Towards *Fatele* Theology: A Contextual Theological Response in Addressing Threats of Global Warming in Tuvalu

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By

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This thesis is dedicated to the followings:

My parents

Talia Maina Salasopa and the late **Lise Moeafu Talia**, OBE.

Mum, your fatele's will remains as living text for the Tuvaluan generations in their search for the presence of the Divine.

And my grandma

Silaati Telito, in celebrating her 90th Birthday.

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"matua fakaasi mai
me pefea au nei
ite vaka nei seki uta
i malae o tagata"

[*fatele* by Lise Moeafu Talia]

Maina Talia

TTCS, May 2009.

ABBREVIATIONS

IPCC	Inter-Governmental Panel for Climate Change
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
EKT	Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu
NRG	New Religious Group
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
AOG	Assembly of God
TWRM	The world-rejecting movement

GLOSSARY

afu	designated place of worship
agaga	spirits
aitu	demons
aliki	chief
aphar	top soil
atua	god
ava fakaaloalo	respect
cogito ergo sum	I think therefore I am
fakafolau	a capital punishment, force to drifting in a canoe
fakagamua	communal free-labor or voluntary work
fakalogo	obedience
fakamaoni	integrity
fatele	traditional dance
fakee—kailao	traditional way of shouting
faleaitu	house for gods
falekaupule	house of authoritative or house of words—house of men

fanua	placenta
fanua tanu	burial place
faoa	fishing crews
fenua o ika	island of fish
fenua,fanua, laukele—	
manafa,potu, nuku and *tia*	chain of words for land (Tuvalu)
Igoa o manafa	names of lands
kai tokotasi	eating by oneself
kaiga-aliki	council of chiefs
kolokolo	local strings
komiti fafine	women's committee
lima-malosi	strong arm—young ladies and men of the community
lotu	church
mana	supreme power or efficacy
manafa-kaitasi	eating together from the same land
matai o kaiga	leader of family
mataniu	extended family members
matua ofo	volunteer mother
mea ote pouliga	words of the darkness
moana pouli	deep dark sea
muna ote lima	words of martial arts
namo	lagoon
nuanua	rainbow
parousia	Christ second coming
pito	umbilical cord
pulotu	*fatele* lead singer
kaiu	selfish
sina o fenua—	
kaupule or *te taumatua*	council of elders
tagata o fenua	people of the land
tao aliki	assistant chiefs

tapuakiga	love/traditional way of presenting gifts
tapui	to tie around/marked a sacred place
tautai	fishing captain
tautua	servant-hood
toa	warrior
tupe Falani	French money
tupua	idols
vaka-atua	prophet-fortuneteller
mukomuko	young nut

ABSTRACT

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Title: Towards *Fatele* Theology: A Contextual Theological Response in Addressing Threats of Global Warming in Tuvalu

Advisor: Prof, Dr. M.P. Joseph

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This study aims to construct a contextual theology that unites the people of Tuvalu in response to threat of global warming related sea level rise. Although the problem of global warming affects the whole planet, this study will only focus on Tuvalu. Attempting to resolve the danger that the people of Tuvalu face in daily life one contribution towards finding human strategies to resolve the global crisis.

Construction of contextual theology creates critical awareness in the people of Tuvalu regarding the danger of global warming related sea level rise. After establishing such awareness, *fatele* (Tuvalu traditional dance) is proposed as a contextual theology employed to unite all of Tuvalu in one voice to respond to the danger of global warming related sea level rise. As the Tuvaluans respond in a united fashion, they unite within the presence of the Divine in performing *fatele*.

Utilization of *fatele* theology will aid Tuvaluans to see the importance of solidarity. In the same way, the churches of Tuvalu should pay attention to the significance of *fatele* and adopt it as a theological methodology to unite their members to combat global warming and other pressing issues of the present time. *Fatele* theology invites all to participate by singing and dancing to resolve this global crisis.

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CHAPTER ONE

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

A. Introduction to the study

Tuvalu as a nation is on the brink of extinction. Small island atolls lying across the ocean without mountains are vulnerable to climate change. Some scientists hold the opinion that the rising sea level is a product of global warming. This problem is not confined to the people of Tuvalu alone. It transcends context. The issue of global warming related sea level rise gains wide currency everywhere, because it is a matter of life and death. In the larger picture, the contemporary issue of global warming requires all human beings to fully participate, in solidarity to do justice to recover and restore the wounded mother earth. Collective efforts will minimize and decelerate the process of global warming.

Some scientists predict that global warming related sea level rise will result in the displacement of a large number of environmental refugees, not only from low lying atolls but also from other nations which are vulnerable. Where are these environmental refugees going to go? Are any nations willing to accommodate millions of environmental refugees? Is there possibility that environmental refugees can relocate without loss of culture and identity? These questions reveal the danger that people currently face. Losing way of life, culture and identity is equivalent to death. Global warming related sea level rise is a dilemma. It affects human totality not only in particular places but also in the world at large.

Negotiations between the governments of Tuvalu, Australia and New Zealand have gone for a while, but have not produced positive answer for accommodating Tuvalu's people. Australia and the New Zealand have offered working schemes for Pacific people as migrant labour.

These negotiations do not stop the danger that the people of Tuvalu experience all year long. Visible signs of rising sea in Tuvalu are more than enough to show the danger that people encounter. The danger and the effects of rising sea level influence the lives of the people and disturb their cultural ways of life. Tuvaluans are forced to live in different styles from their habitual ways. This is because most of the land affected by sea level rise is now is unfit for cultivation and fish are dying because of the heat. Climate change patterns change, the weather is unpredictable, and droughts are expected. These effects are considered major dangers to the people of Tuvalu.

The religious institutions, Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu (EKT) and New Religious Groups (NRG's) are important as prepares and shapers of people's spiritually. The people's mentality and attitudes towards nature derive from the church teachings. If churches preach that nature was given with the purpose to serve and provide for humanity and humanity to dominate, then exploitation of nature by humanity should not be questioned. If humanity was created with the intention of looking after God's creation to establish a good human relationship then the exploitation of nature by humanity should be a primary concern of churches.

Taking the issue of ecological crises—the global warming related sea level rise of the present time by churches as their primary focus in mission, highly contributes to resolving the global crises that affect the lives of humans here and there. It does not mean that taking up ecological problems as primary concerns by Tuvalu's churches by cancelling out other issues. But, since humans are responsible for the cause of global warming related sea level rise, human strategies should be developed to mend the crisis. The root of this crisis has nothing to do with God; the devastation of life and earth resulted from human breakage the covenant with God. Part of this broken covenant is global warming related sea level rise, which destroys humanity. The good news is it's never too late to promote prevention and reestablish a mutual relationship between human beings and nature.

B. The Problem

The result of global warming related sea level rise is the number one pressing issue faced by the people of Tuvalu. Its impacts affect the entire population. It is recognized as a problem, but the people do not all respond to the danger. Since others are not responding to these danger brought about by global warming related sea level rise, creates major problem. The problem not only deals with the people's faith but also is a theological challenge to the churches to reconsider traditional theology in relation to the ecological crises.

Proposed adaptation projects for costal areas and land elevation are in process of and are later to be implemented. All attempts fail if there is no critical awareness of the problem and the danger of global warming among the Tuvaluans. Non-response is

rooted in the lack of awareness. It is no longer valid to say, “Prevention is better than cure.” The stage of prevention has long passed. Tuvaluans experience the danger in their daily life. Today, Tuvaluans should be talking about curing and healing the problem. But, Tuvaluans will never reach the goal of healing if there is lack of awareness of what will happen in the future.

Moreover, there are no signs of radical shift in the way people live their lives, neither any urgent response to the danger. Government and church officials only respond by voicing out people’s concern at the international level, in conferences. This makes the issue of global warming related sea level rise a theoretical issue rather a practical one. But people at the grass roots who suffer the most have not taken any action of radical nature. Rather, then planting coconuts and mangroves around the shore. Response to this global issue needs more than planting coconuts and mangroves. It should be a total shift in the people’s mentality toward the present life. Those who don’t respond should not be blamed. Their non-response shows that the church and the community had done little to illuminate the problem.

People’s non-response drives this study and analysis. What makes the people continue to be silent? What are the social, political, economic and religious factors that cause people to deny reality? Does the present theology of the church contribute to the lack of concern? Does the church’s theology shift in a dynamic way to counter present crises? It is critical to evaluate the theological stance of churches in Tuvalu in order to suggest new theological models to liberate churches from traditional theology. A suggested theological model will lead people to speak of God in the light of extinction of land and people.

C. Research Methodology

The employed methodology of this study is inter-disciplinary while remaining within the premise of approaching the problem from a theological perspective, and undertakes a critical analysis of the context. The aim of this analysis is show the danger of global warming related sea level rise, to expose factors that hold back response, and to construct a contextual theology to counter the problem of non-response. Distance and time impair empirical survey. Journals, books electronic sources and government official presentations will be analyzed and used in this study.

D. Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to construct a contextual theology to aid Tuvaluans to see and respond to the danger of global warming related sea level rise. It aims to construct *fatele* as a contextual theology to promote awareness of global warming and rising sea level and the danger of denial of the horrendous reality that the people of Tuvalu are moving into. Since denial of reality is encouraged by a textual reading of the Bible, churches cannot hide from the critical responsibility to initiate new discourses that entail action.

Fatele theology will provide a new theological perspective in response to the problem from a Tuvaluan standpoint. *Fatele* theology will be employed as an understanding of communal togetherness intended to locate the presence of the Divine in the midst of people suffering the consequences of global warming related sea level rise. A particular attempt to counter the danger posed by global warming

might rise to a global context as a major contribution from Tuvaluans towards resolutions of this global issue.

E. Thesis Content

Content is arranged to construct a contextual fatele theology to unite Tuvaluans as a nation and respond to the danger of global warming related sea level rise.

Chapter one introduces the danger faced by Tuvaluans by: 1) defining global warming and describing world responses; 2) discussing the effects of global warming related sea level rise on Tuvaluans livelihood; and 3) identifying how religious bodies such as the EKT and NRG's respond to the issue. Review of the responses leads to the need to construct contextual—*fatele* theology.

Chapter two provides analysis of the context of Tuvalu. It: 1) introduces Tuvalu geographically and ethnographically; and 2) touches on the analysis of the effects of global warming on Tuvalu's, social, political, economic and religious institutions.

Chapter three reviews prevailing theological discourses in the Tuvaluan context in order to discern theology related popular ideologies. These theological discourses show why people do not respond to the problem.

The last chapter attempts to construct a contextual theological inquiry to reunite the people across their differences. Inaction and denial of reality give birth to *fatele* theology. *Fatele* will be employed in the sense of collaboration (reflected in performing *fatele* at the social level). *Fatele* is sung to remind the church and the

people of Tuvalu that hope for monetary compensation and relocation are not solution for the problem. Waiting passively for these to happen while doing nothing to slow down the process of global warming is an outright crime. *Fatele* functions to rediscover the prophetic voice of the Church and to look beyond the horizon. The church cannot afford to sit back and relax while the people suffer the outcome of rising sea level. *Fatele* theology helps the people see the will of God. It is not to provide solution to the danger that the people of Tuvalu encounter, but create awareness that opens up people's eyes to see their role as human beings in God's creation and to promote justice.

CHAPTER TWO

GLOBAL WARMING: ITS DANGER TO THE LIFE OF THE PEOPLE OF TUVALU

The primary focus of chapter one is to introduce the phenomena of global warming in the particular context of Tuvalu. The danger and effects of global warming related sea level rise to all aspects of life in Tuvalu will be discuss to unveil the seriousness and the danger of the problem. After discussing the danger of global warming related sea level rise, this chapter will seek to explore how the people are responding or not responding to this phenomenon. Knowing for the fact that not all are responding, therefore there is a need for a new theology to assist the people, to create awareness and to unite the community in the process. Therefore, the last part of this chapter will talk about the need for new theology, the theology called "*fatele* theology," which emerges out of the Tuvaluan cultural milieu.

A. Global Warming and Climate Change: The Rising Sea Level

The phrase "global warming" simply means that the average temperature of the globe increases. The global surface temperature increased 0.74 ± 0.18 °C (1.33 ± 0.32 °F) during the last century.[1] Greenhouse gases have a mean warming effect of about 33°C (59°F), without this average temperature Earth would be uninhabitable. [2]

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[1] "Summary for Policymakers" Climate Change 2007: *The Physical Science Basis Contribution of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. IPPC 2007.

[2] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Chapter 1: Historical Overview of Climate Change Science," *IPCC WG1 AR4 Report*. International Panel on Climate Change, 2007, 97. (PDF page 5 of 36), http://ipcc-wg1.ucar.edu/wg1/Report/AR4WG1_Print_Ch01.pdf. (accessed May 1, 2009).

In 1824 Joseph Fourier a French mathematician discovered the effect of greenhouse gases. In 1896 Svante Arrehenius a Switish Chemist investigated their effect.[3] His findings reveal that global temperature has risen since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the mid-1700s, which adds more of these gases to the atmosphere. For example, level of carbon dioxide, a powerful greenhouse gas, has risen by 35 percent since 1750, largely because of the burning of fossil fuels coal, oil, and natural gas. With the large amount of greenhouse gases released, the atmosphere acts like a thick blanket that traps more heat.[4]

The annual output is 7 billion tons of carbon per annum released to the atmosphere. Human economy exceeds the capacity of atmosphere, forests, oceans and soil to absorb its carbon emissions.[5] The increased rate of greenhouse gases release by industrialized countries mirrors the injustice of economic relationships betweens between the North and the South. The root of global warming related sea level rise is excess consumption in the North, which deprives the South of resources. The appropriate balance between consumption and available resources and an equitable

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[3] Spencer Weart, "The Carbon Dioxide Greenhouse Effect," The Discovery of Global Warming. American Instituite of Physics. http://www.aip.org/history/climate/co2.htm. (accessed May 1, 2009).

[4] Mastrandrea, Michael, and Schneider, Stephen H. "Global Warming." Microsoft® Student 2008 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2007.

[5] Micheal S. Northcott, "Embodying Climate Change: Biogeochemical Limits to Trade and the Contradictions of Liberalism," in *Theologies and Cultures: Earth in Jeopardy*, Vol.III. NO.2 June 2006, 35.

use of these resources over the globe leads to a distinctions—between the "luxury emissions of the rich" and the "survival emissions of the poor."[6]

The threat of anthropogenic climate change emerges from the ideological and political condition of late liberal capitalism. As a result of global warming, the sea level rises 20 centimeters and it is predicted that it will raise range from 1 to 7 meters because of polar ice melt.[7] The sea level rise threatens the lives of the people living in low-lying places, especially in Tuvalu when where highest elevation of land is approximately five meter above sea level.

Tuvalu is not the only country that has suffered from global warming related sea level rise. Millions of inhabitants of costal areas have lost their homes to rising sea. In Nigeria, up to 4 million people will be displaced and Lagos will be underwater often a one-meter rise of sea level. Shanghai, China will lose about one-third of its area and displace over 6 million people. In Egypt, 10 million people will be uprooted and much of the fertile Nile delta will be submerged.[8] Bangladesh, the Maldives and Pacific islands, which practice traditional agriculture, contributes nothing towards carbon emissions but totally fall victim to this problem.

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[6] Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth Community Earth Ethics*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 143.

[7] The International Panel on Climate Change estimates a 1 metre sea level rise by the end of the twenty-first century but they assume that Greanland and the Antarctic ice shelf will remain largely intact; IPCC, "Synthesis Report," Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. New evidence reveals that Greenland glaciers are moving, and melting, much faster than the IPCC predicts: Seteve Connor, "Melting Greenland Glacier May Hasten Sea Level Rise," *The Independent*, July 25, 2005.Cited in Northcott, "Embodying Climate Change," 33.

[8] Mark Ketchum, *The Evidence of End Time Prophecy*, (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publisher, 2002), 7.

Visible signs of displacement and environmental refugees are apparent already and more are expected in the very near future. The threat of this phenomenon is experienced in numerous places. The threat of rising sea level in Tuvalu was best explained by Bikenibeu Paeniu at the Inter-Governmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) conference: "We are the most vulnerable of the most vulnerable countries, I need not remind the conference that the whole issue of climate change to us is not of economics and politics, but is of life and death."[9]

Scientific reports and findings on the effects of global warming and its effect on Tuvalu are not necessary for Tuvaluans themselves. Tuvaluans do not need the explanations and predictions of scientists, researchers or government officials. They can see and feel the impacts for themselves when the ocean crashes into their bedrooms more and more nights every year.[10] Nevertheless, what stops them from responding when they see visible signs of global warming everyday? Why they don't they respond when extreme predictions say that Tuvalu will be the first nation to disappear from the face of the earth.[11] The establishment of various organizations to deal with global warming—climate change are signs of active response from concerned people around the world.

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[9] Nick Fraser, ed., "Before the Flood: Tuvalu" *A Documentary*, BBC 2002.

[10] Moya K. Mason (2008) "Tuvalu: An Overview" http://www.moyak.com/researcher/resume/papers/Tuvalu.html (accessed March 23, 2009).

[11] M.P Joseph, "Where is your sister/brother?: Carbon Civilization defile faith in God," (A Paper presented at the Church of South India Synod Consultation, India) 1.

1. World Response to Global Warming and Climate Change

Global warming is not an issue pertaining to Tuvalu alone, but incorporates the whole world, especially countries that face climate change problem. However, the issue of climate change became the interest of governments and Non-Government Organizations. Their participation, along with the initiation of several organizations relate to the issue, was an attempt to bring peace and harmony to the world.

a. The Establishment of Inter-Governmental Panel for Climate Change

At government levels the issue of climate change also became a vital topic of their agendas and policies and a notable theme of global conferences starting in 1988, when the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) established the IPCC. Within this conference, were climatologists, scientists and government officials who are fully participate in this conference. Most of the scientist have seen this conference as the last occasion where scientific opinions on climate change gained recognition before being overshadowed by the political and socio-economic interest of the world ruling government.[12]

b. The Kyoto Protocol

Moreover, another concrete mark of the inter-governmental concerns for this global crisis was the eruption of the Kyoto protocol that was established in Kyoto, Japan in 1997. The initiation of the Kyoto deals with sets concrete targets for

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[12] Paula Di Perna, "The Climate Negotiations: Politics and Posturing: A Report from Geneva," *The Earth Times* (July 31- August 15, 1996) 16. Cited in Ama'amatele Tofaeono, *Eco-theology: Aiga-The Household of life*, (Freimund-Druckerei: Neuendettelsau, 2009), 40.

developed countries to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming. The Kyoto Protocol is a supplementary treaty to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and went into force in February 2005. There are more than 130 countries are party to it, with this figure set to rise; so far, however, the United States (U.S) has refused to ratify the treaty. When George W. Bush became a president in 2001, he supported the motion for the U.S not to ratify the international treaty. He claimed that the treaty would harm the U.S. economy and was unfair to industrialized nations because developing countries were not required to control their emissions.[13]

Bush further says that: "I will not commit our nation, to an unsound international treaty that will throw millions of our citizens out of work."[14] This is mainly the reason he refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol treaty. However, "by refusing to ratify the Protocol, the U.S. has effectively denied future generations of Tuvaluans their fundamental freedom to live where our ancestors have lived for thousands of years," says Paani Laupepa.[15]

Under the Kyoto Protocol, developed, or industrialized countries are subject to legally binding commitments to limits their emissions of the six main greenhouse gases: carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons,

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[13] "Kyōto Protocol." Microsoft® Student 2008 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2007.

