities should be abolished and be replaced by Jehovah, the transcendent and powerful God who was expected to come in the future. This was believed to be fulfilled and consolidated by the arrival of the Christian Missions.

In sum, while adopting and integrating new religious convictions and ideas, Samoans were simultaneously undergoing more widespread changes. Theologically speaking, the appreciation of the power of the runaway sailors in warfare, the sophistication associated with their religious teachings, the conception of God engendered by the marvelous scenes

of the foreign world visited by Siovili, and the introduction of ideas of God related with the technical and mechanical expertise of the early missions, aroused desires for a new, powerful God who would provide all the necessary material demands of the new age. Unconsciously and simultaneously, this led to the gradual detachment and erosion of the immanent divine presence of God in creation from the convictions of Samoans themselves.

3. THEOLOGICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS: EFFECTS OF MISSIONS ON ECOLOGICAL LIFE SYSTEMS

3.1. The Ecological Effects of Christianization and Colonization

Shortly before the death of John Williams, he asserted that, at all levels of life: "... the Missionary enterprise is incomparably the most effective machinery that has ever been brought to operate upon the social, the civil, and the commercial, as well as the moral and spiritual interests of humankind."¹ Governor Wilhelm Solf, in the earliest phase of German colonization of Samoa once said: "*Kolonisieren ist Missionieren*" – to colonize is to missionize.² Some years later, President Richard Nixon publicly declared that the aim of the United States was "to develop the resources that will enable the people of American Samoa to be fed and housed and clothed and educated as well as anyone else in all the rest of America."³ Such comments reflect the "intertwinement of colonialism and mission."⁴ They disclose the aims, motives and features behind Christianization and Colonization. Some of these aims and interests agreeably overlapped but, in many cases, they contradicted with the religio-cultural interests of Samoans.

This section attempts to disclose and critique some of the establishments of the mission of the *Lotu* and the reigning colonial governments. Emphasis is placed on investigating religious and secular motifs in line with ecological issues. The theological perspectives of the Christian mission, as well as the ideologies of the colonial governments, are also examined. To provide an analysis of the process of transformation in relation to the local contemporary ecological crisis, an overall survey of some of the aspects of the socio-religious developments of the *Lotu* is appropriate. This will aid us in identifying some of the underlining social, political, economic and theological conceptions that shaped and contributed to some of the problems faced by Samoans.

3.1.1. Background of Theological Developments

The theological conceptions and religious understanding of Samoans had been altered by the influences of religious sects and the *Siovili* cult mentioned earlier. Denominational confessions such as Methodism, Roman Catholicism, Seventh Day Adventism and Mor-

- 1 John Williams, *JSS*, 582. Cf. R.P. Gilson, *Samoa 1830-1900* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 138-161. Cf. Sharon W. Tiffany, "The Politics of Denominational Organization in Samoa," *Mission, Church and Sect in Oceania*, James A. Boutillier, ed. (New York: University Press of America, 1978): 455-423. See also Horst Gründer, *Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien*, 2 Auflage (München: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1991), 182-186.
- 2 Wilhelm Solf, *Samoa, the People, the Mission and the Europeans* (Unforwarded Report of Governor). Copied from H. Neffgen by Dr. Solf to the Imperial Colonial Office, Berlin; Wellington, Maori Unit (August 1975): 1-19. See also John A. Moses, "Zwischen Puritanismus und Ultramontanismus: die Politik der Diagonalen auf Deutsch-Samoa 1900-1914," *Imperialismus und Kolonialmission: Kaiserliches Deutschland und koloniales Imperium*, Klaus J. Bade, ed. (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1982), 244, and Gründer, 182-186.
- 3 Edward Beauchamp, "Educational Policy in Eastern Samoa: An American Colonial Outpost," *Comparative Education*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (March 1975): 23-30.
- 4 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Missions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), 302. Cf. Niels-Peter Moritzen, "Koloniale Konzepte der protestantischen Mission," *Imperialismus und Kolonialmission: Kaiserliches Deutschland und koloniales Imperium*, 60-62. 'Christianity, commerce, and civilization' – the three C's cannot be isolated from one another.

monism, though hindered by several forceful aspects of religious factionalism, had played influential roles as well. However, the theology and models of doing mission⁵ in Samoa were dominantly shaped by the LMS-Protestant teachings and preachings. The set of beliefs and the value-system of LMS missionaries strongly influenced the whole theological formulations of Samoans themselves, even though the latecomers had variations or contrasts in theological conceptions. The theological teaching of the LMS had been strongly informed by the doctrine of Predestination of Calvinist-Puritanism.⁶ This is reflected in the Articles of Faith drawn up by the first strand of missionaries, which became recognized as an official document of LMS-Protestant Missionary work in the South Seas.⁷

The undertakings in mission and theology of the Church were also strongly dictated by the colonialist attitudes of European nations with pietistic orientations.⁸ Keith R. Bridston has noted how the popularity of pietism at the beginning of the Protestant missionary era, as well as that of the proponents of the social gospel in later years, despite their many differences, are quite similar in their attitude to non-Western cultures. They were mostly influenced by “arrogance and superiority or the attitude of conquerors.”⁹ In relation to theological developments, he goes on to say that the pietists’ cultural insensitivity may have deeper theological roots. “The pietist movement, one of the most creative and dynamic in modern church history, with its strong emphasis on the inner life and personal commitment, was the source of various renewals in many churches, not least in arousing of missionary concern within them.”¹⁰ While the spirit of pietism inspired a missionary enterprise, it has, at the same time:

5 Reference here is made to the general theological understanding and the belief of Samoans in the One Almighty and only True God, incarnate in His Beloved Son Jesus Christ, and always present in and through the power of the Holy Spirit. In relation to Mission, it is an acknowledged fact that missionary work was operated on the political structure of the traditional social system. The socio-cultural construct was crucial in the proclamation of any type of mission, whether Christian or not.

6 Bosch, 239-274.

7 James Wilson, *A Missionary Voyage to the South Pacific Ocean 1796-1798* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1845), 410-420. See also *Frühe Reisen und Seefahrten in Original-Berichten*, Band 5 (Graz: Austria Akademische Druck, 1966). The Articles of Faith or Principles of Religion were drawn up by a Committee of eight persons chosen by the body of missionaries on board the Duff, at sea. A detailed list of the names of those in the Committee is not clearly given. However, it is recognized that out of the eight people chosen, four were ordained ministers who took the leading role in this formulation. The Articles of Faith contains twenty one elaborated statements upon which the faith, moral principles, ethical values and praxis of the Christian mission in the South Seas were to be based. Such principles were, above all, the guideline which directs all necessary spiritual and social life engagements of all people to the truth of God in and through their knowledge of Jesus Christ. The religious statements and theological formulations were constructed on the foundation laid by the Articles of Faith, including later doctrinal revisions such as the Statement of Doctrine of the Samoan Church (LMS) drawn up in 1952, by a Commission that was set up to enquire into the Life and Work of the Church. This was the first written and official formulation of the doctrines of the Samoan Church prepared by an appointed committee, and officially passed in the annual May Church Conference as the main fountainhead for the life and faith of the Church. The Church had depended on the Articles of Faith for all necessary theological and doctrinal teachings for more than hundred years before the 1952 Statement of Doctrines came into existence.

8 Bosch, 259, Garrett, 121 f.

9 Keith R. Bridston, *Mission, Myth, and Reality* (New York: Friendship Press, 1965), 42.

10 Bridston, 42.

... carried with it an ascetic bent, a quietistic attitude toward the cultural order, and a sociological acquiescence that left the secular sphere outside of direct Christian responsibility. The socio-cultural passivity of the pietist movement, together with a narrowly individualistic understanding of evangelism and ethics, meant that the subtle cultural complexities inherent in missionary activity in foreign lands were ignored.¹¹

This was revealed by attempts to convert the inhabitants through indirect or direct authoritarian means. Such efforts can be seen in the first missionaries' attempt to captivate the minds of the natives by the superiority of their accomplishments, especially their technological knowledge. Samoans wondered how these men managed to build ships without outriggers, make leaves speak (write), and many other wonderful things.¹² As a further example, one missionary introduced John Williams to Malietoa in this way: "Here is our minister from England, the dwelling-place of knowledge; he and his brother missionaries are the fountains from which its streams have flowed through these islands ... He is our root."¹³ Thus, the success of the mission was presented as an achievement of the missionary, and not God.

3.1.1.1. Articles of Faith

The statements of faith are founded on the understandings of God, who is defined as "infinite in being and perfection, most pure in Spirit, invisible, without body or parts, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, infinitely just, almighty, and most wise."¹⁴ God was incarnated in Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of fallen humanity. Through the perfect obedience and sacrifice of Christ who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself on the cross, he obtained the full justice and satisfaction of the Father. Therefore, Christ not only "made reconciliation, but likewise purchased an everlasting inheritance in the

11 Bridston, 43.

12 G.R. Pembroke and G.H. Kingsley, *South Seas Pubbles* (London: Richard Bentley and Sons, 1872), 292.

13 Williams, *Narrative of the Missionary Enterprises*, 111.

14 Wilson, 411. Article II. God is conceived in ultimate terms whereby human intellect is not able to comprehend the majestic mystery of the divine will. The personification of God as the "creator, maker, and former of all creatures, the preserver and governor of all things, visible and invisible," presupposes the sovereignty and rule of God over everything. The affirmation of the union of the Godhead, the unity of three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and of one substance who eternally coexists with power, affirms the corporate and the absolute divine work of all that was made.

In the 1952 Statement of Doctrine, God is identified only as the Creator, who "created all beings and things." Other attributes of the divine personification such as Maker, Former, Preserver, and so forth are not recalled. The reason for doing so is not clear, but the author assumes that as a way of distinguishing so-called 'man' from all creatures (in contrast to the initial formulation in the Articles of Faith), the Committee may have consciously or unconsciously denied the original rendering. The emphasis therefore was on 'man.' Being created in God's image, men were like God in that "they have the power of Reason, and have those other qualities which make them free, fit, and able, to have fellowship with their Creator. Men are answerable to God for the use of their God-given powers, and of God's world." All other things, animate or inanimate, find fellowship with God through the mediation of Man. This way of theological thinking categorizes nature as the inferior part of the divine Creation which can be managed, controlled and manipulated for man's benefit.

kingdom of heaven for all those whom the Father hath given to, or chosen in him.”¹⁵ This miraculous event was disclosed to humanity in the Holy Scriptures, inspired and mediated by the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures contain all things necessary to believe concerning God, creation, providence, the fall of man, his/her recovery, and the final end of all things.¹⁶ The truths therein are to be received and believed, and nothing should be believed, or enforced, as necessary to salvation, faith, or practise, but that which it expresses or may be proved. While inspired by the inner illumination of the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures lead believers to progressively understand how God carried out the work of salvation from the Old Testament that found fulfilment in the New Testament through the full revelation in Jesus Christ.¹⁷ And while anticipating the coming Kingdom of God, obedience under the Law

15 Wilson, 412. Cf. SDSC – LMS 1952, 6. The Son as the Word of the Father is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, the eternal God. Taking on one substance with the Father and “(taking) man’s nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance, the two whole and perfect natures, the Godhead and manhood” were joined together in Him. The two natures were “never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man.” The saving work of Christ avails once for all the sins of the whole world. And “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Christ is the mediator and intercessor through which all are forgiven before God. Other intermediaries (saints, angels and so forth) are not accountable to what Jesus Christ did for the whole world. Above all, the fundamental motto of ‘winning souls for the Lamb’ which Count von Zinzendorf set for all missionary work, shaped this kind of Christological formulation. This motto coincides with certain kinds of preaching to impress individuals about the eternal judgment of God.

Man has lost the image of God and all divine communion due to disobedience. Being created in the image of God, all divine aspects such as knowledge, righteousness and true holiness, with dominion over the creatures, were conferred on man in and through a covenant of life whereby perfect obedience was the ultimate condition. Hence, being seduced by Satan to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge and evil, man succumbed to the wrath of God wherein life, both the present and that which is to come, was cursed, and the experience of the pain of death fell upon humans. Hence, the alienation of the human being from God draws him/her to a nature wholly corrupted and depraved. Consequently, humankind has lost all will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation. Losing one’s potential in sin, being unable to convert oneself to the state of innocence, and lacking the freedom and power to do that which is good and well pleasing to God, humankind depends on grace alone to do what is spiritually good before God. “God converts a sinner, and translates him (sic) into a state of grace.”

16 Wilson, 410f. Article I affirms the Old and the New Testament as the one and only Holy Scripture which is the “revelation of God’s purpose, mind, and will, and given by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.” As a source of knowledge about Jesus Christ, the ultimate revelation of God, the Scriptures made known to men and women the will and deeds of God, and how to maintain right relationships with God and with one another. Through faith in Jesus Christ who is revealed in the Bible, only faithful men and women may see God who is in the world around. Obedience to the Word of God is a guiding principle for all Christian practices. Any beliefs and practices which were developed outside the ordinances of the Holy Bible were falsified and totally disapproved. The later formulation (1952 Statement), however, acknowledges that there are other things which may enrich Christian life that cannot be read in the Bible. The Scriptures are “God’s complete revelation of himself (sic) to man, through Jesus Christ, by the agency of the Bible, is at the same time the revelation of truth about man ...”

17 Wilson, 412. The Holy Ghost is conceived as the third person of the Godhead and is of one substance with the Father and the Son. This trinitarian Godhead eternally coexists with glory and majesty. In terms of social office, the Holy Ghost, in the light of the “economy of salvation,” functions as the third person who is “to convince, regenerate, and convert those whom the Father gave to Christ in his eternal purpose.” Hence, the Holy Spirit upholds partakers of the covenant of grace of their benefits, both in time and eternity.

The Statement of Doctrines states that the Father is ever willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. Through these three persons, God’s saving truth is made known. Therefore, through Jesus Christ the Saviour, “the Holy Spirit was sent forth with power to convict the world of sin, to enlighten men’s minds in the knowledge of Christ, and to persuade and enable them to respond to the call of the Gospel.” As the Spirit of truth, power, comfort and of love, He abides with the Church and each individual believer, and moves them to do good and deny evil.

It is clear from the formulation that the Holy Ghost, although considered a co-partner and co-eternal with the Father and the Son, is seen as the subordinate person of the Godhead. As indicated, the work of the Holy Spirit is

of God that was and is revealed in Christ, and with due respect for the authority of God the Creator who gave it, must be exercised. The Law of God is the rule of life that informs humans of the divine will and the appropriate duties in order to refrain from the sinful pollutions of their nature.¹⁸

The whole salvation plan of God suffered from sinful human nature, and humanity was therefore liable to death. Hence, the body of humans returns to dust, and sees corruption; but their souls which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal substance, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous are received in the highest heavens, beholding the face of God in light and glory, waiting only for the full redemption of their bodies. In contrast, the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, waiting in darkness for the day of judgment, where the unjust bodies are raised by the power of Christ to dishonour.

The establishment of the Kingdom of God as the kingly rule of Christ over the redeemed and the unredeemed is still experienced in judgment and wrath, where humans must continue to “labour for the completion of the Kingdom of God in all the homes of men (sic), in all places where men (sic) work, and so in all the affairs of this world.”¹⁹ The Kingdom of God is already here, but its completion still depends on the labour of humans, together with Christ, for its full realization. The Church²⁰ therefore is called to this unfinished task and responsibility.

The doctrinal statements of the Mission and the Church outlined above could be summarized as an anti-creation formulation. Such constructions reflect the strong tendencies of a dualism that promotes division and conquest. From the content of both statements of doctrines, God is seen as an alien, superior and majestic Being who is distanced from all other parts of Creation. With a specific focus on the salvation of humankind, the statements definitely indicate a lack of interest in any other parts of the divine Creation as co-equals and co-partners in the divine plan. This has led to an anthropocentric understanding whereby the human being becomes the centre of God’s saving plan. In addition, such an understanding fosters an androcentric focus where the male is viewed as superior to the female, as well as the human being over other parts of the created world. And while the soul, the spirit, or the inner being has to be saved from evil and pollution, which are enshrined in the physical body and the external world, the identification of the divine with parts of the natural cosmos are condemned by desacralization. The human being, made in the image of God, stands at the centre of everything.

confined to partakers of the covenant of grace, the Church, and individual believers. This means that non-believers and all that was and is created are outside the divine salvation.

18 Wilson, 414. The Article of Faith does not present a clear teaching about the Kingdom of God. But some of the formulations, e.g. Articles XI, XII, and XIII, present some hints of a doctrine of the Kingdom of God.

19 SDSC – LMS 1952, 8.

20 The last Doctrine of the Article of Faith deals with the Church and her related ordinances. There are two conceptions of the Church. Besides the visible church in the world, there is an invisible catholic or universal church which consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the “spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.”

3.1.1.2. Theocracy and the *Lotu*

The missionary efforts centred around three crucial emphases, which may be summed up as: (i). *conversio gentilium* – conversion of Gentiles, (ii). *plantatio ecclesiae* – planting of the Church, (iii). *gloria et manifestatio gratiae divinae* (for the glory and manifestation of divine grace).²¹ In addition, a theocratic dimension developed out of missionary efforts, in which “... the missionaries were to establish in the wilderness a socio-political system whereby God himself (sic) would be the real ruler.”²² This new dimension was not only vividly expressed in the previously mentioned understandings and doctrinal formulations of the early South Seas missionaries, but is also apparent in the process of planting churches and the related developments which will be discussed later.

The Mission Societies in England were established during the time of Britain’s high imperial interests. Such interests were realized during colonization when it reached its peak from the 1880s to the 1920s.²³ Colonialism and imperialism, according to Nils E. Bloch-Hoell and J.V. Taylor, was global and commercially oriented. “It is the expansion of one people at the expense of another, including the utilization and exploitation of another country’s resources. It is the exercise of power (pressure) resulting in oppression and dependence.”²⁴ The Christian mission has to a large degree been exercised parallel with colonialism, sometimes in opposition to the colonial power, sometimes subservient to it.

The engagements in the expansion of the Christian religion were not only a means of proclaiming the good news about Jesus Christ but, as well, of securing political and economic control. For instance, Aarne Koskinen states that the British missionaries’ desire to teach religion was not undertaken with pure motives but, rather, as the forerunners and agents of imperialistic world conquest; their attempt to appear to be purely evangelistic has even been called a mere pretext. The preaching of the Christian religion was regarded as part of the European cultural conquest.²⁵ This means that both the merchant and the missionary can operate side by side.²⁶ Hence, in addition to the religious truth itself, there existed behind the whole mission enterprise the fundamental ideology of cultural imperialism. Some forms of cultural imperialism, or specifically, ecological imperialism, were directly or indirectly mediated by conversions to the Christian religion.

3.1.2. *The Conquest of Gods*

One commentator has observed that “religion is a natural thing all the world over, and for an English man to disown Christ, or a Mohamedan to disown Mohamed, is, in either case,

21 Gisbertus Voetius cited by Bosch, 256 f.

22 Bosch, 258.

23 Refer to a set of Essays edited by Torben Christensen and William R. Hutchison, *Missionary Ideologies in the Imperialist Era: 1880-1920: Papers from the Durham Consultation*, 1981 (Copenhagen: Christensens Bogtrykkeri, 1982). With specific references to “British Missions,” 155-166, by Andrew F. Walls; and “A Moral Equivalent for Imperialism: Americans and the Promotion of Christian Civilization 1880-1910,” 167-178.

24 N.E. Bloch-Hoell and J.V. Taylor, “Christianity and Politics in Africa – Norwegian Mission to South Africa 1880-1920: Colonialistic Confrontation or Apostolic Approach?,” *Missionaries Ideologies in the Imperialist Era*, 17.

25 Koskinen, *Missionary Influence as a Political Factor in the Pacific Islands*, 10.

26 Bosch, 304. Accordingly, “a gun and the Bible be put into effect.”

the most grievous sin a soul can commit.”²⁷ In the case of the early missions in the South Seas, the disowning of the traditional Gods and of the old religions was regarded by the white missionaries as a sinless act. The victory of Jehovah over other Gods was also the victory of the power and knowledge of the white man over the divine conceptions of the island cultures. This form of religio-cultural superiority greatly affected the missionized nations and their cultures, such as in the case of Samoa.

This is evident through the attempt of the first missionaries to overthrow the old Samoan religion, and to replace their divinities by the one almighty and powerful God – Jehovah. Although several missionaries outwardly expressed later their feelings that their purpose had gained little success, in that the Samoans had imprisoned Christianity in the *fa’aSamoa*, and that they had not destroyed the Samoan gods, but had merely added still another God,²⁸ it is argued that the fundamental divine conception of Samoans (which was eco-theologically oriented) was shattered through the conquest of Christianity.

A central aim of the missionaries was to establish a theocratic kingdom according to European conceptions. This was based on the understanding that once the indigenous gods were destroyed, all other parts of the religious worldview would gradually collapse. To destroy the former gods and the divine conceptions, together with associated rituals and ceremonies, was the foremost responsibility of the men and women of God-Jehovah. Local Gods were seen as mere natural objects and idols that should be destroyed either by the power of weapons, by burning, consumption or condemnation. This would convince the inhabitants of the miraculous nature and power of the new God. This superior theological presupposition is reflected in the attitudes of John Williams, as well as subsequent missionaries.

On many occasions, Williams describes in his Journal signs of the joyous victory and superiority of God-Jehovah. For example, in the island of Rurutu, when chief Tamatoa asked him where God-*Tangaroa*, God of Maohi Nui (Tahiti and Society Islands) was, Williams answered that he, with all the other gods, was burned. Likewise, Koro, the God of Raiatea, was consumed by fire.²⁹ Another example of this attitude of conquest is seen when he tried to convince chief Makea to turn to Jesus, “the Conqueror of all idols.” Charging Makea, Williams said:

... can you resist his (Jesus’) power? The gods of wood are food for the fire, but the God without form is beyond your strength: his head cannot be reached! These gods are conquered; but the invisible God remain for ever. The idols now hanging in degradation before us were formerly unconquerable; but the power of God is gone forth, by which men (and women) become Christians, and savages brethren in Christ.³⁰

Further examples of the divine confrontation included the islanders’ being given axes to chop down trees which they venerated as sacred. This was in line with God-Jehovah and

27 Pembroke and Kingsley, 272.

28 Stanner, *The South Seas in Transition*, 292.

29 Williams, *Narrative of the Missionary Enterprises*, 14.

30 Williams from the mouth of Papeiha’s Narrative (a native teacher): “Destruction of Idols,” *JSS- Tahiti 1821-1823*, London: SOAS, 1978. See also J. Williams, *Narrative of Missionary Work*, 28.

Jesus Christ being portrayed as the most powerful conquerors. In this conception, relationships with God were lived, not in close and loving terms, but in frightening experiences. Hardie C., an LMS missionary, after conversing with one chief of the village of Tufu about people's relationship to God, reported as follows: "I said to him that we should be afraid of God as we were all very great sinners, but that if we attended to God's word, repented of our sins, and believed on Jesus the only Savior, God would be compassionate to us, forgive our sins and bless us with everlasting life."³¹

The use of the word 'afraid' instead of awe or reverence connotes an imbalanced relationship between God, the Almighty, Ruler, and so forth, with the mere human being. Such a God ruled and remained abstract from the world, and only few could possess the knowledge to understand the nature of such a God. Hence the blessings of this God were divinely ordained and bestowed on specified people, in this case the English, who, in and through their commitments, saw themselves as the channels through which God could be known. This was a common mentality among the missionaries at this time.³² Moreover, God was interpreted through powerful and majestic deeds. One missionary in Samoa preached that the 'Fatherhood of God' is the supreme revelation of the Godhead.

The desacralization of natural objects which were venerated as abodes of the spirits of the Gods was a set criterion for the establishment of a new theocracy in Samoa. Such practices were seen as part of the saving act of the Christian God. Samoans, especially chiefs, upon the missionaries' advice, had been convinced to eat the incarnation³³ objects of their *etu* (gods), as an outward sign of becoming Christians. As proof of conversion, Samoans were recognized as participants in a baptismal rite whereby they abandoned heathenism and turned to the religion of God-Jehovah. Williams cited the declaration of one chief to convert through eating his *etu* in front of his family and village. As the great chief was consuming his God in fear of death, Williams was also frightened of his own experiment. But the missionary was delighted in the victory of the power of Jehovah as the chief survived the test. Accordingly, a portion of the *etu* was given to each individual who used to venerate the eel as their gods, and "with trembling hearts they proceeded to devour the sacred morsel."³⁴ The victorious outcome of the test, however, did not totally eliminate the fear of diseases and death. This was evident when the participants quickly proceeded to drink a "large dose of coconut oil and salt water"³⁵ as an effectual means of preserving their lives.

The deity-consumption process was gradually followed by others, including the case of Malietoa's son who decided to eat his god which was in the form of the *anae* (fish). The fish had been venerated for ages as the abode of his deity.³⁶ When the leading chief's son survived without any harm, others were also convinced to do likewise. Such experiences are recalled by a native pastor:

31 Hardie C., *Around Savaii, JSS – Sept 12 to Oct 04*, Microfilm No. 1656, London: SOAS, 1978.

32 Hardie, (Sept 12 to Oct 04).

33 Phillips, C. *Samoa: Past and Present* (London: John Snow and Co., 1890), 18.

34 Williams, *Narrative of the Missionary Enterprises*, 13.

35 Williams, 113.

36 L. Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel*, 80.

... my mother's father told his son and me to go and catch and bring all the gods which we worshipped, that we might eat them. ... We said to him: 'Why do you talk thus? Is it because you are in your old age, or is it a proper thought of yours that we should eat the gods we worship, and shall we not die for it?' Then the old man said: 'Do you go and get these things that we may eat them, for they are no longer of any use. The advent of a good god is perhaps near. Seek and bring all the gods that we may eat them. First look for Salevao (the cat) in the bush. That is one god ...'³⁷

Again, the incarnation of the Gods and their natural habitations were overthrown by the belief in the advent of another deity. The transitional experiences of abandoning the divinities was described by the same eyewitness as follows:

Great was the fear and distress of all our family, and they wept, thinking that we should die because we had eaten the gods. We ate each kind of god and then we waited for the good god that the old man spoke of. See the love of god to us, although heathen, He made Himself known to us by the old man.³⁸

In anticipation of a more prosperous life, an acceptance of turning to the new God grew among the Samoans. They began to doubt their source of power as the *root* of all providences, and many decided to seek other fountains of blessings. Samoans had been informed that, as a Savior, God-Jehovah had given His only begotten Son to redeem those who are still heathens. These forces contributed to the mass conversion of Samoans to the Christian religion, and supported the establishment of the mission stations, followed by the construction of new churches, representing the holy thrones where God rules and reigns.

3.1.3. Theological Formulation: Understanding of God

The early theological formulation of the Christian religion in Samoa was developed on the basis of fundamental Christian teachings and hymns which were composed by John Williams and translated into Samoan by two unidentified runaway sailors. These theological formulations can be constructed based on the content of some of these hymns. What follows is the Song of the Sabbath:

<i>E aso sa i leinei</i>	A holy day is this
<i>E aso tele foi</i>	Also a great day
<i>Tatalo tatou sau alii</i>	Let us worship the great king (chief) ³⁹
<i>Ta etu moni foi</i>	The true and only God

³⁷ Phillips, 19.

³⁸ Phillips, 19f.

³⁹ The understanding of the divine as *king* is a foreign innovation which was adopted into the religio-cultural expressions of Samoans. The concept *sacred chief* sounds proper in this context.

<i>Faafetai tatou atoa</i>	Let all unite in thanks
<i>Alofa tele lava</i>	Great indeed (is) his mercy
<i>Ua au mai le aso sa</i>	In giving us a Sacred Day
<i>Ma lona atalii</i>	With his beloved Son
<i>E aso sa i leinei</i>	A holy day is this
<i>E aso lelei foi</i>	A truly good day
<i>Faalogo tatou tasi lava</i>	Let all lift one heart believing
<i>Le upu la lenei</i>	The Lord of Salvation ⁴⁰

The hymn is written in short, simple sentences but in broken Samoan. It portrays an understanding of a faith that is grounded in the merciful God, the great and only King, the Giver of the Sabbath and the Beloved Son. The believers should receive and honour the Sabbath in praises and thanksgiving. Sabbath as a day of worship is a holy and great day, a day for everyone to remain in peace and attentively hear the proclaimed Word. Although this understanding contradicted the indigenous institutions of Sabbath, where a day of rest and celebration was not confined to the seventh day of the week, Sunday became strictly observed by a set of taboos in Samoa as a sacred day.

Another composition reveals Williams' conviction of Jesus Christ as Savior who died and will come again in the future.

<i>Alofa tele lona nei</i>	Great is his compassion
<i>Ua alofa ia i tatou</i>	His mercy to us
<i>Alofa tele o Iesu Christ</i>	Great the love of Jesus Christ
<i>I oti mai i ei</i>	To die upon the earth
<i>E tama pele o Iesu Christ</i>	A beloved son was Iesu Christ
<i>E atalii lelei</i>	A very good Son
<i>Ua oti mai i lalo nei</i>	But he died down here below
<i>Ia ola foi tatou</i>	To obtain salvation for us
<i>Faalogo uma lava foi</i>	Let us everyone believe
<i>Lo tatou loto nei</i>	With our whole hearts
<i>Ia malolo le atamai</i>	That our souls may obtain salvation
<i>Ia sau o Iesu Christ</i>	When Jesus Christ shall come ⁴¹

40 John Williams, *JSS – LMS, Microfilm No. 1635*, London: SOAS, 1978. Cf. Richard M. Moyle, *The Samoan Journals of John Williams 1830-1832*, 120. There is one correction to be made in the translation of the hymn. The last line of the third verse refers not to 'The Lord of Salvation,' rather, it is the *Upu* – Word – which is also employed in the former translation of the Samoan Bible as *Lokou* – Logos. From the context of worship, the emphasis of *Upu* (word) as the preaching word of God is the nearest if not the right rendering. The author's translation of: *Le upu la lenei* is: Now, here (or listen to) is the word.

41 John Williams, *JSS – Cook Islands – Rarotonga to Navigator's Island, 1830-1832*, Microfilm No. 1628, London: SOAS, 1978. Cf. Richard M. Moyle, 120f. The English translation of the third strophe needs some adjustments. It can be put like this: "Let us all hear (listen) / With our whole hearts / That our souls/minds may find/ obtain peace / When Jesus Christ shall come." This rendering fits well in the context of the strophe as it refers to the waiting in peace and hope for the coming of Christ. Rearranged by the author.

The hymn is about the compassionate love of Jesus Christ which culminated in his death. Although death on the cross is not clear from the composition, the emphasis on the reality of death in the Samoan translation is specific and more concrete. It is affirmed that Jesus Christ is from somewhere, but died here and now, right in their midst.⁴² Hence, the sacrificial event is more meaningful when people recognize the reality of the incarnation and the sacrificial act in time and place. The inalienability of the suffering of Jesus Christ and of all humanity at all times is greatly acknowledged. Apart from Williams's belief in the incarnation and death of the Beloved Son, the hymn proclaims the future hope brought by the coming of Jesus Christ. Believers shall therefore wait in unity and peace for that opportune moment. Salvation is corporate and demands the unity of all human souls. Thus, spiritual salvation was the goal of Christian hope.

3.2. The Moral and the Spiritual Development of the *Lotu*

The *Lotu* advocated another form of moral and spiritual order that was shaped by the convincing power of the Holy Spirit to convert minds and save souls. The process was propagated by sequences of prayer meetings, revivals, Sunday worship services, catechistical teachings, and several other religious activities. Christian revivals, daily meditations, worship, and the constant reading of the Scriptures as part of the spiritual discipline were introduced.

The outer sign of true conversion was the eradicating of the native belief in "supranormal agencies,"⁴³ and submitting to Christian instruction. Conversion, as the missionary G.A. Lundie affirms, is a glorious victory whereby "... the Spirit of the Lord cuts off the names of the idols out of the land; and had caused the indigenous prophets and unclean spirits to pass out of the land."⁴⁴

The willingness to convert as we have seen, required the defilement of the Gods or divine Guardians, together with those who cultivated 'life' in the land. This missionary injunction recalls the command of Jahweh to the Israelites to overthrow the Canaanites' Gods when they entered into the land. This attitude is clearly illustrated by one of the stories of an elderly man, a chief of the village of Salelavalu in the island of Savaii. According to the story, the old man used to retreat into the bush at dawn and in the evening to offer a kind of worship under a *tamanu* tree. When he arrived at the place, he sat crossed-legged under the 'sacred tree,' "the only remaining heathen temple,"⁴⁵ and remained silent for some hours. The missionary who worked there, upon hearing from the local villagers that the old man was contemplating and offering worship to his god, ordered the tree to be cut down and burned. The old man died shortly after the destruction of his temple. The

42 The fourth verse of the first strophe, *Ua oti mai i e i*, captures two main ideas. First, it refers to the present act: the death of Jesus Christ is an active and living event. Secondly, Jesus died and was buried in a specific place. Note that the word, *i i*, carries the weight of the verse, and it means 'right here' or 'in/at the place where I am standing.'

43 See Garry Trompf, *The Religions of Oceania*, 129. Trompf contends that Oceanic cosmologies would not be complete without mythic exploits of not only cultural heroes and ancestors, but also the presence of beings who have lesser potents than deities. These beings play varieties of roles, especially in revealing the mysteries of the land.

44 C.A. Lundie, *Missionary Life in Samoa* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant & Sons, 1841), 126.

45 See George Brown, *Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer*, 35.

missionary reported the event to the mission board in London and said that “the old devil is dead ... and his pagan temple, the Tamanu tree is destroyed.”⁴⁶ Again, this was a sign of the victory of the new religion; yet it was a victory in disguise, for it denied the presence of the sacred in nature, and the worship offered in an open context that embraced the world and was not confined to man-made buildings.

Further developments led to the introduction of institutional codes to help with the formation of the moral and spiritual life. Old traditional institutions which were not in accordance with Christian principles were condemned as evil, pagan and superstitious. The missions’ areas of concern included the reformation of conduct, which primarily focused on the changing of Samoan attitudes towards sex, the exercise of chiefly authority, performances of dances, tattooing, the scantiness of Samoan dress, and the lack of privacy of Samoan houses.

3.2.1. *Demonization of Local Spirits*

Foremost in the process of demonization was the denigration of idols and the prohibitions on the belief in the presence of spirits that settled in parts of the land, sea and sky. Samoans feared and respected several objects and places which they believed to be inhabited by a deity or spirit. As a result, they kept their distance and remained silent when crossing such places. As a means of countering these spiritual conceptions, the missionaries implanted a new kind of spiritual consciousness that overshadowed the indigenous spirituality. This overtaking, as Charles Forman observes, was engineered by the “fear of sin,” a phenomenon that was foreign to Samoan understanding⁴⁷ versus the fear of supernatural powers.⁴⁸ The fear of supernatural powers was viewed as part of the enslavement of the human soul by the fear of demons. To free the human soul required the suppression of supernatural forces. This kind of spiritual discipline was adapted and preached by the missionaries to the new converts, and was channelled and perpetuated through the teachings of local village pastors who reacted seriously against the indigenous claims of spiritual presence.⁴⁹

The late Faatauva Tapuai, a former leader of the Methodist Church in Samoa, related an incident in which a pastor reacted with forceful power upon hearing that the villagers kept and cared for *vaosa*. The *vaosa* had been cared for through generations as the sacred dwelling place of the spirits. Such knowledge reflected a kind of cosmic spirituality that fostered understandings of co-habitation and a wholistic approach to harmony with all

46 Cited from the *Miscellaneous Notes and Diaries of the LMS Missionaries*. The name of the missionary and author is not identified. Refer to Miscellaneous Box No. 15, SOAS, University of London.

47 Cf. C. Phillips, *Samoa; Past and Present*, 20. Moral laws of the old Samoan religio-cultural heritage contained no expressions of sin as Christians understood sin. Right and wrong mattered a great deal, and Samoans knew that they went astray. But the idea of sin (as Westerners understood it) was absent from their conceptions.

48 Cf. Charles Forman, “Missionaries in the Twentieth Century,” 49.

49 In the oral tradition of Samoans, there is a related proverbial saying: *E manao i le vao ae fefe i le Aitu*. This is translated as: *There is a need for the bush, but there is fear of ghosts*. The proverb originates from the traditional belief that the spirits inherit parts of natural world. It can also be metaphorically used in the sense that the human will desires, but the body is weak. The idea behind the proverbial saying connotes the sense that there is danger in the face of uncontrolled desires.

parts of the created world. Disapproving of such beliefs, the pastor gathered some villagers to clear the area and turn it to a plantation. Trees of the sacred forests were felled with the use of chain saws, axes, and destructive methods such as burning and applying poisonous chemicals. Although successful with his plan, he planted an instrumentalized view of nature into the consciousness of the local people, together with the idea that the spirits do not inhabit nature.⁵⁰

3.2.2. *Spiritual Discipline and the Civilized Knowledge*

An inseparable part of the missions' philosophy was the conversion of the human mind. This new knowledge was intended to attract Samoans to learn the ways of the *papalagi*. Through the teachings of the missionaries, whether religious or secular, one should become an enlightened convert. On one occasion, John Williams commented:

... the new wants and desires created by the supply of knowledge, the excitement produced by a series of discoveries, many of which were so wonderful and sublime that the island inhabitants could not fail to quicken and enlarge their faculties, and, above all, the elevating power of vital religion, have made them mentally, as well as spiritually, new creatures in Christ.⁵¹

The Christian notion of discipline introduced and inserted into the Samoan knowledge and value-system a radical polarity between religious and secular world-views, and it also stressed the centrality of the rational mind. As the process developed to the stage where people became absorbed by an extremely dualistic worldview, the wholistic knowledge-system of Samoans gradually eroded.⁵² Commenting on this transition, N.E. Stanner states that the Christians' proselytizing campaign that began in 1830 had a great impact on Samoan cosmology and philosophy. Christianity, with its new knowledge, was highly appreciated and earnestly acquired by Samoans. And while "influenced by teachers of their own race to become ashamed of ancient religious practices, (Samoans were at the same time) ... purposely denied even a theoretical knowledge."⁵³

The spiritual formation of the missions included the writing of the local language, followed by the translation of the Bible. At this time, a good Christian was measured according to how well he/she knew the stories of the Bible. Alan Gavan Daws, for example, states that the missionaries and some European settlers had been successful in inculcating in the islanders certain characteristics. Daws cites William Day's letter reporting to Secretary William Ellis of the LMS:

50 Discussion with the late Rev. Faatauva'a Tapuai, (Nov. 1992).

51 Williams, *Narrative of the Missionary Enterprises*, 135.

52 A wholistic understanding of humanity in the Samoan wisdom tradition is reflected through Nafanua's birth. Her being considered the possessor of all knowledge was determined by her birth. Accordingly, an embryo was formed from the sea by a male sea-creature, buried and rooted in the land, and was nurtured by the air (sky). Out of this union, Nafanua was born. Refer to section 5.

53 P.H. Buck, cited by N.E. Stanner, *The South Seas in Transition*, 290.

There are three things which have powerfully arrested my attention as evincing the great moral effect which has been produced on the Samoan nation: the general decorum in regard to the outside observances of religion, also in dress and manners, the great multitude of persons who have learned and are learning to write; and lastly the mental development and intellectual activity of a numerous class of enquirers, chiefly young men.⁵⁴

Further achievements involved subsequent developments such as establishing printing presses where the so-called *tama popoto* (wise men)⁵⁵ produced a variety of publications for education. Beginning in 1839,⁵⁶ a number of publications in Samoan were distributed for local village education. By 1855, the whole of the New Testament had been translated into Samoan, and six years later the whole Bible was in the hands of the Samoans.

Moreover, "... within a quarter of a century of John Williams's landing a self supporting village ministry was at work and native Samoan missionaries had already laid down their lives in foreign service."⁵⁷ Formal education was almost wholly in the hands of the missions in the 1920s. The missions' devotion to education was the most intimate and respectable 'systematic European influence' in modern Samoan life.⁵⁸

Teaching Samoans to read and write was the great accomplishment of the missions. At the same time, attaining the knowledge of the *papalagi* and his world promoted the gradual erosion of traditional knowledge in almost every dimension of life. The abilities of traditional priests to interpret the mysteries of the Divine were questioned. Navigational abilities such as travelling by the guidance of the stars, the moon, flow of the currents and waves, the winds, etc., were slowly replaced. Likewise, traditional calendars which determined seasonal times to grow crops and to harvest, times for a good catch, travel, and so forth, were replaced by a new kind of spiritual knowledge and the Christian calendar.

As new changes took place, dependence on foreign understandings, teachings, and ways became apparent. Local village teachings concentrated on the knowledge of the Bible, the science of medicine, tropical agriculture, the history of England, arts, and the use of civilized tools for handicrafts. These also became subjects in theological institutions. Thus, every local village was blessed by the presence of the so-called "laborious pastors,"⁵⁹ who became not only moderators of spiritual life, but were also recognized as active social servants of God. The missionaries also taught Samoans how to confront the manipulative attitudes of mercantile and agricultural settlers who lived among them. Thus, along with the news of salvation, as G.A. Lundie stated, "... he (a Samoan) arises

54 W. Day to William Ellis, 4/11/1839, JSS – LMS Letters: Box 12. Cited by Alan Gavan Daws, "The Great Samoan Awakening of 1839," *Journal of Polynesian Society* No. 70 (1961): 330.

55 See John Williams and J.B. Stairs, where they refer to themselves as the wise men who were witnessed by the islanders while busy with printing 'leaves' with letters.

56 Lovett, 385.

57 N. Goodall, *A History of the London Missionary Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 353.

58 N.E. Stanner, 291. Cf. Ruth Sinclair, "Preparation for Mission: The Samoan Faifeau," *Polynesian Missions in Melanesia: From Samoa, Cook Island and Tonga to Papua New Guinea and New Caledonia*, Ron and Marjorie Crocombe, eds. (Suva: Star Print, 1994), 8.

59 To be a *laborious pastor* means being someone who is well equipped with the knowledge to deal with everything in life. Besides spiritual attainments, a pastor must, as well, prove his capability through his practical life commitments.

into an industrious citizen, an intelligent trafficker, an honourable dealer, a domestic patriarch, and a servant of God.”⁶⁰

The spiritual discipline, furthermore, was developed into an elitist-oriented education system whereby only sons of the paramount chiefs were trained to become religious teachers⁶¹ in local villages. Even daughters of high chiefs and pastors were admitted to religious schools as a way of preparation for marriage to trained theological students and pastors. Colonial government schools followed the same trends by establishing their own private institutions where sons and daughters of political leaders, administrators, and a few recognized high chiefs received special training. It was a practise in these institutions that only children with *papalagi* last names were admitted. A few exceptions were made for children of influential high chiefs.

The aim was to train the elite to become future leaders for church administration. The education system, as originally intended, served its purpose. But as it further developed, it produced an elite who inflicted upon people many unfavourable deeds. In fact, the system promoted the thinking that people living in the urban areas were more advanced than those residing in rural villages. This also helped to foster distinctions between the rich and the poor both spiritually and socially, besides promoting destructive dualistic thinking in which nature had to be controlled and rapidly exploited to meet human demands. What is also notable in this process is the emergence of the common belief that the more academically-oriented the people were (according to Western standards), the more they were spiritually developed and morally equipped. In most cases, those who were most closely associated with the missionaries usually received such benefits.

The fundamental principles of Western spiritual discipline and ‘civilized’ knowledge focused on the developments of local churches, church schools and central offices for the governing administration of the *Lotu*. In so doing, the missionaries master-minded the spiritual and moral mission while local teachers championed the teaching activities and were laboriously committed to church growth and human benefits.

3.2.3. *Religio-Cultural Purification*

This development went hand in hand with the introduction of new moral codes, aiming at purifying several aspects of the receiving cultural heritage that did not comply with the missionaries’ worldview. The purification process was mostly determined by Western standards, beyond the values of the Gospel. It included, for example, the clothing of people’s half-nakedness, banning of initiation rituals, as well as some communal ceremonial activities. Some of these, though religiously meaningful, were banned by the Church.

The ceremonial life of Samoans had been associated with a sequence of ritual events.

⁶⁰ Lundie, 18.

⁶¹ It was the initial practice of the LMS missionaries that students who graduated from the theological college should work as local religious instructors under the supervision of a white missionary for some years. Only when the missionary approved him to be ordained could he become a pastor in the village congregation. The practice changed during the developmental growth of the Church.

Ceremonial events such as *taga tatau* (tattooing)⁶² and *tini o manaia ma tausala* (traditional marriage) with *faamaseiau* (act of testing the virginity of the *taupou* – daughters of the village chiefs) were tabooed as the missionaries saw that such practices were not in accordance with what they understood to be Christian moral principles. The denunciation of many old traditional rituals became part of the Christian moral discipline. The *taga tatau* was condemned partly due to the understanding that the shedding of blood in tattooing was an act which contradicted the shedding of the holy blood of Jesus for the salvation of humankind.

Additionally, the completion of a *tatau* was usually celebrated with a sexual union between the *sogaimiti* (tattooed man) and a woman. This union marked man's entrance into manhood. Withstanding the pain of being tattooed prepared one to face the complex challenges of life. Furthermore, a man could not fully affirm his 'manhood' without a relational bond or experience of association with the opposite sex. The Samoan philosophy states that men are tattooed while women bear children,⁶³ meaning that the pain of being tattooed is likened to that of giving birth.

3.3. Social and Political Developments of the *Lotu*

The local missions from 1830 to 1900 strived to be autonomous from the parent Mission Societies in Europe. This aim influenced additional changes in the social and political order and structure of the local societies.⁶⁴ Christianity arrived along with ideologies that were influenced by European political and social ideas. This meant that the missions operated very much along the lines of institutions fixed to the European social and political backgrounds. In this regard, Wilhelm Ziehr states that the aim of the British missionaries in the early stages of mission activity was to build a republic or a small state after the model of a small town in England. Due to this aim, some missionaries were so hard on the islanders that they even established institutional punishments such as a payment of money to the missions' funds, or imprisonment.⁶⁵

The evangelists' secular efforts, as J.C. Furnas observed, speeded up the development process. He states that "... the missionaries were inescapably as much European petty

62 It is traditionally understood that tattooing is an initiating act into manhood. Initially, this includes the readiness of a Samoan man to serve in the house of the chiefs. Prior to the act itself, a man must be well versed with the formal Samoan language, chiefly respect, and other related customs. The *tatau* or *pea* has a deep ecological meaning which will also be discussed later.

63 This is based on the proverbial saying: *E ta tatau alii, ae fanafanau tama'ita'i*. Men are tattooed while women bear children. The author conjectures that the ritual must have overtones of corporate suffering (death) and new birth.

64 N. Goodall, 372-380. See also Charles Forman, "Missionaries in the Twentieth Century," 53. The immediate goal of the missionary work was the recognition of the so-called younger churches to become self-propagating, self-supporting and self governing. This aim inspired the LMS missionaries to speed up the development process both in its social and spiritual dimensions. The same idea is mentioned by Forman in relation to the Catholic mission's attempt to be self-supportive and self-propagating, with the exception of self-governing, as Rome had to be firstly consulted.

65 Wilhelm Ziehr, *Hölle im Paradies: Entdeckung und Untergang der Südsee-Kultur* (Düsseldorf: Econ Verlag, 1980), 249 f. Ziehr states here: "Das Ziel der missionarischen Anstrengungen in dieser Zeit war klar ... eine Republik oder ein Spiegelbild des Kleinbürgertums Englands zu machen ... (deshalb) gingen die Missionare hart und streng vor ... Solche Verfehlungen wurden vordem mit Geldstrafen, kirchlicher Buße oder Gefängnis..."

bourgeois or mechanics with an ascetic bent as they were ministers of the Word.”⁶⁶ Furthermore,

... nobody ever told them, nor could they have understood, that the Gospel did not necessarily have anything to do with the desirability of plastered walls. The Gospel was one feature of white culture as the missionaries knew it at home; another was a concern with saving one’s soul; a third was regular hours of (hard) work. Unquestioning, the missionary inculcated all three.⁶⁷

Part of transmitting the home culture of the missionaries was the building of permanent structures to perpetuate English notions of social control. This idea of mission-centralization was taken up by colonial administrations during the 1900s, and has been carried down to the present.

Since the new patterns were generated by foreign ideas and pressures, some unfavourable circumstances emerged in Samoan social and political structures. The missionaries wanted to erect mission centres in specified villages within the districts, so that people of other villages could move to them. This was in contrast to the pattern of the unitary system of dispersed power of Samoan social organisation. Every village held the conviction that, by status and by right, they could manage their own social and political affairs. When a centre as proposed by the new religion was established, it would mean that religious, social and political power would be concentrated in one particular settlement. In addition, the association of the white missionary with the chiefs and people of such a location would be accompanied by accumulative monopolization of power⁶⁸ and social benefits. To counter this, many Samoans refused to abandon their villages, and therefore adopted as their own model the pattern that the new religion should be operated within the local villages’ social and political framework.⁶⁹

Churches, buildings and residential houses for the missionaries and pastors became central in almost all the villages. Although this signified the success and growth of the *Lotu*, it had several undermining ecological effects. Buildings were constructed according to Western-style architecture,⁷⁰ which not only “stressed the virtues of hard work”⁷¹ but also required foreign materials together with an enormous exploitation of land and marine resources, and new methods of manipulating natural resources were simultaneously introduced. For example, missionaries like John Williams and George Brown⁷² explained the

66 C.F. Furnas cited by Bridston, 44.

67 Bridston, 44f.

68 Cf. M. Meleisea, *The Making of the Modern Samoa*, 12f.

69 J.W. Davidson, *Samoa mo Samoa* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1967), 36. Cf. Ruth Sinclair citing Gilson, 8. Davidson states that “Samoan Protestantism never became the mirror image of English Nonconformity that was the ideal of most of the LMS missionaries. Even in its structure the church developed in ways that owed more to Samoan than to English Nonconformist tradition ...”

70 Davidson, 35. The missionaries in the face of cultural shocks were not acquainted with living in the open houses of the Samoans. Due to the lack of privacy provided by Samoan houses, they preferred to build houses in the European style to suit their demands.

71 Robert C. Kiste, “Pre-Colonial Times,” *Tides of History: The Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century* K.R. Howe, Robert C. Kiste and Brij V. Lal, eds. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 3-28.

72 George Brown, *Pioneer-Missionary and Explorer*, 34. Describing the process of building the mission-house, Brown explains that “coral was burnt for lime in immense ovens; stones and coral collected; large trees cut down

process of producing cement from local materials whereby many trees were cut down for fire-wood. Local villagers were instructed to collect coral rocks from the sea in great amounts and to dig large holes in the land. After burning the coral, a white powder was produced and used as cement for building churches.

The ‘roasting of rocks,’ as the islanders wonderously observed, gave them new and alternative ideas of utilizing valuable fruit trees such as breadfruits and bananas, as well as corals, rocks, and so forth. Describing the miraculous event of rock roasting, John Williams states:

At length the teachers requested them to set light to the firewood; and, as soon as it began to blaze, they could contain themselves no longer, but commenced shouting. ‘Oh these foreigners! they are roasting stones! ... Come hurricane and blow down our bananas and our breadfruits, ... we shall never suffer from famine again; these foreigners are teaching us to roast stones.’⁷³

The change in the order of nature demonstrated by the ‘roasting of stones’ revealed not only the miraculous power of the white man’s God, but it also explained his intellectual and technical abilities. Through the indirect imposition of a destructive awareness of nature’s potential, the islanders were at the same time convinced that: “The trees and the very stones in the sea, and the sand on the shore, become good property, in the hands of those who worship the true God, and regard his good word.”⁷⁴

The use of the new material revolutionized building methods. Unfortunately, it allowed little place for indigenous crafts and materials. This development was further activated by the willingness of Samoans in local villages to adopt the missionary’s building style. Besides providing a concrete or cement house for the man of God, almost all social supports were offered. One of the providential occasions relayed by G.A. Lundie was as follows:

In the middle of the day we went to the *fale tele* – the great house, to receive the contributions to the missionary cause. Young and old, rich and poor, brought something – chiefly little parcels of arrow-root, with many pieces of *siapo* (native cloth), some little baskets, and several fine mats, which are the most valuable property in the islands. A noble array, men and boys, the matron and the maid, even to the infant in it’s mother’s arms, had its little offering, and all for the cause of Christ.⁷⁵

far inland and dragged to the beach to be sawn into beams and rafters, or used as firewood for ovens. The whole of this work was done by the natives without any monetary considerations.”

73 Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises*, 20. Cf. S. Craig, *Between the Two Miracles* (London: Independent Press Ltd, 1956), 37.

74 Williams, 20.

75 Lundie, *Missionary Life in Samoa*, 108 f.

The offerings, as marvelled at by the missionary, were part of the Samoan custom of giving. But ironically, the missionary translated such actions as a sign of a change of heart. In his words: “Where the heart is enlarged, the poorest can find something for his master.”⁷⁶

It has been previously mentioned that while the Samoans tried to develop the new religion more in line with their own traditions, in contrast to English traditions,⁷⁷ the rapid growth in the development process of building mission stations and local village churches coincided with the constant exploitation of ecological systems. In the traditional method of house construction, it took a long time for Samoans to fell trees, but with the provision of “axes and saws, hinges, and other tools and ironmongery”⁷⁸ from missionaries’ friends in their homeland, the construction process was realized with remarkable speed. Additionally, the construction of complex centres to accommodate men of God was greatly mobilized by the competitive character of the Samoans themselves in relation to political and social matters. One commentator recorded a saying of one of the deacons of a particular church:

There has been a good deal of rivalry in building churches. I remember a remark made by a deacon when with others we were sitting chatting after a service in a particularly impressive church. ‘If you should see a better church than ours, let us know and we will pull ours down and build another.’⁷⁹

Craig further comments that the element of competition is very present in Samoan church life and affects not only the buildings. In relation to this competitive element, it has been noted that the missionary inherited a prominent place in the local community. As soon as he was seen to be the possessor of both material and spiritual wealth, almost every village requested a missionary.

3.3.1. *Theological Tendencies*

The institutionalization of the Christian religion was, in many respects, inspired by John Williams’ ‘motion’ theology, which emphasizes that God moves as the people are active. In his view, the superiority of God is disclosed by superiority of technology, which then means that Christianity is a prerequisite for civilization.⁸⁰ This kind of theological understanding somehow manipulates God’s own freedom via the technological abilities of human beings. Williams’ conviction suggests that the more people were engaged in

76 Lundie, 109.

77 Cf. Davidson, 36. The difference here is that Samoans did not want to move to the centre stations of the mission; rather, they preferred to establish within their own local villages a church together with a residence for the servant of God.

78 B.J. Mathew, *The Ship of Peace* (London: Livingston Press, 1947), 32f. Mathew specifically refers here to the friends of Williams in Birmingham who helped in sending good supplies of tools for construction purposes.

79 Craig, 38.

80 LMS Reports, 1829 to 1840. Cf. R.M. Moyle, 16f. Also, G. Daws, *A Dream of Islands: Voyages of Self-discovery in the South Seas* (Sydney: Jacaranda Press, 1980), 59. It is reported that the progress of civilization made by the ability and skill of Williams operate most beneficially both on religious and secular interests of the people. An increase in the nature of production grows hand in hand with the Word of God.

‘civilizing’ works of merit, the more they were entitled to salvation. Richard M. Moyle sums up this theological understanding by commenting:

The God whom John Williams preached saved the soul but also enabled the repentant sinner to live in civilized comfort as determined by British standards. Material prosperity was a virtue to both the preacher and convert, and the desire for European goods an indication of the sincerity of the conversion ...”⁸¹

Again, it is clearly expressed that salvation and Western ‘civilization’ co-exist. The belief in God materializes itself in the virtue of livelihood and prosperity. Such virtues inspired changes in the material development of the missions. For example, as the Christian civilization took over, the perception that the Gods indwells several places as their temples, besides traditional Samoan temples which were ecologically erected,⁸² was replaced by an insistence on European-styled chapels. This was activated not only by the influence of the missionaries, but also by the willingness of Samoans themselves to adopt such perceptions. Being enforced by the conviction that the rendering of good services to God through the missionary work was a means of obtaining divine blessings, the fundamental life resources were sacrificially utilized in excessive ways.

Provisions for the missions and the men of God contributed in speeding up the social and political development of the *Lotu*. Part of the provisions for the mission and the missionaries’ welfare was inspired by the value of giving. Giving all the best to God was the standard upon which faithful and successful believers were identified. The idea of giving had been intensively promoted by the teachings of the missionaries. A sermon preached by one missionary on St. John 3:16 – “*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son ...*,” and St. Luke 10: 27 – “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind*” – clearly presented the idea of giving as being instituted by God.

In the same manner, of course, God expected a return. The God who loves the world is counter-balanced by the demand of human love. While giving witness to God who so loved the world and gave Jesus Christ as a supreme revelation, and the promise of everlasting life for believers, the missionary simultaneously presented a God who “imposes upon us (Christians) a supreme obligation.”⁸³ The supreme obligation was to respond to the love of God in and through Jesus Christ by giving all, even to the utmost of human powers – “the powers of the whole nature with which God has endowed us.”⁸⁴ The love of God is expressed in the word ‘gave’ and as a response, giving in terms of reverence, service, fellowship and cooperation is demanded of Christians. Sanctity and reverence as the fruits of the love of the mind and soul are accompanied by the love of service that inex-

81 Richard M. Moyle, *The Samoan Journal of John Williams*, 16.

82 Besides the indwelling of the Gods or spirits in several parts of the land and sea as in the past, traditional Samoan temples were built from timbers of the forest, roofed with leaves of sugar-cane and coconut trees, and firmly tied by sinnets. These materials were constantly being replaced as they naturally decomposed.

83 Sermons compiled by J.E. Newell, *Miscellaneous Writings*, Box. No. 9 (1902), SOAS, University of London.

84 Newell, “For God so Loved the World ...” (John 3:16).

trically relies on human abilities. To give, whether spiritually or physically, is what God expects from believers.

This kind of theological understanding is further reflected in another missionary sermon which expresses the following: “God’s Grace is never an abstract, impersonal thing, it is love expressed in some deed of help and blessing – by someone, for someone... the realization of a need which you through the outpouring of the Spirit of grace can supply.”⁸⁵ In sum, giving in this respect was propagated by the awareness that grace had not been freely given for the whole of creation; rather, God, through the work of the mission, demanded the people to give all for its growth and progress.

3.3.2. *Social and Religious Regulations*

The social regulations of Samoans were organized according to their own life patterns. Decisions were made by the *matai* of each family, and the village orders were based on general consensus agreed upon by the *fono*. Matters concerning the livelihood of family and village members (sometimes extended to the district and national level) depended very much on the cooperation of the *matai* with family members or villagers. Besides religious duties, as previously mentioned, the *matai* regulated the working of the land and of the sea, besides their mediating roles in human relations.

Samoans’ acceptance of the new religion was accompanied by a number of new social and political codes. The missionaries were then seen as new lawmakers of the Samoan communities. They were active agents in upholding the Ten Commandments, as Koskinen notes: “Everything that was not in keeping with the holy book was considered sinful. Justice of the Mission was based on the Decalogue ... (and) in fact, any custom that did not suit the English middle-class notions of propriety was passed over as heathen wickedness.”⁸⁶ While respecting all commandments, it is apparent that the missionaries placed emphasis on the observations of the first law, which speaks about honoring the one and only God, and also on the strict keeping of the Sabbath, as well as the law which features taboos related to sex. The introduction of new religious codes undeniably altered the whole system of Samoan life, and adjustments were made in order to conform to the new standards.

3.4. *The Lotu and the Colonial Rules*

The social and political perspectives of the missions and colonial rule is a broad topic that could be explicated voluminously. However, the author has chosen to discuss areas that are related to the ecological theme. The focus will be on some of the developments of both the missions and the colonial government administrations, and how the interactionary co-existence of the missions and the colonial rule affected the organizational life of Samoa. ‘Organizational life’ refers to the whole human and natural order of traditional Samoan life in the context of change.

85 Newell, A Sermon on Zechariah xii:10, “The Spirit of Grace and of Supplication” (October 28, 1906).

86 Koskinen, 36.

The division of Samoa after the Berlin Treaty of 1889 between the United States and Germany marks another epoch in the history of the missions. It was during this time that the contrasts of the social, political and religious interests of Samoans, the European settlers and the missionaries were experienced in new ways. These reactions, whether theoretical or practical,⁸⁷ could not escape patriotism, nationalism and denominationalism.⁸⁸ These so-called *isms* provoked divisive and destructive attitudes rather than constructive and life-promoting principles.

It is noted, for example, that before the United States and Germany officially established their centralized form of government in 1900, the spirit of factionalism had already been intensively felt and had materialized in terms of private human interests.⁸⁹ This led to the outbreak of the Samoan Civil War shortly before the colonial powers took control. The colonial ideology of dividing a nation in order to conquer and rule was behind the order of the time, and was strongly guided by the colonial ambitions of the Americans, Germans and British.

The missionaries were no mere by-standers of colonialism. During the initial phase of colonization, some missionaries, especially those who worked on the eastern islands of Samoa, favorably supported the colonialist ideas and the claim of the United States to take control. Most missionaries saw American control as divinely sanctioned and a very wise move with regards to their commitment to the social needs of the people, in terms of improving communications, education and health conditions.⁹⁰

This was in contrast to the aims of the missionaries in the Western island group, who strongly believed that “the foreign powers should accept the notion that sovereignty over the country was possessed by its people collectively, but the government should be organ-

87 Refer to Mary Evelyn Townsend, *Origins of Modern German Colonialism 1871-1885*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1921, 22-52. See also P.M. Kennedy, “Anglo German Relations in the Pacific and the Partition of Samoa: 1885-1899,” *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* Bd. 17 (1971): 56-72. Townsend refers to the theoretical contributions of professional personnel such as historians, political scientists, emigration societies, explorers and natural scientists, and the missionaries as a stimulus behind German Colonial Expansion. The idea was predominantly “projected and promulgated by the so-called doctrinaires and intellectuals (human convictions), as well as supplemented by certain definite currents within the national life.” Even though initially existing as an idea in this sense, colonialism became gradually realized through Germany’s commercial engagement. In this way, the German Empire was “... silently and independently transforming theory into practice.”

88 For example, an LMS missionary, Mr Hucket, during the time of transition reported that: “What certainly will be brought into clearer contrast is the difference between the loose continental Romanism of one part of the population, and the strict Scottish Presbyterianism of the other. The fight will be between two parties. *LMS Report, 1901*, 298. See also Reports from 1880 to 1900 when Samoa was undergoing political and social transitional changes.

89 Davidson, 47. Meleisea. 31-45. Davidson presents a clear view in relation to the contrast of interests during this period. For instance, in 1870, “... the (European) settlers had been primarily concerned with the establishment of a government that could maintain law and order. After the war the matters with which they concerned themselves included the recognition of their land claims and the maintenance of rights to continue buying lands and to introduce indentured labour for its development ... To advance them, they actively fomented Samoan factionalism and, with equal alacrity, called upon consuls and visiting naval officers to assert their claims.”

90 See, for example, *LMS Report 1901*, 303. It is reported here that: “The closing part of the century will always be memorable for the passing away of the native rule in Samoa and the substitution of civilized government. Tutuila and Manua have come under the wise and sympathetic rule of the United States Government.”

ized on a district basis.”⁹¹ From this understanding, the missionaries were convinced that any idea of a unified Samoan monarchy which the colonial powers had intended to establish would be a failure.⁹² While anticipating unfavourable influences of Germany as a hindrance to the development of the missions, the missionaries interpreted that it was “God’s providential dealings with us in Samoa ... (to take notice of the) ... danger of identifying our Mission with the German flag.”⁹³ These missionary warnings were evidently based more on religious interests, in contrast to the political and economic aims and goals of the colonial rulers. Against the mission strategies, the colonial administration tried to de-Englandize (*Entanglisierung*) Samoans by attempting to Germanize (*Germanisierung*) them.⁹⁴

The contrast of interests at the beginning of colonization is clearly spelled out in a 1900 LMS Report. It notes that the cancellation of the celebration of the Emperor’s birthday, which fell on the Sabbath, created other conflicts. The missionaries, pastors and church members strictly observed the Sabbath as a holy day, and the festival for the birthday celebration was refused. Yet the German authorities reacted to this as an act of disloyalty. In return, they criticized the missions from an economic viewpoint, and even banned some of the religious activities. German rulers considered it unreasonable to continue “... the annual gatherings, at which the churches bring in their contributions for the support of their pastors, and for missionary purposes ... in large sums ...,”⁹⁵ without any intention of paying taxes. Additionally, the official government ordered the missionaries to put a stop to building expensive churches.⁹⁶

3.4.1. *A Perspective on Lotu and Colonial Rulers*

The quest for power and political control of the Western world was intimately identified with the idea of militarism. Indeed, militarism was always accompanied by ills of every sort that exploited the life of the whole creation, even though it sometimes established stability and order. To satisfy the thirst for political control, the three powers mentioned earlier considered the geographical location of Samoa to be a strategic centre in which to establish their naval stations. This drove the Samoans more toward humiliating conditions rather than advantage.⁹⁷

Colonial rule attempted to control almost every aspect of Samoan life. The pressures on both human and natural resources were mostly recognized in imbalanced relationships. In foreign and local interactions, there was turmoil rather than favourable ends in the social and political history of Samoa. According to Davidson, this was a time when the “traditional forms of authority had become increasingly inadequate in the face of changing con-

91 Davidson, 39. The experiences of the mission’s establishment where Samoans adopted the new religion, within the framework of her social and political organization, played an influential role in this decision.

92 Davidson, 39 ff.

93 Miscellaneous Notes, LMS Missionary Writings, 6.

94 Wilhelm Solf, *Samoa, the People, the Mission and the Europeans*, 1-19. J.A. Moses, *Zwischen Puritanismus und Ultramontanismus*, 244.

95 107th LMS Report, 1902, 280.

96 LMS Report, 1902, 280.

97 Cf. Davidson, 60.

ditions and in which every attempt to achieve the reorganisation necessary for the establishment of stability had ended in failure.”⁹⁸ In addition, natural resources were developed at an accelerated pace and increasingly generated a complexity of ecological problems.

At the beginning of the colonial regime, there was a conflict of interests between the missions and the German rule. It was a continual battle between the power of God represented by the missions (or the church) versus the power of the State symbolized by the Emperor. The battle was predominantly linked to conflicting notions of power, authority and loyalty. The missions claimed their right to authority and had confidence in the power and rule of God which had already found root in the institutional life of Samoans, long before the arrival of the colonial governments. Having been oriented by missionary teachings for more than half a century, the people found in them confidence and security, both morally and socially. In reaction against German hegemony, some missionaries actually sought British annexation of Samoa.⁹⁹

Perhaps recognizing the stronghold of the missions, colonial rulers attempted to legitimate their power by preaching that it was the will of God for them to rule over colonies. The Power of God preached by the missions was somehow assimilated by the colonial administrations to be the main working mechanism behind Samoans’ subjection to imperial rule. In this way, it was taken for granted that the Emperor, represented by the Kaiser, had been entrusted with the divine authority to exercise his rule over Samoa.¹⁰⁰

3.4.2. *Questions of Social and Political Power*

Central to the Samoan conception of religion during this era was the authority of the *matai* over his/her household, as well as the missionary and/or a pastor over his congregation. Keesing, Davidson, Gilson, and Meleisea disclose that the exercise of foreign colonial rule from 1830 to 1900, whether over the traditional *matai*-system, or the functioning structure of the *Lotu*, was disapproved of by the majority of Samoans. The attempt to establish a centralized government had been rejected from the beginning by Samoans, who

98 Davidson, 67.

99 See LMS Reports, 1899, 1900, 1901, 1902.

100 Sermons compiled by J.E. Newell, Miscellaneous Boxes No. 14, 15, 16, SOAS, University of London. Note that the sermon has no specific text, but occasionally, the missionary refers to the passage in Luke 5:7 where the Lord is “*behind the signal and grants the common blessing*.” This imperial understanding is vividly expressed by a German missionary who worked in Samoa, where he stresses in some parts of his sermon in 1902 at an official occasion:

“I think it is fitting that the great and blessed influence exerted by the Kaiserin not only in the palace home, the shrine of her loving heart, and in the homes of her sons – your royal princess – but also silently and powerfully throughout the Empire should thus annually be recognized ... Her first-born son, ... the coming King and Kaiser should be a fine Christian wielding his enormous influence and rule for the true advancement and elevation of the peoples he should govern, and (as his Royal Father is doing) for the peace and progress of the world must be honoured ...”

The sermon emphasizes obedience to the empirical rule as a virtue of Christian life. It consolidates not only the rule of the Emperor as being divinely authorized for the advancement of human development, but also for the peace of the world. It depicts how the colonized should behave and relate to the colonizers. The political propaganda was backed up by the enduring words of the suffering Christ: ‘not my will but thine’ or, in simple words, not the Samoan will, but the will of the Kaiser. In a practical sense, the missionary indirectly applied the Biblical text to affirm the German colonial aims and objectives.

had been governed under the leadership of *matai*. Trusting the *fa'a-matai* to have sustained a self-sufficient communal life, the *matai* saw the exercise of foreign control not only as a means of weakening their *pule* (authority or power), but also of breaking down the traditional social and political structures.¹⁰¹

Although the imperial political system recognized in some respects the traditional social order of Samoan life, there were those who envisioned that the newly implemented system would eventually lead to cultural discontinuity. In fact, cultural discontinuity leads to the disintegration of people from their own rights and relations to the sources of a prosperous living. This was vividly represented by Governor Solf's approach, which was essentially paternalistic.¹⁰² In an attempt to alter the organisational structure of the *fa'a-Samoa*, Solf implemented a hierarchical and a centralized system whereby he ruled on behalf of the German Kaiser, the *tupu sili* (highest king), and he chose Mataafa Iosefo, one of the paramount titles, to be the *alii sili* (paramount chief) and to reside as a leading figure of the Samoan monarchy.¹⁰³ Some of the leading paramount chiefs were placed in secondary roles as *fautua* (advisors). Samoans were expected to recognize the royal authority through obedience to the orders of the Governor who acted as a representative of the German Emperor.

The imposition of the new hierarchical system, together with the related social and economic discrepancies, created greater tension between Samoans and the colonial rulers. The *Lotu*, in the course of social and political conflicts, played a mediating role between the two parties. It is evident during this time that the missionaries and the colonial rulers had gradually developed common interests and offers of support to each other for the improvement of social and economic programs. Through cooperative means, the missions benefited from the findings of the experts who were brought by the colonial government to report on the country's resources and potential, in addition to the government's road-building programme.¹⁰⁴ This was one of the main reasons for the missions' close identification with the colonial rulers.

When intense conflicts arose from the *Mau* Movement in 1908 (Samoan movement for self-government), the missionaries sought reconciliation from Samoans as a means of fulfilling the colonial wishes. This was affirmed when the orator Namulauulu Lauaki, the leader of the *Mau* Movement, together with other leading chiefs and supporters, was sent into exile. Davidson recalls the event by stating: "With the assistance of the missionaries, however, a peaceful surrender was arranged; and Lauaki and nine others, accompanied by a large party of relatives and a pastor, were taken to Saipan, in the Marianas."¹⁰⁵ In this case, the *Lotu* cooperated with colonial rulers in advocating the uprooting of people from their homeland. Reconciliation through humbling oneself to the demands of the powerful and the maintenance of peace was used as a bait for captivity and exile. Retaliation to op-

101 It was unthinkable to Samoans to be subject to other authorities besides the authority of the chiefly system and the Christian religion which was already being established. This was apparent by their attitudes against working under a white man. This led to the import of coolies (labourers) by the colonial master (Germany) to work in their plantations.

102 Davidson, 78.

103 Meleisea, *Modern Adaptations*, 29-32.

104 Davidson, 77.

105 Davidson, 87.

pressive measures was met by the use of spiritual and military weapons. Being exiled from one's own homeland, of course, meant a total uprooting of people from their living habitations.

3.5. Industrial and Economic Developments of the *Lotu*

The transition from natural technology and a subsistence land-based economy to a techno-scientific and monetary system was facilitated by new ideas and skills conveyed to the islanders in order to profit economically.¹⁰⁶ The introduction of Western material goods provided life with many advantageous alternatives. Traders, runaway sailors and other Europeans who settled on the islands had already introduced the knowledge and skills for economic consideration. But the *Lotu*, through the persistence of missions directors on missionaries in establishing 'civilized' converts helped to further the process. The missionaries supported the desires of the local people in matters related to trading and commerce.¹⁰⁷ Before specifically referring to the practical side of industrial and economic development, it will be helpful to first examine certain determining theological tendencies of Christianity that shaped and inspired the economic engagements of the missions.

3.5.1. Theological Tendencies

The idea of God's providential nature was one of the prominent theological convictions that accounted for the conveyance of the Christian mission to the South Seas.¹⁰⁸ The LMS Board of Directors trusted God to be the Provider of all good things and, for the missionaries who left their homeland for life, the humble reliance on God and "Jesus as the sole Disposer"¹⁰⁹ of all good things was the bottom line of all hopes. The disposing activity of Jesus was undoubtedly linked with the providential supply of human demands as an inseparable part of the missionary vocation.

God's Providence was considered synonymous with missionary providence.¹¹⁰ This providence, furthermore, relied on local natural resources such as animals, produce of the land and valuable commodities for sale as mission properties. The God-given essentials of life became property of ownership and assets for the mission. This mentality is recorded in a missionary manual, as follows:

As to cattle and horses, which you will need: They are reared on native property, and put in your power, because you are the missionary. They are not allowed to you, the man, the individual; but to the missionary – you, or

106 See LMS Report – 1929, 7-18. This idea is specifically clear from John Williams' intentions. In the LMS Report – 1929, apart from raising subscriptions and constructing sugar mills on several islands, it is stated that the progress of civilization is mostly "made by the ability and skill of John Williams," whereby he believed that technological and economic developments operate beneficially both in terms of people's religious and secular interests.

107 See, for example, K.L.P. Martin, *Transactions of the LMS* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), 15. Cf. Aarne Koskinen, 125-140.

108 See LMS Reports, 1830-1840.

109 Lovett, 21.

110 Newell, Sermons, 5. Cf. Charles Forman, "Missionaries in the Twentieth Century," 41 ff.

any other missionary. They belong to the mission, not to you; and the produce, in great part, belongs also to the mission. A new calf or foal sells for very little. It is its rearing which gives it value, and this is all mission property.¹¹¹

The command appears to be theologically informed by the presumption of divine ownership of the entire earth. This is assumed to be based on Biblical texts such as Psalm 50:10-12, where it states: “*For every wild animal of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the air, and all that moves in the field is mine ... for the world and all that is in it is mine*” (cf. Lev. 25:23). This understanding of divine ownership undoubtedly had been adopted by the missions to authorize their property ownership takeover, even though these living creatures were not locally conceived as domestically owned.

In addition, even though the missionaries were initially coached to “enlighten the mind and inform the judgment, and thus reach the heart”¹¹² of the natives, and had been exhorted to be free in all their power from supporting secular matters, they were, without exception, active participants in commercial trading. This happened despite the fact that they were warned that “Money and property always bring anxiety and other feelings, at least unfavourable to the highly spiritual life of a devoted missionary ...” and were advised, therefore, not to work as a “half-missionary and a half-merchant.”¹¹³

Engaging in commercial and trading enterprises was in fact wholeheartedly accepted by most missionaries. The missions’ ‘civilizing’ campaign could not escape from commerce as an essential need upon which success was built. As has already been noted, this view was strongly advocated by John Williams, who himself was convinced that “Wherever the missionary goes, new channels are cut for the stream of commerce.”¹¹⁴ “Geography and the expansion of foreign trade ...,” according to Williams, influenced the working relationship between commerce and Christianity in the Pacific.¹¹⁵ Williams’ views were later furthered by his son, John C. Williams. In 1839, J.C. Williams became “the first Christian trader”¹¹⁶ to monopolize the coconut oil trade. He built himself a vessel for trading among the island groups of central Pacific, began the export of coconut oil from Samoa, and established a general store in Apia.¹¹⁷ Williams’ trading activities were stimulated by LMS representatives in outer districts as the mainstay of monthly contributions.¹¹⁸ The Methodist mission operated upon the same lines:

111 Lundie, *Missionary Life in Samoa*, 287.

112 Lundie, 287.

113 Lundie, 287.

114 J. Williams, JPS, 583.

115 R.P. Gilson, 138. Based on a sermon Williams preached at Guildhall, England.

116 Davidson, 38. Richard M. Moyle citing Gunson, 16. Cf. Trood, *Samoa-Island Reminiscences*, 59. Trood presents an account of the stay of J.C. Williams in Samoa as Consul for 24 years, during which time he bought much land from the natives around the Apia town area. He and his son-in-law McFarland “started a small cotton plantation (45 acres at Faleula in 1864), and had subsequently turned it into a coconut plantation in 1867.”

117 Gilson, 165. Davidson, 38.

118 Gilson, 165 f.

Whatever good the Wesleyan may do spiritually the mischief they work commercially, whenever they have a chance, is beyond counting, and the common name of their missionary sooner, “the Palm Oil trader,” is, according to their own account, well deserved.”¹¹⁹

The RCM, following the same stance, procured cargos of sandalwood and a great supply of sea-pearls as items for commercial trading, besides the constant dependence on agricultural products for sale.¹²⁰ Again, in order for the missions to progress, commerce could not be avoided.

