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ALAGAUPU AND PREACHING MINISTRY

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DISSERTATION IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

The use of proverbial sayings in any context is very important. Their use in the preaching ministry has been a significant aspect of religion. Their use however has sparked much debate amongst religious scholars as well as those in the different church denominations. Samoa in particular has been part of this debate because of the issue of whether to use Samoan proverbs in the preaching ministry. Like any other society, Samoa has its own proverbial sayings or in the Samoan language, *alagaupu*, which define and describe life in Samoa, especially that of ancient Samoa. This thesis explores the legitimacy of using *alagaupu* in the preaching ministry in general and in particular in Samoan churches.

Information was obtained from numerous sources, including published and unpublished sources as well as several oral sources. *Alagaupu* are used on a day to day basis, within every aspect of Samoan life and in particular Samoan sermons. The extent to which *alagaupu* are used in the preaching ministry is great, especially to the understanding of the religious content and context the preacher is conveying to the parish members. Therefore, the contribution of proverbial sayings, or *alagaupu*, in the preaching ministry is equally important to the ministry and the relationship between the preachers and parish members.

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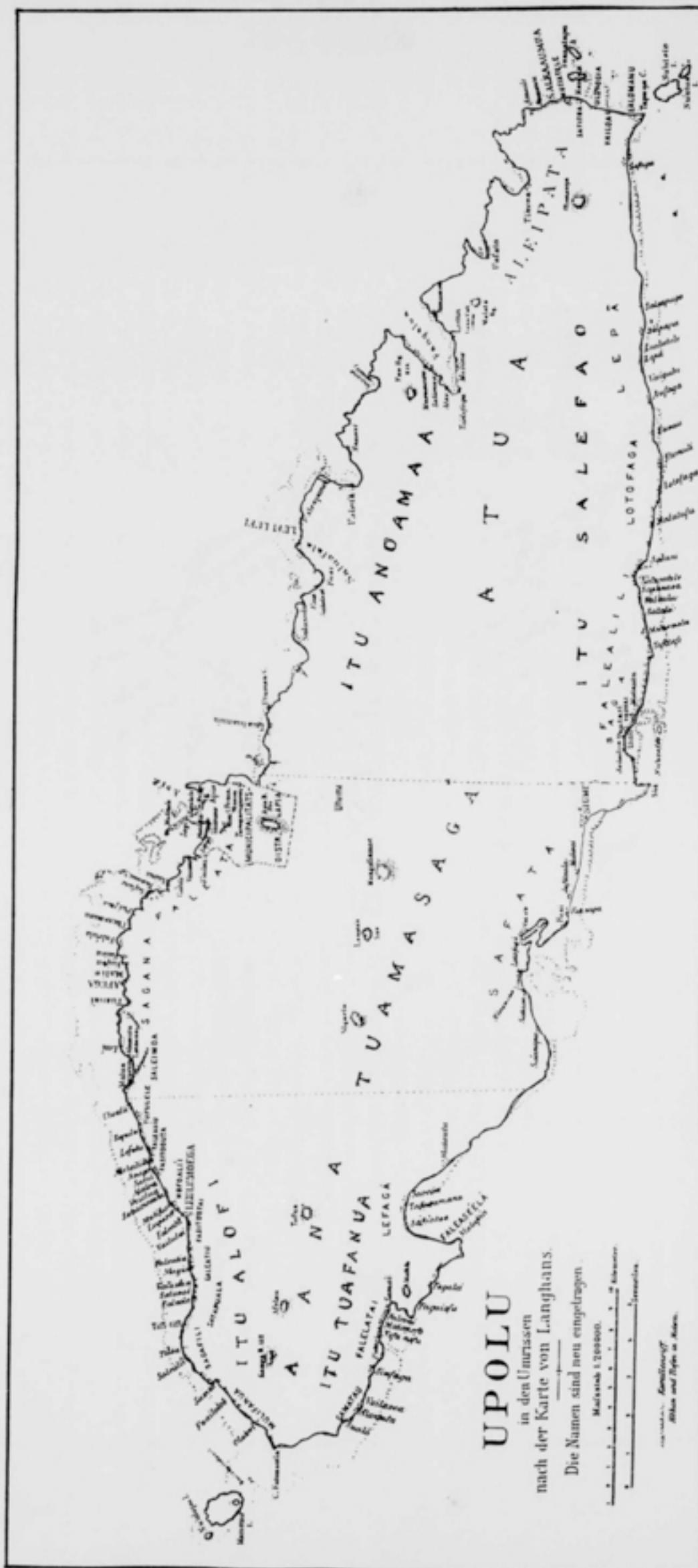
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INTRODUCTION

*Alagaupu*¹ is the Samoan word which can be translated as 'proverbs' or 'proverbial sayings' in English. They are short, pithy and profound sayings which give expression to the folk wisdom and truths about life derived from the experience of past generations. They express in encapsulated form the accumulated knowledge of the sages of old Samoa.

Like genealogies, stories, legends, folktales, poetry and songs, *alagaupu* form a distinctive genre of the Samoan oral tradition.² They are a fundamental component of the Samoan vernacular. They are used in oratory speech making, in songs and poems, in ordinary conversation, in newspaper articles, radio and TV broadcasts, as well as Christian preaching. Today, there is quite a large corpus of *alagaupu* in use throughout Samoa even though some have been lost to antiquity.

My interest in this particular topic began during my first year as a theological student at Malua, particularly during Homiletics classes when we were introduced to the dynamics of preaching and the art of structuring a sermon. The experience of hearing staff members and final year students actually make use of *alagaupu* when preaching in Sunday services really fascinated me. It really inspired a kind of higher level of hearing.

Another factor which further increased my interest was the 'Pacific Theology' course in which I became aware of the efforts and endeavours of Pacific theologians to try and forge what may be deemed a Pacific Theology using indigenous cultures, concepts, language (e.g. *alagaupu*) and experiences of life in the Pacific region. This awareness not only gave me a sense of solidarity with these Pacific Christians but it also aroused in me an urge to somewhat join in this Pacific venture.³

¹ *Alagaupu* is made up of two root words: 'ala' meaning way, path, cause, source; and 'upu,' meaning word. So the word *alagaupu* literally means the way or path in which certain words (Proverbs) came to being.

² Handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. Much of this Oral tradition still has not yet been put to writing.