[14] George Bush, A speech in responding to Kyoto Protocol, in Nick Fraser, ed., "Before the Flood: Tuvalu" *A Documentary*, BBC 2002.

[15] Lester R. Brown, "Tuvalu—First Victim of Rising Ocean Levels," http://www.truehealth.org/climnw05.html, (accessed, May 1, 2009).

and sulfur hexafluoride. In general, the treaty calls for industrialized nations to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 5 percent below 1990 levels. The target goals must be accomplished by 2012, and commitments to start achieving the targets begin in 2008.[16]

These established organizations reflect the world as a whole binding together to help reduced the problem. However, it does not mean they have put a stop to the danger that the low-lying atolls are encountering, because not all are responding in the same manner. Therefore, let us consider the danger of global warming related sea level rise encountered by the people of Tuvalu.

B. The Dangerous effects of Global Warming Tuvaluans encountered

A small nation like Tuvalu who totally relies on their land and the sea as their only sources of survival has been affected by global warming. Like any other third world countries they depends on their land for their survival. The land is very important to any human because it carries their identity. Traditionally for most Oceanians,[17] land is life and more. In the Oceanian setting, the land, sea and sky are the backbones of life and the main resources of religio-cultural heritage. Just like the blood that flows to nurture and maintain life. In deeper sense of talking about the land, Sevati Tuwere describe *fanua* (land) like a mother to most Pacific people in terms of its 'unquestionable waiting-presence." Like a waiting mother, the *fanua* is

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[16] "Kyōto Protocol." Microsoft® Student 2008 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2007.

[17] The term 'Oceania' is highly used now in theological discourse rather than using the Pacific. Oceanian theologians claim the term Oceania or *Moana* (ocean) should be employed in any theological discussion, which reflect the present context of the oceanians, which are affected by the ocean-sea.

always there to receive her inhabitants back. In relation to land and sea, it is a home for the living and a resting place for the dead.[18]

Our motherland or our home is now facing critical problem and her essences started to fade away. However, Tuvalu is vulnerable in almost every aspect that is affected by global warming. Tuvalu has no streams and rivers, poor soil and many other conditions that intensify the risk of environmental crises that may result from global warming related sea level rise.

1. Land, Costal Erosion and Storm Surge

In Tuvalu, the sea has eaten up our land. Erosion has resulted in family losing their lands and it is more than 90% of the communities live close to the coast. Sea level rise, overland flooding, storm surges, tropical cyclones and major hurricanes are the main causes of coastal erosion, including the destruction of coastal coconut tree plantations.[19] In every coconut plantation, which is planted along the coast, the sea has taken down two to three rows within a period of ten years. Coconut supplies daily drinking from green nuts and for making toddy. Almost the entire population engages in cutting copra as a mean of earning money. Dried copra was the nation's chief export. Much of the land area, which was occupied for planting coconuts, is no longer

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[18] See, Tofaeono, 45; 181-2

[19] *"Tuvalu's National Adaptation Programme of Action: Under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change,"* (Funafuti, Tuvalu: Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment, Agriculture and Lands, 2007), 12.

of any value. On the nearby islet of Vasafua the coconut trees are dying because of seawater and droughts. Entire atolls covered with trees have been stripped bare.[20]

Coconut Plantation at Tefaga Nanumea

Source: Moya K. Manson, "Tuvalu: Flooding, Global Warming, and Media Coverage"

The rapid change in weather pattern together with the tidal phenomenon has become an annual natural disaster. In the past, floods were known to occur two or three times a year. Now they seem to come monthly. The island of 'Tepuka Savilivili' on the rim of Funafuti atoll was over washed by waves resulting in the destruction of all of its vegetation. Then the entire island simply vanished in 1997.[21]

[20]Moya K. Mason, "Tuvalu: Flooding, Global Warming, and Media Coverage," http://www.moyak.com/papers/tuvalu-climate-change.html (accessed March 3, 2009).

[21] Manson, "Tuvalu: Flooding, Global Warming.

When coasts are destroyed, people have no options but to move inland for security and livelihood. Even in Small Island like Tuvalu, 'ecological refugees' are increasing.[22] However, another danger people encounter inland is also flooding. Most islands in Tuvalu have a lagoon located in the middle of the island so the sea from outside eating the coastal, while the lagoon eating inland, added more stress to the people. Thus, there are three major dangers for the people: costal erosion, overcrowding and economic drops due to major loss of coconuts that produce copra for the market.

Because of inland overcrowding, the debate on land distribution among family members comes into play claiming their land for relocation and for survival. The issue of land distribution has become a major problem for the people in Tuvalu. The increased number of family members and the decrease of land space gave birth to the idea of private ownership. More and more families appear in court appealing for division of land. Privatization of land ownership is one of the negative impacts of sea level rise. The diagram below further explains the danger the both internal and external sides of the land areas, which has been affected by the sea.

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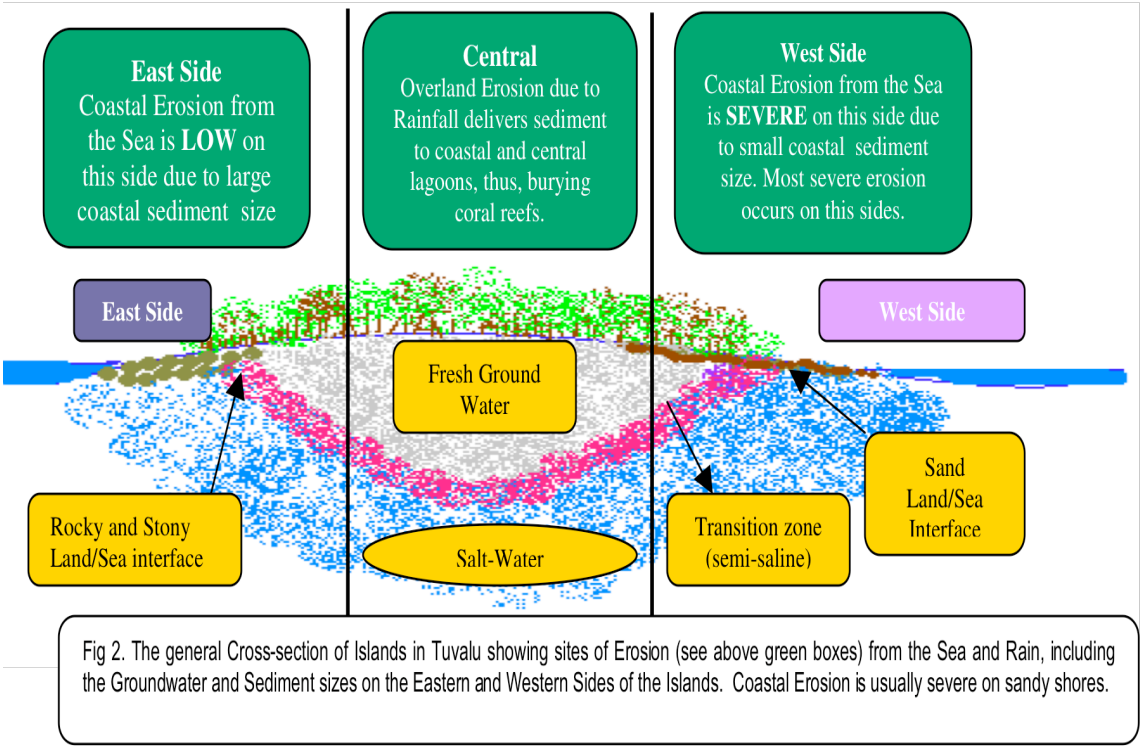
[22] Tafue Lusama, "Where are you God? The impact of global warming on Tuvalu," in *Theologies and Cultures: Earth in Jeopardy*, Vol.IV. NO.1 June 2007,12-3.

General Cross-Section of Islands in Tuvalu



Source: Tuvalu's National Adaptation Programme of Action

When the sea rises from outer side coastal areas, it does not mean the lagoon remains constant. Therefore, people who are living in both sides are affected; they have to move further inland to ensure their survival. The question should be asking here is the availability of food inland to supply the entire community inland.

2. Food Security

Talo and *pulaka*, which are considered most important root crops and staple diet, planted deeply in order find water. However, salt water has seeped into the inland pulaka pits making them unfit for further cultivation. The direct impact of salt-water intrusion due to sea level rise on groundwater will result in the loss of *pulaka*

productivity. More than 60% of *pulaka* pit plantations have been devastated by seawater.

However, seawater intrusion does not only affect *pulaka* but also fruit trees.[23] In some places, three-quarters of the plants have died. Fruit trees such as banana, coconuts and bandanas are also suffering because of soil salination.[24]

If the very basics of life sustainability are ruined, the people ought to rely on imported foods. Most people who are going through these sufferings are from outer islands, which jobs are limited and ship-distributed foods seldom come. This is especially in the northern regions of this island nation.

3. Water Resources

The three main sources of water are: rain water (main source), underground—well (supplementary) and desalinated water (recently introduced for emergency use only). Most families depend on rainwater collected from rooftop into their water cisterns.[25] Shortages of water are critical national challenge resulting from climate change due to the unpredictable changes and variability of climate change. Groundwater used to be an alternative to rain water as needed and the main source of water for agriculture. During the 1999 *El Nino* there were prolonged periods of water

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[23] "Tuvalu's National Adaptation Programme of Action," 27.

[24] Manson, "Tuvalu: Flooding, Global Warming."

[25] Lusama, "Where are you God? 11. IPCC 4AR – WGII Chapter. 16:- in the Pacific, a 10%reduction in average rainfall (by 2050) would lead to a 20% reduction in the size of the freshwater lens on Tarawa Atoll, Kiribati. Reduced rainfall coupled with sea-level rise would compound this threat. Many small islands have begun to invest in the implementation of adaptation strategies, including desalination, to offset current and projected water shortages.

shortage, in August of that year a sate emergency was declared for Nanumaga and Niutao. Another state emergency was declared in November for Funafuti.[26] That same year Motufoua Secondary School on Vaitupu was forced to close due to the shortage of water and Groundwater could not supply the whole school. The Vaitupu island community dug many wells for survival. Then the wells turn salty and undrinkable, trees turned yellow, and the toddy sap decreased to zero.

Ground Water: Polluted and Undrinkable

Generally, water resources are not centralized because each private household collects rainwater. Family water storage is insufficient due to the increased urbanization of Funafuti where demand for water exceeds water storage capacity. Water scarcity is a common problem particularly in Funafuti both during dry seasons (June-September), but also during the wet season (October-March). To meet the

[26] *"Tuvalu's National Adaptation Programme of Action,"* 25-6

demand for water, desalination technology was introduced in 1999. The desalination plant is also open to the threat of pollution by poor waste management, which degrades the water quality and brings diseases and health problems.[27]

To ensure survival, family rainwater and groundwater have became privatized, unavailable to extended family members and neighbors. Island communities started selling water, collected from modern meeting halls and desalinated water produced by the island local governments. It implies that God's gift of water for human survival is available only where there is money. The poor who remain in their old houses and depend upon groundwater are the ones who suffer.

4. Coral Reefs and Marine Resources

The population of Tuvalu relies on the ocean's natural resources as the primary source of protein.[28] Since Tuvalu islands are formed of coral reef, our first line of defense against storm surges is coral reefs. Recent studies indicate that the sea surface temperature of Tuvalu is 29°C with seasonal variation of +/-0.5°C. The result of temperature rise is coral bleaching and of some marine species diversity are

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[27] *"Tuvalu's National Adaptation Programme of Action,"* 19; 28.

[28] United Nation Framework Convention of Climate Change, "Tuvalu Initial National Communication Under the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change," http://unfcc.int/resource/docs/natc/tuvalunc1.pdf. (accessed March 20, 2009). See also, "*Tuvalu's National Adaptation Programme of Action*," 24.

destroyed.[29] Disturbance on Tuvalu's coral reefs will pose major problems of food security and weaken our first line of defense against climate disasters.

Another negative impact, which brings disastrous to Tuvalu economy, school of fish has moved to nearby zone to find the right temperature for their survival. Because of the temperature raised of the sea, recently, fish are found dead in a very large number are considered a waste (Tuvaluan's called this period *kaupa*). During the *kaupa* there is little or no tidal flow in or out through reef passages for more than two days at a time. Therefore, various ponds of water within the reef will become very hot in the daytime, caused suffocated on fishes. Not only the fishes are affected but seaweeds also dying. This period is known as a time that there is a bad smell because of the dead and decaying marine organism.[30]

From these dead and decaying of Marine's organism, open another possibility for disease through flies. Nevertheless, the rapid growth of population and the swift lost of fish during this hot period will certainly bring a scarcity of marine resources. Therefore, dependency on the market increases.

5. Health Problems

Change in the condition of drinking water creates health risks for the whole of Tuvalu. In tropical or sub-tropical zones whose weather and climate that are favorable

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[29] L. Buckley, *Environmental Survey of Funafuti Atoll*, 1983. Cited in *"Tuvalu's National Adaptation Programme of Action,"* 29.

[30] Samasoni A. Finekaso, "Traditional Marine Ethnobiodiversity and its Application to Inshore Marine Resources Management in Tuvalu: A Case Study of Vaitupu and Funafuti Atolls, Tuvalu." (MAMS thesis, University of the South Pacific, 2005), 143.

to the transmission as malaria, dengue, filariasis, food and water-borne diseases. Other climate-sensitive diseases of concern to small islands include diarrheal diseases, heat stress, skin diseases, acute respiratory infections and asthma. The observed increasing incidence of many of these diseases on small islands is attributable to poor public health practices, inadequate infrastructure and poor waste management control.[31] Waste management system in Tuvalu, especially in Funafuti is not reliable. Septic tanks often leach out to the groundwater, which is return brought to the surface during high tides when low ground gets flooded and results in increasing of water-borne diseases.[32] Moreover, the problem of overcrowding in Funafuti contributes to the fast spread of diseases that lead to critical health conditions.

The danger and threats to existence is further explained in words of our former prime minister, Saufatu Sopoaga at the 58th Session of the United Nation general assembly in 2003: "We live in constant fear of the adverse, impacts of climate change. For a coral atoll nation, sea level rise and more severe weather event looms as a growing threat to our entire population. The threat is real and serious, and is of no difference to a slow an insidious form of terrorism against us."[33]

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[31] Inter-Governmental Panel for Climate Change, "Climate Change 2001: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability," Cambridge, 2001, 864, www.ipcc.ch/pub/reorts.htm, (accessed, April 21, 2009).

[32] *"Tuvalu's National Adaptation Programme of Action,"* 28.

[33] Brian and Helena Cannon, "Tuvalu and Global Warming," http://www.tuvaluislands.com/warming.htm, (accessed on March 20, 2009).

C. Churches' response to global warming

Visible signs of the danger of global warming that has mentioned above need not to repeat its seriousness and the urgent necessity for the people's actions to be implemented. Positive actions started to emerged such as the church involvement in government organization for climate change and participating at the international and local level voicing out their concerns as victims of global warming related sea level rise. However, it does not mean the entire populations are in the same line of responding to the danger that they encountered every single day in Tuvalu.

1. Review of Survey: The people's response

A survey conducted by the EKT showed that up to 20 percent of the church-going population denied the reality of global warming. They hold strong to their faith based on the Noah narrative that there will be no more flood sent to destroy humanity. Those most likely to accept the Noah narrative, and therefore doing nothing to save the country and nature, are those aged between 40 and 60 upward.[34]

These are EKT members. If 10 percent of the population who belongs to the NRG's who hold strongly to Noah narrative as an absolute is included, the number increases to 30 percent who believe that there will never be any destruction by water. Added to the 30 percent of climate change deniers are the majority of EKT pastors

[34] Kim Cain, "Noah's rainbow worries some Tuvalu church leader's" Available on: http://www.journeyonline.com.au/showArticle.php?categoryId=2&articleId=1686, (accessed, March 22, 2009).

who, respecting the Bible ended up refusing to respond as a team and as a nation to this catastrophic issue.

2. NRG's and the Poor in Society

Additionally, NRG's denied global warming. Fundamentalist Christians argue that the Bible is inspired word of God, as if its very words were spoken directly from the mouth of God, so that the Bible is absolutely without error.[35] This literalist method of reading the scriptures leads to inaction and a blind acceptance of "what is." Treating the Bible as inerrant means that any social phenomena that are at variance with biblical teaching are regarded as untrue. Global warming related sea level rise that threatens to flood Tuvalu and eliminate all life is seen as a contradiction to biblical truth, and is therefore denied.

The next categories of people who are less concerned are the poor. It does not mean they are not concerned because they do not care about the environment; they are less concerned because they are deprived of the right to life by the riches and the advantages people of society. The poor depend heavily on natural resources for their living because they cannot cope with modern lifestyle.

Furthermore, the debate on global warming has been conducted in a foreign language that is beyond the poor's understanding. Alienation of the poor from such debates leads the poor to confess, global warming has noting to do with them. Global

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[35] John Parratt, *A Guide to Doing Theology,* (Great Britain: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1996), 23.

warming is a problem of the elites and the rich who are engaged in the capitalist world. Why worry is nothing to do with us?"

3. A Concern for Unity: Initial Point of Combat

Tafule Lusama, the social justice secretary of the EKT, who also represented the country to UNFCC in Kenya, is actively involved in the Tuvalu National Climate team. He was confronted with the problem that the whole population is not in line in responding to global warming. He stated: "If our people do not accept the reality how can we unite to fight it? How can we respond as a nation if we deny we have a problem, and we are dealing with our very survival?"[36] Lusama brought into light the danger if the people are not united in the global combat. The initial step to fight against the issue of global warming related sea level rise is to unite as one nation.

However, the most dangerous thing to happen to any society is when people are not responding as a community. The, fragmented community in Tuvalu can only be united through the employment of traditional and cultural practice best understood to them, not only to educate them but to create a positive consciousness, that compels them to act and respond. Global warming related sea level rise is an issue pertaining directly to Tuvaluans who should not leave it for others. Either they declare that they have no part in this global phenomenon or claim that they are innocent. They have to do something. Desmond Tutu stated: "Resolving the ecological crisis of our planet, however, is no longer a problem we can leave to scientist. Just as we are all part of

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[36] Cain, "Noah's rainbow worries some Tuvalu church leader's."

the problem so we are all also part of the solution."[37] Therefore, there is an urgent need for constructing contextual theology to unite all Tuvaluans to wage the fight for survival posed by the danger of global warming.

D. The Need for a New Theology: *Fatele* Theology

The majority of the people living in Tuvalu have never been exposed to the outside world and they have limited excess to the language in which debates on global warming have been carried out. Since 30 percent of the people do not respond to the issue of global warming, the danger is amplified. To fail to respond to the present reality it is equivalent to committing a crime. The proposed *fatele* theology embraces the whole community to responds as a wounded community.

Fatele is a traditional local dance. It is compulsory for all people of the community, young and old, poor and rich, to participate by singing and dancing. Since the problem of global warming is neither an individual problem nor a family problem but one that faced by the people of Tuvalu, constructing *fatele* theology, which is both indigenous and contextual for the people will be a groundbreaking theological discourse and reunite all Tuvaluans to join the chain of *fatele* in responds to danger.