In terms of spiritual formation, as previously discussed, industry, carpentry, tropical agriculture and other related disciplines had already been inclusive subjects of theological curricula. This aspect was not only vividly expressed by the missionaries’ industrial and economic engagements, but also theologically mediated through the missions’ preaching and teachings. One example can be noted, in which a missionary enthusiastically developed what can be called a ‘*Divine-Merchant Christology*.’ Preaching on Revelation 3:18, “I counsel thee to buy of me,” the missionary stresses three important points: (i). The Divine Merchant; (ii). His merchandise; (iii). The inducements He offers to buy of him.¹²¹

The missionary constantly emphasizes eternal ‘richness’ as the most distinguished value of the Gospel, over against the pursuits of material wealth. As such, eternal human values were considerable means required for the establishment of God’s Heavenly Kingdom on earth. He presented Jesus Christ as the champion of all merchants. Jesus Christ as Savior of the world is like a merchant with valuable wares to sell, and Christ pressed these wares upon human beings to accept through a purchase transaction.¹²² With his merchandise expertise – in the sense of appropriate consideration of the utility of his goods, the intrinsic values, and what may be called the “promise of the commodity,”¹²³ Jesus, as a merchant, had already foreseen the needs of people and had therefore chosen his goods in accordance with such needs. The missionary goes on to say that by having looked upon the world, and having seen what the needs of humans actually were, Christ had in His power supplied all human needs, and in his infinite goodness he had brought salvation down to humankind.¹²⁴

The second part of the missionary’s sermon pictures Christ as an oriental Merchant with his camel loaded with the goods he had for sale. When he arrives in the early morning at a city or town, he unloads his camel, packs his wares in a convenient form for carrying, “leaves his beast outside the city, and commences his house to house visitation of the city ... He grows not weary with rebuffs and slights, but presses on – knowing not, but that

119 George R. Pembroke, and G.H. Kingsley, *South Sea Pubbles* (London: Richard Bently, 1873), 273. Cf. Gilson, 138-161.

120 Koskinen, 138 ff.

121 A sermon on the Book of Revelation, III:18, supposedly from J.E. Newell. Miscellaneous Boxes No. 13, 14 and 15, SOAS, University of London. There are some observations upon which these sermons are assessed with the word “supposedly.” The author has observed that there are a number of sermons with different variations of handwritings. Therefore, not all sermons are J.E. Newell’s; rather, he must be the one who gathered and compiled all the scattered writings and sermons.

122 Newell, 6f.

123 Newell, 16.

124 Newell, 7.

success may yet close off the day.”¹²⁵ These theological notions served economic as well as spiritual purposes well in the missionary enterprise. They helped in inspiring Christian commitments to the missionary work, in all its totality.

In other words, Jesus Christ the Merchant offered salvation, but only when one buys from him. The offering of valuable things to the missions was certainly viewed as one avenue of buying and obtaining salvation. Even though the missionary projected Jesus as “a traveller seeking shelter, friendship and communion,”¹²⁶ the sermon does not contain any sense of inheriting the Heavenly Kingdom as a free gift of grace. Again, the image of Heavenly richness, as proclaimed and promised, could only be attained through the willingness of the consumer to give all in order to buy it. The inhabitants were taught “not to be weary of good works, but to continue to give their oil and arrow-roots to God, that the blind may see, and the deaf may hear.”¹²⁷ Here, works of merit precede free grace.

3.5.2. *Monetary-System and the Developments of the Lotu*

The adoption of the monetary system was something new, and the missionaries taught the islanders the value of money, its use, and how to prevent unfair transactions between them and the traders. This, however, does not mean that the missions themselves eschewed commercial activities. The mission endeavour was recognized as intimately part involved in monetary operations. The missions’ command to cover nakedness, for example, was an advantage for traders, in the sense that the purchase of clothes was highly demanded by the Samoans. While demanded as a sign of conversion, the demand for cotton prints, shirts and trousers, shoes and stockings was reckoned at 80,000 to 100,000 yards per annum by 1951.” The demand to buy cloth, in many ways, pushed the islanders under the yoke of economic pressure from both the missionaries and the traders. People were indirectly forced to find a means of earning money.¹²⁸

B.J. Mathew recalls one occasion where John Williams was given L103 (British Bounds) in money. After this, the island inhabitants said: “This is to cause the Word of God to grow in other lands.”¹²⁹ Williams, knowing that these islanders had never before seen money, explained to them its worth, its technical use and importance for the further development of the mission. He said: “Men and women and boys and girls in the far-off islands of *Beritani* (Britain) collect money in order to send missionaries to you.”¹³⁰ Williams assured them that they could buy money with other things such as valuable materials and animals. He then ordered them to “let every family set aside a pig for the mission’s purposes.”¹³¹

125 Newell, 7.

126 Newell, 3.

127 Williams, *Narrative of the Missionary Enterprises*, 12.

128 Koskinen, 132 f; Keesing, 123 f; Gilson, 138-148.

129 Mathew, *The Ships of Peace*, 33.

130 Mathew, 33.

131 Mathew, 34. It is further stated that, early on the next morning, John Williams was awakened by the piercing squeals of a hundred of pigs all along the beach, and the people were busy cutting a nick in the ears of selected pigs as a mark for animals on sale.

One can observe how the monetary-system¹³² was introduced, and how Western commercial ideas were deposited into the consciousness of the islanders. This marked the beginning of a socio-economic order whereby norms of property-sharing constantly underwent transformation.¹³³ In traditional exchange-systems, reciprocating ceremonial activities were confined to materials of worth, including some goods, animals and food. In contrast, the newly introduced system brought about an inductive kind of thinking where the worth of natural resources was reduced to items of commercial value. Several trees possessed great value to the Samoans, and they were felt to reveal the providential nature of their Gods, mediated through the experiences of prosperity. However, the ingenuity of the Samoans themselves in discovering and applying natural resources for their necessities and comforts turned these trees into mere items of commerce. To the missionaries, these trees became “important articles of commerce.” They would, “in the hands of English cabinet-makers, vie with some of their most admired woods for furniture productions.”¹³⁴

3.5.2.1. Monetary Operations

The value which was propagated was that the manipulation of nature was for the spreading of the Word of God. Christian teachings were extended to include industrial and commercial techniques and means for discovering proper mechanisms to quicken the establishment of industry. The missionaries were persuaded that their engagement in monetary operations would be beneficial both to the secular and religious interests of the people.¹³⁵ Being influenced by early Calvinist Protestantism, with its value on being industrious, disciplined work that yield benefits to those who are predestined for salvation, human efforts, and efficiency were considered as outer signs of inner faith.

The intense involvement in the monetary system meant that the customs of reliance on and receiving goods from natural resources for daily use were now replaced by certain religiously-oriented economic principles such as hard work, industriousness and productivity. Hence, Samoans who naturally enjoyed leisure times and had no strong incentive to grow rich due to the peculiar circumstances in which they were placed,¹³⁶ were eventually

132 See Melvin Ember, “Commercialization and Political Change in American Samoa,” *Exploration in Cultural Anthropology*, George P. Murdock, ed. (Publishing co. 1963): 1-31. To provide a clear perspective on the Western understanding of the monetary system versus the traditional exchange system, one has to distinguish between the direct transaction of buying and selling, using money, and the distribution of goods through the mechanism of hospitality and sharing. Ember simply states that “when money comes into use as the means of exchange, the process of commercialization has begun. That is, commercialization is the development of buying and selling, which by definition depends upon the presence of money ...”

133 A. Johnston, *Camping Among Canibals – Samoa*, 184 ff. The practical communism of Samoans was that: “... if a native gets money, or anything else, he straightaway divides it amongst his brothers, and cousins, and uncles, and sisters, and so on, and the idle ones ...” The missionaries saw this as a way of disadvantage.

134 Williams, *Narratives of the Missionary Enterprises*, 127.

135 LMS Report 1829, 14. An example is given here where “the meeting for business was held” by the Tahitian Auxiliary Missionary Society. In the meeting, a report on the local church’s subscription to the Parent Society in England was read, which included 2,000 bamboos, (about 1000 gallons) cocoa-nut-oil from Tahiti, and 700 bamboos (about 350 gallons) in Eimeo.

136 Pembroke & Kingsley, 283.

attracted and drawn into the operating commercial system where time and hard work are of crucial importance.

The missions depended very much on collections from the people. For the Protestant missions, one method of summoning financial means for the social development of the Gospel was the introduction of the *Me* (May collection). The *Me* was an annual event in England, whereby a special Sunday in the month of May was officially set by the Mission Society as a specific time for financial contributions and offerings collected for the widening of the Gospel. This was later adopted by the LMS (also WMMS) in Samoa, and had later on used to provide funds for the payment of indemnities demanded by consuls and naval officers.”¹³⁷ Catholics likewise collected monetary contributions for ecclesiastical purposes. Notably, members of the congregations cooperatively offered hard work free of charge in the missions’ commercial plantations, besides improving their own plantations for the sake of economic production and ecclesiastical support. Other sources of funds included the publication of books and educational items which were sold at reasonable prices or exchanged, including “one piece of scriptures printed in Samoan in exchange for one gallon of coconut oil.”¹³⁸

3.5.2.2. Commercialized Views on Natural Resources

The introduction of the monetary system marked the beginning of the commercialization of indigenous natural resources. The missionaries arrived with the idea that natural resources such as land, animals, trees, etc. could be privatized through the process of sale and legal registrations. The missions’ intentions were bolstered by economic criteria such as the careful consideration of the domestic animals and commercial crops studied in terms of their profitability. Landscapes and sites as well were researched and valued after their productivity.¹³⁹ Access to transportation and trading ports was also considered. It is disclosed, for example, that J.C. Williams, the first island trader, also became the first land-owner who managed to purchase the “most potentially rich lands,” and utilized them for his commercial interests. His approach was followed by some missionaries.¹⁴⁰

This approach was clearly presented in some of the Missions’ reports. One instance (in Tahiti) was noted by the missionary P. Hodges during 1796-1799 in his Diary, where he and his colleague Mr. Bourne went to look at a valley to see which place they considered to be “the best to form a sugar plantation and a missionary plantation.” After confirming the productive nature of the piece of land, they chose a residence on a hill for themselves and called it “Providential Hill.”¹⁴¹ The choice of site and the productivity of the land were ideal from a European perspective. However, the decision overlooked the ecological side effects in relation to the planting cultures. In other words, the consideration favoured profitability at the expense of ecological discontinuity. The missionary was not aware of the fact that his decision did not suit the climatic context, in the sense that rainy seasons

137 Davidson, 72.

138 Watters cited by A.C.S. Wright, 94.

139 From the Diary of P. Hodges, Tahiti 1796-1799. Hodges was a missionary of the LMS in Tahiti.

140 Gilson, 163 ff.

141 P. Hodges, *Tahiti 1796-1799*.

caused soil erosion in valleys. This would further cause destruction of other related eco-systems. These views are also commonly expressed in the writings of George Turner¹⁴² and other missionaries who worked in Samoa.

It was notable that, when the Christian religion was to be established in local villages, it was normally agreed upon by certain chiefs to allocate parcels of land for ecclesiastical purposes. A commercialized view of land came to be accepted by Samoans, when the missionaries indirectly refused the free offer of land and made a purchase of a property for the missions' purposes. One of the examples given here refers to a land sale in which the LMS bought a parcel of land for the establishment of her theological institution.¹⁴³ The mission organizations which arrived later followed the same process, which ended up with the mission owning more than 5,000 acres of land in Western Samoa, according to statistics.¹⁴⁴ The missions also own several portions of land in Eastern Samoa.¹⁴⁵

Besides the acquisition of land as private properties for the mission operations, acres of land were not only cultivated and converted into commercial plantations, but the land itself became a product with an economic worth. Acres of land were planted with a variety of "commercially profitable plants"¹⁴⁶ such as arrowroot, ground nut, Kaffir corn, brown corn, maize, and so forth. Some of these introduced cash crops, according to later researches, were ecologically unhealthy to the tropical soil.

In addition, it was the usual practice of the missionaries that during their visitations from island to island, they brought with them a number of valuable plants (especially cash crops) which were not available on other islands. Through transportation, new insects and pests were introduced to other islands that effectively harmed the life of local species or life-supporting eco-systems. For instance, A.C.S. Wright in his research reveals that:

Between 1850 and 1860, the Samoans were undergoing the first real experience of modern commercial methods ... Land use practices were scarcely modified in response to this new stimulus production (fresh vegetables and coconut oil demand) ... The introduction of new plants, new pests, diseases, and trees which invaded the village gardens. Weeds like

142 George Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, 34.

143 Turner, 34. It is noted from Turner's narrative that when the missionaries sought a site for the theological institution, many chiefs and villagers were willing to offer them land free of charge. But the missionaries did not consider the offers; rather, they requested to 'purchase' it and consider it as a mission property. Turner states: "We called together the owners of the land, marked off about twenty-five acres, and paid it in calico and hardware. Subsequently, as our members increased, we added twenty-five more. The entire cost of the land was 28.3s. 11d; that is to say, about 11s. per acre English value, or 1.5s. per acre Samoan value."

144 A.S.C. Wright, "Soil and Land Use of Western Samoa: Soil Bureau," *Bulletin: New Zealand Department of Scientific and Industrial Research*, No. 22 (Wellington: R.E. Owen Government Printer, 1963), 83 f. See also Keesing, 262 f.

145 See Keesing, *Modern Samoa*, 266-268. There is no exact estimation of the total amount of acres of land obtained by various missions such as the LMS, WMMS, RCM and so forth. Keesing only states that during the colonial administrations, there were parcels of land granted for church purposes. Actually, before this time, the missions had already owned many acres of land in Eastern Samoa. Keesing only records a large holding of 360 acres that had already been registered by the Mormon mission.

146 See, for example, LMS Report 1901, 308; 1902, 291. The phrase is commonly used in Missionary Reports, identifying a variety of plants in terms of their cash values. LMS Reports from 1840s to the 1900s often refer to this when commercial agriculture became a stimulus of the Samoan economy for both the Church and the Colonial Government Administrations.

latana and guava have proved very difficult to eradicate since they have become established amongst native plants and push fallows.¹⁴⁷

In addition, it was occasionally noted that the missionaries discouraged the planting of indigenous plants that were used for traditional ceremonies or for medical purposes, to be replaced, instead, by cash crops.¹⁴⁸ The engagement of the missions in commercial activities generated not only the breaking open of the land for agriculture at an accelerated rate, but also encouraged the practice of monoculture. Machines were provided by the the missions' supporters at home, and helped in speeding up the rate of productions.¹⁴⁹ The commercialized and privatized views of land as a resource, together with the modified methods of cultivation have, in most cases, more unfavourable side effects than ones favourable to indigenous ecological systems.

3.5.2.3. The *Lotu*, Commerce and Colonialism

Pacific historians generally acknowledge the efforts of missionaries not only in teaching people proper ways to deal with traders, but also protecting them from losing their land to European settlers, although the missions themselves had been acquiring land either as gifts or through purchase.¹⁵⁰ The *Lotu* in fact became a "landlord."¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, the missionaries' intervention on behalf of Samoans to protect their indigenous land rights was helpful to a degree.

These efforts became weakened as more *papalagi* arrived and took over acres of land, either by unfavourable means of exchange or through manipulative methods, and at unfair costs. The *fanua*, which was inherited by Samoans as a gift of divine blessing, whose value cannot be bought or valued monetarily, and which must be handed down to succeeding generations, became not only a *restricted area* to be fenced but also a commodity of sale. In the traditional land-system of Samoans (Polynesians), the title to the land remained vested in the *matai* of the *aiga* and *nuu*. A "... transfer of lands between Samoans always obliged the recipients of the land to accept the authority and common identity of the *aiga* and *nuu* who bestowed it."¹⁵² A *matai* as an individual is not entitled to own or transfer ownership of parcels of land; rather, one has to consult the family for its approval.

The accelerated land sale process was evident from the 1860s to 1900s. This was engineered by the civil war of Samoans which was backed up by colonial powers such as

147 Wright, "Soil and Land Use of Western Samoa," 95 f.

148 Discussion with John Doom and some members of a Delegation of the Tahitian Protestant Church, Belgium (November, 1997). In Tahiti and the neighbouring islands, the growing of the *kava* plant was discouraged and replaced by wine. *Kava* was used for ceremonial activities and for medical purposes. But the missionaries saw that it would benefit the mission economically when people were encouraged to become involved in wine production. The change was purely based on economic reasons.

149 K.L.P. Martin, 15 f.

150 Davidson, 46.

151 The 'landlord' concept is shaped by Western capitalist conceptions in the sense that, not only are humans owners of the land, but they can develop or even dispose of it in the name of profit according to their private will.

152 Meleisea, *Making of Modern Samoa*, 31.

Great Britain, the United States and Germany.¹⁵³ By 1864, according to Meleisea, “The (European) settler economy was booming but the Samoan economy was in crisis ...”¹⁵⁴ The economic crisis was intensified not only by the disruption of war, but also by natural disasters such as a prolonged drought, a severe storm, and an insect plague.¹⁵⁵ Faced with the instability of food production at that time, Samoans were indirectly forced to “barter away for a rifle or a few tins of biscuits”¹⁵⁶ hundreds of thousands of acres of fertile land. The delusion was promoted by claims that there were great fortunes to be made, along with the fantasy that there existed hundreds of thousands of acres of empty fertile land, besides typical colonial thinking that the native races were divided and dying out, as well as the lure of cheap labour or the belief that such labour could be imported.¹⁵⁷

Foreign political influences in civil warfare provoked not only more divisions among Samoans themselves, but simultaneously served European interests for acquiring more land. Additionally, the poor attendance of Samoans to the cultivation of staple crops resulted in their constant dependence on foreign goods. Land sales, therefore, according to statistics, resulted in the European settlers and the German colonial government owning and controlling 125,630 acres (including mission land) of Western Samoan land between the 1850s and 1900s.¹⁵⁸ A major portion of the land was initially owned by the Godeffroy's Trading Company,¹⁵⁹ and was later taken over by the German administration. As a result, people of some villages lost nearly all their land. Other parts of the country, including uncultivated forest land upon which the people depended for agricultural food production and means of livelihood, were also alienated.¹⁶⁰

Behind the land sale phenomenon lies the fact that the German colonial administration had already located the most fertile portions of Samoan land, particularly for consolidat-

153 Meleisea, 21-45. Cf. Letters compiled in: *Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Samoa 1885-1889: Presented to Both Houses of Parliament by Command of her Majesty*, No. 1, March 1889 (London: Harrison and Sons, 1889), besides many other historical writings on Samoa. Since the discussion here is limited to commerce and the land issue in relation to its ecological aspects, the author has decided to avoid a detailed discussion of colonial powers and their political motivations. But it is evident from historical records that one of the most generating issues accounting for local conflicts that finally led to the civil war was the intentions of the so-called colonial powers to establish a single centralized form of government to control local affairs of the Samoans. Beyond that was the fact that *economic interests* were at the foundation of colonial powers' foreign interests. It must also be noted that from 1800 to the 1880s, there was no established form of central government in Samoa. A centralized form of government was less recognized by Samoans. But this became recognized when the Great Powers extended their imperialist interests during this period. The Samoan power struggles, according to Meleisea, were “... shaped by the ambitions of the Europeans in Samoa.”

154 Meleisea, *Making of the Modern Samoa*, 33.

155 Meleisea, 33.

156 Trood, *Island Reminiscences*, 61.

157 Meleisea, 33 f.

158 Keesing, 260-268.

159 Davidson, 46 f. It is recorded that “between 1869 and 1872, Theodore Weber, manager of the Godeffroys, bought an area that it estimated over 25,000 acres for the extension of his firm's plantation activity ...” There were also speculations of a “... small deposit, to an area estimated at over 300,000 acres (or nearly half of Samoa) ... a situation had been created that threatened a serious disruption of Samoan life.”

160 The after-effect of this process is strongly felt today in that many Samoans are trying to claim their land back from the government. This land conflict is rooted in the land alienation practises of the foreigners. Refer to the writings of Keesing, Davidson, Meleisea and others.

ing her commercial ambitions.¹⁶¹ These lands were registered as “crown land,” which refers to ownership in the possession of the king. Further, land which was sacred in the indigenous worldview became forbidden grounds of white men. Understanding land as something to be owned has dominating and exploiting overtones.¹⁶² This was disclosed in the way in which the colonial government attempted to develop large-scale coconut plantations to increase the production of oil exports, later shifting to copra production. But the greatest defect of these German commercial interests (and also the missions) had to do with the destructive ecological impact of commercial agriculture.

In contrast, the American colonial government, together with the white settlers before 1889, grabbed only about 1,000 acres from Eastern Samoan land. This relatively small amount was due to the limited interest of the United States in acquiring land. The Americans only needed land for government purposes such as schools, hospitals, and other institutions. The major interest of the United States was in strategic concerns, resting on the naval security provided by the Pago Pago harbour in Tutuila.

The experience of the majestic power of the white man was once again experienced through the presence of warships transporting soldiers and weapons, and for marine strategic protection.¹⁶³ This power was not only applied to threaten the human society but also indirectly contaminated the clear waters of Samoa, not only through their diesel motor (oil spills), but also through naval tests of weapons. With the introduction of the monoculture of the so-called developers, plants were severely struck by diseases, which affected not only land resources but also human welfare. The transformational shift from the horticultures and shifting cultivations of Samoans¹⁶⁴ to the monoculture (and *Zwischenkultur*)¹⁶⁵ of the commercial-minded developers accounts for some of the local ecological problems.

3.6. An Analytical Theological Reflection

There are two prominent aspects of the theological problem in relation to the early missionary activities in Samoa that need to be pointed out. Firstly, the invasion and the

161 Christel Fensterseifer, “Die Wirkung kolonialzeitlicher Vorgaben auf sozioökonomische Wandlungs- und regionale Entwicklungsprozesse süd pazifischer Inselländer am Beispiel von West-Samoa und Amerikanisch-Samoa.” Ph.D. Universität Hannover (1993).

162 For example, areas grabbed by foreigners were either fenced or protected by caution notices. Ownership in this sense is referred to as something which can be sold as a property at any time. This is in contrast with the indigenous conception of land ownership.

163 See “German Consul at Apia to German Government, January 04, 1889,” *Affairs of Samoa 1885-89*, 298-301. One example refers to a letter from the German Consul at Apia, His Honorable Becker, to the German Government in Berlin on January 4, 1889. It is reported in his long letter that “... the rebel Chief Mataafa (had hope and was still encouraged) ... by the consignment of 28,000 cartridges, which came on board the English steamer Royalist ...” This was followed by the arrival of the German ship Olga with a load of soldiers and weapons, and the American schooner Orion with 35,000 cartridges. The number of ammunitions almost equalled the total population of Samoa at that time.

164 Fensterseifer, 120 ff. Cf. Peter Bellwood, *The Polynesians: Prehistory of an Island People* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1978), 34-38. See also A.C.S. Wright, 99 ff. Wright affirms that “shifting cultivation is the traditional agricultural practice of Samoan farmers and is a deeply rooted tradition ... (It) is the easiest way of raising crops and requires only a very small outlay on agricultural implements.” Thus, “the degree of success achieved by shifting cultivation on stable soils is closely bound up with the maintainance of an efficient organic cycle.”

165 Fensterseifer, 120 f.

overthrow of several vital elements of the religio-cultural heritage of Samoa by Christianity led to the alienation of some of the traditional concepts and symbols of the Gods, the Creators, Animators, and Sustainers of all living systems. The community of the Samoan divinities was conquered, overthrown and torn asunder by the proclamation of the Almighty One, God of the whole world.¹⁶⁶ In so doing, the variety of ways in which the world was conceptualised was reformulated in an extremely individualistic terms. The process marked a shift from polytheism to monotheism.

Secondly, the indigenous conceptions of the ‘immanence-transcendence’ of the Spirits were denied by the conquest of the belief in the one and only Holy Spirit of the Christian faith. The ancient spirit world was denigrated and overtaken by the individualistic theology of the European missionaries. This was a theology “that postulates a transcendent deity who creates the world but does not invest himself (sic) in it in such a way to make it holy or sacred.”¹⁶⁷ The ancestral faith, then, was shaken to its roots by the takeover of the Christian religion. Subsequently, the Christian mission was not only strongly expressed in terms of mastery and instrumentalized ways of thinking but also continues to be portrayed in foreign concepts, symbols and images.

Christologically, the mission claimed to be inspired and motivated by the awareness that the Good News should be preached to all the earth as the fulfillment of the Great Commandment (Mt. 28). The established version that relied on the mission to be committed to the heathen world of uncivilized people basically remained an underlying error of early missionary activity until it was recently recognized. Armed with the glorious blessings of the Gospel, the early missionaries were convinced that, in and through their work, they were bringing Christ and salvation to the savage nations. Although this was partially true, what the majority of missionaries overlooked was the fact that the spirit of Christ was already present in Samoa and had been worshipped throughout many ages. Christ cannot simply be wrapped up and transported in suitcases from a knowledgeable to an unknowledgeable place; otherwise, the spirit of Christ would have no freedom of its own. Later observations of this reality caused one missionary to comment that the so-called ‘heathen’ are very far from being irreligious and, in fact, it would be advantageous for the mission to respect or at least recognize the vitality and functioning logic of the so-called pagan religions.

It is to our great advantage that we recognize the religious faith of these people. Paganism is infinitely more cultivatable than atheism. The heathen who sees God in everything is a much more hopeful subject for the missionary than one who sees no need of God. We do well to study the religious thought of these people. We ought never to attack their beliefs or worship. It will not compromise our religion to recognize them as our fellow

166 Cf. Dieter Becker, “Junger Wein und neue Schläuche: Theologische Wissenschaft heute und der Fachbereich: Religionen, Mission, Ökumene,” *Es Begann in Halle ...*, Dieter Becker, Andreas Feldtkeller, eds., Bd. 5 (Erlangen: Ev.-Luth. Mission Verlag, 1997), 192. The concept of mission had been shaped and influenced more by the classical Roman notion of civil rights and military warfare.

167 David Kinsley, *Ecology and Religion*, 104.

religionists ... We gain nothing by weakening the heathen's veneration for deity.¹⁶⁸

The Spirit of Christ or the traces of the Divine had already been experienced in the religious-cultural life of Samoa. Christ, although hidden, was perceived in mysterious ways. Myths, rituals and oral traditions were living witnesses to this ever-living presence of the divine.

In far-flung lands, and before God spoke to the Hebrew people in their history, primitive myths had evolved and spread from a seed-bed of the Neolithic Age. These were stories that spoke of beginnings; the cosmos, the planet earth, life in all its forms, including human life, which were linked to culture and survival. All were told, retold and transmitted to younger generations to be told again.¹⁶⁹

Early missionary activity also concentrated more on personal conversion that leads to being saved in Jesus Christ rather than on taking creation into account as a complementary theme of the proclamation. Jesus Christ was depicted in every respect as a Savior and Redeemer of all people. The admiration of the beauty of creation that was sustained by the religious and cultural practises of Samoans slowly eroded through various emphases of Christianity. This shift in worldview was accompanied by the new consciousness of inheriting a special place and status in their own world. The human being came to be placed above nature and no longer within nature.

The Spirits who, as the ancestors believed, helped to provide healing to the people, empowered their worship life, and also preserved various parts of the land and sea in and through their presence were criticized as worthless in comparison with the Mono-Spirit of Christianity. By proclaiming the one and only true Holy Spirit of the Christian religion, the religious consciousness of the real presence of spiritual manifestations in the community of creation was considered a false belief. The missionaries identified the local spirits as evil spirits, or mere spirits of the dead ancestors. These conceptions were implanted into the psychology of Samoans and inevitably led to a de-spiritualization process.

In contrast, if the spirits were the energy of life-preserving vitalities, then one can affirm their existence as eternal and real. The spirits were with all of creation from the beginning, in the present, and the future, in both good and bad situations. Their presence had been the wellspring of life itself. As asserted:

The passage of life and death, the victories of their heroes, the sustenance derived from earth and sea, rhythms of fruitfulness, plantings and harvests, birth, motherhood, tranquillity, storm and fire... The shadow of omnipotence passes beyond all these beginnings and cycles because it speaks of the presence of God who was there before the void over the great waters.¹⁷⁰

168 James D. Nason, "Civilizing the Heathen: Missionaries and Social Change in the Mortlock Islands," *Mission, Church, and Sect in Oceania*, Boutilier, ed. (New York: University Press of America, 1978), 129.

169 Peter Salamonsen, "Let the Earth Rejoice, Let the Ocean Roar: Pacific Ecumenical Reflections on Creation and the Environmental Dilemma," *SPJMS* No. 12 (December, 1994): 3.

170 Salamonsen, 3. Ideas of Joseph Campbell in his work *Masks of God* are followed here, in the sense that the relatedness of the indigenous people to the very foundations of life – the land and the sea – shaped and determined

From the socio-economic and political engagements of the *Lotu*, we have seen that almost every development was inspired and informed by an identifying theological conviction. These convictions not only aimed at converting people but also furthering the progress of missionization. These developments served their purposes. However, they were accompanied by many disadvantages which helped in the detachment of people from their roots. Additionally, sources of livelihood were exploited and managed for human benefits without respecting their inherent values and sacredness in the belief-system of the Samoan community. Conversion to Christianity in this sense meant the giving up of people's faith in the immanent God of Creation to the one and only transcendent Deity who was mediated through European anthropocentric conceptions.

3.7. Summary

We have attempted to disclose the operational character of the missions, both in their religious and secular engagements. The reactions of the *Lotu* to various forces represented by colonial rule that confronted the creational context and traditional Samoan way of life during the 1830s to the 1900s have been analysed. The impacts of development programmes of both the *Lotu* and the colonial rulers on the functioning human and natural ecological systems have also been highlighted.

Change, whether negative or positive, is inevitable. Nevertheless, the springs of life embedded in the non-human created world were developed by human beings in the context under discussion at an accelerated pace and on conquering, controlling and exploitative terms. As has already been stated, these were partly inspired, prescribed, and sanctioned by certain theological underpinnings.

The thirst for both divine and secular power as a source of blessings was one of the transformative forces of the new changes, and it was increasingly sought after not only by the chiefs, but the missionaries themselves. Such determinations were geared toward "new opportunities for status enhancement and acquisition of material wealth made available through the missionary presence."¹⁷¹ Notably, trade was developed on an unfair basis, in the sense that exchanges of essential resources of the local communities were bartered with objects of limited worth. Hence, whatever motives upon which Christianity was accepted,¹⁷² she became the dominating institutional force in almost every sphere of Samoan life. The saving program of the *Lotu* was interwoven with secular ambitions, specifically, the expansionist interests of Great Britain that were realized under the New Zealand administration, the economic interests of the German colonial administration, and the mili-

a religiously oriented divine awareness which informed them that there existed a divine Being or Principle in the beginning of all existence.

171 Tiffany, "The Politics of Denominational Organisation in Samoa," 424-456.

172 John Williams, *JSS-Rarotonga to Samoa*, 1830-1832, Microfilm No. 1628, 1978. SOAS, University of London. Christianity arrived at the time of great and restless rivalries among Samoans in the fight for *papa* (honorary titles). Malietoa at this time was busy with warfare. On the arrival of John Williams and the missionaries, it is reported that Malietoa was earnestly requesting them for a blunderbuss (an old type of gun with a wide mouth, firing small bullets or small shots at a short range), besides his desire for foreign goods. It is also recorded that Malietoa was pressured from his chiefly companions that it would be very stupid of him if the white men left without giving him this precious and useful weapon.

tary interests of the United States. These forces violated the unity of Samoa's religio-cultural inheritance, mastering human identity and destiny, even shaping divisive attitudes and the idea of dependency.

The historical shift from an uninstitutionalized religio-cultural faith¹⁷³ to a more institutionalized Christian belief system was evident during these stages of the missionary movement. In these developments, the perception of a God that was not confined to any institutionalized form or structure, yet was immanently close to the community through a variety of expressions, was confined within the plastered walls of newly built mission stations. Apart from the conceptions of divine centredness, the awareness of the sacredness of both the human and natural world was narrowed down to personal representations. The institutionalization of religious conceptions in the missions either directly or indirectly led to the detachment of the divine from the spheres of God's own divine indwelling.

The participation of the *Lotu* in religious, social, political and economic development was multi-dimensional and touched every facet of life. This may have been inspired by the conviction that the love of God confronts all frontiers. In reality, however, the faith conviction emphasized soul-saving and the establishment of the heavenly Kingdom on earth. The acceptance of Christianity suggested new shifts in the *fa'aSamoa*. The creational associations of ecological life-supporting systems that were constantly recognized through the responsibilities and care of the *aiga*, as the basis of unitary living, underwent profound evolutionary reformulation and adjustment. In the midst of these changes, the regulations and transactions of the new household began to be one-sidedly controlled and managed as Samoans threw themselves into both the religious and social control of the missionaries.

173 Keesing, 397 ff.

4. LOTU IN THE CONTEMPORARY ECO-SITUATION: AN ANALYSIS

4.1. Place of Ecological Issues in the Life of the *Lotu*

Detailed information on the causes, effects and impacts of the eco-crisis has been provided in this work and in numerous publications. To refrain from repetition, although reference will be made to this data from time to time, the focus in this chapter will be narrowed to the existing institutions and theological conceptions of the *Lotu*, or the fundamental conceptions which are directly or indirectly informing ethical attitudes related to eco-problems. This task calls one to respond to questions such as: What has the *Lotu* to do with ecological crises? If the *Lotu* is central to the life of the society, then how and to what extent is she contributing to the betterment or to the detriment of the communities of life?

The *Lotu* in Samoa has had a glorious reputation, and to pose a public critique of the *Lotu* is almost viewed as a violation of the sanctity of the Divine. Nevertheless, we cannot uncritically support such an uncritical sanctuary, for there is no real transformation if we always agree to the irregularities of the operating system. In the face of a critical ecological situation, the contemporary challenge is to move beyond the institutional horizon of the *Lotu*, and make an inquiry into the functioning system of beliefs and values by critically examining the root causes, motives and stimulating principles behind her material and spiritual status.¹

Harvey Cox has contended that to view any religion as oppressive without first examining the actual function it performs in the real lives of human beings in concrete situations can be misleading.² Since any system of religious beliefs inherits both hard and soft elements in its ethical teachings, a vital task of the discerning believer is to critically examine the religious practices in order to reveal the root causes of pain, anger, frustration, alienation and aspirations of those who express themselves through these practices. Equally important is to disclose ideas and values which these practices sanctify by first listening to the human religious aspirations and then moving on to the more properly critical task.³ Although there is a lack of interest to take heed of the crisis of ecological reflection in religion, Cox's underlining point of disclosing the oppressive ideas inherited by a religion through a critical task is appreciated here.

4.1.1. Centrality of the *Lotu*

The *Lotu* remains at the heart of the religio-cultural heritage of Samoa. Her doctrinal teachings form one's worldview,⁴ and her central place is presented in a great variety of

-
- 1 The author is intimately associated with and an inseparable part of the religio-cultural lifeway. In addition, since he is an ordained pastor and co-worker in theological education in the local seminary, he cannot escape the reality of the life-system in which he is immersed. With due respect to the norms of the religio-cultural lifeway, it is from the afore-mentioned standpoint that he is qualified to analyze and constructively criticize the system of which he is a part.
 - 2 Harvey Cox, "The Heart of a Heartless World: Christians and Marxists Examine Religion," in *Many Mansions: A Christian Encounter with Other Faiths* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 180-194.
 - 3 Cox, 180-194.
 - 4 See Malama Meleisea, "Ideology in Pacific Studies: A Personal View," *Class and Culture in the South Pacific*, ed. Antony Hooper (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1987), 140-152.

systematized expressions, such as: "... every few yards there is a church, a mission, and schools ..." ⁵ Stanner, following Mead, Keesing and others, exposes the situation as dominated "by massive churches and their associated buildings ... usually on rising grounds ... (with) good architectural styles, perhaps well furnished. The pastor's house is more often than not the best, certainly the most costly dwelling in the village ..." ⁶ Manfred Ernst has also noted that: "... There is no other Pacific Island group, known to me, where the society and the mainline churches are so closely knit together, and where the church has had and still has such impact on nearly every aspect of life as in Western (and American) Samoa." ⁷

The previously mentioned observations are based on the institutional face of the *Lotu*. They portray a beautiful image and confer upon the *Lotu* a sterling reputation. One may be tempted to presuppose that the material side is the outer expression of the spiritual or the inner life of believers. Although Ernst, on the one hand, asserts that the *Lotu* (especially the mainline churches) is an influential agent in many changes in the life of Samoans, it must be seen, on the other hand, that such influence has and is still being engineered by some motifs which are in contrast to the living faith.

The influential nature of the *Lotu* has been developed in a manner whereby Samoans have gradually forced themselves to experience life as a process filled with religio-cultural obligations, struggles, insecurity and hopelessness. In other words, the institutional structure is painted beautifully, but it does not really touch the systemic dimension which is a hindrance to the integrity of the local living-earth community. Specifically, the emphasis on ecclesiastical centredness signified by institutional structures has maximized rather than minimized stresses on both the human and natural eco-systems. How is the issue of ecology related to the *Lotu's* central place in this category?

After the experiences of two devastating cyclones, Ofa in 1990, and Val in 1992, ⁸ the worst to hit the islands in more than a century, for example, many people were left without shelter, food or water, besides severe damage to infrastructures, economically viable crops, and marine resources. Of course, there were some forms of relief, especially from overseas relatives through financial remittances. While attending to fundamental needs for survival, by way of replanting food crops and the reconstruction of social institutions such as schools, hospitals, and so forth, the *Lotu*, at the same time, placed upon people other social pressures such as the immediate rebuilding of churches or pastors' houses, besides a variety of monetary donations for other religious activities.

A pastor in one village after the first cyclone, for instance, received heavy criticism when he distributed the *taulaga* (monetary offering) that had been collected by his congregation and was ready for handing over to the main church body for its administrative work. Although he had responded to the immediate needs of the time, most people, especially leaders and other pastors, looked at the act as something which was not in com-

5 Charlotte Cameron, *Two Years in Southern Seas* (London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd, 1923), 158.

6 Stanner, *The South Seas in Transition*, 290.

7 Manfred Ernst, *The Role of Social Change in the Rise and Development of New Religious Groups in the Pacific Islands: Beiträge zur Missionswissenschaft und interkulturellen Theologie*, Theo Sundermeier und Dieter Becker, eds. Bd. 8 (Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1995), 171.

8 Cf. "Country Report – Western Samoa: A New Spirit of Enterprise," *The Courier* No. 159 (Sept.-Oct., 1996): 30-37. The devastating situation is also mentioned by Jill Gale de Villa, ed. *Environment and Development: A Pacific Island Perspective*, (Manila: Asian Development Bank Report, 1992), 138 f.

pliance with the content of faith. For them, the amount of money which is offered in the name of God must not be given back to people regardless of critical situations and human needs.

One might argue, on the other side, that it is not the *Lotu* that imposes such pressures, but the village congregations themselves who do not want to humiliate their religio-cultural pride.⁹ Evidently, both factors play an influential part in the problem. However, since the *Lotu*, as previously stated, is a dominant agent behind changes, she cannot escape blame for leveling greater social pressures on people, which means fueling more exploitation of life eco-systems. Devastation from cyclones causes socio-economic instability or, simply, struggles for survival in a life-threatening situation. To recover from such a situation naturally forces people to resort to alternate means whereby the resources of the land and sea have to be manipulated at an accelerated rate.

4.1.2. Pastoral Roles and Ecological Commitments

Pastoral roles or commitments to provide direction for an ecologically unhealthy situation should begin with asking critical questions as a way of exposing realities. Pastors normally find it hard to ask questions such as, Why are people still poisoning and practicing dynamite fishing that exploits marine eco-systems? Why are farmers intensively opening up large parcels of land for cash crops? Why are they continually applying poisonous chemicals for killing weeds, even though the chemicals are dangerous for human life,¹⁰ the soil, and the underground water-springs? Why are some villages allowing their virgin forests to be ruined by overseas timber companies? Why have flying foxes¹¹ (besides other bird species which are already extinct) decreased drastically in numbers because they are shot down and sold through smuggling and black-marketing? Why do we continue to depend on development aid, imported tinned and junk foods which are not healthy, and which are causing our people to die from diseases at very early ages? Are we benefitting from the so-called modern development and globalization? In a general outlook and a

9 See for instance, Margaret Mead, "The Samoans," *Cooperation and Competition Among Primitive People* Mead, ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1937), Reprint 1961, 282-312. Also, "The Role of the Individual in Samoan Culture," *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute* No. 58 (1982): 481-95; Meleisea, "Ideology in Pacific Studies," 140-152. Some of the expositions on this traditional understanding are reflected in ethnological, anthropological and historical writings such as those of Augustine Krämer, Sir Peter Buck, Margaret Mead, Keesing, Freedman, Latukefu, Garrett, Meleisea, and others. The religio-cultural pride of Samoans is related to traditional values such as honor and respect. For example, in a village setting the immediate family and the whole village would build the most beautiful and largest/highest house/s of the sacred chief/s. In the traditional Samoan society, the house of the sacred chief symbolized the status of the family and the whole society. Having pride in their charismatic leadership (which was of course associated with *mana*), Samoans invested almost all of their efforts for the sake of their chiefs and their respective villages. From this conception, and in the light of the *Lotu's* context, building nice houses for the congregational members while leaving the *faifeau*, the man of God, without a better one, is "a sign of ungodliness and a symbol of neglecting religio-cultural duties."

10 Since the weed-killing chemical is also used by some Samoans for committing suicide or murder, besides causing skin diseases, it is here identified as a destructive one. These poisonous chemicals are banned by most countries of the world from application to farming practices. But in Samoa, the sale of such chemicals is widespread.

11 The vital contribution of birds in the process of pollination is specifically recalled here. Flying foxes are the most active agents in consuming and spreading seeds of traditional plants and trees of the indigenous forests. Thus, the constant killing of the flying fox species leads to the decrease of forest and vegetation growth.

quick response to the questions, one would not be surprised to find that a pastor who is called to the mission of God is frowned upon if he attempts to address the above-mentioned activities.

Pastoral commitments to the ecological crisis vary from the national level to the local village levels. Religious institutions such as the National Council of Churches espouse some sustainable ecological ideas and have been prophetic in confronting some of the development projects which are exploitative and dangerous to the life of the communities. Commitments have been expressed in sermons, letters of greetings and comfort on national and seasonal celebrations, conveying pastoral ecological concerns and demanding ethical duties. On a national commemoration of (Western) Samoa's independence, Cardinal Pio Taofinu'u addressed Samoans as follows:

It is beautiful and fitting that our country is dedicated to the God who has so bountifully blessed us in our islands. Our seas are filled with fishes, our plantations produce abundantly, and our mountains are covered by rich forests. Our material needs are filled by our land in God's most generous way ... In thanks to God for these great favours, we ... have a strong obligation, and a sacred challenge to protect what God has given us so that it may nourish our children and their children in turn for many generations. We must never make the error of sacrificing our heritage and our future for the ease of today ... We must never permit material aspirations to blind us to our duty to God and to the future of God's islands and people, Samoa.¹²

Pastoral cooperation has also been communicated through protocols, petitions, and public appeals, besides the direct and prophetic voicing of concerns. One example of this prophetic stance in addressing ecological threats can be seen in the prayer of a Roman Catholic priest, the late Patele Tovio, at the opening of the Brewery Plant in the industrial zone in Samoa, which was funded and technically aided by a German company. In his prayer, Tovio acknowledges not only the advantages brought about by the industrial plant, but he also stresses the disadvantages, ranging from individual human defects such as accidents, diseases, imprisonment, abuse of women, broken families, divorce, and so forth, when the beer made in the plant is excessively drunk and wrongly used.¹³ He eloquently pointed out certain ecological concerns by saying in part of his prayer: "Father ..., we pray for those responsible for the functioning of this plant – may they honestly avoid polluting our life-giving lagoon."¹⁴

12 Cardinal Pio Taofinu'u, "Pastoral Letter: Our Land, Our Heritage, Our Blessing," (29 June, 1985). Other words of the letter state: "There is still time for us to choose the kind of future for our children may inherit. We can sell our timber, deplete our forests, give away our fishing rights, adopt foreign standards and customs or we can continue as the people of an independent state based on Christian principles, and Samoan customs and tradition." See also "Letter of Christmas Greetings addressed to the People of God of Samoa," (19 December, 1986). Some words of the letter state: "I am joyous because this is the season of peace, a time of love ... I am joyous because ... (we are) a nation living in the knowledge that sovereignty over the universe belongs to God alone. So the authority to be exercised by His (God's) people, within the limits prescribed by His (God's) commandments, is our sacred heritage."

13 A Prayer by Patele Tovio cited by L. Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel*, 157f.

14 Patele Tovio cited by L. Kamu, 157f.

Besides this positive eco-awareness, it is apparent that pastoral engagement in eco-problems has been signified mostly by efforts of rubbish clean-ups carried out by youth groups and Sunday schools, through close cooperation with the government in pioneering some conservation projects, and through the active participation in the national day for the environment. Some pastors and congregations have taken up the issue in worship services but the majority still feel that this is outside the sphere of their pastoral responsibilities.

All of these efforts are signs of pastoral awareness and commitment to eco-issues. However, by closely examining them from another angle, the eco-commitments are determined more by economic motives such as fund-raising for religious purposes and activities. There is no sense of a free-will care. This means that religious priorities have been blinded by an economic growth-based consciousness. The church members are moved not because of the inspiration of the heart, but due to the achieving ends associated with such duties. Additionally, the situation is worsened by the fact that most pastors do not want to constructively criticize the economic system of the *Lotu*,¹⁵ or to attempt to identify hindrances that are directly or indirectly imposed on people, particularly those which account for the intensive exploitation of natural resources.

Moelagi Jackson, a hotel manager who has been active in eco-issues and eco-tourism, states that one of the major hurdles to local eco-problems is the misconceptions of the majority of pastors about mission. For most pastors, the *Lotu* has a different mission, that is, caring for human souls. Being blinded by a misconception that other parts of the created world are soul-less, pastoral commitments to the protection of the environment therefore depend on the willingness of a few pastors. Jackson adds that if pastoral decisions are based on such a misunderstanding of God's mission, and influenced in some cases by misleading advice either from their wives or their own congregations, then how can the promotion of an awareness of the sacredness of our common heritage be possible?¹⁶

Sometimes decisions on related issues do not even reach the village level. At the national level, Jackson sees that there is little cooperation between the *Lotu* and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in the mission of protecting the environment.¹⁷ Informants in this research claim that the pastor-centred soul-saving mission of the *Lotu* creates

15 Cf. Ian Smith, "God and Economics," 179. Economics is not the emphasis of religion even though it was/is used for religious purposes. The religious emphasis on excellence of personal conduct and moral character has negated the value of economics, or in other words, the knowledge of God does not coincide with economic knowledge. The challenge for the *Lotu* is to rethink and offer a proper perspective on the synthesis between theology and economy in the context of ecological issues. Smith states: "The Christian community in every generation must rely on a sanctified conscience, a renewed mind, compassion, and prayer to determine what constitute good economic works and an appropriate prophetic stance under varied circumstances. In a world in which men and women are naturally, greedy and grasping, there is plenty of scope for a genuine Christian economic witness."

16 Moelagi Jackson, Discussion with the Author, Safua, Savaii. August, 1996. Moelagi also mentions that the problem of the pastorate (referring to the mainline churches) is that they criticize the mission of the Mormon Church which is socially effective to some extent, without a self-realization that they are also called into the mission of God for the sake of creation. She is also convinced that the pastoral eco-commitment will never be effective when the pastors themselves do not understand the importance of such issues.

17 Specific reference here is given to the Churches and Non-Government Organisations in (Western) Samoa. The situation in American Samoa is a bit different in the sense that there are not so many Non-Government Organisations besides the Church.

in general an atmosphere of religio-cultural misconceptions, rather than corporate actions and commitments to environmental protection.¹⁸

4.1.2.1. Ecology and the Status of the *Faifeau*

The *faifeau* is a person of high honor and prestige in the Samoan society. He is usually seen as a man of God and a servant of Jesus Christ.¹⁹ His fundamental roles include the preaching of the Word, administering the Sacraments, visiting the sick, comforting the sorrowful, praying for blessings and prosperity of the *nuu*, looking after the spiritual and moral life of the society, and so forth. Such roles are extended to those of reconciliation, or mediating between rivalries whenever conflicts arise among people. His calling to the ministry of the *Lotu* is specifically focused on human benefits.

Being addressed by many different kinds of religious titles,²⁰ one may be confused in attempting to comprehend the specific roles which a *faifeau* performs. Even the *faifeau* themselves are caught up in this confusion.²¹ According to Lalomilo Kamu, the confusing situation has become an irony in the pastor/village relationship, as it is experienced in terms of “superior/inferior, having the pastor as the superior.”²² In terms of inculturation, Samoans adopted the concept *faifeau* as a servant of God, and granted him traditional religio-cultural titles²³ such as *ao fa’alupega*²⁴ and *fa’afeagaiga*.²⁵ This has shifted the status of the *faifeau* to a higher level, where he is ranked the same as the paramount chiefs. To a certain extent, the pastor is sometimes higher because he is entitled to claim both divine and secular power. Granted with these honorary titles, a *faifeau*, the one who is supposed to serve, becomes the one who is mostly being served. He is conceived as a “king in a

18 Discussion with Informants, August, 1996.

19 Mackensen Götz citing Marsack, *Zum Beispiel Samoa* (Bremen: n.a. 1977), 327. Götz states that the Church in Samoa plays an influential role in the religious life of Samoans. The pastors “...nahmen eine geachtete Stellung als religiöse Spezialisten in den Dörfern ein, die Kirchen wurden zu einem der sozialen Zentren.”

20 Different titles given to a *faifeau* presuppose a variety of roles he plays in the *lotu* and for the society. In a village setting, a *faifeau* is regarded as *auauna a Iesu* (servant of Jesus), *osi taulaga* (priest – sometimes called a *perofeta* – prophet), *suli vaaia o le Atua* (a representative or heir of God), *o le ua faapaiaina* (the one who is anointed – or saint), *o lē na te tauasuina le vai o le ola* (one who fetches the water of life), etc. These titles are associated with the religious or ecclesiastical function of the *faifeau*.

21 L. Kamu citing Court Judge Marsack, 140.

22 Kamu, 141.

23 Since the social, political and economic aspects are inextricable parts of the whole Samoan lifeway, the use of the term ‘religio-cultural heritage’ is necessary in the sense that all other aspects are included in it. The two terms, *Ao Fa’alupega* and *Fa’afeagaiga*, have, indeed, their social, political and economic meanings which will be discussed later in detail.

24 *Faalupega* refers to the traditional polity of Samoa where every village, district and main island has its own form of formal address. Hence, the word ‘ao’ which simply means *head, above, clouds – heavenly*, etc. – connotes the sense that he is a man of a higher rank, and moreso, his status is above the religio-cultural status of Samoan chiefs.

25 *Feagaiga* refers to the brother-sister relationship, where the brothers would protect and take care of their sisters. The concept also includes chiefly titles and extends to both human and nature relationships. This concept will be explored in detail later. The concept *fa’afeagaiga* (like *feagaiga*/covenant), as has already been discussed, was given by Malietoa as an honorary address to the white missionaries. It means that the missionaries were accepted in the community and would be treated with much care and respect, in the same way the sisters.

castle,”²⁶ or, as Keesing asserts, “... almost as a god, and the Bible, together with the interpretations placed on it, appear to have an all but magical finality.”²⁷

The shift of emphasis of pastoral roles ‘service’ and ‘responsibility’ to those which are shaped by dominating, authoritarian and dictating attitudes has indirectly shaped adverse theological and ethical attitudes of many. Again, Kamu sees that the shift of the pastoral model from *auauna* (servant relationship)²⁸ to that of the *feagaiga* relationship, when understood in terms of power, authority and prestige in a secular sense, has often tempted pastors with false perceptions of their roles.²⁹ Such a misunderstanding in relation to the ecological issue is revealed by the arrogant response of one pastor who was brought to court accused of killing fish using gelnignite. He not only violated and persistently ignored the procedures of the court hearing, but he also reacted in a very arrogant manner. When the judge announced his imprisonment, he reacted: “Imprisonment? But you can’t do that to me? I am a *faifeau* (pastor)!”³⁰ Being hypnotized by such a psychological sickness,³¹ the pastor believed himself to be the agent of God’s power, and therefore no one else, not even natural forces, should supercede his ruling authority.

The pastoral authoritarian mentality is enforced by his prestigious access to wealth. When a *faifeau* is called to a congregation, not only is he (and his family) accommodated in a beautiful house, well respected by the village, but he also receives the best of what the people have, and usually earns the highest income from his *alofa* (gracious act of giving, or monetary donation for the pastor). Sharon Tiffany has rightly observed that the pastorate has become an all-powerful institution and presently constitutes an educated elite comparable in prestige and status to the highest ranking *matai* in Samoan society.³² Ernst has also concluded from his research that a minister of the Congregational Church is amongst the highest paid people in the village.³³ Today almost every pastor, regardless of the denomination to which he belongs, enjoys not only the social prestige and pleasures

26 Cf. Kamu, 141. See also Sione Latukefu, “The Impact of South Sea Islands Missionaries on Melanesia,” *Mission, Church, and Sect in Oceania*, 91-108. Latukefu recalls the unfavourable manners of Samoan pastors in the mission as “... hot-tempered and quick to resort to violence when the people failed to follow their instructions.” This was basically due not only to the tremendous cultural pride of Samoans and their aristocratic belief in themselves to be the cream of the Pacific, but also due to the fact that the pastor has a special place in Samoan communities.

27 Stanner, 290.

28 Since the concept *auauna* (servanthood) is shaped by foreign understandings of monarchical structures, thus connoting the king or master-servant relationship, the author here suggests the usage of the term *tautua* (to render service) as it fits well in the religio-cultural context of Samoa. Normally, the *tautua* is reciprocally performed in almost every level of Samoan society (from childhood, adulthood, up to the old age). This means that the *tautua* is performed in every stage of life where each one serves each other, according to the respective functions one is expected to carry out in the family or community.

29 Kamu, 142.

30 Court Judge Marsack, cited by Kamu, 141.

31 The author puts it in this way due to the fact that many pastors (including the author) during their preparatory theological training critique the pastorate system as being stagnant, having short-sighted and parochial visions, and always being piously condensed to spiritual matters. At the same time, they are also aware of a kind of materialism that is oppressive to the religio-cultural lifeway. Although aware of the irregularities of the contemporary system, many who are called into parish work easily lapse into the operative system and eventually become the energizers of the same system, with little or no effort expended in providing appropriate changes.

32 S. Tiffany, “Politics of Denominational Organization in Samoa,” 436 f.

33 Ernst, 172.

he receives, but also earns a high income. In the *Lotu* of present-day Samoa, as Ernst continues:

... some *faiifeau* live in luxurious houses, own more than one flashy car of expensive make, a large piece of land with, maybe, an already furnished house on rent, and children have degrees of high level; mostly, on the expenses of the congregation.³⁴

Ernst has exposed the reality of the Samoan mainline churches³⁵ and the comfortable living standard of the pastorate, and because of this exposure he has been criticized for his analysis. For instance, Featuna'i Liuaana argues that since financial contributions to the *Lotu* and the pastor's income are normally done on *loto fuatia ifo* (a free will basis), people are therefore not forced to give; rather, their offerings are freely done based on the inspiration of the heart and faith. By positing the *Lotu*³⁶ as an agent of social institutions,³⁷ he seeks to counteract the accusation that the *Lotu* imposes upon their members heavy financial burdens.

Likewise, Levesi Afutiti, a pastor of the Congregational Church, explicates the interdependent nature of the local and overseas-diaspora *Lotu*. Seeing the willingness to contribute as a sign of growth in faith, he presents a contextualized image of the *Lotu* as a "coconut tree on a hill" nourished by fertile land, with sweet fruits (referring to her members), and with the tree always withstanding heavy tropical winds, meaning continuing growth in the midst of catastrophies. Referring to the diaspora character of the *Lotu*, he sees the floating nature of the coconut, moving from one island and taking root in another island, as an analogy of growth in faith.³⁸ Afutiti then concludes that such a faith conviction depends economically more on the component of *foai* (giving) than on receiving.³⁹

This image, when viewed from an eco-perspective, reflects a kind of parochial understanding of the *Lotu*, in the sense that a coconut does not survive the cold climate of countries like New Zealand, Australia and the United States to which he has been referring. Further, once the leaves and the tops of a coconut tree are blown away or destroyed by hurricanes, it will not be able to bear fruits or leaves even if the roots and the trunk are nourished by a fertile soil. The only other alternative is to cut them down for firewood or other purposes. In the economic operation, there is no reciprocating flow of cash, rather, it capitalizes on the pastoral level.

34 Ernst, quoting Nove Vailaau, former general secretary of the CCCS, 172.

35 See Featuna'i Liuaana, "The Wind Blows Where it Wills," *Pacific Journal of Theology* Series II, No. 12 (1994): 75-84, and Levesi Afutiti, "Samoan Church and Church Diaspora," *Pacific Journal of Theology* Series II, No. 16 (1996): 14-35. Note that Ernst, by making aspecific reference to the clergy of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa, has unavoidably encountered criticism by Samoan Congregational pastors or theologians.

36 Specific mention of the Congregational Christian Church is made here. But the author contends that other denominations inclusively function likewise, although there are some variations in their systems of operation.

37 Liuaana maintains that the mainline churches offer not only religious services, but also social and educational opportunities. In this way, the Church is viewed as a reciprocal partner who not only receives from its members, but also indirectly offers or gives something back for society's sake. See Liuaana, "The Wind Blows Where it Wills," 75-84.

38 Afutiti, 14-35.

39 Afutiti, 30.

The two aforementioned arguments appear to centre around the social and spiritual development of the *Lotu*. They somehow portray the devout religious servitude of Samoans but, again, they have overlooked the immediate pastoral realities which are threatening to nature and human life. In contrast to growth, regardless of whether it is in relation to spiritual or social institutions, there is an imbalance in our religio-cultural system of giving and receiving which is intimately related to eco-problems. There is disorder in our present religio-cultural lifeway, where an “irrationality of the system’s rationality”⁴⁰ dominates. The irrationalities in the system have boiled down to the continuing abuse of life-supporting resources.

4.1.2.2. Laity and Eco-Issues

Ecological issues are clearly analyzed from the perspective of the laity when we take into account their common faith projections, expectations, and the practical means to fulfill their religious goals. The laity’s faith perspective is mostly informed by dualistic thinking that naturally draws a demarcation line between spiritual and secular matters, divine and profane, the inner and the outer life. Such distinctions are intimately infused into the religio-cultural consciousness of the laity who, in most cases, associate the roles and functions of the *faifeau* with prescriptions of the will of God. The *lotu* and the *faifeau* belong to the domain of the Holy – God and Spirit – whereas the laity (deacons, confirmants, and worshipping members) pertain to the earthly domain, and specifically deal with the social and the material development of the ministry. This dichotomy is continually being fostered by the colloquial saying: *O le galuega a le faifeau o le Tusi Paia ma le Pese, ae o le tino o le galuega, o le matafaioi lena a le aulotu*.⁴¹ (“The pastor is called to preach the word of God and conduct worship services, but the laity is responsible for the material side of the *Lotu*.”)

Dualistic conceptions further bespeak a separation between the Church and the State, and, in post-modern eco-interpretations, a separation of the moral universe of humankind from that of the non-human environment.⁴² These dichotomous comprehensions accompany passive interpretations of the content of the religious faith and its translation into authentic actions. The laity’s way of thinking stipulates and privatizes the roles and functions of the *faifeau* not only to the *Lotu* herself, but also to purely moral and religious obligations. Social, economic and political issues pertain to the laity and, in this sense, religious obligations are insignificant to and detached from the pastoral religious dilemma. The economist Brian Lockwood contends that a pastor in a Samoan village is accorded

40 Julio de Santa Ana, citing Franz Hinkelammert, “The Present Socio-Economic System as a Cause of Ecological Imbalance and Poverty,” *Ecology and Poverty: Concilium – Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo, eds. (London: SCM Press, 1995), 3-11.

41 The common expression reveals the general perceptions of Samoans about the place of the *Lotu* and the *faifeau*. In almost every discussion between the author and informants, the colloquial expression was stated in a variety of ways, but they all bear the same meaning that spiritual matters pertain only to pastoral roles while the social and material side belongs to the lay people.

42 The author avoids the use of the term *siosiomaga* (environment) in this work due to the basic conviction that human beings are not isolated components of the divine creation. Human beings, men and women, are indeed inextricable parts of the whole creation.

the status of an ‘important guest’ and is dependent on the village for his livelihood. Although he “often has a considerable influence, he has no traditional social or political status. While the Church plays an important role in the social and economic life of the village it is foreign to the traditional social system on which the village is based – it is an imposition and is formally treated as such.”⁴³ This kind of understanding has clearly influenced many Samoans, thereby reducing the mission of God to the Church and to purely religious or spiritual concerns.

4.2. Inculturation Process and Ecological Issues

The blending of the traditional material culture and the Gospel can be recognized as a unique mark of the Samoan religio-cultural identity.⁴⁴ The process is affirmed by the fact that, in almost every sphere of life, “the church still forms the essential stabilizing, regulating and integrating force; sanctioning the old kinship and *matai* systems together with traditional customs ...”⁴⁵ As a central and autonomous institution, the church provides “new outlets in place of those passing or passed – opportunities for assembling and engaging in cooperative activities, means of self expression and competition as in singing, giving, church-going, and the like, and making some adjustments and fusions between the old way and the new.”⁴⁶

In contrast, however, the contemporary inculturation process has developed more toward a kind of religio-cultural socialism with effects which can be burdensome on human and natural resources. The constant threaten of such ecological destruction calls for a critical reflection on our religio-cultural expressions and the stimulating ideas behind new changes. To unveil and identify what is at the root of the inculturation process and to construct a sound perspective from the ecological viewpoint is the core of this section.

4.2.1. *The Roots of Eco-Problems in Inculturation*

The adverse effects of the inculturation process can be traced mostly to ecclesiastical misconceptions from both the pastorate and the laity, as has already been elucidated. Such misconceptions have been outwardly witnessed in the ways Samoans cultivate and translate the Gospel message within the framework of their own culture. Wanting the *Lotu* to meet new demands and changes, the inculturating attempt is, in all respects, necessary. The problem is due mainly to the gradual erosion of our value systems. The authenticity and spontaneity of our religio-cultural lifeway are gradually being eroded by the emphasis on cultural formality that is generated by our own ideologies, and influenced mostly by human materialistic prestige and cultural pride. In the midst of these emphases and in-

43 Brian Lockwood, *Samoan Village Economy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 33.

44 It is misleading to state that the whole religio-cultural heritage of Samoa was overthrown by Christianization and Colonization, even though there were imbalances at different levels of interactions, contacts and transformational changes. As has been stated elsewhere, acceptance of some elements of the foreign culture depended on the perceptions and convictions of the receiving community when they saw some compatibility with their customary way of life.

45 Keesing cited by Stanner, 293.

46 Stanner, 293.

fluences, our sense of religiosity which defines and shapes meaning for us becomes meaningless.

Malama Meleisea mentions certain features of the ideologies which Samoans have created. From his personal experiences, Meleisea not only claims the strong influence of Christianity in his own worldview but, moreso, he contends that the construction of such a worldview is founded on traditional cultural prestige and pride.⁴⁷ In relation to the offertory contributions to which he refers, the *Lotu* has incorporated into its system the cultural practice of a public announcement of what is offered by a *matai* and his family or village to a receiving party. This public act serves as a means of proclaiming the gratuitous act that has been performed on behalf of the receiving partner and, at the same time, it expresses thankfulness and appreciation for what has been offered.⁴⁸ This cultural practice has been integrated into the religio-cultural system of offerings for the pastor and the *Lotu* where, on almost every Sunday, a deacon will stand up in front of the congregation and openly declare what each deacon, usually under the title of his/her family, has contributed.

The afore-mentioned practice can be seen as a burden on Samoans themselves in the sense that the cultural instincts of prestige and pride stimulate the practice to an extreme where “a silent competition”⁴⁹ exists among deacons, who are also *matai* – chiefs and orators. It then appears that the more one gives to the *Lotu*, the more one gains recognition from both the *Lotu* and the village. Competitive giving becomes associated with being a good Christian who is very obedient and a pious devoted leader. How one carries one’s posture after a church service depends on the amount donated for the *alofa* and the *taulaga*. A good example is cited by Meleisea, where he mentions: “Our family would walk out of church each Sunday, our head held high with pride, because in the weekly reading out of contributions to the church, our contribution was always the greatest or second greatest amount given (our heads were a little lower in the second case).”⁵⁰

4.2.1.1. Quantitative Emphasis of Inculturation⁵¹ – An Illustration

One of the factors contributing to eco-problems is the cultural value of doing the best in religio-cultural events. With the emphasis on the quantity of what is done, we are driven to rely on material greatness to validate our religious commitments. While almost all religio-cultural activities revolve around the *Lotu*, we tend to count on such commitments as ways

47 See, for example, M. Meleisea, “Ideology in Pacific Studies: A Personal View,” *Class and Culture in the South Pacific*. Antony Hooper, ed. (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1987), 140-152.

48 Meleisea, 140-152.

49 Meleisea, 141. Cf. Manfred Ernst, 164-182.

50 Meleisea, 141. The author makes a synthesis with what Meleisea discusses here. From his own experiences of a village congregation and the leadership status of his father in the village as a paramount chief, cultural and religious expectations of the village community and the church are always accompanied by the understanding of giving the best of what he and his family have received in terms of money, food or other material goods. It is a disgrace if the demands of the title’s status in both the village and the church are not fulfilled.

51 Samoans do not measure the goods, products, items of food and other materials which are used in ceremonial occasions in terms of pounds, kilograms, etc. as the Western world does. Therefore, when items are mentioned in this discussion, the author is talking of quantity (amounts) and not weights. For example, when animals are slaughtered for a ceremonial event, they are not taken to a butchery; rather, villagers slaughter the animals and use them immediately. This means that no official measurements are taken.

of justifying our right to earn not only prestige but also personal salvation. This is disclosed by the reactions to the religio-cultural activities such as an opening of a newly built church, officiating at pastoral promotions to leadership positions, installing of paramount titles, a marriage ceremony, funeral services, and so forth. Realistically, most of these events would never escape social, economic and ecological stresses. The event of a funeral service can be described here to clarify the point.

When a deacon in a congregation passes away for instance, he dies not only as a member of the local church, a member of a district circuit and the *Lotu* at large, but also as a chief of the village and district, besides the head of the family. The pastor as usual gives spiritual comfort and encouragement to the mourners, besides conducting the funeral service. It is a common practice that the deceased stays overnight with the family and church choirs, youth groups, and sometimes sunday school choirs participate and offer their sympathies through *leo*⁵² throughout the night. Besides singing, they also bring with them wreaths, yards of cloth, monetary gifts, and the presentation of a fine-mat/s by the choir leader. In return, after a *leo*, they will be presented with a *sua* (an act of respect)⁵³ together with food items such as cartons of bread, boxes of biscuits, packages of tinned fish, butter, jam, tea or coffee, and so forth, as a token of the family's appreciation.

On the burial day, pastors of other faith confessions in the village attend the last service, and pastors of the same denomination in the district circuit in some cases come, depending on the status of the deceased. After the burial service, pastors and their wives, the congregation, the choir, and the attendants, besides the people of the village and those from the district, and guests, will be gathered in houses allocated by the family in order to have meals and to receive the *fa'aaloaloga* (literally- an act of respect).⁵⁴ All pastors who are present will be given a *sua*. Usually in a *sua* presentation, a woman will come with a coconut with a dollar as a lid on the top of it and the yards of cloths wrapped on her body and place it in front of the pastor, followed by a traditional tray of food such as taro and a chicken/or meat, a cooked pig of medium or large size, *ie toga* (fine-mats), and an amount of money – not less than fifty or hundred or more in an envelope. After this, words of

52 *Leo* means voice, and is a short form of the word *leoleoga*. *Leoleoga* is originally an old Samoan religio-cultural tradition. The tradition recalls that the family members and the villagers called themselves together in a house of a sick person (nearing death), to chase away the evil spirits that were believed to be causing severe sicknesses and death. When a person died, Samoans believed that the spirits came in the dark, waiting for the spirit of the dead to be accompanied to *Pulotu*. Samoans also believed that the coming of the spirits in the night could cause even more troubles. So their coming together and making noises by singing and other activities would relieve not only the fear of the family but also be a means of chasing away evils. The *Lotu* might have taken up this practice and developed it further, with the sense that through singing and giving short Biblical exhortations, the suffering souls could be healed and comforted.

53 *Sua* is presented by the hosting family or community to a visiting party. In the process, a public declaration of what has been presented is made by an untitled man in the *malae*. This is a reciprocal way of conveying thankfulness and gratitude of the receiving partner.

54 The Samoan custom of food consumption does not correlate with the European understanding of having a meal (lunch or *Mittagessen*). In the Samoan way, when the hosting family (e.g., the deceased person's family) does not provide enough (both well-cooked and raw foodstuffs) for the attendants, the shortage of food will be the bad news of the event. In other words, the story of the shortage of food will be the shame of the host forever. For example, a meal offered with only taro or rice, a chicken-leg, green salad and a soup, without a steak or pork and fish, is always looked on as a sign of disgrace. Offering the best for Samoans means giving almost all that can be listed, which means quantity and not necessarily quality.

thanksgiving are exchanged and then people are dismissed. The village and the relatives who participated in the funeral would also receive some material items such as meat, pork, cans of tinned fish, an amount of money and fine-mats. The family of the deceased would provide all for those present. This is but one example of the reality of the contemporary Samoan material culture.

In the past, a funeral ceremony was handled in very simple, reciprocal, manageable ways. In a *leo*, for instance, a presentation of a wreath of flowers, a fine-mat of worth, and the pastoral comfort and presence of the community was the utmost emphasis. Food consumption in feasting and the reciprocal flow of wealth in a funeral ceremony was regulated and maintained a fair balance in terms of respect for the ecological life-system. In addition, mourning families were relieved from socio-economic pressures such as the decorations of graves and the purchase of a costly casket for the deceased because dead bodies were wrapped in a *siapo* (traditional cloth) or a fine-mat and buried in an earthly grave, which is a sustainable, earth-friendly method.

In contrast, the emphasis on materialism, regulated by the strains of the monetary system and time consumption, has caused many imbalances in both human and natural ecosystems. A Samoan of the recent past, for instance, would invest a long period of time to weave a fine-mat, which was the most valuable economic item of the traditional culture, or even climbing a tree to collect coconuts for ceremonial purposes. In the new socio-economic system, Samoans would prefer to buy a coca-cola to replace a coconut, or to buy fine-mats in market places, arguing that it saves time and work. As a result of the new development, almost no funeral today in Samoa would escape a loan from the bank, not only to spend on the family affair, but to use for other related expenses such as cementing and decorating the grave, a costly casket, besides funeral transport services.

The new developments show a lack of ecological awareness and consideration.⁵⁵ For instance, the excessive use of soft drinks could contribute to pollution because the containers are not bio-degradable; and the cementing of graves and ill choices of burial sites could lead to the contamination of underground water upon which communities depend. Moreover, costly caskets which are made of iron or aluminium would not only take years to decomposed, but their very cost become burdensome to the majority. These realities are mostly overlooked by our materialistic emphasis.

4.2.1.2. Quantitative Inculturation and Ecological Deficits

Almost all villages in Samoa still live in a semi-subsistent economy. With the exception of a few who manage to establish themselves and survive in the capitalistic lifestyle of Westerners, employment opportunities are limited, salaries are relatively low as compared to a high cost of living, with the majority of the labour force receiving very low wages, ap-

55 The author is referring here to the conception of *dead-living relationship* of Samoans, which is related to burial practices and places. Normally, elderly people are buried in front of houses or at a nearby cemetery. This is due to the understanding that the one who is dead remains in relation with the living not only by sleeping nearby, become the family's guardian angel, but also in that by seeing the grave, memories of the deceased are always recalled. The dead are buried at any place where the family agree to set aside as a burial place, regardless of whether it is near a river, the sea, or places where proper conservation measures need to be taken.

proximately \$ 40 per week in the case of (Western) Samoa.⁵⁶ In American Samoa, salaries and wages are relatively high and can meet basic living costs. This does not guarantee an assurance of hope because the wages do not begin to meet family obligations and religious-cultural affairs.

From the illustration of funeral practices, we can see that huge quantities of food products are consumed and lives of other living creatures are sacrificed to satisfy human demands. There are funerals where the slaughter of cattle includes more than ten pigs besides chickens being killed and cooked, a variety of processed food packages that cost more than five thousand dollars, and an outlay of more than twenty thousand dollars. This is the definition of 'the best' in the contemporary lifeway of Samoa. And this comprehension of what we now mean as 'the best' is highly appreciated and valued by the *Lotu*, a place where people of goodwill are meant to find communion with Christ, the cosmic creator and liberator of life.

The prescribed reality is unbelievable. Meeting the obligated personal, family, village and *Lotu* responsibilities means a great reliance on the exploitation of natural resources. For many people, the dependency on resources of the land and sea is so great that it has become a commodity to abuse. Land and sea are then no longer gifts of God for daily use, as in the old belief system but, rather, an asset for sale and a solution for financial need. This process escalates in an uncontrollable way in order to meet social and religious demands.

In the context of the debt crisis of the governments and the financial demands of the *Lotu*, we are caught up in a vicious cycle of exploiting the land, sea, and the atmosphere. For instance, there is the constant illegal killing of fish with dynamite and other poisonous chemicals for consumption or for sale, thus destroying our coral reefs that are vital in maintaining a necessary balance in marine life resources. The survival of small sea creatures is threatened, and there is a gradual loss of the islands' protection from high tides and tidal waves. These cause coastal erosion, destroying mangrove swamps – habitats of sea and bird species – besides damage to infrastructures such as houses and roads, as many live on the coast. Related to this problem is the opening up of virgin forests for pastoral and commercial agriculture, causing ruin to watersheds, and tremendous soil erosion during heavy rains or when the rivers are dried up, thus deteriorating the habitats of the related life-supporting eco-systems therein.⁵⁷ Much of this destruction has been for the purpose of finding new means of financial gain to better meet the endless cycle of religious-cultural obligations.

56 Ulafula Aiavao, "What Yazaki Means to the Samoans: Hiring for Wiring Brings Job Boom," *Islands Business Pacific* (October, 1992): 51 f. The eagerness to attract foreign investors is accompanied by incentives whereby, in the end, the investing partner benefits at the expense of the majority, the labourers. They are the ones who bear the sacrifice of the business system. For example, in the case of the Yazaki Wiring Company, the preconditions granted by the Government of Samoa include a 10-year corporate tax holiday and 10 years duty free import of raw materials. In terms of labour, "the legal minimum wage is set at just One *Tala* (42 US cents) an hour which is attractive for foreign investors, and local business ... almost no one can ignore Yazaki nowadays."

57 Cf. *The Pacific Way – A Report to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development by the SPREP to the Rio de Janeiro Climate Change Conference* (May, 1992).

4.2.1.3. Responses to the Quantitative Emphasis of Inculturation

The *Lotu* has responded to the afore-mentioned issues, but it is only a minimal response. This means that some effort has been invested in educating people to be aware of the structural forms of a lifeway in which they are suffering. Based on an analysis of Ernst's research, a growing number of the mainline churches' members have left to join the parachurches in Samoa. Ernst concludes that this is happening not only because "the contributions to the church are considered a heavy burden ... But in the long term it is clear that adjustments to the changed framework of the church's social environment are inevitable."⁵⁸ In actual fact, as long as the *Lotu* continues to persist in its present pattern, it will not be in tune with the 'sigh of the oppressed creature' and 'the heart of a heartless world.'⁵⁹ With the exception of the Roman Catholic Church,⁶⁰ which has radically eradicated some cultural elements from religio-cultural activities, such as a *sua* presentation in funeral services, other Churches continue to accept and foster the costly lifestyle, even when they may be conscious of the system's strains and stresses.

The life philosophy and theology of the late Bishop Patelesio Finau,⁶¹ a prominent leader of the Pacific churches and an advocate for justice and peace issues, serves as a living example here. Speaking against external and internal injustices that cause ecological destruction, he advocated a kind of inculturation reform as a means of combating the constant and accelerated exploitation of local natural resources. This is a form of liberation from within a respective religio-cultural heritage. During his life ministry, he called for authenticity, spontaneity and simplicity of religio-cultural expressions as a vital means of restoring the wholeness of not only humanity but all of God's creation. His respect for the integrity of creation was fulfilled on the day of his funeral services, when his family and relatives fulfilled his wishes by avoiding the slaughtering of many animals, as is a common practice. They only cooked three pigs to feed the multitude who attended to pay him farewell tributes.⁶²

4.2.2. An Analysis: Economic and Ecological Systems of the *Lotu*

Ecology and economy have been treated as separate and unrelated to faith. Despite the fact that both are benefitting, influencing, governing, dominating or even hindering the mission of churches as well as the livelihood of believers, these subjects are not yet topics

58 Ernst, 173.

59 Ernst citing K. Marx's definition of religion, 284f.

60 This radical move by the Roman Catholic Church in Samoa could be seen as an appropriate remedy to the problem. However, it sometimes overlooks the fact that the Gospel is mediated by cultural expressions. A radical overthrow of the cultural component is not a necessary resolution. What is needed is to reform and reinvent our religio-cultural authenticity which was expressed previously in simple and spontaneous yet formal and respectful ways.

61 Bishop Finau was a Tongan Catholic priest. As chairman of the Pacific Conference of Churches, his commitment to issues of justice and peace for Oceania have been deeply appreciated. Paddy Finau, as his friends called him, passed away during the PCC meeting at Niue Island, while he was still the chairperson of the executive council in 1994.

62 See the *Pacific Journal of Theology* Series II, No. 11 (1994). The Journal is dedicated to Bishop Patelesio Finau, a committed servant and a man of God who, although a priest, believed in the 'priesthood of all believers' and saw Rome as a faraway place from Oceania.

for open discussion. Even though economic and ecological issues have consciously or unconsciously been repressed, a precise view of our local context with specific reference to the *Lotu* requires a re-examination of the socio-economic patterns that are inherently embedded in our religio-cultural lifeway. It must be re-emphasized here, with Max Weber's⁶³ economic analysis in mind that religious ideas are in no way independent from economics. Specifically referring to our situation, religious understandings that surround the *Lotu* and the pastorate have promoted the livelihood of a small minority of people at the expense of the basic resources of life for the many. Church obligations, as Stanner observes, are:

... helping to dampen economic growth and to restrain development. The Protestant Samoan churches and strong Catholic families both have to come to terms with the political hierarchy, and these terms could lead to the growth of a theocratic division ... The growth of native authority systems, literate education, individualism, general secularism and economic differentiation tend to be accompanied by political and doctrinal unrest.⁶⁴

Political and doctrinal unrest posited here is rooted in the desire of one institution to dominate and govern over the economic and development affairs of the other. Without considering an integration of one system into the life of the other, the willingness to differentiate in an individualistic sense leads to an overthrow or the submission of one to the other. Controlling the economy is essential to the capitalist market society today, where a small minority controls the means of production. Having the power to accumulate wealth either by fair or manipulative means, they not only rule over the economy but activities of the society's livelihood.⁶⁵ In so doing, the capitalist economic system of traditional societies, which is normally governed by a prestige-oriented authority and operates on cooperation, giving and re-distributing, has gradually lost its meaning and value. The ability to command and mobilize activities of a society on a vast scale, according to Douglas Meeks, leads to the denial of others' rights and access to the goods that constitute livelihood.⁶⁶ "This gives rise to the decisive social relationship of domination in market society: the social dependency of propertyless persons who have lost access to means of livelihood."⁶⁷

Julio de Santa Ana discusses the historical economic processes of the Western world that pushed many Two-Thirds World nations and the majority of the world population to the periphery – the outer circles away from the inner circles. The processes of production and the circulation of a wide variety of goods, trade and finance are controlled by a ruling class (including the One-Third World nations). This economic system, which is behind

63 Cf. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Talcott Parson (London: G. Allen, 1964).

64 Stanner, 294.

65 See, for instance, Ulrich Durchrow, *Global Economy: A Confessional Issue for the Churches?* Transl. by David Lewis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987), 1-20; M. Douglas Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 58-60. Cf. Rob van Drimmelen, *Faith in a Global Economy: A Primer for Christians* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), 7-28.