³ Some of the works to which we were introduced in this course include: Faitala Talapusi, Eschatology in one Polynesian context, (Extract); Ilaitia Sevatia Tuwere, Making Sense of the Vanua: A Contemporary Theological Concept, unpublished BD Dissertation (PTC, 1991)

Perhaps the most influential factor that drove me to this subject was the negative view of many students and even Lecturers and Parish Ministers, regarding the use of *alagaupu* in the preaching of the Christian message of God's love for the world. During sermon classes, the criticism was often heard that *alagaupu* had seen their heyday. They were already a linguistic write-off. Hence their use in the text of a sermon would only confound the message of the gospel and confuse hearers of this day and age. Ordinands for the ministry of the church would therefore be better advised not to use *alagaupu* in their sermons at all.

I personally refute such a criticism; so do many students and theological teachers. Also, among many parish ministers and Congregational Church members, there is evidence that such a criticism finds no support. Rev. Elder Toese Toailoa, for example, is strongly in favour of the use of *alagaupu* in the preaching ministry of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa.¹ When interviewed, he relates that throughout his parish ministry, most of his sermons have always included either a *alagaupu* or a legend. The purpose of this, of course, is to make the message of the Gospel more meaningful to his Congregation. Rev. Misikopa Loli asserts that almost if not all *alagaupu* do have theological significance if interpreted and treated properly.² Rev. Alalise Apineru³ of the Methodist Church, believes that the use of *alagaupu* in sermons does affect the hearing of the gospel message in a favourable way. Sermons which make use of *alagaupu* are very effective especially for people living abroad because they can relate to their past and their culture.

For this writer, the issue is a theological one in the sense that it involves the relationship between a cultural reality, namely *alagaupu*, and the theological task of the Church, namely the preaching of the good news of salvation. Put in question form, it may read thus: Is it theologically legitimate to use *alagaupu* in preaching? Or, are we

¹ Minister of CCCS currently serving in the diocese of Australia. He has been in parish ministry for over thirty years.

² Minister of the CCCS currently serving in the diocese of South Auckland, NZ. Close to thirty years of service.

³ Minister of the Methodist Church in Samoa serving the diocese of North NZ. Over 10 years of Service.

justified, theologically or otherwise, to use *alagaupu* in the preaching ministry of the CCCS (Congregational Christian Church of Samoa)?

It is this principal issue which defines the perimeter and focus of this dissertation. What is intended here is an attempt to try and arrive at some informed resolution to the problem. To do this we shall use the following format: Chapter 1, an examination of some selected *alagaupu* is carried out in order to gain an understanding of their origins, meanings, use and/or relevant application and lastly their significance in the life of Samoans. For the sake of convenience, the selected *alagaupu* are classified under three categories: (a) those derived from the sea; (b) those derived from the land/village; (c) those with mixed derivation. Research material for this chapter were drawn from extensive interviews carried out with many people both locally (Upolu and Savaii) and overseas (NZ and Australia).

Chapter 2 explores the biblical witness of both the Old and New Testament. The intention of this chapter is to see whether there is a biblical basis for the use of *alagaupu* in the proclamation of the Christian Message. Chapter 3 examines the theological significance of *alagaupu* and how they can be used to express themes in Christian theology. An attempt is also made to establish the relationship between *alagaupu* and Christian preaching.

CHAPTER ONE

SAMOAN ALAGAUPU: ORIGINS, MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE

Alagaupu, or proverbs, as we have already pointed out, is a fundamental component of the Samoan language. As such, it is an important part of the Samoa's God-given cultural heritage; something deeply entrenched in the structural make-up of Samoan life and practice. Today, Samoan language is a compulsory subject in every intermediate and high school in the country. Hence, it is unreasonable to assume that every school child is taught about *alagaupu* on a regular basis. The same can be said of the general public. For, no local newspaper, be it daily or weekly, lacks *alagaupu* in its pages. No oratory speech made in ceremonial village gatherings can do without *alagaupu*. We find them in the lyrics of many popular songs and in children's poems (solo). We hear them on radio broadcasted death announcements and local TV documentary programmes. So, on the whole, the use of *alagaupu* is just as important today as it has been in the past.

Evidence of the importance of *alagaupu* in Samoan life and culture may be seen in the various efforts made to compile all those that are currently in use. C. Steubel and Brother Herman have collected 21 legends in which several *alagaupu* find their roots.¹

E. Schultz has collected over 500 Samoan proverbial expressions in a book of that same title.² Leulusoo Leatutufu³ 500, and Nuualii Mulipola Mailo Saipele 114 in his Proverbs of Samoa.⁴

There is obviously a large corpus of existing *alagaupu*. However, the problem, according to one of my informants, is that the above collections do not have all the

¹ Steubel, C. and Brother Herman, TALA O LE VAVAU: The Myths, Legends and Customs of Samoa, (Auckland: Polynesian Press, 1987).

² E. Schultz, Samoan Proverbial Expressions, (Auckland: Polynesian Press, 1980)

³ Leatutufu, Leulusoo, Collection of Alagaupu for personal use.

⁴ Proverbs of Samoa, Nu'ualii, M. M. Saipele, (Wellington: Snap Printing Ltd. 1994).

known *alagaupu* of ancient Samoa.⁵ Another problem involves the question of origins of *alagaupu*. Of those that are in existence, the origins of only a few are known with some degree of certainty. For the majority it is difficult to establish exactly where, who and what gave birth to them. In addition there is also the problem of interpretation, a problem that is often intensified by the fact that different districts have different traditions about the origins of certain *alagaupu*.⁶

Perhaps it is this problematic nature of *alagaupu* that motivates its critics to suggest that they should have no connection with the preaching of the gospel. However, in spite of the difficulties involved in interpretation and the diversity of opinions regarding the origins of many *alagaupu*, one thing is as clear as daylight. That is, all *alagaupu* have their roots in the events and activities of daily life in ancient Samoa. Their origins lie in human activities taking place firstly on land around and within village boundaries. Wars, games, house building, handicraft making, are some such activities. Secondly, there are maritime activities such as lagoon and deep sea fishing, individual, small or group village fishing excursions. And thirdly, there are activities which take place in the forest. Examples of these are pigeon-snaring, wood gathering, clearing and planting crops, boar hunting and the like. In the light of this truth, it may not be too presumptuous to say that most of *alagaupu*, if not all, are derived from the ordinary, everyday life experiences of human beings in Old Samoa. Similarly, the meaning of each *alagaupu* may be understood in terms of its associated activity itself. Let us now turn to the following selected *alagaupu* and examine what they mean.

A. ALAGAUPU DERIVED FROM MARITIME HUMAN ACTIVITIES

(1) "*Sasa'a faaoti le utu a le Faimea*"

This *alagaupu* can be expressed in English as "emptying out completely, the bamboo receptacle of a fisherman." The word '*faimea*' is a general term given to an

⁵ Interview with Agafili Tolovaa on March 1 and 6, 1999.