The heart of *fatele* theology is to re-strengthen and intensify the concept of communal life, which is found within the chain of *fatele*. Re-establishing this Tuvaluan aspect of life will enable the community to join together regardless of

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[37] Norman Habel, *Foreword to The Earth Story in the Psalm's and the Prophet*, by Desmond Tutu (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001), 7.

differences in the spirit of *fatele*, a sprit of togetherness and oneness that shows the world that Tuvaluans are one in body, mind, and spirit as we respond to the danger we encountered. *Fatele* theology, will loudly speak about our liberation, and the problem of relocation. Within the sphere of *fatele*, no doctrinal set of beliefs neither class division is mandated. *Fatele* theology is not about identifying significant features or attempted to interwove God to give a solution to the problem of global warming. Indeed, *fatele* theology will be employed to identify the presence of the Divine in the midst of our struggle, trying to locate God in our defining moment.

E. Summary

The danger of global warming has led Tuvaluan people's lives to a defining moment. The sea has eaten the land. Crops cannot grow well. Underground water is salty. Coconuts are falling down. Fish are dying out. The subsistence economy is highly affected. Tuvaluans are forced by the danger of global warming to totally depend on the imported food in the market to sustain life. Dependence on the Market raises questions of affordability of living in such a life style. The dreadful experience of depending on the market is the loss of identity and the concept of communal living will diminished.[38]

It is also clear that Tuvaluans are not united in the fight against global warming. Various divisions among the people lead to neglect of the reality of life. The construction of *fatele* theology will help the community to embrace all various divisions within society to combat global warming.

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[38] Lusama, "Where are you God?" 12.

After seeing the danger of global warming to the life of the people in Tuvalu, the next chapter will discuss how global warming influences and reshapes the life of Tuvaluans.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS OF THE CONTEXT

Chapter two sets forth the danger of global warming and its potential effects on the very life of the people of Tuvalu. Tuvalu's response to this conceivable calamity has been disappointing. Not all of Tuvaluans are responding in a serious manner to the issue of global warming. This chapter's primary objective is to analyze of the contemporary context, to examine how global warming affects Tuvalu's social, political, economic, and religious institutions.

A. Tuvalu at the glance

Tuvalu is an independent Polynesian island nation located in the Central Pacific Ocean midway between Hawaii and Australia. Formerly known as the Ellice Islands, they separated from the Gilbert Islands after a referendum in 1975, and achieved independence from Great Britain on October 1, 1978. The population of 11,636 (est. 2005) live on Tuvalu's nine atolls, which have a total land area of 10 square miles, or 27 square kilometers. This ranks Tuvalu as the fourth smallest country in the world, in terms of land area.[39]

The small inland mass of low lying coral atolls make Tuvalu vulnerable to climate change caused by global warming. Yet, even after years of information regarding the islands' ill-fated circumstance, many Tuvaluans have not shown seriousness in addressing global warming. Though some have migrated to other

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[39] Brian and Helena Cannon, "About Tuvalu," http://www.tuvaluislands.com/about.htm, (accessed on March 23, 2009).

island-nations in the Pacific, many still remain on the islands. Understanding their perception of the threat of global warming requires examination of the socio-cultural context in Tuvalu.

> Strictly speaking, Tuvalu traditional society operates mainly on a communal life basis. This means that the whole pattern of life-style whether politically, socially, economically or religiously oriented, is basically lived according to communal principles. These in fact make the people do things, work their way and live together as a community. In fact a strong and cohesive unity is always present.[40]

B. Socio-Cultural Setting

1. Council of Chiefs and *Vaka-atua*

Tuvaluans lived their lives under the control of the *kaiga-aliki* (council of chiefs). From its very beginning, Tuvalu valued this system as the center of well-being. The major role of the *kaiga-aliki* is to maintain prosperity, security, and peace within society.[41] *Kaiga-aliki* controls the temporal and secular life of the people, and traditional leadership was part of their role.

Equal to the *kaiga-aliki*, are the *"vaka-atua"* (prophet-fortuneteller), who control the people's religious affairs. When the *kaiga-aliki* and the community

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[40] Filoimea Telito, "The Impacts of Social Change on the Tuvaluan Family," (BD thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1982), 11.

[41] Each aliki's is assigned to a particular area to maintain prosperity. For example, one aliki will be assigned to look after a land. One example is the land in Vaitupu, which is divided into two main villages, Asau and Tumaseu. The aliki would announce that during a particular month, the people of the island would use one of the villages to get their food - either coconuts or local crops. If, for example, the Asau side is chosen, it is also the responsibility of the Tumaseu side to reproduce. This system presently exists in theory but not in practice.

experience calamities and famine, they turn to *vaka-atua* for assistance.[42] *Vaka-atua* performs shamanistic rites, and serve as mediators between the gods and the people. They were well respected, supported by the common people and not required to labour. The *vaka-atua* overrules the *kaiga-aliki*.[43]

Beneath the *kaiga-aliki* are the *tao aliki* (assistant chiefs). Their role was to advise the *kaiga-aliki* mediate between the people and the chief and vice versa. Moreover, they organized public works, fishing expeditions, and so forth.[44]

2. Communal Life is the center of our living

Communal living in Tuvalu functioned under the hierarchical leadership of the *aliki*, supported by *matai o kaiga* and their family members. This political structure is best described in sociological terms as the traditional "indigenous model." Under this system, all parts of a given society are affected—there are no atomistic, individual persons, autonomous social classes or groups, sharp separation between functional religious beliefs and the regent leadership. The effects of the system are pervasive.[45] A positive feature of the model is the way that every person is required to

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[42] Sofala L. Nofoaiga, "A Historical Study of the Interaction between the traditional leadership and Christian Leadership in Tuvalu," (BD thesis, Kanana Fou Theological Seminary, 2007), 10-11.

[43] Laumua Kofe, "The Tuvalu Church: A Socio-Historical Survey of its Development Towards an Indigenous Church" (BD thesis., Pacific Theological College, 1976), 13-14. In the past they were known as *vaka-atua*, now they are called *tino fai vailakau* (magicians).

[44] Pasoni Taafaki, "The Old Order," in *Tuvalu: A History*, ed., Hugh Laracy et al., (Suva; Fiji: University of the South Pacific, 1983), 20.

[45] Ibid, 33.

participate and work together. Additionally, there is no visible sign of division between rich and poor.

Individualism and isolation have no place in such a society. Each member has a part to play in building the society. Individualism is essentially a Western product, reflected in Rene Descarte's understanding of the self, "*Cogito ergo sum*" (I think therefore I am). A communal sense of identity is also found in the African's slogan, "I belong, therefore, I am," and in the Palestinian villager's conception, "I reside in this village, therefore I am."[46] Samoan's show their communal society in the saying, *"e le tu fa'amauga se tasi"* (no one stands like a mountain). Tuvaluans say, *"seai se mea lei ite kalo-vao"* (you will never find anything good in the bush). Society is life. Only through interaction between people will life be born.

Emile Durkheim employed functionalism to explain interactions between individuals. From this perspective, each part of society contributes to the stability of the whole. Breaking away to establish one's own empire leads to major change, causing the society to readjust towards stability. Religion and its sets of beliefs provide a great source of stability within society.[47]

This basic pattern of Tuvaluan society since it's beginning has seen stability and prosperity until recent times. Religion has always been the central to the worldview of Tuvaluan society. Everything evolves from it. However, there are

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[46] David W. Augsburger, *Pastoral Counselling Across Cultures,* (Philadelphia: Westminister Press, 1986), 82.

[47] Margaret L.Andersen and Howard F. Taylor, *Sociology: Understanding a Diverse Society,* (Belmont, California: Thomson, Wadsworth, 2006), 20.

signals in society of a new paradigm shift, which concern for Tuvalu's self-identity on a sociological basis.

3. Care and Share concept

In the next level, the way of life in Tuvalu can be described as the share and care system. One may say that, life is totally controlled under this system. Life is lived for the betterment of others, to ensure that neighbors are well taken care of. This has been central to Tuvaluan culture since decades before the arrival of Christianity and Europeans. This system of life can be described as the free exchange of goods without expectation in return. The exchange of goods goes beyond the concept of the market the buying and selling concept. If a family gives their neighbors a basket of fish today, tomorrow they might receive green coconuts. Sharing of local resources among the people never result in poverty.

Moreover, "these transactions highlight sociability and compassion rather than material gain or narrow economic rationality, and include 'gifts' given in response to recipient need as well as requests made to others for assistance."[48] Goods and food are not exchanges trade, but as gifts. This is the heart of the way of life in Tuvalu. Houses stand without walls, symbolizing open hands and the readiness of hearts to give and help others.[49]

> While fish is highly perishable and few households have refrigerators, Nanumeans could bake or salt their surplus fish for the future use.

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[48] Keith and Anne Chambers, *Unity of Heart: Culture and Change in a Polynesian Atoll Society,* (Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc, 2001),127.

[49] Tafue Lusama, "Punishment of the innocent: The problem of Global warming with Special reference to Tuvalu," (MAR Thesis, Tainan Theological College and Seminary, 2004), 35

> Instead, they frequently choose to share their surplus with relatives and neighbors, as local norms prescribe.[50]

The concept of sharing has no boundaries.

> In Tuvalu a very close friend, member of family and neighbors must be given whatever they ask for. This was central to the very strong in-built social security in the community. To be selfish (*kaiu*) is to be despised and a laughing stock in the village.[51]

On the same level of sharing, Puafolau Poeala an old man from the island of Vaitupu simply refers to this concept as *tupe Falani* (French money). The phrase *tupe Falani* simply refers to the sharing system that was common throughout the community.

In addition, customs such as *matua ofo* (volunteer mother)[52] and *sai taina* (honorary siblings) create a mutual relationship between members of the community and ensure that they remain connected with one another.[53] Unconsciously, these customs function in a way to maintain the spirit of sharing and care for one another.

Global warming related sea level rise has affected this concept, and changing the people's perspective of societies. People are now more concerned for their children's future. Preserving and managing of resources is a long-term concern. The unpredictability of droughts and the change in weather patterns has affected the people's interest in sharing and caring for others. It is now wise to store fish in the

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[50] Chambers, *Unity of Heart*, 134.

[51] Finekaso, 48. See also, Kiste, Robert C. "Tuvalu." Microsoft® Student 2008 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2007.

[52] Volunteer mother, a ceremonial kinship role undertaken by distant female cousins of a newborn child father. See Chambers, *Unity of Heart*, 254. This practice *matua ofo* is commonly practiced by the people of Nanumea.

[53] Chambers, *Unity of Hearts*, 230.

fridge for bad whether conditions rather then sharing. Therefore, "refrigeration is against God" says M.P. Joseph.

4. *Fakagamua*—Communal Free-labor: No one is exempt

Under the communal aspect of life, the concept of *fakagamua* came into being. *Fakagamua* means communal free-labor or voluntary work provided by members of the community for families, groups, the church, or the community as a whole. It was offered to whosoever needed help. The men, young and old, would provide all the materials and the labour while the women provided foods, drinks and meals from the beginning of the project until its end.[54] This concept existed on all the islands of Tuvalu. When the chiefs of the islands announced community work, it was compulsory that all men and women of the island attend. Everyone understood that *fakagamua* was mandatory. Anyone who failed to participate would suffer consequences. This concept was highly valued and practiced by the people. It was a serious offense to reject the words of *kaiga-aliki*:

> The *aliki* decision was commonly regarded as a final judgment no matter how harsh or how wise it might be, and regardless of how people were affected by it. A decision of an *aliki* was a serious pronouncement and no person or family could violate it—which at times they did—without running the risk of being punished, possibly by being forced to leave the land for the great sea. Even the penalty of death might be imposed by the *aliki*.[55]

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[54] The community not only participates in voluntary basis, he or she also has to contribute in terms of providing materials which are needed. For example, if the community is building a local *falekaupule* (community meeting hall) young men will provides local woods, the old men will provides *kolokolo* (strings) while the women provides *lau* (pandanous leaves). We can see here that no member of the village is left behind, except the children.

[55] Taafaki, 19.

Discussions were regarded as part of the moral responsibility of the *aliki* in maintaining peace and order in society. By acting and being attentive to the words of the *aliki* the people of the village maintained equilibrium and upheld the hierarchical structure of society, and preventing its collapse.

5. Morality and Justice

Before the arrival of the *lotu* (church) the *kaiga-aliki* developed and imposed moral standards to guide the community. Punishments were enforced by the *kaiga-aliki*, and were common in the communal life of the people. Two forms of punishments were the *fakafolau*[56]and the *tolo*.[57] The *fakafolau* was normally imposed when more than two women conceived children from one man without proper marriage.

Traditional moral codes cannot be separated from the church concept of excommunication. The arrival of the *lotu* missionaries made use of existing traditional moral codes to validate the principal of excommunication to those who resisted and refused to follow what the church demanded.

Regardless of that Tuvaluans rendered services to their community not out of fear of the *kaiga-aliki* nor of punishment, but out of the following threefold principle

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[56] *Fakafolau* is a punishment applied to those who do not abide the island ruling system or anything that link to violation of island regulation. The community will tie you up and put you in the canoe that had already has holes in it and they will take the canoe far out into the open ocean left you to drift. The bottom line of *fakafolau* is death. Currently in Tuvalu, some islands still practice the concept of *fakafolau*, but in a different form. Those who does not compile with the island rule such as drinking alcohol on Sunday, the kaiga-aliki has the power to sent that person away from the island. In this case, the government have no over the kaiga-aliki when it comes to island affairs.

[57] *Tolo* is a punishment is not worst than *fakafolau*. *Tolo* was believed to exist later than the *fakafolau*.

of service. Firstly, *ava or fakaaloalo* (respect), secondly, *fakalogo* (obedience), and thirdly, *fakamaoni* (integrity). These principles become the basis of all aspects of communal living. Family circles taught these principles to children. The *kaiga-aliki* continues to encourage the whole community to hold on to these principles.[58]

Considering punishments as moral norms, the positive outcomes are perceived in terms of humanity, and nature. Utilizing severe punishment as a means of birth control – in which a child shall only be conceived through proper marriage gives the chance for marine and land resources to recover and be restored for the following harvests.

6. *Te Falekaupule* (Meeting place) and the Place of Women

Traditional gatherings announced by the *kaiga-aliki* were held in the *Falekaupule* (house of authoritative). Sometimes people referred to it as *Te fale o muna, Te fale o tagata* (house of words—house of men). The *falekaupule* is at the center of the village next to the church building and the sea. This demonstrates the connection between church and society and reflects the open hearts of the community to accept travelers who stopped to re-provisions. The location facilitates free accessibility and convenience for the whole community. Without a *falekaupule*, there is no community. All productions are produced according to the need of the *kaiga-aliki*. When the fishing expeditions arrived, they brought all their fishes to the

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[58] Teagai Esekia, Interview: A Tuvaluan scholar on Tuvaluan linguistics and culture at Motufoua Secondary School, Motufoua, Vaitupu, Tuvalu. 21 July 2004. Cited in Taualo Penivalo, "The Contextualizing of the Servant Paradigm in Isaiah 49:1-6 in the Community of Tuvalu," (Kanana Fou Theological Seminary, 2005), 69-72.

falekaupule to be distributed. *Talo*, *Pulaka*, chickens, and pig competitions were commonly held between villages. After competitions, special distributions would be made in the *falekaupule* to pastors and especially to foreigners on the island. All communal activities climaxed in singing and dancing *fatele* in the *falekaupule*.

In Falekaupule gatherings each *matai o kaiga* (leader of family) has a designated post to lean on. The pastor usually sits next to the paramount chief. The *Falekaupule* meeting enables the men to deliberate issues that concern the welfare of everyone in the community. Sometimes, when things are not going smoothly, they will fight. Normally these men sat in the front, and donated gifts of the land or of the sea to the community.[59] Presenting such gifts proved their ability to be in the circle of elders for decision-making. Due to the difficulties of life today with the sea and the land barely producing because of the effects of climate change this custom has faded away.

In the *falekaupule* women and children are not allowed to join the men, the only exception is social entertainment, the *fatele*. It is mandatory that everyone participate in this event. Next to the *falekaupule* is the women's house *fale o fafine* in which the women prepare food for the men in the *falekaupule*. The wives of the *kaiga-aliki,* or those of noble birth lead women's gatherings. Their main tasks are making mats, baskets, thatch, string, fishing shoes, ointment and other things. To maintain or to increase the social status of an individual or couple, a man and woman have to possess numerous things of value. Those of higher birth must ensure that they

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[59] Keith and Anne Chambers, "Origin, Customs and Identity of Nanumea," 2004, 46, http://www.nanumea.net/Faiga_mo_Iloga.html, (accessed, April 24, 2009).

have more possessions than ordinary people. Women of common birth try to become servants of the *kaiga-aliki*, which was the highest position any common woman could obtain.[60]

Although women were not permitted to speak in the *falekaupule*, when the issue of global warming comes into discussion, the voices of the women are heard more often in the debate. Mr Willy Telavi told the Fifty-Second Session of the Commission in New York: "I am delighted to note that the commission on the status of women has taken up climate change as an emerging issue…"[61] Thus, solidarity emerges when both women and men advocate awareness of global warming related sea level rise.

7. Council of Elders and *Matai o Kaiga* (Family leaders)

Another traditional institution is called *sina o fenua, kaupule* or *te taumatua* (council of elders). These advise to the *tao-aliki*. Their words are most respected in the community. They could admonish the *kaiga-aliki*, on matters of food supply and preparation for war.[62] This body also serves as *matai o kaiga*. Despite the fact of involvement on the community level, a *matai o kaiga* also have to make sure that his

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[60] Jane Resture, "Women in Tuvalu," http://www.janeresture.com/tuvalu_women/index.htm, (accessed, April 24, 2009).

[61] Willy Telavi, "Status of Women: Delivered at the Fifty-Second Session of the Commission," New York, 2008, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/statement_missions/tuvalu.pdf, (accessed, April 24, 2009).

[62] Ibid.

mataniu[63] (extended family members) are well prepared to give what is demanded by the *kaiga-aliki.*[64] In addition, his paramount task is to control the *manafa-kaitasi* (eating together from the same land), by giving suggestions and recommendations for the preservation of land.

As communal principles have lost their values throughout the years, people have come to question the authority of *kaiga-aliki*. They have lost interest in serving the community. Most say that giving monetary contributions and serving the demands of the *kaiga-aliki* is a burden and is not a Christian practice.

The most valid argument behind reluctance in regard to the communal principle and the option for individualism is influenced the impact of climate change, which has led people to rely on the market for their survival. To a large extent, this change in attitude has to do with global warming, rooted in globalization, and contributing to the deterioration of communal life. Life in Tuvalu has become dangerous due to diminishing landmass. People search for new meaning of life and a secure future. They are essentially seeking salvation, which the church and the society have failed to provide.

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[63] *Mataniu* carries the meaning of either extended family or *matai* household.

[64] Note that what is demanded by the *kaiga-aliki* are not for their personal used, but for the whole community. For example, when the *kaiga-aliki* decided to call a community gathering, each *mataniu* are demanded to provide taro (root crop) pigs and etc. These foods will be use by the whole community.