66 Meeks, 59.

67 Meeks, 59.

“an unjust success of a few at the exclusion and subjection of many who bear the brunt of the system’s injustice,”⁶⁸ is always generated by an in-built drive to dominate, recognizing no limits, cultivating the market only in order to obtain advantages.⁶⁹ Such a system breeds accumulation of wealth that is always enforced by the spirit of domination, conquest and colonization.⁷⁰

In the light of Santa Ana’s analysis, and in comparison to our situation, there is an unjust flow of wealth in our religio-cultural lifeway. The *Lotu* and the pastorate become the inner circles, identified as a dominating institution, operated by a ruling class, and developed in the spirit of personal accumulation and private benefits.⁷¹ In the simple and understandable words of Adam Smith, the founding father of modern economics: “The clergy of every established church (*Lotu*) constitute a great incorporation.”⁷² Ian Smith exposes this idea further by conceiving the church’s economic system in terms of its internal structure, whereby the clergy is metaphorically viewed as the ‘board of directors’ which has an objective of maximizing ecclesiastical wealth. Smith identifies the careful monitoring of the system by theological novelty in order to maintain the equilibrium and harmony of the religious tradition.⁷³

By undertaking a careful consideration of Smith’s analysis of the church’s system, it is evident that there are some components which can be applied to the present situation of the *Lotu*. Viewing the church as an institution, and the status of the pastorate within that institution, we have seen how the flow of wealth is concentrated on a few, at the exclusion of the majority and with the consequence of the intensive manipulation of essential life resources. Compounding the situation is the fact that these problems are inspired by theological misconceptions which are mostly channelled by the *Lotu*.

To inquire into the underlining principles behind this situation, Santa Ana’s position is appropriate, for he sees that “The root of the problem is not the growth (of the *Lotu*) as such (that accounts for our eco-problems), but the kind of growth and the means by which it is achieved, and its effects.”⁷⁴ The real challenge for us is to find the root causes which

68 Julio de Santa Ana, “Socio-Economic Systems as a Cause of Ecological Imbalance and Poverty,” unpublished document, 5f. Also, *Sustainability and Globalization* Santa Ana, ed. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), 1-22. Cf. Bas de Gaay Fortman & Berma Klein Goldewijk, *God and the Goods: Global Economy in a Civilizational Perspective* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), esp. Chapter 7, 71-95.

69 Santa Ana, 4f.

70 Santa Ana, 6.

71 The living standard of a *faiifeau* has already been mentioned. Referring to the socio-economic system, a *faiifeau* in some villages not only gets the best foods, but often has free travel (usually someone of the village/congregation will pay for his fare or the bus driver does not charge). The money that a *faiifeau* receives from his *alofa* (monetary love offering for the pastor) is for the pastor’s own private expenditures and, furthermore, these donations are non-taxable. In the light of this, one can see that, at the local level, there is no reciprocating flow of the economy in the *Lotu*.

72 Ian Smith, “God and Economics,” *God and Culture* D.A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, eds. (Ann Arbor: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 167.

73 Ian Smith, 167. Smith asserts that “any social phenomenon can be conceived as human economizing activity.” Taking the economic theory of the church as an example, he sees the pope as the “chairman of a huge multinational corporation that produces religious, educational and social services.” Given the aim of maximizing wealth, the main task of recruiting the clergy is to convince the customers that “the discounted value of the future salvation exceeds their current opportunity costs – that is, their opportunities for worldly pleasure.”

74 Santa Ana, 7.

lie behind the irrationality of the system's rationality. Additionally, we must inquire into the consequential means of such irrationalities that are disclosed to us by new shifts of emphasis in the pastorate. This includes, in addition to religio-cultural status, the economic status revealed by the daily presence of *faifeau* on golf-courses, regular overseas travels for private and family affairs, and even some who are not content with former residential houses built by the congregations but insist on new, more modern constructions.⁷⁵

4.3. Theological and Doctrinal Links to Local Eco-Problems

Since Christianity and aspects of the Biblical traditions bear some blame or are co-responsible, to a certain extent, for the ecological crisis, it is necessary here to identify some of the basic Biblical texts (especially the Genesis creation accounts) and the shared theological interpretations of the majority of Samoans. The Biblical creation narratives and their theological implications can be posited as stimulating principles behind local eco-problems. Part of claiming the Biblical traditions as part of the problem is due to the literal interpretation of Biblical texts by the majority of church-goers in Samoa. In this light, therefore, it is necessary to revisit the Bible from a perspective of Christians who literally read and understand the Biblical message without any so-called scholarly and exegetical expositions. Such an approach has contributed not only to the embrace of modern world-views, but also to a distinctive ethical stance toward creation.⁷⁶

4.3.1. *Biblical Texts and Ordinary Theological Interpretations*

Christianity is thoroughly embraced and the Bible is taken for granted as the supreme guide by most Samoans. Even though the Bible conveys narratives and traditions written for past generations, the majority of Samoans continue to receive the Christian message through Biblical texts as unquestioned truth, and to apply it to the contemporary conditions of life without question. Most often, there is an absence of awareness that what the Bible says can be problematic and can hardly orient us to face all present-day problems in our particular context. At this stage, it is necessary to ask some related questions. For instance: What are the theological convictions that generated and shaped our attitudes which have contributed to local eco-problems? How does the Bible concretize these convictions? In addition, how are we applying these convictions in our worship, celebrations, proclamation and participation in the mission of God?

75 This remark relates mainly to pastors of the mainline church traditions. A village scene in American Samoa and (Western) Samoa, for example, would allow one to identify a pastor's residence by a modern-styled house, well furnished, and probably the highest in the village.

76 See James Barr, "The Literal, the Allegorical, and Modern Biblical Scholarship," *JSOT* 44 (1989): 3-17. 'Literal interpretation' sounds foolish to some, but, "literality can be a sign of strength." For example, James Barr states that: "If we say, 'the Bible literally says that God is love, or that Jesus rose from the dead' ..., then we feel that we are saying something extremely powerful and convincing: it's not just some idea, it's really there in black and white, it's literally true."

4.3.1.1. Creator God and Creation out of Nothing

The understanding of God is based on the long-ranging complexity of theological traditions conveyed by the Christian missions explored earlier. God is mostly conceived by Samoans as *Ieova*,⁷⁷ the Creator of a well-ordered seven-day universe, the One who only spoke and brought things into existence. As the Author and Maker of the heavens and the earth, God is mostly conceived to be working through almighty and majestic deeds. The account of creation begins with an affirmation that, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1). All therein were created out of the divine word; for the Creator spoke, and let things be. With the belief in God who created everything out of nothingness (*creatio ex-nihilo*), God is often conceived to be distinct from all that had been created. Remaining distant, the whole of creation is handed over to the control and care of Adam, the man who is assisted by Eve, his wife. Drawing upon this understanding, constructing and developing the world and related parts of creation are determined by the will and wishes of human beings. And since creation is a prior output of God, humankind is likewise entitled to mend creation as the Creator did.

4.3.1.2. Humankind in the Image of God

The work of the sixth day, which culminated in God's saying "*Ina tatou faia ia o le tagata i lo tatou faatusa, ia pei o i tatou o ia; latou te pule ai foi i i' a o le sami, ma manu o le vanimonimo, ma le fanua uma lava, atoa uma foi ma mea ola ...*"),⁷⁸ poses a problem of misinterpretation. The principal command: "*ia tatou faia le tagata i lo taotu faatusa, ia pei o ia o i tatou*" ("Let us make humankind in our image, it shall be like us") has absolutized and affirmed human beings as the crown of the divine creation. While the command is authorized by God, most are convinced that being made in the image and likeness of God means that God's very intention is that the human being must always stand at the centre of creation.

Closely linked to the understanding of the image of God is the general view of *Atamu*⁷⁹ as man alone, although this is literally and traditionally taken from the second creation narrative.⁸⁰ Based on the teachings of the Biblical tradition, the majority of Samoans claim that Eve was made from the rib of Adam. The extreme separation of *Atamu* has been

77 Note that the name *Ieova* (JHWH) was used in the original Samoan translation of the Bible instead of *Atua* (ELOHIM). In this way, there was no distinction between the two divine names.

78 See, for instance, *O isi Lauga i le Afioga a le Atua – Some Sermons on the Word of God – 1863*, by an unidentified preacher but presumably one of the Protestant missionaries. An example here is cited from a missionary sermon on 1. Mose 1:31, "*Ua silasila atu le Atua i mea uma lava na foafoaina e ia, faauta ua lelei lava ia;*" with the theme: "*O le foafoaga o mea uma ma lona lelei,*" which simply means 'Creation and its Goodness.' English translation of the Samoan Verse: "Let us make man in our own image to have dominion over the fishes of the sea and the birds of the air, over the earth and all living creatures" (Genesis 1:26 f).

79 The original translation of the Bible employs the term *Atamu* (transliteration of Adam). The word is presently translated as *tagata* (humankind).

80 Since most church-goers do not have any understanding of the background of the creation stories in the Bible, they simply read the second narrative as part of the first creation story.

intensified by the principal command of ‘dominion over.’ This has legitimized the hierarchical order of creation where domination becomes normative.⁸¹

Normally, the corporateness of the divine image in both the male and female has been mostly taken for granted. And since the majority do not really acknowledge the presence of the feminine aspect in the image of God – which, at the same time, pushes the female to a secondary status through the imposition of male dominance – other parts of creation have likewise been disposed of from the divine image.

4.3.1.3. Human Dominion

The identification of the divine image with ‘mankind,’ together with the command to have dominion over the fish of the sea, birds of the air, the earth and all living creatures, presupposes a kind of universal human lordship. This has been generally accepted as one of the reasons for human dominionship that leads to the exploitation of life resources to the point of exhaustion. Some have argued that the problem is due to misinterpretations by Judaism and Christianity of ‘dominion’ to mean ‘domination.’ Ruth Page⁸² points out that God has dominion and power over the earth, and human beings were created to represent that power on earth. Page also suggests that the words ‘power’ and ‘dominion’ are fiercely used in the sense of “trampling or stamping on the rest of creation.”⁸³

Being made in the image of God can never deny the dominating overtones of the verse. This has driven many to affirm the divine sanctification of the hierarchical order of creation. This is re-emphasized by the command *ia pule foi i latou i i’ a o le sami* ... (“have dominion over the fish of the sea”). The divine command authorizes the rule of the human being over the living creatures and the whole earth. It then turns out that the command to have *pule* (dominion) is understood in the sense of mastering other parts of creation and developing the land in the way people would like it to be.

This has deliberately reduced the value of other forms of life, and rendered them according to their utility and worth for the human being. At present, the majority believe that life revolves around human beings, and planet earth is humankind’s, and specifically, man’s province.⁸⁴ This has caused us to see ourselves not as stewards but masters of the created order in a dominant and despotic sense.⁸⁵ The current oppression faced by the ma-

81 Cf. Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *Wenn Gott und Körper sich begegnen: Feministische Perspektiven zur Leiblichkeit* (Stuttgart: Gütersloh Verlag, 1989); and Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexismus und die Rede von Gott: Schritte zu einer anderen Theologie* (München: Gütersloh, 1985), 95-115.

82 Ruth Page, “The Influence of the Bible on Christian Belief about the Natural World,” *Christianity and Ecology* Elizabeth Breuilly and Martin Palmer, eds. (London: Cassell Publishers Ltd, 1992) 39. See also, *God and the Web of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1996), i-xix.

83 Ruth Page, “The Bible and the Natural World,” 25.

84 Freda Rajotte with Elizabeth Breuilly, “What is the Crisis: The Illness and its Symptoms,” *Christianity and Ecology*, 7.

85 See Leonardo Boff, *Von der Würde der Erde: Ökologie – Politik – Mystik* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1994), 49. Cf. Gerhard Liedke, *Im Bauch des Fisches: Ökologische Theologie* (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1979), 63-70. Boff defines the original meaning of the Genesis text (Gen. 1:26, 28), especially the two phrases ‘image and likeness’ and dominion and subdue. Viewing the connection of the two, he states: “Als Mann und Frau ist der Mensch Repräsentant Gottes in der Schöpfung, Gottes Sohn bzw. Tochter, Statthalter Gottes, der bzw. die Gottes Schöpfungswerk fortführt. Gott hat den Menschen zum Schöpfer, zur Schöpferin geschaffen. Das heißt

jority of people, together with the constant exploitation of natural resources in Samoa, are propelled by this understanding. The sense of superiority over other people, land and sea resources through selfish misuse and abuse has become the rule of the day.⁸⁶ Again, this exploitation of other parts of creation for the benefit of human beings is Biblically sanctioned. Discussions with most informants reveal this by their constant refrain that ‘the Bible said so.’⁸⁷

4.3.1.4. Be Fruitful and Multiply

‘Be fruitful and multiply’ is a divine code for blessings. This reality of blessing is not only expressed in the religio-cultural lifeway. The well-being of the nations depends on their trust in God⁸⁸ who blessed the first human beings by allowing them to fruitfully multiply. Today, this divine command must be read with new spectacles, reinterpreted, and translated in an appropriate language in order to be understood. Many Samoans claim that the Bible has commanded them to be fruitful and multiply.

The Samoan translation of Genesis 1:28, especially where it says: *ia uluola ma fanafanau* (be fruitful and multiply), is mostly understood in the sense of birthing. The Samoan translation does not imply any reference to the procreation of animals, fish, plants, and other living species, as indicated by the word, ‘be fruitful;’ rather, *uluola* (to live and multiply) is understood in the sense of human growth. There is less a sense of referring to the fruitfulness of trees or the harvest of the land or the well-being of a multitude of other creatures and living species. The natural implication of the word is reduced to the process of human birthing as a sign of divine blessing. This coincides with the promise of blessing

exegetisch Abbild und gottähnlich. Unterwerfen und herrschen müssen in diesem Kontext verstanden werden ...”

English Translation: “The human being, man or woman, is a representative of God in creation, his son or daughter, helping to carry out God’s creative work. God makes the human being a creator ... The terms *dominion* and *subdue* are to be understood in this context ...” According to Liedke, “Die Erdherrschaft ist dem Menschen nur auf der Basis seiner Gottesebenbildlichkeit übertragen...” He further discloses the command *dominium terrae* in a brief and systematized exposition touching on reason and rationality as part of the image and likeness of God. The false application and outcome of concepts such as Liedke proposes are revealed by institutions of oppression of both people and nature by modern technological developments.

86 Deforestation as an example can be cited here. During discussions with people of related villages who have granted their virgin forests to the foreign timber-mill companies, it was observed that people share the common conviction that the trees, the land, and all that it contains were given by God for their benefit.

87 This is a common opinion of several informants from villages where timber-mill companies are already present (e.g. Asau, Aopo, Vaipu’a), and some which were approached and had not yet been actively deforested, such as Palauli and Falealupo. After the experiences of destructive cyclones, some claimed that there is no other alternative for family survival and to finance social institutions such as schools, hospitals, and so forth, but to grant the forests to logging companies so that they could receive monetary profit. Asking whether this was a proper use of these resources, most responded that they believed that God had seen their suffering and had therefore approved such decisions. According to this way of thinking, the *pule* (authority) in this situation is appropriate. Some said: “*Fai mai ai le Tusi Paia, o mea uma na tuu e le Atua i le tagata e tua i ai, ma fai i ai lana pule.*” (“The Bible says, all things have been given by God to the human being for his/her own benefit, and to manage according to one’s own will.”)

88 After the colonial takeover, Eastern or American Samoa adopted as her national motto: *Samoa muamua le Atua* (Samoa, Let God be First); and (Western) Samoa established as her Motto: *Faavae i le Atua Samoa* (Samoa founded on God). The two mottos imply a common religio-cultural affirmation that relies on God as the ground and founder of life.

for Abraham (Gen. 12:1 ff), which counts on the multiplicity of sons and daughters as compared to the stars of the heaven and the grains of sand. These two texts are interpreted from an anthropocentric perspective where the endowment of divine blessings is realized through the process of human procreation.

The command to be fruitful and multiply, inevitably translates into the growing sizes of families. Like stories of childless families in the Bible,⁸⁹ Samoans see barrenness as a curse from God and only the antithesis – giving birth to as many children as possible – as a sign of divine blessing. This kind of thinking spearheads the rapidly growing population of both Samoa.⁹⁰

Several attempts have been directed toward the control of the birth rate. However, programmes like Family Planning fail to minimize the sizes of families due to the fact that people have been firmly oriented toward the Biblical teachings that God ordained growth of the human race. Disobedience to the divine command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth are considered a great sin against God's will by Samoans.

Equally related to the promise of blessings are our reactionary responses to the Biblical text where the wise one exhorts his adherents to cast their food upon the river, for one day they will receive much more than what was given (Eccl. 11:1). While we often replace the word *mea ai* (food) with *mea* (anything of worth or value), we are continuously mistaken by the application of this saying. Of course giving is an utmost value in the religio-cultural heritage of Samoa as well as Christianity. But our literal reading of the text can cause us to over-react by producing in a forceful way and to exhaustive ends the reproductive potentialities of natural resources themselves.

4.3.2. Ecclesiastical Centredness

The central place of the *Lotu* in Samoa is closely linked to confessional or ecclesiastical centredness. Almost every Samoan has an intimate association with a specific *Ekklesia*.⁹¹ Ecclesiastical affiliation has not only categorized people religiously, but it has increasingly fostered projects which, on the one hand, privatize the faith commitment of believers, and on the other hand, diminish the corporate character of the communities. In other words, denominationalism endangers demonationalism, which means that ecclesial identification distinguishes members of a local congregation to the extent of dividing local village communities from each other. Such divisions, whether internal (within the local congregation) or extended to the wider local community (in the confessional sense) shape a kind of religious identity which is more oriented toward individual benefits than

89 See Ruth Page, "The Influence of the Bible on Christian Belief About the Natural World," 36. Page states that, in the Old Testament, "Barrenness, lack of children, and wasteland were a cause of grief and were often held to be a sign of God's displeasure ... The joy of a new baby, of beautiful gardens and productive farms is still with us. But our world is so much more over-crowded."

90 According to Western Samoa's census of 1991, the total population was about 161,298 with a large number of about 50,000 Samoan migrants living in New Zealand, without counting those who live in other countries. American Samoa's total population in the 1990 census was 46,800, showing an increase of 43.1 percent over the 1980 estimate. What is amazing is the prediction that by the year 2020, the population of the two Samoas will be doubled if there are no successful birth-control attempts.

91 A transliteration of *ekklesia* or the Church as the elect of God.

communal advantage. As has been exposed above, this was sparked by the early missionary work, which was then implanted into the religio-cultural lifeway of the society.

4.3.3. *The Sacraments: Proclaimed Word – Central-Yet-Bounded*

Central to the worship life of the Church are the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. These preserve the essence and ongoing life of believers. Although the proclaimed Word has been officialized by the Protestant churches as central to her life, it can be seen that the possible effects of centrality have been overlooked. The proclamation is centred around the moral development of church-goers and adherents, having no relation to the wider world. This kind of dismembering of the world goes hand in hand with the confinements of the effectiveness of the Word of God to human beings. Being influenced by a strong dualistic emphasis on human salvation at the expense of creation, the church's proclamation has concentrated on the improvement of personal morality and the inspiration of souls. In so doing, the divine communication in and through natural phenomena (theophanies) has unconsciously been omitted for many years.

This is based on the conception that, in the Bible, God spoke only to people or to a nation. And this is partly due to the theological formation of pastors in seminaries where, in practice, a student of theology who prepares a sermon is usually expected to exegete a Biblical text and must present a direct and sometimes heavy application *for* or *on* the listeners. The proclamations of the Word are mostly geared toward issues relating to human salvation, and therefore lack an effective link to creational issues. From several discussions with informants, it is observed that the preaching of the Word has been routinely carried out in this mode. It was even noticed that when parts of the created world like trees, animals, birds, fish and so forth are mentioned in a sermon, they are only spoken of in terms of illustrations to be used for human beings. Hence, an exclusive way of enforcing detachment from essential sources of life is grounded in the Word of God which has been misinterpreted in an anthropocentric bias.

4.3.4. *Holy Communion*

A drastic shift in the celebration of the Holy Sacrament goes hand in hand with the transitional change to the modern era, where in some ways the Samoan Church has reached a critical point in history. The indigenous sacramental symbols or elements for the Holy Communion such as a piece of *taro* and coconut milk or drinking water are made foreign by the attractions of the bread and red wine. One record in the LMS Reports, for instance, states that: "The foreign element is entering very much indeed. It shows itself in such a very little thing as the fact that the Samoan is 'no longer satisfied with the milk of the coconut as communion wine but must colour it with something to make it look like the foreign wine he sees in the stores'.⁹² In fact, the colour of elements makes the difference, and red, as the majority comprehend, signifies not only the blood of Jesus Christ but also

92 LMS Report, 1913. See also Norman Goodall, *History of LMS 1895-1945*, 362.

the forgiveness of sin. An understanding of the Holy Communion as a Thanksgiving Meal and an appreciation of God's given gifts of creation for the life of all is totally absent.

At present, the use of local elements for the Eucharist is a challenge for the churches as part of the inculturation process. Wine and bread can easily be bought in stores. But is it possible for us to receive the gifts of life with which God has blessed us? Participation in the Holy Communion using foreign elements is, again, an act of desacralization of the local and indigenous gifts of God's creation and, simultaneously, a sanctification of foreign elements which have economic associations. This is a clear indication of our alienation from the sacredness of indigenous life.

4.4. Summary

Local ecological problems have been discussed from the perspective of the church in relation to her institutional status and theological teachings in the previous section. It has been noted that the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of eco-problems cannot be separated from every other sphere of life. Its content is a web of social, political, economic, climatic and religious forces interacting and interpenetrating, each having an impact on the other. In so doing, creation, which has its own integrity from a theocentric and pneumacentric perspective, succumbs to the temptations of human institutional understandings which are informed by destructive attitudes of materialism and greed. These are promoted by socio-economic pressures of the life system where almost every natural resource is valued according to its economic worth. This is one way of expressing human-centredness to an extent that the lives of trees, animals, fish and all the rest of creation have been robbed of their intrinsic value and right to life. The human temptation of over-cultivation of the very essentials of life is due to profit-driven ambitions in a despotic sense.⁹³

The analysis of the realities provoked by the *Lotu* vividly shows the direction in which she is heading. While opting for spiritual orientations based on the Gospel on the one hand, the *Lotu* in her institutional guise, on the other hand, is gradually developing more toward a materialism influenced by economic and political factors. These developments symbolize the status of both the *Lotu* and the pastorate. The socio-economic system of the *Lotu* functions in such a way that only a few benefit from it. While it has merged with and immersed itself in local activities and politics, it appears that she has lost her basic foundation and orientation to a sanctified life, where communal relations are to be nurtured in love, care and respect for all, including the living components, that have been desacralized.

The call to reinstate religio-cultural authenticity and spontaneity is urgent. It is like a voice crying in the wilderness, calling for deliverance from unnecessary human bondage, especially since our lifeway has materialized itself to such an extreme that the Gospel message seems to be determined by the quantity and worth of cultural expressions, at the expense and sacrifice of living eco-systems. Our call does not imply a total overthrow of the current system but, instead, a reforming of the system by reinventing a sense of fairness in the flow and distribution of common resources.

93 Discussions with Informants, (August, 1996).

5. THEO-COSMOLOGICAL VIEWS OF SAMOA

5.1. Ancestral Worldviews

Much has been said about the shifting realities of life which are stimulated by religio-cultural convictions of Samoa. The perception of the essential sources of life was and is continually informed by mastering and dominating attitudes. Such attitudes are reflexes of the so-called developers or agents of development, who have often interpreted the moral imperatives to subdue and master the world in a one-sided monologue, and with a sense of superiority.¹ This has been influenced by the effects of a metaphysics which generated an understanding of nature as something that is a lifeless and purposeless material. Intimately linked to this mastery orientation to reality is the detachment of the cosmology from the understanding of the world as history. This is closely related to the detachment of theology from science, as John Haught notes: “Theology has handed over to science the study of the natural world and retreated into the more elusive and purely human realms of history, freedom, existential subjectivity, or the quest for meaning.”² In so doing, theology has been made largely irrelevant to our understanding of the cosmos. The human exile from nature (based on Cartesian dualism) detaches the human mind from nature. This has consequently left the cosmos “to be perceived as fundamentally alien to the mind, and it has been very difficult for humans to feel at home in such a spiritless world.”³

To formulate any reliable accounts of the historio-cosmological past of Samoa seems initially impossible, as they are mostly treated from the standpoint of imagining and theorizing. Nevertheless, the existence of some historical evidence during the contact period contributes significantly to the reconstruction of the traditional religio-cultural life of Samoa. The recording of historical events later, especially by literate people, has been tainted by generalizations, pre- and misconceptions and, to a certain extent, based on heroic achievements of individuals. The history of Samoa, for instance, was and is considered a product of a special elite produced by a group of literate people who managed to record events and accounts of the colonial past and significant human activities.⁴ History in this case depended largely either on the information recorded by the early European discoverers and sailors, or the missionaries who invaded several islands with the Gospel during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

In reality, however, Samoan history is only a record of a minority (political leaders and traditional paramount chiefs and heroes, recorded by foreigners). It is thus unfortunate that the historical events were observed and recorded through lens coloured by the experiences of the *papalagi*, with little attention given to indigenous beliefs and perceptions. Samoan recorded history became “an embodiment of the outsiders’ memories, perceptions, and interpretations which are transmitted to the memories of the Pacific islanders through

1 Cf. David Kinsley, *Ecology and Religion*, 3-6. Developers mostly view the world as a non-human resource in which the role of human beings is to apply their initiative and power in order for the potential of essential life resources (land, sea and sky) to be exploited.

2 Cf. John F. Haught, “Restoring Our Sense of Belonging,” *The Woodstock Theological Centre – Forum Paper* (April 1994); *The Promise of Nature: Ecology and Cosmic Purpose*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1993).

3 Haught, *Woodstock Forum*, 3.

4 D. Denoon and R. Lacey, eds. *Oral Traditions in Melanesia* (Hong Kong: Colorcraft Ltd, 1981), 1-5.

education, consequently reordering their memories.”⁵ Samoans therefore know little about their own history and, indeed, have lost most of the cosmological aspects of their life-history. Samoan historians have recently begun to sketch Samoan history, researching and reconstructing it from their own interpretations and perspectives. Since this development is in its infancy phase, there is still a need to research our past, recall and rediscover appropriate means to cope with the present challenges in regards to sustainable development on the basis of ecological understanding.

The aim in this section is to recall and interpret some of the ancestral relics and remains of the Samoan religio-cultural heritage. These include their rapport and knowledge of their world, their moral and ethical attitudes towards their homeland, and also the inter-connections and interrelations among the Gods, human beings and cosmic components. In Samoa, traces of divine history identified by landmarks, relics and naming concepts, are living witnessed to their claims of Samoa as an inheritance. These historic features attest to the unity of Samoa’s cosmological heritage founded on a firm conviction that they, as people and world, were blessed, ordained and sanctified by their Gods. The ancient ancestral world and perception of history indeed constituted a wholistic cosmic history. This claim was somehow falsified, transformed and replaced by contemporary forces and understandings of history. Nevertheless, it is the contention that the theo-cosmological views of the ancestors are bridges that orient us in our ecological concerns.

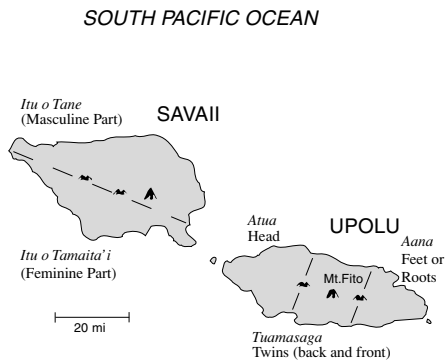
The theo-cosmological claim of Samoans is rooted in the affirmation of their ancestral origin and common genealogical heritage in God-*Tagaloa*, as well as their rapport with the land, sea, and sky scapes. Explicated by the chanting of the *faalupega* as a liturgical expression of the cosmic components, the whole geographical-scape was viewed as a web of living bodies enhanced and animated by a life-giving energy, the Gods, Ancestors, or Spirits. Mountains, trees, stones, fish, reefs, and heavenly components were seen as inextricable parts of a single bodily heritage that was shared in common with human beings. Each component had meaning and a role to play for the whole body.

This worldview was informed by mythological traditions which talk about a divine body that was crushed and scattered by the cosmic creatures in the ocean. Although scattered into pieces, they were united and given a name – Samoa. Informants in the island of Manu’a relayed that the myterious divine body, in a form of bloodclot, was found floating in the ocean. Land, sea, and air creatures split it up. Forces such as the wind, waves of the ocean, radiations of the sun, moon, and the stars managed to move and bring them together into a single unit, a living organ which is Samoa. All these processes, as informants related, were rooted and coordinated by an animating Soul or God-*Tagaloa*.⁶ The mythological tradition is affirmed by the way the islands of Samoa are named, divided, and sealed by the liturgie of the *faalupega* as a way of embracing such a reality (see Maps I & II).

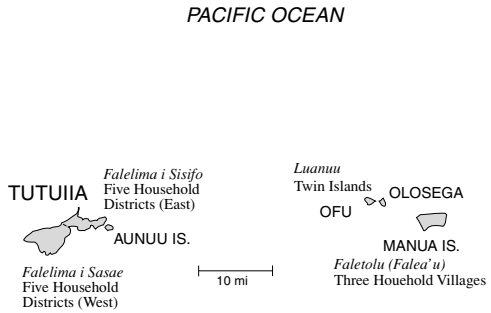
5 Albert Wendt, “Novelists and Historians and the Art of Remembering,” *Class and Culture in the South Pacific* Antony Hooper, ed. (Suva: Fiji Times Ltd, 1987), 86 f.

6 The information is based on the myth of the first human being relayed to the author by the chiefs and orators of Fitiuta, Manua. The myth informs the bodily worldviews of the Samoan islands. The myth does not appear in any written document. This is due, presumably, to the unwillingness of the islanders to share their sacred traditions with early foreigners. Discussion with author, November, 1992.

Body of Islands – Samoa (Oceania)



Map I: Former (Western)⁷ Samoa.



Map II: American Samoa.

(Cited from: PcGlobe Program)

Affirming the sacredness of the cosmos was the essence of the traditional lifeway. A wide range of oral (and written) traditions relate that the Samoan ancestors perceived their world as a group of islands created by the Gods and left it to grow in its own rhythms and movements.⁸ In other written versions, it is stated that Samoan islands were formed out of pairs of rock, either thrown down from above or hooked up from the bottom of the ocean. The cosmological genealogy, which originated from the pairs of rock, took the form of (married) couples, and gave birth to the succeeding generations.⁹

Besides the sacral nature of the land (and sea) scapes, the naming of the islands, based on the bilineal nature of the cosmic genealogy,¹⁰ is the ground of the Samoa bio-communities of both humankind and nature. This was the basic characteristic of conceiving the world in a wholistic manner. N.E. Stanner states that such “juxtaposed pairs” are disclosed by mutual supporting or contending functions of chiefs and orators, “reciprocity in kinship and ceremonial relations, and the grouping in pairs throughout the social-political system.”¹¹ Sanctioned by initiation feasts as a way of entering into communion with Gods and the community, “heaven itself was fairly uninterested,” as the Supernatural was ex-

⁷ The new constitution has recently changed the name Western Samoa to Samoa. For our case here, we prefer to use the term “former” since the change is not actively known.

⁸ Williamson, 4.

⁹ See J.W. Ellison, *Opening and Penetration of Foreign Influences in Samoa to 1880* (Corvallis: Oregon State College, 1938), 15. Cf. Williamson Vol. 2, 218-231; Turner, 17-21, Stairs, 222.

¹⁰ Cf. Lowell D. Holmes, *A Case Study in Cultural Anthropology* (San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1925), 8f. Islands are named after each marriages, e.g. *Sa* and *Vaii* – *Savaii*, *U* and *Polu* – *Upolu*, *Tu* and *Ila* – *Tutuila*.

¹¹ Stanner, 306.

perienced on earth.¹² This coincides with the indigenous conviction that “the Samoans originated in Samoa.”¹³ Traditional worldviews presented a communal and reciprocating nature of the religio-cultural lifeway. Ritual practices legitimated an awareness of the sacredness of geographical scapes and living communities.

The aforementioned affirmations, however, were accompanied by some misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the religio-cultural life of the Samoans from the records of the early missionaries and settlers. Felix Keesing, for example, states that the experiences of early observers of the absence of a “powerful priesthood and institutionalized religion,”¹⁴ as compared to other Polynesian island groups, were vivid indications that the Samoans had no religion. John Williams stated:

They (Samoans) have neither *malaes*, nor temples, nor altars, nor offerings; and consequently, none of the barbarous and sanguinary rites observed at other groups. In consequence of this, the Samoans were considered an impious race, and their impiety became proverbial with the people of Rarotonga; for, when upbraiding a person who neglected the worship of the gods, they would call him a godless Samoan.¹⁵

To the early observers and the missionaries, the existence of a powerful priesthood and an institutionalized religious structure were the marks of the religious life of the so-called ‘primitive’ societies. The identification of the non-religious outlook of the Samoans with such ceremonial institutions even drove them to label Samoan religion as “heathenism clothed in a different dress.”¹⁶ What was misunderstood was the fact that the Samoans had a very different system and conception of priesthood, as well as *malaes*. For other Polynesian societies, religion was a phenomenon which was perhaps more distinct from the social and political life of the society.

The priests in the context of the Samoan religion were a peculiar class who were designated to perform servitude roles. *Malae* were also seen as not only a centre of religious matters but also places for social and political activities.¹⁷ They were more than a mere place or a play ground, for they included the meeting place of the divine chiefs, a place of divine encounter, a sacred place for hunting, etc. Even the sea in the presence of the *tautai* (fishermen) was a sacred place.¹⁸

John Williams, as a result of his observations and comparisons of Polynesian religious forms, concluded that the Samoans; “having no altars stained with human blood, no *maraes* strewn with the skulls and bones of its numerous victims, no sacred groves devoted

12 Stanner, 310-313.

13 A response of an old Samoan chief to the anthropologist Sir Peter Buck, in his presentation on Polynesian Migration and the origination of Samoans from Asia.

14 Keesing, 399 f.

15 Williams, 131.

16 Williams, 142.

17 Keesing, 399 f. *Taula aitu* (priests) acted as prophets, family attendants, and servants of the gods of war. *Malae*, in most island places, was symbolic of religious activities and was also seen as the political and social centre of the village.

18 Proverbial sayings in fishing activities used by chiefs and orators refer to the sacredness of the ocean. For example: *Ua paia le aso aua ua nofoia le tuaaumafuamalu*. Literally: “This occasion is sacred as the fishers assemble themselves in the deep ocean.”

to rites of which brutality and sensuality were the most obvious features, this people had lords many and gods many.”¹⁹

Hans Nevermann has analyzed the Samoan way of life and viewed the religion of the Samoans as being distinguished from their social, economic and political engagements.²⁰ Despite the fact that Nevermann presents the oldtime religion as a dichotomy, if it is seen as playing a servitude role within the activities of the traditional society, Samoans did not see it as being an appendix of social and political life. The oldtime religion was firmly integrated as the centre of communal living. The centrality of religion is symbolized by the centredness of the *malae* and the house of the high chief, which was considered as a temple for community worship. The servitude role was the essence of traditional Samoan life, which is still maintained today.

According to Keesing, “the Samoans were no less religious than their fellow Polyynesians, but their religion was closely integrated with the elaborate political and social organisation; the priests remained the servant of the chief, and for the most part, priestly functions were incorporated with chiefly and oratory functions.”²¹ One example of this aspect of the old Samoan religion is presented by the *Tapuaiga Fa’amalama* worship noted as follows.

5.1.1. *Tapuaiga Fa’amalama – Worship*

In the first written documents on the Samoan language, the missionary George Pratt presents *fa’amalama* to mean ‘a fire for giving light, a lamp, a window.’²² When rendered as a verb, *fa’amalama* becomes *fa’amalamalama*, meaning: to cause to burn brightly, to make clear, or to explain.²³ Formed out of two syllables, *fa’a* – which is a prefix and an active participle; and *malama* – to enlighten, to make bright or clear, or to give guidance through explanations, the term is understood as a continuous religious act whereby people ask for enlightenment. Given that the worship was performed at night, it can be interpreted as an urge to be enlightened in the face of hardships and difficult experiences. During the act of worship, people (or a representative – traditional priest or *matai*) expressed their fears, joys and hopes to the God whom they trusted to provide protection and blessings.²⁴

The *tapua’iga fa’amalama* was usually performed just as night-time closed in. The performance of the *fa’amalama* expressed the urge of participants to find security and comfort by remaining in the *malamalama*. Gods were felt to be present in the midst of

19 Williams, 142.

20 Hans Nevermann, *Götter der Südsee: Die Religion der Polynesier* (Stuttgart: W. Spemann Verlag, 1947), 125. Following: “Während der Marae genannte Kultplatz in Polynesien meistens der Ort religiöser Zeremonien ist, bedeutet das entsprechende Wort Malae im Samoanischen einen Dorfplatz als politischen und sozialen Mittelpunkt, und im allgemeinen wurden die religiösen Riten in den Wohnhäusern aufgeführt, in denen auch die Symbole der Götter aufbewahrt wurden.”

21 Keesing, 400.

22 Samoans in olden times did not live in closed-door houses with windows, but rather, in open houses. The translation of *faamalama* as ‘window’ here does not really touch the meaning of the word itself.

23 J.W. Newell, ed. *Pratt’s Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1960), 99. First edition, 1862.

24 See an example where an old chief prayed in intercession to the family God for blessings, protection and guidance.

both light and darkness. Hence, humankind, and in fact the whole created world, experienced the divine presence in co-existing terms. The experience of being enlightened was symbolically expressed by the lighting of *afi* or *fa' amalama* (fire) at sunset, together with the offering of prayers to the family or national gods. The prayers were, indeed, a cosmic adoration of divine goodness, together with intercessions for the perpetual sustainment of the essential gifts of life.

From this brief etymological explication of the concept, one can glimpse the function of *fa' amalama* in the context of Samoan indigenous life. The perception of the divine was, on the one hand, that of a universal existence, in the sense that Gods were beyond human control. The potencies of the Gods superceded and transcended the dualism of darkness and light. But the experience of the divine presence in the context of the *fa' amalama* is also one of being both far away, yet at the same time being close by, abstract yet concrete, transcendent yet immanent. Further, darkness here refers not only to night-time, but also to moral and spiritual darkness, or simply when the human soul undergoes difficulties, and thus yearns for divine comfort and guidance. The human relation to the divine is therefore one of linking back and forth to the source of light (and life), thus being in intimate relationship with both darkness and light.

During the process of religious conversions and historical transformations, *tapua'iga* became the term most commonly used to refer to the act of worship, or a response to the supernatural powers beyond human conception and control. *Fa' amalama* slowly faded away as the missionaries and foreigners labelled it a heathen custom that was irrelevant, immoral, uncivilized, sinful, and so forth. Changes took place through the attempts of both the missionaries and Samoan Christians themselves who re-interpreted old religious customs as ineffective and less valuable. The ancient understanding of *tapua'iga* was transferred to the new *lotu*, and people at times began to use the word *fa' atuatuaga* (faith) to refer to other new religious movements.²⁵

5.1.2. *Ritualistic Aspects of the Ancestral-Cosmic Religion*²⁶

The concept 'traditional' or 'indigenous religion' has been previously discussed. Our point of focus here is to recall the ritualistic aspects of the ancestral religion and investigate how they informed and influenced the religio-cultural lifeway of the communities in their relation to each other and to the essential foundations of life, the land, sea and sky-scapes.

There appear to be three main forms of ritual expressions of *tapua'iga*. These are: (i) *tapua'iga nofonofo* (an act of meditation while sitting in silence), (ii) *taulaga* (proper preparation, offering and distribution of food), and (iii) *ifoga* (the act of reconciliation).²⁷ An *ava* ceremony was usually performed prior to the enactment of these ritualistic ex-

25 For example, when people talk of the Bahai faith, they speak of *Faatuatuaga* Bahai or *Lotu* Bahai.

26 Cf. "Rituals in Context," *Pacific Rituals: Living or Dying?*, Gweneth and Bruce Deverell, eds. (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, 1987), viii. The author refers to ritual expressions to mean "... a repeatable patterned way of expressing the significant experiences and events in the ongoing life of a particular people and culture."

27 Cf. K.T. Faletose, *O le Tala Faasolopito o le Ekalesia Samoa (LMS): A History of the Samoan Church* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1959.), 5-8. English translation by the author.

pressions. The *matai* of each respective family of the village would participate in the *ava* drinking. The *taulele'a* assisted in preparing and calling out the designated cups to the chiefs, and also provided the *taupou* with materials such as *vai ma le taina o le fau* (water and the clearing of the refiner) for mixing the *ava*. Most important to this ceremony is the expression of thanksgiving, and pouring the first of the *ava* by the *matai* for his or her god on the ground, or on the mat in front, before those assembled drink the remaining mix. As an example, a *matai* usually would say, *O lau ava lea le Atua: Faafetai i lou alofa. Tausi ma faamanuia mai ia i matou i fuafuaga o lenei aso. Ia manuia! ... Manuia!* This can be translated as, “Here is your *ava* O God (name of the God)! Thank you for your love. Protect and bless us in today’s endeavours. Blessings be with all! ... (Others would respond), Bless you too!”

5.1.2.1. Contemplating Aspect – *Tapuaiga Nofonofo*

The first expressional form of *tapua'iga* resembles a contemplative act whereby an individual or the community silently sets aside a time of prayers to their personal, family or national God for security, victory and success, while others are engaged in social activities like fishing, house-building, tattooing, sports competitions and so forth. Such activities have their own taboos which must be observed; otherwise the divine blessings would not be guaranteed. This aspect designates the place of mystery in the religio-cultural lifeway. Participants have the desire for and expect the break-through of the supernatural in their ordinary experiences. This dimension can be identified as body-soul seeking for trans-experiences.

5.1.2.2. Offering – *Taulaga*

Taulaga were normally performed in the morning at the rising of the sun and in the evening at the setting of the sun. The offering of food bespeaks the reciprocal nature of Samoan society where the foods offered to the *matai* are received, and afterwards redistributed by *tulafale*. Prior to the distribution of the offering, the *tulafale* would officially proclaim the amount of food offered by the donating party. At the same time, a public declaration of what has been offered is called outside by a *taule'ale'a*. The essence of the *taulaga* in this category is not only food but the mediating role of the spoken words. It is the tradition of Samoans that each *matai* has a specific portion designated for each person of almost every fruit, bird, fish, and animal which is offered,²⁸ according to their rank and status in the community. This tradition has been eternally consecrated in the sense that the status and ranking of the *matai* are well considered.²⁹

28 There is a Samoan proverbial saying: *O le atu ua uma ona aisa*. This means that even while the bonito swims in the ocean, Samoans had already proportionately counted its parts for consumption.

29 Cf. Margret Mead, *Samoa*, and Sir Peter Buck, 232. Status and rank in the order of Samoan society is not only represented by the forms and structures of houses and living settlements, but also by distributions of food and material items. Sharing of a cooked pig is a good example, where all members of the village community, from the sacred chiefs, the pastors, elderly people and children would receive their specified portions.

5.1.2.3. Reconciliation – *Ifoga*

The *ifoga* or *tapua'iga faasifo* (confessional and humiliating act asking for pardon) deals with the behavioral attitudes of the community. It is “a public act of submission or apology through prolonged bowing before the house of the offended party.”³⁰ In cases where a person has violated the ordinary norms that sustain the integrity of human relationships, the family, and the society – for instance, in severe cases such as murder or an assault, or disrespecting a *matai*, *ifoga* is often carried out. Here, the assaulted person together with his family or sometimes the whole village community would proceed early in the morning to the front of the offender's house or *malae* and remain in silence. While seated with fear of revenge from the offended party, the assaulter would bow down in the front, covering his or her head with an *ie toga* (fine mat). This could take hours depending on the willingness of the family to accept the interceding act. Upon accepting the *ifoga*, speeches are exchanged and the *matai* of the offended party would raise the assaulter up from his/her kneeling position, thus welcoming him or her with the whole party into his house. There, an *ava* ceremony would be performed and a feast provided to celebrate the remission of the misdeed and the fear of revenge.³¹

In short, reconciliation as summarized by Filemoni-Tofaeono, “bespeaks a desire for mutual trust and regained dignity in a cultural act.”³² While viewed as a degrading act, the performance of reconciliation is an avenue through which “families not only bear with the humiliation but manage to show care for each other, regardless of the severity of the misdeed ... (And even though the act of *ifoga* may not take away the scars of what has happened, it somehow) provides a sense of relief and inner peace to those affected by such circumstances,” once it is performed.³³

5.2. Theological Concepts of the Ancestral Religion

It is noted from some parts of the previous discussion that the traditional concept of God does not point to one specific deity but to a multiplicity of Gods. W.T. Prichard, during his former consulate in Samoa, stated that “the Samoans had an almost endless number and variety of gods ... There were the gods of the individuals, the gods of families, the gods of towns, the gods of districts, and the gods of the nation.”³⁴ In addition, there were God/s of each trade such as house-building, warfare, planting, fishing, and so forth.³⁵ According to Meleisea, the divine concept of Samoans seems to echo Syncretism as a result of Theism and Pantheism. He categorizes traditional Gods in two main classifications: the so-called *Atua* (Gods with no human origins), and *Aitu* (Gods with human origins but being half-god and half-human).³⁶ Horst Cains, following the classification of Stairs, has ar-

30 Joan Filemoni-Tofaeono, “A New Dimension of Ministry: The Role of the Church in Relation to the Problem of Alcohol in American Samoa,” *M.Th. Thesis*, Pacific Theological College, (1993): 55.

31 Faletose, 6ff.

32 Filemoni-Tofaeono, 56.

33 Filemoni-Tofaeono, 56f.

34 Prichard, 106. Cf. Turner, 18; Stairs, 216f.

35 Turner, 24. Williamson, 68.

36 Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 35f.

ranged the Gods of the Samoans into four categories, namely: *Atua*, *Tupua*, *Aitu*, and *Saualii*. As a means of representing the immortality of the divinities, many emblems were chosen, including some of the heavenly bodies, such as *Lii* (the Pleiades), *Tupua-Legase* (Jupiter), *Nuanua* (Rainbow) and *Lao maomao* (the marine rainbow).³⁷ We will follow these categorizations and examine how they influenced the religious life of the society as a whole.

5.2.1. Gods – *Atua*

Atua is an inclusive non-gender term used to address the “original gods,”³⁸ the “highest gods,”³⁹ the “immovable,”⁴⁰ the “Supreme Being,”⁴¹ or “the superior gods with non-human origins.”⁴² In etymological studies, the term is believed to derive either from the Malayan word *tuban* or *tuan* in Sumatran,⁴³ which refers to God. It is also possible that the concept *Atua* might have been influenced from neighboring Polynesian societies where the word has certain generic links. This ancestral linking is shared by almost every Polynesian society when referring to their ancestral Gods. To mention a few, for example: the Samoan word *matua* (parents or elders) is related to *oromatua* (Tahitian term for ancestors) and *aumakua* (Hawaiian term for ancestors). The meaning of *matua* is not limited to immediate parents but extends to include all the previous ancestral generations.⁴⁴ With reference to *atua* as *matua*, ancestral ties and parental roles (to care, love) are recalled, as well as the notion of birthing, assurance of blessings and security in life (and death).

Atua shared the common divine address, *Tagaloalagi* (sometimes shortened – *Tagaloa*), but differentiations were made based on the suffixes which are added to their names. The suffixes designated the roles and status of each individual God.⁴⁵ For instance, besides

37 Stairs, 215.

38 Stairs, 211. Cf. Horst Cains, *Aitu: Eine Untersuchung zur autochthonen Religion der Samoaner*, E. Harberland, ed. (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1979), 172. Turner, 18-20.

39 Nevermann, 47. A translation of the phrase *die hohen Götter*.

40 Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 4.

41 Williams, 143.

42 Meleisea, 35.

43 Dolar E. Heider, “Götter und Dämonenglauben im alten Samoa,” 356.

44 Nevermann, 51 f. Nevermann states: “Auf Tahiti entsprach der Kult der Oromatua dem hawaiischen Aumakua-Kult. Beider Bezeichnungen hängen mit dem Wort *matua*, “Eltern” zusammen, aber sie beziehen sich nie auf die wirklichen Eltern, sondern auf Vorfahren längst vergangener Zeiten. Die Oromatua haben sogar alles Persönliche verloren und sind Schattenseelen, die oft in Gruppen auftreten und als übelwollende Götter die Lebenden quälen.”

45 See Pratt’s *Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language*, 182 f and 310. In relation to the concept of naming, the addressing of the Samoan traditional Gods by special names is another good illustration. Here, for example, *Tagaloa* is a peculiar name shared by all original gods. The name stems from two root words: *Taga*, meaning “action or motion of hands” – a noun – or “active” when used as an adjective. It also means “a bag, stomach” or a “removal of restrictions from things which have been restricted.” And the word *Loa* means “to be long ago, way back, no end, or directly and instantly” when used as an adverb. The combination of the two words provides a sense of the Creator God *Tagaloa* as a long (or tall) and active Being who existed long ago. This God is present, without end, and acts to free things which are in bondage. The name *Tagaloa* echoes also the concept of birthing and the continuation of life when we refer to the stomach or bags as “wombs of life”. It should be

Tagaloa, the principal God, another tradition presented two other co-creators, *Tagaloa tosi* (the maker) and *Tagaloa vaavaai* (the seer or beholder). The two divinities helped the creator god not only in the creation of the earth but were also sent by *Tagaloa* to complete the formation of the bodies of the two human beings and to impart them life.⁴⁶ Elaborating on the Samoan understanding of the divine concept, Dolar E. Heider, a German missionary who served in Samoa during the colonial period, summarises the concept of God-*Tagaloalagi* by breaking the word into three respective syllables. By referring to *lagi* as the heavenly habitation of God, *loa* as the endlessness and vastness of space and time, and *taga* as meaning the *I-self* and the ultimate freedom of the total being, he states that the three essential characteristics are united to form the unity of the divine. *Tagaloalagi* is therefore the “*allmächtige Himmelsherr*” (omnipotent God of the heavens).⁴⁷

This God transcends space and time and in the divine’s own freedom and power does what is willed. As progenitors of other deities, and believed to be creators of the earth and all other forms of life therein, the original Gods did not possess any form of imagery or personal representations (for example, associations with priests or temples), and were not invoked in religious practises and worship.⁴⁸ Even though the original gods were not evoked, they were adored with thanksgiving, especially for the gifts of providence (particularly in terms of food). One can note then, that the idea of the supreme Creator-God had already been embraced by the ancestors. With a trinitarian version as explicated by the missionary, one can see and distinguish how the so-called enlightened knowledge attempted to categorize the understanding of God who was worshipped and adored for ages by the ancestors.

5.2.1.1. Deified Gods – *Tupua*

Early writings discuss the divine concept of *tupua* according to the relationship of the deities to the human world. Any mediating role or contact of the *tupua* to *Tagaloa* is hardly mentioned. *Tupua* were built-up forms erected by human beings to be images of Gods.⁴⁹ The divination of such forms or images was determined by the experiences of the living reality. This means that paramount chiefs were venerated as *tupua* when they were

noted also that the suffix *a-lagi* – “sky or heavens” added to the name *Tagaloa* implies that God *Tagaloa* lived in the highest heavens as the principal God.

46 Stairs, 212. Stairs further states that this tradition “seems to be a remarkable allusion to a trinity of workers, and also appears to be an indistinct reference to the phenomenon of the elevation of portions of the land by volcanic agency ...”

47 D.E. Heider, 357. Heider refers to *Tagaloa* as: “Der Ungebundene, Unbeschränkte in Raum und Zeit, daher der Allmächtige, der Absolute, der Souveräne, der Höchste, der Herr über alles, weil er nicht gebunden ist durch irgend ein Tabu.”

48 Stairs, *Old Samoa*, 212. This statement may be based on a misinterpretation of the religious life of Samoans. As the traditional religion preached no separation from the cultural ceremonies, Samoans invoked and adored *Tagaloa* in their lives. See John Williams, for example, who once said that from his observation, “... and the Samoans in particular, had a vague idea of a Supreme Being, whom they regarded as the creator of all things, and the author of their mercies. They call him *Tagaloa*; and ... at their great feast, prior to the distribution of the food, an orator arose and, after enumerating each article, exclaimed, Thank you, great *Tagaloa* for this.”

49 Hans Fischer, *Studien über Seelenvorstellungen in Oceanien* (München: Claus Renner Verlag, 1965), 199. The rendering of the term “*Tupua*” by Pratt (1878: 366) places emphasis on the fact that *tupua* is recognised in forms and figurative images. Pratt refers to the term as “a stone supposed to be a man petrified” or “an image.”

considered by their family as a responsible figure worthy to be deified. This living responsibility was not confined to human relations, but was seen as the ultimate link between Samoan paramount chiefs and the creator God. With this mediating role, the paramount chiefs had to respond to the creator, the source of all life.

Tupua in its most basic sense means paramount or sacred chiefs (or kings in the Western context). In symbolic terms, they represent authority, power and noble leadership qualities. The emphasis on charismatic gifts, personality, courageous character and material wealth were the measures by which the paramount chiefs received great respect in several communities. These communities gradually elevated the status of the paramount chiefs and consequently worshipped them as Gods. *Tupua* is identified with the deified spirits of the chiefs who, after death, proceeded to dwell in *Pulotu*. The idea is derived from the traditional rite (or ‘worship,’ as Stairs puts it) of *O le Faa-Atua-alalaina*,⁵⁰ referring to embalmed bodies of some of the chiefs which were made into sun-dried Gods.

The personification of deified spirits of the paramount chiefs reveals the desires of human beings to be with their prominent leaders. The manifestation and reincarnation of the chief’s spirit in different objects constantly reminded them of their divine presence, which guaranteed security, goodwill and life. Besides providing safe protection, the divine presence could influence the decision-making of the people as well as the daily activities of the community. The traditional concept of *Tupua* bridged the gap of the death-living relationship.

5.2.1.2. *Aitu* as Gods

Aitu is naturally understood by Samoans without etymological research. In a detailed analysis of the meaning of *Aitu* from different Oceanic regions, Hans Fischer declares that many Polynesian societies employ almost the same word to refer to spirits of different kinds (either Gods, good or evil spirits, ghosts, ancestral spirits, free wandering spirits, temples of spirits, etc.).⁵¹ Horst Cains, in his work on *Aitu* and its central place in Samoan traditional religion, found no fundamental meaning for the concept in the Samoan language.⁵² He presumed both the idea and the word *Aitu* to be originally adopted from and largely influenced by Asian conceptions and languages.

50 Nevermann, *Götter der Südsee*, 37f. *O le Faa-Atua-alalaina* means (i) embalming of the dead body of a paramount chief in order to be made a God; or (ii) to make and preserve in a form of a God in order to be present forever. The first meaning of the term refers to the process, whereas the second expresses the insecure desires of the subjects (or families) searching for protection, and an actualisation of hopes for a continued communion. It is an expression of a human longing to realise life after death as an ever-present reality. The second meaning is based on the discovery of the recent remains of a “sundried god” and the explanations given by a great grandchild and a relative of the deceased. Hans Nevermann adds that the process *sonnengetrocknete Götter* can also be realised as *eine Vorbereitung zur Reise des Toten nach Pulotu* (the preparation of a chief’s trip to *Pulotu*). This is confirmed by the evidence that after the embalming process, the body of the paramount chief is rubbed with traditional oil, covered with *tapa* cloth, put in a boat, which is then taken to be placed either in the family’s temple or a worship place.

51 Hans Fischer, 348f.

52 Horst Cain, *Aitu*, 10-14. Cains attempts to trace the meaning of the term *Aitu* by following the study of Otto Dempwolff, “Worte für Seele und dgl. in einigen Südsee-Sprachen,” *Folia Ethno-Glossica* 2 (1926): 42-53; Also *Vergleichende Lautlehre des austronesischen Wortschatzes*, I 1934; II 1937; III 1938); Walter Ivens, *The Polynesian Word Atua: Its Derivation and Use*. Man 24 (London: n.a., 1924), 114-116, 133-136, 146-147; Cf.

The indigenous use of the word correlates with the application of the term *Agaga*. However, the understanding of *Aitu* in the context of the Samoan language echoes other meanings, such as: a violation of norms and values preserved by a society, either by disrespect or through a negative utilization of authority,⁵³ or an extraordinary phenomenon experienced in ordinary life.⁵⁴ Due to the wide and firmly rooted influence of the Christian traditions, the concept *Aitu* is presently understood negatively by most Samoans. Any reference to Samoan *Aitu* in contemporary Christian worship is associated with demonic beliefs, of which the figure of Satan is the primary personification.

Aitu, according to Stair, are the descendants of the “original Gods.” They include national war Gods, district Gods, and family Gods to whom the priest interceded for protection and help. Being also recognized as “tutelary Gods” or “private Gods,” Samoans appropriated the *Aitu* of each individual from his or her birth to death. The tutelary Gods offered special protection in all their varied fortunes.⁵⁵ Some of these Gods settled and ruled *Pulotu* or the *Fafa*, while others inhabited familiar objects, animate or inanimate. Objects such as trees, animals, birds, fish, and sometimes human beings were venerated and respected by Samoans as forms through which their guardian deities were incarnated.⁵⁶

Each one of these objects was absolutely sacred and feared and revered as the abode of the *Aitu*. The deification of objects⁵⁷ does not mean all such objects became unavailable for the benefit of the human beings; rather, only the ones which were supposed to be the deity of each individual person and family were tabooed for consumption. Unknown sicknesses resulting in death are often explained as a violation of certain conditions of one’s good relation to his/her private God. The *Aitu* were the Gods of particular faculties and

Rudolf Kern, “(A(n)itu: Its use in Malay, Indonesian, and Polynesian Languages,” *Journal of Austronesian Studies* Vol. I, No. 2 (1956): 5-19. The three researchers offer a variety of meanings for the term or concept *Aitu* which was studied by Fischer and precisely summarised later on by Cain as the “spirits of the dead.” The summary is based on ... “Die Idee, die in allen drei Ableitungsversuchen unabhängig von der phonetischen Ausgangsbasis zum Ausdruck kommt, ist die der Toten- oder Ahnenverehrung, die in vielen Teilen Ozeaniens bis in die Gegenwart erhalten geblieben ist ...”

53 This is based on the literal translation of the two syllables *ai* (eat) and *tu* (stand). In the Samoan custom, it is very disrespectful when someone stands and eats in front of others, or even walks around the village and eats. The Samoans label the involved person as an evil figure. In this sense, the word *Aitu* might have derived its meaning from the combination of the two words. The evil act suggests the breaking of norms and values through the abusive use of authority and power.

54 Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 34. Reference to the extraordinary phenomenon being realized in the ordinary means impossibility, while yet a possibility. Meleisea (and others) relate narratives about the origins of *Aitu Tagata* as a very abnormal or unnatural process. *Aitu* were believed to be born from bloodclots. Thus *Aitu* were simultaneously seen as both spirit and human.

55 Turner, *Hundred Years Ago and Long Before*, 17. Cf. Nevemann, *Götter der Südsee*, 49.

56 Stairs, 216.

57 Prichard, *Polynesian Reminiscences*, 106 f. Prichard clearly states that the “private Gods were supposed to dwell in some tangible object or thing, which was held in highest veneration by the individual whose God was enshrined in it, though others may abuse it with impunity. Much eccentricity was manifested by these Gods in the selection of their shrines.”

some were regarded as gods of warfare, fishing, planting, building, fire, thunder, and so forth.⁵⁸

5.2.1.3. Spirits – *Agaga*

“*Agaga* simply means to go or to come. *Aga atu* means to go away; *aga mai* signifies to come. The reduplicated *agaga* is used to designate the soul as distinct from the body, which at death was supposed to go away from the body and proceed to the hadean regions under the oceans.”⁵⁹ It was also believed that “*agaga* is said to be the daughter of *Taufaanuu*, or vapor of lands, which forms clouds, and as the dark cloudy covering of night comes on, many feel sleepy, because his soul wishes to go and visit its mother.”⁶⁰ The belief in *agaga* leaving at the time of sleep and coming back to live in the body upon awakening was experienced as a daily process. Brown further states that Samoans believe that “it (*agaga*) goes away when a person faints, and his revival is a sign that it has come back again.”⁶¹ Due to this outside-inside spirit movement, visions and dreams were accounted as real in the sense that the soul has actually seen a vision.

Agaga also refers to *atamai* (wisdom), or to *manava* (breath). Stairs explains that Samoans believed that when a person dies, his/her *agaga* left the body and proceeded to *Lagi* (the underworld region).⁶² The *agaga* of the individual was seen to be accompanied by a group of spirits to its destination, and there they engaged in paying visitations to the world of the living. It has been noted that *agaga* were classified as *aitu* (Gods) that not only had human origins,⁶³ but also visible incarnations in certain objects, places of the land and the sea. Samoans believed that when the spirits visited the living world, a *vaaloo* (long boat with fire) was seen, and singing or crying and lamenting were heard. During such visitations, fishermen were urged not to go fishing.

5.2.2. *Habitations of Gods and Spirits*

The dwellings of the Gods varied. Turner presents that small houses or temples, a great house of the village where the chiefs assembled, some settlements, a sacred grove, sea-shore, and places in the sea were venerated as habitations of the Gods. *Pulotu* and *lagi* (heavens), which refer to a place remote from human habitation, were also identified as the divine’s dwelling place. This means that Gods and spirits were immanent. Though transcendent, they were in the world, on earth, and not in the empty space above.

Habitation of Gods coincides with the concept ‘Incarnation.’ Prichard states that Gods and spirits were known to incarnate in several objects such as trees, stones, fishes, and so

58 Prichard, 112 f. Prichard relates a story of *Le Sa*, the great God who supervised the plantations of Samoans. In times of scarcity, special offerings were made to win his favour, for to his displeasure was attributed the failure of their crops. *Le Sa* was seen as one of the fertility Gods.

59 Turner, 16.

60 Turner, 17. Cf. Cain, 108-114.

61 Brown, 1910, 219. Cf. Krämer, 1902/3 123, 132 f, 13.

62 Stairs, 210-240.

63 *Agaga* and *Aitu* are identical to a certain extent. When Samoans talk of the spirits of the dead, they are referring either to *agaga* or *aitu*. Both *agaga* and *aitu* could incarnate in certain forms.

on. The presence of many supernatural beings made it complicated for early visitors to grasp the divine idea, not only because of its complexity, and the difficulty in identifying to which God the worship was offered, but also because of the difficulty of the fact that some of the local deities were consumed by the people.⁶⁴ “Those gods were the most cruel and capricious that took up their abode in things edible, for their proteges were ever debarred the priviledge of eating them. He whose animal God was in an animal was forever forbidden the delicacy of the meat, while his neighbors or others feasted on it with hearts filled with joy and contentment.”⁶⁵

5.2.3. *Taulaaitu and Taulasea – Priest and Shaman*

The concepts *taulaitu* (priests) and *taulasea* (shaman) are terms which have often been misunderstood by outside commentators. As in other religions, the *taulaitu* stands as a mediator between the Gods and people. *Taulaaitu o aiga* (anchor of Gods of families or priests of families) intercedes on behalf of the family; in other words, they are summoned for divine aid.⁶⁶ The priestly office, held either by the head of the family or a sister of the family’s chief, presents the worship as well as the dedication of gifts, offerings and sacrifices to the Gods. In approaching the Gods or venerated objects, the priests, in awesomeness, fear and respect, acknowledge the divine presence using a language of humility. The contact of the priest to the supernatural forces marks him/her from other social functions in the community. While offering religious services for the community, special offerings such as food and materials of worth are reciprocally offered for his/her welfare.

Likewise, the shaman plays a mediating function between the supernatural forces and the community, but slightly different in nature. The spiritual contact of the shaman and, on some occasions, his/her manipulation of the spirits for the benefits of his/her community, renders him/her public attention. And while one’s shamanic function is usually beneficial in terms of one’s healing activity through spiritual contacts, and natural medicines, and sometimes through the use of magic, a shaman is also recognized alongside the priests as a privileged group in the community.⁶⁷

Even though the functions of the priest and the shaman are slightly different in nature, their communication with the spirits, and performance of spirit-pleasing rites give assurance of well-being, which in return elevates their social status in the community, such that they enjoy the same rank.

5.2.4. *Mana and Tapui*

Mana has been a theme of extensive discussion and research. It has attracted the interest of many scholars, not only because of its cosmological dimension (belief in *mana* as a powerful force which is diffused throughout the whole cosmos), but also due to its per-

64 Pritchard, 107.

65 Prichard, 107.

66 Stairs, 222. Nevermann, 119, 125 ff. Nevermann employs here the term *tufuga* (someone who is gifted in hand-work). But this is in contrast to the *taulaitu* in terms of offering presentations and worship.

67 Williamson, 236-241. Cf. Nevermann 120.

suasive dimension in the religious life of Oceanians (and other societies).⁶⁸ *Mana* belongs to those terms that cannot be clearly explained in words, but must be experienced. Although volumes have been written on *mana*, it is not surprising that obtaining a specific definition of the Polynesian or Oceanian concept has not been successful.⁶⁹ This has also been due to the emphasis of researchers on finding a “European verbal equivalent” for the Oceanian concept, as noted by the cultural anthropologist Raymond Firth.⁷⁰

In Firth’s empirical approach to the study of *manu* (connected with the end results in reality) and *mana* (more to do with supernatural power) in the Tikopia society, it appears that both concepts refer to success in real life. The reality of success is received in the “normal,” which is recognized to be spirit-given.⁷¹ The belief in *mana* is associated with blessings or divine providence. *Mana* is “a combination of success in material events such as crops, fish, death of bewitched persons, cure of sickness, relief from fear; a personal attribute of chiefs, the volition of spiritual beings who grant to or withhold the *manu* from the chiefs; and value in a positive sense.”⁷² From this understanding in the Melanesian context, *mana* is generally referred to as the “spirit-power for success,” dealing mainly with materialism associated with magic and power of the ‘big man.’⁷³

Due to the aristocratic structure of Polynesian society (including Samoa), *mana* is associated with the totality of power and authority⁷⁴ (and wisdom).⁷⁵ Even though the central focus is on the chiefly sector associated with victory and success as the end-result, such power was vested upon the chiefs and traditional heroes through the authorization of

68 Seresese T. S. Vaaimamao, “*Mana*: An Inquiry for a True Pacific Spirituality,” BD. Project, Pacific Theological College (1990), Chapter 2.

69 Raymond Firth, “The Analysis of *Mana*: An Empirical Approach,” *Cultures of the Pacific*, Thomas G. Harding and Ben J. Wallace, eds. (New York: The Free Press, 1970), 317. A diversity of interpretations of *mana* from the following different authors are cited by Firth: “a supernatural power; influence” (Godrington); “magical power; psychic force” (Maret); “impersonal religious force; totemic principle” (Durkheim); “divine force” (Handy); “effective; miracle; authority; prestige” (Tregear); and “true” (Hocart); whereas recent research refers to *mana* in analogical terms as “electricity” (Driberg) or “luck” (Hogbin).

70 Firth, 316.

71 Firth, 330f. See the given example of the *manu* of the rain. “The *manu* is given after the fashion of the Gods. Noone sees it.” Here it refers to the unseen source of blessings, and the power beyond this source is viewed as *mana*.

72 Firth, 331. The concept depends on how each society understood and experienced the spiritual and physical applications of *mana*.

73 Tony Swain and Garry Trompf, *The Religions of Oceania* (London: Routledge, 1995), 140f. See also Theodor Ahrens, *Pawa. Mana* in most Melanesian contexts is associated with magic.

74 One example of *mana* as associated with power and victory is presented in a story of the friendship between the Tui-Manua and the Tui-Toga. The two kings were close friends. The Tui-Toga was curious about the news of the *mana* of the Tui-Manua and decided to pay a visit to Manua. The visitors from Tonga were warmly received by the Tui-Manua and his people, and after a couple of days the Tui-Tonga asked Tui-Manua whether he could take a bath in his *vai sa* (sacred pool). The wish was rejected but the Tui-Tonga insisted on asking Tui-Manua for permission. Being aware that the Tui-Manua allowed noone to swim in his sacred pool, the Tui-Tonga decided to violate or test the *mana* of Tui-Manua. He secretly jumped into the pool, where he was found dead by his people. The Tongans mourned and interceded with their deities to grant life once again to their king. However, a chief of Manua (who look after the pool) advised the Tongans to change their interceding words by saying: *Tui-Manua e, alofa maia; Tui-Toga e, ala maia!* (Literally, “Pardon us, Tui-Manua, give life to our king once again!”). The Tui-Toga came back to life, and his people believed that the *mana* of the Tui-Manua was the greatest. Author’s discussion with Chiefs of Manu’a, (November 1992).

75 The term ‘wisdom’ or ‘knowledge’ is added due to the contemporary notion which suggests wisdom as power, or “the power of knowing.”

the Gods or spirits. The possessor of all *mana* was *Tagaloa*, and upon the divine impartation, other divinities including human beings (chiefs) and even more inferior ones were endowed with *mana*. The recipients appropriate and apply *mana* not according to their personal wishes and prestige, but in relation to the will of the Gods/spirits.

As noted, *mana* was believed to be possessed by the Gods who often identified themselves with objects of the natural surroundings such as trees, stones, animals and fish. Its manifestation in objects was seen as a means of endowing nature not only with power, but also with divine values which demanded reverence and respect. It was an invisible living force, and through the noble maintenance of relations between the objects imbued with *mana* and human beings, the assurance of harmony and blessings was guaranteed. *Mana* and *tapui* (taboo) are integrally employed in the context of the traditional religio-cultural life of Samoans. While *mana* connotes the energetic aspects of divine objects, *tapui*/*tapu* emphasizes the consecrated dimension. This means that *mana* is associated with several taboos. When a chief is known to possess *mana*, he/she and the villagers will observe the *tapui* in case difficulties might arise.

5.3. Traditions and Worldviews

Samoans thought of the existence of the world as being divinely given by the Creator God *Tagaloalagi*, who was the first-born offspring of the heavenly marriage.⁷⁶ This existence was perceived as a self-contained creation that comprised Gods, humans and the created world. The world was horizontally laid out and firmly rooted to the deep or the underworld by the Creator God/s who also inhabited the place.⁷⁷ Local authors who attempted to write a brief history of Samoa state that: “Samoans envisaged the universe as a dome, ending at a horizon. The dome had many layers above, where the gods lived ... It was generally thought that the world was flat and that if ships sailed too far west, they would fall over the edge.”⁷⁸ The layers of the dome were seen as *Lagituai* (the ranging mountain-tops with nine layers; some say more or less). The mountain-tops were believed to be inhabited by each individual God, arranged according to their status, and the creator God dwelled in the highest level.

Viewing the universe as a dome which ended at a distant horizon reflects the limitedness and closed-in perception of the islandic reality. As a society surrounded by a vastness of space and filled with many waters, life was realized in relationships and close contacts with each other. Central to their activities was the cultivation of the land and the fishing of the sea. These activities were regarded as corporate networks that aimed at the social welfare and common good of all. This kind of societal solidarity in almost every sphere of life meant that individualism was rarely experienced. The mutuality of communal living

76 K.R. Lambie, “Tala Tuufaasolo o Samoa,” unpublished typescript, 11. According to the genealogy of *Tagaloa*, there was an intermarriage of the earthly preexistent materials, from which issued *Eleele* (soil or land). This was followed by the marriage of the heavenly materials, which gave birth to *Tagaloalagi*, the ever-living being of the heavens.

77 John Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands*, 18. Cf. Elsdon Best, “Maori Religion and Mythology,” *Dominican Bulletin II* (1982): 91.

78 Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 42f.

allowed for corporate responsibilities and functions aimed toward security (spiritual and physical protection), peace, and the harmony of all members. Apart from human organization, it was seen that everything in the created cosmos was knitted together in a web of reciprocal and interrelated links. The other components of the created divine order (the environment) were recognised as a living part of the whole system. The survival of the whole habitation was managed as a bio-cosmic system operated, not on an I-It relationship basis, but on the We-(I)-Thou principle.

In this sense, all components of the surroundings were observed and respected as spiritual and sacred living participants. Humankind was not a distinctive member inheriting a unique place in the cosmos; rather, humans were simply participating members. The human being found his/her true identity, not in the essence of one's own being, but in association with other selves, including the natural environment and the Gods. The influence of Gods over the human world was great, and was one of the main reasons why the Samoans of old respected and honored life as a sacred entity. Life itself was more than just living; it consisted of right relationships founded on attentiveness to the presence and actions of the divine deities.

The other basic characteristic of the traditional worldview was the rhythm that empowered the organic process of life. The cyclical understanding of time was represented by the appearance and continuous reappearance of the moon. The year was divided into twelve months and each month was given a name, usually after a God who would be specifically honored in that month, and according to a series of divine experiences in the natural phenomena. Several deities were evoked at special times, mainly for the assurance of security and providence.⁷⁹ For example, agricultural seasons, the best time for planting and harvesting, fishing, hunting, celebrations, journeys, etc. determined the flow of community life. In contrast to the modern concept of timing, Samoans recalled moments of historical and natural occurrences as important time indicators.⁸⁰ The human being was not pressed by time but lived and enjoyed time as it came.

5.3.1. *Mata-Saua – Traditions of Origin*

Matasaua, which is located on the island of Manua, was, according to most creation myths,⁸¹ the first island to be created in the whole Samoan group. Until today, the Manuans claim that their island is the central point of all Samoan beginnings.⁸² The traditions of *Matasaua*, as observed by Augustine Krämer, were/are preserved and transmitted in

79 Bastian, *Einiges aus Samoa und andern Inseln der Südsee*, 16. This follows the German version: "Der Mond war der Zeithalter des Jahres. Das Jahr war in zwölf Monate eingeteilt, und jeder war durch einen Namen bekannt ... und ein Monat wurde oft nach einem Gotte benannt, der in jedem Monat speziell verehrt wurde."

80 Bastian, 16-19.

81 Reinecke, *Samoa* (Berlin: Wilhelm Süsserödt Verlag, 1902), 3. "... ihre Entstehung (Samoa) ist, vermutlich von Osten nach Westen fortschreitend, vor sich gegangen. Nach der Samoa-Mythe entstand erst Manua, dann Savaii, Upolu und schließlich Tutuila."

82 Discussions with chiefs of the village of Fitiuta – Manua. The same expressions were given by many other Samoan chiefs during discussions on the topic, (August, 1996). A Samoan proverbial saying: "*O le ua e afua mai Manua, ua lanu ai Samoa uma*" ("Rain begins to fall, first on Manua and then continues to fall over all the islands of Samoa") is usually used by the orators to acknowledge the origin of everything. Today the proverb is metaphorically used to refer to God as the originator of all things and, in particular, the source of all blessings.

the *Fale ula* (the red house).⁸³ In the *Faleula*, the old people gathered before sunrise to re-tell past traditions as well as to share new stories. The traditions of *Mata-saua* are believed to be the original source, due to the belief that such stories were affiliated with the dawn of the day or the morning sunrise. This conception simultaneously alludes to the telling of visionary stories or to the sharing of dreams.

Mata is literally translated as: eye, source, spring, origin or fresh;⁸⁴ and *saua* as: ‘being touched, affected, or to be reached.’⁸⁵ The interplay of the two words presents the sense of being moulded or touched, or being firstly seen and then influenced. Besides this given definition, the place itself is related very much to the origins of all existence. *Matasaua* is historically taken as the place of the Samoan genesis. As noted, it is the island where the first rays of the sun are seen. Some characteristics of *Matasaua* traditions from the author’s observations are worth consideration.⁸⁶

Firstly, while inquiring about communicating with some of the chiefs concerning stories of old, the author noted that they were willing to share stories but would deliberately change the subject either in the middle or near the end of the stories. The inquirer therefore receives only fragments or pieces of information. When asked the reasons behind this, one of the chiefs solemnly declared that their stories are “sacred” and they are therefore not allowed to be shared in full or publicized, otherwise these traditions would lose their sacredness. Hence, they would rather keep such traditions to themselves, because whoever gives away these sacred traditions to a foreigner, according to their understanding, will be punished by the spirits of the ancestral Gods, either through sickness or death. Secondly, since sacred traditions ought to be orally preserved and perpetually handed down to the coming generations only by the chiefs, one will obviously realize that when these people speak of the ancestral God *Tagaloa*, a sense of awe, majesty and transcendence will be experienced.

5.3.1.1. *Lagi*⁸⁷ – Categories of Heaven

In contrary to the Eastern traditions, the Western traditions of the Samoans are affiliated with the conceptions of the end-time, or the continuation of life beyond. Most of the related traditions were preserved in the *Faleula* (red house) which was erected as the royal residence of the sacred chief, Malietoa, the later descendent of Pili, the son of God Taga-

83 Augustin Kraemer, *Salamasina: Scenes from Ancient Samoan Culture and History* (Pago Pago: Marist Brothers, 1958), 5f. Translated in English by Brother Herman, 1949.