⁶ According to C. Steubel, "interpretation often vary between villages or districts and are the subject of vigorous debate." See, C. Steubel and Brother Herman, TALA O LE VAVAU: Myths, Legends and Customs of Samoa, (Auckland: Polynesian Press, 1987).

expert in any specific field. In fishing, *faimea* refers to a fisherman who is an expert in making fish hooks out of sea shells. 'Utu' refers to a bamboo receptacle where all fish hooks are kept. 'Fa'aoti' is a figure of speech meaning to show everything and that nothing is hidden.

In the past when an inexperienced fisherman goes to the *faimea* looking for fish hooks, it has been a practice that the *faimea* has to completely empty out his receptacle so as to help his brother fisherman. The *alagaupu* can also be applied to "....a master of other skills like tattooing, handicrafts, carving, weaving and canoe building with the same meaning....."⁷ The German author Dr. E Schultz, who also collected information about Samoan proverbs during the time of the Germans in Samoa, shares the same explanation of the origin and usage of the above *alagaupu*.⁸

In essence, the *alagaupu* means to disclose everything and that nothing is hidden from the seeker. It can be applied to the relationship of a teacher and a student whereby the teacher, in educating the student, reveals everything for the benefit of the student. The *alagaupu* carries the connotation of love and intimate relationship, for out of such, the master pours out his or her insights for another's advantage.

(2) "Ua pii oa le foe ale tautai sa tiu i a'auloa."

In English this *alagaupu* literally means, "the paddle of a fisherman who has been fishing in a faraway reef now rests on the gunwhale of his canoe." It has been the normal practice of the bonito fishermen in the past, to fish beyond the reef in the deep sea, far away from the shore. Returning home is always a painful and tiresome job because the fishermen have to row all the way back. Approaching the shoreline, the fishermen usually rest their oars on the gunwhale, as a sign of safe return.⁹ The *alagaupu* then means that the fisherman has at last reached his destination. It carries the connotation of joy and relief after tests and suffering endured at sea.

⁷ Interview. Agafili Tolova'a - Supervisor of Samoan language Education Department. 1 March 1999, Apia. 1.00pm.

⁸ E. Schultz, *Samoan Proverbial Expressions, Alagaupu Fa'asamoa*, (Auckland: Polynesian Press, 1994), p.11.

⁹ Interview. Sitagata Liaina, 72 years of age, Lotofaga, Aleipata. 25 March 1999. 3.30pm.

In usage, "this *alagaupu* can be applied to the fulfillment of a plan or a vision. It can also be used in connection with the completion of a project or task. Very often, the preachers have used its meaning as a theme for their sermons for the New Years Eve service. Usually, what preachers tend to emphasise is the sense that after a long journey through the year, people have now finally come to the end and of course a new beginning.¹⁰

(3) "*Ta'ape a Fatuati*"

Despite the lack of modernised fishing equipment in the past, Samoans had their own traditional ideas of catching fish. One of her fishing technologies was to erect a heap of stones (*fatuati*) underwater in the lagoon for the purpose of attracting fish for shelter. "...when the fisherman comes to fish around this heap of stones, it needed to be removed so as to catch the fish nearby, and in the process the stones would be scattered all over the place. After fishing, the heap has to be reconstructed for future fishing and so the dispersed stones are put back to their original places...."¹¹

This *alagaupu* refers to the scattering of stones and their rearrangement back into order after fishing. It highlights the idea of the final reconstruction of the stones into their places. Even though the stones are pulled apart into disorder, they will eventually come back into place. In the end they are gathered as one heap of stones again. The above view, from an old well known chief interviewed, coincides with Schultz's version.¹²

In usage, it can be applied to the fellowship of different Christian denominations. No matter how different they are in names, they are all 'stones' of one heap called Christianity.

(4) "*E tulituliloa le atu a le Sa'u*"

This *alagaupu* originates from the bonito fishing in the past. The bonito fishermen observed that the swordfish often pursued a shoal of bonito fish, seeking not

¹⁰ Interview. Rev. Auatama Esera, Sapapalii. 9 march 1999. 2.00pm.

¹¹ Interview. Lemauga Nafatali, 70 years of age. Lotofaga, Aleipata; 25 March 1999. 2.00pm.

¹² E. Schultz, op. cit. p.15.

the whole shoal of fish but one particular bonito. According to one informant,¹³ if the particular bonito, that the swordfish is chasing after, is leading or in the middle of the school of fish, the swordfish never attacks the ones at the back but pursues its chosen prey. Even to the extent that when the pursued bonito is hooked up by a fisherman's line, the swordfish jumps up out of the water to catch it, often injuring inexperienced fishermen. Skillful fishermen however, are always aware of the swordfish's bonito and quickly release it back into the sea so as to avoid danger.

The above version is the general Samoan understanding. An interview with one outstanding fisherman, with fifty years experience in underwater and line fishing, agreed with this explanation but had an additional explanation. He learned from his forefathers, who were also experienced fishermen, that the particular bonito the swordfish seeks, is usually found sheltering beside the fishing canoe during bonito fishing. Experienced fishermen then, catch it and throw it away from the canoe in case the swordfish, while aiming for its bonito, may cause damage and injury to the canoe and its occupants.¹⁴ This version is supported by Schultz¹⁵.

Usually, the meaning of this tends to emphasise that the *alagaupu* refers to the consistent attempt by the swordfish to pursue its bonito. That no matter how easy it is to catch the bonitos nearby or those in its path, the swordfish is determined to catch the particular bonito it is after.

In application, the *alagaupu* can be used to encourage someone to pursue his or her goals in life. The swordfish pursuing its prey can be likened to a person struggling through life to try and achieve his/ her aims without regard to the difficulties which may arise in the process.

(5) "*E lutia i Puava 'ae Mapu i Fagalele*"

The English translation of the *alagaupu* can be as "one experiences distress at *Puava* but find refuge at *Fagalele*." *Puava* is a cape between the villages of Papa and

¹³ Interview. Fa'amate Sa'u, 46 years of age; Currently teaching Samoan Language at Maluafofou College. Vaitele; 12 March 1999. 7.30pm.

¹⁴ Interview. Timu Simone Lavea; 46 years of age, Safotu, Savaii. 10 April 1999. 3.00pm.