C. Political and Economical Context

1. Hierarchical Structure

Traditional leadership in Tuvalu was maintained for centuries. The *kaiga aliki* has the highest position in policy and decision-making. They render final say on any issue pertaining to the livelihood of society. This council of chiefs has the right to expel and exile a person from society.[65]

This ruling system was never questioned in the 'good old days' because the majority of island people lived in village settings. They were limited in access to the outside world. Today younger generations have received better education, gained access to the outside world, and have become aware of democratic ideals, equality, and human rights.[66] Globalization has influenced and disturbed the way people used to live.

Most chiefs throughout Tuvalu also have held positions in the church. Within the church realm, they have held dual positions such as 'deacon and lay-preacher.' When it comes to decision-making on the level of the laity, they are in charge. Their social authority as *kaiga-aliki* has extended to the church. At general assembly they are also involved. Their power to influence participants is highly effective.

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[65] This has been an ongoing punishment, who doesn't follow island rules and disturbs peace will be sent away on the first boat to arrive. In most cases the police officers are ordered by island chiefs to escort exiles to the boat. The island chief will never allow an exile's return to the island. The capital is over-crowded because most of the people cannot go back to their respective islands.

[66] Manfred Ernst, *Wind of Change: Rapid growing religious groups in the Pacific Islands*, (Suva, Fiji: Pacific Conference of Churches, 1994), 269.

Within this traditional and political hierarchical structure, women have no chance to become members of the ruling party. It does not mean that the women have no value in society. There is a *'komiti fafine*' (women's committee), where they can discuss matters relating to women and matters pertaining to the community.

During colonial times, island councils were set up on each island, and all were subjected to the colonial office in Kiribati. The relationship between the *kaiga-aliki* and those who worked in island councils was respected. Since Tuvalu became an independent nation in 1978, *kaiga-aliki* authority over the people has declined. The new era marks the transition of local leadership from various islands to Funafuti, which became the capital of Tuvalu. Although this new form of government was introduced, at the local level the *kaiga-aliki* still had the power to run the affairs of the people, but not as powerfully as before.

The government of Tuvalu established its official government administration in the capital, imposing political by-laws and regulations that appeared to be more authentic and precise than the *kaiga-aliki*'s ruling system. The government introduced human rights. Section 23 of the Tuvaluan Constitution, clearly spells out 'Freedom of Belief.' It says that all her citizens have the:

> (a) freedom of thought, religion and belief; and
> (b) freedom to change religion or belief; and
> (c) freedom, either alone or with others, to show and to spread, both in public and in private, a religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance. [67]

This freedom of Belief and human rights contribute in many ways to the people's

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[67] "Mase Teonea vs Kaupule," *Civil Jurisdiction: High Court of Tuvalu, Funafuti*, Tuvalu,11 October 2005.

choices of what beliefs they wanted to associated with, and to seek satisfaction of their needs. This put pressure on the *kaiga-aliki* in their attempts to maintain existing social structures. One outcome of these freedoms led to divisions among the people, an obstacle to people wishing to unite as one.

2. The implementation of the *Falekaupule* Act

When the Tuvalu's government realized that society could not survive without the *kaiga-aliki*, which remains a strong force, they saw it fit to also embrace the *kaiga-aliki*. The '*Falekauple* Act' came into being. *Falekaupule* is the meeting place ruled and operated under the authority of the *kaiga-aliki*.

On December 12, 1997, the government established the "*Falekaupule* Act" with an executive arm called the *Kaupule*. But, the act differs from a parliament because *Falekaupule* are local assemblies, on all eight islands normal convened at three-monthly intervals. They tend to be dominated by elders and chiefs, sometimes by church pastors, with the addition of women who have an increasingly prominent role in the *Kaupule* committees. Owing to the 1997 *Falekaupule Act*, these local assemblies have full jurisdiction over island affairs, and have thus acquired many of the powers of the national government.[68] The new *Falekaupule* administration system merged together the traditional and the new governance system. It deals with island and community affairs,[69] in order to bring harmony to the community. The following

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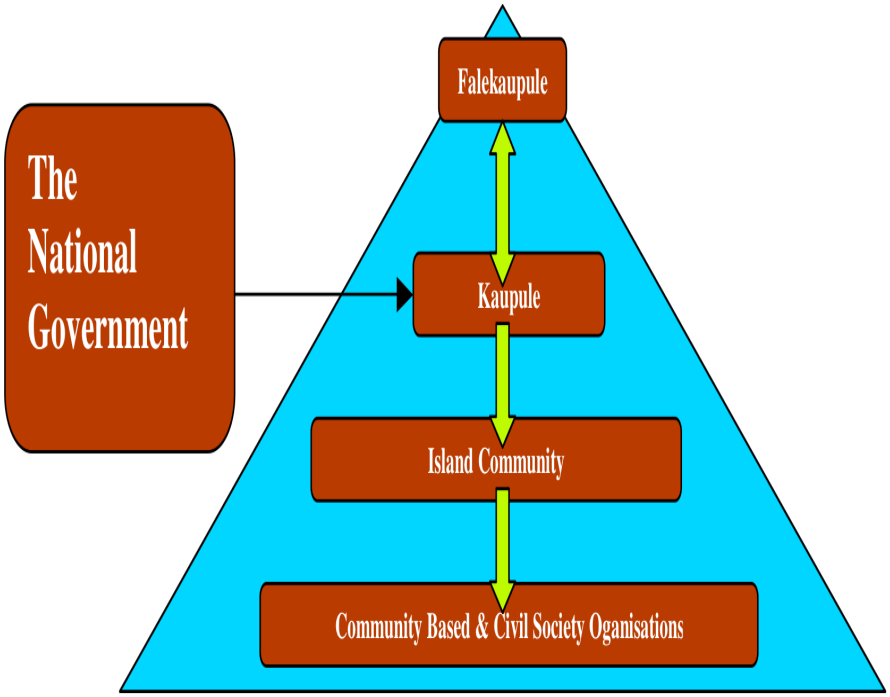
[68] Paulson Panapa and Jon Fraenkel, "The Loneliness of the pro-government Backbencher and the precariousness of simple majority rule in Tuvalu," in *State Society and Governance in Melanesia*, (Australia National University, 2008), 6.

[69] *Tuvalu's National Adaptation Programme of Action*, 18.

structure was designed to meet the same social structure that existed in society in order to rationalize this new implementation.

Falekaupule Structure



The "*Falekaupule Act,*" which was supposed to strengthen the *kaiga-aliki* system, has unfortunately been viewed negatively as demolishing and undermining chiefly rule in Tuvalu. The "*Pulekaupule*" (chief-executive) on the island of Vaitupu has been seen to have more power over the *kaiga-aliki.* Their power has gone beyond *kaiga-aliki* and proceeds to monitor the island's economic sustainability. On Vaitupu, natural resources that were under the supervision of the *kaiga-aliki*, such as the *namo*[70] (lagoon), *potufakagamua*[71] and the *te togo*[72] are now under the control of the

[70] *Namo* is a Tuvaluan word for lagoon. This lagoon is conserve and only authorized fishermen worked under the *kaupule* are allowed to fish and sell to the people. This is one of the great

Kaupule. The authority of the *kaupule* reserves these places for the purpose of market production. They produce for the market while the local people suffer from limited food caused by global warming related sea level rise.

3. Economical Context

Tuvalu's economic context is measured and determined by land area, local resources, and offshore incomes. Though small in size, Tuvalu's annual gross domestic product (GDP) is approximately US$20 million. Regardless of the low GDP, US$2,000 per capita. Tuvalu has been successful at securing offshore income through external investments.[73] In 1988 and 2001 the real per capita grew at an average annual rate of 3.7 percent.[74]

Within Tuvalu's economy there are two clear divisions. The subsistence economy is concentrated outer islands. Subsistence activities, particularly fishing and the cultivation of coconuts, taro, pandanus, bananas, and papaya, dominate the

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incomes that used to receive by the *kaiga o aliki*, yet this no longer the case. The money they received from the *namo* goes directly to the *Kaupule*.

[71] *Potufakagamua* was given by the chief's for any strangers who visited the island, to collect coconuts. However, the land has been commoditized by selling a large amount of brown coconuts to the capital.

[72] *Te Togo* means Mangroves. This is a Mangroves Conservation Area best known for the huge amount of crabs found in this place. Before *te togo* was transforming into a conservation area, the people of Vaitupu relying on *te togo* for food. Sadly, it's now converse for the tourist and for the market whiles their own people are suffering of finding crabs to eat.

[73] *Tuvalu: 26 Economic Report From Plan to Action*, (Philippines: Asian Development Bank, 2007), 1.

[74] Pusineli Lafai, "Tuvalu Country Report 200," Executive Summary, Second Draft' Funafuti. Cited in Rumaroti Tenten, "Tuvalu" in *Globalization and the re-shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands*, Manfred Ernst, ed. (Pacific Theological College, 2006), 446.

domestic economy. The only major export is copra; handicrafts are exported.[75] Statistics show that the subsistence economy involves 62% of the population. It is the dominant economy in Tuvalu.[76]

The monetary economy is dominated by public sectors in the capital in Funafuti. The primary goal the monetary economy is to make profits from the public. Though the private sector is not the dominant economy in Tuvalu, recent events have shown its expansion rapid growth. The Tuvalu National Provident Found (TNPF) recorded that:

> 85 private businesses large enough to make contributions in 2005. In Funafuti, 421 licenses were obtained to operate a business in 2005 and more than 300 were issued in Vaitupu, the second largest island by populations. While many of these businesses are short-lived and some are for different activities operated by the same business, it suggests that many families have an interest in operating at least a small business activity.[77]

Global warming related sea level rise is a driving force behind the shift of people's interest from subsistence economy to monetary economy. The decrease in soil fertility for planting has increased dependency on the market, and pressured the people to engage in the monetary economy to help in feeding their families.

Apart from the two local economies, "offshore income" is a major contributor to Tuvalu. Tuvalu received large amounts of income from offshore and public source as much as twice of GDP. The major source of offshore income is from: fishing

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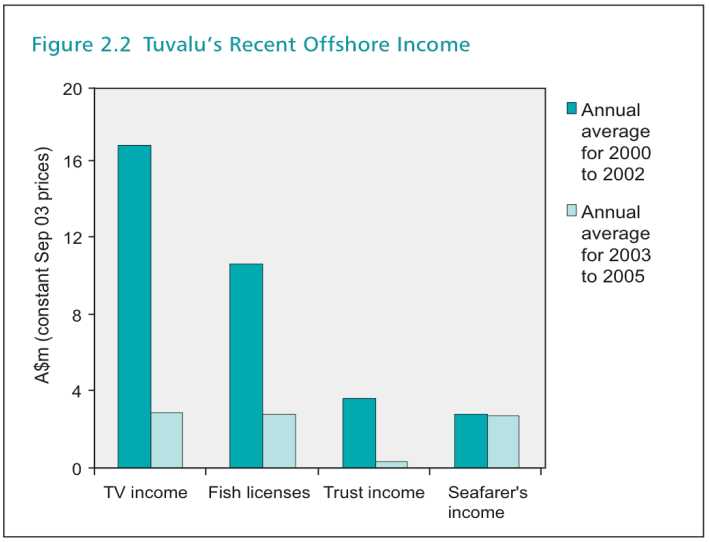
[75] Kiste, Robert C. "Tuvalu." Microsoft® Student 2008 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2007.

[76] Tenten, 446.

[77] *Tuvalu: 26 Economic Report From Plan to Action*, 66.

licenses, revenue from the "dot TV" domain name, returns of trust funds invested in Western Globalized Capitalist market, and Tuvaluans working in international shipping market (seamen).[78] The following graph clearly indicates the income Tuvalu received from offshore.

Tuvalu Offshore Income



Sources: CSD (2004b), Government audited accounts and Budget Papers (various years).

a. Revenue without Labour

The revenues of the Tuvaluan government come through manpower, either from economy, the monetary economy or from migrant labours. The government of Tuvalu receives these revenues without producing anything. The Internet Top Level Domain (TLD) known as the "dot TV" is analogous to Tuvalu finding gold. In 1999 a Canadian businessman, Jan Chapnik voiced his intention of buying the "dot TV" from the government of Tuvalu. With the desperate need for money, in the year 2000

[78] *Tuvalu: 26 Economic Report From Plan to Action*, 1.

the government of Tuvalu signed with Chapnik to form a company in Pasadena, California. Tuvalu has a 20% stake in "dot TV" and will receive US$50 million, which will be paid at the rate of US$1 million dollars per quota over a ten-year period. Recently the first payment of US$18 million was made. This amount is double the country's GDP. With this income, Tuvalu paid its United Nation (UN) dues 2000 it also enabled Tuvalu to join the Pacific Island Climate Change Assistance Program (PICCAP).[79]

On the one hand, "dot TV" helped Tuvalu to be part of these important organizations, enabling the people's voice as victims of Climate Change to be heard in the Pacific and the world at large. On the other hand, the decision to sell the domain can be seen as unproductive economic activity or poor economic management. People of Tuvalu have referred to the government's substantial profits only through the domain ('dot-TV'), as 'to-tivae' (pants fall – it is a shameful event).[80]

b. Capitalism and Landownership

Privacy and freedom are the most distinguishing features of capitalism.[81] Privacy and freedom are connected to 'landownership,' which is purely market terminology, an ideological attempt to persuade people to participate in the market. Under the

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[79] Wobbe Vegter, "What's in a name? $$$ if you're called Tuvalu," http://wvegter.hivemind.net/abacus/Tuvalu.htm, (accessed March 23, 2009).

[80] Fitilau Puapua, "Gospel Communication and the internet: A Study on Paul's Gospel Network to Address problem of Church Networking in Contemporary Tuvalu," (BD thesis, Malua Theological College: Samoa, 2007), 14.

[81] Po Ho Huang, *From Galilee to Tainan: Towards A Theology of Chhut-thau-thin*, (Manila, Philippines: Association for Theological Education in South East Asia, 2005), 169.

strong influence of capitalism, Tuvalu's government started leasing land for school and government purposes. Commoditization of land was seen as a major income for the people. Individuals within families began to resist the *matai* leadership, and to launch requests for the *kaitasi* (land for the extended family) lands to be divided for individual gain and pursuit of profit.

After agreeing to transfer ownership to individual members *kai tokotasi* [82](eating by oneself) of the family, younger generations to use the phrase, *"tou mafaufau ko tou laukele"* (you brain is your land). In essence, they say that this is a great option for the future, since they lost the land to other members of the family. Their lives are practically controlled by the landowners, and limited access or even prohibited access to the land will eventually occur. This prevailing idea shifts our focus from the land as sources of living to livelihood dependant on the market.

> Living on the market is the symbol, which proves that the people are losing their identity as Tuvaluans. Not only are they separated from the land, but also the concept of communal living and sharing is fading due to the cash-reliant kind of life-style they are forced to adopt.[83]

The feelings of alienation and detachment from the land are a threat to inclusive personal property. "The kind of property necessary to the logic of the market is the right of an individual or corporation (natural or artificial individual) to exclude others from some use or enjoyment of something…this narrowing of the meaning of

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[82] This form of ownership usually occurs when *Kaitasi* lands have been divided and each *Kaitasi* member thereby hold a new interest of *Kai Tokotasi* to his or her share bequeathed from divided *Kaitasi* lands. An owner holding land in *Kai Tokotasi* is free to do so with the lands as he or she pleases.

[83] Lusama, "Punishment of the innocent," 26.

property meant an enormous increase in the function of property as a means of controlling the lives of those who, without property, are dependent for their livelihood on those with excess property."[84]

Privatization of property is the prime requirement for capitalistic social market progress, but it has its side effects. The fertility of the land in Tuvalu for cultivation leads the people to easily allow their land to be leased by private sectors or the government to make money out of it. This could be seen as one part of income they received from the government annually.

c. Migrant Labour

Migrant labours seek to travel to other lands for many reasons. Their intentions involve politics, economics and social factors. Through international exchange, or migrant activity as part of globalization, the receiving country takes control of the cheap labours.[85] These are also environmental refugees. The increasing threat of global warming related sea level rise is one reason why Tuvaluans have become migrant workers.

The Tuvaluan population in New Zealand is 1,965 (Census in 2001) and the working population is approximately 400, which is equivalent to almost one-third of the number in cash employment at home in Tuvalu. These migrant labourers are located in Auckland where there is a demand for unskilled labour in market

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[84] M. Douglas Meeks, *God the Economist: The doctrine of God and Political Economy,* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 105-6

[85] Huang, *From Galilee to Tainan*, 174-5.

gardening. This scheme began in 1986 and permits up to 80 workers from Tuvalu. The agreement was on a three year basis. Some remained illegally while some managed to apply for residency.[86] Several working schemes operating at the present time serve the same purpose to recruit cheap labours.

Migrant labours are cheap and their status as aliens, lacking membership among the citizens of the countries where they are situated, deprives them of any claims to autonomy and basic rights. In a very negative sense, speaking strongly of migrant labourers under the condition of globalization, labourers have become disposable, like plastic cups, syringes, and ballpoint pens. They are subject to the principle of "use and throw away,"[87] totally controlled by citizens of the place where they labour and totally without freedom.

Regardless of the evil treatment received, they are forced to accept it a mean of survival. Approximately 500 Tuvaluan men are employed abroad at any given time, as sailors primarily on German-owned ships. Around 300 sailors are in Tuvalu on leave between rigorous, 12-plus-month cruises. Remittances from seafarers are a major source of income for families in the country.[88] Since those in the first wave of migrant labour in 1986, families have gone abroad and remittances have diminished.

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[86] Aunese Makoi and John Gibson, *Do Remittances Decay? Evidence from Tuvalu migrants in New Zealand,*(New Zealand: University of Waikato), 2.

[87] MP Joseph, "Myth of Globalization: Rule of Capital to Global Apartheid of Resources," in *Theologies and Culture: Impact of Globalization*, Vol.III.No.2, December 2006, 22-24.

[88] Wikipedia, "Tuvalu," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Tuvalu, (accessed May 4, 2009)

E. Summary

Political, economic, social and religious institutions are highly affected and influenced by global warming related sea level rise. The threats of global warming related sea level rise has introduced concern and stress among the people in their search for a secure future. Tuvaluan communal life has started to fade away. Individualism and privatization is starting to take over society. This is becoming the major challenge of the present time: How can Tuvaluans retrieve and restore communal living principles in order to maintain equality in society? If communal living continues to be exploited, visible signs of poverty may emerge in Tuvalu.

In chapter two outlined the negative impacts of global warming related sea level rise to the life of the people in Tuvalu. However, it reveals that Tuvalu has done little in responding to the danger they encountered. The following chapter will discuss the prevailing theological discourses that stop the people from responding.

CHAPTER FOUR

REVIEW OF CURRENT THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE IN TUVALU

Global warming related sea level rise influences and reshapes people's culture, traditions and way of life, but one thing remains: the land. Even though is seen to have been eaten up by the sea, only the soil is gone but not its significance. Many families depend on the market to survive. The poor with little or no income cherish their land as the only means of survival. This chapter explores current theological discourse that has become the ideology of some people in Tuvalu. The concept of the *fanua—fenua* (land) from a Tuvaluan perspective will be discussed in relation to the people and the people's attitudes towards global warming related sea level rise. Teachings of the EKT and NRG's that influence and lull people into inaction will also be shown.