84 Pratt, *Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language*, 210-211. Note also his comments on the meaning of the same word in Malayan language, that is: (i) *mata* means eye and (ii) *mantha* means raw or unripe. There is an assumption that the Samoan word derives its root meaning from the Malay language.

85 Pratt, 263.

86 Lowell D. Holmes, *Samoa Village* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winsten Inc., 1976), 1. See also, *A Case Study in Cultural Anthropology* (San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart & Winsten Inc, 1975), 1-8. Holmes refers to *Matasaua* as the historical place where God *Tagaloa* chose to create the first human beings.

87 *Lagi* is employed to inclusively represent the underworld region. Note that places such as *Pulotu*, *Sa-le-Fee*, or *Agalega* are all included in this classification. Traditions of the West then refer to *Lagi* as well as the mentioned places.

loalagi.⁸⁸ These traditions are somehow related to the going down of the sun, resting into the deepness of the vast oceans. Samoans of old believed that when a person dies, his or her soul proceeds to *Lagi*, either to *Pulotu* (paradise),⁸⁹ or to settle in another place called *O le nuu-o-nonoa* (the land of the bound).

5.3.1.2. *Pulotu* or *Fafa o Saulii* – The Hades

John B. Stairs, one of the earliest LMS missionaries in Samoa, refers to *Pulotu*, *Fafa* (Hades), and *Sa-le-Fee* (the Hades of the God *Fee*) as occupying a prominent position in Samoan mythology. However, he has made a clear differentiation between *Sa-le Fee* and *Pulotu* by stating that:

O le Fafa (Hades) is like the entrance to *Sa-le-Fee*, the Samoan Tartarus, or dread place of punishment, and also to *Pulotu*, the abode of the blest; the one entrance being called *O le Lua-loto-o-Alii* or deep hole of chiefs, by which they passed to *Pulotu*, the other, *O le Lua-loto-o-tau – fanua*, or the deep hole of the common people, by which they passed to *Le nuu-o-nonoa*, or the land of the bound, which is simply another term for the much dreaded *Sa-le-Fee*.⁹⁰

Pulotu is associated with the chiefly rank, in which, in the context of traditional Samoan life, whether political, social, or in the religious sphere, chiefs were seen as sacred models personifying noble acts and good manners. Their souls were thus guaranteed to be perfect and pure, and when they departed after death, they were qualified to enter into Paradise. Entrance to *Pulotu* depended entirely on how well a person behaved while living. The future destination was determined by the conditions of the present.

The separation of common people from chiefs was a clear mark of Samoan differentiation between good and evil souls. The deified spirits of deceased persons of rank comprised another order of spiritual beings, the more exalted of whom became posts in the house or temple of the gods at *Pulotu*.⁹¹ *Pulotu* in this sense connotes the worship aspect of the life beyond. By linguistic implication, the word itself when literally translated means *Pu* (hole, cave, or a cornshell) and *Lotu* (prayer or religion). *Pulotu* is therefore a

88 Augustin Kraemer, *Salamasina: Scenes from Ancient Samoan Culture and History*, 5f. The original *Fale ula* was erected in Manua by *Tuimanua*, but it was taken to the western island by his wife, Malietoa's sister, who was badly treated by her husband (*Tuimanua*). According to tradition, the house was carried in sections to the island of Upolu and was built towards the north in order to catch the rays of the morning sun and the sunset.

89 Nevermann, *Götter der Südsee*, 35. "Die Vornehmen gelangten als Totenseelen in ein Land, das man auf Samoa, Uvea und Futuna Pulotu und auf Tonga Bulotu nannte. Es ist nicht anders als das Paradies der anderen Polynesier, hat aber jede auch noch so entfernte Verbindung mit Havaiki verloren. Das Lebenswasser und den Lebensbaum findet man inmitten der gewaltig großen Insel Pulotu im Westen oder Nordwesten der Inseln, und unter dem Herrscher Pulotus, dem Gotte Savea-Siuleo (auf Tonga Hikuleo), genießen die Seelen dort ein Leben in Überfluß und Freude. Ein Abglanz dieser Herrlichkeit zeigt sich selbst auf Insel im Osten, deren Bewohner nichts vom Wunderlande Pulotu mehr wußten, denn in allen Dialekten hat *purotu*, *puloku*, *pootu* usw. noch die Bedeutung 'wunderschön' bewahrt."

90 John B. Stair, *Old Samoa: or Flotsam and Jetsam from the Pacific Ocean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1897), 217.

91 Stairs, 215.

place of the most honored life of praise and worship, or paradise. It also symbolically suggests corporateness of religious living or salvation beyond death.

There is another rendering of the term which depicts *Pulotu* as a residential place of the gods under the sea.⁹² This means that the place is under the human world, about which Turner comments, "The subterranean regions (or lower regions) were reported to have a heaven, an earth, and a sea, and people with real bodies, planting, fishing, cooking, and otherwise employed, just as in the present life."⁹³ Reinecke explained that in *Pulotu*, there is a tree in the middle surrounded by fresh drinking water. There are others who view *Pulotu* as an island which is located to the northwest of the island of Savaii. This is also referred to as *Sa-le-fee*, which is a place for the disembodied souls or the spirits of the deceased commoners ruled by a renowned war-god and deity, *Fee*.⁹⁴ *Sa-le-fee* is also called *Nuu-o-Nonoa* (the land of the bounds) or *Nuu-o-Aitu* (the land of the spirits).⁹⁵ Horst Cain views *Sa-le-fee* as a place in another level of the earth under the human world in the depths of the ocean. The place was believed to be supervised by the vindictive spirits of the war gods and other deities such as *Fee*, *Nifoloo*, *Moso* and so forth. The disembodied spirits after death immediately commenced a journey to *Sa-le-fee*, which is on the far western end of the island of Savaii. The spirits from other distant islands of the Samoan group, in the course of their journey, swam from place to place intending to reach their resting destination.⁹⁶

From this brief discussion, we can conclude that the perception of *Pulotu* as Paradise emerged out of the desire for living to be prolonged on earth. The anticipation of another existence beyond portrays the eagerness to continue with the daily activities of ordinary life. Besides the hope for life's continuity, there were certain moral principles and values which were already established for guiding the living, and also to determine the inheritance of Paradise.

The Samoans believed in *Pulotu* or *Lagi* as the habitation of the gods and the final destination for the spirits of the dead. For example, they believed that there were *Aitu o le Lagi*⁹⁷ (spirits or ghosts in heaven), or *Atua o le Lagi* (Gods of the heavens), and *Tagaloa-lagi*. *Lagi* refers to a place under the wide ocean which extends from the remote end in the west of the islands to the east, and the surface of the ocean of *Mata-saua* and *Pulotu* was its boundary.⁹⁸ By tracing the location of *Lagi* from the Samoan conceptions, it was a place on earth and under the earth. Reference to the locality of *Lagi* as being up beyond the celestial sphere is a later development. During the early stages of the London Missionary Society work in Samoa, Turner compiled and recorded some of the fragmented accounts of the past mythical traditions. He states that Samoans believed that *Lagi* (the old heaven) fell down, and that people crawled like animals. However, the plants at

92 Pratt, *Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language*, 171.

93 Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, 235 f.

94 Stairs, *Old Samoa*, 218.

95 Stairs, 217 ff.

96 Stairs, 217 ff. Cf. Bastian, *Einiges aus Samoa und anderen Inseln der Südsee: Mit ethnographischen Anmerkungen zur Kolonialgeschichte* (Berlin: Wilhelm Süsserödt Vlg., 1889), 20.

97 Cf. Cain, 323.

98 Sega Atoe, Leatisao Taofi, and Atualevao Tagaloa, Discussion with author. Fitiuta, Manua. Nov, 1992.

first helped them to push up the heavens. This was followed by an attempt from a man who was in need of water.⁹⁹

Dorlar E. Heider mentions two possible references to the old Samoan understanding of *Lagi*. First, *Lagi* was referred to as the range of mountains whose peaks (identified according to their height) were residential abodes of the gods. Each range had a special name representing the God who inherited the place. Secondly, *Lagi* was traditionally understood by Samoans as a *malae* (a place for ceremonial gathering), the central place of every village where the *fale tele* (a big house or temple) was erected for community meetings and worship.¹⁰⁰

The realization of *Lagi* as mountain ranges and as the central place for communal occasions clearly depicts the religio-cultural structure of the traditional Samoan way of life. The association of Gods with residential places granted such places with meaning and integrity. In the same manner, the identification of sacred chiefs with the central grounds gave meaning not only to the place itself, but to the whole community. Community in this sense means more than a group of people. It encompasses every part of the human habitation, including the dead. The belief in *Lagi* as a place either on earth or under the world portrays the eschatological hopes of the old Samoans. The frequent recalling of the spirits of the dead and the reference to the world and the underworld implies that the anticipation of life was more for the present and the past rather than the distant future.

5.3.2. Samoan Myths of Creation

Samoan creation myths and narratives have certain variations which are to be treated with serious attention. Based on research and observations of past written accounts of creation myths, there is no clear critical analysis on the origins and characteristics of creation traditions. This may be due to the interests of those who recorded and narrated the stories. On the one hand, the one who relates the narrative may not take seriously into account the context, the conceptions of people of a certain area about their deities, their understanding of life and its mysteries together with their perception of the social and natural environment. On the other hand, the storyteller may place his or her emphasis only on what happened in the beginning, without giving due attention to the consequences.

Written and some oral explanations of creation myths of Samoa are complicated and interwoven due to the fact that each village has its own related myths and traditions. However, the common characteristics of these myths allow them to be grouped into two categories: the Manua (eastern versions) and the Upolu-Savaii (western versions).¹⁰¹ Manua

99 Turner, 152.

100 D.E. Heider, *Götter und Dämonenglaube im Alten Samoa*, (Manuskript für den religionsgeschichtlichen Teil), 358. The Samoan concept of *malae* is like the Roman Forum, a ceremonial ground or arena.

101 This is an original classification of the author based on the fact that, amongst almost all of the researches on Samoa (especially religious and theological works), no one (besides Professor Krämer) has attempted to identify the distinguishing characters of the traditional creation narratives. In most cases, the researches have concentrated mainly on traditions of one part of the island group without regard to the other. Therefore, the traditions of the other part are either totally neglected or, if considered, they are cited from previous writings. This approach is handicapped in the sense that it lacks real contact with the people, sharing their stories in discussions, or an empirical observation of the historical places and a feel for the surrounding phenomena. The

versions are characterized by the divine distinction. The encounter with transcendence is taken as the primary point of departure. In this respect, Creator-God is considered as the one with all power and majesty who inhabited the highest layer of the heavens. In contrast to the western traditions, the Gods had close contacts with the human world and identified themselves with the ordinariness of life. The experiences of close contact and relationships with the Gods molded the whole of life. Let us proceed to a brief survey of this classification.

5.3.2.1. Manua Versions of Creation Myths

The islands of Manua are also referred to as the *motu-sa* (sacred islands). This is due to the belief that the Creator-God *Tagaloalagi* chose the place as his primeval residence where he began creating the Samoan world. Hence, the islands were observed with awe and fear because of the awareness of the presence of the high and majestic progenitor of all creation.¹⁰² Even today, such fear and awe, or consciousness of the sacred, is strongly held by the people of Manua, and they continue to advise visitors about careful observation of this sacredness.

In one version of the creation mythologies, the Supreme Being of the Universe, *Tagaloalagi*, dwelt in the highest heavens.¹⁰³ Being alone in such an expanse, *Tagaloalagi* envisioned the creation of all things through his intelligence while wandering the Universe. There was then no sky, no seas, no land.¹⁰⁴ Other things were not created and, accordingly, on the place where *Tagaloalagi* stood, *papa* (rocks) sprang up. Then *Tagaloalagi* spoke to *papa* to split up, and there emerged *papataoto* (spreading rocks), followed by other different kinds of rocks which existed after each divine spoken word. The Creator-God turned to the other direction, spoke to the rocks and then smashed the rocks with the right hand. The rocks were split into pieces and spread towards the other direction. Out of this mighty act, the earth, sea and all the universe was formed.¹⁰⁵

author's construction is a result of collected information as well as shared experiences of the people of both historical parts of the island groups. Visitations also to historical places, especially the east (*Mata-saua*) and the west (*Pulotu* or *Sa-le-Fee*), granted deep insights. (Reference to field research November-January, 1992 and August-October, 1996).

102 In a discussion with Leatisao, Sega, and Atualevao of Fiti-uta, and Malaepule of Olosega (villages of Manua), they clearly pointed out that their island obtained the address *motu-sa* or the sacred island due to the divine presence as well as the blessing granted to their paramount chief, Tuimanua, from *Tagaloalagi*, the Creator. Since *Tagaloalagi* was pleased with services rendered to him by the people of Manua, the Creator-God then blessed Tuimanua with *mana*, or supernatural power. With *mana*, Tuimanua managed to consolidate his leadership and protect his people from enemies and natural disasters. Discussions with author. (November, 1992).

103 Reference to the 'highest heaven' does not mean the heavens beyond the celestial spheres. Highest heaven in the indigenous context refers to (i), the place of the original source; and (ii), the highest peak of the mountain range. In relation to the Manua traditions, *Tagaloalagi* lived in *Matasaua*, from whence every blessing or curse of life springs. The rising of the sun at *Matasaua* symbolises the continuity of the divine presence and an affirmation of his greatness. Samoans believed also that the mountains were settled by traditional Gods. These settlements were arranged according to ranks, and since *Tagaloa* was the paramount deity, *Tagaloa* should therefore inhabit the highest layer.

104 J. Fraser, "The Samoan Story of Creation," *Journal of Polynesian Society* Vol. 1, No. 3 (1892): 163.

105 Reinecke, 105. Cf. Stairs, 210-240. Nevermann, 47-78; Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 2-6. It can be argued that the story has parallels with the Biblical creation traditions. But it differs in the sense that the idea of 'creation out of nothingness is absent.'

One of the central features of the eastern creation narrative is the emphasis on the vertical dimension. The reference to the divine abode and the layers above implies the distinctive character of the Creator-God. The distinctiveness of the divine principle presupposes creativeness as part of the divine being. This is recognized by 'activeness' (or divine mobility) as well as creative knowledge. This foreshadows the positive motif of an individualistic nature, in the sense that the availability of space and freedom arouse creative thinking. Through imagination, analysis, envisioning, and so forth (an intellectual process), things were initially planned by the Creator-God and simultaneously brought into being to become realities. It is noted also that out of eternal materials known to the Creator only, the existence of the earth was made possible. The springing out of rocks from the place where the Creator-God stood indicates not only the emphasis on the rock as the foundation of the earth, the divine's place, but also the supremacy of the divine over what has been produced. Standing on the rock foreshadows the divine lordship over what had been created. The other variation of the creation myth states that God was resting on the place where the rock sprang.

The creative activity is followed by a sequence of mighty acts on earth through spoken words. Here, the narrative reflects the majesty and greatness of the Creator as the one who not only puts forth the eternal plan, but also establishes it. The creation myth presents the divine power as an enabling force or principle beyond creation. The spoken words signify the authority and influence of the Creator over what has been created. The spoken words as an ordering principle provide the rhythm and pattern in which things exist. The consolidation and confirmation of the divine absolute power is signified by the final action of the Creator when he split the rocks with his right hand. To a certain extent, this act of the Creator is an aggressive one in contrast to the power of the spoken word.

The pre-existence of heavenly materials can also be noted as a peculiar characteristic of the eastern traditions. Such materials are eternal and therefore only the Creator in one's own sovereignty could command them into being. As an example, one of the creation narratives states that *Tagaloa* had a child named *Tuli* (species of plover) who one day wanted to go down from the heavens to the surface of the oceans. On a trip, *Tuli* could not find any place to rest because there was only water. Returning to heaven with great frustration, *Tuli* voiced a complaint of having nowhere to rest. Out of *Tagaloa's* concern for *Tuli*, *Tagaloa* threw a rock down from the heavens which became land, the resting place of God's child.¹⁰⁶ The place became known as *O le atu motu o Samoa* (Islands of Samoa). The myth echoes the initiating potency of the Creator-God based on the divine's compassionate concern. The inner force moves and causes God to act.

One other version of the creation myth starts with *Leai* (nothingness or endlessness). There was only nothingness, into which *Nanamu* (smell), *Efuefu/Eleele* (dust or soil), *Ao* (clouds), *Savili* (wind), and *Asu* (smoke) all emerged and filled the vacuum. Smoke turned into clouds, while earth became rocks. The clouds and the winds interacted and produced *Puao* (vapors). As Creator-God was covered by the clouds, *Masina* (moon), *La* (sun), *Sami* (sea) and *Vai* (water) were created. After a devastating catastrophe, the moon and the sun escaped to the heavens, while rocks endured to revolt against the sea. Through the

106 Stairs, 212.

splashing of the sea waters against the rocks, a fire broke out. And through an intimate relationship of the waters and fire, the land, Samoa, came into existence.¹⁰⁷

The myth features the volcanic origin of Samoa with some evolutionary innovations. It resembles not only an earthly creative activity that is initiated from above, but it also presents a world which is created out of the main components of earth, water, light, fire, and wind. These cosmic elements interacted to bring about a world – Samoa. The place of the Creator in this narrative is different from the previous accounts, in the sense that *Tagaloa* is surrounded and covered by the clouds of the heavens, an indication of mountain-tops as residential places of the divine. Besides the earthly abode of the Creator-God, the myths present the earth, sea, and the sky as the end product of several interrelations and interactions of the cosmic elements. The vertical emphasis of the divine is clearly indicated, besides the initiating acts to bring forth other foundations of the created world such as the moon, sun, sea and water.

5.3.2.2. Mythical Versions of Upolu and Savai'i

Typical of the western traditions of Samoa is the relationship with the underworld gods. The emphasis is more on the lateral dimension and creation from below. Mythical versions of the western islands acknowledge *Tagaloa* as the Creator and Giver of life. This creative principle who was inhabiting the underworld was active in shaping the earth and other forms of life. The underworld Gods created the world by pushing up materials from the bottom of the deep ocean to form the whole cosmos. For instance, one creation myth features the existence of Samoa as a product of the mighty action of the God *Fee* (Octopus), the ruler of the underworld. *Fee*, upon the command of *Tagaloa* to fulfill Tuli's request for a resting place under the heavens, pulled up a huge rock from the bottom of the ocean. The rock was crushed by the waves of the sea and gradually divided into pieces, forming the group of islands of Samoa.¹⁰⁸

Werner von Bülow presents another version that was told by an old Samoan chief who resided on the island of Savaii. The narrative begins with the birth of *Tagaloa* from eternal or pre-existent materials (*Urstoffe*). *Tagaloa* had a child, and both were recognized to have authority over all the earth. Creator-God and the child one day engaged themselves in bonito fishing. While *Tagaloa* was advancing from a distance, God heard the child calling that a fish had eaten his fishhook. *Tagaloa* ordered him to hook it up. The object was declared as a newly found homeland, which was considered as the whole world.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Reinecke, 104. Author's translation.

¹⁰⁸ Stairs, 212f. Stairs presents another version of the origin of the earth, stating that in response to Tuli's "complaint of want of a resting place," the Creator-God *Tagaloa* 'fished up' a large stone from the bottom of the sea with a fish hook. This was taken to be the son's dwelling place. As Tuli proceeded to take possession of his new home, he was also faced with the difficulty of being restless. He had to hop from place to place because the waves of the seas partially overflowed. Upon another complaint to his father, the rocks were fished up to the desired level.

¹⁰⁹ The word *lalolagi* refers to the world without the heavens. *Lalo* means under and *Lagi* heavens. *Tagaloa* and his son's new homeland is the earth which was hooked up from the bottom of the deep ocean. (Translation of the author based on the Samoan verses: *Faauta o lo ta nuu lenei ua maua. E le o se nuu e tasi, ae o le lalolagi uma*). Werner von Bülow, "Die samoanische Schöpfungssage," Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie, 1899 (12): 59-66.

The myth suggests the navigating and migrating experiences of Samoan (Polynesian) ancestors. Their settlement on the islands is affirmed by a myth that they had found a world for themselves. The founding of the homeland was followed by the formation of the whole cosmos through a sequence of forceful interactions between the rocks of various sorts. As a result of the conflicts between different types of rocks, *eleele* (soil) existed, which was again defeated by *maa talanoa* (talking rock) that was covered by *mutia* (grass). The process continued with the growth of trees and plants, followed by the existence of animals and sea creatures.¹¹⁰ The existence of other parts of the created order was without divine command. The natural laws became effectively in action after the incidental act of the divine when the fish was hooked up.

Apart from the mentioned traditions, it was believed that the existence of the islands was due to the mighty act of the God *Mafuie* (earthquake) who lived in the interior of the earth somewhere below Samoa. The region was believed to be the place of fire. While the earth had a handle (like an umbrella), *Mafuie* occasionally amused oneself by shaking it. Earthquakes are therefore called after *Mafuie's* name. *Mafuie* was a heavy sleeping God, and when *Mafuie* suddenly awakened or turned from one side to another, the movements caused the whole earth to shake. On some occasions, especially when the sleep was disturbed, God *Mafuie* would furiously wake up, causing fire and smoke to break out and pierce through the earth.¹¹¹

5.3.3. *Myths of the Origins of Nature*

Apart from the existence of Samoa as land, sea and the universe as a creation of the divine God/s, there are myths and oral traditions which feature the emergence of other forms of life. These occurrences are expressed in the religious beliefs of the people, and taken as the origins of nature. There is no mention of the existence of a human being as an original creation of the Creator in myths. This may be due to the place of the human being as a latecomer of the created order, or it is an indication that the human being is a product of the evolutionary process.

Besides the mythological narrative which states that the first human beings were formed from a bloodclot and fashioned by the birds of the air and fish of the sea,¹¹² Masua relates another version that portrays the birthing of the first earthly human beings from the heavenly ancestors. The original parents were two different kinds of fire (*Afimusaesae* – man, *Mutalali* – woman), who had a son name *Eleele* (soil, earth). As a result of many inter-marriages between the soil, rocks, and different types of trees, the so-called *fanau a le eleele* (children of the earth) multiplied. The trees of the forest grew very tall, almost reaching the heavens where the Creator God resided. Because of this, God sent down one of his servants, *Fue* (creeper vine), to remedy this situation. This was a wise idea, but the creeper vine crept among the tree tops, making the food-bearing trees in the

110 Bülow, 59-66.

111 Prichard, 112. See also George Turner, *Samoa: Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, 158 f. The narrative account of the origin of fire is also presented here as being caused by the great battle between God *Mafuie* and *Tiitiatalaga*.

112 Refer to the Myth of the Creation of the First Human Beings in: Amaamalele Tofaeono, "A Quest for a Samoan Theology of Creation," *B.D. thesis*, Pacific Theological College (1993): 51 f.

forests bend to the ground, almost to the extent of dying. *Tuli*, the child of the Creator-God, after visiting the earth, reported the matter. By ordering another tree (a messenger) to interfere, the creeper vine was pulled down and remained there until it dried and rotten. As the creeper vine rotted, *Tuli*, in a second earthly visitation, observed that the rotting remains produced two huge maggots. The two maggots were later on formed to be the first human beings.¹¹³

In a reverse manner, trees were believed to come into existence through the acts of the deities or spirits, either in covenantal relationships, or through acts of sacrifice out of love (See App:iii). The Gods or spirits were incarnated in either a man or a woman who became attracted to each other sexually. In some cases, the refusal or abuse of such relationships resulted in covenants whereby the sacrifice of life became beneficial for the surviving partner. This is vividly presented in the story of the coconut tree,¹¹⁴ the *Nafanua* legend, as well as the story of the *taro*, the main food-crop of Samoans. All of these myths suggest the intimate interrelationships of every component of the world as a single unit of the process of life and death.

5.3.4. *The Significance of Land, Sea and Sky*¹¹⁵

Creation myths and traditions reveal that almost all spheres of traditional life were directed and influenced by an awareness of the divine presence in the material as well as the spiritual world. One example is the attitude toward other forms of the created order. People did not see such forms as mere objects for their benefit; rather, they were considered as living partners, sharing and interacting in interconnected functions and relationships for growth and survival. The land, sea and sky, as indicated by creation myths, were central to the religio-cultural lifeway of people. They were seen as fundamental resources and promoters of life upon which other forms of the created order depend. They are a place where the womb of one's being is buried and a space where one interacts and co-exists in the web of life.

Traditionally, land, sea and sky are the backbones of life and the main resources of the religio-cultural heritage. Like the blood that flows to nurture the whole body, these basic components are vitalities and essences of our total beings and places out of which people (and natural objects) come and into which they return.¹¹⁶ Samoans do not possess or own the land; rather, each family inherits the *fanua* not only as places for habitation but also for religious, political, social and cultural engagements. Although *fanua* is narrowly employed to refer to portions or parcels of land, the social and political connotation of the

113 A story, "*O le Tupuga o le Eleele ma le Tagata*," retold by Masua of Lufilufi, in: *O Tala o le Vavau: Myths, Legends and Customs of Old Samoa*, adapted from the collections of C. Steubel, A. Krämer and Brother Herman, illustrated by Iosua Toafa (Auckland: Pasefika Press, 1995), 3. See English version, 99. The narrative is rearranged by the author. Also see Turner, 150.

114 This story was told by Potoa'e Tuvaifale, a pastor of the Congregational Christian Church in the village of Safune. His information was gathered from the chiefs of the Safune village where the story originated. Discussion with the author (Sept, 1996).

115 It must be emphasized here that Oceanians do not view *sami* (sea) as a separable part of their world. The land and sea in the Samoan and Oceanic worldviews are parts of the one world in which they live and die.

116 Tuwere, 102.

term is extensive in that it includes the uncultivated lands, virgin forests, as well as the frontal sea, lagoons, reefs and beyond as resources under the communal care of the village or district.

The word *eleele* is equivalent in meaning to *palapala* (soil, dust or earth). Both words are also used to refer to *toto* (blood). *Eleele* is also understood to include *vao* (grass, trees, or forest). Usually when Samoans speak of *gagau le vao* (literally, “to break open the bush or forest”), or *faatoa le fanua* (“to clear the land to be ready for planting”), they are actually referring to the cultivation of the land. To speak of *eleele* or *fanua* in this sense indicates that part of human culture is to till and plant. Thus, cultivating the land naturally coincides with planning (which involves the counting of seasonal cycles), as well as divine intercessions for protection of crops from diseases and droughts and also for a good harvest. Land in this sense is part of the religio-cultural life, and connectedness to the land, the forest and the sea portrays a unique identification of Samoans with nature. Land is life and trees are means and symbols of livelihood.

Again, the sea cannot be separated from the cultural and religious native life because it was and is not only the place of ancestral Gods and spirits, a breeding place of fish and seashells, but also a means of contact and communication with neighboring island nations. It was an integrated part of traditional culture, whereby Samoans managed to explore other parts of the islands as well as engaging in social and political contacts and economic exchanges. This is well articulated by Epeli Hauofa:

The world of our ancestors was a large sea full of places to explore, to make their homes in, to breed generations of seafarers like themselves. People raised in this environment were at home with the sea. They played in it as soon as they could walk steadily, they worked in it, they fought on it. They developed great skills for navigating their waters, and the spirit to traverse even the few large gaps that separated their island groups ... From one island to another they sailed to trade and to marry, thereby extending social networks for greater flow of wealth. They travelled to visit relatives in a wide variety of natural and cultural surroundings, to quench their thirst for adventure, and even to fight and dominate.¹¹⁷

5.3.4.1. Relational Understanding of the Triology

The co-existence of the three foundations of creation has biological and relational overtones which can be summed up in the word *womb*. In this categorization, *fanua* is often thought of as mother. After the birth of a child, the *fanua* (placenta) is buried in the land and a tree planted on the spot either to mark the place of burial or to be a determining symbol of growth and success. On some occasions, it is thrown into the sea. Such practices depend very much on the wishes of the parents, the family or the village for the child to become a good planter, a chief, a warrior, a great fisherman, and so forth.

Concerning the feminine aspect of the *fanua*, with its focus on the birthing experience, Pacific theologian Sevatī Tuwere is convinced that *fanua* is like a mother to most Pacific

117 Epeli Hauofa, “A New Oceania: Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands,” 8.

people in terms of its “unquestionable waiting-presence.”¹¹⁸ Like a waiting mother, the *fanua* is always there to receive her inhabitants back. In relation to land and sea, it is home for the living, and also a resting place for the dead.¹¹⁹ In referring to land and sea as the *fanua*, Tuwere, in an attempt to explore theologically the concept of land (*vanua*) in the Fijian context, states that land to the Fijian (as to other Oceanian societies) indicates: “means of livelihood, making sense of time and events, place of traditions and ancestors, and a reassuring sense of identity.”¹²⁰ Hence, the “symbolism of *Vanua* calls for a fresh interpretation of history. And since history of the land and sea which includes myths, and belief and value systems is part of the history of salvation,”¹²¹ it therefore demands indigenous interpretations and expositions of its significance.

5.3.4.2. *Nafanua* – A Theo-Ecological Model of Life

Almost every writing on the oldtime religion, culture and history includes the narrative account of the heroine, liberator, prophetess and Goddess *Nafanua*. For our purposes, several vital aspects are offered by the story of *Nafanua* which are related to the relationships between the divine, human beings and nature. The story of *Nafanua* bridges the gap between the mythical aspects and the historical experiences of the religio-cultural heritage of Samoans. Besides many historical events which are related to *Nafanua*, the name itself bears significance as it is related to the people, land and the sea. To some extent, the woman is recognized as the daughter of the opportune time, a manifestation of divine wisdom, a child of nature, a national warrior, a priestess, a savior and Goddess.¹²² The origin of her birth, her name, and what she performed¹²³ encompasses an ecological way of relating to the land, sea and sky.

The emergence of the female warrior *Nafanua* coincided with one of the most exciting periods in Samoan history. It was a time when the villages and districts were fighting for supremacy over honorary chiefly titles. Oppression and suffering because of defeats in warfare were the hallmarks of the time. *Nafanua* interceded and fought with the people

118 Sevati Tuwere, “Making Sense of *Vanua* (Land) in the Fijian Context: A Theological Exploration,” Ph.D. dissertation, Melbourne College of Divinity (1992), 102. This is common throughout the Polynesian and Pacific region. It metaphorically refers to the life of people as a leaf of a tree. It springs out from its earliest stages, becomes green and is active in the food production for the whole tree, and when it turns yellow it fall downs, rots, and is consequently absorbed into the mother earth. These processes of birthing and dying are very much associated with mothers.

119 The author here employs the other meaning of *fanua* (a resting place or grave). When Samoans talk about death and burial places, they use the term *fanua oti* (the land/place of the dead) or *tuugamau* (the land/place where one is placed forever).

120 Sevati Tuwere, “An Agenda for the Theological Task of the Church in Oceania,” *Pacific Journal of Theology*, Series II. No. 13 (1995): 10.

121 Tuwere, 10f.

122 Samoans believed that Gods were mostly the offspring of incestuous sexual intercourse between a God and a human being. One of the best-known examples is the birth of the Goddess *Nafanua* from *Saveasiuleo* (the God-father who ruled *Pulotu*) and *Tilafaiga*, his niece.

123 Filemoni Tuigamala, *Samoan Writings on Culture and Samoan Proverbial Expressions*, unpublished papers. (1986). The woman took her and decided to name her *Nana i le fanua*, which is condensed to *Nafanua* (hidden in the land). *Nafanua* was believed to have a divine character. She emerged as one of the greatest figures in the history of Samoa. Author’s Translation.

yearning for freedom. Managing to defeat all enemies, she was bestowed with the four main honorary chiefly titles. According to tradition, the “Goddess *Nafanua* entered the bodies of her Priests *Auvaa* of *Falealupo* and *Tupai* of *Satupaitea*, and spoke through them. Her will was carried out and in a short time the west regained its independence.”¹²⁴ While recognized as a heroine, liberator, and the first to hold the four recognized titles, *Nafanua* did not take this honor for her personal gain; rather, she redistributed these titles back to the chiefs and people of Samoa.

5.3.5. *Samoa Heritage and the Significance of Naming*

Samoa is the name given to the group of ten scattered inhabited islands in the middle of the vast Pacific ocean, and is believed to be originally settled by people of Polynesian origins. In the light of many different versions about the origin of the name, there are two main emphases to which attention should be drawn concerning root meanings.

Firstly, the root word is *moa*, which refers to heart or soul or the seed of emotions. In simple terms, *moa* is the centre of the human body, and when the prefix *sa* (sacred, consecrated, or not to be touched) is added, it connotes the sense that there is sacredness in the human. The name, in other words, is identified with humanity. Secondly, *moa* is a traditional name given to “hen.” Once the prefix *sa* is added, it implies that hens (or birds and animals) were also sacred in the eyes of the ancient Samoan.¹²⁵ Reinecke, in his classification of the origin of the name Samoa, presents three main definitions:

(i). *Moa* was the oldest royal family on the far eastern island, Manua, who ruled over all the group of the Samoan islands. *Sa* means to belong, to be related or being tied to through profound and intimate connections. *Samoa*, in this sense, means: belonging to the *Moa* – family.

(ii). *Moa* in the linguistic expression means, “the soul of man, or the inner part of the humanity or the womb of the earth.” Being engaged in an intimate relationship with the earth, *Tagaloalagi* connected the heavens and the earth. As *Tagaloalagi* took the heavens as his eternal home, he offered his soul/heart (*Moa*) to inhabit the earth. *Sa* means consecrated, tabooed, untouchable, holy, or to be kept sacred. Samoa in this sense is God’s consecrated or sacred soul and body.

(iii). *Moa* means “hen,” a very huge and loveable bird on the island, which is portrayed in myths to be sacred, holy, untouchable, etc. *Samoa* means: the sacred hen.¹²⁶

The name Samoa is also traced back to the Polynesian waves of migration, when the Maoris of New Zealand brought with them on their long canoes the huge birds called *moa*. These *moa* were not only considered to be edible, but were also very tame and loved by

124 A. Krämer, *Salamasina: Scenes from Ancient Samoan Culture and History*, 14.

125 The rendering of the name “Samoa” is developed out of several opinions of the Samoans who participated in discussions with the author.

126 Reinecke, 101.

the settlers. Since the Maoris first settled the islands, they decided to keep the hens as sacred birds from their homeland to commemorate their migration and settlement.¹²⁷ Hence they eventually coined the name Samoa, which means “sacred hens.” Kipeni Sua-paia relates a legend about the origin of the name Samoa by tracing it to God-*Tagaloa* and his grandchild, Lu. Because his grandchild wanted to place his name before the name of his son, Moa, *Tagaloa* disciplined him and ordered him to honor and respect his uncle all his life. Lu was frightened and escaped down to earth and settled there. But Lu always remembered his father’s warning to honor Moa in all he did. Due to this, Lu named his new settlement *Sa-ia-moa*, or sacred for *Moa*. This term is condensed to Samoa.¹²⁸

From these different aspects of defining the origin and the meaning of Samoa, one can conclude that the name is associated with ideas that feature inclusiveness, corporateness, a sense of belonging, sacredness and consecration. It is a sacred land as it has an intimate affiliation with the ancestral god *Tagaloa*, the Creator. The divine affiliation preserves its sacred character and meaning. It is the land of the divine. Even the animals and birds, and all other parts of nature, are included in this sacred aspect. Overall, Samoa depicts an image of a very big family or habitation where the deities, humans and other components of the created world were knit together and maintained by a working code of behavior indicated by the word *sa* (‘belonging’ and, at the same time, “thou shall not”).¹²⁹

5.3.6. Traditional Divisions of Samoa

It has long been expressed that *O Samoa o le atunuu na tofi*; or, “Samoa is a country which has already been blessed and divided.” This is followed by another proverbial saying: *E tala tau Toga, ae tala tofi Samoa*; (“The neighboring islands of Tonga created her kinship through wars and bloodshed, but Samoa received her kinship through peaceful means and by divine calling”).¹³⁰ The proverbial saying expresses the situation of the Samoans before the Christian religion arrived. Samoa was divinely chosen, divided and then given by God to each specific family and groups of people, villages and districts as an inheritance.

The comparison of the Samoans with the Tongans is an attempt to emphasize the fact that Samoa was freely chosen and divinely given. For the Tongans, only through victory in warfare could they inherit a piece of land for settlement. But the Samoans of old believed that even when a party was considered to be defeated and conquered, they would only pay allegiance to the victorious title but the possession of the land remained.¹³¹ The only possibility of division and the taking over of lands was when the winning party in warfare de-

127 See Reinecke, 103 f. Cf. Kipeni Sua-paia, *Samoa, the Polynesian Paradise*, (New York: Exposition Press, 1972), 20 f. This theory is discussed by Reinecke, but there is suspicion that it is not a sustainable argument, due to the migratory theory suggesting one of the Malaysian islands, Sunda, to be the origin of plants and animals of the Polynesian race. Dr. Peter Buck, an anthropologist, affirms this by stating that Samoans or Polynesians are affiliated with the Malaysians due to the similarities of languages, customs and traditions as well as the natural growth of trees and plants. On the other hand, the Kon Tiki theory by Thor Heyerdahl suggests South America as the origin of plants and animals of the Polynesians.

128 Sua-paia, 18.

129 Keesing, 399. Keesing here refers to the word *sa* or *tapui* as a constituent element of the Samoan religion which is equivalent to the “thou shalt” or “thou shalt not.”

130 Discussions with Informants, (August, 1996).

131 Discussion with Lole Ioane, and Vaipou Sanele, and Tu’u’u Kolonevile, (April, 1996).

cided it. But that rarely happened. This is a clear indication that Samoans had a very different conception of warfare and the rewards granted to the victorious party. The proverb also means that the traditional stories of the islands of Tonga are mostly taken from warfare, whereas the Samoan stories are about divisions.¹³² These divisions were usually “a result of *mavaega* (death wishes) by the paramount chiefs to their families, villages or even districts for service rendered. These *mavaega* were strictly observed.”¹³³ Cultural division of Samoa is clearly illustrated by the narrative of Pili (see App:iv),¹³⁴ which defines geographical boundaries together with the given cultural tasks of each division. The story of Pili is told again and again. This is seen as one of the means by which history is remembered and preserves its continuity, at the same time providing the norms by which the wholeness and holiness of life were traditionally administered.¹³⁵ The origin of the narrative is traced to the desire of God-*Tagaloa* to marry *Sina*, a lady who lived in the cave.¹³⁶ The force of love caused God to employ all other cosmic powers in order to court her. The narrative ends with the issuing of a son (in creaturely form) who installed the divisions of Samoa (see App:iv). These parts resemble bodily or organizational-geographical groupings with each part relating to one another. Sanctioned by a *faalupega* as a formal and chiefly way of embracing the sacredness and the identity of specific places and habitations, the wholeness and oneness of Samoa’s heritage founded by the Ancestors, God/s, or Spirits was revered and dealt with respectfully.

5.4. Summary

Much has been said about the theo-cosmological worldviews of Samoa. It was a world that was conceived to be ruled by the God/s, spirits and supernatural agents who were perceived to govern the ordinary affairs of life and remained in close association with human beings. The presence of Gods in almost every part of the cosmos gave its inhabitants something to be revered, respected, and sometimes treated with awesomeness. While religiously perceived to be inherited by living spirits, there was a type of theo-cosmic awareness that authorized behavioral and relational attitudes to each other and to the living members of the homeland.

For humankind, it is noted that ancestral conceptions present nothing to identify their peculiarity or uniqueness in the world. There is also no indication in narratives of humankind’s being created in the image of God, as well as the stipulated command of dominion

132 Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 29.

133 Meleisea, 29f.

134 C. Horst, 375; Ferner: “Stammbaum samoanischer Königsgeschlechter – Malietoalinie,” Intern. Archiv, Bd. 11, cited by Werner W. Bülow, “Die Eidechse im Volksglauben der Samoaner,” *Globus*, 1898a. (74): 256-259. See also “Die Geschichte des Stammvaters der Samoaner: Eine samoanische Sage, erläutert und übersetzt, W. Bülow, *Internationales Archiv für Ethnologie* (1898b): 6-18.

135 See the full account of the story by Gatoaifaana Peseta S. Sio, *Tapasa o Folauga i Aso (Compass of Sailing in Stormy Days)*. (Apia: Samoa Printing & Publishing Company, 1984), 8-11.

136 The name *Sinaaleana* literally means “Sina, the lady who lived in *ana* – a cave.” Sina took the cave as her home. The cave naturally signified protection, stronghold, security and peace. George Turner translates the name *Sinaaleana* as the “white of the cave” – because she lived in a cave in which there was also kept the parrot of the king. George Turner, *A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before: A Study of a Polynesian Society Before the Advent of European Influence* (Papakura: R. McMillan, 1983), 234.

over other parts of the created world. Humankind is not a distinctive member inheriting a unique place in the cosmos. He/she is a participating member sharing in common with animals, plants, fish, and everything else in the created habitation. By participating in such a spiritual and sacred habitation, the human being finds one's true identity not in the essence of one's own being, but in association with other "selves," including the natural environment and the Gods.

Basic to the ancestral worldview are the spiritual potencies that empowered the cycles of life. The cycle of events and the regulations of time, represented by the positioning of heavenly in relation to earthly bodies, dynamically enabled the life of everything in union with each other, Gods, humankind and the natural world.¹³⁷ These events are sanctioned and legitimated by the worships of Gods, spirits, and supernatural forces. Appeals for welfare and healing enacted by priests and shamans aimed at harmony and joyous life in the world. Deities were evoked at special times mainly for the assurance of security and providence. Relatedly, human cultivations such as planting, harvesting, fishing, hunting, celebrations, journeys, etc. were determined and informed by the co-ordination of the Gods/spirits and natural phenomena. Time was not a pressure.¹³⁸

Most significant is the affirmation that, although separated and conjoined by the ocean, Samoa remained a unified world. Although challenged and encountered by polytheism of personal Gods, their belief in one Creator-God supercede this polytheism and has become the root of their communal and sacred identity. This was the source of their common pride and an affirmation of their faith. This has informed their filial relationships of intimacy with Gods, spirits, and the components of nature through attitudes of reverence, respect, and the recognition of the presence of others. The ancestral theo-cosmic convictions – ranging from their conceptions of the divine, affiliations with the supernatural or the sacred, embodied view of the world, influence of heavenly and earthly categories, growth and propagation of life, maintenance and rapport relations to the land, sea and sky – were viable means of maintaining a natural equilibrium as well as conserving the ecology of life. Life itself was more than just living; it consisted of right relationships founded on attentiveness to the presence and actions of the divine, and maintained by befriending and embracing other existents. This is legitimated by an affirmation that a body of islands such as Samoa is *aiga*, a sacred inheritance of God.

137 Bastian, *Einiges aus Samoa und andern Inseln der Südsee*, 16. This follows the German version which states that: "Der Mond war der Zeithalter des Jahres. Das Jahr war in zwölf Monate eingeteilt, und jeder war durch einen Namen bekannt ... und ein Monat wurde oft nach einem Gotte benannt, der in jedem Monat speziell verehrt wurde."

138 See the Samoan Calendar recorded by Bastian, 16-19.

6. CREATION AS *AIGA*: AN ECO-THEOLOGICAL EXPOSITION

6.1. Creation – A Biblical Perspective

Attempts have been made to disclose the local and regional experiences of the global ecological crisis through a discussion of the uprootedness of Samoan natural and social life amidst religio-cultural transitions. We have approached this task by identifying the multi-dimensionality of ecological defects contributed to by the early Christian missions and colonization, as well as the impact of the *Lotu* and its status in relation to the ecological crisis. The relics and remains of the ancestral heritage which were deeply ecologically-oriented have also been presented in the previous chapter. What follows is a re-construction of an eco-theology that is not only bound to the indigenous context but is also riveted to the regional and global ecological issue, by means of a synthesis of ecological themes, drawing on sources both Biblical, religio-cultural and contemporary. This is developed out of the framework of *aiga*, the local symbol which bespeaks, on the one hand, the origin and locus of one's identity while, on the other hand, informing ideas and practices through which life can be meaningfully lived out.

Biblical scholarship has mostly posited that the theme of *creation* cannot stand independently from the soteriological aspect of faith in God. In the Biblical tradition, creation is principally conceived as a prologue to history.¹ This means that creation "... sets the stage for the unfolding of the divine purpose and inaugurates a historical drama within which (the people of God) and, in the fullness of time, the Church were (and are) destined to play a key role."² While it stands in an inseparable historical relation to the narrative of the span of generations, "... creation provides the background and setting for the vocation of God's people,"³ viewed christologically in the New Testament and the Church.⁴ The purpose and goal of the whole creation, therefore, is attributed to Christ who was in the beginning, is present in the work of the Holy Spirit, and is expected in the fullness of time.

It is the intention in this section to revisit the Biblical traditions in an exegetical exercise in order to reorient us to our vocation as God's people in the whole of creation. Such an exercise is a challenge, as it not only seeks for understanding, but is also a quest for the

1 G. von Rad's main thesis (*Haupt-These*), cited by Jürgen Ebach, "Schöpfung in der Hebräischen Bibel," *Ökologische Theologie: Perspektiven zur Orientierung*, 98-129. (See footnote 7). Cf. Bernhard W. Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation: Old Testament Perspectives* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 25. Theodore Hiebert, "Rethinking Traditional Approaches to Nature in the Bible," *Theology for Earth Community*, 23-30. Advocates of historical interpretations (following von Rad) include G. Ernst Wright, Nahum Sarna, James Barr – to name a few. The soteriological experiences assume the providence of nature while wandering in the wilderness, as well as crucial questions about the bestowal of the fertility of the field or its denial (which was commonly shared by Israelite farmers). These were conceived as the activities of the Divine and, as such, these religio-cultural experiences were incorporated into the theology of creation. 'God created the world' then becomes an affirmative article of faith.

2 Anderson, 25. Cf. Hiebert, "Rethinking Traditional Approaches to Nature in the Bible," 23-30.

3 Anderson, 25f. (See also Chapter 8). It is interesting to note how Anderson categorizes the phases of history from the context of creation. To him, the old Epic tradition (J) does not stand in isolation from the series of historical covenants narrated by (P), namely: the ecological covenant with Noah (Gen. 9), the land covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17), and the climatic revelation of God under the cultic name *Yahweh* in the Mosaic period (Ex. 6). Each of these covenants is understood as a covenant in perpetuity (*berit olam*), which signifies God's commitment to the earth and to the whole creation.

4 Anderson, 19 and 244.

meaning and purpose of God in creation. It will, at the same time, keep in perspective our ecological tasks in respecting and preserving the whole earth (cosmos) as our common house, conserving its resources. The designated task is to unmask the ecological-constructs and ideologies⁵ in the narratives, or the ecological life-giving substances which are at the base of the creation accounts.

Admittedly, the Bible contains a body of literature that features creational or ecological themes, and it will be beyond the scope of this work to pay attention to all of them.⁶ Therefore, the chosen Biblical texts are confined to the Old Testament story of creation in Gen. 1-3; the Prologue in the Gospel of John 1:1-5, and the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians 1:9-14 in the New Testament. Since creation narratives or Biblical texts in general are quite extensive, preference is given to an *eco-thematic exegetical model*. This means that related themes presented in Biblical texts are explored and discussed from an ecological viewpoint. In this approach, the Bible is taken seriously as a source of wisdom, although these traditions are not normative texts. Rather, our approach is an act of ‘producing meanings’ for ourselves while reason, tradition and the experiences of the religio-cultural traditions of one’s living context are also considered as sources of wisdom. This is where we can, indeed, find the Bible to be a record of a “progressive revelation” that defines growth and the process of life in the apprehension of the Divine.⁷

6.1.1. Creation as Oikos and the Problem of Biblical Interpretations

Creation as a house, a household, or a habitation in a Biblical (hermeneutical) exegesis poses some difficulties, principally due to (i) the boundedness of the image of בַּיִת – *bajit*⁸ and/or οἶκος in Greek;⁹ (ii) the diversity of hermeneutical positions in Creation as a theme

- 5 John B. Thompson’s definition of ideology as an idea which ‘designates the process by which meaning or signification serves to sustain or legitimate social relations,’ either of domination, subjugation, depression, etc., is employed here. James. M. Kennedy, “Peasants in Revolts: Political Allegory in Genesis 2-3,” *JOST*, Issue 47, (1990): 2-14.
- 6 Creation narratives of God’s creative acts are found in Psalms, e.g. Psalm 24, 104, etc.; the writings of the Prophets, e.g. Second Isaiah (40-55), Hosea, Jeremiah, etc.; Wisdom Literature, as well as in the writings of the Evangelists and the Apostles in the New Testament.
- 7 G. Ernest Wright, *Studies in Biblical Theology: The Old Testament Against Its Environment* (London: SCM Press, 1953), 9f. Seeing the Bible as ‘a record of progressive revelation’ is a biologically-oriented approach which involves considering the Old Testament as the fulfilment of the New Testament. Being ‘progressive,’ the concept ‘growth’ is metaphorically used to depict the nature of approaching the Bible. For instance, Wright states that “every idea in the Bible started from primitive and childlike origins and, with however many setbacks and delays, grew in scope and height toward the culmination in Christ’s gospel.” The Bible in this sense is a ‘record of a spiritual development.’
- 8 Cf. H.A. Hoffner, *ThWAT* G. Johannes Botterweck und Helmer Ringgren, eds., Band 1, (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1973), 629-637; and Ludwig Koehler & Walter Baumgartner, *LVTL* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1958), 122-123. Author’s translation. Etymologically, *bajit* is an old word (noun), and is suggested to derive from the Accadian root *bitu*, *betu* in Assyrian, Ugaritic root *bt*, Arabic *bait*, Aramaic *bet*, etc. As a noun, *bajit* can hardly be accompanied by any verb, and only when it is employed with the denominative verb in the Accadian language, when it denotes ‘overnight,’ or a ‘shelter to spend the night in.’
- 9 Otto Michel, “οἶκος,” *ThWNT* Gerhard Friedrich, ed. Band V (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verl, 1954), 122-136. Author’s translation. In the Greco-Roman World, οἶκος, *vecas* in Sanskrit, and in Latin *vicus*, are rendered as house – *Wohnstätte* (a residential place or location).

of Biblical studies; and (iii) the universal interpretations of Biblical accounts,¹⁰ overlooking the religio-cultural contexts specific to one's own lifeway.

6.1.1.1. The Concept *Oikos*

In Hebrew understandings, the wandering-desert traditions and the exilic traditions have greatly informed and influenced the conceptions in which house/household and family have been modelled. While considered as landless people in most cases, the comprehension of *בית* focuses mostly on the historical-transitory aspect. *בית* was conceived mostly in a temporal or static sense as the Israelites in the Old Testament traditions were nomads. In other words, they did not have permanent homes; rather, they lived in tents. So the *tent* was a relative term normally used for a house, which means that they were people of the way, moving from place to place. Only later in history, *בית* was used to denote God's place, temple or house.

In the Greek-Hellenistic world, the concept tends to be shaped mostly by spiritual-transitory comprehensions. The heavenly house in the Gnostic traditions and in the ideas of Philo was a dwelling of the soul, as opposed to the world here, the material house or the bodily dwelling. The material/bodily house is a fallen, humiliated, and dark temporary dwelling that is expelled and alienated from the heavenly house of wisdom, light, fullness and perfection. The destiny of the soul therefore is to be elevated to the heavenly home, the spiritual house.

Jesus in the New Testament referred to the House of God, the Father's house, or the House of David to mean either a holy tent, temple, a heavenly kingdom, and sometimes an earthly dwelling (Acts 17:26f, cf. 16:33 & Lk. 2:1). The early church adapted the word to portray "a space for living members and of a community of believing members, a gathering of faithful people, a heavenly community on earth, networking in relationships. The concept recalls not only blood-relations and kinship, but also the faith-related aspect of people in communion, fellowship, locale, place, and the house of gathering, as well as the management of such communities. In metaphorical terms, *בית* and *οἶκος* signify the home, apartment, family (in terms of sibling and kinship relations), a residential place, a cave, burial place, a sacred house, an inn or part of the house set aside for guests and where animals are kept.

Regardless of whatever emphasis is presented in these views, with some considerations of Hebrews 2:5 (creation as not being subject to angels but a revelation of a new humanity and creation), both conceptual understandings commonly capitalize on the understanding of a house to refer to a shelter for human beings, with less emphasis on a space or place for the biotic-associative members, or the whole ecological habitation. This conceptualization, in other words, has simply reduced the household to the confines of humankind.

10 Cf. Hiebert, "Rethinking Traditional Approaches to Nature in the Bible," 23-30. These include "dubious philosophical and anthropological models" of Biblical studies and interpretations which are strongly influenced by Hegelian idealism as well as a relooking at Eden and the re-examining of Mediterranean farmer values.

6.1.1.2. Biblical Interpretations

Creation as a theme itself has been accompanied by a variety of Biblical-exegetical interpretive trends. These lines of interpretation, as Ludwig Schmidt¹¹ has categorized them, are represented by the works of G. von Rad,¹² Claus Westermann¹³ and H.H. Schmidt.¹⁴ Typically, Biblical exegetes have concentrated on the study of creation from an anthropocentric perspective,¹⁵ where creation is dichotomically treated from the perspective of history versus nature. The ethicist and philosopher, J. Baird Callicott, asserts that an anthropocentric approach simply applies standard Western moral philosophies which are coloured mostly by utilitarianism, with its emphasis on human welfare, deontology and human dignity.¹⁶ In this categorization, the human being assumes that everything in creation has been provided by the Creator-God for his/her self-benefit – in other words, an extreme form of anthropocentrism. This trend of interpretation is indicated by the use of the words *תורת הכבבה* – *torat hakebibah*¹⁷ to connote the meaning and the study of creation as God's *oikos*. The linguistic and conceptual understanding portrays a clear differentiation of subject-object dualism, where the human beings are perceived to be at the centre of God's creation, and to have been authorized to have dominion over other components of the created order.

Besides this human-nonhuman dichotomy, controversial streams of Biblical studies

- 11 Ludwig Schmidt, "Schöpfung: Natur und Geschichte," *Altes Testament*, Hans J. Boecker, Hans-Jürgen Hermisson, Johann Michael Schmidt, und Ludwig Schmidt, eds. (Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996), 267-288.
- 12 Cf. L. Schmidt, 267-288, and B.W. Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation*, 134 f. Cf. Hiebert, 23-27. Gene McAfee, "Ecology and Biblical Studies," *Theology for Earth Community*, 31-44.
- 13 Cf. L. Schmidt, 267-288, Anderson, 134 f. See also introductory notes by Claus Westermann, *Practical Commentary on Genesis* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987). Westermann argues for the one-dimensional emphasis on the history of salvation (*Heilsgeschichte*), as has been followed by others (represented by von Rad, Barth, etc.). He sees the story of creation as "a theological exposition of God's redemptive activity, which is the ground of Israel's praise" (referring to the liturgical character of Genesis 1). Salvation/redemption cannot be differentiated from God's blessing. Author's translation.
- 14 Schmidt, 267-288. Author's translation. Schmidt argues for the centrality of Creation itself, especially how the oriental mythologies shaped the understanding of creation's self-renewal. This is evident in festivities, fertility cults, etc. (for example, New Year's festival), and is carried into the present. To Schmidt, the soteriological aspect of creation also belongs to the people of the world today, and is not confined to any particular sphere of life but, rather, resembles a cosmic order where the political and socio-economic are formed into orderliness. Soteriology (Yahweh's Salvation History) therefore is embedded and has been disclosed in Creation (Protologie) from the beginning until the present.
- 15 Aubrey Rose, ed. *Judaism and Ecology* (London: Cassell Publishers Ltd, 1992), ix-xii. Cf. Hiebert, "Rethinking Traditional Approaches to Nature in the Bible," 23 ff. Rose states: "God, Torah, the people of Israel, the land of Israel, and the relationship between them, are at the heart of the (Jewish) religion." Since Judaism has been developed within a specific context of 'people-hood,' the dominating paradigm in the Old Testaments on 'the chosen people and the chosen land.'
- 16 J. Baird Callicott, "Toward a Global Environment Ethic," *Worldviews and Ecology: Religion, Philosophy, and the Environment* Mary Evelyn Tucker and John A. Grim., eds. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), 30 ff. See also, James Gustafson, *A Sense of the Divine: The Natural Environment from a Theocentric Perspective* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1994), 86. Gustafson identifies the problem as an extreme form of anthropocentrism that leads to 'despotism'. Accordingly, "The root of human fault is ... (the) contraction of our thinking and our affections, of our loyalties and concerns. Despotism is the extreme form of anthropocentrism; it claims human self-sufficiency."
- 17 Jaacov Lavy, *LH-DH* (München: Langenscheidt, 1980). Translated as: "die Weisheit in Bezug auf die Umwelt" (by my colleague Sung Keun Kim – a doctoral candidate in OT/First Testament) – or the knowledge to study the environment.

and interpretations of creation exist, one favouring historical-critical methods while others employ mythological-analytical methods. Some contemporary critiques even consider the Bible as a source of authority that promotes “suspicious views of nature,” in the sense of “ancient Israel’s tensions with the religions of its neighbors and its resistance to connecting natural forces or features with deities,” as well as the emphasis on Israel’s historical consciousness.¹⁸ The diversity of Biblical hermeneutical studies on creation, therefore, legitimates the dualism of history versus nature, or reality in contrast to mythology.¹⁹

6.1.1.3. Religio-Cultural Contexts

The Bible has often been interpreted from outside one’s own context, which means that the religio-cultural lifeways of the readers are undermined in most instances. In so doing, the ideologies that help in shaping the Biblical traditions have been taken for granted, without considering whether such traditions are relevant to one’s specific context. This problem is exposed in the last subsection of this chapter by a brief comparison of the indigenous mythological traditions on creation with the Biblical traditions.

In relation to ecological contexts, some Biblical scholars have preferred the “soft technological approach” to the interpretation of the scriptures, arguing that the wisdom of God invested in humankind must be applied to determine the nature of one’s environment. This means that creation must be dealt with as an object of human cultivation.²⁰

Post-modern studies of the Biblical tradition seem to discredit anthropocentric interpretations in favour of biocentrism (literally life-centred)²¹ or ecocentrism (every life interpenetrates and has some influence on others).²² While biocentric and ecocentric Biblical approaches have a common strategy of developing a new understanding that God’s

18 Gene M. Tucker, “Rain on a Land Where No One Lives: The Hebrew Bible on the Environment,” *JBL* Vol. 116, No. 1 (1997): 3-17. Cf. G. Ernest Wright, *The Old Testament Against its Environment*, 42-76. Cf. B.S. Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament: Studies in Biblical Theology*, No. 27 (London: SCM Press, 1960), 13-27.

19 Gerhard Liedke, *Im Bauch des Fisches: Ökologische Theologie* (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1979), 71 f. Liedke traces the historical roots of anthropocentric interpretations, suggesting that the Biblical creation in Genesis is to a great extent informed by demythologized thinking, whereby the Gods who were believed to inhabit nature in the Greek cosmology were differentiated by the Hebrews in their cosmological views. To see God in the moon, for example, was strongly denied by the Hebrew writers.

20 Cf. Jürgen Ebach, 108. One of the ecological exegetical models is suggested by Jürgen Ebach in his article, “Schöpfung in der hebräischen Bibel.” He emphasizes Genesis 2:15 (the role of the human being in cultivating and preserving creation). To Ebach, themes such as *Scheiden* (separation), *Machen* (make/form), and *Nennen* (calling) should not be the central focus of an eco-Biblical exegesis but, rather, the place and role of humankind made in the image and likeness of God in creation. The author includes the themes denied by Ebach due to the fact that the divine acts presented by such verbs are of great importance to the contemporary issue of holistic ecology. This means that the human-centred kind of exegesis is not employed here; rather, the text is approached both theologically and ethically in the context of an ecological exegesis.

21 Callicott, 30 f.

22 Cf. Callicott, 31 ff. The author borrows Callicott’s definition of an ecocentric approach based on the land-ethic of Aldo Leopold (following Darwin). Ecocentrism emphasizes social organisation of living communities, stressing that “we human beings have duties and obligations to the several communities to which we belong, as well as to individual fellow members.” In addition, “each of us is a member of a local biotic community, as well as of other human communities.” Thus the comprehension of ‘the role of *homo-sapiens* from conqueror of the land to plain member and citizen of it’ is an utmost demand as it implies respect for fellow members, and also for the community as such.” Indeed, “a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community; it is wrong when it tends otherwise” (Leopold).

very aim and purpose in creation is for the whole welfare and for the common good of all living things, and since both emphasize inter-relatedness and inter-connectedness of everything in life processes,²³ there is much to be said in favour of these approaches.

6.1.1.4. Approach and Method of Interpretation

Despite the diversity of Biblical exegetical approaches, in an effort to provide a contextual Biblical eco-perspective on creation, an *integrative method and approach* is offered as an alternative possibility. Here creation is conceived in the framework of *aiga*, whereby all parts and members of the created order, despite their inherent differences, are viewed as reciprocal animating partners, all participating in the production and the sustenance of life.²⁴ In the cultivation and the propagation of life, the human being finds one's own place and identity in creation, not through one's own individual self-potential, but through the recognition of oneself as an inseparable member of the ecological systems of life, participating in that process through caring and responsible living.²⁵ The recognition of one's personhood is attained on the basis of the understanding that the Creator-God is the God of light, wisdom and life.

6.2. Creation as Home or Household – Gen. 1-3

Genesis sets the stage for an understanding of the history of God's creative and redemptive deeds with Israel as a heritage (Deut. 4:20 f, and Psalm 28:9). It consists of narratives that range from the creation of the world (Primeval History – Gen. 1-11) to the protohistory of the people of Israel which begins with the calling and the promise to Abraham and the subsequent ancestors (Gen. 12-50). The two histories are preludes to the Exodus-event and God's covenant with the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai. These historical events are endowed and sealed by the assurance of blessing and prosperity that ultimately depends on the inter-relationship of the land, the chosen people, and their obedience to God. While bound by the ordinances of the covenant, the household, which was the "key vehicle of the religio-cultural life,"²⁶ was surrounded by a set of moral codes, aiming at the maintainence of well-being and the assurances of Jahweh's blessings, depending on the

23 Cf. Gerhard Liedke, 18-20. Reference is made here to the fundamental principles of ecology, namely; (i). Everything exists with others in relationship, (ii). Everything must somehow be sustained, (iii). Nature (creation) knows better, (iv). There is no free beer. Translation of the author.

24 Taken from a number of Biblical Studies in a Seminar on: "Ecology, Economy and Theology." August 4-14, 1998. Ecumenical Institute Bossey. Themes of Bible Studies: Economy, Land, Labour, Money, Sabbath and the Year of Restoration (Jubilee).

25 Liedke, 127 f. Liedke's point is based especially on Genesis 1:1, which conceives of the heavens and the earth as the houses of all living-beings. "*1.Mose 1 schildert die Schöpfung am Leitfaden der Häuser (oikoi) der Lebewesen.*"

26 Rainer Albertz, *A History of the Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period: From the Beginnings to the End of the Exile*, translated by John Bowden, Vol. 1 (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1994), 26f. Cf. Horst Dietrich Preuß, *Theologie des Alten Testaments: Israels Weg mit JHWH* Bd 2 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Vrlg, 1992), 105-115; Jonathan Magonet, "The Biblical Roots of Jewish Identity: Exploring the Relativity of Exegesis," *JSOT*, Issue 54 (1992): 3-24.

social justice of the people living on the land, the caring and loving attitudes to land with effective regulation of its use, and the celebration of its produce.²⁷

This included the family system which “is very much older than the history of the Israelite religion and was the basis on which Israel’s Yahweh religion was built up.”²⁸ The family was the “basic economic and social unit among the shepherd and farmer population of the hill-country,” and was the “key vehicle of religion... (where) the father was/is still a priest (Gen. 13:18; 35:7) ... and religious experiences and notions are primarily governed by the horizons and the needs of family life.”²⁹ In an overall picture, the life of the people, community, and everything in creation is a story of God’s engagement, entering into intimate relationships with creation as a beloved home and household. This idea was propagated by the religio-cultural faith of the Israelites, and echoes in their claims of land as heritage.³⁰

Genesis 1-3 suggests this entire picture. It consists of a duality of creation stories compiled by the Priestly and the Yahwistic writers (P & J), featuring the life experiences and ideologies of being at home, or of being not at home, which can be interpreted as life in exile.³¹ The overriding concern of the creation narratives (which also runs throughout the whole book) centres around God’s option for life which, in an ecological sense, is God’s relational option for the process of “life-survival-offspring-fertility-continuity.”³² In short, life cannot be lived in isolation from the chain of surviving and growing communities, and its continuity cannot be secured without a permanent home and a fixed habitat.³³

The priestly creation narrative (Gen. 1:1-2:4a)³⁴ is an affirmation of the faith of the Israelites. It centres around the conception that their history cannot be separated from the world which God-Jahweh created.³⁵ Its historical interest is rooted in the institution of the

27 Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation: Theology of Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 338. In the Wisdom tradition of Israel and Judah, the household was one of the important social institutions for conceiving reality in metaphorical terms. Accordingly, creation or the world was not simply an impersonal monarchic state, but a *home* where both social roles and intimacy informed and sustained relationships from time to time. Like kinship, the institution of the household is traced to an originating act of the Creator.

28 Albertz, 26 f.

29 Albertz, 29 f. In a sequence of essays on the fatherly image (*Das Vaterbild*) in Mythology and History of the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Old and New Testaments, he contends that every aspect which sustained the continuity of the life of a community was subsequently seen as an attribute of God.

30 Cf. Dianne Bergant, “Restoration as Re-creation in Hosea,” *The Ecological Challenge: Ethical, Liturgical, and Spiritual Responses*, Richard N. Fragomeni and John T. Pawlikowski, eds. (Minneapolis: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 3-15.

31 Cf. J.P. Fokkelman, “Genesis,” *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, eds. (London: Fontana Press, 1997), 37-40. Reference is made here to the life of settlement in Canaan, on the one hand, and the anticipation of a settled life while in captivity.

32 Fokkelman, 41.

33 Fokkelman, 42 f. The author follows Fokkelman’s idea except for the fact that the anthropocentrism revealed in his presentation is not totally accepted.

34 Cf. T.A. Perry, “Poetics of Absence: The Structure and Meaning of Genesis 1:2,” *JSOT* Issue 58, (1993): 3-11. The controversy about the exclusion of the second part of the fourth verse in chapter two (Gen. 2:4b), which is argued as a complete redactional verse in itself (or a formulaic citation echoing the opening verses – Gen. 1:1-2), which introduces the second creation narrative, is acknowledged. But for our purpose, consideration is given to the traditional division of the two creation accounts.

35 Erich Zenger, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 2 Auflage (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1996), 107 ff.

Israelitic theocracy,³⁶ tracing its *Sitz im Leben* to the time of the occupation of the Jewish country (ca. 603 BCE), the destruction of the Temple (586/7), and the subsequent years in exile (ca. 520 BCE). The deportation of portions of the Jewish tribes (mostly craftsmen) to serve in Babylon, and the rest who became subjugated to the conquerors in their own homeland was a painful collective experience. Life in exile was a homeless experience, a meaningless life. The national enslavement coupled with the destruction of the *Wohnort Gottes* (House of Jahweh)³⁷ was a great historical loss. It was a history of destruction and exile that was comprehended by the Priestly writer as a story of a threatened world, a homeland in which God-Jahweh had forsaken and abandoned the people.

The Yahwist creation story (Gen. 2:4b-3) is based on the pre-exilic traditions of the Israelites. Its *Sitz im Leben* is traced especially to the time of the Davidic-Solomonic Enlightenment, and the narrative itself is largely shaped by the life-experiences of the peasant communities in the highlands of Palestine.³⁸ The story follows a pattern where the life of the first human beings was created, placed and nurtured inside the garden, and ended up in expulsion from the garden of God. Traditional interpretations commonly interpret the story as based on anthropomorphic experiences of the Creator God-Jahweh who immanently related to the created beings in the garden of Eden. The story has close associations with the revealed-nature religions as indicated by the use of emblems and nature representations derived from a more ancient religious tradition of Israel.³⁹

Both creation stories (P & J) portray the unique comprehensions and experiences of life in hostile situations, and the faithful trust of the Israelites in God who would/could liberate them from the yoke of suffering by creating, upholding and restoring them. These were made possible not only by the realization of their own cultural identity and human freedom, but were also evident through the restoration to the promised land. Their “historical life experiences evoked a strong sense of identity and hope, which were then expressed in poetic ideas.”⁴⁰ The expressions of suffering experiences had at the same time been internalized and transformed into the sphere of visions, imaginings and dreams for well-being in a fixed habitat, a new permanent home that God would finally create to house them. Such hopeful imaginations nurtured Israel’s faith. The conception of creation

36 John Skinner, *Genesis: The International Critical Commentary* S.R. Driver, A. Plummer and G.A. Briggs, eds. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963), lix. Cf. Erich Zenger, 89-101; and Yohanan Aharoni, *Das Land der Bibel: Eine historische Geographie*, übersetzt von Almut Loew (Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 421-434.

37 Background information on the Priestly creation narrative is available in many volumes of commentary. For our interests, see Albertz Rainer, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period: From the Exile to the Maccabees* translated by John Bowden, Vol. 2 (London: SCM Press, 1994), 369-398; Luise Schottroff, *Die Macht der Auferstehung: Sozialgeschichtliche Bibelauslegungen* (Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1988), 8-26; and “The Creation Narrative: Genesis 1:1-2:4a,” *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* Athalya Brenner, ed. (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 24-38. Also, Horst Seebass, *Genesis 1: Urgeschichte 1,1-11,26* (Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996).

38 Werner H. Schmidt, *Einführung in das Alte Testament* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), 72-76. See also Schüngel-Strauman, “Creation of Man and Woman,” *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*, 53-76.

39 Seebass, 33 ff. Cf. John Skinner, *Genesis*, 49-51.

40 Cf. Cohen Jeffrey, “The Bereshit Song,” *Judaism* No. 43 (1994): 220-222. Also, Christoph Bultmann, “Creation at the Beginning of History: Johann Gottfried Herder’s Interpretation of Genesis 1,” *JSOT*, 68 (1995):23-31. Following Herder’s method, a poetic approach in relation to Gen. 1 takes into account meanings of symbols and images in the Biblical text that represent realities familiar to all human experiences. This is not based on an “aesthetic judgement” but rather, a “heumeneutical idea” of the reading and the interpretation of the text.

as a *Lebensraum* (space of life) or a *Lebenshaus*⁴¹ (house of life) was shaped by the hope in God's promise, and actualized by the restoration to their land as the habitation of life.

Therefore, the creation stories constructed by the Priestly and the Yawistic writers, as Walter Brueggemann asserts, are informed by the experiences of suffering, disparity, and loss of a homeland,⁴² which simultaneously produced hope evoked by memories of a good, orderly world, a household of life which is brought about by God's transformative acts.⁴³ This hope was an attempt "... to provide a people in misery with a new order and comprehensive cult, a structure which makes a home for the homeless and deported in a manifest relationship with God."⁴⁴ Thus, the loss-experiences were built into a stylized "collective memory," which then anticipated a transformative life enabled by generous and miraculous deeds of God.⁴⁵ As such, the tragic conditioning of the Jewish lifeway was dismantled by the strong penetration of the promise of "returning to the days of independence in thought and action, to a free people wedded to the soil of their own land."⁴⁶ The collective memory of loss was projected into the historical reality of common life.

As a concentric matrix of the themes of creation and salvation, both accounts are centred around an orientation to the whole life-system. From a psychological and a sociological viewpoint, the exilic/post exilic community⁴⁷ projected and addressed by the Priestly school revealed not only a sense of loss and hopelessness but, at the same time, it presupposed a strong sense of solidarity and complementarity. The desire of returning to the historical home or paradise⁴⁸ was strongly imbued with ideas of community in relationships, sharing in common not only the essential resources of life, the image of God, but also the celebration of the sabbath. Recovering and rehabilitating the homeland as a promised gift of a faithful God is therefore the central emphasis depicted in Genesis 1-3. Here is where the history of salvation is intimately merged with the history of God's creation, in a covenantal⁴⁹ language of intimate (sexual) relationships, in which the land (rep-

41 Zenger, 107. Cf. H. Seebass, 62-67.

42 The experience of being homeless is not limited to the understanding of being exiled or removed to another place. One can also experience being homeless in one's own homeland. This experiential phenomenon was undoubtedly shared in common by the peasant communities in the highlands of Palestine as well as the Israelites in the time of the Babylonian exile.

43 Walter Brueggemann, "Suffering Produces Hope," *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (1998): 95-103. See also, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986). In his conclusion, he states: "Grief should permit newness; Holiness should give hope; Memory should allow possibility." Cf. Bernhard W. Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation*, 19-42. Anderson claims that the doctrine of creation stresses "the transcendence and freedom of God, the complete dependence of the whole creation upon the Creator, the reverence for all forms of life ..., and everything in it, with ultimate meaning."

44 Schottroff, *The Creation Narrative*, 25.

45 Brueggemann, 95-103. Also, Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Memory, Tradition, and the Construction of the Past in Ancient Israel," *BTB* Vol. 27, No. 3 (1997): 76-82.

46 Jonathan Magonet, "The Biblical Roots of Jewish Identity: Exploring the Relativity of Exegesis," *JSOT* Issue 54 (1992): 3-24.

47 M.G. Brett, "Literacy and Domination," *JSOT* Issue 378 (1987): 15-39.

48 Zenger, 107 ff.

49 Cited from Bible Studies: Ecology, Economy, and Theology Seminar, on the theme "Land." August 4-14, 1998. Land is portrayed here as hope for the landless and people in an eschatological sense. Evidently, a hope for the so-called poor will never become a reality when they are dispossessed of their land. Isa. 62:4 f. 4. "You shall no more be called Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight is in Her, and your land Married, for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. 5. For as a young man

resenting creation) was married to God and became the wife of God (Cf. Zech. 14, Isa. 62:4f).

In short, the centrality of creation and salvation, as idealized by being *at home* within the framework of the creation stories, is recognized from the standpoint of life in exile, longing for a homeland return, and life outside the garden anticipating the paradisaical life in Eden. The homeland, its ideologies and experiences, becomes the heritage and crossroad of all life encounters.

6.2.1. Priestly Creation Narrative

The chain of the creation of the world as *Lebenshaus* (1:1-10) was presupposed by the communicative word, and categorized into three main phases: the creation of inorganic creatures (1:1-19), organic creatures (1:20-25) and humankind (1:26-31).⁵⁰ The story ends with an affirmative statement of creation's goodness before God's rest from all work on the seventh day, together with the closing statement of the generations of the created heaven and earth (1:1-2:4a), which suggests the continuity of creation in its own rhythmic order.

In short, the Priestly narrative proceeds from chaos to the creation of order, the constant affirmation of creation's goodness, and culminates in a procreative scene. In other words, the well-ordered creation proceeds from a positive aspect of sin and suffering signified by the obedient coming into being of light to the word of God (1:3), the constant pronouncement of the divine judgement: God saw that it was good; as well as the procession toward blessings, first upon the living creatures (1:22), upon humankind (1:28), and the sabbath (2:3).⁵¹

6.2.1.1. Creator-God Creates and Separates

Creation by separation is a peculiar characteristic of the creation activity of God in Genesis 1. Critiques of the transcendental view and the sovereignty of God over creation have argued that God's (אֱלֹהִים – 'elohim)⁵² distantiation of Himself (sic) from the world is

marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you."

50 Claus Westermann, *Schöpfung: Wie Naturwissenschaft fragt – was die Bibel antwortet* (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1971 & 1983), 67. The author's English translation of: "Das Ganze gliedert sich in die Erschaffung der Welt als des Lebensraumes ... die Erschaffung des anorganischen ... und organischen Lebens ... und des Menschen." The orderly form of the living space (1:1-10) includes the laying out of the essential rhythm of life which God called Day and Night (1:6), the basic foundations, the Sky (1:8), the Earth and Sea (1:10) prior to the habitation and the settlement process.

51 David J.A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series 10 (Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 66.

52 Claus Westermann, *Genesis: Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament*, Band 1 (Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974), 139f. Cf. Sebas, 65. There is no general consensus among Biblical scholars about the name אֱלֹהִים – 'elohim, which is used by the Priestly writer here for the Creator-God. However, אֱלֹהִים – 'elohim can be rendered, as L. Köhler suggests, following Westermann: "... nicht nur Gott, sondern auch ein Gott, der Gott, Götter und die Götter" (translated as "God, a God, Gods and the Gods").

identical with P's creation narrative.⁵³ Because the Creator-God has created the heavens and the earth in the beginning and left it to function according to its own rhythmic order, and with the authorization of humankind's dominion, the whole created world depended on humankind's execution of the divine commands. This suggests a clear separation between God as Subject and Author from creation as a created-object, which remains in relationships mediated and established by God's creative word. Genesis 1:1-5 states that:

1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, 2. the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 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. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

The prior activity of God in creation was the bringing forth of order out of the existing (historical) chaos through the acts of creating, separating and calling.⁵⁴ While the earth was chaotic, a creation of order and clarity was an ultimate and foremost activity of the Creator-God. This idea is exemplified by the Hebrew construct: בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים – *beresit bara 'elohim* ("in the beginning, God created"). The construction of the first two verses in the Hebrew text has been presented in two main streams of interpretations. This is due to the interpretation of the very first word: בְּרֵאשִׁית – *beresit*⁵⁵ or *baresit*.⁵⁶ In one extreme, it points to an event that happened once (*Einmaligkeit*)⁵⁷ and would not be repeated, while, in the other extreme, it implies that the divine creative activity presented in vs. 1 assumes a totality of creation before the chaos, the אֶרֶץ – *'erez* (earth) in vs. 2.⁵⁸

53 Specific reference is given here to ideas presented in G. Ernest Wright's, "The Old Testament Against Its Environment," which highlights the adopting and rejecting of certain religious ideas as revealed in the nature of the Jahweh-religion (in relation to the religions of the neighboring nations, especially the Canaanites and the Babylonians), 9-41.

54 Westermann, 154 ff. Cf. Graham Ward, "A Postmodern Version of Paradise," *JSOT* Issue 65 (1995): 3-12. The principle of differentiation in creation is not only revealed in "the act of dividing, of making differences through language" but also is vividly presented in the order of natural creation which differs from that of the human order, and yet is intimately related.