¹⁵ E. Schultz, op. cit., p.19

Falealupo in Savaii.¹⁶ *Fagalele* is a bay beyond *Puava* at the Falealupo side. At *Puava*, there is a dangerous cross current that fishermen and sea travellers find very difficult to cross. But once they pass that area of difficulty, they will always enjoy the calm sea at *Fagalele* bay. Therefore, a fisherman or sea traveller, after struggling at *Puava*, will finally find refuge at *Fagalele*.

According to reliable sources from Falealupo village, the sites about which this *alagaupu* speaks remain intact even today. Silia Titi of Falealupo.¹⁷ (aged 68 and resides in Tufulele village) remembers very well the time when he was an active fisherman. "In the 1960's" he recalls that they usually crewed a traditional canoe of three rowers. When crossing the strong current at *Puava*, which is part of the usual route that no traveller from Papa to Falealupo can avoid, it is hard work rowing because of the dangerous cross current. As far as he can remember, more than ten canoes were wrecked at the spot and none of the occupants were ever found. After facing difficulties at *Puava*, the arrival at *Fagalele* bay was a 'jolly good sail' as the sea is quite smooth and calm. The body always feels the soft cool breeze.

The *alagaupu* carries the idea that after struggling in the beginning, one will surely enjoy good times at the end. It can be used to encourage a person engaged in a venture; that after difficulties and challenges one may face, there is assurance that the outcome is always joyful and rewarding.

B. ALAGAUPU DERIVED FROM THE LAND

(1) "*Mua mea i Matautusa*"

This *alagaupu* can be literally translated as "First are the things to *Matautusa*." *Matautusa* is a combination of two words. '*Matautu*' is a village in the eastern end of Apia and '*sa*' means 'sacred' or forbidden. Legend holds that there was a demon named *Moa'ula* who used to live in *Matautu*. Whenever a traveller passed through *Matautu*,

¹⁶ Savai'i is the largest Island in the Samoan Group.

¹⁷ Interview. Silia Titi, Tufulele, Upolu, 20 March 1999; 1.00pm.

(s)he must firstly make an offering to *Moa'ula* before continuing the trip otherwise trouble would face him/ her on the way. From that tradition, the said *alagaupu* derives.

Another version of the *alagaupu* is said to have originated from *Matautu*, Fagamalo¹⁸ in Savaii. According to this version, a tribute of food has to be given to the body of orators at *Matautu* whenever a new boat or house is constructed; when a new plantation is laid out or even when a new fishing net is taken out to sea. Failure to do so means that offenders will face the consequences of being punished with their property being destroyed, even to the extent of killing their chickens and pigs and uprooting their plantation produce.

The third version comes from Aleipata¹⁹, a district at the eastern side of Upolu. According to this, *Matautusa* is the name of the settlement where the paramount chiefs of the districts, *Fuataga* and *Tafua*, reside. In the district, there was a man-servant of the chiefs who went fishing with his son *Velovaa* one day. The man was suspicious that *Velovaa* was not his biological offspring. He then decided to discard the boy into the ocean and left him there to die. It so happened that the boy was brought back to shore by a turtle (*i'a sa*). Consequently, the turtle was killed by the village people at a place now called *Namo*, Solosolo village. When *Velovaa* distributed the turtle, the head was firstly given to *Tafua* and *Fuataga* at *Matautusa* (Aleipata). The middle was given to *Leutele* at *Falefa* (Lufilufi), and finally the end part (tail) was given to *Atua* (Falealili). Therefore, the tribute (*Faalupega*) came to be known as "*Ao Atua*," "*Uso Atua*," "*Ma i'u o Atua*." (Head of *Atua*, middle of *Atua* and End of *Atua*.)

In all three versions, the essential meaning of the *alagaupu* seems to be the same, namely, superiors at *Matautu*. Obviously, *Matautu* is considered to be a sacred place because it is the residence of the superior or the ultimate, authorities.

In usage, it can be applied to the relationship between people with different ranks or status within the community or society, like the *taule'ale'a* and *matai*. For example, in a family circle, the traditional role of the untitled members of the family is to serve

¹⁸Interview. Seupule Neetia, 59 years of age; Saleaula, Savaii. 3 May 1999. 8.00am.

¹⁹ Interview. Lemaunu Fa'atonu, writer and editor; Department of Youth, Sports and Culture, Government building, Apia. 11 March 1999. 9.00pm.

their chieftains first. This service takes various forms; collecting wood, hunting, fishing, preparing food, cultivating family land and so forth. The *alagaupu* can also be applied to the relationship between people and the God which finds expression in the interaction of people and the pastor.

(2) "*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai'i.*"

Literally, the *alagaupu* means "*Tai'i's cry of distress is heard from Pulotu.*" *Pulotu* is believed to be a place at the west of Falealupo, Savaii where all the spirits of the dead are believed to reside. This *alagaupu* has a lot of versions and thus becomes complicated. The version collected by C. Steubel seems to be the general belief of the Samoans. It says that;

..Savea Siuleo and Tilafaiga lived at Pulotu with their daughter Nafanua. When Tilafaiga gave birth, it was only a clot of blood which was hidden in the land. (The word Nafanua is a combination of two words, "Na" - hidden and "fanua" - land). When Saveasiuleo investigated his wife's pregnancy, she told him that it is hidden in the land. Savea told his wife to call it, whereby a girl came whom they called Nafanua. In those days, the west district had been defeated by the east and it was a grievous defeat. The people were held as slaves and treated most cruelly. One day while Saveasiuleo, Tilafaiga and their daughter, Nafanua were sitting in their house at Pulotu, a talking chief by the name of Tai'i was climbing up a coconut tree with his feet upwards to pluck down coconuts. (A way of punishment.) He was wheezing labouriously and muttering that he would like to see someone deliver them from this slavery. He would dare not say these words on the ground as he was afraid of their oppressors. Tilafaiga heard the old man's wheezing and she clicked her lips in compassion. Saveasiuleo, then asked why she was clicking her lips and she told him that it was out of compassion for her people who are ill treated by the east. A few days later, Saveasiuleo ordered his assistant demons to cut down the Toa tree in front of their house. They did so, and fashioned it in to two clubs and an oar. One club was named Faauliulito which means "things are not getting any better." The other club was named "Fesilafa'i" which means "things are going to be better." The oar was named Ulimasao which means "do not let yourself be carried away by anger..."²⁰

²⁰ C. Steubel and Brother Herman, op. cit., pp. 123-125.