A. Theological Exposition of the Land

The phenomena of the global warming related sea level rise raise concerns for the Oceanian theologians to re-visit the significance of land and sea. Theological discourses of *Moana* (sea or ocean)[89] and *Vanua* (land) became dominant motifs in

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[89] Witson Halapua from Tonga proposed the idea of *Moana* for dymnamic approach to Pacific leadership. Halapua reminds the Oceanians that *Moana* is their identity in which through *Moana* all islands are united with other countries in the world. He used *Moana* as a metaphor for God and a picture language of God. However, *Moana* is also refers to as our creator, the ground of our beings, our unifier, our life-sustainer, and our mystery—"our God!" This is the basic trends of doing theology in the Pacific context, first is to disclose all positive aspect of a cultural idiom than try to interweave with God. The danger is, God now is employed through idiom of the *Moana*, but when one's think critically, there is a quite number of people had been killed in the *Moana*, many fisherman have lost their life due to the angry Moana. If so, how can Oceanians use such a dangerous metaphor, which confine God? See Witson Halapua, "*Moana* Methodology: A Way of Promoting Dynamic Leadership," *Talanoa* Oceania,: hhtp://sites.google.com/a/nomoa.com/talanoa/Home/papers-presentations/halapua—moana, (accessed May 2, 2009). See also, Mikaele Paunga SM, "Dreaming the

doing theology in the Oceanian context because rising sea level that shook the very foundation of all living inhabitants, the land.[90] What is the meaning of land? What role does land play in the lives of human beings? These types of questions become very sensitive when the issue of land comes into discussion. Traditional understandings of land were legitimately taken to another level and restated through the employment of biblical images when Christianity arrived.

In the Oceanian context, the word for land is basically the same: *Hanua* (Papua New Guinea—Motuan People), *Fonua* (Tonga), Vanua (Fiji), *Fanua* (Samoa), *Fenua* (Wallis et Futuna) and *Whenua* (Maori).[91] Oceanian theologians tried to re-signify the essence of land as: "means of livelihood, making sense of time, and events, pace of traditions and ancestors, and a reassuring sense of identity and reclaiming the sacredness of the land."[92]

B. Re-signifying the essences of *Fanua—Fenua* (Land) in Tuvalu

Many Tuvaluan words describe land. *Fenua, fanua, laukele, manafa, potu, nuku* and *tia.* The word *fanua* is equivalent to the word used to describe the placenta

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Land (Ocean): Resistance and Hope in Pacific islands Practical Theology," Australia E-Journal of Theology, August 2005, Issue 5-ISSN 1448-632.

[90] Ilaitia S. Tuwere from Fiji develops what is called "Vanua: Towards a Fijian theology of place." Tuwere explains the significance of Place or land (Vanua). He examines the way the indigenous Fijians define themselves as people in relation to their Vanua. Tuwere pave the way by uplifting the significant of the land to the pacific people especially in when the pacific islands and other nations a suffering from climate change—sea level rise which has eaten up the land. See. Pauga, *Dreaming the Land (Ocean)*.

[91] Paunga, *Dreaming the Land (Ocean)*

[92] Ilaitia Sevati Tuwere, "Making Sense of Vanua (Land) in the Fijian Context: A Theological Exploration," Ph.D. dissertation, Melbourne College of Divinity (1992), 102. Cited in Tofaeono, 182.

of a fetus. The placenta's major role is to supply food and oxygen to the fetus through the umbilical cord (*pito*). Using *fanua* demonstrate its role as the provider of life. If *fanua* stops functioning, the baby will die. The land has the same role as the placenta, to supply human beings with food and oxygen to sustain life. If the *fanua* does not produce there will be no life. The *fanua* (placenta) is buried in the *fanua* (land). After a child's umbilical cord dethatch, it is either buried on the *fanua* or thrown into the deep sea. If it's buried the family will plant a coconut tree on top to symbolize life and nurture by the *fanua*.[93] The coconut tree that is planted on the umbilical cord is called *niu-fakamauganiu* or *tena inu*, meaning that this coconut tree will provide drink for the child. It further extends the child's relationship with a biological mother to new mother, *fanua*, which will be the caretaker. Each Tuvaluan has a personal story to tell of their own *niu-fakamauganiu* where their *fanua* and *pito* were buried. It is a special place that Tuvaluan will always long to be near to. To cut ties with the *fanua* is to loose life.

> Land has power to produce food vital to human life. It is this productive power that makes the land valuable to human beings. Without land, there is no life, and there are no human beings. Land and human beings share a common life and destiny. A bond of life is forged between the lands those who work it and depend on it…Land

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[93] The coconut will always be the tree that plant on top of the placenta, which is called *niu-fakamauganiu*, or *tena inu*, meaning that this coconut will provides drinks for the child. The placenta is normally buried but the umbilical cords will either buried or thrown into the sea, this is done with a wish that when the child grows up the child will become a good fisherman or a good planter. Note that the Samoan's also used the same word to refer to the placenta and land but expressed in a different understanding. See Tofaeono, 181. In the Fijian Context, the umbilical cord of a boy will be buried while the girls will be thrown to the Ocean which signify their connection to the Ocean. See. Josefa Mairara, "The Floating Coconut: A Contextual Approach to Methodist Mission in Fiji," in *Asia Journal of Theology*, Vol.21, Number 2, October 2007, 187.

> and us, we and land—this bond of life is forged by God. We live in land and land lives in us.[94]

In the same *fanua,* the dead are buried. Parents and ancestors are buried on the *fanua*. The practice of cremation and other forms of taking care of the dead does not exist in Tuvalu. There is only land burial. This practice strengthens ties with the *fanua* and the ancestors. When Tuvaluans speak of the land, they speak respectfully of the living and the dead. When one climbs a coconut tree he is obliged to throw down a very young nut (*mukomuko*) in such a manner that would break it open accompanied by saying *tou, tou, tou*, *tou-la*[95] (excuse me). This is a unique sign of respect and reverence to the dead buried in the land and toward the *fanua*.

In the same sense that land is portrayed as life, the word *fenua* takes two meaning; *fe* is word shortened for *fea* (where?) and *nua* appears in short form for rainbow *nuanua*. *Fenua* is specifically used by *tautai* (fishing captains). Every expedition took place out of sight of the land. At the end of fishing trip the *tautai* asked the *faoa* (fishing crew) *fea te nua*? (Where is the rainbow?) Meaning where is the land? Colour projected from the *nuanua* shows that Tuvaluans refer to land as life. The rainbow is a symbol of life renewal. Being away from the land to the *moana pouli* (deep dark sea) to fishing invite death because they are at *fenua o ika* (island of fish).

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[94] C.S Song, *Theology from the womb of Asia*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books,1986), 93.

[95] Donald Gilbert Kennedy, *Field Notes on the Culture of Vaitupu Ellice Islands*, (New Plymouth: Avery & Sons Limited, 1931), 49.

The sea is considered to symbolize death in contradiction to the sense that it provides food—fish for the people. Expeditions are risky for any *tautai*. Many have been killed in the *moana*, by drifting, by unexpected storms or when eaten by big fish. Just as in the story of Noah, people die in the water, but the rainbow is a sign of hope and of the continuity of life. This is how Tuvaluans understood *nuanua*. In the arrival of Christianity, the meaning of *nuanua* was connected to the story of Noah. God's covenant with Noah (Gen 9:13) was re-interpreted in the Tuvaluan context as life only found in one's own *fenua*. When the *tautai* and his crews arrived at the *fenua* they found security, peace and fullness of life.

The Hebrew creation myth tells how life was personified through *fanua—fenua*. In Genesis 2:7 God created man from the *fanua—fenua*. God created the human being *'adam out* of topsoil, *aphar*,[96] from arable land. The Yahwist is precisely uses the word *aphar*—arable a land that can be cultivated in the growing of the grains, vineyards, and orchards.[97] The basic understanding of *aphar*—topsoil of an atoll island, is of the fertile part of the soil. It is a mixture of animal waste, and decayed plants that have been converted into fertile soil. Though on coral atolls Tuvalu which where the soil is infertile, we are reminded, that topsoil has never been infertile because *adam* was created out of it. In other words, though atolls are

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[96] The Hebrew word *aphar* (earth, dust, powder, ashes, earth, ground, mortar, rubbish) used in the same sense with the word *adama* (ground, earth). See, Michael S. Bushell and Michael D. Tan, "BDB Lexicon" *BibleWorks*™ Copyright© 1992-2002.

[97] Theodore Hiebert, *The Yahwist's Landscape: Nature and Religion in Early Israel*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996),34-35; 59-61. Cited in Theodore Hiebert, "The Human Vocation: Origins and Transformations in Christian Traditions," in Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether, (ed), *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Human*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, 200), 139.

regarded as lacking nutrients in the soil, they never run out of life. Life is a cycle; it starts from the *fanua—fenua* and returns to the *fanua—fenua*. "You are land, and to land you shall return.[98]

Land is a unique symbol of life. Tuvaluan and Hebrew understandings of life include mutuality and interconnection between human beings and land. Human beings must respect their relationship with land. The land is the link of life, the source and destination of all creatures. Without proper care of land there can be no community, without proper care of land there can be no life.[99]

1. *Fenua—Fanua:* A Gift from God

The concept of *fenua—fanua* as a gift from God existed well before the arrival of Christianity. The origins of Tuvalu's people begin with travelers on a journey in search of land. Some left their own places due to famine and war. Others may have been blown off-course and ended up in Tuvalu.[100] In their search for land, finding *fenua—fanua* is a blessing for the people from God.

In the Hebrew Bible, the land of Canaan is seen as a gift grant from YHWH. Theologically, this concept of land as a gift from God is usually interpreted as an expression of divine grace. In social and political terms, however, the continuous reminder that the Israelites who invaded the land had not earned it is designed to

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[98] Song, *Theology from the womb of Asia*, 93.

[99] Wendell Berry, The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture, (San Fransisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977), 86, 94. Cited in Theodore, *The Human Vocation*, 147.

[100] Talakatoa O'Brien, "Genesis," in *Tuvalu: A History*,17.

create a sense of total indebtedness and dependency on YHWH as the universal ruler and land-giver. Canaan is a land grant by YHWH to Israel.[101] Because this land was given as an inheritance to Israel there was no selling or buying. Land was only transferred to heirs.[102]

Since human beings were created from the *fenua—fanua* no one has the right to own the *fenua—fanua*. On that understanding Tuvaluans value land above any other of their possession.[103] Selling of the land is highly proscribed. Lands can be exchanged but not bought. Selling of land is shameful because it implies one is too lazy to make a living by gardening and cutting copra. When sale is to a stranger from another island, the act is doubly shameful because it encroaches upon the primary right of the people who belong to the island to support themselves from its resources."[104]

On the same level as knowing that land of the Tuvaluans is a gift, popular traditional methods have been developed to protect it. *Pono a potu* (literally means land is closed) is used when the community gathers together for island functions.

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[101] Norman C. Habel, *The Land is Mine: Six biblical land ideologies*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 39.

[102] Ken Gnanakan, *God's World: A Theology of the Environment*, (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1999),76.

[103] Laloniu Samuelu, "Land" in *Tuvalu: A History*, 35.

[104] Barrie Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire: Towards a History of Kiribati and Tuvalu*, (Canberra: Australia National University Press, 1982), 209

When the island is gathers together no one is allowed to access to the land.[105] This method was employed with the understanding that it allows the *fenua-fanua* to recover and reproduce.

Another way of caring for the land is the *tapui* (to tie around). The word is rooted in *tapu*[106] meaning prohibited or sacred while the word *ui* connotes the meaning of walking past or picking something from a tree or bush. Since *tapui* is sacred, no one is allowed to walk past sacred land or to pick any fruit from that place. The people applied this method when they found certain parts of the *fenua—fanua* were not growing well or that a tree that seemed not to bear fruit, they girded *tapui* with a small coconut leaves indicating this portion of land or trees are not to be used. Anyone who sees *tapui* on the tree, all will respect the restriction.

2. *Manafa:* A Religious Identity

Manafa (family owned land) is etymologically divided into two words, *mana* and *fa*. *Mana* is commonly used through the Polynesians islands, with the meaning of power and authority, *fa* is the prefix of *fa-nua* (land). Every family has *manafa* inherited from their ancestors. Each *manafa* in any *fanua—fenua* has its own name.

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[105] *Pono a potu* indicates that, when anyone enters to the land during this time, there is a possibility of stealing in other people's *manafa-land*, and there is also a possibility one can over use the land for ones own interest.

[106] Tuvaluans also use the word *tapu* as holy or scared. The implications that the Tuvaluan received when they hear this word *tapu* they feared. However, the word *tapu* overtone the word taboo in which C.S Song claims that taboo-verbal form *tapui* means "to make holy" and according to van der Leeuw is "a sort of warning: Danger! High Voltage. Word affinity posed the same intention of using the word, *tapu—taboo* or *tapu*. See. C.S. Song, *Tell us our names: Story Theology from an Asian Perspective*, (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984), 31.

Igoa o manafa (names of *manafa*) are not just names, but names that mark an historical event of the past.

Tuvaluans associate themselves with the *mana* of their deities, *atua* (gods), *aitu* (demons), *tupua* (idols) and *agaga* (spirits).[107] These deities reside in *Tia* (sacred lands), which are established on *afu* (designated land for worship). When an island experienced famine and drought, Tuvalu turned to their *tia* to worship their deities, which dwelt in *afu,* to restore the *fenua*. A common prayer recited by the people of Vaitupu was:

Vaka-atua	Priest
Koe mai a luga na *Ono mai ki tou kau afua* *Avaka te mouku o uta* *Ke vau ki a luga* *Mo fai ou totoga* *Ki te malamaga nei,* *Kae mana mai la koe mai a lunga.*	O thou who dwellest above Look down on all your people Bring up the vegetation on shore That it may come up To be your gift To this congregation And dost thou look down with favours from above.
Fakapotopotoga: Mana	Congregation: Favour
Kae tuli mai ne koe mai a lunga *Tafola tu,* *Mo fai ou totonga* *Ki te malamanga nei,* *Kae mana mai la koe mai a lunga.“*	And chase down from above A school of whales As your gift To this congregation And dost thou look down on us with favour from above?
Fakapotopotoga: Mana	Congregation: Favour
“Ave ake se ulu fonu *Se kapakau isave,* *Se moana tu* *Mo fai ou totonga*	Bring up a crowd of turtle A shoal of flying-fish, A shoal of bonito, As your gift To this congregation.

[107] Seresese T. S. Vaaimamao, “Mana: An Inquiry for a true Pacific Spirituality,” (BD thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1990), 18.

Kite malamanga nei, *Kae mana mai la koe mai a lunga?*	And dost thou look down on us with favour from above?
Fakapotopotoga: Mana	Congregation: Favour
Tuli mai ne koe mai tafa sulu *Tafola tu,* *Mo fai ou totonga ki te malamaga nei,* *Kae mana mai la koe mai a lunga.*	Chase hither from the south- east A School of whales As your gift To this congregation. And dost thou look down on us with favour from above?[108]

This supplication was a plea for blessing during famine. An expression of religious faith that through the deities who resided in the *tia*, prosperity will be bestowed upon the land and the sea. The history of this prayer is known to all generation of Vaitupu and it still used in the church. When this supplication is recited in church, it automatically takes people's thoughts to a particular *manafa—Te Afu o Puga*[109] and *Te Afu of Lakia*[110] but not to their deities. *Te Afu o Puaga* and *Te Afu o Lakia* are the two religious identities with the sacred land that saved the lives of people in the past. Having names for *manafa* it speaks to the history of the land.

The arrival of Christianity forced people to transfer the *mana* of their deities' dwellings in *afu* to a God in heaven voluntarily for the purpose of gaining wealth and

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[108] Kennedy, 147-149. Kennedy's translation does not fully capture the essence of the meaning of the word *mana*, which has the sense of power, authority or efficacy. This ancient prayer is recited responsively between the *vaka-atua* or the pastor and the congregation. In order to preserve and remembered this prayer, Asau village in Vaitupu composed a fatele on this prayer.

[109] *Te Afu o Puga*, is located directly where the sun rises. The people worship there at the sun rise. This understanding produced the belief that the dead should be buried facing directly to where the sun rises. When the sunrises it rises together with the ancestors. Their ancestors still live.

[110] *Te Afu o Lakia*, is situated at the northern part of the island where the sun sets. This place is a worship place. People will come as a *fakamelega*. The island worships here when the sun is about to set. Directly across from *Te Afu o Lakia*, is the burial place called *Punua o Mele*, these are the most respected *manafa*. On passing this places one must say *tulou or tou, tou, tou, tou la* (excuse me) of respecting the people and the land.

good health.[111] Later, *mana* was used as a sacred word to describe the powerful deeds of the pastors. Now, the use of the word *mana* is in relations to the pastor alone. When the island experiences famine and drought people expect the pastor to perform miracles using his *mana*.

3. *Fenua—Fanua*: A Cultural Identity

Human history is a story of people searching for identity. The theme of identity is revisited throughout any nation's history in the search for freedom. The land given by God to the Israelites was a symbol to reaffirm their identity. The cries of the Canaanites for their lands taken by the Israelites were a cry for human identity and freedom found only in one's own land. Blacks in America who struggle to restore their identity, as being black. The African who has been alienated from the own land due to apartheid struggles for identity in order to feel the real meaning of humanness. Tuvaluans, small in number are soon to disappear and diasporas. Preserving the identity is urgent *Fenua—fanua* prepares and shapes the meaning of Tuvaluness.

Identity found in the *fenua—fanua* cannot be treated apart from freedom. Affirming identity is an assurance of freedom to live. Any freedom is void and empty unless a person is able to affirm personal dignity, integrity and identity. A person needs an identity and freedom in order to testify to the *Imago Dei*. Freedom without identity is no freedom at all, and identity without freedom is nothing short of

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[111] Tafailematagi T. Muasau, "The Samoan Missionary Enterprise in Tuvalu," (BD thesis, Pacific Theological College,1983), 34.

slavery.[112] Identity and freedom are direct addresses of God's nature, which is freedom and identification with the people who struggle for freedom. The *fanua* or *manafa* help realize people's freedom and determine who Tuvaluans are.

Theology of self-determination is relevant in trying to maintain the Tuvaluaness. "Self-determination is the right to free decision exercised by an autonomous personality or group. The right of self-determination preserves one's identity and meanwhile promotes his/her freedom."[113] Therefore, the search for freedom is a search for identity; identity only found in the people's own land, nowhere else.

4. *Fenua—Fanua—Manafa*: Behold the *Oikumene* of Life

The meaning of the word *oikumene* is employed to give a greater meaning to the land. The word *oikumene* commonly refers to an inhabited earth. It derives from two Greek words, οικος and μενω. The word οικος[114] simply means household or a dwelling place and μενω[115] connotes the meaning of someone or something to remain. Ecumenically speaking, the word *oikumene* means to remain in one dwelling place—household, or to remain under one roof.

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[112] Huang, *From Galilee to Tainan*, 50.

[113] Po-Ho Huang, *A Theology of Self-determination: Responding to the people for "CHHUT THAU THIn" of the people in Taiwan*, (Tainan, Taiwan: Chhut Thau Thin Theological Center, 1996), 113.

[114] The word οικος contains many meanings, but is best described as house or place of habitation. See Michael S. Bushell and Michael D. Tan, "Friberg Lexicon" BibleWorks™ Copyright© 1992-2002.

[115] *Meno* is describe the opposite meaning of depart or go away. In the that sense, ite reflects the meaning of remaining in one dwelling place. Ibid.