55 Brevard S. Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*, Studies in Biblical Theology No. 27 (London: SCM Press, 1960), 40. The use of the word *beresith* has often been misunderstood in the context of verse 1. Childs, following L. Köhler's rendering of the word, suggests that: "Resith is not the beginning of a series, but to be taken absolutely as the opposite of 'aharith (the end) ... (which) ... stresses that creation in the Old Testament is an eschatological concept. The God of Gen. 1:1 finds the closest parallel in the first and the last (*rison 'aharon*) of Isa. 44:6 and 48:12."

56 Childs, 30 ff. The school of Wellhausen, Gunkel, Zimmerli, and von Rad's interpretations agrees that since *beresit* is an absolute word, the first verse can be a complete sentence and stand independently on its own. The other stream of interpretation is represented by Biblical scholars like Rashi, Holzinger, Dillmann, Skinner, H.W. Robinson, etc., who interpret *beresit* as a construct, followed by a genetive, which thus considers vs. 2 as a parenthesis.

57 Cf. Sebas, 65 f. The translation of vs. 1 can then be: "Im Anfang (war es), als Gott Himmel und Erde schuf." There are differences of opinion about the constructive structure of vs. 1 and 2 (especially whether vs. 2 is a nominal sentence of vs. 1 or not) in the Hebrew text. But most Old Testament scholars (following G. von Gunkel) generally agree that vs. 1 is an *Überschrift* or a *Motorverse* (W. von Soden) of the whole account.

58 Alberto Soggin, 16-23 (exploring Gunkel's: *Motiv des Chaoskampfes von Seiten des Schöpfergottes*).

The diversity of scholarly opinions signifies the multi-faceted understanding of creation from a historical perspective (creation work as it once happened) in contrast to the mythical/mystical conceptions, where creation was engendered and was/is being propagated by the divine acts of becoming. Nevertheless, the textual construct בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא bespeaks separation or differentiation aspects of creation. The Creator God created through the act of separation. Claus Westermann, in this context, writes that, through the creation of light by separating from darkness in the beginning, all of the activities of creation in the days that followed became a possibility.⁵⁹ Hence, the separation of light becomes the determining activity for the works that followed. The first created light separated from chaos, as Westermann emphasizes, should not be conceived as the purest of all potents/powers, or as a mysterious stuff, a sublime element, an independent or self-sufficient Object/Thing, but, rather, as a fundamental possibility of creating the rhythm of the created order.⁶⁰ God created light so that the time-rhythm of orderliness could become possible. To separate in this respect creates possibilities of orderliness, clarity, progress, and so forth. The existence of all that was created was affirmed good and very good. The ultimate impression in this context therefore is that creation means a well-structured, well-ordered, rhythmic life and not vice-versa.⁶¹

The separation/differentiation theme has some associations with the core idea presented by the word בְּרֵאשִׁית. J. Alberto Soggins comments that בְּרֵאשִׁית shares the common root word that has similar meanings with *Überrest* or *Überlebendes* (relics or the surviving remains)⁶² which is, as well, related to *Erstlingsfrucht* (first fruits).⁶³ The idea of the beginning is emphatically attributed to the absolute divine distinction, before the work of creation had been resumed. It appears in this respect that sharing the common root word,

59 Westermann, 155.

60 Westermann, 155. Authors translation of: "Durch die Erschaffung des Lichtes am Anfang wird die Gesamtdarstellung der Schöpfung in der Tagesfolge erst möglich ... Jedenfalls kann dann Licht nicht gemeint sein als "die feinste aller elementaren Kräfte" oder als "ein geheimnisvoller Stoff" (A. Dillmann), als das "sublimste Element," als ein "selbständiges Ding," ein feiner Stoff" (H. Gunkel). Das ist deshalb nicht möglich, weil bei P die ersten drei Schöpfungakte eben nicht etwas wie Herstellung von Substanzen, sondern die grundlegenden Scheidungen sind ... Gott erschafft das Hellsein und damit die Ermöglichung des grundlegenden Zeitrythmus, die Ermöglichung der Ordnung."

61 Sebass, 66. Author's translation follows: "... den ersten Eindruck von dem, was Schöpfung bedeutet: Wohlgestalt, Wohlordnung, Rhythmus, Leben. Der Kontrast heißt nicht: nichts – etwas, sondern gräßlich – herrlich."

62 Translated as 'relics' or remains of an original culture (see, for example, Englisch – Deutsch, Langenscheidts Großes Schulwörterbuch). Another translation states: "etwas, was (verstreut, wahllos od. ungeordnet) von einem ursprünglich Ganzen als Letztes zurückgeblieben ist ... einer alten Festung: *die sterblichen -e. (DUDEN – Deutsches Universal-Wörterbuch A-Z). This seems to refer to a feast of celebration of the remaining elements (or fruits) after destruction and death. It can simply mean a celebration of life or things which survive a dangerous and deadly event.

63 Soggin, 22f. Cf. G. Ward, 3-12. "רֵשִׁית – resith ist dem Substantiv seerit, Überrest, Überlebendes, ähnlich, es bezeichnet gewöhnlich die als edelsten Teil betrachtete Erstlingsfrucht eines Agrar- oder Viehzuchtprodukts ... Ob nun verstanden als status absolutus oder als status constructus, so daß der Anfang, der Beginn im absoluten Sinn gemeint ist; und in der Tat kann es vor der Schöpfung nichts gegeben haben, ..." This means that the beginning of all creation and all that had been put forth is attributed to the creating activity and majestic potent of God. Some Biblical scholars suggest that referring to רֵשִׁית – 'resith' as first fruits of the agricultural and pastoral life of the Israelites resembles the cultic elements of their worship. Besides the offering of the first fruits is the constant affirmation of God as Creator and Giver of all blessings, but it also points to God as the sanctifier of life. It is to some extent an affirmation of the One and only God of the whole creation, which is, at the same time, an absolute statement of Monotheism.

בְּרֵאשִׁית, in the context of Jahweh-worship connotes the sanctification of creation by God through creative and separative activities.⁶⁴ The creation of difference, as Graham Ward states, is an “act of sanctification, for to sanctify is to separate; (and this is) furthermore the creation of desire. God’s desire is toward the natural and human order he (sic) has established, he (sic) blesses them and provides for them.”⁶⁵ Through the act of separation, as Ward proposes, the relational character of the Creator-God to creation and vice-versa was established, and the relation of one to the other has a sanctified character.

Creation is affirmed by the verb בָּרָא – *bara*, which is technically and exclusively used for divine activity,⁶⁶ “novelty and extraordinariness (Is. 48:6 f, 65:17 f, Jer. 31:21),”⁶⁷ and an effortless production by word or volition (Ps. 33:9 f).⁶⁸ The interplay of the words בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים with the created matter therefore depicts the existence of the heaven and the earth (vs. 1) as a totality, or a complementary wholeness of the world God created.⁶⁹ While בָּרָא has overtones featuring ideas such as *trennen* (separate) or *absondern* (segregate, isolate),⁷⁰ creation has a supreme relation, purpose and meaning. Differentiation ideas are explicated by the coordination of activities defined by verbs such as עָשָׂה *asah* (make), and – *qal* (call). These verbs define the process of how the uttered Word of Creator-God (“And God said ... And it was so”) brought the whole creation into existence. This indicates that there is a separate technical aspect of creation.

Furthermore, the differentiation motif is exemplified by the phrase: רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת – *weruah’ elohim merahepheth* ‘*al pene hammayim* – “and the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”⁷¹ Biblical scholars have diverse opinions on the implications of the spirit’s hovering or sweeping upon the surface of the earth.⁷² Those who follow the traditional interpretations have posited that the background of the Genesis creation is informed by other creation mythologies familiar to the religions of the Near

64 Ward, 3-12.

65 Ward, 5.

66 Skinner, *Genesis*, 14 f.

67 Skinner, 15

68 Skinner, 15

69 Seebass, 65. The heavens and the earth portray a totality of creation. This is not a mere abstraction of reality; rather, it is an affirmation of the universe as whole creation of God. To Seebass, “Zu Himmel und Erde: Der Merismus als Bezeichnung einer Ganzheit ist sowohl dem Hebräischen ... als anderen Sprachen vertraut ... Der Merismus vermeidet Abstraktionen wie Cosmos, Universum oder das All ...”

70 Soggin, 23.

71 Childs, 33. Other translations suggest *ruah* to mean *wind*, *spirit*, or *breath*. The moving activity of the spirit in Gen. 1:2 f is clarified by Childs as follows: “There is an obvious connection with the Hebrew in the Syriac where the root signifies to ‘foster,’ ‘hover,’ or ‘brood.’ The Ugaritic offers the closest parallel ... (giving) the meaning of ‘soar.’ In the Old Testament, the word appears once in its *gal* form (Jer. 23:9), and once in the *piel* (Deut. 32:11) besides Gen 1:2 which is also *piel*. The description in Deut 32:11 is that of an eagle teaching her young to fly. The first verb, *hiph.* of ‘*ur* – stir up, denotes the action of the bird forcing the young out of the nest. Then follows *yeraheph* describing the actual process of getting the young to take to the air. The action is a *hovering*, *shaking*, *flapping*, but never *brooding*. In Jer. 23:9 *rahaphu* denotes a ‘shaking or trembling of bones from fear.’ Köhler renders *merahepheth* in Gen. 1:2 as *hover trembling*.”

72 Seebass, *Urgeschichte: Genesis 1,1-11,26*, 67 and 235 – Steck, cited by Seebass. Seebass summarizes the activity of *ruah* as: (i), *Hin-und-her-Bewegen* (here and there movements) which is like *breathing and shivering in cold*, (ii), the blowing of the wind from somewhere else (Ps. 29:3 – where the powerful voice of Jahweh is over the waters, which also alludes to the majestic creation of light in vs. 3. Special reference is therefore given to *atmen* (breath).

East,⁷³ where the battle of the Gods is mirrored in the Creator's fight with the threatening chaos. In this context, the hovering activity of the רֹחַ assumes aggressive and violent overtones. The רֹחַ of Creator-God here is depicted in warrior terms, or as if someone is ready to go to battle. Along these lines, T.A. Perry has commented:

God's Spirit comes to be seen as a cosmic Storm that rages – not simply blows, ... or broods over the waters ... No, God is epically garbed in a frightful wind-storm and goes a-warring with the much deflowered but still dangerous old Mesopotamian goddess Tiamat (= Tehom?) who rules over the cosmic ocean. These grand images help portray the religious differences between Israel and her ancient neighbors; but their origin may be the bold imagination of scholars ...⁷⁴

Perry suggests that the usual translation of עַל־פָּנָי – *'al pene* (on the face, or on the surface of) in vs. 2 creates a view in which darkness is touching the deep, which means that darkness is a prime characteristic of the deep.⁷⁵ Arguing against this kind of interpretation, he proposes that עַל־פָּנָי which primarily means “not touching but rather in opposition (over against), not on the face of but rather facing,”⁷⁶ emphasizes the concrete experiential sense of absence, which is the absence of light and life itself that the רֹחַ אֱלֹהִים – *ruah* of God is about to bring forth. Here, the real difficulty about the phrase ‘spirit of God’ in Genesis, according to Childs, is that: “The *ruah*, which normally has a positive meaning and belongs most definitely to God's creative work, stands over against the creation in Gen. 1:1. ... As it now stands, there is a strange anomaly of having a creative force of God judged as a negative action.”⁷⁷ The spirit standing over against the creation therefore does not coincide with the understanding of the word *ruah*, signifying:

... simply breath (Ez. 37:5-8); then again, it means wind or breeze, the movement, the movement of the air (Gen. 3:8, 8:1). When the spirit of God is spoken of, the usual meaning is of a supernatural, divine power which breaks into human life causing actions which surpass the normal human capacity. It is a divine, mysterious force upon which all life is dependent (1. Sam. 10:10; Num. 24:2).⁷⁸

To alleviate the difficulty, a number of attempts have been made. For instance, Childs (citing Gunkel – and his disciples) suggests that the creative God and the brooding spirit actually have no inner relation, but are mutually exclusive. Gunkel's idea rests on a brooding of the spirit in which: “The chaos develops within itself, (and) the creative God, on the other hand, applies his will from outside upon the world.”⁷⁹ Childs then concludes that:

73 Anderson, *Creation Versus Chaos*. Cf. T.A. Perry, “A Poetics of Absence: The Structure and Meaning of Genesis.1:2,” *JSOT* Issue 58 (June 1993): 3-11.

74 Perry, 3-11.

75 Perry, 3-11.

76 Perry, 3-11.

77 Childs, 34 f.

78 Childs, 35.

79 Childs, 35. Childs comments that such an interpretation is too much coloured by *brooding*. The verb can best be rendered as *hover, flutter, or flap*. In this light, “the frequent translation of *brood*” which lent considerable sup-

“... one has to understand the spirit of *’elohim* as a continual action over against the chaos by the creative God of verse 1. Gen. 1:2c does not begin the creation since syntactically it is part of the chaos. It merely expresses a relationship of coexistence between 1.1 and 1.2.”⁸⁰ The argument is carried on further by B.M. Anderson, who suggests that the chaos was not totally expelled but, rather, it was only pushed back during the work of creation.⁸¹ In this vein, he writes:

... the watery chaos is not destroyed, rather, the primeval sea surrounds the habitable earth on every hand. Were it not for the Creator’s power, by which the firmament was created and the sea assigned boundaries, the earth would be engulfed by the flowing together of the waters and would return to primeval chaos (cf. Gen. 7:11; 8:2).⁸²

The specific separation of the chaos is founded on the principle of the independent existence of darkness, which does not belong to God’s creation, as well as the common understanding throughout the Old Testament which sees darkness as closely associated with death (Job 38:17, Ps. 88: 13, 49:20, a sphere opposed to life, and a land of non-being (Job 12:25, 18:18). It also recalls the mythical aspect of creation where the primeval waters were also uncreated and had been given a negative character.

In sum, the separation or differentiation aspect of God’s creating activity, whether in a concrete historical or in a mythological (or pictorial) sense, alludes to the liberation of life from a chaotic world which is defined by darkness, formlessness and void. The רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים – *ruah* of God moving upon the תְּהוֹמוֹת – *tohu*⁸³ *wa bohu*⁸⁴ (darkness, deep, or chaos), then, presupposes the idea of God creating and giving life in the barren land or desert place, or life and survival in the face of destructive powers and death. Like a “giant mother-bird” whose wings quietly move on the face of the waters, the *ruah* of God is a quickening breath and God’s invigorating and supportive spirit.⁸⁵

The act of separation does not indicate any sense of divisiveness of created parts; rather, it means the ordering of the fundamental categories of time (1:3-5) and space (1:6-10), the sky, land and sea with their respective communities, the creation of humankind as distin-

port to the cosmic world-egg theory of Gunkel loses its validity since the philological evidence eliminates it as a possibility.”

80 Childs, 36. We see here: “... an active chaos standing in opposition to the will of God. It is a reality which continues to exist and continues to threaten his creation. The chaos is a reality rejected by God. It forms no part of creation, but exists nevertheless as a threatening possibility.”

81 Anderson, *Chaos versus Creation*, 157 ff.

82 Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation*, 9.

83 Cf. Childs, 32. *Tohuwabohu* is employed in Deut. 32:10 to signify a wilderness. This usage is parallel to *midhbar* and *yesimon*. Sometimes the word is used to describe a ruined city (Isa. 24:10) and is parallel to *’ayin* and *ephes* (Isa. 40:17). In a figurative sense, it is employed to connote something which is unreal, of idols (Isa. 41:29) and a worthless argument (Isa. 29:21).

84 Childs, 32. Westermann, 67. See also Soggin, citing D.T. Tsumura, 26-28. Other alternate interpretations of *tohu wa bohu* such as an understanding of *Leere* (emptiness) and *Nichts* (nothingness) as *unfruchtbaren und unbewohnten Ort* (a dry infertile and uninhabited place) or a lifeless place are suggested. Childs states: “The noun waste (*tohu*) signifies a *trackless, howling wilderness*, and it can be readily seen how this could become the symbol for emptiness. The word void (*bohu*) appears only three times in the Old Testament and only in connection with *tohu*.”

85 Schottroff citing Martin Buber, 24 f.

guished from the creatures on the sixth day, and God's resolving to rest on the seventh day as separate from the created order. It is a creation of difference in every aspect. Even though interconnected in their own adaptive ways, every created being is vitalized.

6.2.1.2. Gathering and Ordering of Living-Communities

The gathering and ordering of living communities is an inextricable work from the separation activities of the Creator-God in the Priestly construction. This is indicated by the separation of the waters above and under the dome leading to the appearance of the sky. In pictorial language, the sky which bends in a curving arch is like a sheltering roof which had been separated from the waters, that is, the vast horizontally-laid ocean where חַדְשָׁא – *ha'arez* (dry land) had been separated (Gen. 1:9 f) through God's gathering activity. This is followed by the gathering and placing of each biological community in its habitable place. Living species such as vegetation and plants in the field, sea, sky and land creatures are biologically grouped in the respective places where they naturally co-habitate.

The 'bringing forth' of vegetation on the third day (1:11-13) with fruit-trees and seed-trees of every kind; the ordering of the sky lights (1:14-19) on the fourth day as indicators for seasons, days and years; the bringing forth of sea creatures and birds (1:20-23) on the fifth day; and the work of the sixth day (1:24-25), which is the bringing forth of animals, creeping creatures and humankind, signifies the whole structure and functioning order of the divine creation. The 'bringing forth' is a process whereby the land, sky and the waters become the fundamental producers of the birthing process. Here, the land, sky and waters are seen to contain the potential for the production of life.⁸⁶

Biblical commentators generally agree that the calling forth activity (plants and living creatures) recapitulates the ancient myths where, through an intimate contact of the male God (*Enki*) to the female God (*Utu*), eight plant types were called forth, and in the Cannanites' fertility cult there was the bringing forth of life by Mother Earth.⁸⁷ In the myth of *Enki* and *Utu*, for instance, it is stated that the intercourse continued such that another eight plants types were produced and the process continued. This is in contrast to P's presentation, where all sorts of plants were brought forth in a single activity, in a diversity of characteristics, which Westermann describes as a means of bringing forth in their own natural totality (*als einer Ganzheit ergibt*), in contrast to the developmental theories of scientific studies today.⁸⁸

Creation is a complex embodiment of all living communities. Although they vary in

86 Cf. E.A. Speiser, *Genesis: The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc, 1978), 4-6. There are a variety of translations of the Hebrew text, but the translation offered by E.A. Speiser is considered here, especially in relation to Gen. 1:11, 12a, 14a, 20. "Let the Earth burst forth with growth: ... The earth produced growth, ... Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky, ... Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, ..." The emphasis on these essential foundations of life expressed in birthing imagery recognizes the vital power of growth and fertility.

87 Soggin, 36. Cf. Westermann, *Genesis Kommentar*, 172 ff. To Westermann, "Gott gebietet der Erde, daß sie die Pflanzen hervorbringe. Damit aber, daß an dieser Stelle das Schaffen Gottes für das Entstehen offen ist, ist ein grundsätzlicher Gegensatz von Schaffen und Entstehen nicht mehr möglich und nicht mehr nötig."

88 Westermann, *Schöpfung: Wie Naturwissenschaft fragt-was die Bibel antwortet*, 70 f.

form and appearances, they share in common the experiences of being animated and animating. The priestly construction (Gen. 1:11-2:4a) follows a pattern which ranges from the greening of the land, the animating of all living beings, the formation of humankind, culminating in the rest of God on the seventh day. Traditional (anthropocentric) interpretations mostly view this sequence (plants, sky lights, marine species, birds and animals) as a preparatory act of the Creator-God for humankind's sake. Here, the purpose of putting forth the vegetation and (seed/fruit) trees was for the nourishment of animals and humankind, the sky lights to serve as time-keepers, and the marine species and the animals as helpers. In contrast, the layout, ranging from plant species to animal and human species, signifies God's ultimate purpose of reproducing life – indeed, a bio-ecological cycle of life in contrast to mechanical life, as all beings receive and share in common the living breath of life (Gen. 1:30c).

The word construct **נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֶת־כָּל־יֶרֶק** (everything has the breath of life) has a peculiar emphasis here as compared to **נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה** in vs. 20 f and vs. 24. In these two verses, **נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה** is translated as a living soul, individual, or being. The phrase is collectively used here to refer to the first appearance of life on earth. However, in vs. 30 the **נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה** denotes that the *inner principle of life* is intimately permeated into every living being and, therefore, life becomes an inherent vital principle that regulates and sustains the living process.⁸⁹ Such life is commonly shared by living beings/souls, meaning that the earthly creatures (humankind) share with animals (and birds) the same vegetarian status (Gen. 1:30d). The vegetarian motif can be understood as a way of affirming the human's earthliness as well as a reminder of one's status in the chain of life.⁹⁰ The distinction also involves the biological and reproductive nature of the vegetation and trees as compared to animals and human beings. Skinner, among others, affirms the mythological influences on this account and identifies the contrast between the plant versus animal and the humankind's world. Accordingly:

... the plants, whose reproductive powers are included in their creation (v. 11 ff), ... are endowed with the right of self-propagation by a separate act – a benediction (vs. 28). The distinction is natural ... (and) there is nothing to indicate that only a single pair of each kind was originally produced; the language rather suggests that whole species, in something like their present multitude, were created.⁹¹

In this light, the progressive propagation and generation of life indicated by **נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה**, as Anderson proposes, draws no definitive distinction between animate and inanimate beings; rather, all created beings, such as stones, rocks or soil are considered animate components.⁹² All of what has been created are animated beings, which are placed in their

89 J. Skinner, 35.

90 Sebass, 84 ff. Sebass cited also the works of Schmidt, Rendtorff and others, who trace the vegetarian motif to the traditions of the Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Graeco-Roman worlds. The vegetarian motif originates from ancient traditions, whereby humankind were like animals eating grass, besides the eating of animal flesh as containing blood which is life itself.

91 J. Skinner, 29.

92 Anderson, *Creation versus Chaos*, 191. Also, *From Creation to New Creation*, 52 f.

own living spaces, adapting and adjusting to the nature of their own habitats,⁹³ and interacting or even communicating, according to the order and rhythm of their own potentialities. This means that every ecological life-system in God's creation has its inherited paradisaical place, intrinsic worth, value and meaning. Every component lives and survives not in a subject-object relation but, rather, they possess and inherit their own rights to life, and at the same time relate to each other in a kind of equilibrium.

6.2.1.3. Image of God and Humankind's Dominion

The creation of humankind on the sixth day is secondary to the creation of animals. The work signifies the difference between the order of animal creatures and human creatures. Although the works of individual days are distinct from each other, the acts are intimately related. The distinction of the activity is affirmed by God's resolve: *Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness ...* (Gen. 1:26f). As to be made in the image and likeness of God stands in contradiction to the belief that the God of the Israelites cannot be conceived in gender forms or portrayed in sexual images, the statement is believed to be borrowed from indigenous myths,⁹⁴ especially the fertility-cult traditions. This is strongly reflected in the writings of the prophet Hosea (14:8f),⁹⁵ where God-Jahweh is portrayed in blossoming and productive tree-imageries, culminating in a plea for social justice rooted in faithfulness and the execution of Godly relationships.

The main aspects emphasized in Gen. 26f cannot be treated in isolation from one another, as humankind, made in the image and according to the likeness of God, was intentionally created. The verse moves from an actual, physical likeness of God to intellectual or human reasoning, and to the distinction of a right way from an unjust way of living in relation to God. In the context of creation, the physical output of the **צֶלֶם** – *salam/selem* (image) and **דְּמוּת** – *damuet/demut* (likeness/form)⁹⁶ became an earth creature,⁹⁷ who was

93 The Hebrew term **מִקְוָה** is employed in this sense as a habitation, locale, or place of (co)habitation.

94 See, for instance, Oswald Loretz, *Schöpfung und Mythos: Mensch und Welt nach den Anfangskapiteln der Genesis*, Herbert Haag, Rudolf Kilian, and Wilhelm Pesch, eds. (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk e.V., 1968), 86-92. Cf. Ernst-Joachim Waschke, *Untersuchungen zum Menschenbild der Urgeschichte* (Berlin, n.a. 1984), 15-51. It is mentioned here that Gen. 1:26ff is presumably foreign to the faith of the Israelites, and therefore the idea may originate from the royal ideologies of the ancient oriental world where kings were considered as inheriting the living sanctity of God or the Gods.

95 Hos. 14:8f. 8. "O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like an ever-green cypress; your faithfulness comes from me. 9. Those who are wise understand these things; those who are discerning know them. For the ways of the Lord are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them."

96 Cf. Sebas, 80, Soggin, 44. See also R. Alter and Fokkelmann, 33. Christian D. von Dehse, "The *Imago Dei* in Genesis.1:26-27," *Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. XI, No. 3 (1997): 259-269. *Selem* and *demut* are similar in meaning. *Selem* means statue (as a plastic reproduction) and can be associated with the Akkadian word *salmu(m)*, which was used to refer to the images of the pagan gods; whereas *demut* refers to likeness, similarity, etc. Alter suggests: "The reiterated assertion that there is no likeness (*demut*) that man can possibly find for God is, of course, a sound argument against idolatry, something that explicitly concerns the prophet; but the term also echoes the first creation of humankind (*demuteinu* – Gen. 1:26). That is to say, God is perfectly free to fashion a human creature in His (sic) own likeness, but it is utterly beyond the creature's capacity to fashion a likeness for his (sic) Creator."

97 Cf. Dan E. Burns, "Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24 – Asleep in the Garden," *JSOT* 37 (1987): 3-14. The rendering of 'adam as an "earth creature" is followed here. Accordingly, **אָדָם** – 'adam (a masculine word) in gram-

granted divine dominionship. Humankind is recognized as a being, not in terms of gender status but, rather, in a collective generic sense (*Gattung*). Although the resolve of God to make humankind according to His (sic) image has generated much argumentation, the capitalization on the nature of the Creator-God in a collective plural sense,⁹⁸ which is also an inseparable part of 'adam, and the responsible role of humankind, is most significant, as Sebass suggests.⁹⁹ In these collective or communal relations, the Creator-God exists not only for Godself, but also for the Otherselves, namely the earth and all its creatures, including humankind.

In a re-examination of the notion of humankind being made in the image and according to the likeness of God, Tübingen theologians¹⁰⁰ offer a variety of interpretations, in which humankind is generally understood as being created to be God's living partner and a communicating creature, who communicates in communion with God. Humankind, male and female, created in the image of the Creator-God, are also responsible creatures. Moreover, there appears to be common agreement that the way humankind relates to the Creator-God is to execute dominion over the fish, birds and so forth. To have dominion over the creatures is the utmost intent of being made in the image of God, as the Priestly writer narrates.¹⁰¹ This notion easily lends itself to attitudes of separation from the rest of creation and as an indication that the human being is God's counterpart in creation.¹⁰²

'Let them have dominion' וַיְרַדּוּ (רדה – *radah*) has been given a great variety of meanings, which are either presented in soft overtones or rendered so as to imply certain harsh rulings.¹⁰³ Generally, רדה means rule or lordship. The traditional meaning of dominion in this context (Gen. 1:28) has dominating overtones, just as רדה has connotations of trampling, as when one tramples a wine press.¹⁰⁴ The meaning here portrays a rough move-

matical gender form is not sexually identified. While sexually undifferentiated, אָדָם in Genesis is referred to as an earth-creature.

98 A personal plural form in vs. 26b, whereas a singular subject in 26a, singular personal pronoun in vs. 27a, and in 27b, it is presented as the image of God – 'elohim.

99 Sebass, 81. Author's summary of: "Sie sind nicht göttlich, weil sie wie die Fische und Flugtiere zeugende Wesen sind und männlich und weiblich Ebenbilder – eine für Gott unmögliche Differenzierung. Sie sind nicht dazu da, die Erde zu unterwerfen und die Tiere zu beherrschen, um Götter zu versorgen, sondern zur Wohlordnung, zum Leben, zu Schöpfungen im Rahmen der Schöpfung, u.a. zur Bildung von Gemeinwesen."

100 Walter Gross, "Die Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen im Kontext der Priesterschrift," *Theologische Quartalzeitschrift*, 161 (1981): 244-264. Cf. Ernst-Joachim Waschke, *Untersuchungen zum Menschenbild der Urgeschichte*, 15-51. Gross discusses humankind in the image and likeness of God as follows: "Menschen als Bild und Gleichnis Gottes ... Er ist ein verwandtes Wesen, das Gott entsprechende Wesen, das Gegenüber Gottes, der Bundespartner, von Gott ansprechbar und Gott ansprechend." (Martin Hengel). "In seinem Ebenbild will der Schöpfer seinen Partner, sein Echo und seine Ehre finden." (Walter Kasper) "Mit dem Symbol der Gottebenbildlichkeit ist der gottsuchende Mensch und der gottsprechende Mensch gemeint ..." (K. Barth). "Der Mensch ist als ganzer dazu bestimmt, vor dem Angesicht Gottes zu leben, Gott zu antworten, sich vor ihm zu verantworten, und ihm so zu entsprechen ... Das aber heißt, der Mensch ist ganz und gar und überall Person" (J. Moltmann).

101 Cross, 244-264. Cf. Soggin, 42-45; Sebass, 82 ff.

102 See Christian D. von Dehsen, "The Image Die in Genesis 1:26-27," *Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. XI, No. 3 (Autumn 1997): 259-269.

103 A number of contemporary renderings of the word in relation to the ecological crisis are mentioned in the introduction of this work. To recall a few: "slash and burn" (Lynn White Jr.); "... an incentive for mechanization and pollution;" (Arnold Toynbee); or to "conquer nature, the enemy of Jehovah" (L. McHage).

104 Cf. Bernd Janowski, "Herrschaft über die Tiere: Gen. 1,26-28 und die Semantik von *hdr*," *Biblische Theologie und gesellschaftlicher Wandel*, Georg Braulik OSB, Walter Groß, Sean McEvenue, eds. (Freiburg: Herder,

ment from above downwards. This contains references to the traditional agriculture-technology of the wine farmers, which practically meant a means for production (and redistribution in an economic sense), though the concept does not escape certain rough overtones (Joel 4:13).¹⁰⁵

In contrast, *רדה* is also rendered as a kind of beneficent governance and a royal responsibility similar to what Solomon exercised over his realm.¹⁰⁶ Affirmatively, *רדה* in this category is analogous to the governance of a ‘kindly ruler who seeks to protect and preserve a cherished realm.’ To have ‘dominion over’ in this sense means stewardship and responsible caring (*Sonderbehandlung*). In carrying out their responsive duties as stewards of God, humans’ relational responsibility is understood, not in the dominative/manipulative sense but, in the function they perform in relation to God, and to the whole created order. However, the so-called kingly model presupposes hierarchical and anthropological rules which work more toward destructive ends than life-giving means, as is experienced today.

Being made in the image and likeness of the Creator-God ought to be envisaged in the light of carrying out one’s responsibilities to bring about corporateness and co-existential identity of all life forms.¹⁰⁷ Once dominion-as-stewardship is affirmed in the light of the Priestly construction, the emphasis empowers the idea that the stewards themselves are creatures among creatures, and part and parcel of the broader web of life, engaging in the creating activity in reciprocal ways, and in Godly terms. Understanding dominion in this context not only drives one to recognize one’s limitations in creation, as Bernd Janowski¹⁰⁸ comments, but also enables one to recognize the integrity of the community of life as the fulfillment of God’s mandate to have dominion.

6.2.1.4. God Rests and Created Communities Regenerate

The creating and propagating of ecological life-systems is carried into the Sabbath when God rests from all work, as well as the concluding affirmation of the community of generations in Gen. 2:4b. The intention of God resting on the seventh day is the divine affirmation of the whole created order. God’s rest is closely linked to the understanding that the *צבא* – *saba* (multitude/host), or all created living beings (Gen. 2:1) are bestowed with a special blessing and sanctity. The ‘rest’ of God is an intimate part of God’s creation

1993), 182-198. Also, Michael Welker, “Was ist Schöpfung? Genesis 1 und 2 neu gelesen,” *Evangelische Theologie*, Zweimonatsschrift 51. (1991): 208-244.

105 Bernd Janowski, 182-198. See also Groß, 244-264; and, Wilhelm Gesenius, *HHAT* (Göttingen: Springer-Verlag, 1962), 746. Other etymological renderings include: *treten*, *trampeln*, *fließen*, *hinterhergehen*, *treiben*, *beibringen*, *züchtigen*, und *herrschen*, and it appears that the emphasis of all these verbs lies not in a violating sense, but rather in activity, or bringing something in order, or to make it good.

106 Alter and Fokkelmann, 33.

107 Cross, 259f. Cross cites the works of Hans Wilderberger (1965), James Barr (1967) and others, who view the implication of the text in the framework of Israel’s monarchy and the expectation of executing their governance according to God’s gracious wisdom and deeds.

108 Janowski citing Christian Link, 195. Author’s translation of: “Nicht um seiner selbst willen, sondern um der Integrität der gemeinsamen Lebenswelt willen, die er mit den Tieren teilt, wird der Mensch mit dem Mandat zu herrschen beauftragt.”

itself,¹⁰⁹ in the sense that the blessing and sanctification of the sabbath is parallel to the recuperation and restoration of life.

The peculiarity of the rest of God on the seventh day in this respect, as Westermann asserts, is the ordering and the rhythmitizing of all God's work in the wholeness and holiness of time. Creation has been granted with an opportune time and a peculiar goal."¹¹⁰ This conception is greatly influenced by the historical experiences of the Israelites, and it is used in the seven-day commandments in Ex. 23:12, Ps. 146:6, and Ex. 20:4, and in Ex. 16:22, when the glory of God was revealed to the Israelites, and their recognition of peace/rest in God. The idea of God resting contains certain mythological elements, which feature the pleasant thankfulness of the female god Marduk who finally found a home where they could live in peace with Tiamat.¹¹¹ The idea of God's rest in the context of the Priestly writer suggests not only a refrain from work for recuperation, and a re-energizing of life potentials, but moreso, a realization and restoration of every created life in the Shalom of God. One can state then that the Creator-God has set the Sabbath as the crown and goal of creation.¹¹²

The Priestly narrator concludes with the statement: אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ בְּהִבְרָאָם ("These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created ...") Gen. 2:4a). The verse is considered as a conclusion to the Priestly creation narrative, affirming the absoluteness, wholeness and goodness of creation. Here, the wholeness of creation is signified by the complementary existence of the heavens and the earth. The affirmation is also treated as a heading for a new narrative cycle. While the statement superlatively affirms creation as a very good work of God, it also at the same time implies its propagating and reproductive character, in a reviving and renewal sense. The enactment of the theme 'propagation' and 'survival' is indicated by its own key word תּוֹלְדוֹת – *toledot* (basically, "begettings").¹¹³ תּוֹלְדוֹת derives from the root יָלַד – *yld*, and it connotes birthing into a new life. The term is normally used to refer to the mother's birthing process (*yaldah* – she gave birth), as well as the father's (*holid* – he begot) begetting or receiving of a child. Once the child is received, the birthing process is called *nolad* (he/she was

109 Sebass, 89. Westermann, 57 f.

110 Westermann, *Schöpfung: Wie Naturwissenschaft fragt*, 98 f.

111 Sebass, 90. Cf. Schmidt, 158 f.

112 This follows one of Jürgen Moltmann's main theological convictions that Sabbath is the crown of God's creation, and not the human being. This idea is explored by Walter Brueggemann, *Living Toward a Vision* (New York: United Press, 1990). The institution of the Sabbatical year and Jubilee (Lev. 25:2-4), the command not to destroy the fruit-bearing trees when they were at war (Deut. 20:19), and the cherishing of the fruits of the land (Deut. 16:11) were part and parcel of their common life-orientation. We find, in other periods of history, that the life of the household of Israel was threatened, and the insistence of the faithful leaders, kings, and prophets to maintain the order of the house by keeping to the ordinances of Yahweh as a basis of *social-eco-justice* was their utmost concern. The eighth century prophets such as Amos, Micah, and Hosea insisted on the observance of the covenant as a fundamental guidance of hope and life. Hosea, for one, uses nature-imagery to remind the people of their primordial covenant with God.

113 Cf. Robert Alter, "Introduction to the Old Testament," *Literary Guide to the Bible*, 16. Also, J.P. Skinner, *Genesis: International Critical Commentary*, 36-55. The abundant genealogies presented, according to Alter, "are enactments of the theme of propagation and survival which is characteristic and central to the book of Genesis and the Torah as a whole."

born).¹¹⁴ The process implied by the term contains overtones such as waiting in pain, expectation and hope, and the commemoration and celebration of birthing into new life.¹¹⁵

In most cases, ילד refers to the birthing process of human beings, especially as fathers begetting and subjects of begetting, and to the maternal nature of mothers giving birth to children (Gen. 3:16, 1. Kgs. 3:26, 1. Sam. 4:19 etc.), or a birth of a folk/people (Num. 11:12). Most interpretations assume the application of תולדות – *toledot* in the context of P's narrative to portray the generation of human beings. In so doing, the bio-ecological meaning of the concept itself in the context of the creation story may be subject to misconceptions. On other occasions, ילד is also applied to the birthing process of birds (Jer. 17:11), what the day might bring forth (Prov. 27:1), and animals (Gen. 10:1, Lev. 22:27).¹¹⁶ In the context of the Priestly narrative, however, the תולדות (Gen. 2:4a) has an implication that the heavens and the earth give birth to generations. Evidently, this understanding caused the Hebrews to raise the radical question whether heaven and earth may be the objects of God's begetting or whether the Creator-God had given birth to both the heavens and the earth. The radicality of the argument lies in the fact that the God of the Israelites is essentially a sexless God. תולדות then is intended to be employed metaphorically, "... especially when approaching the boundaries of the taboo in Israel's strict sexual morals, it carries the oblique suggestion that the cosmos may have originated in a sexual act of the gods."¹¹⁷ This strict sense is echoed in Jeremiah 2:26 f:

As a thief is shamed when caught, so the house of Israel shall be shamed – they, their king, their officials, their priests, and their prophets, who say to a tree, You are my father, and to a stone, You gave me birth, for they have turned their backs to me, and not their faces.

The idea of stones giving birth to human beings is strongly denied here due to the conviction that the house of Israel was born out of God's very own will. Nevertheless, the idea of the birthing potential of stones themselves reveals the nature of the existing fertility cults that the Israelites had strongly rejected.

In conclusion, it appears that the generations of the heavens and the earth is an affirmation of all that had been created (explicated by ברה – *bara*), and given the breath of life. Furthermore, the statement features not only the potential powers of fertility and growth of both the heavens and the earth themselves, but it simultaneously reveals the mystery of life and its continuity as "his/her-story."¹¹⁸ Thus, every godly-created being has a story, and they exist to imply God's story. This depends not on the essential growth potential of every created being, but also on the power of the Creator-God who relates to all creation, as has been presented in sexual imagery. The Israelites and many others undoubtedly had been unconscious of or were unwilling to integrate this understanding of God in sexual re-

114 Fokkelman, 41.

115 The idea of celebration of life is taken from the discussion on the theme: "Sabbath and the Year of Jubilee: Economy and Theology Seminar," Bossey Ecumenical Institute, August 4-14, 1998.

116 See Gesenius, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Wörterbuch*, 300f.

117 G. Ernest Wright, *The Old Testament Against Its Environment* (London: SCM Press, 1953), 22-24.

118 תולדות etymologically refers to the begetting of generations. The genealogy in this context is referred to as "his/her-story" which, in the modern sense, simply means 'the story of generations.'

lationships into their faith. Moreover, the theme of production and reproduction of ecological communities of life is vividly clear from the presentation of the Priestly writer. This is intimately linked to the divine maternal characteristic, which is one of the leading motifs (*Leitmotiv*) in the Priestly narratives.

6.2.2. *Yahwist Creation Narrative*

The objective in this section is to affirm God's central purpose in creation for communal production and reproduction of life in reciprocating bio-ecological relations, as further presented in the narrative of the Yahwist. The discussion is categorized into three main imagery (mythical) or historical phases, ranging from a dry, barren, infertile, isolated, lonely, incomplete life to a life of growth, fertility, luxury and communion, which is ironically accompanied by temptations and complications. God's ultimate purpose and goal in such a life is to be cultivatively productive and to be assured of sustainable continuity. Although the emphasis on life remains the leading motif here, one must not be misled by any suggestion of the absence of evil, chaos, or death, or the threatening of life itself as being eliminated from the process.

The Yahwist creation narrative is presented in a sequential form, defining a lifeless situation and the formation of the 'adam from the dust of the ground (2:4b-7), the paradisaal garden of Eden (2:8-14), the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:15-17), the tree of life (2:9), the existence of animals and the woman as helpers to the man (2:18-25), temptation by the snake, the curse, and the expulsion from the garden (3:1-24). The Yahwist's presentation proceeds from a deadly aspect of (individualistic) life to a communal living in the paradisaal garden, and ends in life being detached from its essential roots.

The Yahwist creation account is traditionally characterized as a story of humankind's disobedience, in which the omnipotent Creator-God removed the man and the woman from the garden of Eden. In many ways, the story of Eden constitutes a lost paradise, or is simply "a tragic narrative of human failure and disgrace."¹¹⁹ This traditional reading is not insignificant; however, a precise interpretation of the narrative cannot be reduced to a single understanding or hermeneutical position. The story of Eden and the Fall of humankind is also read through other lens that present different meanings and diverse messages. Some post-modern trends of interpretation suggest the Yahwist narrative as a story of liberation and an inspiring portrait of the origins of the human family,"¹²⁰ as an "aetiological account of the origins of sexuality, desire and representation,"¹²¹ as an allegorical epic of the political manouever by minority aristocrats over against the majority peasant class through manipulative imperialist knowledge and personal characterizations (represented

119 Sam Dragga, "Genesis 2-3: A Story of Liberation," *JSOT*, 55 (1992): 3-13.

120 Dragga, 1-13. As Dragga states: "... without the assumptions regarding the procreative couple, the wicked serpent, the tragic disobedience, the omnipotent God and the loss of paradise, Genesis 2-3 is a radically different narrative, with different characterizations, motivations and meaning. It describes the origins of the human family as cosmic and heroic. It pictures the man and the woman developing as human beings, from timid dependence to aggressive irresponsibility to courageous maturity. It displays the woman choosing fertility and the man joining the woman, together forfeiting personal immortality, blessed and cursed with the ability of creativity, proud of their choice, and given their liberty by a sympathetic creator."

121 Graham Ward, "A Postmodern Version of Paradise," *JSOT*, 65 (1995): 3-12.

by *Yahweh-Elohim*),¹²² as well as an authoritative source and origin of a patriarchal culture that had to ensure the silence of women, and the frequent domestication of both the land and the creaturely world.¹²³

6.2.2.1. Creator-God and a Lifeless Community

The emphasis on the ecology of life on earth is apparent in the shift of focus of the Yahwist's creation story from heaven to earth. The focus on earth signifies the primary locus of God's participatory life-giving actions. The earth becomes an arena of God's co-operative commitments and engagements for all living beings. The shift also coincides with the definition of the waters under the earth as a vital potent of life,¹²⁴ in contrast to the waters from above, which had not yet been caused by Yahweh. The waters and the earth permeate life, besides Yahweh's life-giving power. The transition from the Priestly narrative, especially the rest of the Creator-God and the affirmation of the generations of the heaven and the earth (Gen. 2:4b-7), bespeaks the self-regulation of life mediated by a vital principle, if not Yahweh as the source of life. In short, the narrative follows a pattern which moves from a lifeless to a living situation (Adam-Eve-Eden), the possibility of death as separated from life (Gen. 2:17, prohibition of the tree), the denial of death through the option for life (human pro-creation), and the relatedness of human beings to both life and death.¹²⁵

The Yahwist narrative begins with an account of a lifeless and barren land, for there was no rain and there was no man to till the soil (Gen. 2:4b-6). Like the chaos in the presentation of the Priestly writer, Yahweh's realm in the beginning¹²⁶ is a raw uncultivated place, which can be imagined as a desert or a wilderness-like realm. Although life appears to be absent, the springing of water from under the earth gives life and growth to the plants. The phrase cannot escape allegorical or metaphorical interpretations. The narrative advocates ideas such as a life outside, a life that is not being re-produced, for the Source (the Creator-God) has not caused it to be. The generation of life continues from plants to the formation of Adam אָדָם out of the אֶרֶץ. The interplay of the Hebrew words indicates not only that the original human being is androgynous¹²⁷ – having both male and female characteristics – but also an inextricable part of the earth, the waters (sea), the plants, animals, birds – all sharing in common such androgynous bio-characteristics, and having access to the tree of life. This may be a deliberate connotation presented by Gen. 2:9 – tree of life.

122 James M. Kennedy, "Peasants in Revolt: Political Allegory in Genesis 2-3, 3-14."

123 See Helen Schüngel-Straumann, "On the Creation of Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3: The History and Reception of the Texts Reconsidered," and Lyn M. Bechel, "Rethinking the Interpretation of Genesis 2:4b-3:24," *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*, 53-117.

124 Water symbolism mostly depicts fertility and nourishment. It also is associated with maturation and with the nature of women in their birthing process. Water on the other hand can be a symbol of death in its destructive power.

125 Eleen van Wolde, *Words Become Worlds: Semantic Studies of Genesis* (Köln: E.J. Brill, 1994), 32 f.

126 Gen. 2:4b. The beginning of the narrative is traced to the time known to the deity alone. This is thought to be influenced by the Accadian cosmogonies whereby nearly all traditions begin with the construction *inumi*, later *enuma*, literally, "in the day that," or "when."

127 Philis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 94-99.

Even though the beginning is portrayed in a seemingly lifeless situation, the association of a barren land, where plants and herbs were yet to spring up with the underground springs (or sea) that watered the whole face of the earth, gives evidence of the nurturing potentiality of the waters in vs. 6. The scene has some associations with old Mesopotamian mythologies of an underground ocean,¹²⁸ the foundation and spring of life. This idea is also recalled by the Psalmist's declaration: "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers" (Ps. 24:1-2, cf. 136:6). It is like an island which is anchored into the deep and surrounded by the ocean.

The reverse of emphasis (P & J) also conveys the notion that Yahweh's profound actions for life precede words. In the narrative, Yahweh chiefly acts by forming, breathing, planting, taking, putting, etc., and giving to the human being the responsibility of naming every living creature (Gen. 2:19f). This means that Yahweh participates in the activity of enabling and molding life, which Biblical scholars generally agree stems from the fact that such life had been mostly shaped by desert experiences. Gene Tucker argues that the Yahwistic narrative and the traditions it contains reflect the "mixed agricultural economy of the central Judean hill country" where the communities were "deeply connected with the natural order, from its fundamental convictions about the relationship of human life to the rest of that order, to the activities of the deity, to the agricultural patterns of its ritual calendar."¹²⁹ This contention is affirmed by the key phrase in Gen. 2:5b: "For the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth הָאָרֶץ – *ha'arez*, and there was no one אָדָם – '*adam* to till the ground הָאָדָמָה – *ha'adamah*."¹³⁰

Here, two main ideas are presented. Whereas rain is provided by Yahweh to water the land, humankind is meant to be the cultivator, tiller and labourer. Both activities amount to "the transformation of the earth into arable land which can support life."¹³¹ Such an understanding places emphasis on the arable landscape,¹³² the problem of humanity's compelling attitudes toward it, and Yahweh's banishment of the relationship between man and the land.

6.2.2.2. Eden – A Habitation of Life

Attempts to trace the geographical location of Eden, and the question of whether any garden of Eden existed, are endless themes of Biblical debates. While historical evidences fail to provide proofs, one can describe Eden as a "no-where land" that is located in a mythical landscape. "Eden is located at the very centre of the mythical world," as

128 Cf. Christoph Dohmen, *Schöpfung und Tod: Die Enthaltung theologischer und anthropologischer Konzeptionen in Gen 2/3*, Hubert Frankemölle und Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, eds. (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk e.V., 1999), 208-249.

129 Gene M. Tucker, "Rain on a Land Where No One Lives: The Hebrew Bible on the Environment," *JBL*, Vol. 116, No. 1 (1997): 3-17. Tucker adopts Theodore Hiebert's stream of hermeneutics here.

130 Tucker, 3-17.

131 Tucker, 3-17.

132 This understanding is commonly shared by Biblical theologians such as Bernhard Anderson in his work, *Creation and New Creation*, and Walter Brueggemann, *The Land* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982). See also Tucker, 3-17.

J. McKenzie states,¹³³ in a “womb of fertility” which is compared to the birthing nature of woman¹³⁴ or simply a place of innocent life, where outside destructive forces have yet to be experienced and death does not exist.¹³⁵

The association of Eden with rivers not only portrays a complete panoramic or exotic view of the garden, but also signifies an inseparable co-existence of the land and the waters in the life-giving process.¹³⁶ This nurturing process had produced gold and onyx stones, which identifies the commercial productivity of the land itself. The picture of the garden of Eden – ranging from the productive potentiality of the land and the waters, the vegetation, the fruitfulness of trees, animals in pairs (and their naming), with the Creator-God-Earth-Adam-Eve birthing narrative, – provides a complete ecological chain of life. The forming of אדם out of the אדמה suggests the cultivatable nature of humankind’s role in the garden as being life-receiving, giving and sustaining. In other words, “... adam is made for the garden, not vice-versa, ... (and he/she) is “made for the soil, vegetation, and the livelihood of everything in Eden.”¹³⁷

The role as a cultivator qualifies אדם to stay in the garden. The אדמה (cultivable ground or soil)¹³⁸ supplies humans with a responsibility to be fulfilled, in relation to all חַיִּים נֶפֶשׁ – living beings such as trees, creatures, rocks, etc., which have also been formed and connected to אדמה. In other words, every living being in the garden of Eden participates in the cultivating and nurturing process of life, not on the same level, but according to their own rhythms and potentialities.¹³⁹ They all share in shaping a culture of creation.

In addition, the relation of אדמה to חוה (Eve) entails a life-producing process. The re-

133 McKenzie cited by Dan. E. Burns, “Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24: Asleep in the Garden,” 3-11.

134 Dragga, 3-13.

135 Graham Ward, “A Postmodern Version of Paradise,” 3-12. Cf. Terje Stordalen, “Man, Soil, Garden: Basic Plot in Gen 2-3 Reconsidered,” *JSOT* 53 (1992): 3-26. Here, Eden is implicated in a desire for a nostalgic paradise where one had been sheltered and nurtured. It is either an ‘ontological’ or a ‘theological’ heaven.

136 See Bechtel, 93; Hermann Vorländer, *Die Entstehungszeit des Jehowistischen Geschichtswerkes* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 1978), 27 f. Cf. E.A. Speiser, 9-11 and Childs, 41 ff. *Eden* (Sumerian/Hebrew) or *edinu* in (Akkadian) simply means pleasant, delight or plain. It is sometimes rendered as a place of enjoyment. The concept is linked to *ed* (Job 36:27) which is related to *id* (river, or streams of sweet water beneath the earth). This rendering suggests Eden as a garden of fertility or a place where life is nurtured and propagated. “In opposition to the priestly understanding of the world reality as the free creation of a transcendent God, Near Eastern myth provides a striking contrast. The Babylonian myth of the Enuma Elish provides a classical example of this pattern. There was a time before world reality had been formed in which there existed only a watery chaos. From out of this chaos the gods emanated, begotten from the union of the sweet water with the primeval sea. Creation was a reforming of the pre-existent matter into the present worldorder.” *Tehom* and also *Tohu* and *Bohu* are therefore depersonalized or demythologized by the Hebrews.

137 Stordalen, 3-26. Stordalen differentiates between שֵׁיחַ (plants outside the cultivated sphere – non-cultivated plants) and צֶשֶׁב (plants used in the Hebrew economy as food, either for cattles or for people). The sense used for vegetational life here designates the human economy connected to the ארֶצַּע (ground/land, piece of land, land territory – nation, all land or earth).

138 Stordalen, 3-26. אדמה (cultivated ground) is in the צֶרֶף (field) which is inside ארֶצַּע (land or a larger and wider space). Thus the אדמה is a non-geographic concept, which means it refers to any fertile and cultivable land.

139 This knowledge of animals sharing in the cultivating role, or specifically in tilling the ground, is found in agrarian societies, especially in tropical climates where animals such as cows and buffalos are used to help in the tilling of the soil. In other places where there is less domestication of animals, pigs naturally dig up the soil, which is a practical way of preparing the land for cultivation. Biology has also informed us that plants have recycling systems, not only for oxygen and hydrogen, but their roots recycle and regulate the nutrients for the fertility of the soil itself. In this sense, all participate in the process of cultivation.

lational communion of both precedes life, not only on the human level, but also in the immediate community of Eden.¹⁴⁰ Eden then depicts a habitation of life, life in every dimension. It is the context whereby living beings co-habitate, a place where life is interdependently shaped and where the meaning of each aspect is interconnectedly defined. Such a co-habitation in its original process was blessed, not only with procreative land, rivers, trees, creatures, and so forth, but also with a procreative couple.

6.2.2.3. Yahweh and the Law for Trees

In Gen. 2:16f, the regulations for trees in the habitation had already been established by the Creator-God as a fundamental principle of life. God said to the man and the woman: “You may eat of every tree of the garden; but the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die (Gen. 2:16f).” While prescribing the tree of knowledge as taboo, it is obvious that eating of the tree of life also in the midst of the garden (Gen. 2:9) is permitted. Some interpretations consider the tree of knowledge of good and evil to function as an “ultimate godlike knowledge,”¹⁴¹ “an immortal and immutable tree which is related to God’s transcendence and immanence, a tree to know life and death.”¹⁴² Or, it allegorically characterizes the monarchical access to knowledge to rule, as a way of maintaining the status-quo.¹⁴³ In essence, however, the tabooed tree is simply a sacred tree. The prohibition related to the tree indicates a deep consciousness of seeing evil, and death as a consequence of violating the integrity of the divine inherited in a tree of knowledge.¹⁴⁴ Hence, the tree ought to be preserved, respected, and kept sacred by the conscious awareness that life and death is inherited in it.

The regulation of the trees has laid before the human couple the conditions of life as distinct from death, amidst the luxurious life of enjoyment. The taboo means that God has set limits or a boundary in order for humankind not to destroy the very centre of their beings. The centre is symbolized by the tree of knowledge.¹⁴⁵ The prohibitions coincide

140 The close relation of the Hebrew words *חַיָּה* (to become) and *חַיָּה* (life) connotes meanings such as: life, to live, or to become alive.

141 Westermann, 290, 328 f; and, Wolde, 33.

142 Landy cited by Wolde, 34f. Landy interprets the two trees as the one representing immortality and immutability, and the other connoting experience and change. While linking the tree of life with *Eros* and the tree of knowledge with *Thanatos*, Landy suggests that the desire for truth is the psychological basis of the tree of knowledge, whereas the tree of life is founded on the fear of death and life. Although the desire for truth ended in death, the tree of life stands in contrast to it. The two are combined by God.

143 J.M. Kennedy, 3-17. To Kennedy, the forbidden tree of knowledge of good and evil is used in the narrative to imply aristocratic knowledge (representing the character of Yahweh). Access to knowledge would allow the human couple (seen as peasants in the garden) to revolt and overthrow the monarchy. To maintain the monarchical governance, therefore, the peasants were to be penalized or rather learn their lesson not to go against the ruling authority. The prohibition of the tree of knowledge therefore allegorically represents the monarchical attempt at preservation, although in a very negative way.

144 Wolde, 32-36.

145 Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 42-46. In exploring the importance of trees in mythologies, Eliade discloses that: “The most widely distributed variant of the symbolism of the centre is the cosmic tree ... Thus, all the sacred trees are thought of as situated in the centre of the world, and the ritual trees or posts which are consecrated before or during any religious ceremony are, as it were, magically projected into the centre of the world.”

with a rationality that, once all trees are freely given for humankind's sake, then death becomes an obvious end result.

The code for trees then suggests the ecological intention of the Yahwist, bearing in mind the self-regulating, renewal, and healing potentialities of trees themselves, apart from their productiveness for the vegetarian dependence of earthly creatures. Growth and the continuation of life through trees' reproductive nature are intimately a part of God's pro-creative option.¹⁴⁶ The idea is emphasized by allowing Adam and Eve to eat of every tree, as well as the tree of life (Gen. 2:9), except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This means that not all trees were to be consumed; the one which is sacred must be preserved.

The attainment of knowledge to touch the prohibited tree, therefore, symbolizes humankind's desire for dominance that brings pro-creativity to an end. The Creator-God in the narrative has redirected the human couple in terms of their role and place in creation as equally important to the trees and the prohibited regulations for their propagation and preservation. This idea is linked to the significance of the tree of knowledge of good and evil as specifically associated with sexual knowledge. It is obvious when, following the human couple's eating of the fruit, they immediately discover their nakedness, their sexual differences (Gen. 3:6-7). Abstaining from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, according to Sam Dragga, "... is thus designed to preclude the human discovery of procreativity."¹⁴⁷ As a genuine option for pro-creativity, the human couple must be connected to trees, which are part of the reproductive cycle of life.

6.2.2.4. The Serpent – An Ecological Option

The serpent has been identified by the role it plays in the narrative as an evil creature with a seductive character. The 'de-mything of the creature' (*Das Tier (Schlange) ist völlig entmythisiert worden*)¹⁴⁸ is basically due to interpretations which view the disobedience of Adam and Eve as a consequence of being tempted by the serpent. On this occasion, the creature is regarded as an enemy of humankind for it has tempted them and caused death. This has established enmity between the serpent and humankind. The serpent in this case represents a mysterious phenomenon of evil with its tempting role.¹⁴⁹ This argument, however, is proven to be weak, for God has created enmity between both man and woman and has also brought death to both of them, and not the serpent.

Soggins, Loretz, Sebass, and Ellen van Wolde see the serpent as a representative of a rival fertility deity, a symbol of immorality, or a dualistic animal representing both life and death,¹⁵⁰ as was common throughout the Semitic world (2. Kgs. 18:4 and Num. 21:9).¹⁵¹ Against the presentation of the serpent as symbolizing evil and death due to the rejective

146 The reproductive nature of trees indicates that they also inherit male and female characteristics. This signifies growth, whereas their dying and re-birthing nature (as indicated by the falling of leaves) resembles the cyclical system of life.

147 Dragga, 3-13.

148 Soggins, 81. Cf. Loretz, 116f.

149 Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 324f; Soggins, 81; Wolde, 4-6.

150 Dragga, 3-13.

151 Soggins, 81; Loretz, 117; Sebass, 101 ff; Wolde, 8 ff.

attitudes of the Israelites to the Canaanite fertility cult, there is an alternative consensus that the serpent is simply a creature of God which symbolically represents life, livelihood and providence.¹⁵² Wolde, following Vrienz's argument, suggests that the serpent should be interpreted as a "magical animal of life and wisdom." This is based on the self-renewal nature of the serpent, together with its life-giving fertility, as it was known in the Canaanite, Phoenician, Egyptian and Babylonian worlds.¹⁵³ This is indicated in the Yahwist narrative, for example, where the fertility nature of the serpent is closely identified with wisdom. By addressing the creature as עָרֹם – 'arum (wise, prudent, or crafty),¹⁵⁴ the Yahwist, after describing the eating of the fruit of the tree, states that the man and the woman knew that they were עֵרֻמִּים – 'erummim (naked – Gen. 3:7). This suggests a clear association between nakedness and the knowledge of sexuality, when they recognized their differences.

The identification of the serpent with the knowledge of sexuality, fertility and reproductivity is recognized further by the close association of the name *Eve* and serpent in the Hebrew language. Etymologically, one will find that both words are linked to life, fruitfulness, survival and the like.¹⁵⁵ This connection can be explicated in sexual relationships, such that the attraction of the serpent (which is masculine in Hebrew) to *Eve* is a prelude to her birthing nature. This is biologically linked to the smell of the serpent itself, as it is quite similar to the smell of the reproductive genitals of humans after a sexual encounter, particularly women. The reproduction of life in this category is associated with the story of the serpent and humankind. Although the narrative ends with a tragic notification to all characters in the story, the ability of both Adam and Eve to produce a new human being symbolizes the continuation of life.

The self-renewal power and life-giving potentiality of a serpent, to a certain extent, also identifies the serpent as a creature of God that represents a certain ecological wisdom. This wisdom is indicated by the abilities of the serpent to renew itself, to survive, together with the function it plays in the whole of creation, the garden of Eden. In the Yahwist narrative, the serpent is identified as a wild creature that the Lord God had made, and its habitat in the garden of God is the tree. In the story, the serpent is carrying out its respective duty and function of guarding the fruit of the tree from being eaten. The dutiful and crafty character of the serpent has qualified it as a preserver of the sacred tree, as well as its natural or biological characteristics, such as the smell of its skin which is ecologically related to its role as a natural conservationist.¹⁵⁶

From an ecological point of view, the serpent is not only adaptable to the tree, but the

152 Soggins, 81. Cf. Loretz, 117, and Wolde, 4-8.

153 Cf. Wolde, 9. Soggin, 80f.

154 The serpent is also characterized as a deceiver and, as such, the word אָרָם – *arum* has the meaning 'prudent' (Prov. 14:8), as well as 'more cunning than any wild creature' (Job 5:12).

155 Bechtel, 97. Cf. A.J. Williams, "The Relationship of Genesis. 3:20 to the Serpent," *ZWA* (1989): 357-374. Following Bechtel's relational interpretation of the Hebrew words הָיָה (to become, live, enumerate, etc.) and חַיָּה (Eve). הָיָה is closely associated with נָחָשׁ (snake) when rendered as הִיָּה (hiwya), which is translated as 'snake' or 'life' in the Akkadian language.

156 Societies and other species which are acquainted with the smell of the serpent in trees would quickly identify its presence and then retreat from the place. This means that its inherent nature is associated with its function and role in the garden of Eden.

tree, its fruits, and its preservation depend upon the reciprocating presence of the serpent. In other words, the interdependent natures of both the serpent and the tree are related to producing, protecting and restoring life. Such functions and inherent natures are vividly recognized in the field of medicine, where the serpent and the tree are symbolically used to connote fertility, survival, goodwill, health and prosperity.

6.3. Creation as *Oikos* in the New Testament

The radicality of viewing creation Christologically in the New Testament has already been mentioned. New Testament interpretations are centred around the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. However, we are confronted with the problem of how to reconcile our belief in Jesus, an individual who lived two thousand years ago in a specific cultural context, with the contemporary cosmological and astronomical conceptions. Contemporary cosmology and astronomy, for instance, inform us that the universe contains more than a hundred billion galaxies, is evolving in a dynamic process in space and time and, as our home, the universe had its origin between eight and eighteen billion years ago.

These facts lead us to ask questions about the relevance, meaning and relationship of Jesus to creation as a whole.¹⁵⁷ They also compel us to reexamine our understanding of the significance of Jesus for the whole universe or, inclusively speaking, for the whole creation. Moreover, they lead us to appropriate God's will for our own time, in our restricted capacities and in relation to the ecological problems of today. Such an inquiry leads us to redefine the relationship of Jesus (as Logos/Word) and creation, principally from the perspective of wisdom.

New Testament explications on creation have concentrated on studying the theme from the Synoptic Gospels, the Epistles of the Apostles, and the Book of Revelation. For our purposes, attention will be focused on the already mentioned Biblical texts. While it appears unthinkable to offer an ecological interpretation from the Prologue in the Gospel of St. John,¹⁵⁸ an attempt is made here to offer an alternate possibility, by way of conceiving God's very activity "in Christ" from the perspective of a theo-cosmology and God's revelatory relation to the world of hostility, the earthly habitation and home, as prescribed by abstract Greek philosophies and Gnosticism. In this light, the Incarnation of God in embodied terms and the perpetual healing activity of the Spirit in all creation are affirmed. It

157 Cf. Luise Schottroff, "Schöpfung im Neuen Testament," *Ökologische Theologie: Perspektiven zur Orientierung*, 130-148. Note that in the New Testament there is no mention of nature or human environment; rather, 'creation' is frequently employed. This means that all life forms or living beings are respected and recognized as the creation of God. Individual terminologies such as people, plants, trees, weather, etc. are used without any reference to them as nature. Creation as an outer-worldly (*außermenschliche Schöpfung*) concept is used to depict people as part of God's creation – children of God, etc. (κτίσεις – Rom. 8:18-22) – who stand in opposition to the will of Creator-God.

158 Discussion with Dr. Christian Strecker, 02 February, 1999. Augustana Hochschule, Neuendettelsau. See also Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum neuen Testament*, 2 Reihe 78 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996), 24. The difficulty lies not only in the dualistic perception of creation in the Johannine traditions, but also in the unsettled debate on John's Christology itself as represented by Bultmann's existential perspective (1:14a – the Word became *flesh*) versus Käsemann's (and Schottroff's) 'naïve docetic' approach that emphasizes Christ's glorification (1:14c – 'and we beheld his *glory*').

not only bears witness to God as the originator, mediator and sustainer of life¹⁵⁹ but, it discloses the hidden ecological ideologies of “existence, relationship and predication”¹⁶⁰ which underline the texts.

6.3.1. Exposition on St. John 1:1-5 and Ephesians 1:9-14

The interpretation in this subsection follows the author’s main idea that God’s very purpose in creation is for the production (and reproduction) of life, as well as the divine choice for a sustainable life in communion and unity of all things in creation. This idea is fundamentally developed by John the evangelist in the Logos Hymn, and indeed throughout the whole Gospel. The Prologue, and the whole Gospel of John’s storytelling, according to Kermode:

has the virtues of economy, connexity, and depth. He is bent upon making his narrative together, but in so doing he is always attending to his deepest purpose, which is the representation of the eternal in relation to the transient, of the manifestations of being in a world of becoming ... He has still in greater degree a concern for a thematic organisation of the narrative,...the creation of historylike detail, and what is sometimes called ‘the effect of the real.’¹⁶¹

Interpreting the texts in this way diminishes the perception of the Gospel as being guided by extreme dualistic and/or mechanistic ideas, while at the same time affirming the organic diversity and unity of life which underline the cosmological and communal intentions of the writer. The Incarnation of God reveals in depth the divine orientation as “creation’s monism.”¹⁶² As such, the world (cosmos) as our *oikumene* (Heb. 2:5), although evil by nature in the perception of John’s community in particular, is organically loved by God (Jhn. 3:16), and it becomes an arena in which God’s salvific activity becomes accessible. It is, indeed, a good world which is loved by God.

The idea presented in the Fourth Gospel is synonymously explicated in the Letter to the Ephesians (either by Paul or pseudo-Pauline), summarized by two complementary ideas: The μυστήριον – mystery of God’s will revealed in Christ; and οἰκονομία – the plan of God to unite all things in Christ through the organization and administration of the household – become an adaptable model of a living faith. Approaching both texts from an ecological viewpoint compels one to understand that all that God has created (Eph. 3:9; Rev. 3:9) ought to be conceived, organized and cared for in a reciprocal life-giving manner. Such is the Gospel’s essential message that the Apostles appealed to the early

159 Udo Schnelle, “Johannes als Geisttheologie,” *Novum Testamentum* Vol. XL (1 January, 1998): 17-31. See also D.M. Smith, “John, Apocryphon of,” Keith Crim, ed. *TIDB – IE*, supplement Vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 481-489. Emphasis here is given to *die heilvolle Gegenwart des Parakleten* – Jhn. 14:16f – or the redeeming presence of the Spirit.

160 Frank Kermode, “John,” *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, eds., 445.

161 Kermode, 452f.

162 Jürgen Becker, *Das Evangelium des Johannes – Kapitel 1-10: Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament*, Band 4/1 (Würzburg: Gütersloher Verlag, 1979), 147 ff.

Christian communities to sustainably preserve as a model of life in their relationships with God, fellow members, and with all created beings.

6.3.1.1. The Prologue: The Logos – St. John 1:1-5¹⁶³

John the evangelist sets the Logos hymn as a departure point of his Gospel. The Logos hymn is presented in a mythical form and contains some ideas parallel to the creation story in Genesis 1, especially in relation to concepts such as in the beginning and God's creative Word, in and through which all things had been created. Since the hymn remains an introductory statement with some unresolved mysteries for Biblical interpretation,¹⁶⁴ what is generally understood is that the Prologue is a congregational hymn (*Gemeindelied*) "which has been adapted to serve as an overture to the Gospel narrative of the career of the incarnate Word."¹⁶⁵ The content and intent of the hymn¹⁶⁶ is developed in depth by the evangelist in his theo-christology, which can be condensed in the word 'Logos.'

The Logos hymn is also regarded as a philosophical statement adopted by the evangelist to define Jesus and his ministry in his own context. While originally existing as a philosophical concept amongst the pagan religions of the time, John proclaimed the message of Jesus by employing the Logos in ideas, thought forms and language of the existing culture and lifeway of his own time, to indigenously express the reality of God in the world that was revealed in Jesus Christ.¹⁶⁷ This reality is indicated by the leading motifs of light and life in Jhn. 1:1-5. Here the concept Logos, which was widespread throughout the Hellenistic world, suggests meanings such as truth, a clear comprehension, proportionality, a unity of cosmological laws, or a unitary participation of the one and the wholeness (*Einheit des Einen und Ganzen*). The thinking process and its results are recognized in their totality.¹⁶⁸ In this respect, the evangelist had undergone a process of contextualization where Jesus and his proclamation were presented in the language which was adaptable and made sense to his mixed and diverse religious audience.

The hymn, according to Jürgen Becker, can be divided into three main strophes, namely: (i) the creation of all things in and through the Logos (Jhn. 1:1-5), (ii) the salvation of all things in and through the Logos (1:9-13), and (iii) the fleshly/bodily incar-

163 See B. Klappert, "Λόγος (Word)," *ThBINT*, Lothar Coenen, ed., Band II/2, (Wuppertal: Theologischer Rolf Brockhaus Verlag, 1971), 1407-1410. The Logos Hymn covers St. John 1:1-18. Our interest will be limited to verses 1-5, but references will be made to the whole Hymn from time to time. Logos simply means 'word,' a 'saying' or a 'reflection.' When rendered (λέγω – *lego*), it means to gather, to count, and to say. It also means spirit, reasonable (λογικός – *logikos*), educational (λόγιος – *logios*). Logos is related to *mythos* – when considered as a way of telling stories about the Gods (by Homer). When used for Jesus Christ as an incarnated Logos of God, then it is understood as the participation of God in the category of Word. This follows M. Luther's categorization: *the Word in God*, or the *Speech*, as Calvin translates.

164 Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium: Einleitung und Kommentar zu Kap. 1-4*, Teil 1, (Freiburg: Herder, 1979), 205 ff.

165 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1985), cxxxviii.

166 C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: SPCK, 1978), 151 f. The theo-christology of St. John includes the communion of God and Jesus, the sending of Jesus into the world, as well as the revealing of God's will on earth.

167 Cf. Renty Keitzar, "Creation and Restoration: Three Biblical Reflections," *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North*, David G. Hallman, ed. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994), 52-61.

168 B. Klappert, "Λόγος," 1409-1402.

nation of the Logos (1:14-18).¹⁶⁹ The first five verses of the Gospel speak of the beginning as originated in and by God, the coming-into-being of all things in the Logos, life in the Logos, as well as the co-existence of Light and Darkness.

1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2. He was in the beginning with God. 3. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4. in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.¹⁷⁰

The incarnation of the *Logos* is typically interpreted in personified-historical terms. This is indicated by the constant repetition of the phrase ἐν αὐτῷ – in him, and is affirmed by the reference to τῶν ἀνθρώπων in verse 4. This interpretation posits a clear differentiation of metaphysics from history. This has not only confined God’s revelation and purpose to history (history of humankind at the expense of creation as a whole), but also raises disputes over the issue of whether Jesus as the Word of God and as God’s spoken words are identical or not. Schnackenburg makes a clear distinction between these by stating that the words of the revealer (Jesus) are not identical with the revealer as the Word. Since Jesus proclaimed the Word of God, therefore Jesus as the Logos of God must not be understood in its absoluteness.¹⁷¹

Raymond. E. Brown also comments that to understand the Logos as *What God was* is a fair interpretation. Since the intention of the Gospel has been centred around John’s affirmative answer to the charge made against Jesus, as has been disclosed in Thomas’ confession of Jesus as: ὁ θεός μου (‘My God’ – Jhn. 20:28), the personalistic readings tend to be widely accepted. However, for “... a modern Christian reader whose trinitarian background has accustomed him (her) to think of God as a larger concept than God the Father,” Brown proposes that the translation “The Word was God is quite correct.”¹⁷² When the Logos is substituted with a personal pronoun, then the *He/Him* – Logos – is assumed to be taking up human flesh. The personified rendering of the word then specifically reflects the early Church’s conviction which points to Jesus Christ as “the true God of true God” (a

169 Klappert, 1432. See also Jürgen Becker, 70. Following the thematic categorization and rearrangement of the Logos Hymn by Jürgen Becker, whereby the verses which refer to John the Baptist as a witness are ignored. Strophes of the hymn are headlined as: (i). Die Schöpfungsmittlerschaft des Logos, (ii). Die Heilmittlerschaft des Logos, and (iii). Die Fleischwerdung des Logos. Compare also R. Schanckenburg, E. Schweitzer, etc. Others, especially R. Bultmann’s school, have arranged the hymn into four strophes ranging from: (a) the divinity of the Logos and the function it has in creation, (b) the function of the Logos as light and life for the world of human beings, (c) the rejection of the Logos and its work (also the incarnation) in the world of human beings, (d) the glorification of the Logos’ incarnation and the reward of the faithful believers.

170 An alternate reading of John 1:1-5 in its original context would be: 1 Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. In the beginning was the Logos/Word, and the Logos was with God, and God was the Logos. 2 οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. It was in the beginning with God 3 πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν. ὃ γέγονεν All is through it (the Logos) ‘becoming/existing,’ and without it (Logos) nothing exists of what it is to become. 4 ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων. The becoming (or what comes/happens in it) was life, and that life was the light of humankind. 5 καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness accepted it not. Author’s translation.

171 Schnackenburg, 254-257.

172 Brown, 4f.

formulation of Nicaea) that concretized Jesus Christ as the ultimate revelation of God's saving activity in history.¹⁷³

To reconstitute the understanding of the Logos in the conceptual context of the community of John, one can find that Jhn. 1:1a: 'Εν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος suggests several meanings.¹⁷⁴ For the Greeks, the Logos existing in the beginning refers to the pure spiritual substance that brought order to the world. While viewed by the Greek-speaking Jews as a miracle of creation in the Old Testament, the Logos was understood as a quasi-personification of Wisdom which functions as the ground of God's revelation in the history of the exodus journeys.¹⁷⁵ Reference to the Logos in the beginning as an ultimate reality of reason and human's capacity for rational thought that determines the invisible and the material world was popular amongst the Gentiles. For the Christians of the time, the statement: 'Εν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος points to the original proclamation of the kerygma. Thus, the very purpose of God for creation had been revealed in the fullness of time in a historical Deed.¹⁷⁶

From this brief survey, it is noted that the existence of the Logos in the beginning is accompanied by a number of conceptualizations. The communities of the evangelist's time undoubtedly understood the statement from their own religio-cultural backgrounds. Harmonizing the diversity of understandings, however, it can be assertively stated that the opening statement not only refers to the Logos that was in the beginning with God, and was Godself, but it points to the wisdom that qualitatively and dynamically engendered an orderly creation. In this light, the Logos is conceived not only as a divine concept but, most importantly, one with a role to play in the material order. The Logos creates, saves and restores all things through its creative and healing activity.¹⁷⁷

Hence, creation and salvation are syntactically moulded in the Logos principal understanding. The Logos in Jhn. 1:1, then, is referred to as with God and God's very self. The co-existence of the Logos with God in the beginning depicts the relational or communicative character of the divine that activates the process of life.¹⁷⁸ This idea is presented

173 Brown, 5.

174 See James L. Price, *Interpreting the New Testament* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), 538-547. Also, Michael Theobald, *Die Fleischwerdung des Logos* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung GmbH & Co., 1988), 296-317. Cf. Schnackenburg, 261 ff; Klappert, *ThBlNT*, 1433. Philo attempts to combine the Logos understandings not only as Wisdom but also as a material potent between the Creator and creation. It existed as a world-soul or an eternal image of the whole creation.

175 J.H. Bernhard, *The International Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, A.H. McNeile, ed. Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1962), cxxxviii-cxli. The divine voice (Gen. 1:3) has been widely understood by the Hebrews to depict God's action in creation. The action of God is identically assimilated to the divine Word (מִמְרָא – *memra*), which is sometimes used as of a Person. This means that the Word has personal qualities which are eternally related to the Creator-God (cf. Prov. 3:13 f, 4:5 f, 7:4. Ecc. 24:3).

176 Price, 53

177 The Logos is seen as a universal Healer (cf. Wisd. 16:12). While in eternity with God, it descends to earth, and while on earth, it can reach heaven (18:15 f).

178 Many commentators agree that the emphasis of the phrase *in the beginning* in the Fourth Gospel goes way beyond the beginning presented in Genesis. As such, 'Εν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος specifically refers to the preexistence of the Logos with God in eternity.

symbolically in John when Jesus frequently referred to him (sic) as the source of life, and is affirmed by the divine self-proclamation ἐγώ εἰμι (I am) sayings of Jesus.¹⁷⁹

The Logos is not distinctively part of creation; rather, it is an intimate attribute of God. Considered as the mediator (*die Schöpfungsmittlerschaft der Weisheit*) in and through which all things were created, as Jürgen Becker asserts, the Logos becomes the preexistent wisdom, the ‘first fruit’ and the ‘first-born’ that calls forth every ‘being’ (Col. 1:15 ff, Phil. 2:5-11, cf. Jhn. 15:5).¹⁸⁰ This indicates that everything in the world was created by and owes its very integrity to the Logos that existed with God before the world came into being. When viewed in an anthropological sense, following Klaus Berger, then Jesus has taken in God into himself while the Logos of God inspired him.¹⁸¹ This points to the reality of God in human wisdom, which Berger defines as the creating and healing presence of God in creation that was mediated in the work and preaching of Jesus, who shows the way to God.¹⁸²

6.3.1.2. Becoming as the Activity of the Logos

The function of the Logos is clearly presented in vs. 3: “All things came into being through it, and without it not one thing came into being.” The appearance of ἐγένετο (came into being) in this verse, according to Brown, indicates that we are in the sphere of creation, and the fact that the Word creates means that creation is an act of revelation.¹⁸³ The coming into being of all things through the Logos echoes God’s direct address to his (sic) nation in Isaiah 44:24 – “Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who by myself spread out the earth.”