This version by Steubel is basically in line with the general belief of the old Falealupo people as well as the people of Salega district.²¹ As for the result of Nafanua's mission: Tilafaiga insisted that a mere girl could do all this battle by herself. But it is believed that Saveasiuleo made up his mind to send his devils to war. In the end, Nafanua won the battle and gave victory and freedom to the west, where she chased some of the enemy to the boundaries and killed some of them. It was embarrassing for the rivals because at the very end, while Nafanua was busy finishing off the last lot with her club, her top dropped by accident and she was half naked. So the strong warriors of the opposition side were startled by what they saw, in that she was a mere lady.

The *alagaupu* can be applied to a situation of hearing a relatives suffering even though he or she may live abroad or a great distance away.

(3) "*E pipi'i tia 'ae mamao ala.*"

The English translation of this *alagaupu* can be read as "the *tia* are close together but the distance from one to the other is a very long and difficult walk." A '*tia*' is a man made vertical stone structure used in the old days for the purpose of snaring pigeons.²² It is usually built on a clearing on top of a mountain. If two *tia* are on the top of two side by side mountains, they are often close enough for people on top of each to be able to talk to each other. But to get from one to the other often takes a long time because of the intervening valleys. Schultz in his writings also shares this same view.²³

This *alagaupu* can be applied to two families which maybe closely related by blood ties but may not live in a mutual relationship because of misunderstandings. Likewise, it can also be referred to the reality of travel between two neighbouring villages. To travel from one to the other may seem to be quite easy, but because unforeseen danger may arise on the way, the traveller may find that the journey may actually take much longer to complete.

²¹ Interview. Fuiono Senio, 70 years of age; Falealupo. 5 May 1999. 4.30pm.

²² Pigeon snaring was a very popular sport in the old days. It was, however, usually limited to the chiefs.

²³ E. Schultz., op. cit., p. 31.

C. ALAGAUPU OF MIXED DERIVATION

(1) "*E le tu'ua fa'apo-evaga o tama le mafutaga, e pei ole suaga-ipo nai Avalua.*"

The literal translation of this *alagaupu* may be explained as "do not depart like a meeting of a peer group at night, like the fishing of edible sea worms at *Avalua*." The *alagaupu* is a comparison of two different events. The first part, "*e le tu'ua faapo evaga a tama le mafutaga*", refers to a peer group outing in the moonlight, where if one wishes to leave, one does so without a word of farewell to the others. The second part is said to have originated from the fishing of edible sea worms at *Avalua* in Sapapalii, Savaii. *Avalua* is a swampy bay at Sapapalii where the edible sea worm (*ipo*) used to be fished in the past. Normally, when the fishermen are on their way to the place where the sea worm are found, they go as a group in good fellowship. But when one finds a spot where the worm is in plentiful supply, one silently fills up one's bag and leaves because one does not want the others to have a share of the catch.²⁴

The pioneers of the *alagaupu* have linked together the silent departure of a peer group and the quiet fishing of a self-centred fisherman to form one *alagaupu*. The *alagaupu* has both a negative and positive intention. Negatively, it serves to express disdain for actions or attitudes of self-concern. It is usually used as a reminder that such attitudes are contemptuous in Samoan thinking. It gives expression to the traditional and cultural conviction that silent departure from a group venture/gathering is both inappropriate and disrespectful. Positively, the saying gives expression to one's acknowledgment of the presence and reality of others. Its use has the intention of affirming and showing recognition of the significance of others involved in a group situation.

The *alagaupu* can be used by looking at a situation whereby people of a church congregation are doing work together. A person cannot just up and leave, before the work has been completed and also while others are still working. With any work a carpenter

²⁴ Interview. Papalii Misipati, 84 years of age, Sapapalii. 8 May 1999. 9.00 pm

does, for example, he/ she never leaves unless the work has been completed because the family who ordered the work will always have a few words of thanks for the carpenter.

(2) "E a Ulu tafega 'ae selefutia ai Vaisigano."

The English translation states that when "*Ulu* is flooded, the Vaisigano delta is affected." '*Ulu*' is a river brook in a mountain behind Maagiagi village. This river which flows down to the sea, entering Apia harbour at a place called Vaisigano delta, next to Aggie Greys hotel. Every time the *ulu* brook floods, the strong current collects all sorts of rubbish, even big trunks, thereby making heaps of rubbish and debris at Vaisigano and thus causing much damage to the soil and vegetation surrounding the delta. Schultz's version is in line with this view also.²⁵

This *alagaupu* can be applied to someone who takes the blame on behalf of another person or for the benefit of others. Within Samoan villages, there are rules and regulations by which village members have to abide. These are overseen by the village council, made up solely of chieftains of the village. If these rules are broken the people in the village are liable for punishment and even exile from the village. If one person breaks the rules, not only will (s)he be punished, but his or her family will share the punishment. Therefore the act of one person can affect the lives of his/her family within village politics and the family's place in the village's social organisation.

D. CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ALAGAUPU

i. Wisdom of the Pioneers²⁶

Despite the changes which have taken place with the coming of development and the uncertainty surrounding the origins of many *alagaupu*, the fact remains that the wisdom of the pioneers embodied in and conveyed through the surviving *alagaupu*, is still

²⁵ E. Schultz. op. cit., p. 98.

²⁶ Pioneers here refers to those who created and came up with *alagaupu* in use today

influential in Samoa today. Often people of today tend to regard generations of ancient Samoa as "unschooled" people in terms of modern education. Yet, the fact that *alagaupu* have continued to find meaning and cultural relevance in people's lives even today shows that the pioneers were not only wise but creative people.

They may not have been educated in a school room such as we have today but they are educated all the same. Their school, as *alagaupu* clearly reflect, is life itself and its varied experiences. Their wisdom and creativity have their source in the actual experience of living in community. In this respect, the truths they pass down through *alagaupu* have an all-time significance for Samoans.

Today, *alagaupu* still hold a distinct place in the Samoan language. Not only do they add lustre to the language itself, they also serve to intensify the intended meaning required to be conveyed to an audience. For these reasons, *alagaupu* are considered to be indispensable in the art of speech making in general and oratory in particular. Furthermore, in light of these functions of *alagaupu*, it is obvious that they can play a very significant role in the Church's speech-making about God, that is, in preaching.

ii. *Alagaupu* as a form of Knowledge and Education

Alagaupu, understood as the embodiment of human wisdom and experiential truths, are containers of knowledge. They preserve and transmit the accumulated knowledge of society from one generation to another. As such, *alagaupu* are therefore educational in nature and function. They provide insight into the realities of human existence in the Samoan context. They reflect the values that are considered essential for the life of Samoans. They have the capacity to educate every generation about those important values, be they social, cultural, ethical or whatever.