Οικος should be understood in relation to the λογος[116] (word) in order to fill the meaning of the dwelling place. *Fenua—fanua* is home, not a rented or leased property. Οικος requires human responsibility to keep it as our home. Human relationship with the *fenua—fanua* should be informed by emotional attachment that we have towards our home. There are two primary understanding of what *oikumene* could offers for life:

> 1. The primary objective of the household is to sustain the life of its members. A home could be qualified to be a home when members of the household take responsibility to maintain an atmosphere where life could be blossomed. In the traditional culture, a home is to welcome new life, and new life brings celebration to the household. New life ensures not only lineage but the continuity of home. The creation and protection of a life-giving/ life-sustaining atmosphere is a primary imperative of the members of the household.
>
> 2. The definition of earth as home suggests that the household is a place of relationship. All members are connected through a web of intimate relationship as parents, children, brothers and sisters, or uncles and aunts. Home is not a place where members remain as strangers. All members, both old and new, will feel the warmth of relationship. This implies that when the younger brother subdues the elder sister as a slave and exploits her labour, the integrity of the home is violated. [117]

Understanding the meaning and the definition of *oikumene*, quickly brings to mind land as a household that offers the promise of abundant life. Life, security and joy are only found within the *oikumene*, through a web of intimate relationships. Only

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[116] Gospel of John relates Logos to the Word, or the divine reason for creation. "In the Beginning was the 'Logos' and the 'Logos' was with God". From John's interpretation therefore the logos of *oikos* should have primacy over other relations. Cited in M. P Joseph, "Where is your sister/brother?" 6.

[117] Ibid, 6.

through such interaction within the household is the assurance of all aspects of life. To experience the promise of life offered by the household requires staying on the given land. Refusing to remain in one's own dwelling place means missing the promise of life in fullness, security, peace and joy, which no other dwelling place could offer.

B. We have nothing to do with Global Warming, Thus says the poor!

Discussions of the significance of land to the people of Tuvalu, reveals strong ties with land. People are attached to the land because is their birthplace and the *fanua tanu* (burial place) of their ancestors. Land is life and the symbol of true identity as Tuvaluans. The greater the external threat the more they draw near to the land. How can they leave? How is it possible for Tuvaluans to neglect their identity? Their land speaks of their history, of the present and of the future to come. This is why it is impractical for Tuvaluans to leave the land. They see that traditional wisdom of life will be lost outside the *oikos*. Displacement into a new *fenua* means letting go of the meaning of life.

The people who remain faithful to their ties with the land are the illiterate or *tagata o fenua* (people of the land) who have stayed on the island all their life. Since global warming related sea level rise rooted in civilization and modernity, these people see nothing to worry about. "Why worry, it has nothing to do with the way we live? We are not the cause of this problem? We don't travel nor we don't have any cars or motorbikes. So, why we have to waste our time worrying too much about this problem?"

Denial what is happening is another way of saying how much they love their land. Behind their delayed response to reality is the significance of the concept of land to Tuvaluans. Nevertheless, "In the sublime view of religions, the nexus of people, land and the divine was the pivot in which order is maintained."[118] To rephrase this, PEOPLE, LAND and DIVINE equal LIFE. If the nexus is disconnected it means death. The issue of the land is not a social or political issue, it is a theological conviction rooted in the peoples belief.

D. EKT Traditional way of teaching

The EKT has a story influence on the mind of the Tuvaluans. Their traditional theology and the prevailing missionary theology uses a monologue approach that requires the other party to listen but no dialogue. It is necessary to look at the EKT's traditional theologies that hold back the majority of the pastors and people from confessing that rising sea level is real. Not all are convinced that this is a reality.

1. The danger of taking a side

There is no such thing as neutral theology or a "middle" theology. Neutral theology is a roofless theology, and has no foundation.[119] Doing theology is taking sides will offers a solid foundation for a theological journey. Jesus took the side opposite of the *status quo*, the side of the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed. The result of taking a side was death as a convict.

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[118] M. P. Joseph, "Myth of Globalization: Rule of Capital to Global Apartheid of Resources," in *Theologies and Cultures: Impact of Globalization*, Vol.III. NO.2, December 2006, 21.

[119] Song, *Tell us our names,* 11.

The lesson that Jesus taught on the cross, to which the EKT most pay attention, is that a side must be taken. "Living, or rather dying and being damned, makes a theologian, not understanding, reading or speculating."[120] It is a waste of time, to know theology as theory but not as practice. But, many refuse to take the hard way or to take a side, lest the current socio-economic structure collapse.[121]

The assumption is made that the church alone is capable of understanding who Christ is, interpreting him correctly, and preaching him authentically.[122] This has become established knowledge that should not be questioned. The people must listen to what are they are told and considered it as a final product. Its weakness appears to be that people are caught in traditional theology and traditional readings of the Bible.

2. Noah's Narrative: Traditional reading of the Bible

Traditional reading of the Bible is implanted when Tuvaluans first received it from the West through the missionary enterprise. This type of reading is common in the Christian world and is conditioned to certain aspect. The Bible is read to justify of who we are, and to justify our present belief system. This is taking control of the

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[120] Cited in Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's The Theology of the Cross*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1995), 152.

[121] In the Tuvaluan context, pastors are careful what they teach to the congregation. If a congregation hears something new that is against their faith and the Bible, most will seldom attend Sunday service. In most cases, they refuse to give their free will offerings for the Pastor and for the EKT as a whole. If pastors started to speak about God's covenant with Noah in a radical way, they will receive nothing. The only way to maintain the economic structure and monetary flow of the EKT pastors is to preach that God will never destroy humanity no matter what.

[122] Song, *Theology from the womb of Asia*, 166.

Bible, rather than allowing the Bible to speak to us and engage us in a dialogue with the text to locate the will of God.[123]

Looking for justification of what is happening at the present time leads pastors to construct a framework based on certain ideologies, then to read the bible to justify their silence. Ideology is a pattern of beliefs, and functions to promote the social and political cause of a particular group in society, to justify its vision, and to promote its interpretation of reality as truth.[124] Tuvaluan's reading of the Bible particularly the Noah narrative is shaped and informed ideologically by the prevailing social, political and economic dilemma that surrounds them.

The negative impact of traditional reading of the Bible it does not open eyes to explore God in a dynamic way, but reveals a stagnant God—a boring God. Traditional reading can be seen as a reason for people to deny global warming related sea level rise because it clearly indicates in the Bible that there will be no more flood sent by God to destroy humanity. Traditional reading of the Bible has absolutized all single events, characters and so forth. It also reflects the very nature of literal reading of the Bible.

E. New Religious Groups as part of the Problem

NRG's in Tuvalu are influential components of religious arm, moving in an unstoppable momentum. Their teaching contributes to rapid growth in membership.

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[123] M. P. Joseph, "Lecture notes on Contextual Reading of the Bible," Tainan Theological College and Seminary, Tainan Taiwan, 2009.

[124] Habel, *The Land is Mine,*12.

The basic task here is to explore their prevailing teachings or theologies that contribute to ignoring the present danger of climate change in Tuvalu. This exploration shall not be a judgmental but will delineate the nature of NRG's understanding towards the present reality.

1. The Parousia: Towards the end of time

The so-called Parousia or the second coming of Christ is a common concept developed during the early church period. When William Miller brought it up and highlighted it as a chief focus his movement.

> I believe the time can be known by all who desire to understand and to be ready for his coming. And I am fully convinced that some time between March 21st, 1843 and March 21st, 1844, according to the Jewish method of computation of time, Christ will come and bring al his saints with him; and that then he will reward every man as his work shall be.[125]

Miller's first predicted date did not materialize and he confessed his error regarding the return of Christ. That same year he made another prediction that Christ would return on October 22, 1844, again it did not happen.[126] Millers claim of the parousia was proved wrong and declared to be the "Great Disappointment of 1844," but he implanted an urgent anticipation of Christ's return in the heart of his followers. Later when the movement gained popularity Miller's followers started the Seventh-day

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[125] Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Ravi Zacharias, ed., (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 2003),538.

[126] Ibid, 540.

Adventist and Christ and the second coming became one of the cardinal doctrines of the Adventist faith.[127]

Majority of NRG's in Tuvalu hold strongly to a belief of the parousia. Dispensationalist influences many of these Eschatologically oriented groups such as the Pentecostals, Adventist, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Charismatics, fundamentalist Baptists, or Brethren, also offer the teaching of a better life hereafter to help bear the hardships of this life.[128] According to this view, the fight against the prevailing injustice of the world should be suspended from any attempts because prevailing injustices, and corruptions are signs of the end times.

Such consciousness, leads people to look at present reality and suffering that they face as part of the fulfillment of Christ's return. Many biblical texts such as Matthew 24: 1-51 are quoted to substantiate and justify their claims. Hal Lindsay published a book titled *The Late Great Planet Earth*, claiming that in the past twenty years world developments had fulfilled most of the conditions, foreseen in both the Old and the New Testaments. Lindsay gave a detailed picture of World War III with the claim that almost total worldwide destruction to take place, before Christ would return in glory.[129] The issue of global warming related sea level rise, which destroys various parts of low lands, is seen as part of the world destruction that leads to

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[127] Martin, 553.

[128] Ernst, *Wind of Change*, 245.

[129] Hal Lindsay with C.C. Carlson, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), in Ernest, *Wind of Change*, 245.

Christ's return. Human beings should not get involved in preserving the earth because destruction is one an aspect of fulfilling this cardinal belief.

The Assemblies of God (AOG) makes a clear statement that the world we live in is at the end of time. The AOG primary task is to save the souls of unbelievers. The demand for saving souls leaves no room to deal with social problems. The AOG claims that human solutions or actions are not enough to counter social problems. They rely on God's intervention to resolve these problems.[130] To leave human problems for God to resolves results in human inaction and in doing nothing to help the present reality. Human beings are not capable of transforming the world.

For instance, "What I tell the people, half a loaf of bread is better than none. Keep on working there and ask God to help you to give you a better job. But do not overreact, because the Bible tells us that we must obey our employers. Stop grumbling, stop complaining, because employers need to survive first before we workers survive."[131] NRG's urge people not to speak against unjust action unfavorable treatment, and poor working conditions. NRG's, members leave almost everything for Christ to do at his return. But what shall we do now? Do we have a role to play or are we just spectators? Karl Marx saw religion as a tool for class oppression through which oppressed people develop religion to soothe their distress.[132] One Mormon writer has negated the present reality in saying:

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[130] Ernst, *Wind of Change*, 22-23.

[131] Ibid, 273.

[132] Margaret L.Andersen and Howard F. Taylor, *Sociology: Understanding a Diverse Society*, (Belmont, California: Thomson, Wadsworth, 2006), 453.

> It is our belief in God that eventually the right will triumph, eventually the good will triumph. This is a testing period. Life is a temporary state; we're not here forever. There comes a time when we all die and there comes a time when the world ends. So in the end, when Christ comes, everything will be right.[133]

This belief justifies NRG's inaction no matter what visible social crisis they encounter. To some extent, Christian fundamentalism has the capability to make legitimate the dominant ideology of a total market, for the sake of an unlimited accumulation of capital. The fundamentalist-apocalyptic thinking is somehow perverted because catastrophes (earthquakes, famines, wars, or epidemics) are viewed as signs of the end time that affirm Christ return. Though it may turn out to be a laughing stock, however, this kind of thinking has influenced political leaders of the United States President Ronald Reagan used it, among other reasons, to justify an increase of expenses for arms build-up during the 1980's.[134]

World devastation, shortages, epidemics and massive destruction are ignored because life is only temporary. This attitude leads to avoidance of involvement and contributes to rapid "materialization" of a new heaven and new earth without a sea (Rev 21:1) long anticipated by NRG's. The expectation of the imminent advent of the unobstructed return of Christ has been a very attractive aspect of dispensational theology.[135] Because it claims to be the only present hope waiting for Christ's return

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[133] Ernst, *Wind of Change*, 273.

[134] Ibid, 246.

[135] Ernest R. Sadeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianisms*, (Grand Raids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), 64.

is the only way to righteous living. In this way the NRG's promote a life without regard for worldly matters.

2. Mother Earth is Evil: A Dualistic perspective

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."[136] The author of the fourth gospel portrayed God's love for the world, not an empty world, but a world that filled with life. God's relationship with and affection for the world, is twisted to suit the teachings and expectations of NRG's.

Consistent with the view of the end of the world, NRG's believe that the earth should be damned as evil and totally rejected. These groups have been classified as "The world-rejecting movement" (TWRM) A common claim is that the prevailing social order has departed substantially from God's prescriptions and plan. Human beings has lost touch with God and spiritual things, and, in the pursuit of purely material interests, has succeeded in creating a polluted environment; a vice-ridden society in which individuals treated others as a mean of fulfillment of their selfish interest; a world filled with conflict, greed, insincerity and despair. Accordingly, they anticipated the Parousia will commence immediately to sweep the world and replaced by a more spiritual order in which old evils and mistakes will be eradicated, and utopia will have begun.[137]

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[136] John 3:16

[137] Roy Wallis, "Three Types of New Religious Movement," *in Cults and New Religious Movement: A Reader*, Lorne L. Dowson, ed., (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 37-38.

NRG's see the world as filled with chaos and evil, as an enemy. Only inside the NRG's circle can anyone be safe.[138] Since the world has become an enemy of human being's, there are a discontinuity betweens humans and the world. The simple argument is that destruction of the world by sea, war and other natural disasters is seen as a good that destroys and defeats the enemy, the world. Distance is placed between people and the world. Distance works as bipolar and produces a set of opposed fields that cannot attract to one another. Therefore, what happens to the world is not the believer's problem but is its own problem. This distinction between the world and human being alienates people from the evil world and maintains the gap.

A favorite misappropriated text used to solidify the rejection of the world is found in 1 John 2:15, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Use of this proof text reveals a lack of social ethics and no concern for current socio-ecological crises. This is a punishment of the ungodly actions of human beings. By this logic of rejecting earthly matters, one runs the risk of rejecting God's presence in living reality.

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[138] Luna L. Dingayan, "A Study on the New Religious Movements in the Cordillera Region (Philippines)," in *Religious Fundamentalism and its Challenges to Doing Theology in Asia Regional Theological Consultation Organized Annually by the Programme For Theology & Cultures in Asia*, Tainan Taiwan, 2004, 58.

Eschatological-dispensational groups are founded on belief in totalitarian dualism. In this dualistic perspective the existing world is evil and wicked in contrast to the world to come, which is presumed, in the return of Christ, will bring an end to misery, disease, injustice and death.[139]

Failure of colonial theology to attract people in the colonized land is one reason for the "world negating theology of the western churches." Religions in the colonized land have had a wholistic vision regarding earth and divine, and it appeared to be difficult for missionaries to break the ethical norms of these traditional religions. The dualism of spirit and flesh has done the job where the missionaries failed. They heuristically applied this dual principle with God and nature/God and earth where earth was described as an epitome of evilness.

Dualistic understanding has the power to determine what is evil and what is good. In essence, the dualistic perspective reiterates the language of absolutism which functions as a power to control others by leaving no space for other interpretations. Claims of absolutism works by construction of demons. Demonizing the other gives power of absolutism. "My interpretation of revelation is the ultimate truth therefore, all other interpretations are invariably wrong." [140] Absolutism imperatively proposes only two possibilities; either this or that: either save or lost; holy or unholy; true or false; good or evil, creation or evolution. Anyone who is not yet convinced is dismissed.[141]

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[139] Ernst, *Wind of Change*, 245.

[140] M. P. Joseph, "Either with us, or against us: Politics of Fundamentalism," in *Theology of Our Times*, Number 11, July 2008, 11.

[141] Dingayan, 59.

3. A Promise of Salvation

One of the most influential teachings offered by the NRG's is the promise of salvation. Salvation is attained after being born again and developing a personal relationship with God. According to the teaching of the SDA "One who truly understands and accepts the teaching of the Seventh-day Adventist Church can assuredly know that he is born again, and that he is fully accepted by the Lord. He has in his soul the assurance of present salvation, and need be in no uncertainty whatsoever."[142]

Making sense of any religion requires looking at how it functions to offer a path for salvation. Each NRG's tends to offer salvation for their members; Bryan Wilson asks the question 'What shall we do to be saved?' Salvation could only be achieved through a profound change in oneself.[143] To be saved or to attain salvation is a private matter. Salvation has to do with oneself. It has nothing to do with either community or your family. Promotion of selfhood is a chief focus of assuring salvation and going to heaven.

The promotion of selfhood in religious terms is informed by economic theories. The cardinal focus of economics is on the promotion of the selfhood to be successful in life. Success is equivalent to happiness and joy, which only can be

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[142] Martin, 553.

[143] Lorne L. Dowson, *Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements*, (Canada: Oxford University Press, 2006), 29.

attained through commodities. Therefore, commodities have become a self-totalizing, self-divinizing entity.[144]

Another distinct feature of NRG's is being absolute by saying 'I am saved." This impression by the believers can be rearticulated as 'I am saved, therefore I don't need God anymore.' God's saving grace and redemptive work for the whole of creation has become stationary. Being saved makes involvement in social issues as an act of defilement of the purity that pietistic nature requires for salvation. The promise of salvation offered by NRG's moves people to focus away from the present reality and onto a heavenly that is beyond human comprehension. Therefore, no attempt can be made to the resolve ecological crises of our time because this has no place in the basic criteria of things that need to be accomplished to guarantee salvation.

E. Summary

Tuvaluan understanding of the *fenua-fanau* as a household of life has become prominent in the theological discourse of the people. It is not an abstract understanding of land, but is an experience that is rooted in engagement with land for survival. It holds people back from immediate response to challenges of the present time. Tuvaluans are well informed by their pastors that there will be no flood at all. Saying that there will be no flood, is an excuse of not taking a side.

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[144] M. P. Joseph, "Let God be God," in *Theologies and Cultures: Earth in Jeopardy*, Vol.IV. No.1, June 2007, 7.

NRG's that promise salvation and teach against the evil world have been successfully planted in Tuvalu. The spread of globalization and the impact of neo-capitalism, which comes with the currency of promoting selfhood, fit smoothly with NRG's teaching of individualistic salvation that is self-determined. Subsequently, it is safe to say that NRG's provide a good place to hide irresponsive to present challenges. But how can they keep silent when the sea is up to knees? How can we deny reality when predictions have been made that Tuvalu will be the first to disappear? Tuvaluans need to humbly confess the reality of life. Closing eyes to see and mouth to speak about these ethical challenges surely is sin.

Since the prevailing theologies of the EKT and the NRG's are not relevant to address and confront with the present issues of the time, churches are challenged to construct other theological languages to address the life and death issue of the people. In the absence of new theological construction people will perish.

The next chapter will present a theological inquiry to aid Tuvaluans to come together and deal with this pressing issue. *Fatele* theology can unite the population in to one spirit to respond to danger of global warming related sea level rise Tuvaluans encountered.

CHAPTER FIVE

A CRITICAL THEOLOGICAL INQUIRY: A FATELE THEOLOGY

The reality of climate change is matter of serious contention around the world. Political and economic interests goad some to construct theories of denial in most cases. In Tuvalu, religious and theological discourses contribute to turning a blind eye towards global warming related sea level rise.