Two leading ideas presented here correspond to each other. While alluding to the process of becoming or birthing, on the one hand, the idea echoes the integrity of life and inherency of being on the other hand. Again, the personified rendering of the Logos as δι’ αὐτοῦ – in/through him – together with the emphasis on πάντα (all things) suggests the process of becoming as indicated by the double usage of the verb ἐγένετο (came into being) to define the divine mediating activity.¹⁸⁴ The outcome of the process is referred to as the ὃ γέγονεν (what or that had become) and it alludes to the themes of light and life. The activity of the Logos therefore strikes at the production of πάντα – a broad and inclus-

179 Jesus identically used ordinary cosmological symbols such as bread of life (Jhn. 6:35,41,48); light of the world (8:12); door (10:9); the good shepherd (10:11); the resurrection and life (11:25); the way, truth, and life (14:6); and the true vine (15:5) to refer to himself.

180 J. Becker, 72.

181 Klaus Berger, *Im Anfang war Johannes: Datierung und Theologie des Vierten Evangeliums* (Stuttgart: Quell Verlag, 1997), 135. Author’s translation of: “Jesus hat Gott in sich getragen, weil der Logos Gottes seine Inspiration ist.”

182 Berger, 128 f, 135.

183 Brown, 25.

184 Cf. J.H. Bernard, cxlv. ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος is found particularly in vs. 6, but the extension to 7 and 8 indicates the function of the Baptist, which is to bear witness to the Logos, the light and life. The cosmos which is the consequence of becoming, including humankind (vs. 10 f), was unconscious of the continuous animating activity of this energy in the whole creation, even though it became revealed as an exhibition of the Divine Glory (vs. 14).

ive concept which reaches beyond the human world to the history of salvation and creation as a whole (cf. πάντα – Col. 1:16, and τα πάντα – Rom. 8:22).

The consistent use of the verb *evge,neto* not only recalls the theme of creation, but also bespeaks the emanating function of the Logos in permeating life.¹⁸⁵ Schnackenburg comments that, despite the diversity of speculations about the function of the Logos: ὁ γέγονεν not only resembles what has been produced by the godly Logos, but also indirectly validates and defends its universal role of creating all things in good order.¹⁸⁶ In short, one can see that the mediating role of the Logos is qualitatively accessible on account of what it has caused to come into being, the presence of the Logos in such being, and, simultaneously, the presence of the being in the Logos itself. The essential being of the Logos is contrasted to creation as a becoming, a re-producing process. This is a kind of ecological reading of the phrase which is linked to life, the central theme of the fourth Gospel itself.

6.3.1.3. Logos as Life and Light versus Darkness

The Prologue plainly states that the Logos is ζωή – life, and that life was the φῶς – light of humankind. Life and light here specifically belong to category of the eternal. The interpretation is based on the translation of ζωή, which is rendered as inner being, life eternal, or the life that was in and with God (1. Jhn. 1:2, cf. Jhn. 3:16, 5:40, & 10:10), apart from the identification of light with the Word (Wisdom) that brought forth a good creation in the Old Testament (Ps. 119, 130, Prov. 8:35). The independent presentation of life in the first part of the verse indicates the unitary character of the Logos in itself, whereas the complementary existence of life and light in the second part presupposes the enlightenment function of the Logos (humankind in particular – καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων). This may be based on John's emphasis on the divine's active presence in the life of believers and in defense against Gnostic speculations.

Although translations tend to place emphasis on eternal life, the theme is still debatable, especially when reference is made to life as life of the whole creation, in contrast to an individual human life.¹⁸⁷ While ζωή is used twice in a single verse, it is appropriate to interpret the former as linked with creation, and the latter with embodied life, or an animating being. This understanding alludes to the declaration of the economy of salvation¹⁸⁸ in and through the incarnation in vs. 14: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory ...” Again, as Berger asserts, the Logos becoming flesh is an embodiment of a Godly life in humanity that is liable to death, and is glorified as God.¹⁸⁹

185 R. Brown, 6. ἐγένετο was used to describe creation in the LXX of Genesis 1, and the emphasis on ‘apart from him’ or ‘not one thing’ ... without him stands for not only the causality but also the presence. Cf. Berger, 129 ff. Berger describes the *Prozeß Zeugnis* – witnessing process of the Logos as a synonym of human wisdom and the spirit (intellect) that develops towards a victorious and a deified end.

186 Schnackenburg, 214f.

187 See comments by Brown, 6f. Brown appears to be presenting two different possible interpretations of life in vs. 4a and 4b. In his view, “If the subject of line 4a is taken to be the whole of creation, then eternal life would be singularly inappropriate. But if we suggest a special aspect of creation is meant, i.e., creation in the Word, then eternal life is quite appropriate.”

188 Barrett, 151.

189 Berger, 135.

The double use of ζωή suggests a more ecologically-oriented meaning than an anthropocentric interpretation. This is indicated by referring to life in humankind, not in an individual-biological sense, but in a theo-bio-ecological way. All communities, though diverse in norms, values, and nature of adaptations, are touched by the incarnation of the Logos and bestowed with life. Although animated with life, all are liable to the experience of death and the resurrection of life. This means that even though the specificity which accompanies Christian convictions has placed limitations on the incarnation of God in humankind, rather than in the whole of the created cosmos, the implication of a shared life as a model of Christian living is actually vividly presupposed.

In this light, the evangelist has posited life as living for the other and for God as the ground of one's faith, in contrast to living for one's own self. This emphasis of ζωή is clear only when vs. 4 is read holistically.¹⁹⁰ A separatist reading of the verse in two parts rather than as a complementary interpretation would possibly lead to the specification of the second ζωή as the light of humankind. The movement from the first, which refers to creation at large, to the second leads to the differentiation of eternal life from embodied life, although each one affects and has effects on the other.

An inclusive reading suggests eternal life as intrinsically part of embodied life and vice-versa. When read in this way, the Logos which was God and was with God is considered as both the Source and Agent of life. While remaining the originator, God at the same time permeates life to all living beings, including humankind, animals, vegetation and the cosmos as a whole. The permeation of life through the unending essential energy of God is henceforth recognized by the self-propagating power of God (or the Spirit) in everything.¹⁹¹ This ecological aspect is distinct from a mechanical reading which features the understanding of life and light as referring to the speculative thinking of humankind only and its mediating function. Life and light are intimately connected to each other. While both are linked to the Logos, the emphasis is placed on the reciprocating relationship not only of the biological life but moreso the relation to the divine.¹⁹² The destiny of creation depends on the permeated co-existential life and light, organically manifested with intimate connection to the source, the Logos of life. This discussion has allowed us to consider the cosmos and humankind as part of creation in its totality and, at the same time, to conceive of life as being or eternity which has penetrated into history, a history which is encountered by darkness and death (vs. 5). The co-existence of light and darkness distinguishes between the positivity of the life that was/is in the Logos and the negativity of the world, the life-negating endeavours of the human world.

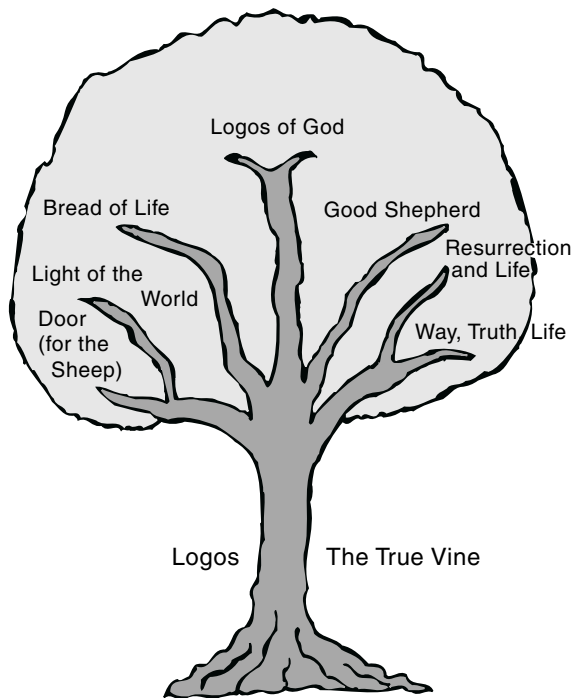
190 See H.G. Link, "Leben," *BNT*, Lother Coenen, ed. (Wuppertal: Theologischer Verlag, 1969), 837 ff. The author's argument is based on the double use of ζωή in vs. 4, in contrast to differentiations when adjectives such as λογικά ζωή (Menschen) and αλογα ζωή (Tiere) are employed. This indicates that ζωή (life) whether eternal or not is a shared life-giving vitality for all beings.

191 See H.G. Link, 838. Also Barrett, 158. Following Bultmann's idea on *life* as being enabled by an innate vital potent (κίνησις) that empowers one's own movement. "The light was the life, ... an essential energy of the Word." Berger, 135. "*Der Geist ist selbst Gesandter Gottes*" or, The Spirit of God is God's own envoy.

192 Becker, 73.

6.3.1.4. Logos – Ecological Implications

The exegetical study of the Prologue (Jhn. 1:1-5) unveils the ecological intent and content of the Gospel as a whole. Regarding the ecology of God, one can observe that the reality of the Creator-God can both be accessible and inaccessible. Reference to the beginning designates the Logos as belonging to the sphere of God ('was God'), the heavenly existence, and it simultaneously bespeaks the temporal existence of the Logos (was 'with God') as expressed in historical-experiential deeds. The Logos remains and reigns with God and, at the same time, it relates to the whole creation through mysterious and revealed deeds. A close observation of the chronological sequence of the ἐγώ εἰμι sayings in the Gospel, in relation with the incarnation motif of the Logos, reveals the ecological intention of the evangelist. This is affirmed not only by the orientation to life which is informed by creation-monism, but by the message wrapped in signs, miracles and symbols of life. This (ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος) portrays an ecological ethic and emphasis on life which can be illustrated as follows:



The *I am* sayings in St. John conclude with Jesus' identification with the vine tree. This signifies a deep ecological consciousness that underlies the Gospel. The use of cosmological symbols not only verifies the theo-christological interest of the evangelist, but consolidates the faith conviction that centres around the understanding of the Logos as both the revealer and the revealed life (as in miracles and signs).

It qualifies, in addition, the life-giving and healing function of the Logos in creation.

Everything that is affected by the life-giving energy of God becomes a living being, and simultaneously inherits some sort of life-giving and healing potentiality. This qualifies the life-giving potentials of other parts of the created cosmos, as is notable when Jesus used the materials available in his own time in the process of his healing ministry. For example, the healing of the blind man by using the soil (Jhn. 9:6f) signifies that the soil also plays an important function in the process of healing or re-energizing life. It means that the eternal life becomes accessible in the ordinary ecology of life, or “the incarnation (of the Logos) meets people (and all things) at the very centre of their existence,” as P.N. Anderson puts it.¹⁹³

The Logos of God, in other words, not only permeates life and light into everything, but it also enables and sustains the continuity of that life which has been violated of its own integrity. This is enabled by the appropriate healing activity of the Logos. In Christ, all things are held together, cohere and participate in the process of life-giving and receiving – τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν (Col. 1:17, cf. Rev. 1:17). Once this conception is understood from the viewpoint of ἀγάπη – gracious love, which is central to the evangelist’s presentation, then the Incarnated Logos of God becomes the essential and fundamental principle that creates and redeems all life.

When serious consideration of the whole Gospel of John is undertaken within the above framework, one observes that the anthropocentric emphasis on the incarnation capitalizes not so much on a human-personal incarnation, but on a fleshly, embodied or organic sense, which incorporates the nurturing, enabling and preserving functions. This is illustrated throughout the whole Gospel, and is presented and represented by John’s symbolic language. This being the case, anthropomorphisms that accompany many interpretations pale into insignificance, while an eco-biological interpretation becomes relevant. The bread, shepherd and door interdependently co-exist with light, resurrection, the way, truth and life. As a true vine, the Logos is depicted to be fulfilling the double function of sustenance and providence, while at the same time, it designates an affirmation of life that is rooted in one’s own sphere, abilities, integrity and identity. The whole ecological system of life, whether eternal or ordinary, is intrinsically woven together for the purpose of growth, communication, fruitfulness, productivity and sustainability, renewed from time to time by the self-creative and renewing vitality of God. This purpose of life, however, was contrary to the words and deeds of the world, the dark world of humankind in particular.

6.3.2. *Mystery and the Plan of God: Oikos Model – Eph. 1:9-14*

9. He has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, 10. as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. 11. In Christ, we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel

193 Paul N. Anderson, 34. Anderson explores R. Bultmann’s perspective on the *offense of incarnation*. Accordingly, “the paradox of the incarnation is that the glory of God is revealed in the humanity of the Son.”

and will, 12. so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. 13. In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; 14. this is the pledge of our inheritance towards redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

The passage is part of the doxological proclamation of the purpose of God to unite all things in Christ, as well as the assurance of benefits for faithful believers. Although the apostle's emphasis here is placed on the human benefits of redemption in Christ, the passage is a part of the apostle's intention to place human redemption within the framework of the whole creation.¹⁹⁴

Besides other important issues, the apostle addresses the Ephesian congregations calling for unity in faith. The conviction which provides a unity to the whole is that God has a predestined purpose working in history, and the fulfillment of its all embracing goal is expected to be fully revealed.¹⁹⁵ The purpose of God, which is the mystery of the divine will, however, had already been revealed in Christ. The tangibility of God's secret, which is wisdom and insight (1:8b), is in ordinary terms – in Christ Jesus – and, *in Christ*, the divided Christian communities and all things are restored in unity. The revealed mystery in Christ is the God-given gifts granted to humanity and all things in an opportune time (καιρός), and all must be recognized and appropriated for the common welfare of all components of the whole creation.

Since an interpretation from an ecological perspective is our focus, the emphasis on the human community and the creational community is discussed separately in this subsection, taking the house and household as the central religio-cultural expression and model of both realities.

6.3.2.1. House/Household as a Model for the Faith-Community

The house and 'household codes' for its organization were the framework in which the life and faith of the early Christian communities was centrally nurtured. As an institution, a household was the basic unit that served to provide the needs of family members. In the time of the apostle, the household consisted of many members, ranging from the lord (κύριος or δεσπότης), to immediate members including official administrators, labourers and slaves, all granted different obligations and responsibilities.

The cohesiveness of the units depended on the sense of loyalty to the household, which stemmed directly from common economic, social, psychological and religious factors. The household provided members with a sense of security and identity that the larger

194 ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐν αὐτῷ – All things are gathered up in Christ, things which are in heaven and things which are on earth (Eph. 1:10).

195 R. Schnackenburg, *Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament: Der Brief an die Epheser* (Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1982), 57 ff. See also Price, 469.

political and social structures were unable to give.¹⁹⁶ By anticipating the security and the life of the church in a hostile situation, the apostle adopted the terms and concepts associated with the house/household to define obligations and various relationships for members of the Christian community. Family houses were places for Christian gathering, fellowship, worship, exchange, and so forth.¹⁹⁷

For the early Christian communities, the arrangement of the inner spaces of houses was an important duty of family and community members. The organization of spaces in houses in order to provide a good living was a necessity. Following the synagogue-model evident in that time, the creation of spaces included the veneration of particular places for worship, for the sharing of bread and offering. Intimately linked to understanding of creation of spaces is the notion of receiving newly converted members and guests in the spirit of hospitality. It is noted here that the house and its order served both the ordinary and religious life of the community. Thus, the house/household became a spiritual model for fellowship, and at the same time, a central place of social, economic and spiritual exchanges. It was a “basic-cell”¹⁹⁸ of the Christian movement.

The Christian faith was not only nurtured in the household through the preaching of the Gospel and sharing of the bread, but it was also a prominent place of distribution and redistribution of material goods among communities. This means that the administrative codes related to the livelihood of the house and household were also adapted into the life of the Christian communities. The elders normally took the lead in coordinating roles with the help of all family members. Members who were endowed with gifts (charisma) were encouraged to freely employ such talents for the good of the whole community. Despite the diversity of gifts and roles, the central goal was the wellbeing of the whole community. In relation to the “basic-cell” image, the welfare of the whole body depended on the living function of the cell. Once the cell dysfunctions, the whole body is threatened with suffering consequential defects. In other words, when one member of the organic unity does not function accordingly, the whole system is liable to break down and collapse.

In Ephesians, the essential purpose of οἰκονομία – God’s plan¹⁹⁹ for the fullness of time and the revealed mystery of God in Christ²⁰⁰ – is portrayed in household imagery, both in its existential outlook and in metaphorical meanings. Just as in the organic struc-

196 P.H. Towner, “Households and Household Codes,” *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid, eds. (London: Inter Varsity Press, 1993), 417–419.

197 Werner Thiessen, *Christen in Ephesus: Die historische und theologische Situation in vorpaulinischer und paulinischer Zeit und zur Zeit der Apostelgeschichte und der Pastoralbriefe*, (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 1995), 263 ff, 283. Notably, the house-gatherings or household-congregations (*Hausgemeinde*) dealt not only with the spiritual life of the Christian fellowship but, evidently there was a strong sense of social solidarity in caring and the sharing of material wealth among the believers. The faith communities worked to plant and nurture the new faith and to re-produce its fruits in communal terms.

198 Meeks cited by Werner Thiessen, 263.

199 Schnackenburg, 58. Cf. T.K. Abbott, *The International Critical Commentary: Epistle to the Ephesians and to the Colossians* S.R. Driver, A.P. Plummer, and C.A. Briggs, eds. (New York: T & T Clark, 1964), 15 ff.

200 In contrast to an initiated secret which human intellect has to struggle with, the apostle bears witness to the μυστήριον – mystery of God’s wisdom and insights that are revealed in Christ: With all wisdom and insight he (God) has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his pleasure, that He set forth in Christ (1:9).

ture of a house, where every part contributes in upholding and strengthening the whole body, the Christian communities were invited to the same organizational unity and solidarity. Such an organizational model is informed by the mystery of God that was revealed in Christ.²⁰¹ The fundamental principles are an earnest calling to communicate the mystery of the great revealed secret of faith that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow-members of the body (Eph. 3:6), the exaltation of Christ to be the head of the body, the church, and the fullness that fills ‘all in all’ (Eph. 1:22). These are all attributed to the indwelling of the Spirit, the giver of a diversity of gifts that the church as a body needs for growth (Eph. 4:7 f).

The organic-unity model of the house/family and the restoration of the body of believers is the plan of God. The term οἰκονομία (plan of God) bespeaks the administration of the household, which resembles not only the natural codes for communal organization, but also includes spiritual and moral codes. It not only refers to the function each member performs, but also recalls how each individual and the whole community carry out their respective functions. The sole purpose is that, through the mutual sharing and appropriation of God-given gifts, the common good of all members is ensured.

Hence, there is a variety and diversity of gifts. Although differently bestowed in nature and potential, each must be respected in its own dynamic abilities, and each must functionally participate in and communicate the *unity* of the whole body, the communion of the Christian household. The reciprocity of giving and receiving, the distribution and redistribution of communal material wealth, or spiritual/moral richness, was the underlining basis upon which the corporateness of life of the body was to be recognized. Sustaining this unity depends on the οἰκονομία – the role, function and optional choices of the administrators, whether their ambitions are for one’s own self (which are considered to be short-term goals or self-benefits), or for the betterment of the whole community – a sustainable long-term goal.

Again, this purpose is based on faith in Christ Jesus, the revealer of the mystery of God’s plan. The function of Christ, and the way Christ economically and communally ushered in a restored unity for humanity and a new creation,²⁰² are profound examples of a living and lived faith. God in Christ becomes not only the foundation of unity, but is also recognized both as an administrator and a chief steward of the household of God. The functions Christ performed are depicted by Christ as the *cornerstone* on which the whole structure is conjoined, and to which all members are attached to find spiritual and social growth. The congregational members were called to live out such a reality. The letter to the Ephesians as a whole “sets the work of Christ in the context of God’s eternal purpose and expounds its cosmic consequences into which humanity is caught up.”²⁰³

201 This is also evident in the apostle’s doctrinal teachings on the Christ-event, seeing the cross in terms of reconciliation through redemption (Eph. 1:7, 2:13, 16, cf. Rom. 5:6-10, 1. Cor. 15:3, Col. 1:14), justification by grace (Eph. 2:8), and the establishment of peace between enemies through the claims of oneness in the Spirit of God (Eph. 2:18).

202 Reference is made here to the term ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι which is normally used in mathematics or economics, and is based on the practice of gathering things together and presenting them as a whole; this may be influenced by the Greek mathematical system of adding up numbers in one column and then putting the sum at the top.

203 J. Painter, “World Cosmology,” *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, 979 – 982. Eph. 2:19-23: “... but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and

As an organic entity, the orders and functions of the household are evidenced in the codes of faith and social responsibilities. The economic and political structures related to it were media through which the social and ethical implications of the Christian faith were channelled. As a model of unity and the common good of all, the house was organized not only as a place of gathering and fellowship, but as a place of both social nurturing and spiritual re-energizing of the newly planted faith amidst destructive forces.

6.3.2.2. Organic Model of Creation as a Household

The organic model of the household of God in Christ is also applied to creation as a whole. The totality of creation is expressed by the phrase: *All things in heaven and on earth are united in Christ*. This simply means that creation as a household finds its meaning and goal in Christ.²⁰⁴ All created members (Eph. 3:9, Col. 1:15-17, cf. Eph. 1:10) grow and progress toward their restoration. In Christ, all things in heaven and on earth are recapitulated. The universal plan of God in Christ in the beginning, therefore, although realized in the actuality of the present stage of life, is anticipated to be fulfilled and restored in its totality in the future. Recapitulation as the sole purpose of all things in heaven and on earth in the beginning, present, and the anticipated future is recognized as the reassertion of God's purpose for creation, which involves the overcoming of the evil powers in control of the present age, as well as the enmity manifest in human life (Eph. 2:14-22).²⁰⁵

The appropriation of the whole creation from a cosmic perspective, as a framework in which all things are like members of a household congregation, is exemplified here. The life of all things is energized by the inner working of Christ and the continual presence of the Spirit. In this sense, all things in creation are conceived as members of the household of God. Like the church which is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:21, cf. 1. Cor. 11:2), creation is also seen as God's habitation where the revealed mystery is made known, where the Spirit is present and experienced, and where all created beings are cared for and appropriately administered for the common good of all members of the living habitation. With an assurance that no one member is left out, the central inclusive purpose of restoration is fulfilled by God's redemptive act.

6.4. A Contextual Analytical Reflection: Retrospect and Prospect

To summarize the Biblical and Samoan traditions on creation, an attempt has been made to identify the similarities and contrasting characteristics in both narratives, especially the indigenous mythological traditions which were presented in the previous chapter. Pointing out the fundamental principles which shape creation accounts enables us to identify the legitimate ideologies behind the narratives which encourage and enforce the abuse of creation as our living home. Disclosing some of these distinctive aspects is advantageous, not only in identifying similar and contrasting reflexes in creation mythological traditions,

prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God."

204 Painter, 979-982.

205 Painter, 979-982.

but also as a foretaste of some of the ideas which are systematically explored in the following chapter, the theological exposition.

6.4.1. *Contrasts in Religio-Cultural Contexts*

First, it must be observed that the Samoan creation narratives contain some misconceptions due to deficiencies in language translations. For instance, the constant addressing of God as *Häuptling* (as recorded earlier) does not really take into account the sacredness, honor, respect and wisdom which are related to the indigenous concept of *alii paia* (sacred chiefs). Additionally, the word *va* which is constantly being translated as *kämpfen* (to fight, to go against each other in a violent sense), does not capture the meaning of the Samoan concept itself.²⁰⁶ *Va* simply means to differentiate, to distance oneself, to create a gap, or to separate, not basically or necessarily due to a fight but due to natural causes.

Second, indigenous understandings of creation are founded on experiences of sacredness, rootedness, and being adapted to particular localities and communities. The Biblical creation narratives are, to some extent, based on hostility, landlessness, homelessness, and rootlessness life-experiences. If people are adapted to particular habitations, then how could these experiences be conceived and conceptualized in the local context, where being at home or being rooted in concrete localities is firm in the lifeway?

Third, the Biblical creation faith is shaped, in many ways, by desert and wilderness experiences. In contrast, in the Samoan context there is a complete absence of desert and wilderness experiences, seasonal timing is not significant, the natural vegetation is alive, and the productive fertility of other life-forms is cyclically recognized. How can these contrasting experiences be harmonized?

Fourth, the negative ideas which are associated with the serpent, the curse of Adam to till the ground, and Eve's pains of giving birth, for instance, have some demonized overtones. Demonization means that the conception of the serpent as evil leads to a denial of its eco-biological potentialities. Additionally, Adam's work to till and cultivate the ground is looked on as a curse rather than a responsibility. A semi-agra-community like Samoa would consider its gardening work secondary or even degrading, based upon what the Genesis story states. This leads to a ranking of cash-earning jobs above domestic responsibilities, as understood today.

Fifth, in the Biblical tradition, the understanding of creation has been influenced by dualism in the sense of extreme separation. This is reflected not only in God's trans-relation to the created world, but also in the dual-existence of order and chaos, life and death, land and sea, and so forth. Specifically, while associating the land/humankind with good, the sea is identified with chaotic imagery. It is mostly comprehended in symbolic terms either as an enemy of humankind and the land, or as a threatening chaos, and therefore it must be viewed as an adversary. This is vividly expressed by the 'vision of the new heaven and the new earth,' where the 'sea' was (and will be) no more (Rev. 21:1). For Sa-

206 W. von Bülow, "Die Samoanische Schöpfungssage," 58-66. Cf. Dorothee Schneider-Christian, "Schöpfungs- und Urzeitmythen aus Samoa," *Anthropos* – ZVS 89, No. 1-3 (1994): 125-135. There is one occasion where the word, *vatau*, indicates 'to fight against,' when the Octopus and the underground Rocks fought against each other and led to the defeat of the Octopus.

moans and Oceanians, in contrast, the sea is inseparably part of the land and sky. If the Biblical vision is based on such adversarial tendencies, then how can the 'sea' (as chaos) and the oneness with and habitedness of the sea for Oceanians be reconciled in the shalom of God?

Sixth, in the New Testament, the Incarnation of the Logos in the person of Jesus contradicts the Samoan religio-cultural (ancestral) institution of the incarnation of Gods, spirits, or supernatural forces in almost every life-form. How then can we appropriate the anthropocentric radicality which accompanies the evangelist's witness?

Seventh, the institution of the household and its applied principles are strongly informed by the Romish hierarchical structures where "lordship" and "slave institutions" shaped the principal codes of life. These undeniably influenced the order of life of the early church communities. How can we manage to understand this in the light of *aiga* and the governance of chiefs? Moreso, how can we comprehend 'slavery' in a context where such an institution did and does not exist?

6.4.2. Ecological Reflexes of Samoan Creation Mythologies

There is undoubtedly a great influence of Judaeo-Christian traditions on the Samoan mythological constructions. However, the questions which have been asked can help us to point out some of the profound characteristics of the local religio-culture which are meaningful for our ecological concerns. These are some of the distinctive features:

1. In Samoan myths of creation, there was no activating spoken Word of *Tagaloalagi* in the beginning (*Machtwort des Tagaloalagi*) that precedes the existence of all living beings. Rather, it was the natural laws (*Naturgesetz*)²⁰⁷ that brought forth the order of everything. Natural laws continually shaped and formed the world as it was from the beginning. It is also notable, as we saw in one account, that the fishing up of the world by the Creator-God happened accidentally.

2. In the Genesis creation narrative (esp. Gen. 1:1-3), after the waters above the firmament and the waters below were separated, the earth appeared, and then *Elohim* began the work of separation in order to bring forth other forms of life. Samoan mythologies, on the other hand, indicate that *chaos itself worked out/arranged order* from within itself. Through natural acts, the rocks, the stones, the earth, grass, plants, and so forth came into existence. The act of becoming presupposed the differentiation of one from another and resulted in the formation of something. The rocks reacted contrastingly toward each other until the plants were brought forth, and the process continued until the last created being, who brought forth the family tree (*Stammbaum*).

3. In Samoan creation mythologies, there was less intervention of the gods than in the Judeo-Christian traditions. The plants came into existence through the *generatio aequivoca*. The marriages of plants gave birth to the forests, and then finally to people.²⁰⁸

4. There is no indication of creating an individual human (as 'Adam') in the Samoan creation narratives. Besides people being originated out of natural causes, they were born

207 Refer to pages 170-175. Cf. Bülow, 58-66. Schneider-Christian, 125-135.

208 Bülow, 58-66. Author's translation of: "Nirgends finden wir ein Eingreifen der Gottheit ... Durch Vermählung der Pflanzen unter einander entstehen Pflanzen und endlich der Mensch."

from two earthworms. These worms were born out of the rotted leaves of a certain plant. In this process, male and female came into being at the same time, not one before the other.

5. It is also clear that the existence of a Creator-God before creation is absent in the Samoan cosmology, as God was born out of an intimate contact or sexual relationship of the Heavenly void/emptiness and the Heavenly clouds. Without any personalistic characteristics, God was conceived as an activating potent that caused and brought everything into an orderly existence.²⁰⁹

6. In Samoan cosmology, there is a general orientation toward the communal cooperation of the family of the Creator-God/s in the creation of the world. Although a specific emphasis on the divine personification or incarnation of God in human terms is manifested, there is an absence of both humankind being created in the image of God, as well as a divine command of dominionship. Humankind is part of God's interdependent creation.

7. The incarnation of the Logos, which is conceived in personalistic terms, contradicts the indigenous religio-cultural traditions which see this as one of the manifestations, incarnations, or revelations of God in creation. Additionally, the separation of the human household from other components of creation in Ephesians is in contrast with the inclusive indigenous understanding of *aiga*.

From these observations, we can conclude that the ecology of life in which humankind claims to create history and culture cannot be separated from the so-called cyclical regulating systems of the natural world. Although different and diverse in their createdness, all participate with God in the process of the creating, producing and sustaining of life.

6.5. Summary

An exegetical exposition of the Biblical creation from an ecological perspective has been dealt with in our previous discussion. It is observed that the Biblical traditions in both Testaments reveal God's alternate options and concern for life, indeed, life in all its ecological dimensions. In the Priestly creation narrative, creation of differences by way of separation recalls not only the self-identity or integrity of the Creator-God as well as creation, but also implies that every other member in a good and orderly creation is intrinsically different from the other. Despite these differences, there is an interdependent unity of all things represented by God's gathering and ordering of each ecological life-system. The propagating of living communities depends on the mediating function of a divine principle. In this process, humankind is recognized not only as part of the living eco-system, but also as one of Creator-God's co-working agents of life.

Moreover, humankind, together with all created beings, shares in common the essential eco-system, namely, the earth, sea, and sky as the foundations upon which life is nurtured. The formation of Adam, his loneliness and desire for communion in the Jahwist's narrative, suggests that the production of life is diminished when lived independently. Life in

209 Bülow, 58-66. Bülow compares this with the Phoenician creative powers/energies by stating: "Bei den Phöniziern verbinden sich Feuer und die Wasserluft oder die Urnacht mit dem Geisterhauch und es entsteht die Urzelle," following Darwin.

the Garden of Eden depicts interconnectedness, interdependence, the adverse effects of seductive and diminishing activity, as well as God's option for life's continuity. In Eden, even though the human couple were seduced and became liable to death, God denied death and opted for life and its continuation by way of humankind's reproducing through birthing.

The New Testament presents the life-permeating work of God in and through the Logos, the idea of the divine incarnation (Logos in Jesus Christ), as well as the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in the whole creation. The incarnation of the Logos in human terms unearths the gift of the wisdom of God for humanity, as an associative member of the chain and the living process, providing insight for how humans can deal with choices in life. All of these processes are clearly illustrated in the house and household images which depict the significance of participatory engagement, mutual sharing and caring, co-management, and the life-encouraging spirit of all members. In the framework of creation as a whole, the welfare and livelihood of all members, though different in natural characteristics, depends on a harmonious coordination of their functions, as well as the recognition of their life-sustaining potentialities. This harmony has been verified and recapitulated in Christ, and is continually manifested in the work of the Holy Spirit that inhabits all things in heaven and on earth.

7. THEO-ECOLOGICAL CLAIMS OF *AIGA*: SYSTEMATIC EXPOSITION

7.1. A Contextual Ecological Understanding of the Triune God

Theo-ecological claims of *aiga* penetrates on the essential issues concerning life and death. The horizons of *aiga* extensively include the divine-cosmic spheres of life. And since it embraces God as the ever-living source of life, *aiga* is conceived here as an arena where “God-talk and cosmos-talk meet at life-talk.”¹ It is based on human reflections on the depth and meaning of the life of faith as well as its cultivation into a living reality. It revolves around the metaphysical trinity of God, the world and humanity, as well as authentic practises related to it. The metaphysical trinity and the related praxis present and represent a diverse and complex of essential qualities and characteristics which coexist, coherce, and cohabitate in “mutually enhancing relationships”² which are fused into a total wholeness.

A theo-ecological exposition of *aiga* takes into consideration ideas of prominent theologians who are committed to doing theology from ecological perspectives.³ Since the central focus is on the Samoan context, such theological ideas are integrated and woven with the indigenous experiences of Samoans, including the author, drawing mostly on local concepts and expressions, in an attempt to expose them theologically in order to bring the Gospel home. It is our hope that comprehending *aiga* (as in this way) may be a way of “embracing the real ecumenical dimension of faith in response to God’s compassionate love for the whole creation and all endangered life-forms.”⁴ It is our further hope that this would “empower us to take responsibility for our place in creation as neither superior nor inferior to the plants and animals and stars who are in fact our brothers, sisters and cousins,”⁵ and as members of the cosmic-biotic community. While exploring the household of faith from the local perspective, an openness to the household of God, the household of life (*oikumene*) is affirmed.

Following the biblical eco-thematic exegetical exercise as the fundamental basis of our

- 1 Kosuke Koyama, “Cosmology and Justice in Ecumenical Perspective,” *Theology for the Earth Community: A Field Guide* Dieter T. Hessel, ed., (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 103-110.
- 2 Cf. Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*. (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), 53.
- 3 To mention a few theo-ecological articulations of theologians for example, see: Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); “Ökologie,” *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*. Band XXV., (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995); 36-46; *Gott im Projekt der modernen Welt*. (München: Chr. Kaiser Gütersloher Verlag, 1997). etc. Steven Bouma-Prediger, *The Greening of Theology: The Ecological Models of Rosemary Radford Ruether, Joseph Sittler, and Jürgen Moltmann*. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995). Rosemary Reuther Radford, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983); *Gaia and God: Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992). Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*. (London: SCM Press, 1993). etc. Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996). etc. Leonardo Boff, *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995). Ideas of Thomas Berry, John Cobb, Mathew Fox, and others are also considered. See also the survey of ecotheological thinkings by: Paul Collins, *God’s Earth: Religion as if Matter really Mattered*. (Goldenbridge: Gill & Macmillan, 1995). esp. Chapter 4.
- 4 Martin Robra, “Theology of Life – Justice, Peace, Creation: An Ecumenical Study,” *Holding Together Theology and Life. The Ecumenical Review*. Vol. 48 Number 1, (January, 1996): 28-37.
- 5 McFague, 136-150.

theologizing, we attempt here to rethink and reappropriate our orientations toward God, the place of humankind in God's creation, as well as authentic means and practises which are essentially relevant for a sustainable and healthy community of creation. As a way of thinking afresh a living reality that is accountable to God and, simultaneously, a reorientation of our human relationships to the sanctity and the integrity of the whole creation, this section is divided into three subsections which feature claims of our ecological thinking concerning the Triune God, Christology, and Pneumatology as diverse yet interrelated and interconnected parts of the reality of the divine *aiga*.

7.1.1. *Aiga o Atua ma le Atua o Aiga – Household of God and God of the Household*

Christian theological formulations have presented and continue to present God in a variety of distorted views.⁶ These distorted views of God are perpetually being informed by the ills of merchantilism, militarism, commercialism, neo-colonialism, and international competitiveness, as has been exposed earlier. In some of these developments, conceptions of God and God's relation to creation have been heavily criticized, suggesting that, since God has been conceived in terms of transcendence, otherness, dominantly masculine power, and the like, this orientation has shaped the whole idea that God is alienating and dehumanizing.⁷ Such views of God have, in turn, contributed to human manipulative control over creation as God's co-creators. This has led further to the denial of God's immanence or presence in the world "by constructing a deism that pictures a far off God, who, occasionally in a divine rescue mission for human beings – the divine image-bearers, breaks through miraculously to execute it."⁸

A remodification of our understandings of the triune God as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of the whole creation leads us to view God as *Aiga o Atua ma le Atua o Aiga*. *Atua* is yet a problem for Samoans as it has since long been shaped by Euro-American theological and philosophical discourses which emphasize the human-like divine attributes. In

- 6 Rosemary Radford Ruether, for example, calls for a rethinking of 'God by moving beyond God the Father'. Being criticized as a force which informs the *double domination* of both women and nature and intensified by the *mechanic and triumphalist images of God*, Ruether reappropriates the Christian theological teachings by posing a God/ess-oriented thinking. As such God is both the "Primal Matrix – the ground of all being and liberator" of all creation. In this view, God is conceived of as *neither stifling immanence nor rootless transcendence*. Jürgen Moltmann argues against the main streams in which theologies of the past century had been developed, calls for a *reappropriation of doctrine of God that promoted human sensitivities of God's immanent presence in the world*. Viewing the centrality of salvation as a means of promoting the transcendental, remote, and distinct divine God to be over and above creation, he sees that the world is mostly realized as being detached from the divine rule and is mostly left to the destructive control of humankind. Sallie McFague challenges the *kingly model of God* and legitimize theological presuppositions which supports *anthropocentrism and androcentrism that promote both human passivity and social models of domination and submission*. While focusing on God-human relationship, a sense of respect and consciousness of the visibility of nature has always been ignored. McFague then suggests a decentralization of the divine model of God and proposes a bio-cosmocentric view of God.
- 7 Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*. (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1997), 15 f. Cf. Gordon D. Kaufman, *Theology for a Nuclear Age*. (New York: Westminster Press, 1985), 31-40.
- 8 Loren Wilkinson, "The Uneasy Conscience of the Human Race: Rediscovering Creation in the 'Environmental' Movement," *God and Culture*. D.A. Carson & John D. Woodbridge, eds., (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 301-320. Compare also, Larry L. Rasmussen, "Die Rückkehr zur Kosmologie," *Ökumenische Rundschau*. 48. Jahrgang, Heft 1. (January, 1999), 3-17.

contrast, however, *Atua* in the Samoan language is recognized to have neither gender nor status. The divine concept in the religio-cultural understanding is not only neutral, but can be of any Thing or any Supernatural potent that permeates and empowers the process of life.⁹ God is conceived of both as Being and/or Thing, and can sometimes manifest in personal figures. The multiplicity and diversity of the divine attributes forms a oneness and unity, or a divine monism: *Aiga o Atua* (Family of Gods – Godhead). This understanding of God became conditioned and absolutized when *Atua* was given a singular personal and emotional statuses.

In a brief retrospective on the missionary theological conquest, the indigenous understanding of *Atua* as a transcendent-immanent Creator God has been altered by the monotheism of Christianity. This emphasis on monotheism embraces the supremacy of an individual personal God who reigns in heaven. This is clearly presented by the way the divine name is spelled out.¹⁰ Monotheism has often emphasized privatization, separation, and the belittlement of the divine concept in an extremely individualistic, personal and destructive sense. It has stripped the theological understanding of God of its communal, inter-relational and inter-dependent nature. In doing so, God becomes the “God-of-the-gaps”¹¹ who invents creation and waits patiently to intervene when it is necessary. This God leaves the earth to the control of the lesser gods, namely, the human beings.

The takeover of such an individualistic conception of the divine has shaped an understanding of God who is lacked in relationships, both in Godself as well as associations to the whole creation. It has confined the relationship of the individual to God in terms of I-Thou, without the recognition of other social relationships. This internalization of I-Thou relationships negates the social nature of communal living, which by religio-cultural implications becomes a private, internal enterprise. It denies the material world and separates the spiritual life from every other social institutions. God is determined only by human emotional terms such as love, anger, and so forth. This radical elevation and removal of God from the world, bounded to the confines of human emotional expressions, is a radical violation of our confession of the triune God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of all life. This “semitic notion of God” has alienated the divine from the cosmic process of life.¹² It has left the world independent of God to work according to its own

9 R.W. Williamson, *Religion and Social Organisation in Central Polynesia*, 4.

10 John Bradshaw, “Some New Testament Key Words in Samoan,” *The Bible Translator*. Vol. XVIII, (London: United Bible Society, 1967), 75-81. Bradshaw is a former LMS missionary and principle of Malua Theological College. Cf. Steve Bruce citing Peter Berger, *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 8 ff. Chronologically, the radical transcendent God of Judaism alienates the world, was remythologized cosmologically by Christianity. And a reversed trend was evident, however, “as the Protestant Reformation demythologized the world, eliminated the ritual and sacramental manipulation of God, and restored the process of ethical rationalization.

11 McFague, 138. Cf. Sally Noland MacNichol, “Reclaiming, Revisioning, Recreating in Theo-Ecological Discourse,” *Theology for Earth Community*, 67-76,

12 Paul Collins, *God’s Earth: Religion as if Matter Really Mattered*. (Goldenbridge: Gill & Macmillan, 1995), 133. A concept coined by Alfred North Whitehead, pioneer of Process theological thinkings. Cf. George E. Tinker, “An American Indian Theological Response to Ecojustice,” *Defending Mother Earth: Native American Perspectives on Environmental Justice*. Jace Weaver, ed., (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), 153-176.

structure, logic, and order. God only created the world at the beginning and wait until the end to act.¹³

However, viewing God and Creation in the context of the household of God and God of the household harmonizes the Being and the Personhood of God. This way of conceiving the divine features the transcendent-immanent of the triune God in Creation and Creation in God. And while it embraces the unity and mutuality of the triune God as Creator on the one hand, it also presupposes, on the other hand, the distinctive and dynamic function of the divine. Understanding the triune God in this way makes possible the conviction that the entire cosmos is a habitation of the Godhead, and the whole habitation is where God cohabitates (cf.: Ps. 24:1 & 2). In this respect, we conceive *aiga* as a space and place where we dynamically experience the sustaining and redemptive work of the triune God. Creation is simply the home of God.¹⁴ In order not to sidetrack our attention, we shall proceed to discuss the concept from the framework of trinitarian understandings.

7.1.2. *Aiga o Atua ma le Atua o Aiga in Trinitarian Expressions*

To avoid the catechical repetitions of theological articulations on the Trinity,¹⁵ an attempt to articulate *Aiga o Atua ma le Atua o Aiga* as an ecological model of the triune God will be carried out. It is important to note that, in ancestral religio-cultural traditions where polytheism dominated, a mathematical expression given to address the divine and the divine's attributes was not an emphasis. Expressions such as the triune God, or God in three persons were more understood to depict the multiplicity of divine attributes in communal fellowship. Phrases such as: Community of God in Communion; or, One in Many and Many in One; acknowledge that there is oneness (*Einheit*) and a diversity (*Vielfalt*) in the Trinity.¹⁶ The triune God is conceived as the One who created and indwells creation in communal and in inter-relational terms. God in three persons involves not only an interplay of the divine communal fellowship but also features a creative and relational nature both in inward and outward participatory interplay of movements and actions.

An affirmation of the Trinity of God as Father (sic), Son, and Holy Spirit on its terms and in its own integrity, is, at the same time, an acknowledgement of the oneness and communal nature of the Godhead. The triune God is a community in partnership. Though diverse in nature, the Trinity co-exists, co-eternal, united, and infinite. The co-existential partnership and the subordination of personal qualities of the Trinity in an unconditional-fellowship is maintained.¹⁷ It is in this divine fellowship that the genesis and the existence

13 Bruce, 9 f.

14 See Steven Bouma-Prediger, "Creation as the Home of Gopd: The Doctrine of Creation in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann," *Calvin Theological Journal*. Vol. 32, No. 1, (April 1997): 72-103.

15 See, Horst Georg Pöhlmann, *Abriß der Dogmatik*. (München: Gütersloher Verlaghaus, 1973), 85-88. Also, J.P. Mackey, "Trinity, Doctrine of," *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*. Alan Robinson & John Bowden., eds., (New York: SCM Press, 1991), 581-589.

16 Cf. Peter F. Schmidt, *Im Anfang ist Gemeinschaft*. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1998), 53 f.

17 This is in contrast to the formulation of the Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit of the early church. In this formulation, The Father is coequal with the Son and the Holy Spirit, remaining in an equilibrium of a personal sequence. Here, we follow the Trinity in terms of communion and co-eternal, but the three persons are distinct and different from one another. Simply, the Son is not equal to the Father.

of the whole universe is being created. As God's house and household, therefore, creation which is made up of living beings, matter, energy, bodies, and forces, exists in permanent interactive relations to one another and to the Godhead. This interplay leads to an awareness that the diversity of forms of the cosmos which had been created into complexities of relations "emanates from this divine relational interplay and is made in the image and likeness of the Trinity."¹⁸

Emphasizing the trinitarian oneness calls us to conceive of the triune God as a community in causative and functional characterizations.¹⁹ While emphasizing the actions of God toward creation, thus highlighting the transcendent nature of the triune God, the fact that God's actions are not separated from creation must not be overlooked. It is in the community of creation that we recognize Creator God as a fellowship or "a unique community of the indwelling God,"²⁰ who created and continues to create and is, at the same time, at risk in participating and getting involved in creation. Creator God acts in and through the incredibly complex physical and historical-cultural evolutionary process and remains the agent, the self, whose intension are expressed in the universe.²¹

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, especially in the New Testament, creation as once accomplished remains as a continuous divine activity. Creator God created, and is constantly sustaining, preserving, redeeming, and perfecting creation, in and through the activity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The *original cause* is identically related to the *creative cause*, the Son, who is historical and revelational, and who likewise co-relates and co-partners with the *perfecting cause*, the Holy Spirit. Moltmann, for one, suggests that we should view God, not only in abstract terms but, in the historical reality of God's revelation.

Further, the triune God has conditioned Godself in creation which is an act of a self humiliation and love for the whole of creation. From there, the history of God is socially oriented and understood from the viewpoint of relationships, communal interactions, and fellowship.²² The original trinity in relation to creation, as Moltmann suggests, is orderly arranged as *creatio originalis*, *creatio continua*, and *creatio nova*.²³ *Creatio originalis*

18 Boff, 19. See also Williamson, 38. It is stated here that, God-*Tagaloa*, the originator of humankind, was the child of Cloudless Heavens and Spread-out Heavens, the previous ancestry begin with the High Rocks and the Earth Rocks, and their child, the earth, this being followed by a number of male and female ancestors whose names were those of phenomena of nature."

19 Gunton, 196. Gunton, states that: "If all divine actions are actions of the one God, so that the actions of the Trinity towards the world are undivided in an absolute sense, the persons are irrelevant for thought, and a kind of monism results."

20 Moltmann, *The Coming God: Christian Eschatology*, 304.

21 Cf. P. Collins, 146. See also Colin E. Gunton, "Relation and Relativity: The Trinity and the Created World," *Trinitarian Theology Today*. Christoph Schwöbel, ed., (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1995), 92-112. T.F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement*. (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1994), 115-143., *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons*. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 168-208.

22 Discussion with Moltmann, Tübingen, (Sept 15, 1998). The author translates here what Moltmann refers to as a social trinitarian teaching (*Sozialtrinitätslehre*).

23 Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 55, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 286-287. Distinguishing between this trinity, he suggests that the original trinity remains fundamentally as a departing point of the sending trinity (*Sendungstrinität*), which is the sending of the Son of God in the world, the glorified trinity (*Verherrlichungstrinität*), which is eucharistic by nature in the cycle of life, as well as the eschatological trinity (*Eschatologische Trinität*) that emphasizes the doxological aspect of life which is sustained and maintained by the Spirit. See also, Bouma-Pre-

refers to the freedom of God to create without any preconditions. In this sense, the world and all living things therein are viewed in terms of their being contingent, in the historical existence – *creatio continua*, and with an expectation of perfection at the end-time – *creatio nova*.

All of these creative processes are mediated in the relationship of the Father (sic) to the Son and to the Holy Spirit who maintains and functions in and through unity and distinctive coexistence in fellowship. Moreso, thinking in such a way embraces not only the presence of the divine communal fellowship in creation, but also acknowledges that “everything has its space, and every living thing has its space”²⁴ in the world and in the triune God. In this trinitarian thinking, creation, redemption, and the fulfilment of all of God’s promises depends on God’s own activities and in God’s own initiative.

What attracts our interest in Moltmann’s formulation, however, is his ecological paradigm where he affirms God’s presence in the world as a vital power that creates, sustains, and will continue to redeem the whole creation. The focus is on the interactive and communal aspect of the Trinity as the authentic source of all ecological systems of life. This trinitarian oneness and multiplicity is the mystery of the triune God. The one and multiple mystery of the triune God is revealed and disclosed in the reality of creation’s unity and diversity.²⁵ Seeing the whole creation as an output of the triune God, the universe is conceived as a diversity of beings in contingent, relational, and enepgetic union. The inhabited world is, indeed, a complex and a diverse living reality, yet at the same time one united and interrelated, as it is a reality modelled after the Trinity. It is a place in which “God invades every being, enters into every relationships, erupts into every ecosystem. But God especially sacramentalizes the life of every human individual because we find intelligence, will, and sensibility as distinct concretization of our one humanity, whole and entire.”²⁶

As a principle Creator God, *Tagaloalagi* in Samoan mythological traditions is conceptualized as Godhead. The unity and mutuality of existence of Beings forms the Godhead as Creator and Maker of all life. The divine’s active and dynamic presence in creation as *aiga*, features Creator God not only as an inseparable member of the household, but also as the One in and upon which every individual life is founded. The Trinitarian articulation of God (see Ch. 5 pg/149 ff) can be challenged on the basis of its anthropocentric rejecitiveness. It has decentred humankind not only from possessing the image of God, but also one’s role of dominionship.

The formulation, however, is sustained on the basis of its theocentric-ecological claims.

diger, *The Greening of Theology*, 110. Moltmann’s trinitarian fomulation is biblically based on the presentation of the evangelist John (Jhn. 14:9-11), where the relationship of the Father to the Son and to the Holy Spirit is maintained and functioned in and through unity and distinctive coexistence in fellowship.

24 Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, 299.

25 Leonard Boff, *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm*, 48 ff. See also, Edward Farley, *Divine Empathy: A Theology of God*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 235-251. Boff suggests the universe to be created after the model of the triune God. Though diverse in nature, unity is realized to be rooted in a community, which is the Trinity. He also singles out the importance of human beings not only due to ones sacramental nature bestowed by the divine, but also of the intellectual sensitivity to live in responding to God and humanity.

26 Boff, 48 f. Cf. Farley, 216-234. To Boff: “The Trinity is three distinct Person, but the links of life, the loving correlations, and the eternal interplay of relations among them is such that the three exist, subsist, in one. They are the one God-communion, the one God-relation, the one God-love.”

It plainly embraces God at the centre of all life. With the realization of God at the centre, humankind is then being recognized only as one of the agents in God's creation. Humankind is different, but is in no way distinct and separate from other forms of life. She/he is not a special agent of life, but a constituent part of a genetic coding that is bonded and rooted in the process of organic life.²⁷ If believed to be made in the image of God and to exercise dominion over other parts of God's creation, then such features are considered not as indicators of human superiority, but rather, the manifestation of the divine blessings which are only recognized on a shared-basis. The diversity of living members of the earthly habitation are related and rooted in triune God, the well-spring of life. They co-exist and co-habitate in God, with God, and for God. Being rooted in the divine organic union, all things in creation find their essential being and identity in terms of communion in relationships. The triune God and God's relationship and communion to the world are seen not only as a vital, sensitive, responsive and a living force, but also a stronghold in and through which life is redeemed and sustained by the interdependency of divine providences.²⁸

Although the latter aspect (absence of human agency) presented by the indigenous understanding introduces what might be called a theological tension, a complementarity is evident as both traditions embrace creation as God's fundamental gift of life. *Aiga o Atua ma le Atua o Aiga* presupposes God and creation as a communal unity. Each and every being is given with a space and place to inhabit, a time span in and around which to move and evolve, and eternity as an end with which one has some kind of link and association. In communal terms, we are obliged to speak of the oneness, unity, and corporateness of the Godhead. In relational terms, we recognize the revelatory dimension of the divine as explicated by the diversity and contrasting characteristics of creation.

7.1.2.1. The Communal Nature of Aiga o Atua

The traditions of Samoa unearth a belief in many Gods and many Lords.²⁹ God has been conceived as any number of Greater Beings who are related to a single organ, *Aiga sa Tagaloalagi*.³⁰ Gods called themselves in an assembly, planed and decided what ought to be done, then sanctify it by a ritual ceremony. In some presentations, the Gods married to heavenly beings and gave birth to new generation of Gods, who became members of *Aiga Sa Tagaloa* (sacred family of God-*Tagaloa*). "*Tagaloa produces other Tagaloa*."³¹ If God produces other Gods, then the totality of generations as consequences of the divine's

27 P. Collins, 158. Cf. Paul J. Wadell, "Taming an Unruly Family Member: Ethics and the Ecological Crisis," *The Ecological Challenge*, 62-65.

28 This is based on the conviction that the Samoan world was created after the Model of God as *Aiga Sa Tagaloalagi*. Following the fundamental principles of the organic models of the earth as a living organism, the author applies these to develop an understanding of God in terms of *Aiga* (relational and communal ties). According to this model, the world is a living organism, with everything therein existing in a complex of relationships, being permeated by the beneficent life, and interdependently exist to support and sustain each other.

29 John Bradshaw, "Some New Testament Key Words in Samoan," 75-81.

30 Other writings use phrases for God such as *Aiga Sa-Tagaloa* or *Ao a Tagaloa*. These phrases refer to the family of God or a collective address of the divine Godhead, the great Gods.

31 Williamson, 39.

birthing process are all related members of the household of God. These members cooperated to propagate and maintain the welfare of the household, as well as keeping the activities and progress of *aiga* in order.³²

Creation is by its very identity and nature, a community in communion. There is no deliberate individuation in creation; rather, the individual finds its meaning and the totality of one's identity in the other. In mythologies of Samoa, the Creator God made the heavens and the earth either by rolling down two stones from heaven, or by dragging up two stones from the bottom of the sea with a fish hook. Creator God equally created two human beings, a son and a daughter. The daughter gave birth to a child, the grandchild of God. As the grandchild attempted to violate the order of generations, relationships to other members of the *aiga* were hindered, and communication broke down. These were recovered when the grandchild escaped to the earth and made it a home, *Sa-Moa* or sacred to the community of *Moa*. The homeland is a reminder to keep and preserve the sacred relationships of a divine lineage, and to restore them to the communion of the divine heritage.

The myth of creation shows no indication of the creation of singles or individuals; rather, it discloses that everything exists in pairs. Creation consists of a diversity of co-existing members which are related in union to the Godhead, and to each respective members. Giving birth to generations of beings and the demand of observing relationships through sacred attitudes indicates the will of the divine to maintain the harmony and livelihood amongst members of the living household, *aiga*. The sacredness of relationships is extended to the earthly habitat, the home of generations. The emphasis on place and space (geography) is central to the creation of God.

God is, by nature, a community in communion. This does not mean a denial of the distinctive and private dimensions of the divine communion. In the framework of *aiga*, for example, besides the life of the habitation of God, there is also a distinctive aspect, where the God of each individual member of the family is venerated as private deities. At the same time, a communal God, the God of the household (including the district and national Gods) was venerated and worshipped. Being conscious of the divine, the individuals paid great respect to the private gods, which were believed to inherit parts of the created world, and simultaneously offered worship to the family God. This belief system suggests that an individual member can find communion even in the private spheres.

The mention of a creative original principle existing by/on/in Godself has overtones of a self-contained principle, existing in its own self, maintaining its own divinity, and its own freedom. God is communion in Godself. This means that the principle qualities of the divine in terms of ultimacy, absoluteness, and freedom to act, and react, remain unknown to creation. The actions of God are known in God's own terms. One may suggest that this is hidden-being-in-itself, and its immanence in the depths of its own being. Hence, the communal realm of God does not mingle with the realm of others.

Despite this, the divine assembly and sexual imagery of the creative principle suggests the religio-cultural or social nature of God. The engagement of the creative principle in sexual relationship bespeaks the inner desires to be in intimate relations, communion, and

32 Williamson, 39.

fellowship. Engagements in such an intimate process marks the beginning of a creative and an active process, the reproduction of generations of living members of the household. The qualities of the creative principle *Tagaloalagi* recalls the dynamic aspect of infinite life, as well as the potencies of God's creative, maintaining, and sustaining activities of the divine imparted or injected into the succeeding agents or potencies. Again, this is how the whole family of God was built, maintained, and continued to be sustained. Thus, while respecting individual potentialities of the Godhead to relate and communicate in co-existential ways, the strong sense of mutuality in relationships simultaneously coordinates and participates in establishing the structures, rhythms and orders of creation.

Aiga o Atua ma le Atua o Aiga then describes ideas of the divine who communes and communicates, who is intimately involved in the affairs and the essential life of *aiga* as the God of life.³³ Forming a relational unity, God simultaneously relates, communicates, sanctifies, and participates in the welfares of creation. The cooperateness and the unity in relationships form the potentials upon which God enables and vitalizes the creation of each and every member.

The communal dimension (as expressed in the biblical tradition in the previous chapter) is one of the ways in which we may dialectically conceive the reality and the rationality of the communal character of God. God in communion communicates through the creative Word, and even God's resolve to make the human being in the divine image indicates the communicative aspects of the divine. In the New Testament, the Logos communicates to the World the hidden mystery of Creator God who was in the beginning of creation. Additionally, it has been disclosed that the production and reproduction of life is mediated by God's nurturing power in Jesus Christ, the Logos or Wisdom of God, in and through Christ's very life. This is experienced in the communion of the congregational members of the household, as well as the capitulation of all things (*ta panta*) of the created world in Jesus Christ, where everything finds meaning in life. The creation of every living being, therefore, is rooted in the communion and the communication of the Godhead.

The communal nature of the triune God is experienced in the community and unity of all members of creation. This bespeaks an identification of God with every member of creation and proclaims creation as a heritage of God to which we inextricably belong and in which we dwell. This idea is acknowledged by the Psalmist (Ps. 90:1 f), who sees God as a dwelling place, in and which all generations takes refuge for life and survival. Here, all the categories of creation are summed up in a Trinitarian form of space, place, and time. And this is where and when we find God and creation as the ground upon which we live and move and have our beings (Acts 17:28). In the expressions of creation as a household, God is our common ancestral root and the heritage of our survival. In this sense, the communion of the divine is both eternal and ordinary. It is eternal as God exists with one another, for one another, and in one another; and at the same time, ordinary and social, in so far as God and creation coexist and become a space and place where the divine indwells, and where the interplay of divine activities is unfolded.

33 Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 3. See also, *The Source of Life*, 24. "Life is communication in communion. And, ... isolation and lack of relationship means death for all living things."

7.1.2.2. *O Sootaga o Atua o Aiga* – God and Household in Relational Terms

In every form of relationships, there is an individual and collective, personal and communal, private and public, inward and outward, static and dynamic axis pole. There is also a freedom of choice, yet, on the other hand, there are limitations and conditions. Any form of relationship is by nature communal, reciprocal, dynamic and conflictual. Although we tend to reject the conflictual aspect in communal relationships, we must not totally overlook its positive connotation, as a “community in contradictions is often stronger than community in agreement.”³⁴

A life of a community in communion depends on relationships and how relationships are communicated.³⁵ This is one of the constitutive elements that binds the whole community of creation together. Everyone and everything has some kind of connection and influence on one another, either biologically, socially, religiously, and so forth. The insistence, for example, on chiefly expressions such as: *o gafa e tau i lagi* (a genealogy that is connected to heaven / or a divine household heritage), embraces the interconnectedness and the interdependence of communal relationships of the divine and the household.

An ecological understanding of the triune God embraces communal relationships in an interdependent manner. Like an individual who is a member of a community of interdependent parts, the triune God is seen as Creator and an intimate part of the community of creation. God creates by relating and participating. God relates, communicates, and sanctifies the welfare of the household. This dimension is reflected in the mythological tradition explained earlier. The very presence of God is experienced in and through mediating activities, where the knowledge and custom regarding how every member functions and responsively lives in relations to God and to every other members of the household are evidenced. For the human being in particular, he/she experiences God in his/her religious-cultural relationships through constant and effective use of the gift of wisdom or the charisma.³⁶ In other words, it is the charisma that validates and qualifies our responsive role in all kinds of relationship. Once charisma is seen as God’s participatory knowledge in creation,³⁷ then it works towards a well appropriated re-production of life rather than the maximization of destructions and death.

The coexistence God in communion and in relational terms is what binds together the divine as a family consisting of intimate member. God is seen here as a diverse of divine attributes that interrelate in the mediation of the very life of the household. It is the unity that actualizes and vitalizes living relations. In other words, relations and communications draw the divine into a unity of the Godhead, and, simultaneously relate and communicate outwardly to the whole creation. In these terms, God is conceived as a family in God’s self by way of relating to each other, but also, through relational ties to creation, the world with all its parts becomes inseparable members of a single whole. The emphasis on God’s privacy, independency, separateness, and the like, however, shall not be pushed to

34 Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 2.

35 Relationships of the household inclusively counts on aspects such as *faia* (to relate, to have rights), *gafa* (genealogy/heir), *sootaga* (connection), *pito* (end, part of, portion) etc.

36 See, for example, Günther Kehler, “Max Weber (1864-1920),” *Klassiker der Religionswissenschaft: Von Friedrich Schleiermacher bis Mircea Eliade*. Axel Michaels, ed., (München: C.H. Beck, 1997), 121-132.

37 Compare, Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 2.

the extreme, otherwise, God is being manipulated and violated of God's own identity and integrity. Rather, both the individual and diverse divine attributes are respected and recognized in a collective harmony. The one must be recognized in the many and the many in the one.

God who reigns independently in heaven and separates Godself from the earth, the spheres of creation as a household, is simply an isolated, unknowable, and a lifeless Deity.³⁸ To continue to conceive of a God who lacks in relationships leads to deliberate rejections of God's own rights, interests, and direct relations to the whole creation. Moreso, its central consequence is a view of a chaotic, lifeless, and a godless world: "*Die gottlose Welt und ein weltloser Gott*" (a godless World and a worldless God).³⁹

Our conceptions of the triune God in the framework of *Aiga o Atua ma le Atua o Aiga* provide us with an understanding of God as a God who transcends and simultaneously is immanent in the whole creation. However, we must distinguish here between God's transcendence in terms of God's external actions over against evil powers, and God's actual dealing and victory over evil in the world. In this sense, God takes the risk, and is at risk in the world. An immanent-transcendent understanding of God respects both the individual and the collective divine integrity. While it recognizes God in God's own self, will, and integrity, it also recognizes God in a collective, provocative and activating way. As such, the resolve of God to unite as a household is a resolve for relational unity. It is a unity which reveals a will and desire for a living community. And while recognizing the whole creation as an output of mutual participation in life-giving and animating relationships, both in inward and outward movements, the communal welfare and life of everything is sustainably guaranteed. Relationships of God are recognized not only in and for themselves, but also for the livelihood and welfare of every member of both Creator and the created. As emphasized, viewing God in terms of *aiga* leads to an understanding of God who created, recreates, and continues to sustain the world through relational and communicative acts, in terms of unity and diversity. This God is not only a living God, but a God of life.

In conclusion, *Aiga o Atua ma le Atua o Aiga* in communal and relation terms, is recognized as not only the Godhead, but as an inseparable part of the *aiga*. By way of cooperation and participation in the works of creation, relational and communal associations of the divine are the fundamental qualities that produce the essential life of the *aiga*. The triune God collectively coordinates the works of creation, and they build on their own diversity, interrelatedness, and inclusivity, a single organ, or a divine body. Comprehending God and creation in this way impels us to view both Creator God and creation not only in a diversity and separateness of qualities and characteristics, but also in a unity of all created things in a family or a divine community. It draws us to conceive creation and all its indi-

38 See, Collins, 131-136.

39 Discussion with Moltmann, Tübingen, Sept, 1998. Specific reference can also be made here to the several works of Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 34-38.; *The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life*. transl. by Margaret Kohl, (London: SCM Press, 1997), 10-15. Moltmann also expresses this in the same way as: *die gottlose Welt – heimatloser Gott: Gott im Projekt der modernen Welt: Beiträge zur öffentlichen Relevanz der Theologie*. (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlagshaus, 1997), 163-169.

vidual parts as an output which is modelled after the essential potentiality of God consolidated through relational and communal associations.

7.1.3. *O le Atua i Itutino uma o le Aiga – God in Everything – Panentheism*

Panentheism affirms the presence of God in everything and all things in God. God indwells everything and everything dwells in God. The concept is differentiated from Pantheism in the sense that, in Panentheism, the manifestation of God is not concretized and conditioned to any specific member of the created world, but rather, everything maintains a living relationship with God. Everything maintains its autonomy and, at the same time, remains in intimate-living relations to God. In Pantheism, members of creation are godified in an absolute sense, whereas in Panentheism: “God is in everything and everything is in God.”⁴⁰ This does not mean that everything is God, but God is in everything.⁴¹

Theo-cosmic claims of *aiga* (see Ch. 5) presents panentheistic features of the ancestral religion. The world as a sacred-biospheric whole cyclically moves in place and space, and is generated by a vital force or energy which indwells the centre. These were the vital beings, sources of life, the Gods, Spirits, or Ancestors. Vilsoni Hereniko⁴² defines such as a round of life where the centre-periphery counterparts are woven by a living energy, the Gods that inhabit the centre into a holistic reality. As a cyclical progression, with diverse parts, the process of life has centralized powers that maintained the unity, and the peripheral elements are attracted, incorporated and formed into a coherent whole. Gods inhabit the centre of an endless cyclic rhythm of nature as well as in the ancestral rhythm of life and death. Death, which is the existential counterpart of life, is metaphorically represented by *Pouliuli* (Great Darkness).⁴³

The indwelling of God in everything and vice-versa is not a mere divine act. It is not just for the sake of God to indwell, or a purposeless and a transitory divine action. Rather, it is an attractive, active, progressive, energetic, transformative, and a life re-generating indwelling. It is, indeed, a relational and a life-giving indwelling. It means that God is not only actively present in creation, but is also creatively active in the process of creation. We are speaking here of God as the World-spirit (*Weltgeist*), Universal (*Universum*), or the Unlimitable (*Unendlich*) that is identical with everything.⁴⁴ Moreso, God moves to attract

40 The panentheistic concept of God is developed by Goethe and Schleiermacher (following Spinozas), emphasizing the identity of God with the world “*Deus sive substantia sive natura*.” This means that God is the one Subject upon which the world depends, and indeed, we can never think of God without the world as Schleiermacher emphasizes – “*Kein Gott ohne Welt, keine Welt ohne Gott*.” See, for example, Horst Georg Pöhlmann, *Abriß der Dogmatik*. (Stuttgart: Gütersloher Vrlg, 1973), 101 & 103.

41 See, L. Boff, 51., Pouma-Prediger, 114-118, 253 f. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 104. He refers to this as: “die Einwohnung Gottes.” Cf. Pöhlmann, 103, and also Dorothee Sölle, *Mystik und Widerstand*. (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1997), 140-145.

42 Vilsoni Hereniko, “Representations of Cultural Identities.” *Tides of History: The Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century* K.R. Howe., Robert C. Kiste, & Brij V. Lal., eds., (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 406-434. “The circle of life has no beginning and no end, and each living thing is part of that circle. At the centre are the gods of the ancestors. These gods maintain the unity of the circle from within, as well as attract attention from the periphery.”

43 Hereniko citing Albert Wendt, 407.

44 H.G. Pöhlmann, 101. See also Sölle, 142 f. To Sölle, panentheism encompasses mystical experiences of the oneness of God’s immeasurable mystery (*Einigung die Unbegreiflichkeit Gottes als zunehmend und nicht abneh-*

everything to the centre. To be with God, in this sense, is to be at the centre and not the periphery. God actively participates in the life-giving activity and gives meanings and values of all things.

Traces of panentheism, recalling the indwelling of God in birds, trees, stones, and human beings as well are evidence of the traditional heritage. Some accounts feature God as being connected with eels, snakes, and lizards, and animals with pointed tails. The presence of God in the sky, on earth, under the earth, beneath the sea, on a distant island, and in everything sanctifies and sustains the livelihood of the whole habitation. God's indwelling in every member of *aiga*, and the rootedness of each created member in God pregnates and empowers the process of life. It not only maintains the integrity of each member of the created world, but it also provides a conscience of reverence, respect, and the recognition of the presence everything. It awakens a sense of awe and a pragmatism towards everything through ritual obligations.

The consulting of Gods before engagements in great activities such as work constructions, warfares, planting, fishing, inter-village sports, was an obligation. In one tradition, for example, a belief in God who indwells in tiny tips of taro leaves is still practised. In the making of the Samoan *palusami*⁴⁵ (food), for instance, the new offshoot-leaves taken from the *taro* will be checked and cleansed one by one, and are orderly sorted out according to their sizes. Most notable in this preparatory process, however, is the taking off of tiny tips of the leaves, before breaking the big parts into pieces. The removal of the tip pieces, as the elderly people relay, is fundamentally due to a belief that the guardian deities of individual members or the Gods of *aiga* dwell in these parts of the leaves. Out of their awesomeness and respect of the presence of the divine, it is wise to take off the part the deities inhabits, otherwise, they would be violated of their very presence. The violation of the practise is an insult to the dieties, which, in return, will not only make the food taste bitter, but it is linked to some infectious diseases on the *taro* crops themselves.

The tradition is both theological and ethical. While featuring the presence of the divine even in a very tiny portion of a leaf, the belief also touches on an ethical responsibility and care. There is a wholistic approach not only of reciprotating the fertility of the land, a way of redistributing to the plant species their own share, but an awareness of diseases and curses as well as the continuity of blessings. Apart from that, the taken off pieces are thrown back to the land, as a way of giving back to the land its due share for nourishment. We can see, then, that the tradition not only discloses a theological belief, but it also touches on the practical dimension of ethical/ecological responsibility, the very essence of *aiga*.

mend erlebt). On the other side lies an unpredictable and unimaginable nature of God's mystery which can only be heard in a still voice and/or a silent cry.

45 *Palusami* is a food made up of the combination of a mixture of the taro leaves and the coconut cream. The cream is wrapped inside the leaves in an oval form, and then baked in an earthly oven. The majority of Samoans take the *palusami* as the most delicious diet on almost every ceremonial occasions including the Sunday meals.

7.1.4. *Aiga as Body and Embodiment of God*

The understanding of God and creation as *tino* (see App:v) affirms not only God's incarnation in bodily terms, but also acknowledges God's historical presence in the reality of all things. It simply implies that creation is the Body of God. The term *tino* is not only used to connote personal and inter-personal relations, but it is also employed to resemble creation in a very extensive and inclusive sense. In her existence, naming and divisions, Samoa reflects the diverse and inseparable parts of a single body (see Chap. 5). Moreover, Samoans perceive animals, birds, fish, stones, and every other parts of creation as being encapsulated in bodies. In one creation narrative, it is related that Samoa came into existence when "the divine heart, mind, soul, and will, entered into the *tino* after the creative acts in the illimitable void."⁴⁶ The statement presents a dual existence of the heart, mind, soul and will, with the divine created body. The dual distinction is conjoined by the process of entering into the body, which intensifies the intimate integration of each part to become a single whole. This means that the body is a combination of parts which are woven into a single unity, with each part playing its own peculiar functions in the body. In this light, *tino*, which is the whole of Samoa, is perceived as an embodiment of God. Creation is God's very own *aiga* and/or *tino*. Moreso, as a body and in bodily expressions, the whole habitation as a geo-scape is perceived in its Thouness, or the whole habitation as a sacred entity.

We talk then of the triune God and creation, not as if God has a body, but simply, God is Body.⁴⁷ It is Body as far as there is no division of the mere frame – the material from the spiritual but, rather, a combination and an incorporation of one in the other. God was made flesh, dwelt among humanity, and the world beheld His (sic) glory. God incarnated means God is Body (Jhn. 1:14). And it is the World that carries on and perpetuates God's embodiment in the present and into the future. Conceiving the triune God and creation in bodily and embodiment terms is challenged by the limitations of metaphorical expressions. By taking the world as a Body of God, we are drawn into danger of conditioning the triune God with the multiplicity of sick, handicapped, polluted, imprisoned, raped, dysfunctioning kinds of bodies. Thinking in this way challenges our perfectionist comprehensions of God.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, we would suggest that it is appropriate that we conceive God and the world in bodily and embodied terms, both in its suffering and redeeming connotations. Apart from that, in the face of contemporary changes, *aiga* as *tino* is progressively changing from its extended-corporateness to small basic groups, which are also accompanied by its own corporeality and needs. The fundamental principles of *tino* are not static, but rather, active and progressive.

The conception of God and creation to be modelled after the body of God acknowl-

46 See, for instance, N.E. Stanner, *The South Seas in Transition*, 295.

47 The author does not differentiate between strong and weak, healthy and sick, big and small, or whatever definitions that we use to define the kind of bodies. Rather, body is referred to here as a whole physical and/or spiritual structure that is liable to growth, has a content, can have access to destruction and death, and is liable to renewal, regeneration, and rebirth. Body is seen here in both abstract and physical expressions. Based on a summary of definitions in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*.

48 See, for example, McFague, 15-20. To her: "We must be at home in our bodies, or more accurately as bodies, if we are to experience creation as our home."

edges the intimate and integral relation of God and creation. It bespeaks a complex of intermeshed eco-systems, the reciprocal functions of individual parts, the spiritual or the expression of emotions, as well as the progressive growth, decay and regeneration. *Tino* establishes links, mediates messages, and consolidate structural institutions. In cosmological views, we refer to all parts in bodily terms such as heavenly bodies, earthly bodies, oceanic bodies, and so forth. In this context, creation as the Body of God is sustainably validated, for it deals with the life of God in creation and creation in God in more experiential terms rather than abstractions. As a divine-creative organ, the embodied Godhead is viewed as an embodied creation. Creation, with all its created parts, is an embodiment of Creator God. God and creation relate and interrelate as functioning parts of the whole body.

Conceptualizing God who embodies creation and creation as an embodiment of the Godhead presupposes an understanding of the world as an intrinsic member of the *aiga*. It is part and parcel of the body of God, whereby each individual member manifests a part/s of the divine, and the divine as well manifests parts of that body. To speak of God and the created world in relational, communal, and in physical terms explicated by body imagery embraces every dimension of relationships, including human beings, animals, fishes, trees, stones, moon, sun, stars, rivers, and the whole habitation as bodily members of the very body of God. All parts of the created world have bodies and are embodied parts of a single whole. The whole land-scape, and the biotic community/ies is conceived as living members of a single biological body, the divine household.⁴⁹

Most Christians believe that God is beyond human conceptions, but we experience God in the ordinary cosmic movements and through human activities and interactions. In other words, it is in the actions and the expressions of *tino* that we learn and have the knowledge of God and how God communicates and relates to us. The Apostle Paul in his Letter to the Corinthians (1. Cor. 12) points this out in a very profound way. Although he refers here to the organization of the Church, the apostle Paul stresses the diversity of operations generated by God who works out all, and the fullness who fills in all in all (1. Cor. 12:6, cf.: Eph. 1:23). In the cosmic reality and in relation to the Apostle's reference to God as the fullness who fills all in all, we are given here with a wholistic understanding about God and how God works. Filling all in all indicates that God leaves nothing as an empty thing. All spaces and places, every single operations in the human and the cosmic spheres of life are touched, enlivened, generated, and regenerated by God, the giver and provider of life.

The Samoan traditional understanding of astronomy discloses how ancestors understood and related to heavenly bodies, and how the heavenly bodies influence the ordinary life-systems and activities of earthly bodies and vice-versa. In this view, Gods, earth, sea, humankind, trees, birds, fishes, sun, moon, stars, seasons, thunderstorms, winds, and so forth, are interactively related and interconnected.⁵⁰ Ordinary life activities and move-

49 This is one of the distinctive features of Samoan (Oceanian) wholistic and holistic way of perceiving the divine creation. In most cases, especially in the Old Testament traditions of the creation, the sea and watery-places are condemned and considered worthless. For Samoans (Oceanians), land, sea, and sky are the inextricable and complementing parts of God's creation."

50 Lene Milo, "Some Theological Reflections about the Universe: Its Relationship with Humankind as Part of God's Creation. Astronomy," *BD Project*, Pacific Theological College, (November, 1993): 19-27. Most of the

ments are shaped and informed by a complexity of interactions. The cyclical calendar of seasons, time of planting and harvesting, feasting and celebrating, travelling, etc., were communicated by heavenly and earthly bodies. This interconnectedness is evident up until today. For instance, an appearance of a certain kind of bird can be interpreted as the beginning of a new season. The same event is associated with bloomings of certain plant-specieses, which is also a sign for a harvest of either a particular fish species, vegetables, or other food crops. The corporateness of the whole cosmic system coordinates and determines the ordinary activities and life movements. Even in the times of devastations, sorrows and mourning, they are sensed and felt. Seasonal and eventual happenings are named after the deities that were believed to be the determining potent or an enabling body that is beyond providences of blessings.

Perceiving God and creation in bodily and embodied terms removes us from the tendency of thinking and treating creation in dualistic, objectified, and in abstract notions. It exempts us from perpetuating destructive dualistic anthropologies which ranks the soul over matter, the spirit as superior over the body, human being as master and all other parts of nature as slaves. Rather, it guides us to respect, recognize, and treat every part of the created world in personified and in subjective terms, or as subjects of equals. Each part of the body, regardless of the function each plays, is recognized in subject-subject relationships, and not on subject-object terms. In creation, we experience the divine and the divine's otherness in the other.⁵¹

Moreover, what is most basic to the body is the interrelatedness of all things and systems. Creator God and every member cohabitates and co-subsists. "God suffers when the World suffers."⁵² Rosemary Radford Reuther in her Gaia hypothesis refers to this as a coevolution of members of biotic communities. While presenting the world as God's body, she sees respect and recognition of the "coevolution of plants and animals within the biosphere of life-supporting air, water, and soil; the intrinsic value of biotic diversity, which preserves versatility; the cooperative interdependency of food chain and the cycle of production, consumption, and decomposition,"⁵³ resolves us to wonder and reverence for life.