Of course when we consider some of the selected *alagaupu* previously mentioned in this chapter, we find that many of them, if not all, have this capacity to teach not just culturally ethical values but 'Christian' values as well. For example, the *alagaupu*, "*taape a fatuati*" is capable of teaching the values of love and fellowship. Implicit in the meaning of "*sasaa faaoti le utu a le faimea*" is the cultural value of sharing and concern for others, which is also a Christian value. The *alagaupu*, "*e tulituliloa le atu a le sau*" contains

teachings about the value of perseverance and diligence. "*E lutia i Puava ae mapu i Fagalele*" expresses the value of patience, determination, endurance and the hope which inspires them.

iii. *Alagaupu* link the present and future to the past

The reality of 'change' is a well recognised fact of the world of today. It is also common knowledge that a culture that does not change is one that is based on 'ancient ways.' The assumption, therefore is that a society needs to accommodate changes if she hopes to move with the rest of the world and not to be left behind. However, to move with the times does not necessarily mean a complete break with the past.

In our own Samoan context, affinity with the past is very strong. This is evident in the overall way of life, the patterns and structure of society, beliefs, customs, tradition and so on. This is not a bad thing at all. In fact, as Talapusi acknowledges, the past plays a significant role in the life of people in the present. People always look to the past, to their origins, in order to confirm and orient their living.²⁷ It is therefore necessary to maintain a link with the past.

Alagaupu then, can obviously serve this need. By virtue of their being rooted in the distant past, they form an important link with the present and future. The use of *alagaupu* in a speech or a sermon enables the hearer to behold in his/her mind the world of the past with its ideas, thought-forms, values and practices. Samoan *alagaupu* can enable one to identify with the hopes, fears, failures, achievements and so forth of past generations, thereby enriching one's life in the present and equipping one for the hope of the future.

²⁷ Dr. Faitala Talapusi, Eschatology in one Polynesian Context, Phd thesis. p. 168.

CHAPTER TWO

PROVERBIAL SAYINGS IN THE BIBLE

Though Proverbs do not contribute as much to the Culture of the Western world as they did to the world of the bible, they are not strange to a Westerners ears. At present, advertising agencies experience the importance of proverbs or sayings. For example, a computer graphics company uses the proverb "a picture is worth a thousand words" in an attempt to draw customers. So proverbial sayings are powerful tools that move with the essence of truthfulness. They have the potential to give expression to the truths about life in a most compact and concise way. Perhaps it is this capacity to couch human truths that makes proverbs and wise sayings an essential component of Israelite culture.¹

According to Hildebrandt,² the Hebrew scriptures are salted throughout with proverbs. They are found in the historical narratives (Judges 8: 2,26), in the Writings (Ps. 34: 11-14), the Prophets (Jer. 13: 12), the Gospels (Mark 10: 25, 31) and the Epistles (James 4:6; 1 Peter 4: 8). Even apochryphal writings such as the book of Sirach are sprinkled with proverbial sayings. And of course, the book of Proverbs is the largest collection of proverbial sayings in the Bible.

Hildebrandt also claims that the "proverbial genre" of the bible has its roots in the Ancient Near East. Most of the proverbs originate from four principal cultural settings: the family, royal court, schools and scribal circles. What they contain are references to significant aspects of the Hebrew faith such as sacrifice, prayer, temple worship and Israel's salvation history to mention a few. They embody and give expression to the truths derived from the Israelite experience of history: of deliverance from Egypt, their wilderness wandering, covenant making, conquest of Canaan and living in the Promised land. In his examination of biblical proverbs, Hildebrandt identifies eleven different types, each with

¹ According to W David Stacey, all cultures manufacture proverbs or wise sayings, epigrams riddles, and the like. So Israel was no exception. See Groundwork of Biblical studies, (London: Epworth, 1979), p.260.

² T.A. Hildebrandt, "Proverbs" in Cracking Old Testament Codes: A guide to interpreting the literary genres of the Old Testament, (eds.), D.B. Sandy and R.L. Giese Jr, (America: Broadman and Holman, 1995), p.239.

a particular form. For example, (1) Abomination sayings, cf. Prov. 15: 8; (2) Instruction, cf. Prov. 4:1; (3) Admonition, cf. Prov. 4:23; (4) "Better than" sayings, cf. Prov. 16:16; (5) Comparative, cf. Prov. 30:33; (6) Beatitude, cf. Prov. 14:21; (7) Paradoxical, cf. Prov. 25:15; (8) Acrostic, cf. Prov. 31:10ff; (9) Popular/Folk, cf. Judges 8:21; (10) Pairs, cf. Prov. 26:4-5.

In the light of what has been said about the nature of proverbs, their origins, content and significance, we shall now explore a few in both the Old and New Testaments. In the rest of this chapter, some proverbs from the Pentateuch, Prophets (former and latter), Writings (Wisdom Literature), Jesus Ministry and finally the Apostles will be highlighted.

A. PROVERBIAL SAYINGS IN THE PENTATEUCH

(1) "He shall be a wild ass of a man, with hand against everyone, and everyone against him; and he shall live at odds with all his kin." (Genesis 16:21)

This saying has its origins in the historical narrative tradition concerning the Israelite patriarch, Abraham. It is derived from the story of Ishmael, son of Hagar, the Egyptian handmaid of Sarai, Abraham's wife. In Hebrew, the word "**pereh**," meaning 'running wild' and 'wild asses' is mentioned ten times in the Old Testament.³ The saying is set in the context of human relationships. With reference to Ishmael, a Hebrew youngster, it is crucial that such a saying has a clan or family setting. It highlights the popular Old Testament deuteronomistic principle which says that the wicked are cursed and the right are blessed. In other words, what this proverb embodies is the Hebrew conviction that those who are faithful to God are surely blessed. On the other hand, those who are against his ways virtually face the consequences of their actions, and since this conviction is a basic tenet of Israelite religion, the saying is bound to be popular among ordinary folk. As a matter of fact

this is exactly how Hildebrandt explains this saying. He refers to it as a,

³ See, Job 6:5, 11:12, 24:5, 39:5; Psalms 104:11; Isaiah 32:14; Jeremiah 2:24, 14:6; and Hosea 8:9.

..folk saying which can be distinguished from the artistic wisdom sayings because they are apparently passed down by and appeal to common people.....such simple one line proverbs appear in narrative texts throughout the Old Testament...⁴

In other words, the saying is a popular folk saying and as such, it is found in many narratives of the Hebrew bible.

(2) “..Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.” (Deuteronomy 19:21).