This chapter proposes a contextual *fatele* theology to provide critical inquiry and to assist the people of Tuvalu to join and participate in response to issue of global warming related sea level rise. *Fatele* theology facilitates social togetherness, cooperation, and systematic response. *Fatele* theology is radical. It has to be in order to meet the radical changes in climate that have brought sea level rise.

A. Contextual Theology: Traditional way for Theological Construction

Theologians in the Pacific have attempted to do theology in and for their particular contexts. Close examination of their theological methodology, shows them to have engaged in practices that are more akin to comparative studies. They attempt to explain the relationship of Pacific peoples to God through the medium of Pacific values. By this means they seek to re-signify God in their own languages and cultural idioms. Most of the contextual theologies they have constructed turn out to be indigenous rather than contextual.[145]

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[145] Using the coconut as a metaphor for contextual theology is no longer relevant. On most Pacific islands the people drink coconut from the market, if they drink it at all. They no longer dwell in houses made almost entirely from the coconut tree. Although the concept of coconut still remains in

Though they aim to contextualize God through the application of cultural values, they only manage to interweave the essences of the coconut and God.[146] We should not take their conclusions as final products of contextual theologies. God is not limited to the expressions available through cultural values alone. In fact, comparative theology, in which the expression of God is limited to the use of these symbols of any one culture or even many combined cultures has the potential to become very dangerous. It both devalues and diminishes God and sets a limit on God's self-revelation in God's own time and by God's own will to make revelation available to ALL creation.

Regions in the forefront of developing contextual theologies (Asia, Africa, Latin America and minorities in North America) stand in stark contrast to what is found in the Pacific. In those regions contextual theology is done within the encounter with reality as theologians attempt to understand the divine. Critical problems that emerge in contextual understanding drive people of faith to respond theologically. In these regions God is not likened to local cultural symbols or traditional values. Rather, the attempt to understand God in the local context finds a liberating agent in the midst of oppression, mistreatment, marginalization, poverty, ecological problems and other such conditions. Pacific theology needs to follow the same trends if it is to

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our consciousness, we have lost its essence. Having lost the essence of the symbol's meaning, the symbol becomes indigenous but not contextual.

[146] The late Rev. Dr. Sione Amanaki Havea coined the term "coconut theology," suggesting that it might well be the description of Pacific theology. In many ways the coconut could symbolize Christ, since it gives life to human beings, and when it is broken new life springs forth. The Pacific use of time might be called coconut time, since the coconut comes to fruition at its own pace, without hurry or concern for punctuality. Coconut Theology has lost its strength due to the change of time, life and affected by the socio-political context. See also, Mikaele Paunga SM, "Dreaming the Land (Ocean): Resistance and Hope in Pacific islands Practical Theology," *Australia E-Journal of Theology*, August 2005, Issue 5-ISSN 1448-632

be contextual. Pacific theologians should identify the regional "burning issues" of this time and attempt the construction of a theology that is both realistic and future oriented.

In the centre of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say I am?" He followed this with a question directly aimed at one of his own disciples, "But what about you? "Who do you say I am?"[147] To properly respond to Jesus in our own time, we need a relevant theology that can guide us. This is also true of contextual theology; it requires a proper and relevant approach if it is to address theological issues currently faced by the peoples of this region.

All theology is ultimately contextual because it arises from a specific historical context and it addresses that context.[148] For that reason *fatele* will be used as a contextual theology as a means of responding to the problem of global warming related rising sea level rise in Tuvalu. Through the hermeneutics of inter-textuality *fatele* can be contextualized theologically so as to offer a sustainable answer to the search for life and a meaningful identity. A new form, and a new *Gestalt* become possible. This is not a mere process of comparing and contrasting God with *fatele*, it is the utilization of *fatele* as a theology that helps identify the mystery of God through human struggle. The task is significant in that the days of Tuvalu's people have been numbered, by rising sea level while little has been done to offer a response.

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[147] Mark 8:27; 29, NIV.

[148] John Parratt, (ed.), *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 2.

1. Revisit the meaning of Contextual Theology

Revisiting the meaning of contextual theology will shed light on the attempt to respond contextually and theologically to the issue of global warming related sea level rise. Why is there a need for contextual theology? The word itself is self-explanatory and it refers to a particular context. The term is utilized as a starting point of doing theology. It is to be remembered that theology is informed by the people's context. Construction of contextual theology depends upon the context not the context depending on the theology.

Contextual theology is understood to be the opposite of Western or traditional theology that was planted by missionaries. The attempt to do contextual theology came out from the so-called third world region. "Contextualization was understood as a critical assessment of the peculiarity of the Third World, in which Christian theology has to be worked out. While it did not ignore what it called indigenization, that is, the response of the Gospel to traditional cultures, contextualization went beyond that."[149] This transition from indigenization to contextualization is regarded as the shift in perspective, which is focusing especially on the role of context.[150]

2. From Indigenization to Contextualization: A new perspective

On the same level of development, Shoki Coe added; "indigenization is a static metaphor, which was in danger of being past-oriented. In using the word contextualization, we should try to convey all that is implied in the familiar term

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[149] Parratt, *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, 8.

[150] Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, (New York, Maryknoll: Orbris Books, 1985), 5-6.

indigenization, yet seek to press beyond for a more dynamic concept which is open to change and which is also future-oriented."[151] For Coe, authentic contextuality leads to contextualization. These two cannot be separated, because in indicates a new way of theologizing in which it involves not only words but also actions. The difference between theory and practice, classroom and street can be defeated. Jurgen Moltmann warns of the danger that academic theology may be over-contextualized and turn into is a fossilized theology. Coe was aware of such a danger, but he saw it as "the missiological discernment of the signs of the times, seeing where God is at work and calling us to participate in it."[152]

In order to be realistic on what Shoki Coe intended for contextualization, C. S Song suggested the need of a perspective to carry out the task of contextual theology; he called it the 'third-eye' perspective. 'Third-eye' is understood as a power of perception and insight that enables one to grasp the meaning under the surface of things and related phenomena. The 'third-eye' perspective is not limited to the Asian

context; rather, it is a call for all theologians to train themselves to see Christ through their own eyes.[153] He further said that, theology deals with the concrete issues that affect life in its totality and not just abstract concepts that engage theological brains.

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[151] Shoki Coe, "Contextualizing Theology," in *Mission Trends* No.3: Third World Theologies, G.H. Anderson and T.F. Stransky, ed., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976)19.

[152] Ibid, 21.

[153] C. S Song, *Third-Eye Theology: Theology in formation in Asian Settings,* (New York, Maryknoll: Obris Books, 1979), xi; 11. He later developed the so-called 'story theology' to approach contextual problems in light of the stories in the Bible. He argues that all are found in the bibles are stories; therefore, in order to get into the depth of biblical stories, Song proposed the storytelling theology.

No human problem is too humble or too insignificant for theology. Theology has to wrestle with the earth, not with heaven.[154] God is not a theological problem, but rather human beings are the problems for theology. Therefore, the task of theology is to see how God makes problematic humanity less problematic.[155] Song goes on to illustrate that Heaven is God's business, and God is taking good care of its meaning. Theology has nothing to do with heaven. Perhaps, in theology "we must concentrate our words and deeds on our earth. It is the earth, not heaven that poses the problem for us and for God. The earth is on fire not heaven."[156]

"The major task of theology today is to locate the incarnation of Jesus in the local cultures and traditions of the people. Locating Jesus in the streets of Galilee and Jerusalem is not enough to become witness to the living presence of the Divine."[157] Moreover, "contextual theology identifies itself as a reflective articulation of the meaning of the encounter with the living reality of the Divine."[158]

Since *fatele* is a cultural and traditional communal practice, it can be used to help Tuvaluans realize the presence of the Divine and respond in a more systematic way to the issue of global warming related rising sea level, which has caused division in society. This attempt to respond to the people's struggle at the present time by the

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[154] Song, *Tell us our names,* 6.

[155] Ibid, 37.

[156] Ibid, 37.

[157] M. P. Joseph, "Searching Beyond Galilee," in Po Ho Huang, *From Galilee to Tainan: Towards a theology of Chhut-thau-thin*, (Philippines, Manila: Association for Theological Education in South East Asia, 2005), 8.

[158] Ibid, 10.

implementation of *fatele* can be considered as part of the third world approach called the "hermeneutics for our time,"[159] an approach constructed contextually to deal with issues pertaining to the reality of a situation.

B. Rethinking *fatele*: Its Origin and Development

Etymologically the word Fatele derives from the Samoan[160] word '*fa'atele*,' literally to multiply—repeat or to build up. Multiplication and building up simply refers to the tune and the rhyme of *fatele*, which starts from a soft note and builds up to the very high-pitched note or complex tune. *Fatele* always comes in two verses to be easily remembered. Some other Pacific islands have found use for the word *fatele*, however, *fatele* as a song and dance style is mainly practiced in two groups: Tuvalu and Tokelau.[161]

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[159] George K. Zachariah, "Toward a Theology of Life: Ecological Perspectives in Latin American Liberation Theology with Special Reference to the Theology of Leonardo Boff," in *Theology and Cultures: Earth in Jeopardy*, Vol IV No.1 June 2007, 94.

[160] The Samoan missionaries have a tremendous impact in various parts of our culture and the language. Fatele could be one of the visible sings of the influence our language.

[161] Allan Thomas and Ieneleo Tuia, "Profile of a Composer: Ihaia Puka, a Pulotu of the Tokelau Islands," in *Oral Traditional*, (University of Victoria, 1990), 273. The peoples of Tokelau and Tuvalu are Polynesian. Tokelau is the only island group that uses a language similar to that of Tuvalu. The influence of *Fatele* in Tokelau came through the work of Tuvaluan missionaries deployed from Tuvalu to evangelize Tokelau under the umbrella of the London Missionary Society supervisors stationed in Samoa. Also in Kiribati before they perform their traditional dance, they normally have a '*batere'* simply warming up before the actual dance. The word '*batere*,' was adopted from the Tuvalu word *fatele*, since in the Kiribati language they don't have 'f' and a 'l' in their alphabet they replaced with 'b' and 'r' to make it sound similar to the Tuvaluan word *fatele*. This is how Tuvaluans influence the Kiribati culture and vice versa during the British colonial days.

1. *Fatele* and other forms of Entertainment

Before Fatele came into being, several forms of local dancing existed, the *katou, pagulu, mako, kupu, fakanau*[162] and *fakaseasea*.[163] *Fakaseasea* co-existed with what is now known as *fatele*. *Fakanau* during the pre-Christian period was also used in traditional worship, which the missionaries demonized and called pagan. In the *faleaitu* (house for gods) *fakanau* was to convey gratitude and to plead for mercy.[164] *Fakanau* and other forms of traditional dance were to maintain the good relationship with the divine through nature. Through full participation in singing and dancing *fatele*, people were touched and they experienced the presence of the Divine. All these forms of entertainment have been transformed into to what is now known, as *fatele* is the newer version of these old forms of social entertainment.

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[162] The *fakanau* which has a tune that is between speech and singing was performed while dancers are standing on their feet. The rhythm of the *fakanau* is much quicker than those of the *fakaseasea* and the present day *fatele*. With the arrival of the missionaries, because of the wide swaying movements and actions required in the *fakanau* were considered to be sexually stimulating, efforts were made to put an end to this kind of dancing. At first it was difficult, but as more and more people came to accept the new religious beliefs the pastors became powerful and influential figures that ultimately dominated the rights of the *aliki*. Because of this the *fakanau*, which the pastors regarded as evil dancing, gradually declined until it disappeared completely. Cited in Laloniu Samuelu, "Singing and Dancing" in *Tuvalu: A History*, 40. See also Jane Resture, "Tuvalu *Fatele*," http://www.janeresture.com/fatele/index.htm, (accessed, March 1, 2009).

[163] The *fakaseasea* is said to be as old as the *fakanau*. This type of dancing is still performed nowadays by elders. Unlike the *fakanau*, the *fakaseasea* is sung much slower to a lovely tune and has one or two performers dancing on their feet. Normally the *fakaseasea* requires no uniformity of actions but the performers are free to make actions, which express the meanings of the words. The survival of the *fakaseasea* up to the present time is due to the fact that the first pastors, fascinated by the lovely tune and the gentle slow actions of the *fakaseasea*, did not do anything to stop people from performing it. Cited in Samuelu, "Singing and Dancing," in Tuvalu: A History, 40. See also Jane Resture, "Tuvalu *Fatele*," available on http://www.janeresture.com/fatele/index.htm, (accessed, March 1, 2009).

[164] Resture, "Tuvalu *Fatele*."

2. Purposes of *Fatele*

Early Tuvaluans, untouched by Western influences, highly valued traditional songs and dances. Apart from simply providing entertainment, the *fakanau* and *fakaseasea*, which were formerly very popular forms of dance, were composed to commemorate the reign of an *aliki* (chief) or *toa (warrior)*, or to praise certain outstanding figures for their skills in canoe building, fishing, house building or for their wealth or bravery within the community. [165] In addition, *fatele* are narratives, expressing poetic images and evocatively describing memorable events.[166] In any island gatherings each village performed *fatele*. *Fatele* became a vital part of traditional culture, which embraced the whole community and reminded them of their true identity as Tuvaluans.[167]

More importantly, the Tuvaluans used *fatele* as a means of preserving their stories of the past. Special rhetorical skills have been transmitted through generations by composing *fatele*. For instance, *muna ote lima* (words of martial arts), which sometimes refers to mea *ote pouliga* (words of the darkness) were composed into the form of fatele to be remembered.[168] The past wisdom of the elders in the community perpetuate through fatele. Reciting the ancient wisdom through the singing and

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[165] Resture, "Tuvalu *Fatele*."

[166] Chambers, *Unity of Heart,* 245-246.

[167] *Fatele* reveals the true life of Tuvalu, which is communally oriented. Tuvalu's culture is classified as a "shame culture". It involves all the people in a society, emphasizing the first person plural, "WE". *Fatele* exemplifies shame culture because it is a communal entertainment rather than an individual practice.

[168] Since these skills are only for the sake of the protections of the family, these fatele are not to be sung and dance in public only within the family circle.

dancing of *fatele*, life and the traditions of Tuvalu are re-actualized so that there is continuity, a constant, and a fusion with the past.

When an island's people prepared to travel to another island for traditional games, the entire island community joined together in performing fatele. It is *tapuakiga* (worship) was done in the sense of blessing. Upon return after the competition was over, again the community joined in performing *fatele*. In such gatherings all *fatele* that were sung that day were selected to suit the occasion.

3. *Fatele* as a Living text: Unity in diversity

A *fatele* begins with the text sung slowly, unadorned by dance. As the text is repeated dance movements are added (some of which highlight aspects of the text), the tempo accelerates. Additional music and dance intensification creates an exhilarating experience. The repetitions of the text provide opportunities for enjoyment and contemplation of its message and craftsmanship. Typically a group of thirty or more dancers performs a *fatele* in rectangular formation in lines of men and women, with a group of drummers and singers sitting in front of them. A formal performance *fatele* will have been rehearsed and a uniform costume is provided for the group. *Fatele* can be sung informally as well, for example during community works, sports, or on fishing expeditions. Formally or informally sung, a *fatele* mobilizes a group and unites them in the presentation of a song.[169] *Fatele* is usually sung when the island performs the *'alofa'* (literally means love)[170] this is a way of

[169] Thomas and Tuia, 272-273.

showing their hospitality to foreigners, visitors, pastors or local groups who are engaged in community work.

Filoimea Telito asserted the importance of *fatele* to Tuvaluans, when he stated:

> *Fatele* is the only traditional form of entertainment which is purely an indigenous aspect of Tuvaluan culture. In fact, this is taught to every citizen from childhood and practiced continuously throughout life. Apparently, it is an obligation for everyone to learn it and be able to dance it. Normally, this dance is taught by the best dancers so that the actions and movement of the body go together with the tunes, rhythms and beat of the mako! [*fatele*] To be ignorant of this social aspect of culture brings shame and embarrassment on whoever that person may be. Being the only form of entertainment that is indigenous the people perform it at all social gatherings.[171]

One of the most distinctive characteristics of *fatele* is to unite the whole community. One *fatele* sung by the island of Vaitupu reflects how embarrassing it is for any one to be isolated from the community:

Kaia e fakasekeseke ei koe	Why are backsliding?
ki tua? Ea e fai sou fenua?	Are you trying to form your own island?
so fenua tokotasi	An island for yourself

Looked at it from a different angle, this *fatele* mocks statement the isolators. A Nanumea Island *fatele*, reflects the beauty of being united into one community:

A galiga o fenua	True beauty in a land
Kote loto gaatasi	Lies in the unity of hearts
Ke maopoopo tou malosi	To put our efforts together
I mea katoa tau o taa ola	For the things we need in life

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[170] *Alofa*, is a traditional way of presenting gifts to those you are involves in community works. During this *alofa*, various kinds of gifts are presented especially foods and drinks (green coconuts). Before the speech or the presentations of any gifts, the group will perform *fatele* unexpectedly to surprise those who are working. It is evident that the workers found reliefs by hearing encouraging messages from *fatele's*.

[171] Telito, 62. The word *mako* also refers to *fatele*.

Ke lagona, kau lagona You feel this, I feel this[172]

Long-term foreign resident of Nanumea convinced by the people of Nanumea there that "true beauty in a land lies in its unity of heart." The great solidarity of the people lies in the 'unity of heart.'[173] *Fatele* offers clues to the ways in which Tuvaluans have understood life as only found within the community.

C. The *Fatu-fatele* (composer): A Theological Message

The status of a composer is highly regarded. People sought out a composer when they wanted to commemorate a special occasion in the community. Most *fatele* composers were illiterate. They are said to have used amazing methods in their work, sitting by the sea and composing Fatele according to the breaking of the waves, which provided both melody and rhythm to *fatele*. Nature and people were in the very nature of *fatele*. After a composer found a tune, the *pulotu*[174] would quickly gather other available people to memorize it before the practice could begin.

Composing *fatele* became a way for people to address issues that needed to be considered by their leaders or for leaders to address the community. In Tuvalu's patriarchal society, people cannot approach chiefs directly. *Tautua* (servant-hood) or *lima-malosi* (strong arm—referring to the young ladies and young men of the community) would ask a composer to create a *fatele* that reflect their appeal to the

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[172] Nanumean *Fatele* attributed to Taumaia Faga in 1943. Cited in Chambers, *Unity of Heart* 246.

[173] Chambers, *Unity of Heart*, 247.

[174] The word *pulotu*, is a title given to a special person with a nice voice who will lead the singing in the *fatele*.

chiefs or leaders. At gatherings where *fatele* are performed, young and old hear varied messages conveyed in the song and dance. It has also witnessed the impact of Christianity in composing *fatele* with biblical narratives. For example:

Ke talia ne tatou	We should accept
Mea lei mo mea masei	Good and bad things
Pela mo Iopu i ona puapuaga[175]	Just like Job during his suffering

Fatele also addresses issues related to environment, fishing, history, traditional tales, and current events. Epigrammatic brevity distinguishes various *fatele*; a story or incident is not told, but only indicated by the message of the song.[176] The brevity of each *fatele* permits one to re-interpret the text to his/her own *Sitz im Leben*. *Fatele* has become a useful tool by identifying the mystery of Divine and the presence of the divine as people continually struggle in search for God.