7.1.5. *Image and Likeness of God in Aiga*

Much has been said about the understandings of the image of God from the Biblical tradition and the Christian theological heritage. In both traditions, attentions have focused on the humankind as being created in the image and likeness of God. As such, the image of God is confined to the conscious, rational, industrial, and the technological abilities of

gods and supernatural beings, however, were believed, on one hand, to look after the well-being of their worshippers or to regulate the affairs of nature and mankind, whilst, on the other hand, their anger was recognized and they were feared accordingly. There are evidences of God to be associated with the celestial phenomena, the sun, the moon, and the rainbow, while thunder was, according to Turner, associated with an answer to prayers offered. One of the names given, according to Turner, to the month of January was Tagalao-tele, or the 'Great Tagalao' which referred to the worship of the God. The name given by Fraser was Tagalao fua, as he says that it was the season for great offerings to God-Tagalao. Cf.: Williamson, 41.

51 See, Radford-Reuther, *Gaia*, 226.

52 P. Collins, 146.

53 See, Dieter T. Hessel, *Theology for Earth Community*, 6. Rosemary R. Reuther, *Gaia and God*, 1-12.

human beings only. Given with the mandate to have dominion, they act as representatives of God on earth (ref. Chapter. 6). God's resolves to make the humankind in His (sic) image and according to his likeness is what makes the human being unique, distinct, and endorses ones dominionship. Bearing the image of God is a privilege and a blessing peculiar to humankind. It distinguishes the human being as a more capable and rational agent who can technically plan, manage, cultivate, and form material projects according to his/her own self will and abilities.

Imaging God in this category, eliminates all other living components to be bearers of God's image, which in most cases, leads to their abuse and destruction. In the post-modern age, however, the image of God in human beings is becoming more and more individually conceptualized. Such conceptualizations rank hierarchial statuses, privatized values, and self interests of human beings over against communal welfare, corporate values, and common interests of the community of life. Further, the emphasis on humankind poses an absolute denial of other parts of creation from the image of God.

Drawing from our wells, however, encompasses an understanding of the image and likeness of God in humankind as one constituent part of the divine image in the whole of creation. God has a diversity of images both in abstract and in actual realities. It is abstract as far as it remains hidden from reality, and it is actual, as it is revealed in reality. In the context of *aiga*, the image of God is more extensive and inclusive. It can be personal and natural. If everything is blessed with the image of God, then everything permeates and reflects the divine image in all creation. At the personal level in traditional understandings, the image of God is understood more on a communal-representative nature. Being created in God's image in this sense means that an individual inherits not only one's image, but the whole community, the household including parents, close and extented relatives, the place of belongingness, one's religion, and even one's God. What one does is inextricably related to the place and space where one belongs, which then means that the whole habitation is affected as it is intimately related to the image of God.

A rediscovery of the image of God in the framework of *aiga* is necessary as a way of broadening our understanding of how God's image is experienced in the whole creation. In this inclusive way, we experience the beauty, structural orderliness, ever growing livelihood, interconnectedness, harmony, and even the rationale in and through which every component of the created world interrelates, interpenetrates, and influences each other as a revelation of God's own image. Every member obtains a rational consciousness which entails an experience of life, death, and regeneration.

Besides initiating aspects of tattooing in the traditional conceptions, for example, it is one of the principal logics behind the ritual that the marks on one's body is an identification of one's identity. While patterns and images of tattoos are drawn from images of nature, they signify the relationship of one's connectedness with divine places of origins. Suffering and pains in tattooing means an identification with the suffering of other parts of the habitation in which one belongs. An image of the divine is a shared image, and human beings share the image of God with other members of the household. All suffer when one part suffers.

Thinking as such can be abstract and at the same instance material and practical. On the human level, we talk of ourselves as bearers of the image of the *aiga*. We carry and take in

and with us the image of God and *aiga*. It is an inherent part of our identity that can not be taken away from our personalities and personhoods. This means that the ways we think, plan, and act reflects the very image of God and *aiga*. Comprehending the image of God in this way stimulates wholistic and generative way of living that recognizes the whole habitation as an intrinsic and an inextricable part of it.

7.2. Keriso o le Tautua Aiga: A Christic-Ecological Perspective

For a long period of time, we have been acquainted with every sorts of christology which are mostly by-products of missionaries.⁵⁴ Yet, we are still left with the challenges of unwrapping such christologies and reclothing them in religio-cultural expressions so that it gives meaning and make more sense for us. In this subsection, we continue to comprehend the content of the Gospel message by translating it in eco-contextual expressions of *Aiga o Atua ma le Atua o Aiga*. This is one way of constructing a Christic-ecological or a Christic-cosmic paradigm, whereby, the emphasis is placed on the effectiveness and vitality of the works and deeds of Jesus Christ, rather, than the ethnicity of the person itself (although both can not identically be separated). Christology, as Joseph Sittler states, is first and foremost a description of the action of Jesus – of how Jesus functioned.”⁵⁵ The discussion will therefore centre around the Christic-ecological function from the perspective of God’s cosmic saving acts. Aspects which are experienced in *aiga* such as communal caring, reciprocal sharing, reconciling, healing, renewal, and celebrating are taken into account, and are summed up by the concept *tautua* (See. App.vi).⁵⁶ We comprehend *tautua* as; (i) an interactive relation of all members of *aiga* with potents or cosmic agents – *Mana e Tapu*. Christ is a supernatural and holy energy that bridges the gulf between the ordinary and the spiritual. This mysterious energy mediates, permeates, and empowers the life of the *aiga*, (ii) Jesus Christ’s actions are life-giving acts that capitalize on life in its wholeness.

7.2.1. Keriso o le Tautua Mana e Tapu: Christ as Divine Potent in Aiga

The concept *mana e tapu* (See. Ch. 5 pg/156f) refers to a divine mysterious energy that is at the basis of the process of life. *Mana* is a supernatural power which is not fixed to anything, but is experienced as a physical force or influence. It is relational in nature as it cannot be independent from the activities of life. The effectiveness of *mana* is maintained by *tapu*, which simply means “holy or holiness ... prohibition or unlawfulness ... (or) a state

54 In many instances, associated with conceptions that shape and inform bitter experiences such as imperialist rules and lordships over people, dispositions of land, properties, material wealth, as well as experiences of ‘uprootedness’ from the very essential sources and means of survival. Some reflexes of these kinds of Christologies are proclaimed by the mission of God performed by the *Lotu*, as has already been discussed above. In some respect, some of them are religio-culturally foreign, oppressive and exploitative, if not climatically depressive and destructive.

55 Joseph Sittler cited by Bouma-Prediger, 95.

56 It must be noted that ideas and institutions of *auauna* (servant) are shaped and founded principally on ideas and practises of servanthood of the Judeo-Christian tradition which are religio-culturally Western oriented by nature.

of being under the influence of the gods.”⁵⁷ The co-existence of *mana* and *tapu* is revealed and experienced in ordinary life as an application of charisma, in terms of wisdom, talents, and so on, in both the personal and natural, social and spiritual dimensions of life. *Tautua mana e tapu* in the context of oral traditions, is associated not only with a divine principle, but can be mediated through words and activities in life. Such actions are not merely for the sake of performance, instead, they are to be authentic divine actions.

In the Biblical tradition, in brief, the Word of God in the beginning of creation is presented as an agent that empowers the activities of the whole creation. In and through the Word, light is created, and everything finds its name, meaning, and life. The Word separates, gathers, and orders the living process of the community of creation. The Word is the power of generations and an active descriptive attribute of God (Gen. 1:3; cf. Jer. 23:29). The prophet Isaiah points out this generative power of the Word (Isa. 55:10-11). The Fourth Gospel exposes Christ, the Logos of God primarily as a dynamic force or a creative power of God that transforms and enables changes in life. Although different in emphasis, the Word of God in the Genesis creation story (Gen. 1:1-5), which is summarized by the evangelist, John (Jhn. 1:1-5), commonly refer to the Word/Logos as the foundation of God’s creativity.

The word of God is the foundation of the cosmic creative process. Christ is the potent beyond the life of everything. To rephrase what the evangelist states about the Logos as: “in him was life and life was the light of all people” (Jhn. 1:4) in cosmic expressions; Christ as the Logos is the energy that generates life. Scientifically, light produces energy that enables the life of everything. It activates the process of life in and for everything. Christ in this respect, is an unexhaustible potent or a generative basis of creation and re-creation.

Likewise, the divine function of Christ in the context of *aiga* can be expressed in terms of *Tautua Mana e Tapu*. Traditional convictions state that the whole creation cyclically moves through propagation, growth, decay, and regeneration. This faith affirmation suggests that since Samoa was created by God from within Godself, or the divine’s very own Soul, Heart, and/or Being,⁵⁸ the ancestral inheritance and homeplace is not only divinely-given (in the sense of createdness) and being blessed (in terms of divine presence and providence), but is also holy-ordained (in the sense of its sacredness).

Conceiving Christ’s functions as *Tautua Mana e Tapu* then consolidates the conviction that ecological life is a creative process founded on an ever-living energy or a mediating agent. And it is through this mediating agent that everything therein creation were recognized as conscious and animate, as all are rooted and linked to this life-giving energy, the Logos or Christ of Life (cf. Jhn. 1:4). This Christic-cosmic energy is a “psychic dynamism principle,”⁵⁹ the “Omega point or pan-Christism,”⁶⁰ an Archetype of the collective con-

57 Tuwere, 136. See also, Klaus Koch, “Sin und Unsinn von Tabus,” *Dialog der Religionen*. 8. Jahrgang, (Chr. Kaiser Gütersloher Verlag, 1998), 187-191.

58 This has been discussed in the previous Chapter, where the origin and meaning of the name Samoa bears a significant witness. Note also that besides other names such as the Navigator’s Island (as the explorers named Samoa), the islands is also called: *Fatu o le Polenisia* – Heart of Polynesia, or the Aristocrats of the Polynesians.

59 A term coined by the anthropologist in Polynesia; P.R. Handy, See also Magret Mead, *Manua*. Refer also to the analysis on creation myths in the last part of Chapter 6.

sciousness,”⁶¹ Charisma or *Mana e Tapu*, at which everything is brought into union with each other and God.

The concept presupposes Christ as the divine-creative power that is beyond the shaping and ordering of the livelihood of *aiga*. With reference to *tautua mana e tapu* in the cosmic-ecological level, a recognition of the productiveness and the reciprocating function of the land, sea, and sky is claimed to be grounded on a divine energy. The strongholds of our survival is founded on an unexhaustible energy which is known as Christ, the *mana* of God. As a life-mediating energy, Christ was preeminently in the beginning, is constantly mediating, and reciprocates all eco-systems of life. Christ as the Word is *mana e tapu* that performs the *tautua* of permeating and regenerating the living process. The ongoing process of life is sustained and maintained by *tapu* which prohibits and regulates its principles and laws. One of the examples of this is a placing of *tapu* on certain food crops. For instance, when a trunk of a coconut tree is tied around with a piece of a coconut leaf, it will be tabooed for a certain period of time until the taboo is taken away. *Tapu* is related to the blessings such as renewal, growth, and fertility. A deduction of *mana* and a violation of *tapu* means the alteration of the principles of life and destruction to the ecological systems of life.

7.2.1.1. Keriso o le Tautua Upu ma le Poto: Christ as Word and Wisdom

There is no way one can draw a demarcation line between *Mana e Tapu* and *Upu ma le Poto* (word and wisdom). Anything or any person who performs *tautua* inherits some parts, and is itself part of both. Christ as the Word is also recognized as Wisdom of God that enables the creative process of life. In the Old Testament, wisdom is an embodied instrument of God and an architect in creation that works out salvation (Prov. 8:22). In the light of creativity, the Torah, which is a creative instrument in the rabbinic tradition is compared to wisdom in terms of their pre-existence and their central functions in the creative process. In Colossians, Christ is declared as the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him were all things created through him and unto him (Col. 1:15-17). Wisdom (*sophia*) and the word (*dabar*) are instruments of God in creation, and Creator God is the origin and source. In other words; Creator God is the source and the background of wisdom, and wisdom, or the Word, is the foreground of God. They are mutually interdependent in the process of creation and redemption.

Christ as the One who serves with word is linked with the creativity in the art of speech and communications. Service is performed both in abstract thinkings and actions. Both concepts are claimed to be divinely ordained and bestowed. In a community where wisdom is mediated and preserved by oral traditions, the knowledge of words, speeches, or in forms of language expressions was and still is highly embraced and recognized. And the association of wisdom in words or speeches enlightens and gives life to *aiga*. Both are rooted in *aiga*, for *aiga*, God of all wisdom is present and continues to reveal the divine creative activity in a diversity of forms and expressions.

60 From the thinking of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin explored by P. Collins, 129-131, Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*. Translated by Phillip Berryman. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), 176f.

61 C.G. Jung cited by Boff, 133 & 176.

As wisdom, Christ is seen as transcendent energy that mediates life, and as word, it recalls the manifestations and the revealed expressions of the divine activity. In the context of both concepts, *aiga* is the language of God that communicates and expresses the creative activity of the divine to all and in all. As word and wisdom of God, Christ is the activating mediator of creation (*Schöpfungsmittlerschaft*), a healer and a life-giving energy (Prov. 16:12) which is eternal with God, and is present on earth, and while on earth, it can reach heaven (Prov. 18:15 f; cf.: 9:1).⁶² In contrast, however, the absence of both the word and wisdom results in the reduction of life, destruction and death. It does not only alters the creative activity that empowers life, but it also alienates a community from one's own inherited norms, values, and the rights to life. The destruction of the whole ecological system of life is evitable, when the knowledge of God is absent from humankind, a single constituent part of the whole creation.⁶³

In short, the blessed-household life, life of *aiga* is threatened when word and wisdom or God's creative activity in Christ is violated and ceased by the control of destructive forces. Indeed, we can not experience wholistic life, when we are not aware of the Christic-cosmic power that circulates the life of every individual member of *aiga*. The land, sea and sky, or the community to which we belong to, are not merely objects of our household, but are fountains of energy flowing through circuits and eco-systems of every living subject such as plants, animals, fishes, stars, and humankind.⁶⁴ An orientation to our belongingness furthermore encompasses an understanding that all things are intimate parts that affect and have some effects on our human bodies.⁶⁵ Globally, we are differentiated as land-scape communities, yet connected by the atmosphere and the oceans. When these fountains of our common household are continued to be devastated, all life on parent earth will be vulnerable.

7.2.1.2. Incarnational Christ and Ecology

To explore the deeds of Jesus Christ and attempt to expose its relevancy in the religio-cultural context of *aiga*, it is suggested that we conceive the uniqueness of God's incarnation in Jesus both in its concrete, physical availability, and the likeness to ourselves. Jesus, as an earthly or historical human being, is likened to us. The statement; Word became flesh and lived among us (Jhn. 1:14) means that God took flesh and tented among us. Creator God enters into the world and undergoes the sufferings and pains of creation (cf. Rom. 8).

The incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth is the centre of our Christian faith. Jesus is acknowledged as the revealer of divine truths in historical acts, a symbol of hope, a brother who served and attended to the need of humanity.⁶⁶ The sole purpose of God's

62 See footnote 179 and 181 of Chapter 6.

63 The prophet Hosea for instance envisions a lack of knowledge of God as a source of evil and destructions. "When there is no loyalty and knowledge of God in the land, ... the land mourns, and all who live in it languish; together with the wild animals and the birds of the air, even the fish of the sea are perishing (see, for example (Hos. 4:1-3; cf.; Heb. 4:12 & 13)."

64 See Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethics," *A Sand County Almanac*, 239. Cf. Dennis Edwards, *Jesus the Wisdom of God: An Ecological Theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), 114 & 160.

65 L. Boff, 133.

66 Cf. Willy Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemann, *God of the Lowly*, 81-84.

sending of Jesus to the world is to give and uphold life in its wholeness. It is a life originated and founded on God's gracious love (Jhn. 3:16; cf. 14:19). The sending of the Son discloses the reality of God's unconditional love for the world. Jesus, as the one in whom God incarnated, is conceived as an ideal humankind who lived a loving, creative, and redemptive life in a particular life-situation. God's sending of Jesus in this sense, is not anthropocentric but, rather, biocentric-orientated. It is a sending which is not for a political or a religious domination of the world by humankind or a saving soul mission for humankind, but, an activity of liberation, the salvation and the redemption of the togetherness or communal life. That is the new creation of all things here and now, for there is no other life than life on earth.⁶⁷ Thus, profound and authentic actions of Jesus had made him honoured and worshipped as the true Son of God. Our following of Jesus therefore is not merely an imitation of his deeds, but rather, an engagement in our own concrete life situation, and as a community witness to the Christ who is among us (cf.: Acts 1:21-22).

From a cosmic perspective, however, we are confronted here with the problem of universalization and particularization of God's incarnation in two ways. First, the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus is challenged on the basis of its boundedness. This is described as "a scandal of uniqueness that is not only offensive to the integrity of other religions, but incredible, indeed, absurd, in the light of postmodern cosmology."⁶⁸ Christianity has conditioned the presence of the divine in Jesus, and such limitations "had some plausibility while still being ethnocentric."⁶⁹ In other words, the incarnation of God is a partified incarnation, which Hermann Brandt describes.⁷⁰ And as such, Jesus Christ as a universal Word must be understood and made known in the reality of life in one's own living situation. "*Das universale Wort spricht nur Dialekt*," (literally, the universal Word speaks only dialects).⁷¹

Second, while captivated by human institutions, the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus has undeniably overlooked God's incarnational presence in all other members of the created world. It ranks God's redeeming love for humanity above the natural world, without the recognition of the fact that God's compassionate love through the incarnation touches every member of the whole creation. The incarnation is therefore, God's suffering solidarity with all things. This kind of religio-cultural insensitivity must be counter-balanced by an understanding of God's incarnational love that confronted and transformed every lifeways.⁷²

Departing from the above mentioned deficiencies of incarnational thinkings leads us to move beyond the personal to a universal or cosmic dimension of God's incarnation. And

67 Cf.: Moltmann, *Gott im Projekt der modernen Welt*, München. (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlaghaus, 1997), 212-215.

68 McFague, 159.

69 McFague, 159.

70 Hermann Brandt, *Gottes Gegenwart in Lateinamerika: Inkarnation als Leitmotiv der Befreiungstheologie*. (Hamburg: Steinmann & Steinmann, 1992), 134 ff. A translation of; *eine parteiliche Inkarnation*. Brandt also refers to Casaldaliga's statement, stating that: "*Das universale Wort spricht nur Dialekt*," or literally, the universal Word speaks only dialects.

71 Brandt, 134.

72 Cf. James W. Gustafson, "The Integration of Development and Evangelism," *Missiology: An International Review*. Vol. XXVI, No. 2. (April 1998):132-142.

here, we would imitate God's incarnation as an activity of the grace of God for all. God's activity of grace is founded on a compassionate love, not only for humanity, but for all living beings who are denied of their rights to life. The incarnation of God's grace is experienced in every thing and in every life-form. Grace is for all, and is given not only to human beings, but it also touches every other life-forms and ecological-life systems. Grace of God even reaches the depths of misery, death and destructions. The incarnation of God in creation therefore is a reality of grace. And in Christ, an absolute concentration of the reality of grace reaches its climax point. The mystery of God's grace finds its ultimate concentration in the mystery of Christ's incarnation.⁷³

7.2.1.2.1. O le Keriso Tautua: The Serving Christ

The life of Christ is identified as a life in service. It is a life attended to human needs. This is the central emphasis of the gospel pronounced by Jesus in the Gospel of Luke (Lk. 4:18f; Mtt. 11:5). Here, Jesus' proclamation presupposes that everything Jesus has done or has been must be understood as elements of divine activity. It is a revelation of God's saving activity that must not be projected, but rather, an experiential living reality which the people of faith bear witness to in their life situations. It takes into consideration the sociological contexts which extends to economic and social conditions of life.⁷⁴ What Jesus Christ did are founded on God's gratuitous love for all creation. Life-giving and creating activities of Jesus Christ are for the alleviation of oppression, suffering, and impoverishment in every forms and structures which they manifest.

In the context of *aiga*, *tautua* is performed for the common good and safeguard of all family members. Founded on the basic principle that every one is recognized not only by ones presence, but also of the function one plays, the mutuality of care and responsibilities becomes the central emphasis. By so doing, the equilibrium of the life-system of *aiga* has to be sustainably maintained. This does not posit an eradication of the diverse and differences of rank, function, potential, quality, and intrinsic value one has. On the contrary, the central idea is for every member to perform and contribute to life-systems.

As landed-people, the Samoans (Oceanians) have not totally faced the problem of poor and poverty in certain extents. No one has died of hunger and experienced homeless. The land-based system of *aiga*, where the land, sea, and the sky have been viewed and taken, is not a system of commodity of profits and self-benefits. This secures so far us from the threats of impoverishments. However, these are constantly being challenged by forces of modern technological and economic developments. Such forces have installed in us the competitive spirit – survival of the fittest, which in turn, provide a strong rationale for imperialist interests and self-control. While schrewed with faith in progress, reason, and in-

73 K. Rahner cited by Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American View*. (New York: SCM Press, 1979), 25., Bouma-Prediger, 98. Cf.: Gustafson, 135 f. Also J.A. DiNoia OP, Karl Rahner," in: *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*. David F. Ford, ed., Vol. 1., (Oxford: Blackwell Inc, 1994), 183-204.

74 See, for example, Wolfgang Stegemann, *Das Evangelium und die Armen: Über den Ursprung der Theologie der Armen im Neuen Testament*. (München: Kaiser Verlag, 1981), 50-52. Cf.: Luise Schottroff, and W. Stegemann, *Jesus and the Hope of the Poor*. (New York: Orbis Books, 1978), 4-6.

dividualism, Samoans are drawn to engulf the *aiga* in a restless march towards post modernity. These forces try to introduce privatization and commercialization of the land-system, propelled the fishing industry, and try to live up to the dictated standards of others. Once the land and the ocean are commodified as these forces state and consequently fall into the competitive rules of wealth and power, then we will, in essence, be giving up our heritage of life.

7.2.1.2.2. Jesus and the Poor in the Context of Aiga

The problem of definitions given to poor or poverty lies on its mechanistic and anthropocentric identifications. In most extent, definitions of poor or poverty presuppose separatist-dualistic categorization of people in their efficiencies, as the ones who have and the have-nots. It simply takes us back to explanations related to ideas of the survival of the fittest. It prescribes the rich and the poor as two totally opposing ends that do not attract and have some connections with each other. In our days, this can be taken to mean that the gap between the rich and the poor naturally grows without serious considerations of their root-causes. Yet, what is mostly overlooked in this way of thinking is the fact that the value-systems of the life of the rich and poor are associated and interrelated. Poverty to humanity can not be separated from the impoverishment of ecological systems of life. It is therefore, a reality that can not be separated from the religio-cultural dimensions of life.

In the religio-cultural context of *aiga*, poor (*mativa*) and poverty is a tabooed word. No one ever uses such word to prescribe or to label the other, unless in a very self-degrading motivation. When poor is employed in communal ceremonies and speeches, it is used in a self-worth-negating sense. It is normally employed to acknowledge the limited offer of services, foods, or a lack of respect of one party offered or shown to another party or visiting community. To the local understanding, only when a person is separated from one's *aiga*, where he/she is not sharing with other members of the community the fruits of land and the sea as sources of God's blessings for nourishments, then such a person can be identified as poor. Samoans obtain a practical semi-communism system where the "social laws and laws of property is *sharing*."⁷⁵ Contrastingly, such laws work for the disadvantage of a society as missionaries saw. Commenting on this, Phillip C. states that:

By the existing land-system, every householder has sufficient land on which to grow the necessities of life for himself and his family, and the people are therefore provided against destitution. There are no poor, and, no poor-laws. But on the account of the semi-communistic system which prevails, there are no rich.⁷⁶

The so-called rich and poor, the haves and have-nots, the privileged and sufferers, the humans and non-humans, were confronted with Jesus' gospel of salvation. This what makes

75 T.T. Prichard, *Camping among Canibals – Samoa*, 176. See also, Tiffany Sharon W. "Giving and Receiving: Participation in chiefly redistribution activities in Samoa," *Ethnology*. 14: 267-286.

76 Phillips, C. *Samoa: Past and Present*, 10.

Jesus' "life-quarrel" unique, as Moltmann states; it was the preaching of a *realistic* and *not an idealistic* gospel that assured the poor of a new living reality.⁷⁷

From a sociohistorical perspective, a realistic gospel as Wolfgang Stegemann and Louise Schottroff present, is "not a reduction of the following of Jesus to an enterprise of the heart, the head, and private interpersonal relations ... (but a) practise of the eyes of faith (that) ... sees through the many lies told by the ideologies of power."⁷⁸ The poor, collectively includes all people who are humiliated, not because of their own choice, but they are made poor by the wills, ambitions, interests of "the man of violence who makes someone else poor and enriches himself at the other's expense."⁷⁹ Under the yoke of systemic oppressions and injustices, they are raped and robbed of their rights to life, and deprived of their human dignities. The poor are the dehumanized, denaturalized, humiliated, and those who suffer.

This definition of the so-called, "rich" (which is always associated with economic-capitalists and property ownerships) is not fully welcomed. Actually, the definitions of the rich contain ideologies and practises which are dangerous and destructive in some extents. Not only the prescriptions by the rich are based on their material values and standards, but when such prescriptions are injected and accepted as norms of one's religio-cultural heritage, they become the forceful mechanisms behind the promotion and the legitimatization of the impoverishment of a community. In this sense, when we refer to Samoa as a God-given *aiga* and a blessed heritage, the so-called rich definitions are not in line with the traditional religio-cultural understandings and lifeway. Only when the prescriptions of the rich, which mostly count on economic material accumulations and worths supercede, then their assumptions and labels of being poor could be welcomed.

One of our challenges concerns the experiences of people living in conditions of intense poverty. Although extreme poverty is found in many places of the world, it has not been experienced in Samoa (Oceania). Even the material and spiritual poor in the times of Jesus, and what the evangelists relay, is not really being intensified contextually except in some cases. But ecologically speaking, we are and will continue to face intensified poverty when we do not act and react against internal and external paternalistic and patronizing forces which are confronting us. These forces as Santa Ana asserts, preach enstrangements. They widen gaps rather than creating partners of equals. They create a psychological sickness which are inspired by emotions. And while they assume distinctions or distances between the donors and the receivers, they aggravate enstrangements of people from their own strongholds of life.⁸⁰

The conceptions of land, sea, and the sky as God-given gifts and sources of life had been, and are still inherited in the traditional lifeway. When we measure according to the standards of the rich by counting on economic worths, then richness in the sense of own-

77 Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 99.

78 See, for example, Schottroff und Stegemann, 6f. The poor include the sick, crippled, homeless (Mtt. 11:5; 25:35f; Lk. 14:21-23; 4:18f; 7:22; cf.: Gal. 4:9), beggars on streets (Mtt. 11:2-5), the sorrowful (Lk. 6:21), debtors (Lk. 12:58, cf. Mtt. 18:23-35) etc. Compare also, Stegemann, *Das Evangelium und die Armen*, 7-12.

79 Moltmann, 99.

80 Julio de Santa Ana, *Separation Without Hope: The Church and the Poor During the Industrial Revolution and Colonial Expansion* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1980), 174f.

ing properties and investing assets, do not fit into the classification of self-sufficiency and contentment. Land, sea, and the sky, as has consistently been emphasized are God-given gifts of life and not commodities for profits. The holding onto these essential sources of livelihood minimizes poverty, leaving almost no one as homeless, dying of hunger, being neglected and rejected. This does not posit a living situation that is without struggles, for continual impoverishments of the fundamental sources of our livelihood are challenging us at a relatively high exponential rate and speed. The poor and the existence of poverty in a social and communal understanding is based on the unwillingness to share by those who have the ability to do so. It is a kind of individualism which values self-benefits and greed.

7.2.1.2.3. Cosmic Poor in Jesus Service

In the New Testament, words and deeds of Jesus Christ presupposes human salvation. Words and deeds of Jesus Christ inclusively touches every kind of oppressive institutions that hinder and estrange possible relationships in life. The ultimate concern capitalizes on life in its wholeness (John 10:10). Life in abundance means life in its wholeness. Jesus Christ became the very life of all humanity, particularly those who were demoralized, exploited, and suffer from the threats of being uprooted from the very means of survival and livelihood.

From a Christic-cosmic perspective, poor and/or poverty is ecologically systemic and interconnected. Poor befriends the rich, and they coexist as two attracting poles of the whole system of life. Both are connected and related to each other in the cosmic-web of life. Ironically, however, in reality, the rich and the poor are not the same. Today, cosmic-nature is poor, because humankind has not only separated it from one's category of rational expressions, but he/she utilizes the same manipulative and deadly kind of rationale to invent the whole earth, to take control over its regulating logics, and alter its systems for one's quantitative benefits.

This interrelated dimension of poor is clearly presented in the Yahwist creation story. As has been exposed in the previous chapter, there is freedom and limitations set for humanity in Eden. But human greed (*hybris*)⁸¹ has caused them to violate relationships with God and alter the fundamental principles that sustains life. The human will of freedom from God leads to alienation from God and a loss of one's orientation and integrity in life. According to Joachim Track, the abuse of freedom of the human will has led to the loss of

81 Discussion with Julio de Santa Ana, Bossey Institute, Geneva. (Sept 15-27, 1998). See also Jon Sobrino, 51 f. According to Sobrino, sin is strictly a theological term, not simply in ethical terms. Sin strikes at the very heart of of human reality, both personal and social ... Sin is not just something that must be pardoned. It must be taken away, eradicated." *Hybris* is sin (*agasala*). It is committed, which means an action that is wrongly done. It is a violation of fundamental principles that govern the livelihood and the common good of a community. Thus, sin is an existential estrangement, an act determined by the distortions of relationships to God and the world. Indeed, there is no separation of the internal from the external conception of sin. Sin of disobedience to the will of God, therefore, is not only a destitute of moral law, but intended, made, and indeed, human-made. As it is, whether conscious or unconscious of, an actual happening that is accentuated by humankind's greedy ambitions. It is the reality of life where the deadly effects of sin are identified and made known in any form and at any level of manipulative controls.

humanity's status and role as a creature and co-partner of God in creation.⁸² Humankind alienates oneself from God, the source of one's freedom, and overpowers the principles that regulate the ecological life-systems, and bears its related consequences.

Thus, we have seen that the whole ecological system of life in Eden is estranged from its stronghold of life due to the sin of humankind. Everything was affected by the consequences of human-made sin. And the life of sin is a life of suffering. In the New Testament, words and deeds of Jesus are for the liberation of the poor, any kind of poor, including the "new poor," the "suffering nature."⁸³ In other words, trees, animals, fishes, soils, atmosphere, and all people who are suffering under the dreadful plights of human sin are inclusively categorized as the least ones. All of the sufferings are crying out to God and in need of a life-enhancing change. Jesus confronted and condemned the reality of sin by liberative actions. Christ's proclamation of kingdom of God is about a reality that is only made known, when all human sufferings and sins are eradicated. When humanity not only pardon their sins but stop sinning and eradicate them.

In Oceania, poor is identified with people who are uprooted from their essential strongholds of life (ref. Ch. 1). The majority are made poor as they are estranged from their own resources of life. Though the claims of land, ocean, and the atmosphere are locally owned, most of these fountains of life are practically control by a few local rich minority, whose principles are dictated by a few foreign so-called, rich governments. Unfortunately, we are dictated by the rationale of the rich which states that when a land, for example, is left without any development, it is poor, undeveloped, and worthless. This means that any consideration of biotic communities habitating in the land are totally being ignored. Other members of the biotic community in this category are therefore considered as the least in God's kingdom. They are the least to whom Jesus said: "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Mtt. 25:40).

To conclude, there is no separation of human-poor and ecological-poor, for they co-relate, coexist, and co-generate. From a panentheistic viewpoint, a violation of a relationship of God and a member of the habitation based on senseless and devastating attitudes of humankind is an existential sin which affects ecological systems and the destruction of life. And indeed, our continual degradation of the essential necessities of life including humankind means our perpetual adding on the sufferings of Christ, which is also the agony of God due to the arrogance of human conducts.

7.2.2. *Keriso o le Matai o le Aiga: Chieftainship of Christ*

In our servanthood christologies, the *Lotu* normally see Jesus Christ as a suffering servant performing servitude roles one-sidedly. This means that the whole life of a believer is centred around the act of giving to serve and for the service of the *Lotu*. This is essential to

82 See, for example, Joachim Track, *Menschliche Freiheit – Zur ökologischen Problematik der neuzeitlichen Entwicklung*, *Versöhnung mit der Natur?* 48-93. Based on Martin Luther's doctrine of justification, Track states that the freedom of the human will comes from God. God alone has the freedom in Godself. And God's freedom justifies and makes humankind free. Author's Translation – refer to p/76.

83 Mc Fague, *The Body of God*, 179-195.

our faith, however, what has often been overlooked is that, we are not critically aware of the one-sided flow of services which benefit a few institutions such as *Lotu* and a few people at the expense of the majority. This kind of Servant Christology does not really fit into the rationale of the religio-cultural lifeway of Samoa, and, therefore, needs to be re-visited. This is partly due to the fact that the institutional ideas and practises of lordship and servanthood⁸⁴ in the biblical tradition are culturally different from the Samoan understanding in some ways. Samoans do not have servants in their household, rather, every one is recognized as a responsible member who performs *tautua i le aiga*, and in return, *aiga* take cares for the welfare of its respective members. It is practically meaningful to see Jesus Christ as *tautua* and as *matai o le aiga*.

Addressing Jesus Christ as *kurios* (Lord – *Alii*) fits well in the local context with an exception of some points of observation.⁸⁵ Since *Alii* is one of the categories of the *fa'aMatat* (chiefly system), the aspect of *tulafale* (orator) is left out, with a few exceptions in some parts of the Bible translation.⁸⁶

By emphasizing the chieftainship of Jesus, we could conceive and experience Jesus Christ both in status of rank as well as in servanthood terms of *aiga*.⁸⁷ In the light of this, Jesus Christ's words and deeds in the local context can be recognized on the principles of his charismatic leadership. It is the *chraisma*, the divine gifts which counts on the wisdom to deal with decision making in life, in dealing and identifying with sufferings, as well as the mediating role in seeking reconciliation. It was the personality, character, and the very life of Jesus that convinced many who pay witness and identify him as the chosen one of God. Besides that, the deeds of Jesus and how he confronted the ills of the operating system of his time were revelatory divine activities that made him honoured and adored as Lord of the Christian household communities and followers.

Likewise, a chief as an ideal figure in the family is served and treated with honour and respect. Being chosen and installed with a chiefly title, he/she is believed to possess and be blessed with the gifts of wisdom and knowledge. And by acting as a divine custodian of the household community by virtue of their being representatives of the ancestral Gods,⁸⁸ he/she has been endowed with charisma to appropriate and to nurture the welfare of *aiga*. According to Max Weber, a person bestowed with charisma is a prominent leader, an ideal image (*vorbild*), or the one whose profound personality is blessed with divine gifts and

84 Ideas and institutions of *auauna* (servant) are shaped and founded principally on ideas and practises of servanthood of the Judeo-Christian tradition, which are religiously and culturally Western oriented by nature

85 Both *Alii* and *Tulafale* are chiefly titles. It is only in the categories of ranks and functions they perform that there is a distinction. Preference is given to Lord translated as *Alii* due to the respect and honour granted to them and the charismatic gifts of leadership and wisdom associated with it. The divine qualities which are believed to be bestowed and inherited by *Tulafale* such as the administrative knowledge and efficiency in oratory speeches, distributions of material goods, the supervision of practical and social activities of the community, and so forth, are totally denied. In this sense, by conceiving Jesus Christ as *Alii*, we are continuing to one-sidedly emphasize the Jesus Christ from above, while neglecting the Jesus Christ from below. This continues to draw us to present our christologies in trans-spiritual or ontic terms and deny the technical or the experiential side.

86 See, Bradshaw, 78. *Κύριος* – Lord is rendered; *O le Alii*, and *Υἱός* Son is rendered *alo*. But to refer to Jesus as the Son of Man, the word *atalii* is used. This is due to the different rendering in the Samoan language.

87 A chief who performs according to one's respective roles in the community is well respected and honoured. These titular expectations when fulfilled maintained and glorified one's status and rank.

88 A. Tofaeono, "Quest for a Samoan Theology of Creation," 105.

empowered by a supernatural power to deal with the ordinary life.⁸⁹ He/she is the one upon whom hopes of a community depends on. Service is a prerequisite of being entitled to a chiefly status, and even in chiefly status, service is the main content and its essential purpose.

Jesus Christ as *matai* of the household community is the One who served, yet, became installed and glorified with a chiefly title as an honour of obedience and servanthood.⁹⁰ The one who is chosen stands at the centre of the household by performing the *tautua*. The chief is *mata* (eyes) upon which *ai* (prosperity) of *aiga* depends. This means that, as an ideal chief, Jesus Christ becomes the central figure, the one who oversees the life of the household, and upon whom members of the household look up to, and the one to whom all honour and respect are given to through services of the members of *aiga*.

7.2.2.1. *O le Pule*⁹¹ *Fa'aMatai a Keriso* – Chieftainship of Christ

The role of *pule* (authority, governance) include ones services of leadership, managing, and organizing the affairs of the household. These functions are viewed cyclically and reciprocally. They include nurturing of the family, distribution of land, production of wealth, preserving the integrity of the household by seeking reconciliation, and also the protection of the household from destructive forces such as human conflicts, famine or diseases imposed on the land and sea resources, and the like. As a custodian of the household, the welfare of the whole organic body, the household depends on one's stewardship. Through the wise use of one's authority, one takes his/her responsibility as a divine honour and a commitment, based on self-giving and life-giving actions.

A Christic nature of chieftainship is the assurance that the sustaining energies of life-supporting systems of the household are not exhausted. The power of fertility depends on one's appropriation. This means that the socioeconomic welfare of the household depends on one's wisdom of re-distributions. In the socioeconomic life of *aiga*, the function of a chief in the household is prescribed by the principles of gathering, distribution, and redistribution of the *tamaoaiga* (material goods).⁹² As the one who receives the material goods for and from the members of the household, his/her obligation is not only to thank them, but to redistribute all to the household members. A most honoured chief spares no-

89 Compare the definition by Günther Kehr, "Max Weber," 121-132.

90 The concept *matai o le Aiga* is neutral. The one chosen as *matai* can be a woman or a man. Although preferences are mostly given to men, the approval of the woman relatives must also be consulted. The fulfilment of the consecrated tasks of chief in and for *aiga* earns him/her honour and respect. The personal character and roles a *matai* plays are believed to be sacredly bestowed and sanctioned. Chieftainship is based on the principles of not only being served, but he/she has to serve and be in services of others. An ideal chief is singled out and godified due to ones leadership qualities, which counts on the personal character, wisdom and knowledge in dealing with the life of *aiga*.

91 *Pule* is used as a translation of the word "dominion or govern" in the Genesis creation story (Gen. 1:26f). The term is related to *tamaoaiga* (socioeconomy) of the household.

92 *Tamaoaiga* literally means, father or mother of the household. Due to the governing relation of the father or mother to the economic welfare of the household community, the application of one's *pule* on the economy of the household depends on the re-distributing role and management of the chief. Customary, in principle, the socio-economic welfare of the household depends on the products of the land and the sea. And since they are the backbones or strongholds of life, a successful family in Samoa is addressed as: *tua i le vao ola*; meaning; being backed up by a fertility land and forest.

thing for his/her, but rather, one receives honour and respect when all members of the household gets a share.

The *matai* therefore governs over the *aiga* with a *pule* and a *soalaupule* which is both an individual and collective authority. The economic wealth of the household therefore, lies not only on one's control, but also on one's re-distributive functions. The goal of a good chiefly authority is the common good of all members.

The uniqueness of Christ's chieftainship is experienced by self-giving love. This was fundamental of God's purpose in Christ. Endowed with the divine wisdom, Jesus attended to the needs of his community, through healing, reconciling, and saving deeds. The deeds of Jesus were unique and wholistic in the sense that they are redeeming and salvific. As McFague asserts, Jesus' redeeming actions were broadened to the salvific dimension whereby the whole body, both human and nature community are saved. All things are not only restored to their well-beings, but are preserved from destructions.⁹³ The fulfilment of the love of God and the neighbour therefore can not be separated from the love of the so-called natural world. In Jesus, we see God as the one who faithfully serves and attended to the needs of the neighbours. Neighbour does not necessarily mean an immediate one who is next, but it includes all those who are in need including trees, birds of the air, and fishes of the sea which are in need. Christ attended to the needs of all. He gave all and suffered for the sake of all (Rom. 8:18 ff). But Christ triumphed by the loss of self. By enduring total defeat in crucifixion, Christ gained complete victory in the resurrection (2. Cor. 6:8-10).

A Christic ecological paradigm of *aiga* as such emphasizes the chieftainship of Jesus Christ as a *matai tautua i le aiga* – a chief who serves, and yet, is served by the whole earthly family. And while his life is conceived as an inclusive salvific activity founded on a shared-life, Christians are also called and invited to a life-enhancing movement that extends from redemption to wholistic salvation. A commitment to the neighbour is a call to a life of risks, suffering, and death. But it does not end there for good deeds are remembered (Lk. 24:34).

7.3. *Aiga*: A Pneumatological Perspective

The Holy Spirit is conceived as the third person of the Trinity. Being proceeded from the Father (sic) and the Son, the Holy Spirit is conceived as Lord and Giver of life. The three persons are worshipped and glorified together as one in unity (381 Creed). Suggestions of the Father (sic), Son and the Holy Spirit as an immanent Trinity has been exposed by some theologians, and as such, the "external missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit, are extensions of the internal processions of God in himself (sic)."⁹⁴ Seeing the activity of the Son as a definitive "revelation of the nature and intention of God,"⁹⁵ the Holy Spirit is conceived of as being proceeded from the Son, and the one who continues God's external proces-

93 McFague, 168.

94 See J.A. Di Noia, "Karl Rahner," *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*. David F. Ford, ed., Vol. 1, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 197. Cf. Leonardo Boff, *Von der Würde der Erde*, 53-56.

95 DiNoia, 197.

sions in the economy of salvation.⁹⁶ The Holy Spirit as being a person of the Trinity is subordinate to the Father.

The patristic nature of the creedal formulation, which is partly followed by some theological articulations, poses some confusions. While posing an independency of the triune God, the divine processions in the economy of salvation is at the same time seen as a one-way flow of the divine grace in creation. This means that an interdependent nature of God's salvation through the activity of the Holy Spirit could hardly be realized and experienced. In the context of *aiga* therefore, we are confronted here with some theo-ecological challenges. For instance, when refer to the Holy Spirit in relational and communal terms, it is difficult to speak of a community in relationship by viewing the Father and the Son as two masculine persons of the trinity without a feminine partner or a so-called, a reciprotating natural counterpart. And while regarded to be proceeded from the Father and the Son, it is absurd to conceive of the Holy Spirit in personified and relational terms.

In spite of the deficiencies posed by the creedal and patristic trinitarian formulation, a revisiting of both the biblical and the religio-cultural tradition is an appropriate and proper avenue through which we could discern the creative, relational, and the wholistic activity of God's Spirit in creation. As such, the Spirit of God is understood more, not in terms of Being, but rather, on the life-enhancing functions of the Holy Spirit. These disclose an intimate presence and association of the Spirit with the whole of creation, in her life-creating, sustaining, nurturing, and renewing ecological functions. We will focus our discussion on these aspects, and try to explore the effectiveness of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the ecological process of life.

7.3.1. *Life-giving Activity of the Spirit of God*

The very nature and essence of God's Spirit is trinitarian, wholistic, and eco-centric. It is trinitarian in so far as She is relational and communicative, wholistic in the sense of restoring and making life whole, and eco-centric in so far as She indwells, generates, and sustains the whole process of life. An affirmation of this life-giving activities of the Spirit of God in creation as a household of life embraces the life of every living beings as gifts of the Giver of life (Acts 17:25; cf. 1. Cor. 15:45). And to attest to such an affirmation, the biblical and indigenous religious traditions present that the Spirit is not only the Author and Liberator, but also an Energizer of life. And while co-creating with God in life, the whole creation is seen as a free gift and not a necessity.

The Spirit of God in Genesis, represented by the wind and/or a living breath initially moves and creates movements. She creates and relativizes movements in creation. Wind or a living breath are cosmic elements which designates on one hand, the fluidity and life-giving potent of the God's Spirit, and, on the other hand, they represent the life-confronting potentials of God's Spirit. The Spirit of God in the beginning as McFague asserts, is "the breath which knits together all creation."⁹⁷ She is *viriditas*, a primordial energy which

96 DiNora, 198 f.

97 McFague, 145.

is beyond the greening of the world.⁹⁸ And by breathing, the creation becomes a union of subjects, and not a collection of objects.⁹⁹ The Spirit in her life-giving process, does not differentiate and alienates anything created from life.

The cosmic elements which express the activity of the Spirit in the beginning represent the commonality of all living beings in God's creation. Everything share in common and have access to life. Air is a necessity and, indeed, a fundamental principle of life. One can not live without fresh and healthy air for breathing. And when talked of God's Spirit as symbolized by water or light on the other hand, then the Spirit is a common and basic life-nourishing potent beyond the process of life. When the air and water are polluted, the wind is destructive, and light (in terms of heat) is depressive by the abuses of human activities, the Holy Spirit also suffers from being polluted, devastated, and depressed.¹⁰⁰ It simply means a reduction and a minimization of life. The nurturing activity of God's Spirit is identified with that of the nature of a mother. She does not only give birth to new life, but she also nurtures and nourishes life. This life-giving activity of the Spirit is evident, when the Spirit of God was poured out on all flesh, they were animated and given with life (Joel 2:28; Acts 2. 17 ff, cf. Gen. 9:8-10).¹⁰¹ She is the wellspring of vitality and giver of all life (cf.: Jhn. 4:14).

In explicating the life-giving activity of the Spirit of God in the biblical tradition (Gen. 2:7 and Jhn. 20:22), Samuel Ryan describes the breathing activity of God's Spirit as a reciprocal and a continuing process. To him, the "breath in humankind is what God breathes out."¹⁰² With an exception that Rayan distinguishes between the activity of the Spirit of God as a giver of biological life and human life, it is dangerous, if not discriminating to discern the life-giving function of God's Spirit as such. To our contention here, however, the Spirit of God gives life to all living beings. She is an unrestricted presence of God that permeates vitalities, and is shared in common by all life-experiences. Imaginatively, if God breathes in what creation breaths out in our contemporary situation, we would be surprised of how God endures and survives the pollution released due to the numerous abuses of human developments. Hence, human beings are participating in an unfair exchange of life.

In the traditions of *aiga*, the Spirit is primarily identified with life and death. While em-

98 Hildegard of Bingen cited by Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, *God's Spirit: Transforming a World in Crisis*. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995), 14.

99 See Barbara Reid, O.P. "Paul for the Ecozoic Age," *The Ecological Challenge*, 17.

100 See, for example, Nancy G. Wright and Donald Kill, *Ecological Healing: A Christian Vision*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 69-73. Cf. Michael Welker, *Gottes Geist: Theologie des Heiligen Geist*. (Neukirchener Verlag: 1993), 27-32. According to Wright and Kill, pollution is not really an environmental contamination but a disease that is rooted in the interaction of the human community and the communities of the land, sea, and spacial scapes. This is strongly confronted by the prophets (esp Amos, Micah, Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah) as they saw that the devastations of these basic resources of life were inseparably related to the suffering of the human existence. Welker pays attention here to the exodus or the liberative activity of God which is founded on the promises of the Spirit of truth and justice upon which Liberation and Feminist Theologies are grounded. This is related to the constructions of Ecological Theologies when God-talks really touches the depths of human dignity in relation with the integrity of Creation.

101 Trees, animals, and all living creatures saved after the flood devastation were promised with renewed life by the covenant and the promise of God's Spirit. The Spirit vitalizes and energizes every living being.

102 Samuel Rayan, *Breath of Fire, The Holy Spirit: Heart of the Christian Gospel*. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1978), 66.

phasizing the immanent-transcendent activity of the Spirit with life, it is experienced that the absence of the Spirit presupposes the reduction of life. When the Spirit goes out from the body, life is reduced, but when it re-enters, life is regained. Thus, the immanent-transcendent presence of the Spirit is experienced through a continual activity of movements. This means that there is a freedom of the Spirit in the life-enhancing process. Based on the incarnate conceptions of the ancestral religion, it is observed that the freedom of the Spirit's life giving and taking activity is not limited to humankind only. The incarnational presence of the Spirit communicates, activates, and sustains every member of the created world. Fishes, stones, trees, animals, land settlements, and so forth, are indwelt by the Spirit. And the reactions of the community of humankind to the Spirit's life-enhancing activity has been accompanied by a sense of fear, awe, and reverence for her benevolent activity in life. This has built an integrated, coherent, and comprehensive spirituality which bespeaks a harmony in God-creation life-permeating relationship. This is sanctioned by ritualistic attitudes, expressing their indebtedness, when the Spirit leaves one of the mentioned components. Accordingly, life is minimized and consequently leads to death when the Spirit is absent.¹⁰³

7.3.2. *Liberating and Saving Energy of the Holy Spirit*

It has been discussed in the biblical chapter that the Spirit of God in the work of Creation not only creates, sustains, and energizes the process of life, but it also separates and acts against chaotic forces that threaten life. The Spirit of God creates orders in creation and impregnates a right setting for every thing to take place in creation. The Holy Spirit liberates and renews every life. The Spirit works not only to create life but also to make things alive and wholly. She creates and at the same time, uncontrollably resists the chaotic forces that hinder the life-giving process. So the indispensable presence of the Holy Spirit in creation sanctifies and makes holy every life-form and every biotic community. In this category, sacred or holy refers not to an abstract sphere or moral perfection, but an activity of a different nature which breaks through and is experienced in the mundane ordinary life.¹⁰⁴

The Spirit brings about a restored-living reality which is, in principle, an "intra-generational" reality that counts on the interdependent of all biological communities. It transcends human institutions and structures which are oppressive, and creates a new reality whereby freedom and dignity are assured.¹⁰⁵ As such the Holy Spirit of God is experi-

103 Reference is made here to a ritual of Spirit-Pleasing. Accordingly, when a fish (venerated as a god of an individual, family, or a community) is found dead, the whole community would place a traditional cloth in the sea or rivers overnight so that the Spirit of the dead fish will indwell. The piece of cloth will be carefully be wrapped and then buried in the land. The ritual is accompanied with great sorrow and crying. The author is convinced that this ritual is transformed by Christianity, in cases when people die in the sea or else where, and especially when their bodies are not found, a service at the sea or else where is carried out which is then concluded with the throwing of a fine-mat or flowers to signify their reverences to the Spirit, a farewell to the person, and to the loss of life.

104 Lloyd R. Bailey, "Sacred Places: The Sacred in Ancient Israel and the Near East," Typescript of Slides OT3, 1-18.

105 Cf. Julio Santa Ana, Konrad Raiser, Ulrich Durchrow, *The Political Economy of the Holy Spirit: WCC Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development 1990*. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), 9-16. See

enced as a life-activating potent in the midst of evil forces or spirits which are endangering the ordinary life. The Holy Spirit makes things whole by restoring their very integrity into proper places. By enabling, upholding, healing, renewing, sanctifying, and perfecting every life-form, the presence of the Holy Spirit of God is thus being identified with life in its wholeness.¹⁰⁶ The Spirit is the common denominator, a fertile ground upon which all things are connected, made whole, renewed and regenerated.

The Holy Spirit of God is a wholly life-giving Spirit. She is an ongoing creative force in the world that permeates life into every living being. Such life is not only fully given, but it is originally, a fully restored and blessed life.¹⁰⁷ As a divine mysterious force upon which all life is dependent, the Spirit of God breaks into the reality of life and vitalizes the ordinary living conditions of every member in the web of life-ecological systems. The life-nurturing function of God's Spirit, therefore, enlivens each individual member of the created world, and is, at the same time present in the very life of community members. This is synonymous to the panentheistic convictions where the active presence of God in all things and all things in God vitalizes, not only the autonomy of each individual life, but it upholds the integrity of such life for the totality of the whole living-system. The presence of God is identical with the indwelling of the Spirit. This reveals the relational divine character to all things created, humankind and all living forms.

In religio-cultural traditions of Samoa (Oceania), the life-liberating activity of the Spirit is something actual and practical. Being perceived to haunt humankind and, thus, considered to be evil on one hand, the activity of the Spirit here is mostly conceived as an influential force which entices humankind to refrain from behavioral attitudes that threaten life. As has been mentioned for instance, an awareness of the presence of the Spirit in settlements, in other living beings, places in the land and the sea has endowed human beings with a sanctified consciousness that not only accompanies acts of awe and reserved, but it also inspires the commitments of care and preservations. The presence of Spirits during the night as Samoans believed, for instance, designates a taboo from fishing. The preservation dimension of the Spirit in *aiga* features a life-giving reality to every forms of life. The reverence of habitable spaces, allowing times for fertility and multiplicity, and a reduction of human demands coincide with the Spirit's liberating and salvific activity. In short, the Spirit of God "... is the life-force of created beings and the living space in which they can grow and develop. God's blessing enhances vitality and does not quench the joy of living."¹⁰⁸

Life-giving and renewing activity of the Spirit of God identically necessitate the Spirit

also Paul J. Wadell, "Taming an Unruly Family," *The Ecological Challenge*, 59-61. "Intrageneration responsibility" (coined by Birch and Rasmussen) refers to the inclusivity of human responsibilities. It means extending neighborly responsible cares to the biotic communities. Our use of the concept here to the life-liberating and renewing function of the Holy Spirit is sustained on the basis of the freedom and the inclusivity of the Spirit's life-sustaining and nurturing activity.

106 Cf. Moltmann, *The Source of Life*, 51 f. *The Spirit of Life*, 175-177. The German word; *heilen/Heilung* (to heal) in relation with the activity of the Spirit is in mind here. Moltmann explains this concept as an intimate part of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly: "... the sanctification of life includes the healing of the life that is sick, and the becoming whole of a life that has become divided and split. Life becomes holy if it has become whole and complete."

107 Cf.: Michael Welker, 16-20. Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 39-57.

108 Moltmann, *The Source of Life*, 71.

as sacred and holy. In the context of *Aiga o Atua*, the Spirit is seen as a linking entity that bounds up God's salvific plan for the whole creation. Where the Holy Spirit is present, there is freedom and fullness of life.

7.3.3. *Life-Orientating Activity – Holy Spirit and Human Spirit*

A life-orientating activity of the Holy Spirit takes the messianic activity of God in Jesus Christ as a departing point. It is an activity rooted in a unique relationship founded on trust, faith and obedience to the love of God. Such a messianic activity is multi-dimensionally experienced by human beings in and through the presence of the Holy Spirit. This life-giving and sustaining activity cannot be separated from the life of the plurality of habitating communities.

In a publication on *The Political Economy of the Holy Spirit* published by the World Council of Churches (1990), besides many other aspects of the multi-dimensional orientation of the Holy Spirit, features such as the sense of being self-affirmative, organic, energetic, liberative, and imaginative,¹⁰⁹ are identified and affirmed as the basic principles. McFague also asserts that:

The way we become human is to grow in sensitivity, to develop awareness of, feeling for, sympathy with these others ... (It) should actually be seen as the preparation or grounding for action. Spirituality is developing the intention to, awareness of, knowledge about, the other (whether another person, a lifeform or an entity in nature, God, or even the self) so that one can respond to that other appropriately.¹¹⁰

These convictions foster a new kind of spirituality which is needed for the ecological crisis of our time. It challenges our human-centred and narrowed kinds of spirituality, and invites us to move beyond barriers of our own conceptualizations. Further, they urge our human spirits to be open and give heed to the life-enhancing activity of the Holy Spirit. In actual fact, the discernment of the activities of the Holy Spirit has been associated with the functions of the disciplined mind. Such has drawn many to perceive the works of the Holy Spirit to be confined to human thinkings and undertakings. The question that continually confronts us, however, is that; If this is the case, how then could we discern the activity of the Holy Spirit? How could the human spirit be conceived of the activities of the Holy Spirit? We attempt to pursue some answers here by drawing on both traditions in relation with the ecological paradigm.

Considering *metanoia* as the first step of confronting one's "inner hindrances" and as a way to be re-orientated spiritually, there is an invitation and an urge of being born again (ref Gospel of John). This re-orientation means a renewal of character or the way of being, and "it has to move not by fear but by faith; not preoccupied with ourselves and our advantages, but for fairness."¹¹¹ An openness to a renewing energy of the Holy Spirit leads to conversion and self-affirmation. Further, it gives birth to a "common sense ... (that) ac-

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Santa Ana, Raiser, Durchrow, 31-39.

¹¹⁰ McFague, *Super, Natural Christians: How we should love Nature*. (London: SCM Press, 1997), 10.

¹¹¹ Santa Ana, Raiser, Durchrow, 34.

cepts neither injustice nor oppression.”¹¹² By going through the experiences of *metanoia*, people will find that they are not alone. Thus, they organically share in the life of faith and have the freedom in their vocation and passion for justice. They become subjects of the Spirit and subjects their own life (Ezek. 37:1-4). The passion for life transcends institution. The Holy Spirit energizes and joins communities together in networking, which then flows out into the civil society, sharing the hopes, visions, concerns and struggles, caring for life and searching for peace.¹¹³

The life of *aiga* depends on the energizing work of the Holy Spirit. Such an activity must be informed by self-affirming experiences, not only of the presence of Holy Spirit herself, but of being sensitive to the determining effect of the work of the Holy Spirit in one’s ownself. This spiritual orientation is in accordance with what Joachim Track suggests as a human self-understanding of one’s integration, in oneself, in the communal fellowship, and orientation in the world as a way of preserving and respecting the integrity of creation.¹¹⁴ This kind of integration resembles the indigenous spirituality of the *aiga*. While claiming the Spirits as preservers of essential sources and vitalities of life, human orientation are informed and shaped by the awareness of the Spirit’s active habitations. Such has informed human ethical orientation affiliated with the restoration of springs the springs of life. Springs of water, rivers, sea places, trees, and so forth, have been conceived by human minds in terms of awe and reverence, which are inextricably part of their faith. Conversion then includes a life re-orientation to the Source that renews and re-energizes one to be fair to the whole human community. Such a re-orientation furthermore, is informed and influenced by a strong sense of living in harmony with others in the cycle of life events.

The inside-outside movement of the Spirit according to indigenous traditions encompasses visions and dreams. Accordingly, these are accounted to be real as the spirit or the soul of humankind actually are caused to see visions. The actualization of visions therefore are inspired and shaped by a spiritual-oriented reality. Normally, such an envisioned reality centres around survival, wellbeing, and restoration of harmony in the *aiga*. In the light of this, the *aiga* is entrusted with a kind of life orientations that preceeds commitments for the welfare of the whole body. This intuitive and cognitive dimension of the Spirit informs harmony amidst conflictual or peaceful realities of life. In and through her sustaining participatory and vitality, all other life-forms are remedied, attracted, and bound together in a life-oriented community enabled by the Spirit.

In the biblical tradition, for example, all life-forms have been endowed with vitalities. And harmony depends on the unfolding of such energies in appropriate and necessary creative ways, which are made evitable and recognized by the blessedness and fertility of life.¹¹⁵ An orientation of peace and harmony in life therefore, is not something that is ideal, but rather, a reality that can only be creatively dealt with. This means that life-informing visions and dreams inspired by the Spirit of God are mediums through which a peaceful reality is actualized. When a community of faith throws themselves open to the

112 Santa Ana, Raiser, Durchrow, 34.

113 Santa Ana, Raiser, Durchrow, 35-39.

114 Joachim Track, 64.

115 Cf. Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, 20f. Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 115f.

creative presence of the Spirit of God who endorses creative and constructive ways for the welfare and the common good of all. The life of a community becomes insecure, when there are no visions, lack of Spirit-inspired orientations, and when there are no “dream lines back to Eden.”¹¹⁶

7.4. Summary

An exposition of the trinitarian doctrine from the framework of *aiga* has been carried out. In an overall outlook, we have seen that the understanding of God as the Triune God contains a diversity as well as a unity of vital and personal characters. Relatedly, there are differences of divine functions of the Trinity, yet, they communicate, interrelate, and harmoniously cooperate for the welfare of all parts of creation. The divine activity extends from the beginning of the work of creation which are upheld and redeemed through the words and deeds of Christ and the sustaining and perfecting activity of the Holy Spirit. This divine presence is experienced in panentheistic terms whereby God has conditioned Godself in everything of the created world. God’s very image in this sense is in creation and not the humankind only. The very nature of the Trinity therefore, can be expressed in the servitude and leadership roles of *tautua* and *matai*, and empowered by the *mana* and *tapu* principles that endorse life. The *Mana* of the Holy Spirit is the vitality beyond growth, livelihood and well being. Trusting in *mana* then retrieves one to the sense of awe, praise and worship which is the thrust of our next discussion.

116 Anne Pattel-Gray Are there “Dream Lines” back to Eden? *Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of creation*. D. Preman Niles, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994), 36-38.

8. AN ECOLOGICAL LITURGY OF *AIGA*

8.1. Christian Eco-Theology in Worship Life

The attempt in this section is to briefly review and reinterpret some ecclesiastical formulations in relation to the church's commitment to the ecological issue. It is our contention that what has been surveyed, critiqued and articulated so far can be put into authentic praxis when the church, as the household of God, becomes a life-giving and enhancing agent in every community. Therefore, relevant faith affirmations of the Church will be briefly discussed, and we will emphasize the life of worship as a transforming energy for the common good and welfare of all. This section offers an alternative liturgy for worship based on the experiences of the author, as an example of integrating ecological issues and concerns in the worship life of communities.

8.2. An Ecological Seasonal Worship Calendar

A new way of addressing ecological concerns in the context of worship calls for a revision of our yearly or seasonal calendar. The events, symbols and ideologies of our age demand a new liturgical language that fits the cyclical and progressive life-time events of the *aiga*. This is a means whereby "symbolism of nature and history merge(d) in the liturgy," as Thomas A. McGonigle asserts.¹ The need for an ecological seasonal liturgical calendar calls for a new shift of focus in worship and spirituality.

Alongside the Christian yearly calendar, a revival and integration of the traditional Samoan annual calendar is recommended. This would not only be a means of integrating ecological themes in the everyday worship life, but it could also be a means of consciousness-raising for the community of faith on a variety of activities in the round of life. Utilizing a variety of familiar symbols and images would further enhance a religious transformation that inspires a sense of commitment to ecological or life-centred issues. This would require a fusion of the religious, cultural and contemporary experiences of worshippers. The traditional Samoan calendar, which is based on the experiences of seasons which correlate to the context, would inform the liturgical life of the Christian yearly calendar. Some readjustments of the Christian liturgical calendar would be necessary.

1 Thomas A. McGonigle, "Ecology and Spirituality: A Twelfth-Century Perspective," *The Ecological Challenge*, 108.

Months	Traditional Months ²	Rituals and Events of Celebration
October-November	<i>Taumafa mua</i>	Harvest of First Fruits – Thanksgiving Celebration
November-December	<i>Toe taumafa</i>	End of the first Harvest of food crops
December-January	<i>Utuva mua</i>	First harvest of yams (testing time)
January-February	<i>Toe utuva</i>	Second phase of yam harvest
February-March	<i>Faa'afu</i>	Falling of yam leaves
March-April	<i>Lo</i>	Yam – Harvest
April-May	<i>Aunuu</i>	Old roots got rotten and new roots spring out
May-June	<i>Oloamanu</i>	Singing of birds – related to blooming of trees
June-July	<i>Palolo mua</i>	First fishing of the palolo (fish)
July-August	<i>Toe palolo</i>	Last fishing of the palolo
August-September	<i>Mulifa</i>	Banana Harvest
September-October	<i>Lotuga</i>	End of Harvest Seasons – Breadfruits

Each month (or days) must be accompanied by scriptural verses or related sayings that coincide with the themes as guiding texts for meditation and worship. A hymn, chant, or meditative music can also be suggested as alternative options.

There are some slight differences between the two seasonal calendars. The traditional ritual calendar is divided into two seasons that follow a pattern of growth, harvest and regeneration. The end of one regular event is followed by another in terms of growing and harvesting. The regulating events are related to the land and the sea. According to the ancestral traditions, these events were determined by the celestial bodies and the circulation of the atmospheric forces such as the moon, stars, sun, winds, lightning, and so forth.

Although it will be difficult to identify the seasonal events of our Christian calendar here, we can propose an integration of the four seasons as is normally accepted, and the two seasonal cycles of traditional events into a trilogy of seasonal events. Both traditions intersect at the very centre (refer to the calendar). This means that the Easter event is represented by the falling of dying leaves (Passion), harvest or maturity of time (Redemption and Salvation), springing of new roots or regeneration (Resurrection), and the joyous singing of birds as a communicating language of the whole cosmos (Pentecost). These events are accompanied by a spirit of adoration and thanksgiving, glorifying the triune God for all providences and blessings.

8.3. Restatement of the Faith Affirmation

The Church is a communion of people who believe in the triune God, have faith in Jesus Christ, and trust in the communion of the Holy Spirit. With the administration of the Holy Sacraments – Baptism and Eucharist – the Church proclaims to the world the will of God and the ordinances of God's grace revealed through the Word and Sacraments. As a body of Christ in fellowship (1. Cor. 12:27), she is also recognized as *Aiga o le Atua* – the

2 Months were counted by the phases of the moon and named after each regular event. Each event was marked by a ritual ceremony, and was related and named after a God or Gods who were believed to be the regulating source beyond each event. See H. v. Bülow, "Kenntnisse und Fertigkeiten der Samoaner," *Globus* (1897):237-239. Cf. George Turner, *Samoa*, 201-204, and, L. Milo, "Theological Reflections about the Universe," 20-27.

Household of God (Eph. 2:19) where Christ is the *tautua* and, simultaneously, the *matai* of the household. She is therefore a community of believers called by God for a unique purpose and a sanctified goal. With the employment of God-given gifts, her members are called and invited to a life-enrichment mission to the world.

In representing God before the people, the Church, through her witness and services of love in words and deeds, is a means of bringing God's gracious blessings upon the people and the whole of creation. In representing the world before God, she communicates to God by offering prayers of thanksgiving, confession and intercession.³

This double mission holds together the *esse* (essence) and *fieri* (function) of the Church. It encompasses an understanding of the Church as *koinonia* (fellowship) which, depending on the triune God's initiative, becomes an agent of blessing and a sign of hope in the world.⁴ Here, the Church is conceived as *corpus christianum* (body of Christ) in a dialectical function: *intra ecclesia* and *extra ecclesia*. As such, the "unity within the church is established by working for unity in the world outside the church ... (and) in the same ways the work for unity in the world will influence the life of the church."⁵

While conceiving the Church as a mutual community of faith-building (oikodome – Rom. 14:19, Eph. 2:21, 1. Cor. 3:9-11),⁶ an eschatological orientation of faith must not be overlooked. The alienation or not-of-the-world (*paroikoi*) dimension must be rightly appropriated into the very life of the household. This suggests that we live in the Kin-dom shaped by the whole ecological community, with human beings as co-agents and stewards of God, hoping for God's eschatological actions. This is where *aiga* as a household of life is re-enlivened and gives rise to the spirit of love, forgiveness, dialogue and mutual exchange, with the goal of building up the whole body of Christ, the household of God.⁷ The process of building up must be counter-balanced by the process of tearing down dividing walls and forces of evil via constructive analysis and critical processes

3 See, for example, *Constitution of the Congregational Church in Samoa* (CCCS), 1830 & 1962, with an Amendment by the Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa (CCCAS), 1980, Articles I and II. Some slight changes are made here by the author such as the insertion of the triune God and fellowship in communion with the Holy Spirit. This is also in line with Articles IV & V of the *Statement of Faith* which embrace the Holy Scriptures as the source of faith and Christian living, a belief in God as Creator, who out of love sustains all creation; Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son, Savior through whom all are saved and justified by grace; the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies and builds up fellowship of the faithful in Christ; and a confession of faith in the Holy Trinity.

4 See Karl Barth, "The Church – The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ," *The Universal Church in God's Design* (London: SCM Press, 1948), 66-68. Cf. "Church and World," *Faith and Order Paper*, No. 50, (Geneva: WCC Publication, 1990).

5 Peter Lodberg, "The History of Ecumenical Work on Ecclesiology and Ethics," *Ecclesiology and Ethics: Costly Commitment* T.F. Best, and, Martin Robra, eds. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995), 3f.

6 Christian believers as *paroikia* – a community "in the world but not of the world" – present a diversity of understandings when linked with *oikodome*. For our purpose, we see both the present reality of the living faith and the eschatological hope that God will bring about a long-term future as a harmonized reality that is experienced by a faith community. The practical reality interacting with mundane forces as well as God's future are poles of the reality of the community of faith or the covenanted community, the household of life.

7 Cf. Konrad Raiser, *To be the Church: Challenges and Hopes for a New Millennium* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 86-88; Lewis S. Mudge, *The Church as a Moral Community: Ecclesiology and Ethics in Ecumenical Debate* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), 141-150. Raiser calls for a "vision of wholeness" (Isa. 65:17-25; John 10:10; Eph. 1:10; Rev. 21:1-4) as a "challenge to all structures which produce exclusion and treat nature as an expendable resource." With the aim to produce a "culture of life," a household community must be oriented toward sharing as a possibility of shalom and the fullness of communion in the Kin-dom of God.

in order to sustain the livelihood of the household. This household is described as “a community with its own house rules expressive of that Spirit ... (calling) for the renunciation of violence, boasting, or self-justification. They imply a refusal to pass judgement upon or exclude those who think or live differently.”⁸ With a commitment to dialogue, a continual striving “within the spirit of truth for communication that resolves differences peacefully” becomes the norm that encompasses:

a logic of forgiveness, the exorcism of guilt, interpersonal solidarity, the sharing of burdens and mutual support, the promotion of justice and peace both within the household and beyond. They speak of a multiplicity that multiplies life’s goods. Such solidarity and hospitality are acted out, above all, in the common meal we know as eucharist or Lord’s Supper.⁹

Certainly, the realization of human salvation is questionable if life-supporting eco-systems are constantly being destroyed, degraded, and made extinct at an exponential rate. If religious, socio-political and economic policies in the local, regional and global contexts, which are behind the devastation of essential resources of life, are informed by greedy and manipulative motivations, then a minority enjoys while the majority suffers. God’s blessings are only realized through the essential sources of life such as the land, sea and sky. For the Church to be seen as an ecological location of the Gospel, she must extend her horizons to the world and be informed by a realistic vision of the future.¹⁰ Her redeeming and saving mission must concentrate on making all of life whole and holy by God through Jesus Christ and the activity of the Holy Spirit. Given the continual violation of the strongholds of life through technological and scientific means in an accelerated and abusive ‘progress,’ the church must pay witness to the love of God, with an affirmation that there is no redemption and salvation outside the perfection of the whole creation.

As has been argued throughout this work, the anthropocentrism of the faith confession has directly or indirectly pushed creation to the periphery, thus ranking human salvation as the foremost criterion of faith. A restatement of the faith confession requires a communal-life ethics which goes beyond human institutions as avenues through which God’s grace is channelled. Since human institutions tend to stipulate the activity of grace as confined to faithful people only, it is a challenge and a call to include ecological-cosmic perspectives as a way of envisioning and making the “Kin-dom of God”¹¹ a reality on earth.

8 Mudge, 147. Cf. “Costly Commitment: Report of the Consultation,” *Ecclesiology and Ethics*, 61-79.

9 Mudge, 147f.

10 Cf. Hans Kung, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics* (London: SCM Press, 1997), 246f. See also Duncan B. Forrester, “Ecclesiology and Ethics: A Reformed Perspective,” 21-27, and Larry Rasmussen, “Moral Community and Moral Formation,” 54-60, *Ecclesiology and Ethics: Costly Commitment*. Hans Kung suggests an ethic that incorporates the human being into nature rather than exploitative domination: “What we need is an integral humane conception: humanity in a cosmic context ...” whereby a life-enhancing spirituality can be experienced.

11 See, for instance, Graham Philpott, *Jesus is Tricky and God is Undemocratic: The Kin-dom of God in Amawoti* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1993), 60f. The author prefers the term “Kin-dom of God” on earth explicated by Philpott, as it is synonymous with some aspects of the *aiga* or household concept employed by the author. In communities where kingly rule is foreign to their experience, kinship is much more relevant to express God’s presence and activity in the communion of communities.

This Kin-dom is a reality shaped by a community who experiences the activity of the God of life in history.¹²

What follows is an attempt to exemplify what a Christian witness means in the framework of worship. It attempts to develop a model that not only contextually fits in the worship life of *aiga* – the household of God – but also links to the ecological context in our common witness as Christians to the triune God of life.

8.4. Liturgical Ecological Model

A model of *aiga* in the religio-cultural and ceremonial life of Samoa is chosen here as a proposal for an ecologically-informed worship life of a community of Christian faith. Suggesting such a model is based on certain presumptions:

First, being informed by a wholistic faith-orientation, the religio-cultural ceremonies and expressions of Samoans not only bring people together in a search for meaning and expression, but also mediate and heal divisions that emerge out of misunderstandings of confessionalism and denominationalism. Relational bonds between people, families and communities are much more stronger in drawing people and communities together than religious confessionalism in its narrower sense. In other words, denominationalism tends to divide families and communities, whereas religio-cultural ceremonies draw people together in their search for meaning.¹³ This does not undermine the validity of a diversity of expressions of the Christian faith, but it is an avenue of enriching the faith in an ecumenical way. It broadens the horizon of faith by seeing and experiencing God in Christ and the Holy Spirit as a common ground of living fellowship and mission.

Second, in the context of worship in the *aiga*, the emphasis falls more on ordinary everyday life, rather than Sunday – as a special day of the week. This does not minimize the importance of Sunday worship; however, a re-constitution of worship in the context of *aiga* is a faith-seeking and enriching process that begins in household circles, and then flows to wider and more complex horizons of relationships. This orientation to worship not only reaches every dimension of life, but it also inspires a spirituality that is not rooted in Sunday only. This model joins the secular and the spiritual spheres in the ordinary mundane experiences of life. It impregnates a spirituality which is more oriented toward the world than theoretically abstracted from the world, including the ecological dimension of life.

Third, this model presupposes an openness to God and to the world. Like an open traditional Samoan *fale*, there is freedom for the activities of the Holy Spirit. The spirit of worship is not only open to other members of the community regardless of their beliefs, but it is also open to experiences of the breaking through of the Spirit of God in community

12 Cf. Philpott, 133 f; Gustavo Guitierrez, *The God of Life* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 187 ff.

13 As an example, in an installation of a chiefly title, all family members and the community come together to celebrate and to pay witness to the ceremony, regardless of their confessional differences. But on Sundays, relatives of the chief's household community who are non-members of the chief's denomination would stay away from the Sunday worship, as they feel that they do not belong to his/her denomination. Religio-cultural ceremonies therefore draw people together, but denominationalism or confessionalism creates barriers between people and communities.

worship. Such an openness is inextricably linked to the creation of spaces for self and communal expressions, confessions and intercessions in the search for meaning and truth.

Fourth, this openness of the worshipping community embraces other parts of the habitation as inseparable members of the cosmic system, participating in praise and thanksgiving to God, the source of all being. The praise of God is founded on the pragmatic experiences of interrelated functions of the cosmic members, and these inform all aspects of the religio-cultural lifeway. Such a spiritual dimension is informed by a culture in which people cohabitate with every other life-form.

Fifth, the openness of the worship context is one avenue toward a religio-cultural viability where the values of oral and Biblical narrative traditions are integrated in ritualistic settings. This can be a means of recapturing the original sense of awe and respect for parent earth where God's providential blessings are mediated for all.

Sixth, such an openness will allow room for reciprocity in the sharing of every available gift and talent of the community, for the improvement of its very life. This kind of model appropriates an inclusive mission, although it recognizes institutional diversities of polity and administration.

All of these aspects encompass an openness to respect and recognize not only other human beings as participating partners in worship, but also other ecological life systems of the household of God. In an inclusive sense, the local, regional and global issues concerning our life are embraced by the worshipping community as realities which should not be denied by faith but, rather, approached and confronted. Being inspired and informed by an eschatological realism, participating members not only give praises to God, the source of existence, for their redemption and restoration to the holiness of life, but simultaneously actualize the conditions of the coming Kin-dom of God on earth by living in that reality.¹⁴

8.4.1. Worship Settings and Contexts

The worship setting must be primarily an open context. It is open as far as it is not confined to the walls of church buildings but, rather, takes into account the non-institutional contexts as well. This is a sort of openness to the world where one finds the reality of everyday ordinary life as an intimate part of the spiritual life. An openness to the world invites everyone to participate, and can also be a means of breaking down religious barriers which divide worshippers. Every respective gift of participating members is needed to mobilize and put into practice this kind of worship setting.

An openness of the worship context would also be one of the means for the participants to experience their being members of the natural world. Through sensible contacts with nature such as breathing of the fresh air, feeling the flow of winds, listening to the singing of birds, touching leaves of trees and smelling the flowers, tasting the fruits and observing other members of the natural world, could allow one to journey beyond one's own limited experiences, and explore the beauty and the uniqueness of what is beyond one's own horizons. This is an implanting of a consciousness of being as natural as it should be to be a

14 Following D. Bonhoeffer's ethical idea of living in the Penultimate time in the conditions of the Ultimate.

member of the world. Additionally, it is an activity that draws one to the wonders and the mystery of life. It is not only open to everyone in the community, but it is also an open space where one has contact with the other components of the habitation. It allows free expressions in the life of faith-seeking, and allows the breaking through of the mystery of God to inspire one's experiences.

8.4.1.1. Normal Order of Worship – Congregational Christian Church Services

- Call to Worship (welcoming words with scriptural verses)
- Prayer of Invocation
- Hymn (Thanksgiving and/or Holy Spirit)
- Scripture Reading
- Hymn
- Prayer – Thanksgiving, Confession and Intercession
- Hymn
- Offering
- Sermon
- Hymn
- Administration of the Holy Communion (first Sunday of the month)
- Hymn
- Blessing

This is the regular order of Congregational worship in Samoa. It begins with a call to worship, prayers and preaching, which are normally interluded by three or four hymns. There are alterations in cases of special occasions and services. The liturgical order is theologically structured after the Protestant emphasis on the two sacraments. Normally, the proclamation of the word and occasionally the administration of the Lord's Supper (which is performed once a month), which are placed as conclusions to the service, signify the importance of both institutions in the life of the Sunday worship service.