This saying is part of Israelite Law which is also found elsewhere in the Pentateuch, for example, Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24: 19-21. It reflects a theological interpretation of history and law composed with an intensity and eagerness which make it stand out within the Pentateuch. It is not a law that took a mere one or two years to put together but was composed over a period of at least two centuries. The Israeli scholar Moshe Weinfeld has argued that, “it is more plausible to assume that the book of Deuteronomy was influenced by the ancient sapiential ideology that found expression in the book of Proverb and the wisdom literature of the ancient Near East.”⁵

The above saying is about human relationships. The use of sayings in the Hebrew clans and family life was common because the usual and common customs of the Hebrews was that it is the father's obligation to teach his children a trade, wisdom and faith. It is believed that the mother on the other hand is very much involved. So a trade and wisdom are avenues of everyday living, whereas faith is the utmost and important part of an Israelite's life in relation to their God, Yahweh.

In saying that, it is believed that most of the wisdom sayings originate from inside families or clans. In fact, this was the main procedure of teaching the youngsters in family circles. As Hildebrandt says, “the family is the most explicit proverbial setting..” Again he further adds that “..many proverbial sayings that originate in the family or clan were

⁴ D. B. Sandy and R. L. Giese, (eds.), Cracking Old Testament Codes: A guide to interpreting the literary genres of the Old Testament, (America: Broadman and Holman, 1995), pp.245-246.

⁵ R.E Murphy, Tree of Life: An exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature, Second edition, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans, 1996), p.104.

collected by the royal court and copied by the schools and scribes..."⁶ It is the emphasis of the text here that, what the law does to one person, the same must be applied to the other. There is no exception when we talk about legal terms. It must be noted that this is one precept of the Law which Jesus uses when he preaches about the law of the kingdom of God, namely Love, in his sermon on the mount (Mt. 5-6).

(3) "The images of their Gods, you shall burn with fire. Do not covet the silver or the gold that is on them and take it for yourself, because you could be ensnared by it; for it is abhorrent to the Lord your God." (Deuteronomy 7:25)

The above saying focusses on relationships between human beings and God. It is important to know that our own Samoan use of *alagaupu* to teach members of a family is basically the same with the ancient Hebrew practice. The everyday life of a family is regulated by the sole authority of a father. Likewise, there were no school rooms in ancient Samoa but the use of *alagaupu* was the form of reproach and admonition used for teaching about better relationships with others and especially with their deities. Again Murphy states in support of what Hildebrandt says;

Before the rise of complicated social stratification, the wisdom of a family or tribe - a certain ethos - would have been formed, based upon the "house", the "farm", and the "town"...Here the contrasts between poor and rich, lazy and diligent, appearance and reality would have been noted and they would have entered into the basic formation of the individuals in the Society....It is reasonable to think that what later became "wisdom" and "law" was at first an undifferentiated mass of commands, prohibitions and observations concerning life....Only later did instruction become differentiated into the scholastic and legal areas. Indeed, the Decalogue itself is a reflection of the ethos of early Israel. The implication of all this is that the origins of the wisdom thought are to be sought in the family and tribe rather than in any kind of school associated with court and temple.⁷

It is obvious that the teaching of "wisdom" and especially the "law" originated in family circles. Later some trained scribes and courtiers collected and separated them. So this is

⁶ D. B. Sandy and R. L. Giese, op. cit. p.238

⁷ R. E. Murphy, op cit, p. 4.

a parallel with the use of our own *alagaupu* especially where they serve as vehicles for transmitting ethical and theological meanings.

B. PROVERBIAL SAYINGS IN THE PROPHETIC BOOKS(Former and Latter)

- (1) "...So he said to them, "What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleaming of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?"**
(Judges 8:2)

This proverb is like a "Better than" saying.⁸ Gideon is either coining a proverb or adapting one. The story may preserve the memory of an attempt by Manasseh's southern neighbours to put a stop to Gideon's retaliatory raiding. According to Hildebrandt, the above saying belongs to the group of Popular Folk sayings.⁹ There are four kinds of traditional sayings: the first are those explicitly identified as a proverb (Mashal); the second are those introduced by the formula "And therefore they say...;" the third are those sayings that sound like proverbs; and the fourth are those converted into poetic two-line wisdom sayings.¹⁰

So the above proverb is to do with human relationships. The setting is the family circle where farms and vineyards are very important. The saying in fact speaks of a person who is well off, but has no desire for another person's possessions. It is the greediness of humans that do not satisfy them with what God has provided.

- (2) "Out of the wickedness, comes forth wickedness." (I Samuel 24:13), cf (Ezekiel 16:44) "Like mother, like daughter."**

The examination by A.R Johnson of the Hebrew term "mashal" translated into English as "proverb" and shows the above saying to be "...a short pithy saying in common

⁸ Refer to p. 19.

⁹ Refer to p. 19.

¹⁰ D. B. Sandy and R.L. Giese, op cit, p. 246.

use."¹¹ The language is picturesque and forceful, and may be used because of its recognised associations with the speaker's judgement. According to Hildebrandt¹² this proverb appears to be a "fixed formula." Its root form is open to countless variations and applications. For example, variations of the proverb are "Like father, like son," "The son of a duck is a quacker," and "As the baker, so does the buns."

Again it is about human relationships within the setting of a family circle. It implies that the picture of elders in a family is reflected in the youngster's daily life styles. That is, if they are taught and admonished religiously and spiritually, the young ones will certainly follow suit. But if they are not, the results are evident. The above proverb is very similar to our own Samoan saying - "*A fa'api'opi'o lava vae o le pa'a matua, e faapena foi pa'a laiti.*" (If the old crabs legs are crooked, so are the youngsters).

**(3) "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."
(Ezekiel 18:2f, cf 12:24 corresponding to Jeremiah 31:29)**

The use of such sayings, according to Johnson, was as a means of instruction in the professional circles of the wise, whose teachings were important enough to be classed together with that of the priest and the prophet. They represent an attempt to inculcate principles of action or modes of behaviour by means of colourful word pictures or object-lessons, drawn from the many and varied experiences of bearer to consent to a particular line of action.¹³

This proverb was formulated and based on the Second Law (Exodus 20:5), "...for I, the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents..." The saying refers to human relationships. It is often used by the prophets in their proclamation of the word of God. This principle of the Decalogue (10 commandments) teaches that the children would be affected by their forefathers' sins. Therefore Ezekiel's listeners misapplied that proverbial concept. As Ralph H Alexander explains:

¹¹ A.R. Johnson, "Masal" in *Wisdom of Israel and Ancient Near East*, (eds.), Martin Noth and D Winton Thomas, (Netherlands: E J Brill and Leiden, 1960), p.163.