An evaluation of *fatele* shows that most were geared towards life sustainability and human solidarity. All *fatele* had varied and important messages for each community member and addressed the realities of communal living. All composers encouraged and promoted harmonious living and created sharp visions for their communities. Seen positively, *fatele* reveal the oneness and togetherness of Tuvaluans to respond to urgent realities.

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[175] This *fatele* was composed after Cyclone Ofa hit Tuvalu in 1991. The island of Vaitupu in the central Tuvalu was mainly affected, living the majority of the people homeless. The author of the *fatele*, remind the island that what ever happened in life, they should accepted it like Job in the Bible who also went through the suffering. Composed by Talia Maina.

[176] Thomas and Tuia, 271.

1. Transformative spirit of *Fatele*

According to tradition, *fatele* has a transformative spirit. This spirit is thought to have motivated each participant and each listener of *fatele*. It is evident that someone in a meeting hall, touched by the spirit of *fatele*, will immediately stand up and dance. Most people stood when their hearts were moved by the words of the *fatele.* Their dance and their actions are not uniform with selected dancers it is because the spirit of *fatele* has fully transformed their whole body to express the joy of *fatele*. Those who are considered to be very quiet in society, pastors and the chiefs, are easily inspired. When they stand to dance they *fakee—kailao* (traditional way of shouting). Shouting brings relief to them. And soon as they stand up and dance, selected dancers remove their dancing skirts and tie them around the inspired ones to slow down the process of being touched and moved by the *fatele* (*moa e sao ona matagi*). Once the *pulotu* and those who control the *fatele* (*kau ote pokisi*) see that people are up and dancing, the *pulotu* will repeatedly sing the *fatele* until they observe that the community has been united in heart. For example:

1. Taku tama saga mai ou mata sa fai pena me masei, a lima ka tusi e tusi kia maua, tapa oi aue ko foki la i tou se alofa	My child turn to me, don't act like that because it's not appropriate, when fingers points, they pointed at us, Woe! for you not loving us
2. Ke masaua la muna a te Fataoto, alofa ki tou tamana kae atafai ki tou matua	Remember words of Proverb, love your father, and take good care of your mother[177]

[177] Composed by Lise Moeafu Talia.

The composer here urges young people to turn way from things that are not appreciated in the eyes of the community: things like drinking alcohol and smoking. In Tuvalu's culture of shame, parents make children aware that when they act in ways considered inappropriate by the society it affects the entire family, causing the fingers of the entire community to point directly at the parents of the offender. Misbehavior by a child brings shame and dishonor on all members of the family.

In the second verse of this *fatele*, the composer used words from the book of Proverbs to substantiate her wish for the young generations. If you love your father and your mother, you will never practice and any evil deeds that embarrass your parents. In applying this form to the issue of rising sea level, the quickest way to reach the people and the whole community is through *fatele*. The transformative spirit of *fatele* will work in the hearts of those who listen and will gradually enable them to envision unity among the community.

2. *Fatele*: A theological transformation

Contextual theology, transforms and it take shape according to the demands of the context.[178] Taking this understanding of transformation, *fatele* calls for a collective effort from the whole community to have a perspective different from their traditional understanding of the promise of God that he will no longer bring a flood. We can show that God is not bringing a flood, but humanity's sinful actions can result in a flood. When one observes that the sea levels are rising at an accelerated pace then

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[178] Jose M. de Mesa, "Contextual Theologizing: Future Perspectives," http://eapi.admu.edu.ph/eapr003/mesa.htm, (accessed on April 13, 2009).

one can appreciate the need to form a new community understanding. Our traditional understanding of God should be challenged in order for transformation to take place. In this spirit of transformation, *fatele* needs to incorporate our struggle to see the injustice of the developed nations.

However, this transformation will come at a premium, because we have to reject completely our present way of living to achieve the purpose of being transformed. Resisting modernity and Westernization is the first step of accepting transformation to take place. Being transformed allows us to re-invite the God who was in the garden searching for Adam and Eve to re-search for our lost in the present time. The spirit of transformation is found in *fatele*. It means that it is a search for a meaning of life, for the God of life, who continues to work in a transformative way. Leonardo Boff calls this experience 'transformative action." He argues that: "Christian faith must make its contribution in the transformation of relationships of injustice into relationships that foster greater life and happiness due to living in participation and in a decent quality of life for all."[179] If we cannot be transformed our theology is meaningless. Thorough transformation leads to action and full participation in the fight against injustice.

3. *Fatele* as an immediate response

"Theology does not deal with 'how to get involved' or even with 'what to do,' but will look at 'why' we should do 'what' we need to be doing. Theology has to

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[179] Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the poor*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997),109.

do with the questions of purpose."[180] The task of a theology is not to examine how you get involved, but is to examine why we should act and what sort of action is required from us.

Rev. Joy Rewii from Kiribati tells the reason why there should be an urgent respond, Rewii writes: "We as pastors living in the Pacific are going through serious theological and faith crises. People come and tell us 'you preach to us about a God who placed a rainbow as a mark of covenant with humanity, promising that humanity will never be destroyed by water. How shall we believe in this God? Why is God not seeing that we are sinking? Water is rising to devour our people and nature." Rev. Rewii continues, "Since we have no convincing answers to offer, the only tangible possibility in front of us is to leave the profession."[181] This is the wrong approach, once we see that this is a human issue and not a theological issue.

"How can *fatele* respond to the issue of rising sea levels in Tuvalu?" And how can *fatele* bring hope and Joy for the people in Tuvalu in this critical time? Our desperate search for God reflects our unstable feelings of the present time in which we have lost the ability to see visible signs of God around us. A suitable avenue needs to be paved so that the community can come together.

We were taught in Sunday school that God is the answer for everything, but we ask: Where are you God? Can you hear our *fatele* sing very loud so you can hear that we are about to sink? Why are you so silent? Aren't you supposed to take side of

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[180] Ken Gnanakan, *God's World: A Theology of the Environment*, (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1999), 6.

[181] Cited in M.P Joseph "Editorial*" Theologies and Cultures*, Vol. 4, No. 1, June 2007, 7.

the poor and the oppressed? What we have done wrong? Why us God? Why not those who cause these ecological crises? Our cries also echo the cry of Jesus on the cross when he was innocently crucified: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"[182]

D. We are Trapped: A Call for Liberating Actions

In ancient times, we understood nature. Tuvaluans were able to read the stars and the clouds to locate schools of fish. The relationship between the moon and the tide is well known to fishermen in Tuvalu. They do not need to go the shore to identify the status of the tide. All is needed is to look at the position of the predict the tide status, high or low coming in or going out.[183]

Tuvalu's also had the ability to listen to the language of nature and predict what would happen in the future. J. L. Austin, understood that language does things. It not only means, but creates realities. Embedded in ritual contexts, language has the power to liberate and transform.[184] This is not the case anymore. People have lost the ability to understand different behaviours and the language of nature. Nature is responding to us today in a foreign language that alienates people from nature and nature from people. The elders of each village have come to know that we are no

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[182] Mark 15:34

[183] Finekaso, 144.

[184] Troy Messenger, "These Stones Shall Be God's House: Tools for Earth Liturgy," in Dieter Hessel and Larry Rasmussen, (ed) *Earth Habitat: Eco-Injustice and the Church's Response*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 179.

longer friends with nature. Our good relationship has been destroyed since the emergence of carbon civilization under the power of capitalism.

1. Re-colonized by the sea

Tuvalu became a free nation when it gained political independence from the British. The EKT became free when it gained religious independence from the Samoan church. Now Tuvaluan's nations and church are trapped and enslaved by the this ecological crisis of rising sea level. Developed countries may regard Tuvalu as a free nation, but that is not the case. Tuvaluans are no longer free; they are mentally and physically enslaved by the phenomenon of waves breaking onto their houses and the seas rising up to their knees.

Today, Tuvalu is flooded with tourists, journalists, anthropologists, government officials and scientists coming from various parts of the world to see the impact of global warming related sea level rise. Their interest has transformed Tuvalu into an exhibition or zoo to be viewed by foreigners. Tuvaluans are powerless to stand on their own and fight against the powerful nations. The struggle is similar to that of David and Goliath.

2. *Tagata o fenua*: *Fatele* as a liberator

Thus, there is a great need for liberating action. Leonardo Boff acknowledged that the initial setting within liberation theology that emerged was not that of an ecological concern, but of exploitation of the son's and daughters of our mother earth

who were condemned to die prematurely, the poor and the oppressed.[185] Boff and K. C. Abraham agree that the cry of the earth is indistinguishable from the cry of the poor. The ecological crisis is rightly the cry of the poor.[186]

Establishing the connection between ecological issues and liberation theology is needed inorder to construct any responses.

> Liberation theology and ecological discourse have something in common: they start from two bleeding wounds. The wound of poerty breaks the social fabric of millions of poor people around the world. The other wound, systematic assult on the Earth, breaks down the
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> balance of the planet, which is under threat from the plundering of development as practiced by contemporary global societies.[187]

The two bleeding wounds that humans need to take into consideration are poverty and the assult on the earth through human actions. In the context of Tuvalu *fatele* can become a liberating agent for the poor. *Fatele* here is not confined into songs and dances, but presses beyond the experience of the poor by opening up their mouths to sing aloud about love and justice.

Not all Tuvaluan's are trapped in this phenomeona. The term 'poor' is used here refers to *tagata o fenua* whose lives are wholly dependent on the land and the sea. These people are always present at social functions and entertainments. They perform *fatele* for the elite, the rich, the pastors and for government officials. But they

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[185] Boff, 107.

[186] Boff, 104. See also K. C Abraham, *Liberative Solidarity: Contemporary Perspectives on Mission*, (Thiruvalla, India: Christava Sahutya Samithy, 2001), 112.

[187] Boff, 104.

are the ones who will be left behind to continue singing their *fatele* while the above mentioned emigrate. The story of the elite and the rich in the Israelite community who were taken to Babylon and left behind those without talent, is repeated in the Tuvaluan context.

Tagata o fenua will only be liberated when the world considers their cries as having validity. But the world will not listen because of the advantages of the *bourgeoise* who are too busy in the war on terror and keeping their businesses running while others face the consequences of unjust and selfish interests. Therefore, *fatele* here serves the purpose of reminding Tuvaluans that to be liberated is first to understand their individuality within their community. Understanding their individuality as an ontological process will lead to solidarity among them to declare their right of being humans living on the same planet earth.

For Leonardo Boff, human beings must feel that they are sons and daugthers of the rainbow, who develop new relationships of kindness, compassion, cosmic solidarity, and deep reverence for the mystery that each one bears and reveals. Only then will there be intergral liberation taking place, both human beings and mother earth will be liberated. [188]

Fatele dancing patterns are uniform. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza described prevailing socio-political dominations as choreographed dancing patterns in which steps and movements are pre-determined by outsiders, not by the dancers.

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[188] Boff, 144.

Unconscious, pre-determined patterns characterize the socio-political order of any society. [189]

Within this dance no one is allowed to use different dancing patterns. Attempts to improvise new pattern spoil the dance. To speak of liberation is to challenge the uniform pattern. To some extent, *fatele* is performed in a way that challenges the chorographed dance and the prevailing social culture of Tuvalu. In Tuvaluan culture, women are not allowed to speak in the *falekaupule* (see chapter 4), but during the performance of *fatele* all are equal. Women and men who are inspired by the spirit of *fatele* to stand and dance, vibrate with power that destroys choreographed patterns designed by the designated dance leaders. Their interruption breaks the uniform patterns and establishes freedom to dance in the presence of the Divine.

3. No Choice but to Re-locate

Tuvaluan's might be aliens in foreign lands, but they are not aliens in this world. Recently, the government of Tuvalu entered into negotiations for relocation. This is the real challenging issue. It affects identity as Tuvaluans. It is strongly argued that relocation is not a problem. The question would Tuvaluans remains Tuvaluans in a foreign land? Can relocated people and feel the presence of the Divine as in their homeland?

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[189] Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation*, (Marynoll, New York: Obris Books, 2006), 103.

4. *Fatele* in relation to theology of the land

It is important to establish the connection between the *fatele* and the *fanua—fenua* is very important. The major task presented by *fatele* is to connect people with God. Dancing, claping and singing with joy and hapiness are celebrative affairmations of the presence of the Divine among the people. Tuvaluans meet God through siging and dancing *fatele*. *Fatele* is web of human interactions and relationships as a living witness to the revelation of the Divine. This web of relationships of people must be maintained without breaking the chain of *fatele*.

The sacredness of land and its meaning supports the intention to fully realize the presence of the Divine. Tuvaluans find it very challenging to the way they sing and dance *fatele*, due to the destruction of the land by the sea. Destruction of the *fenua—fanua* hampers people's the people's ability to dance. Loss of *fenua—fanua* amounts to the negation of the presence of the Divine in *fatele*. To some extent, loss of *fenua—fanua* results in God's exit from *fatele*. This is the important role played by the *fenua—fanua*. It serves to maintain the presence of the mystery of God.

5. How Can We Sing our *Fatele* in a Foreign Land?

"Every man has a burning desire for happiness and enjoyment. But our world gives us little cause for rejoicing. To be happy, to enjoy ourselves, we must above all be free."[190] *Fatele* can offer happiness, enjoyment and freedom. How is it possible to find joy and to enjoy life when the when land is about to be submerged? How can we

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[190] Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology and Joy*, (London: SCM Press, 1973), 26.

sing and dance when we are about to be uprooted and displaced? There is a hope that Tuvaluans will realize their brothers and sisters suffer in other parts of the world and, singing and dancing *fatele,* will create an anticipatory situation moving the world to realize the crisis now heard in the cries of the innocent and marginalized peoples of Pacific societies.

This is similar to the song of the Israelites recorded in Psalm 137, "How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?" Can we still sing our *fatele* in a strange land? The story of our submergence is a reiteration of the story of the Israelites as strangers in Babylon.

> This psalm is better known, probably because it is one of the few psalms which contain a certain and explicit historical reference. It invites narrative specificity. It clearly comes out of the exiled community in Babylon after the destruction of 587 B.C.E., the community reflected in the pathos of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. It reflects the need of those who have been forcibly removed by the Babylonian imperial policies of relocation and yet who cling to their memory and hope for homecoming with an unshakable passion.[191]….Perhaps this psalm will be understood and valued among us only if we experience some concrete brutalization."[192]

Psalm 137 clearly reflects the cries of the Israelites relocated and hoping to go home. People who experience threat and domination from another party best understand it. Tuvalu's case is similar. The actions of developed countries have drastic effect and serve as a dominant force, pushing Tuvaluans to face dire consequences. But the Israelites held onto a hope of return to their land. Tuvaluans will have no land to return to. The message to emphasize here is found in verse 2, "there on the poplars we

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[191] Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1984)74.

[192] Ibid, 77.

hung our harps." This denotes their hope; instead of destroying their harps they hung them on the trees, signifying a futuristic hope that in the near future they would play these harps in the temple in Jerusalem, marking the end of their captivity.

Fatele calls for the whole community, poor and rich, young and old stand up and urge the world at large to see their condition. This is not the voice of individuals; it is the collective voice of people crying for the actuality of God's justice in the world and the liberating of their souls. The Israelites took their harps as symbol of their religious identity to foreign land. Tuvaluans living in the realm of uncertainty cannot take the land with them; the only property that shares solidarity with their brothers and sisters is *fatele*. *Fatele* represents religious and social identity in foreign lands. *Fatele* will be the tool that will help maintain Tuvaluaness.

G. Summary

The above outline of some major aspects of Tuvaluan culture it is intended to show *fatele* in the context of communalism. Culture as part of the content of tradition that shapes popular identity and it gives meaning to life. Passing of culture from generation to generation includes both experience itself and the interpretation of these experiences. In faith communities, the experience of everyday life in text, scripture and tradition are passed on.

Therefore, Tuvaluans should compose *fatele* that convey the Christian message of hope for the people to locate and identify the Divine. If Tuvalu's church begins to do so, the tool could become useful in doing theological reflection on their position in this difficult time. At the same time, *fatele* might call for collaboration between the

mainline church and NRG's to join in singing and dancing of *fatele*, addressing the present injustice visible in this world. The issue of global warming related sea level rise is to be sung and learnt at the same time.

This approach is unique and new to many Tuvaluans. Jesus himself lived in a way very similar to *Fatele*. He taught the people and composed *Fatele* in many of his messages. Mark 14:26 "When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives," is the only text in which it is recorded that Jesus 'sang hymns' with his disciples. The context in which Jesus sang hymns with his disciples was a painful and sorrowful time because the cross was near. Can we imagine how Jesus, struggling trying to identify with the Divine presence of his Father, sang hymns with his disciples to speak against the unjust system of his time? Even though it was a painful time, he took the pain and transformed it into the kind of hope that only comes by fully participating in the struggle against unjust actions. On the cross, he sang what Tuvaluans considered to be an excellent *fatele* "Forgive them for they do not know what they are doing," (Luke 23:34). The "they" of today have cause the sea to rise.

CONCLUSION

Slowing Tuvalu's race towards extinction requires the collective effort of churches and people. Global warming related sea level rise should not be left to tomorrow because tomorrow is determined by our actions today. The way we live today will surely affects our future. Opting not to participate in the people's struggle in response to ecological crises is sin. What is at stake is, the very survival of human on earth. Doing nothing to save God's planet simply is a rejection of God's intent for humans as caretakers of creation. Destruction of the land by the sea is the destruction of the people. Saving the land is saving humanity. Preserving and taking care of the life of the earth, is taking care of our own life as well.

Human action in needed. In Tuvalu, that action begins with the construction of *fatele* theology. *Fatele* theology rises from the context of people who persist in facing the danger of ecological crises but cannot merge as one nation in response. *Fatele* theology acts as a binding agent with the passion to reunite the whole community of Tuvalu as it encounters reality. *Fatele* joins human action in relation to the Divine. This nexus established by *fatele* becomes a strong bond that incorporates the people's collectivity to ensure the presence of the Divine. Continued singing and dancing of *fatele* maintains the presence of the Divine translated into a living hope. Hope here is not discussed in abstract form or futuristic language because it is found in the here and now.

The nowness of God assured by *fatele* theology articulates a present hope for the people. This living hope stands in contrast to the hope offered by traditional

theology, a hope that has not yet to come, which lies in the future. Speaking of God as a living reality of hope in present means that those who deny reality deny the presence of Divine living hope for the people.

What is to be done to maintain human awareness of the Divine presence? What actions are required experience the living hope of the Divine in human response to global warming? Where do we go from here? What is next?

The time for implementation and is the time for living out the *fatele* theology. It's a time for community leaders to take action at the local level promoting ongoing awareness. This is the first step to resolve all ecological crises. Taking the lead in response to danger shows that individual action, small or great, can make a difference. Continued engagement in maintaining earth as livable space reveals participation in God's saving mission.

The challenge to the churches of Tuvalu is to rethink mission priorities. Mission should integrate *fatele* theology as means to continue witnessing the living reality of hope found in people's interaction. From a *fatele* perspective, the church should not anticipate relocation or monetary compensation, but open up other possibilities for people to see the living hope of the Divine at the present time. The challenge to all pastors, government officials and others who have the ability to migrate is to inhabit the community of *fatele* to identify the mystery of the Divine. Consciously or unconsciously, those who leave the *fanua—fenua* the household of life, symbolically move away from the fullness of life. Tuvaluans need the courage to

stand up and say “When we relocate we relocate with God, when we sink we sink with God.”

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