8.4.1.2. An Invitation: Call to Worship

We seek to integrate ecological impulses into the normal worship service as a way of enshrining a new kind of religio-cultural consciousness and an actualized spirituality for the world. The author suggests the following as a contribution to the worship life of our people, with the hope that it can be of use to other worship communities.

An invitation to come together in worship requires creativity. One can either draw from Biblical verses as welcoming words, or one can integrate traditional language such as:

An Integrative-Ritualistic Alternative Translation

<i>Ua paia le taeao ma ua mamalu le aso</i>	This occasion is sacred, it is a holy time
<i>Aua ua afio le Atua i le laueleele nei</i>	For God is present in this place/land
<i>Ua paia ma mamalu aua ua nofoia le maota</i>	It is sacred as holiness indwells this house.
<i>E pei ona fetalai le Atua ia Mose</i>	As God said to Moses

To ese ou seevae aua ua sa le mea nei.

Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place you are standing is holy ground.

(Either pour some drops of water onto the ground as a symbol of the presence of the Holy Spirit, or be silent for a while, or summon the participants to take a deep breath as an acknowledgement of the presence of the life-animating Spirit).

O maia, tatou tapuai i le Atua.

Let us worship God.

8.4.1.3. Invocation

An acknowledgement of the presence of the Holy Spirit can be made either in prayer form or in silence. This would invite the worshippers to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in their midst. By opening of their hearts, body, and minds to the mystery of God's presence, the worshippers would be invited into a holy experience. The assurance of the presence of the holy in one's life would provoke comfort and freedom of expression, as well as openness to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The invocation prepares the worshippers to feel comfortable, and calls for their willingness or readiness to participate. An example of an invitational prayer:

<i>O lou mataisau le Alii e, na e faia ai mea uma</i>	All! created in your wisdom, O Sacred Chief
<i>Na e tuuina i o matou tua'a ia o latou vaavai'a</i>	Given to the generations of Ancestors, cared and nurtured
<i>Ua faaigoaina o laufanua o tamaoaiga</i>	Named as blessed, fountains of wealth
<i>E tau ai i nuu mau, o le toaiga o aiga</i>	Assurances of hope and contentment for ourselves
<i>O le ele'ele e aitua ona maa</i>	A place where spirits indwell rocks and stones
<i>E paia ona tua maota</i>	Sacredness fills the vastness of its homes
<i>E afi'io ai Atua o aiga</i>	Habitable places, enshrined by Gods
<i>E aumaia le ola i o matou uiga</i>	Giver of life to our households
<i>Le Agaga e, lo matou Alii Sili</i>	O Spirit! Our Sacred Chief!
<i>E toai i ai mo le olataga</i>	Source of blessings, and feasts of life
<i>Le pogai o matou sulufaiga</i>	Roots of our search and refuge
<i>Le Alii e, auai mai i la matou tapuaiga</i>	Indwell us! O Sacred Chief! in what we do
<i>Mana! Ua tapu le fanua nei!</i>	Holy! This is a sacred place!

This invocation can be an alternative to the usual prayer where we call upon and acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit in the worship. As life-giving, redeeming and sustaining Holy Spirit, we acknowledge her presence as a vitality for renewal, comfort and blessedness in the whole life of creation. Life in this sense is a feast that is assured by the delights in the presence of God.

8.4.1.4. Hymns

The normal order of hymns in worship can be maintained. That is, each hymn is sung after each liturgical part. For instance, a Hymn of the Holy Spirit (sometimes a Thanksgiving and/or a hymn of Praise) is sung after the invitational prayer, and so forth. However, the selection of hymns must be based on specific themes of the worship services.

As indigenous songs were forbidden in Sunday services, it is recommended that the in-

indigenous hymns now be adapted and included in our hymn books. Many of the indigenous hymns depict an acknowledgement of the connectedness of all the community of God's creation. They can be sung as an integration of people's experiences in the worship life of the community, and can also be a medium through which the human community is reminded of its inseparability as natural beings. This is one way of identifying their mundane life experiences with the sacred. It is a practical means of expressing their common heritage and identity in connection with the divine and other natural partners and/or counterparts in the cycle of life.

Example: The Song of my *Aiga* (Household Community)¹⁵

O Viiviiga o o'u Laufanua	The Praises of my Homeland
<i>O lo ua alalaga mai mauga, pati lima laau o le vao</i>	Oh! mountains are shouting, trees of the forest are clapping
<i>Ua tata faali'i, ae siva mai o Salevao</i>	Drums banging, and <i>Salevao</i> , God of the habitation, dances.
<i>Ua fofoa nei le tava'e toto, o le i'a sa o lo ua a'e</i>	The phaeton rubricauda ¹⁶ hatches eggs, sacred fish is plentiful
<i>Samoa o le mea sili lea ia tautua tasi i ai.</i>	Samoa, this is the ultimate goal of our divine services.
<i>Faafofoga se'i ou faamatala, o le laau o nai tama</i>	Give heed to my story, a tree of my life,
<i>E aoga uma i itu tino uma lava</i>	It is useful to all parts of the body.
<i>O le laau e ta ai sou vaa, ao ona la e fau ai fau fafa</i>	Canoes can be carved from its trunk, house from its branches
<i>A'o ona lau, e sasala faafagu sausau</i>	While leaves and flowers smell like fragrance.
<i>Tali: Ao nai ona fua, e fai ma sootaga</i>	Chr: Oh! Fragrant flowers, joined/stringed into necklaces
<i>E alu atu le manogi, ae sau le sasala</i>	Carried by the winds, Oh fragrance here and there!
<i>Se'i ane lau tusi lolomi le igoa</i>	Recall its name! <i>Laumosooi</i> (cananga odorata) ¹⁷
<i>O le lau mosooi e soo ai Samoa</i>	Present everywhere in Samoa
<i>Sau laia ta o i le Tunaula</i>	Come! let us go to that Paradise.

An interdependence of theo-ecological themes are presented in the song. The first verse begins with the praise of God by all creation. God dances as all creation celebrates the gifts of life which are experienced through the blessings of fertility. This is followed by an appeal for communal services of caring. It then describes the usefulness of a tree for all, to house humans, to sail (fish) and for enjoyment. It then ends with an affirmation of the community's identity in terms of its existential presence conveyed by the fragrance car-

15 "Laumosooi – The Song of my *Aiga*" (household community), translated by Joan & Ama'amalele Tofaeono, "A Quest for a Theology of Creation," BD Thesis, 1993. The composer and the time the traditional song was composed is unknown. But the song is still sung in ceremonial celebrations.

16 Name of one of the bird species that Samoans identify with features such as dutifulness and prophecy. While living in the forest, the bird can fish in two tides (high and low tide). Its flying to and fro from the forest to the ocean is an indication of plentitude of a certain fish species an a due time for a good catch.

17 *Laumosooi* (leaf of the cananga odorata tree). The name is adopted by the community as a common expression of their identity.

ried by winds, its name, and an invitation to the world of paradise. A song such as this can be meaningful in worship, although it has been tabooed by the order of Christian churches.

8.4.1.5. Offering

Besides the usual way of presenting offerings (monetary and material) in worship, religio-cultural aspects of presentations can be integrated. For example, the ways in which the first-fruits of a harvest are presented to sacred chiefs can be incorporated. This is one way of assuring the worshippers of the validity of their commitment through offerings founded on God's self-giving love. Offerings are to be done not as a payment for one's sins, but as an act of appreciation and a willingness to share God's blessings with others.

With a presumption that offering in worship is performed as a regular practice, there is a need for a new religious language to effectively express what offering and sacrifice mean in one's life. New expressions must be combatable with the money-value system or the new economic order and the market system in which participants are engaged, inside and outside the church. Since this has been mostly overlooked by the church, it is highly recommended that a rethinking of the theology of offering (and sacrifice) for the church be undertaken. This is one way to unmask and deconstruct the legitimized abusive ideologies behind the performance of offering (as a way to self-glorification and private salvation), and to reconstruct conceptual and practical means that prioritize communal relationships and love of the other.

This should be done in an inclusive approach, bringing social scientists, politicians, as well as common people as consumers in the congregation to share ideas on issues affecting them, but also to construct a theology of offering or stewardship that would relieve people from current religio-cultural pressures (see Chapt 4). Some recommended texts for such an exercise are: Jhn. 2:13-22; Acts 21:1-41; 1. Cor. 6:20; 7:2; Gal. 5:9, 4:5.

8.4.1.6. Holy Scriptures and Preachings

The Word of God must be clearly heard through its proclamation. Besides the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the communication of the Word of God must inspire, convince and motivate the hearers toward their ethical responsibilities in every dimension of life. Through the hearing of the scriptures and the preaching of the Word, the worshippers are invited to an awareness that their very life is an interplay of a diverse forms of relationships. The Word must be incarnated in the forms and structures of one's living culture.

Scriptural readings and sermons in relation to ecological issues must be oriented around the basic themes affecting the lives of believers. For example: a preaching on the vital importance and of basic necessities of life such as water, soil, trees, air, ocean, and the threats to the sanctity of God's creation when they are abused. Themes related to the programme of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation are also recommended. Materials available on this theme from the Ecumenical movement (WCC, PCC, NCC) are enriching resources one can use for preparations. Ecological themes such as stewardship of creation, covenant, land, labour, economy, politics, technology, sin and suffering, groaning of cre-

ation, must be approached. Global issues such as sustainable development, economic systems, international trade, and so on must also be taken up. Accompanying such issues with illustrations in stories, legends and poems, or demonstrated in skits, dramas, or an enactment of a myth are effective avenues of bringing the message home. A demonstration of a scientific experiment may also be appropriate. These issues can be approached by reflecting and applying the scriptural texts to the ordinary everyday life experiences of the worshippers. Some of these recommended scriptural texts and related themes may be particularly helpful in inspiring the believers' engagements in ecological movements.¹⁸

A hope for an ecologically-oriented community is also actualized when sermons reach and influence the lives of children. Since our system operates on Sunday Schools, practical methods of mediating the Christian message for children are highly recommended. Besides telling stories, the use of basic natural elements (or pictures) such as rivers, waterfalls, fruits, trees, stones, insects such as a butterfly, a lamp representing energy and light, and so forth, must be used to illustrate to them the message of the story. In this way, children could easily visualize and learn from what has been demonstrated. Songs that relates to creation themes can also be sung and acted out. A short and simple closing prayer, repeating the message of the story, is also recommended. This will help children (and the whole worship community) to appreciate and cherish the gifts of creation and God's providential care.

8.4.1.7. Prayers

An integration of ecological themes in prayers is highly recommended. As a praying community of fellowship founded on the all-embracing love of the triune God, prayers must be offered not only as a means of self-communication to God, but also as a means of a self-affirmation of the believer's existence among the presence of others, the community of life. This enriches one's faith-conviction, through the reciprocal sharing with others the gifts of life in prayer and action. Besides thanksgiving, prayers must guarantee the worshippers a sense of assurance, comfort, and the readiness to share one's concerns, anxieties and doubts. Prayers must also offer worshippers a sense of God's assurance and new direction.

The formulation of prayers in written form is also welcomed. This is one way of assuring that ecological issues are included in prayers. While insisting on formulating prayers from one's own mind extemporaneously during the time of worship, eco-issues are mostly left unvoiced. The use of local metaphorical sayings, symbols and images to address the

18 Genesis 1:1-31 – Creation Story – Spirit of God, Dominion, Image of God, Sabbath. *Genesis 2:15* – Land and Cultivation. *Genesis 9* – Flood, God's Covenant. *Leviticus 18:26ff* – Defilement of the Land. 2. *Chronicles 7:14* – Healing of the Land. *Job 12:7-10; Ch. 38, & 39* – Animals, Spirit of God as Maker. *Psalms 24, 19, 33, 102, 104, 147* – Praises, Thanksgiving, Steadfast Love of God. *Isaiah 6:3; 11:1-9; 24:1-10; 43:15-202; Hosea 4:3; Ch. 6 & 8; Micah 6:1-8*, etc. – Harmony of living creatures, Alienation from God, New Creation, God's Justice and Socio-political and Economic Responsibilities. *Matthew, Mark, Luke, & St. John* – Parables of Jesus, Grace of God, Incarnation, Salvation, God's option for the poor (and the rich). *Romans 8:19-22; Colossians 1; Ephesians 1: 1-20 etc.* – Groaning of the Earth, Firstborn of Creation, Household of Faith, Redemption in Christ. *Revelation 21:1-14* – A New Heaven and a New Earth.

divine are also effective means of transmitting the Gospel wholistically. God can be addressed as:

Le Atua o le malua a papa
O Atua foafoa, o le Matua Lalaga
O Le e mapu ai i Fagalele
O le Aa o le olataga
O le Fetu ta'i ala

God, the Rock of refuge
Creator and Weaver of life
The Ground of Peace
God, the Tabroot of life
God, the Guiding Star

A theme can also be suggested by a leader, inviting the whole worshipping community to meditate on the theme in the time of prayers. Praying in silence is also recommended. This can be affirmed by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

8.4.1.8. Sacraments – Baptism and Holy Communion

A revival of the communal and relational dimension of the sacraments is a necessity in the household community. The sociological horizons of the sacraments, including the whole of creation, must be reincorporated into the church's understanding of celebration. This is an effective way of expressing the incarnational faith of the human community in its worship life. An effective administration of the sacraments is a profound medium through which the sacralization of the whole creation can be rediscovered. The use of local elements for the sacraments is a priority. In the case of baptism, it can be performed in the sea, not only as a sacrament in itself, but as a public acting out of the initiating ritual. This is recommended as it is more ecologically meaningful when rightly interpreted. Cosmic elements which symbolize the Holy Spirit can also be used in the sacrament of baptism. Fire, wind, or a bird can be used to supplement water. A ritual of baptism can also be performed in the night, when the household community offers its evening worship. The lighting of a fire in an open place and the performance of baptism in such a setting can be much more meaningful to the witnessing community.

In the administration of the Eucharist, the community of faith must be reoriented to the basic idea of conceiving the Holy Communion as a common meal (*Das gemeinsame Essen*). This is not only a way of realizing our commonality as humans (in the sense that we need food and water for our ordinary living), but it also enhances awareness of our shared commonality with every other living part of the created world. Encouraging the use of local elements or the fruits of the land in the Holy Communion is, therefore, a more meaningful way of expressing the believer's gratitude and thankfulness to God, the Giver of all blessings in the household community. It is an act of appreciating God's gifts of life. The use of local elements not only exempts us from buying the foreign items of wine and bread, but it can be a means of appreciating the gifts of creation in their very naturalness. The sacramentalizing of the indigenous fruits of the land, the sea, and the works of humankind are all conceived as media through which God's life-giving grace is poured out to and through all of Creation. These practices, however, must firstly be explained to the congregation.

Relevant scriptural passages can also be cited while celebrating the Holy Sacrament. Il-

illustrations of social functions and narratives on shared life in the Bible (e.g. Jesus sharing the loaves and fishes with the community) could provoke a sense of sharing for the common good of all. Furthermore, participating in the Holy communion in a shared manner would liberate us from taking the sacrament with an emphasis on atonement for sin only. Instead, it would be considered as a thanksgiving meal to God who made holy every form of life through divine grace. To begin with the administration of sacraments at the beginning in the liturgical order of worship is also recommended as a way of confessing our bio-natural commonality in the life of faith.

8.4.1.9. Blessing

The meditation theme of the worship or a short inspirational saying from the sermon can be repeated here before the usual closing words of blessing. At times a variation can be made, either by summoning the worship community to the exchange of peace, or engaging in a short closing exercise. This would depend on the worship setting. It must also be flexible and educational to the participants. An example in a round-worship context:

Leader: – Invite members to hold onto the neighbour's hand and try to follow what will be said.
 – Take a look at the ones who are facing you.
 – Look around the circle to all members who are joining with you in the round.
 – Close your eyes.

Part 1: Bound by the abounding grace and the mutual relationship of your love, merciful and triune God, we embrace, as inseparable members joining in this circle, as well as in other circles of life, our commitments to one another and to the world in which we live. May you join us in the spirit of truth and love, that we may work to nurture all forms of life, to find peace, and to do justice for the whole of your creation. (silence)

- Open your eyes and release hands.
- Turn around, take a look up at the sky (or the space above).
- Join hands again (with eyes open – facing the opposite side).

Part 2: You have called us to be living witnesses to the world. As we look across the fields, the oceans, and the vastness of space above and around us, we pray that you continue to bless us with your gifts, and be granted with your wisdom, that we may be able to serve you through our missions and endeavours in life.

- Release hands.

Part 3: Go out in peace. May the Grace of God, the Love of Jesus Christ, the Comfort and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us, and the whole world, now and forever. Amen.

Presenting the final blessing as a practical exercise can be a means to reaffirm the worshippers in their commitments to each other and to the world. The joining of hands, facing each other, and looking around the circle encompass concepts that affirm each one as inextricable member of the circle of life. Joining in the life-chain requires the dependence of one on the other, and an acknowledgement of the other's presence. These are central commitments of a living faith.

The releasing of hands symbolizes the differentiation of each respective member in the circle of life. Each member with his or her gifts, abilities and talents is to be put to the service of God by peace-seeking actions and by doing justice. Turning around, looking up to

the open sky, and facing the world out there, suggests that each has his/her own ways, makes one's decisions, and so forth. It is one way of recapturing the greatness of God revealed in and through the whole universe, and a means of mediating a kind of conviction in the believer that he/she is taking the whole system of life into oneself, and that he/she is also a part of the whole system. The blessings of God, above all, are actualized by one's commitment to the whole cosmological web of life. This faith commitment is founded on the peace of God, revealed in and through the gratuitous deeds of Christ, and the ever-sustaining, comforting, and life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit.

9. CONCLUSION

This work has been an attempt to expose, survey, analyze and criticize some of the underlying factors behind theological concepts and undertakings of the mission of the Church in Samoa (Oceania) in relation to the ecological issue. At the same time, we have sought to recall and revitalize certain aspects of the ancestral traditions as an alternate resource for upholding the sanctity of the living habitation of creation. Further, an effort has been made to articulate a theology that is relevant to the ecological context together with some implications for the Christian witness to God and the world. Being conscious of the fact that no theology or missiology can be articulated in a vacuum, social, political, economic, and technological realities have been taken into account. Moreso, the religio-cultural concept of *aiga* as a bio-spheric-community, or the household of life, has been constituted as the fountain from which we draw for spiritual and social nourishments. Being recognized as the centre of all religio-cultural interactions and a place where the mysteries and the experiences of God inter-relate and communicate with all the community of creation, the wholistic and a holistic reality of *aiga* encompasses new hope for the common good of all creation.

In post-modern age, we are acquainted with terms such as: global family, global village and one world. These have been accompanied by pass-words such as sustainable development, sustainable economy, equal rights of both humankind and nature, and saving the world for the sake of coming generations. These have been channelled through local, regional and international projects, and by virtue of consciousness-raising and commitments to the threatened world. In reality, however, these concepts still remain utopia to the majority of the world population including its many bio-communities. It remains a challenge, then, and a call for Christians and all human beings to face up to our commitments to the integrity of God's creation. In this light, some concluding recommendations are offered for consideration in relation to theology and the mission of God.

9.1. Christian Theology and Mission

Christian theology and the mission of God has to reclaim the centrality of both creation and salvation as inseparable poles of the reality of life. As has been the central emphasis of this work, this must be affirmed by the conviction that there is no salvation outside creation. This does not mean a detachment of salvation and creation from the theological and missiological life of the Church but, rather, an inclusive approach of conceiving and applying the Gospel in a w/holistic life of faith. With respect and recognition of our own limitations, in our geo-historic and religio-cultural circumstances, this means that we have to concentrate more appropriately on the religio-cultural contexts in which the Gospel takes root, find expression, evolves and continues to grow. This means that we need to think and act both locally and globally.¹ Doing theology and mission in this way exempts

1 To think and to act goes hand in hand. This is an indivisible way of committing to ecological concerns both on the local, regional, and global level. To think globally and act locally is the usual way the phrase is put. But it is the author's conviction that the significance of the thinking and acting process as a single reality must be recognized

us from a pot-plant kind of approach to a free-growing activity which is centred in the affirmation of God as the triune God of life.² This activity must be rooted and experienced in the reality of *aiga* as a body, house, family, habitation, and bio-spheric-community, expressed by myths, symbols, images and metaphors. These are to be affirmed by the Gospel of truth and life revealed in the word of God. In the process, these must constantly be interpreted anew so that they make a coherent fit with the receiving contexts.

With respect to the multi-faced, multi-layered, and plurality of living situations, doing theology and the mission of God must also take heed of the globalized world context. This means that in the new age, Christian theology/ies and mission must be informed by the “deterritorialized,” “hyperdifferentiated,” and “hybridized” religio-cultural flow of contexts.³ Here the horizon of difference, as Robert J. Schreiter asserts, becomes the basis of understanding the diversity rather than the commonality of communities. And because the “compression of time, the world of cyberspace, and the movement of peoples” is linked to adjustments to multi-cultural realities and the intense interaction that destabilizes the purity of cultural logic, norms and values, a redirection of focus in doing theology and the mission of God in the world is necessary and a priority.⁴

It is my contention that in these diversified flows of contexts, there is a great need to re-constitute christian values and eco-ethical-spiritualities which are made available and offered in any given religio-cultural lifeway as means of responding to the present ecological crisis. Specifically, Christian theology and the mission of God must firstly be conceived as inextricable activities of the everyday life of each individual member of the *aiga*, the household of life. This includes a re-enlivening of christian morals and principles of care, love and compassions for the other. A reorientation to the authentic locus of religion in the ordinary, everyday living out of one’s life is a prerequisite. Religion cannot be a one-day activity but, rather, a lived-life reality which is nurtured by one’s *aiga*, the places where we belong and find meaning through living relationships. This orientation is sanctioned by a life-affirming activity grounded on the conviction that “some eternal greatness incarnated in the passage of temporal fact.”⁵ In this view, our commonly shared life becomes not only as a sacrament, but a doxological one that praises and give thanks to the Source of life for the commonness of our sharing with other living organisms the gifts of grace.

in the sense that what I am doing in the local context is also done for the benefit and the common good of the whole global community.

- 2 See, for instance, Sione ‘Amanaki Have, “Pacific Theology,” *Towards a Relevant Pacific Theology: Theological Consultation. July 1985*. (Suva: Lotu Pasifika Productions, 1986), 21-24. Cf. Theodor Ahrens, “*Von der Kontextualisierung des Christentums und der Synkretisierung seiner Botschaft in Ozeanien*,” *Jahrbuch Mission 1994*. (Hamburg: Missionshilfe Verlag, 1994), 79-87. The pot-plant concept as commonly used in Oceania and Afrika etc. is related to the transplanting of the Western faith in theological and missiological activities.
- 3 Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 26f. Also, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 11 ff.
- 4 Schreiter, 26f, Cf. Ch. 6; 98-115.
- 5 Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*. (New York: The Free Press, 1948), 45. Cf. Paul Collins, God’s Earth: Religion as if Matter really Mattered, 131-136. And, Philip J. Hefner, “Science, Technology and Christian Faith: The Warp and Weft of Mission,” *Journal of the International Mission Studies*. Vol. XV-2, 30, (1998): 51-65.

9.2. Need for New Paradigms

Closely related to what has been discussed above is a need for new paradigms. Since the development of scientific knowledge evolves alongside the process and progress of history (time and space), theology and the mission of God ought to be expressed in relation to contemporary changes and scientific challenges. Otherwise it will be seen, not as a dynamic engagement, but as a static and a nostalgic enterprise. The need for new paradigm-shifts is essential.⁶ Paradigm shift in theologizing and missionizing must be recognised by means of moving away from the Euro-centric paradigms of *thinking theology*⁷ which is typically informed by dichotomies such as material versus spiritual, personal versus social, and so forth, to *holistic theology*. From an ecological perspective, for instance, Russell J. Chandran, an Indian theologian, writes that: “The concern for ecology today is not a luxury concern but a matter of survival, first of all for the poor masses and the poor countries, and in the longer run for the whole of humankind.”⁸ Although Chandran refers particularly to the effect of the ecological crisis on humankind, he has pointed out one way of looking at the reality of poverty in its wholeness, in the sense that when one is affected, others will also be affected.

In the context of the *aiga*, as has been explicated, doing theology and the mission of God must be shaped and inspired by w/holistic thinking and, indeed, must be communicated by an inclusive language of discourse. While rooted in the sacramental life of the Trinity – *Atua o Aiga ma Aiga o Atua*, as I have phrased it – relational and ecological conceptions must inform and shape our ways of thinking and acting in relation to God and to the world. This is a new alliance of humanity and creation bounded together in covenants of trusts and humility.⁹

The need for new paradigm shifts takes *ortho-praxis* as a departure point for doing theology and mission. This is another way of interpreting and understanding the relationship between God and the world, as well as for interpreting the Christian faith from one’s own context. “Human beings can not claim glimpses of the divine reality if one bypasses human realities” as C.S. Song contends.¹⁰ By taking the threatened world as a soil of cultivation, eco-theology is approached from the perspective of the suffering communities, both human and non-human, animate and inanimate. The experiences of pain are not only associated with one’s own cultural self-understanding, but they are considered as revelation in the sense that God is also revealed in the subjective experiences of the suffering world. God is actively present in the pains of the world which are mostly objectified by the

6 K.C. Abraham, “Paradigm Shift in Contemporary Theological Thinking: Emerging Concerns of Third World Theology,” *Prejudice: Issues in the Third World Theologies*, 35-37. Abraham adopts Thomas Khun’s definition of the term paradigm as: “the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community.”

7 Abraham, 36. The Euro-American-centric models of theologizing were dominantly influenced by the Enlightenment (and the Reformation) tradition of the West. Thus, theological approaches were mostly determined by developing theories of knowledge, perception of the nature of reality, and an attempt to discover a language of discourse. This approach objectified reality based on one’s imperialistic knowledge.

8 See J. Russell Chandran, “Ecology: A Theological Respond,” 4.

9 Cf. L. Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, 158-172. See also, Paul Collins, *God’s Earth: Religion as if Matter really Mattered*, 129-136. Collins explicating on Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s thinkings.

10 Choan-Seng Song, *Third-Eye Theology*. (New York: SCM Press, 1979), 12.

arrogant attitudes of human beings, and intensified by the injustices of a privileged few. “A theology which does not articulate the suffering community, does not speak from it, think from it, feel from it, is de facto a theology of oppression” as Dorothee Sölle asserts. It cannot be neutral or avoid taking sides, which in our case, the suffering worlds of the oppressor or the oppressed.¹¹

One other aspect which requires a paradigm shift is the need to accommodate the Gospel message in order to fit it within the living system of the *aiga*. This has been a challenge and a call in this work by means of shifting from the alien experiences of meeting the “transported Christ” to the encountering experiences of “Christ in the context.” In other words, it has been a shift toward “finding (and expressing) Christ in the situation rather than concentrating on bringing Christ into the situation.”¹² Within the framework of *aiga*, where one’s services including chiefly functions become the central locus of livelihood by way of sharing, sacrificing, and reconciling, it is our contention that the propagation of the Gospel in this way becomes an effective avenue through which the communities can comfortably identify themselves. This is also one way of departing from suspicious views and belittlement attitudes in doing and thinking theology while, at the same time, respecting and recognizing that every theology has its own integrity and worth. While maintaining their own integrity, they are open to critique and dialogue with other articulations for enrichment.

With an awareness of the reality of religious plurality, cultural traditions and movements, with its wealth of human insight and scientific knowledge, are another vital aspect of the shifting paradigms in theological developments. Hans Kung in; *Christianity and the World Religions*, for example, calls for a global understanding of ecumenism.¹³ This is a challenge for the Christian religion, not to confine its theology and mission within its own sphere, but to open up to engage in dialogue with other religions. In so doing, communities and nations can actively participate in solidarity to bring into reality the hope for a world of peace and harmony, regardless the diversity of beliefs which people hold. In relation to our working concept and metaphor *aiga*, the openness symbolized by the Samoan open house also suggests openness to the free activity of the Holy Spirit. This is presupposed by the recognition of differences as well as commonalities in belief and value systems.

Most significantly is a need to reconstitute an awareness of the priority of the divine creation over against human domination. This is a shift from the anthropocentric approach whereby reality was constructed in accordance with human projections to a “theo-centri-

11 Dorothee Sölle, *Thinking about God*. (London: SCM Press, 1990), 97. Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, “Christ in Cosmic Contexts,” *Christ and Context*. H. Regan and A.J. Torrance, eds., (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 180- 191.

12 Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 39.

13 Hans Kung, *Christianity and World Religions*. (London: SCM Press, 1984). Cf. C.S. Songs, *Third Eye Theology*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979), 1-16. Virginia Fabella, Sergio Torres, eds., *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983). And, K.C. Abraham, ed., *Third World Theologies: Commonalities and Divergences*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books), 1986. Kung’s theological development in his work suggests an inner-christian ecumenism towards a global ecumenism, the continuity of ecclesiological reflection, dealing with the christological and theological expression of faith, and a search for an adequate theological method that suits the time. This is a way towards a discovery of a new paradigm for theologization. The reality of religious plurality is also taken seriously by the Asian theologians in their attempts to construct contextual theologies.

cal and/or theo-ecological”¹⁴ orientation. This approach is worked out of the framework of creation with due respect and recognition of the active presence of God, the Giver and Ground of all life. The new theological paradigm challenges the “prevailing humanity-creation relations, namely anthropocentrism, domination and exploitation, and promote a renewed relationship and a new covenant with the creation.”¹⁵ This is a prerequisite for an orientation of the right place and the true human vocation in creation as originally called for by the Creator.

The new theological and missiological shifts, therefore, call for a reconstitution of a holistic and wholistic view of creation as a way to dismantle self-centredness, opting for accountability in contrast to domination. This can be one way of affirming that: “Nature is not on the surface but in the depths; the colours are the representation of this depth on the surface; they spring from the roots of the cosmos.”¹⁶ Nature is not an object to be abused but, rather, the springs of beauty and essential source of life.

9.3. Eco-Theological Agenda

An agenda for a coherent theology and missiology of the Church has to integrate the concerns for God’s threatened creation as an intimate part of her life. This must be shaped and informed by the living experiences of co-existence with other forms of life in the created world. In so doing, human beings are seen as co-partners of the triune God who commonly share with other life-forms and responsibly opt for life in its fullness rather than exploitations and death.

As a way to resolve an exclusive anthropocentric view of theology and mission of God, as previously discussed, there is a need for reform of the theology of creation, provided that new approaches which foster wholesome and inclusive insights as a way to restore the human sense of belonging and relating to creation are guaranteed. We must suggest more wholesome metaphors in and through which human relations to each other in the bio-community can be highlighted.¹⁷ Employing metaphors, images, and symbols which are accompanied by wholesome interpretations aims at establishing ecological models of living creations whereby all components of the created world are recognized as subjects in their own rights.¹⁸ One example of this is presented in the Biblical eco-thematic exegetical part of this work, where the author attempts to present an ecological option of interpretation not only by reducing the anthropocentric approaches of treating the texts but, also by trying to eliminate the demonizations which have been imposed on some creaturely symbols.

The rethinking of the theology and missiology of creation, on the other hand, also demands a new shift from the prevailing western formulations which, “though re-thought

14 Aram Keshishian, *Eco-Theology: Toward an Ecumenical Ethic for a Responsible Society in a Sustainable Creation*, 1-16. Cf. J. Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 20-33. Rosino Gibellini, “The Theological Debate on Ecology,” Translated by John Bowden: 125-134.

15 Keshishian, 2.

16 Paul Cézanne quoted by Christian Link, *The World as Parable*. 1975.

17 Sallie McFague, *Models of God*, 8.

18 McFague, 11 f. Cf. Sun Ai Lee Park, “Cross-Fertilization: An Asian Perspective,” *Third World Theologies: Commonalities and Divergences*, 133.

and criticized, remain bound to Western industrial and economic models that seek to manage and control the environment.”¹⁹ An eco-theological agenda must be conceived as a departure from the “androcentric patriarchal culture that has brought violence-victimization, domination-subjugation, rape of both women’s bodies and nature, and the destruction of God’s world; if it has brought violence in the form of capitalism, militarism, and the nuclear weapons race” to embrace the “feminine culture (that) must bring love, equality, justice and peace, care for others and for all; it must therefore be people-oriented rather than authority-centred, life-giving rather than death-dealing.”²⁰

Particularly in the Samoan (Oceanian) context, there is a need for the Church as the household of God to incorporate these shifts as mandates and agendas in their doctrines of faith. In this light, in order to be able to engage and confront the creational or ecological issues, the Church is confronted with several unfulfilled tasks and responsibilities, including the following:

** The theology and mission of God in Samoa (Oceania) must be reformed in order to create and integrate new insights for the enrichment of her mission in relation to the ecological crisis. In performing this task, creation must be taken as the framework for constructing a contextual eco-theology. Such a theology and a missiology are informed by living experiences of the community and the suffering components of God’s creation.

** The development of theological concepts, in order to be relevant in the situation, must be accompanied by the employment of local metaphors, images, and symbols as media through which the gospel is conveyed and made known to people in their own religio-cultural lifeways.

** Through careful appropriation of religio-cultural resources, the Church can embody her call to be creative, in the sense of interpreting the reality and myths of the time, and continuing to weave in new patterns, with the aim of seeing God, Creator, Sustainer and Savior who is continuously present in the work of the Holy Spirit, the life permeating Energy. This communal God demands a total option for life in its fullness rather than life that is virtually subservient to the destructive forces of evil and death.

** It is time for the Church to take up ecological and economical issues in theological and missiological discussions. Since these have been neglected for a long period of time, due to divisive views and demonized attitudes towards both, the Church is challenged and called to a reconsideration of these issues in her life and mission.

** A theology and mission of God must be grounded in a deep sense of ecumenism. Thus, the Churches are involved in networking for the common good of all, informed by the conviction of realizing the Kin-dom of God on

19 Douglas L. Chial, “The Ecological Crisis: A Survey of the WCC’s Recent Responses.” *Ecumenical Review*. Vol. 48. No. 1, (Geneva: WCC Publications, Jan, 1996), 53.

20 Park, 133.

earth. Being continuously informed by the eschatological-biblical vision of a new heaven and a new earth (and the sea!), the Church will not only proclaim a holistic message of hope but also faithfully commit herself to actualize such hope in the midst of suffering and death in every dimension of life.

9.4. Personal Reflection and Analysis

One of the profound tasks in theologizing is to analyze the reality of life and attempt to interpret anew the living situation in the light of the Word of God from time to time. This intra-generative process gives room for new theological and missiological impulses which could be implemented and integrated into the process in order to be enriched, effective and contextually make sense. It is also of appropriate, necessary and of utmost important for a person (which in my case as a pastor, theologian and co-worker in the mission of God) to analyse, criticize and reflect on one's own challenges and experiences while participating in the process. This would not only allow one to reciprocally contribute to theologization but would also be a way of its enrichment by pointing out the strengths and weaknesses while undergoing the process. The thrust of this subsection discloses some of the author's experiences, challenges and hopes.

9.4.1. Goals and Fulfillments

This work has greatly benefited from the availability of a wide scope of sources. With access to documentations on global, regional, and local ecological experiences, biblical and scholarly works, as well as the local and indigenous experiences, it is my contention that the scope covered in this piece of work has been well documented. In the process of researching and writing, access to the international libraries where old materials and sources on the Church mission and Samoan society is highly appreciated. It was also a great opportunity to learn and receive from the indigenous Samoan experiences through researching. This writing is therefore, a result of all experiences which the author weaves and condenses into a single and wholistic theological approach that fits into the trans-ecological contexts.

9.4.2. Challenges

One of the greatest hurdles in this work is the problem of how to get out of the so-called North American and European oriented-theological presuppositions and conceptions. Being challenged by certain assumptions and prejudices of the so-called Western-centric mentalities, the author felt caught up in this kind of prescriptive constructions as he was required to show his abilities and understandings on certain theological traditions, theologians and scholars' viewpoints and also argumentations on certain theological theories. While this writing represents a quest to construct an eco-theology from the Samoan (Oceanic) perspective as a way of departing from the so-called traditional Euro-American theologies, it has been a challenge in the sense that the reverse of focus has given weight to the author's perceptions, critiques, reflections and interpretations.

The author is also aware of the broadness of the topic. It has not been an easy task to compound them as ecological issues and theologizations are interrelated, multi-faceted and complex themes. Accompanied by the limitedness of communicating and writing in English as a second language, the author occasionally finds it difficult to express in depth the indigenous experiences due to misfits and the lack of foreign words and concepts required. As such, many Samoan expressions and thoughts lost their depths and meanings once they are translated. In some cases, the author tries to leave the words as they are with a close English translation although they are not necessarily the correct or accurate translations.

It was a struggle to appreciate in a positive light the mentalities and experiences that were painful and discouraging in this process. Convincing others that no culture, context, theology and a lifeway is superior or subservient to the other, and that partnership and dialoging in doing theology and mission begins with humbling oneself to accept the diversity of perspectives has not been easy to uphold. It is therefore a challenge in theologization and missionization to be open to trustworthy dialogues and be democratic in dealing and communicating, with the readiness to hear and to learn from one another for its enrichments. This is not only a way towards recognizing and respecting the integrity, validity and worth of each theology but also a means of realizing the ecumenicity in theological and missiological engagements.

9.4.3. Visions and Hopes

As previously mentioned, it is the hope that academic work written by non-Westerners in Universities abroad must not be subject to Euro-American theologies and theories, rather, they are to be in line with other contextually-disciplined studies and be recognized in relation to their essences, worths and qualities as each theology is and ought to be by nature, contextual. This goes hand in hand with the employment of local languages in doing and expressing theology in specific contexts as a way of refraining from foreign languages and ways of expressions with the exceptions of contexts where a common language of mediation is necessary.

It is also the hope that indigenous people are encouraged to put the richness and wisdom of their ancestors in writings, otherwise, they will gradually die out. Mythologies and oral traditions portray the lifeways from generations to generations. Some of these mediate religio-cultural and theological conceptions of the fore-going generations which are valuable for the present and the future life orientations. Recalling and even discovering the validity and morales of some of these religio-cultural traditions are prerequisites for progress and a way towards solidarity and livelihood of all communities.

9.5. An Eco-Ethical-Spirituality

A tradition relayed by Samoa ancestors states that, when new yams are about to be planted, a fertile place must be identified (including proper calculations of cosmic forces such as the winds, timing and the position of the sun), the soil carefully cultivated, a hole dug, then the seed planted by turning the roots upwards and the off-shoots downwards.

Cultivating and planting in such a way promises growth, fertility and good harvests. The indigenous agra-experience informs the succeeding generations on the wisdom undertaken for success and well-being.²¹

This simple parable contains four significant points of consideration. In the light of doing eco-theology and the mission of God, there is a need for new analysis, constructive criticisms, and evaluations of human theories and praxis. Additionally, there is a need to dig deep into the roots of realities which are confronting and endangering life. A reversal experience is of utmost importance as a precedence for growth, fertility, prosperity and life. Lastly, a promise of resurrected life is presupposed by the conviction that life in its fullness is gained by the harmonious co-ordination of the vertical and the horizontal dimensions. This simply means that there is no heaven without the earth and vice-versa. "If there is not a living and life-giving Earth-system anymore, there will be no humankind either, and where there is no humankind anymore, there is no Christ, no God incarnate either."²²

The contextual eco-theology of *aiga* as has been articulated, therefore, discloses the threats of life and simultaneously calls for an eco-ethico-spirituality that witnesses to the activity of the living God in creation. It takes as its point of departure the recognition of and respect for the subjective worth and identity of space, place and time. This is sustained by caring and healing potentialities contained and mediated by the regular interplay of all bio-communities. For the one world of humankind divided into categories of rich and poor, north and south, developed and underdeveloped, high and low technology, and so forth, this work calls for a re-orientation to the simplicity of life, self-sufficiency, and respect for life. This necessitates a reversal in thinking and living, or a faith-experience of *metanoia* that is informed by the compassionate love of God and the neighbor as the ground of renewal and empowerment in our commitments to justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

I concede the limitations of this attempt from the Samoan (Oceanic) context in addressing the ecological issue. But it is the hope that this attempt can be of some benefit for our local, regional and global efforts in facing the crisis of our time and the future. As one of my underlining convictions, a person as an individual body or, collectively understood, our home, household or a place of co-habitation is where we meet God and where we are identified and feel comfortable. It is Eden, not a dreaming and an ideal paradise, but an actual place where we live and move and find our being. Eden is anywhere we stay, move, and live, die and regenerate. It is the place where we find life in and with God in its fullness. But it is our common responsibility to make it ecologically sustainable, safe, and a better place to live. It is God's world and a beloved gift and we have to cherish and preserve its integrity for the generations to come. In so doing, we will feel liberated and free to sing to the praise of the triune God of life.

21 Many plants are planted with their roots in the earth. Yams according to the Samoan ancestors (my father) are planted upside down (reversed) so that their would grow well and produce a good harvest.

22 Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, "Christ in Cosmic Contexts," *Christ and Context*, 180-191.

ABBREVIATIONS

ASS	Anthropology in the South Seas
A-ZVS	<i>Anthropos – Zeitschrift für Völker und Sprache</i>
BI-JCA	Biblical Interpretation – A Journal of Contemporary Approaches
C-ANZThR	Colloquium-The Australian and New Zealand Theological Review
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CP- JIA	Contemporary Pacific – A Journal of Island Affairs
DK-EKD-KE	<i>Denkschrift der Kammer der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland für kirchliche Entwicklung</i>
EC	Ecumenical Review
EJMER	Exchange Journal of Missiological and Ecumenical Research
EKD	<i>Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland</i>
haHAT	<i>hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament</i>
IAE	<i>Internationales Archiv für Ethnologie</i>
IB	International Bulletin
JBTh – BTB	Journal of Bible and Theology – Biblical Theology Bulletin
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JIMS	Journal of the International for Mission Research
JPS	Journal of Polynesian Society
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSS-LMS	Journal of South Seas – London Mission Society
LH-DH	<i>Langenscheidts Handwörterbuch: Deutsch – Hebräisch</i>
L.M.S.	London Missionary Society
LMS	ReportsLondon Mission Society – Reports
LVTL	<i>Lexikon in Veteris Testament Libros</i>
NCC	National Council of Churches
NSThR	<i>Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie</i>
MIR	Missiology – An International Review
M – SAMS	Missionalia – Southern African Missiological Society
ÖkR	<i>Ökumenische Rundschau</i>
PCC	Pacific Conference of Churches
PJT	Pacific Journal of Theology
PJ	<i>Philosophisches Jahrbuch</i>
R.C.M.	Roman Catholic Mission
SDSC/LMS	Statement of Doctrine of the Samoan Church – London Mission Society
SIG	Studies in Interreligious Dialogue
SPJMS	South Pacific Journal of Mission Studies
SPREP	South Pacific Regional Environmental Programm
ThBINT	<i>Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament</i>
ThQ	<i>Theologische Quartalzeitschrift</i>
ThPhVs	<i>Theologie und Philosophie – Vierteljahresschrift</i>
ThWAT	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i>
ThWNT	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i>
ThZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
W.M.M.S.	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society
ZMiss	<i>Zeitschrift für Mission</i>
ZMR	<i>Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft</i>
ZRG	<i>Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte</i>

GLOSSARY

<i>aiga</i>	Family, household community or kinship in all its dimensions	<i>fale afolau</i>	An oval kind of house – traditionally made for long canoes
<i>aiga potopototo</i>	The extended family	<i>faia</i>	Relational ties, traditional rights to a genealogy and are associated with chiefly titles.
<i>'aiga</i>	To eat or feasting. Also refers to festival of celebration	<i>faia</i>	To make, form
<i>aigâ</i>	To settle a place, inhabit, to occupy	<i>fa'aaloaloga</i>	A ceremonial presentation of honour and respect
<i>alii paia</i>	The sacred or paramount chief	<i>fa'amalama</i>	Religion, light or to enlighten,
<i>alo</i>	A son/daughter in formal form of speech. Can also mean, the front, to face	<i>fa'amaseiau</i>	Testing of the virginity of the chief's daughter
<i>atalii</i>	A son	<i>fa'aSamoa</i>	The Samoan religio-cultural life-way
<i>atamai</i>	Wisdom	<i>fa'alupega</i>	A formal address of a community in traditional ceremonies. It refers to the complimentary titles used in speeches by which the body of chiefs and the heads of families of any settlement is indicated by a formal address
<i>Atua</i>	God		Likeness
<i>Aitu</i>	Spirit or ghost		To give birth, sometimes used to refer to children
<i>Agaga</i>	Spirit		Reproductive, fruitful
<i>aganuu</i>	Culture, a village lifeway		Land, womb – but particularly to the placenta (birthing organ) of a mother
<i>alofa</i>	Love. Also means, a monetary contribution for the care of pastors	<i>falatusa</i>	Being build, form, decided
<i>alofa tele</i>	A great love	<i>fanau</i>	Afraid
<i>atunuu</i>	A sequence of villages, or a country	<i>fanafanau</i>	To give, offer
<i>auauna a le Atua¹</i>	The Servant of God	<i>fanua</i>	Council of chiefs
<i>ao fa'alupega</i>	The head of ceremonial body of formal expression of recognition, associated with chiefly titles		Genealogy
<i>fa'afeagaiga</i>	The covenanted One – Pastor	<i>fausia</i>	Samoan language
<i>faifeau</i>	Pastor/Minister	<i>fele</i>	To work or an activity
<i>feazaiza</i>	Sacred covenant, the sister-brother relationship, or chiefly relationships	<i>foa'i</i>	Fish
<i>tama fa'aleagaga</i>	Spiritual father	<i>fono a matai</i>	A sacred fish – belonging to sacred chiefs
<i>auauna</i>	To serve, servant	<i>gafa</i>	Fine mats. But are considered as materials of worth (more than the worth of money to a certain extent) due to its life-redeeming vitality in the <i>fa'aSamoa</i>
<i>aulotu</i>	Congregation, Church or Faith community	<i>Gagana Samoa</i>	Jesus Christ
<i>ava</i>	A ceremonial drink – from the roots of <i>Pfefferstrauch Piper methysticum</i>	<i>galuega</i>	Act of reconciliation or a ritual of self-abasement, an apology
<i>Ava</i>	Drinking was and still is a ceremony in itself which Samoans officially perform in welcoming and saying farewell to guests, apart from other important ceremonies.	<i>i'a</i>	<i>Itumalo</i> (<i>itu</i> – side; <i>malo</i> – win) literally means the winning side. But the concept is founded on the rationale of forming alliances among villages
<i>ele'ele/palapala</i>	Soil, earth, mud. Also means blood.	<i>i'a sa</i>	The heavens
<i>'etu</i>	A deity or a venerated god	<i>'ie toga</i>	No, nothing
<i>fa'aMatai</i>	The Chiefly-system	<i>Iesu Keriso</i>	Voice. Also refers to a practise of giving comfort and encourage-
<i>fale</i>	House	<i>ifoga</i>	
		<i>itumalo</i>	
		<i>lagi</i>	
		<i>leai</i>	
		<i>leo</i>	

1 Underlined words are groups of words which belong together. They are said differently but present the same meaning.

	ment to the family of a deceased person. Through singing of hymns, prayers, and the preaching of the Word	<i>sogaimiti</i> <i>sootaga</i>	Tattooed man Relation, connection, to join things together, relatives
<i>Lotu</i>	Religion, faith, confession, or church	<i>sua</i>	A ceremonial act of honor and respect presented to guests or visitors by the hosts
<i>Lotu Toga</i>	Church of Tonga (Methodist Church)	<i>suafa</i> <i>taeao</i>	A name or a title Morning, an opportune time, an occasion to mark an event
<i>Lotu Taiti</i>	Church of Tahiti (Congregational Church)	<i>tagata</i>	Person, humankind
<i>Lotu Pope</i>	Church of the Pope (Catholic Church)	<i>tala o le vavau</i> <i>tala tuu</i>	Myth/mythology Oral traditions
<i>malae</i>	A village green, a ceremonial place of chiefly gatherings – Dorfplatz	<i>tama popoto</i> <i>tama'ita'i</i> <i>tane</i> <i>tapu</i>	Clever boys, knowledgeable guys A lady Man or husband Sacred, taboo, or set under a divine restriction
<i>mana</i>	Super-natural force, vital power, or spirit	<i>tapuaiga</i> <i>tapuaiga nofonono</i> <i>tapu'e</i>	Worship, a household taboo A silent-sitting worship To heap up with soil, to nurture, teach, etc.
<i>manao</i>	Want, like, in need of something	<i>tapui</i>	Tabooed. Also means to preserve in order to grow well.
<i>manava</i>	To breath, to inhale	<i>tatau</i>	Tattoo which relatedly means, one is entitled to do something.
<i>manaia</i>	A son of the paramount / sacred chief. Also means handsome or beautiful	<i>taulaitu/taulasea</i> <i>taulaga</i> <i>taupou</i>	A Priest/or shaman Offering, sacrifice Daughter of a paramount / sacred chief
<i>manu</i>	A bird (also used for animals)	<i>tausala</i>	Woman, lady, lover, or a price for one's redemption.
<i>manuia</i>	Blessing, wellbeing, welfare	<i>tini</i>	Chants sung in traditional marriage ceremonies
<i>masani</i>	Used to or familiar with	<i>tino</i>	Body, embodiment, or body of relationships via blood, titles, social affiliations or friendships.
<i>matafaioi</i>	To be responsible, responsibility, duty	<i>tofia</i> <i>tulafale</i>	Chosen, elected, ordained An orator (part of the chiefly system)
<i>matai</i>	Chief (as chief and/or orator)	<i>tupua</i> <i>tupulaga</i> <i>tupu</i>	God or a divine statue Generation To grow. Also used for King.
<i>mataupu silisili</i>	Theology	<i>tupu Sili</i>	Highest king
<i>matua ofaiva</i>	A chief builder or carpenter	<i>Tusi Paia</i>	Bible
<i>matua</i>	Parents or elderly people	<i>uluola</i> <i>vaa</i> <i>vaevae/vaelua</i>	To multiply, to produce life Boat, canoe To divide, sort out / to divide or separate into two halves
<i>Mau</i>	steadfast to a conviction (A Movement against the Rule of Foreigners)	<i>vanimonimo</i> <i>vao</i>	The Universe Crass, forest, or use to mean a multitude
<i>mea ai</i>	Food	<i>vaosa</i>	Sacred forest or land
<i>mea faigata</i>	A difficult thing, hard event		
<i>mea ola</i>	Living being/s		
<i>Me</i>	Church's monetary collection (CCCS – in May). Also practiced by the Methodist Church. Roman Catholics express it differently		
<i>nuu</i>	A village/s.		
<i>ola</i>	Life or to live. Also applied when a mother gives birth to a child		
<i>olataga</i>	Salvation, redemption		
<i>ola atalilfaavavau</i>	Eternal or everlasting life		
<i>oti</i>	Die		
<i>papalagi</i>	White man, foreigner		
<i>patele</i>	A priest		
<i>Pese</i>	Hymns, sing		
<i>poto</i>	Knowledge, clever		
<i>pule</i>	Authority (translation of 'to dominate or to rule over' in Gen. 1: 26)		
<i>sami/moana</i>	The sea or ocean		
<i>Saualii</i>	Spirit or ghost		
<i>siapo</i>	Traditional ware, cloth		

APPENDIXES

App. i Samoan *Fale* – House

A *fale* symbolizes, defines and expresses *aiga*. It bespeaks the order, character and confines of the world of *aiga*. The existence of *fale* on specific locations recalls the status and rank, history and meaning of a certain unit, ranging from a deity/dieties that inherit the locality, the name and the story of the place, the family title related to it, family members, together with the account of living components (like stones, trees, rivers, mountains, etc.) that mark and define the boundaries of the settlements. Traditionally, the decision to build a *fale* depended primarily on the approval of the ‘hosts of Gods.’ The Gods were consulted not only for the authorization of the sites/house foundations, the materials used in the work (such as trees, stones, etc.), but were also called upon for the impartation of the divine gifts of wisdom and strength to the *matua o faiva* (leading builders – usually old men) and the *aiga sa le malama* (sacred family of wise builders). Calling upon the Gods involves the providential blessings of the land and sea, as well as the wish for fine weather for the success of the work.

Traditionally, *fale* were built on a raised stone-foundation, in oval shapes, and with openness of spaces inside and outside. The construction of the *fale* coincides with worship. This means that while the builders and able members of the community participate in the building work, other members, especially the elderly members, simultaneously offer acts of worships, calling upon the blessings of the Gods for guidance, protections and strength. Besides the ordinary worship, official ceremonial worship was offered after each main part of the *fale* was completed. The deities of the *aiga* were petitioned while the community obediently cooperated in the construction.

App. ii Song of *Siovili*

<i>Su ane la le vaa i na folau,</i> <i>Su ane la le vaa i na folau</i> <i>Ulai! Ulai!</i>	Dash did the ship of the two sailors through the waves, Necklaces! O Necklaces!
<i>Ua taunuu ane i Baratane, Ofiai le alii o le langi.</i> <i>Ulai! Ulai!</i>	A great king (chief) of the skies (heavens). Necklaces! O Necklaces!
<i>A togai faifeau ai, A togai faifeau ai.</i> <i>Ulai! Ulai!</i>	Cry to be sent, cry to be sent, Necklaces! O Necklaces!
<i>Se auvili lasie i la folau lotu, Vai ola ua tului i Eva.</i> <i>Ulai! Ulai!</i>	And the living water has come to Eva Necklaces! O Necklaces!
<i>Su ane la le vaa i na folau,</i>	Dash did the ship of the two sailors through the waves,
<i>Rua tau nuu ae i Balanefe</i> <i>Ulai! Ulai!</i>	And the two arrived at Botany Bay, Necklaces! O Necklaces!
<i>Ofi ai le alii tele, Sili nuu oni manu tele</i> <i>Ulai! Ulai!</i>	The Governor is a great king, Necklaces! O Necklaces!
<i>Su ane loa le vaa i na folau,</i> <i>Su ane loa le vaa i na folau</i> <i>Rua tau nuu ae i nuu o alofa</i> <i>Ofiai le alii o Jehova.</i> <i>Ulai! Ulai!</i>	Dash did the ship of the two sailors through the waves, The two reached the land of compassion. A great Lord is king Jehovah. Necklaces! O Necklaces!!

App. iii Lady *Sina* and the Origin of the Coconut Tree

Tagaloa Funefeai, a paramount chief of Safune village, married Ulufa’asili, the daughter of Tuliaupupu of Vaimauga district in the island of Upolu. The couple lived in Safune at Vanumaisu and had two beautiful daughters named Sina. With the sudden death of the father, the mother took care of the girls. Later, Sina, the eldest daughter, was taken away to inherit the Tagaloa title, leaving the younger sister to stay with the mother.

- 1 Williams, *JSS 1832-1833*, 10f. See also J. Freedman, *The Joe Gimlet or the Siovili Cult: An Episode in the Religious History of Early Samoa*, 188., (English translation only). There are some of the versus which need the correct rendering in relation with the Samoan understanding and conceptions. See also some variations and conceptual renderings by Richard M. Moyle, ed. *The Samoan Journals of John Williams 1830 and 1832* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1984), 110 ff.

While Sina's duty was to take care of her mother, her daily routine was to go down to the coast to fetch sea-water for food preparation. In one of her coastal visits, she found out that she had fetched an eel (*tuna*) inside her bowl of sea-water. So she decided to keep the creature inside a bowl of water as her pet. As the eel grew bigger, she built a pool inside the rocks² for the creature's security and care. The pool became smaller and was extended, until Sina could not build it anymore.

Sina's relationship to her pet was intimate and had even come to the point that the eel was attracted to her and began to sexually harass her. She observed also that the eel sometimes changed its behavior to that of a human being. Without knowing that the creature was a human being (believed to be the Tui Fiti – Paramount chief of Fiji), the lady was afraid and decided to secretly escape. She crossed the forest and reached the village of Safune where she was invited by the chiefs to join in their meeting. The chiefs recognized that there was something happening by her facial expressions, and they wanted to find out what it was. She told them the reasons, and the chiefs told her to go and wash her hands in the *vaia* (sacred pool) so that she could mix the *ava* for the village ceremony. As Sina was facing down to wash her hands, her eyes captured the watchful eyes of the eel staring at her. Being afraid and discontented, she said to the eel: *E pupula mai mata o lou alelo* (your watchful eyes look like a shit) and quickly ran to the guest house.³

The chiefs, knowing that they could not protect the lady from danger decided to send Sina to her mother's family on the island of Upolu. She then started her escape for refuge.⁴ Since the escape was carried out with the support of villages related to Sina's families, the eel felt that his life was in danger and decided to take secretive measures in order to get her. As chiefs of one village sailed to the island to take Sina to her mother's family, the eel climbed the mountain tops of the whole island of Savaii so that he could watch from there where Sina and the crew sailed. As she looked back while sailing, Sina saw the eel acting as an observer and an overseer. This is confirmed by a proverbial saying: *Ua se i'a e moe mauga o Salafai* (Mountains of Salafai/Savaii is like a sleeping fish).

Sina arrived in her mother's village. At the same time, the eel arrived and settled in a nearby water spring. When she went to take a bath at the pool early in the next morning, she was shocked to see the eel staring at her. She escaped to the other pool, but there the eel was also present. There, the eel attempted to sexually harass her but she refused. Upon her refusal and feeling rejected, the eel made a 'covenant' to farewell Sina. He ordered Sina to cut off his head and bury it in the land. And if a tree grew on where his head was buried, she must take care of it in memory of him. Sina did so, and a few years later, a tree sprang up and bore fruits. Sina picked a fruit from it and husked it. There, she saw the face of her eel once again. And as she kissed and opened her mouth to drink from the coconut, she then remembered the covenant of love and the promise of a new life from her lovable yet hated friend and the difficult relationship with the eel.

App. iv Traditional Division of Samoa – Island of Upolu as an Example

On one fine day, *Tagaloa* looked down from heaven and marvelled when his eyes caught the beauty of a woman while she was bathing in a pool. Being caught with surprise and wonder, God adored her beauty by saying: "When you turn your back, it is like the sunrise in *Saua*." God's desire to marry Sina grew. In his pursuit to take her as his wife, he summoned all the beings of the universe to find out who would go down to the world to obtain the woman to be his wife. *Tagaloa*'s former wives, upon hearing this wish, mocked him saying,

Shame on you *Tagaloalagi*
That you wish for a woman of the Earth
Which is full of flies of the land and the froth of the sea.
Shame on you.⁵

Without heeding this grumbling, *Tagaloa* immediately ordered Thunder and Storm to go down to earth to get Sina. After furious roaring and blowing in the world, the two forces failed to get her as the woman was afraid and re-

2 The Samoan concept *foa le papa* is translated here as such. But it can also mean, to engrave in order to form a pool.

3 The pool changed its name to from *Vaia* to *Mataolealelo* up until today.

4 There are historical landmarks which are associated with Sina's escape. For example, in the village of Avao, when aware of what was happening, the chiefs put a ban on the eel's entrance in their land and declared to take revenge. This ban is called: *Salei'a* (literally – not allowed for the fish i.e. eel), a name of a piece of land in the village. There is also a pool called: *Vai o Sina* (Sina's pool) where Sina drank during the escape and saw the eel again.

5 Gatoaifaana P.S. Sio, *Compass of Sailing in Storm*, 8.

mained in a cave. Lightning and Darkness were sent, followed by Rain, but all these attempts failed. Tagaloa then called Losi, the leader of all beings of the divine universe, and made his wishes known to him. Losi, upon hearing the wishes of his master, had a very constructive plan. He called his assistants, Quiet Wind and the Dew of Life, and commanded all the clouds of heaven to assemble on one side. Losi also ordered the Sun to shine brightly and to warm the earth. After this, the land became warmer and warmer, and the woman found it uncomfortable to stay in the cave.

Knowing that Sina needed cool fresh air, Losi called Quiet Wind and the Dew of Life to come forth to bring coolness to the earth. The cool and fresh air forced Sina to come outside the cave, and at the same instant, Losi threw his net down and caught her. She was then brought up to heaven and became the wife of God-Tagaloalagi. The royal couple was blessed with a son named Pili, a name to commemorate the event of his mother being captured and taken up to heaven. The joy of the marriage and the receiving of the newborn son moved Tagaloalagi to build three houses, each one designated for one of the three of them.

When Pili grew old and knew that his mother was from the earth, he decided to visit the place and also the mother's family. Pili's father, although reluctant about the proposal, finally gave in and granted his son three special items. He was given Losi's fishing net, the *ali* (a wooden pillow, and the bamboo plant. Tagaloalagi told Pili what to do with these when arriving on earth. The people of Manua were surprised to see a new human being on the island. They thought of him as the one who had fallen from heaven. So Pili's name was changed to Pilipau or the 'one falling from heaven.' Pili visited his grandfather's residence and introduced himself. Upon this, Tuimanua was filled with joy to see the son of his daughter who had for a long time been lost. Pili then started net-fishing to provide for Tuimanua's meals and he caught, in most of his fishing, *ia sa* (sacred fish – turtles).⁶

Pili proceeded to the islands of Upolu and Savaii, engaging in fishing, and he was very successful with his catches. Accordingly, when the boats were filled, the rest of the fish were poured back to the sea, and thus originated another proverb: "*Ua saa i tai le upega o Pili*," or "the fish from Pili's net were poured back into the sea."⁷ Pili later became a friend of Sinaletavae, the daughter of Tuiaana. They finally got married and was blessed with five children. The first-born were male twins, Tua and Saga. The names commemorated the portions of the sacred fish which were provided for the high ranking Chief's meals. The third boy was named Tolufale (*tolu* – three; *fale* – house), which commemorates the three houses built by Tagaloalagi for them in heaven; the fourth was named Ana; and the youngest named Siumumunanitama, who was regarded to be a peacemaker between the quarrelsome twins, Tua and Saga.

Pili became old and while he was lying on his deathbed, he called his sons to come before him and he proceeded to allocate to them their heritage. He spoke to his sons:

You, Tua, go to the east side of Upolu with the planting stick. Your heritage is to till and cultivate the land for all. Saga will settle the central part of the island with the *fue* (swish) and the *tootoo* (staff) to be the speaker for all your brothers. Tolufale will go to the west, and he will only *silasila ma maimoa* (watch and observe) how things work in relation to the administration of the island. Besides that, Tolufale will be protected by Ana who is given the *tao* (spear) and the *uatogi* (club). Lastly, Siumumunanitama will live between Tua and Saga to (be) *pulumisa* (peacekeeper) because the twins are not of the same heart at all times.⁸

After exhorting and encouraging his sons, Pili breathed his last breath and died. But the death wish was obediently observed and carried out by the brothers. The story mirrors the origins of the cultural and traditional divisions of the country into their peculiar responsibilities and privileges which have lasted up to modern times.

- 6 Turtle or *Ia-sa* was a sacred fish of Samoans in former times. This is due to the fact that only chiefs were allowed to eat this fish. There were also special portions of the fish which had already been designated for chiefs according to their status. For example, the *tua* (back or shell) and *saga* (front part beneath the head) were given to chiefs of higher ranks.
- 7 The Samoan proverbial saying is used in the context of giving praise for abundance and plenty. Usually in ceremonies where feasting becomes the concluding part, an orator will present a speech to express the heartfelt thanks and gratitude of the people when there is plenty and everyone is satisfied. Dr E. Schultz states that the saying from the mythology of Pili can also be applied to the loss of some benefit anticipated or already obtained, particularly when it is loss through negligence. See E. Schultz *Samoan Proverbial Expressions: Alagaupu Faa-Samoa* (Auckland: Polynesian Press, 1980), 12.
- 8 Sio, 11. Some information on this legend were gathered from discussions with Orator Tuuu Kolonevile Tofaeono, Vaipou Sanele, and Lole Ioane. Cf. Malama Meleisea and Penelope S. Meleisea, eds. *Lagaga*, 29-32. The retelling of the story in the present form is the author's translation.

App. v *Tino* – Body

Etimologically, *tino* is interchangeably used to refer to family associations (refer to introduction). In the inter-personal level, *tino* is either use to connote the body of an individual, an organisation of people related to each other, either biologically (including chiefly titles), geographically (places of habitation), and/or by religio-cultural affiliations. The term is inclusively used to connote the body of islands as indicated earlier.

One example of seeing the world as body is related to the division of islands. For example, the island of Upolu is named after the parts of the body: *Ao o Atua* – (the head or origin), *Tuamasaga* (the twin – duality of the backbone), and *Aana* (root or a grounding in a cave, or simply the deep). The other island (Savaii) is also divided into two main parts known as *itu o tane* (male side) and *itu o tamaita' i* (female side). For the whole of Samoa, the island of Manua is known as the *pogai* (main stem), whereas other islands are known as *tino*, *lima ma vae* (body, hands, and feet or branches). Besides calling the islands in such a way, the mountains were called *tuasivi* (backbone).

Mountains were and are seen not only as boundary markers, but were also the living habitations of the Gods. Mountains serve several functions in the Samoan understanding. By creating boundaries, they indicated the geographical order on the one hand, while, on the other hand, they build up connections to other parts. This kind of cosmological consciousness was shaped by the understanding that the creator of every island embodied itself and settled several parts of the sea or landscape. In other words, the Gods were conjoiners of boundaries; Gods and mountains are much more than boundary markers. As such they are imbued with a high aura of mystery and sanctity.

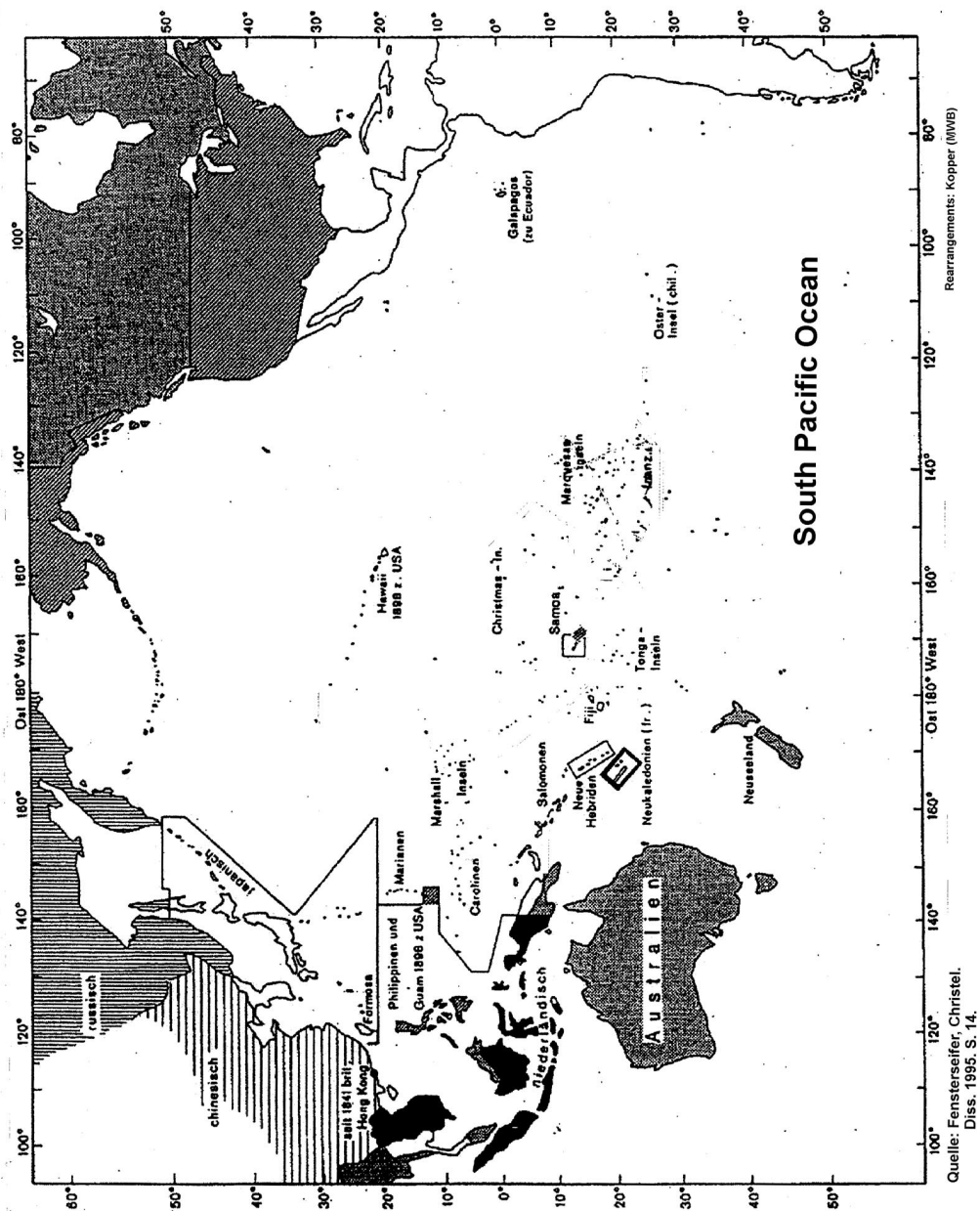
App. vi The Concept *Tautua Aiga*

Tautua means functions or any service performed in order to support *aiga*. The concept is also constituted by the term *fatuaigatausi* (heart, build, care for), which means a centre of life that creates and builds up the life of the family. It relies on energies that mediate as well as responsive actions taken to produce, reproduce and sustain the well-being of the household. The word consists of two syllables; *tau* (touch, hit, harvest, fight, weather/climate), and *tua* (back, backbone, to lean, depend on). It is generally agreed that the concept is derived from the practise of carrying loads of food and important materials on shoulders or with the support of the backbone. It is related to the religio-cultural activities which involve the harvests and fish-catching, the production of wealth and material goods for the livelihood of *aiga*. In this sense, it has connections with the creative activities or divine potentialities beyond life's successes so to curses. Thus *tautua* is employed to imply any kind of service performed or mediated in and through any kind of potentiality, and it includes every respective effort taken by every habitable member, regardless of the worth, shape, age, gender, status, and influences a member inherits. It can be performed verbally, intellectually, spiritually, or socially. Regardless of the degrees and the temperaments each effort works, what involves and important is to act and react in order to get the whole household to function constantly and effectively.

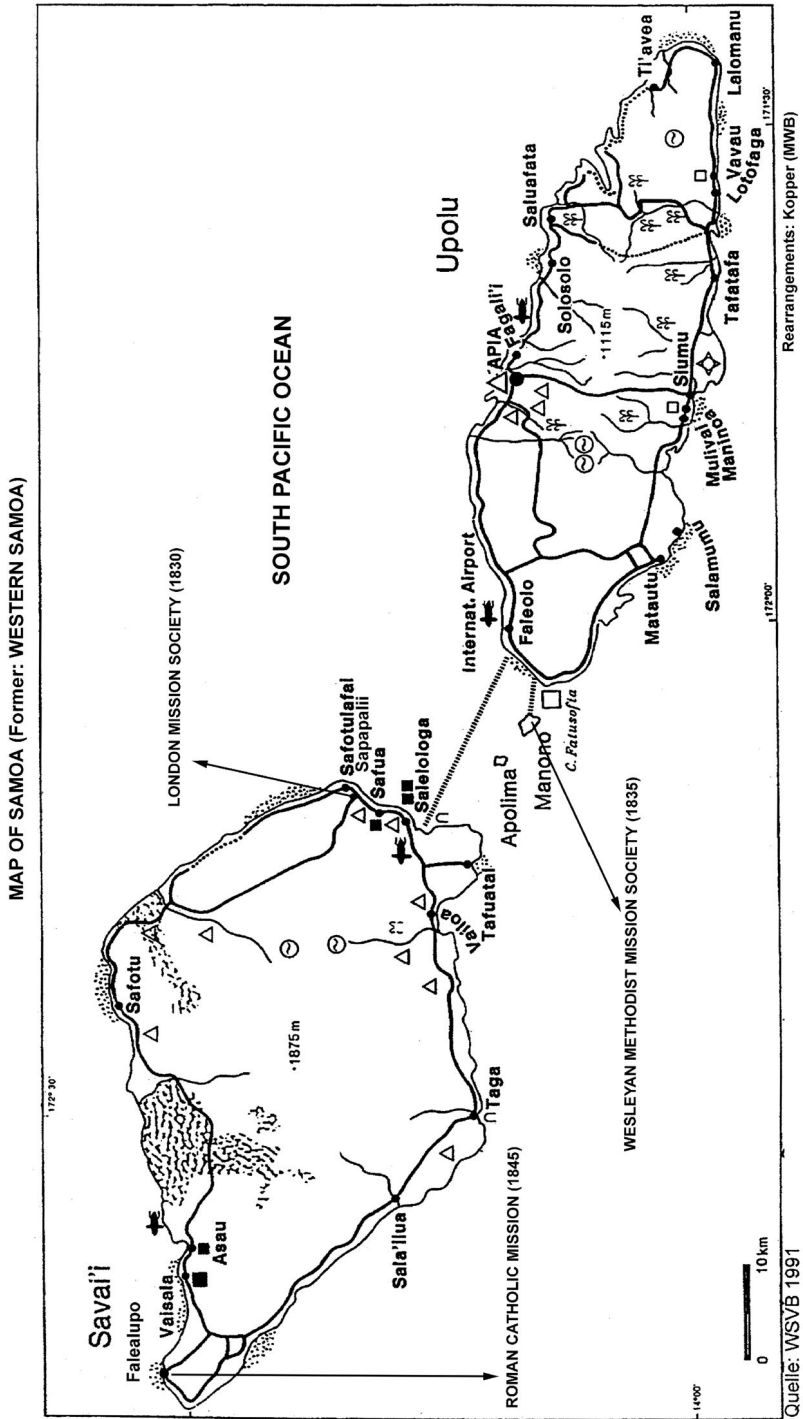
On the personal level, *tautua* bespeaks both the services and the one who performs services for the sake of *aiga*. In most cases, the emphasis is placed on the work performed by adults and elderly people. It goes hand in hand with age, strength and the charismatic gifts one has, and it is linked with *Mana* and *Tapu* (divine power, wisdom, and taboos). One performs in order to serve the other and vice-versa. Services are (inter)personal, interrelated, interdependent, reciprocal, dynamic, productive, and communal. The life of *Aiga* relies solely on the performance of *tautua* by every related and able member. The services a person plays not only define his/her personal identity, but the character and the qualities one has, as well as those of one's *aiga*. In the religio-cultural reality, the significance of a person and the role one plays in *Aiga* is of utmost importance. The works and efforts a person contributes to the services of *aiga* have significance in every level of life, such as in thinking, speaking and acting. *Tautua*, then, suggests that the livelihood of *Aiga* depends on a back-up support and the interdependence of actions that maintain its very life.

MAPS

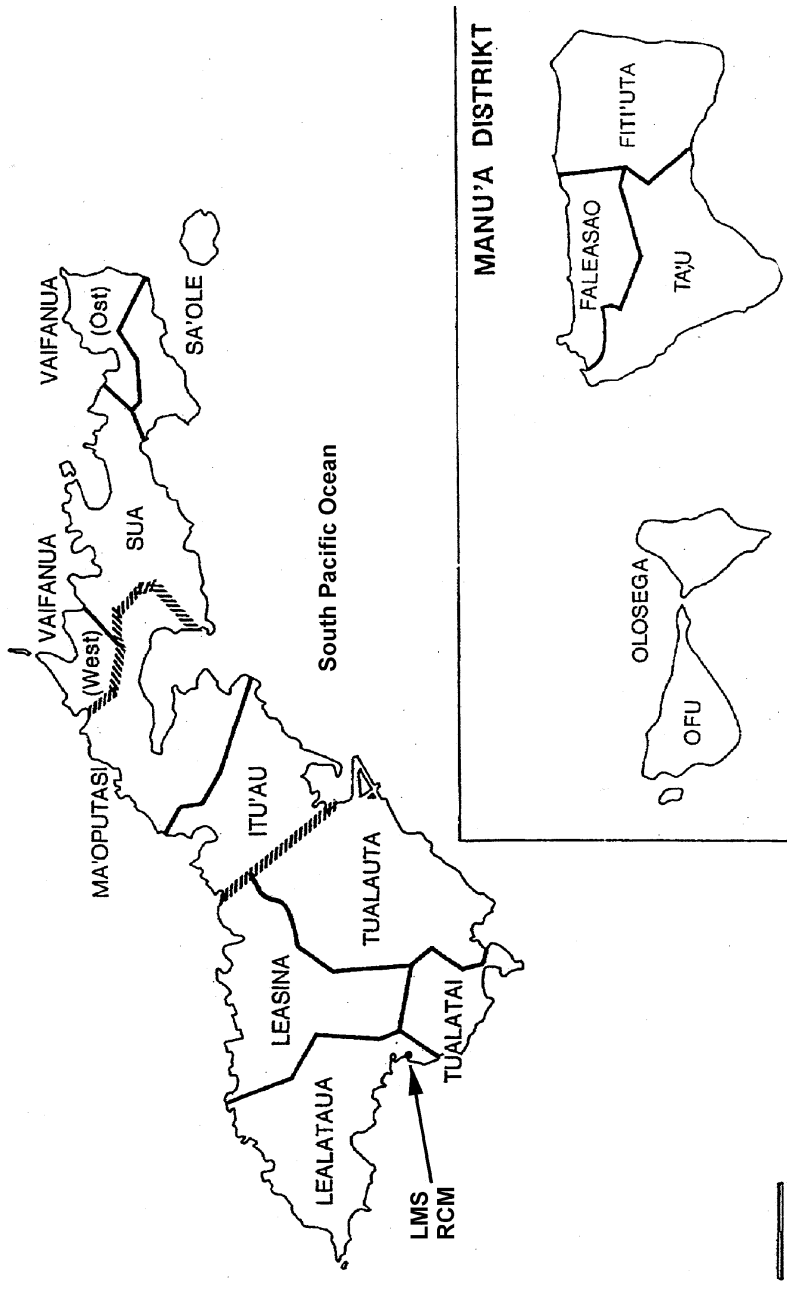
Map I Oceania



Map II Samoa (former: Western Samoa)



Map III American Samoa



Rearrangements: Kopper (MWB)

Quelle: ATLAS OF AMERICAN SAMOA.

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