¹² D. B. Sandy and R. L. Giese, op cit, p.235.

¹³ Martin Noth and D. Winton Thomas, op cit, p. 164.

The Lord's response to this new proverb was that the hereditary principle would cease immediately, for it had been erroneously applied to righteousness and unrighteousness. Each person lives and dies according to his actions.¹⁴

In other words one is responsible for one's sin. If a father sins, he will face the consequences himself but not the offsprings. Each individual will suffer punishment for his/her own wrongdoing. No one can commit sin and expect someone else to carry the burden of punishment for it.

C. PROVERBIAL SAYINGS IN THE WRITINGS

(1) "In vain the net is baited while the bird is watching" (Proverbs 1:17)

Often, proverbs are built around concrete graphic images. Similes and vivid imagery abound in the proverbial literature. A proverb is usually a short, salty concrete, fixed, paradigmatic poetically crafted saying. The sayings recorded in the book of Proverbs are believed to have a general parallelism of thought and structure with Egyptian literature of Amen-em-Opet son of Kanakht, particularly Proverbs 22:17-24:22. According to John A. Wilson¹⁵, this text is found in British Museum Papyrus 10474 and is said to have come from Thebes. It is dated somewhere between the 10th and 6th century B.C. Wilson agrees with the view of R.O. Kevin that the Wisdom of Amen-em-Opet depended on the Hebrew Book of Proverb. It shows that Proverbial Sayings and uses of them originated many years ago in Hebrew family lives even before they were collected by the Royal Courts, scribes and sages of Israel.

Hence, the above proverb is a saying derived from the daily life style of a Hebrew. Naturally it is difficult to bait a bird while it is watching. Therefore, in regard to relationships between human beings and God, the saying teaches the message that even if

¹⁴ Ralph H Alexander, "Ezekiel", in NIV Bible commentary Vol I, (eds.) Kenneth L. Barker and John R Kohlenberger III, (Grand rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing house, 1994), p.1301.

¹⁵ John A Wilson, "Instruction of Amen-em-Opet," in Ancient Near eastern Texts Relating to Old Testament, Third edition with Supplement, (ed.) James B. Pritchard, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), p.421.

we think our evil intentions go unnoticed, other people and most of all God, who is omniscient, would know.

(2) "False balance is an abomination to the Lord, but an accurate weight is his delight." (Proverbs 11:1, 20:10,23)

Abomination is a common term used in the sayings and language of the writings when speaking of humanity's faithful response towards God. It is also used to describe sharp business practice. The term 'abomination' (toeba) suggests liturgical language, and is used in Proverbs to designate wickedness and perversity as abominations "to the Lord."¹⁶

The saying is to do with human relationships. The setting is of scribal circles, as every law given was to regulate relationships between human beings and most of all between human beings and God. It gives the implication that the mutual relationships between people reflect human relationships with God. This proverb is a wisdom saying and therefore has a didactic intention for learning.

As Murphy¹⁷ stated:

It is helpful to distinguish between those that are almost purely observational or experiential and those that are didactic... the experiential saying does not tell the person how to act. It tells the reader "the way it is" and is open-ended.

However, the didactic saying is not open-ended. It can be conveyed simply by indicating a relationship with God. It teaches how one ought to act within this relationship.

(3) "Send out your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will get it back." (Ecc. 11:1)

This is sometimes taken as a metaphor for almsgiving; probably literal and metaphorical advice concerning sea trade in grain and other endeavours. In the Samoan context, it is commonly used by preachers at times of yearly charity contributions (*Taulaga*

¹⁶ E.R. Murphy, op cit, p. 9.

¹⁷ Ibid.

o nuu ese and *Taulaga mo Samoa* - Contribution for overseas mission and local contributions for the Samoan church).

The setting of this proverb is in farm and agricultural practices. It implies that if we give for the sake of another person, God will surely bestow his mercies on the one who gives with faith. According to James L Crenshaw, the saying derives from commercial enterprises and agriculture and therefore contains an "element of risk."¹⁸ The image of casting bread on waters is also found in Egyptian writing.

To Christians, the theological significance of such a saying is quite obvious. It is in line with our own Samoan belief and general religious understanding of hospitality that, "things that are given away, grow." (*e tupu mea ave*). This is the reality of our Samoan faith in God's providence.

D. PROVERBIAL SAYINGS IN THE APOCRYPHAL BOOK OF SIRACH

Chapter 24 of this book is closely associated with Proverbs 8 and Job 28 where the hidden abode and divine origin of wisdom is followed by a new development. It reveals that without a doubt, God and Wisdom are identical. In other words, God and wisdom cannot be separated; God is perfectly wise and Wisdom is God. This is where Ben Sira¹⁹ identifies wisdom directly with the Torah:

(1) "All this is the book of the covenant of the most high God, the law that Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob." (Sirach 24:23)

The above saying has a human-God essence in which the covenant of the most high God stipulated in the law, was given to and for the benefit of Israel. Therefore, all descendants of Jacob were to keep this Law of God. Such a saying originates in family teachings and may have been collected by scribal circles.

¹⁸ John L Crenshaw, "Ecclesiastes" in *Harper's Bible Commentary*, (ed.) James L Mays, (New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 1988), p.523.

¹⁹ E. R. Murphy, *op cit*, p.139.

(2) "A rich person does wrong, and even adds insults; a poor man suffers wrong, and must add apologies." (Sirach 13:3)

The words themselves tell us about the everyday life stipulation of the Jews. In fact, this happened more than 2,000 years ago and is still in existence today. The rich speaks the loudest even when (s)he is in the wrong, because (s)he has the power to cover his/her wrongdoing with his/her wealth. Yet, a poor man/ woman has to suffer the consequences of his/her wrongdoing and also has to apologise in order to satisfy the need of whoever has been offended. It is in the nature of a human to human relationship and occurs in every community, nation and organization.

E. PROVERBIAL SAYINGS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

i. JESUS MINISTRY

In Jesus' teaching and preaching ministry he often makes use of quotations from the Old Testament Law, words of the OT prophets as well as parables derived from normal activities of daily life in Palestine. He talks and creates stories involving traditions, customs and realities that are found in the environment of the Jews. For example, the "Prodigal son", animals like 'sheep,' 'goats' and trees like the 'vine' and 'mustard seed'.

In the Gospel, we find that Jesus uses everyday things and common symbols to express the message about the kingdom of God which is the focus of his preaching and teaching ministry. In his so-called sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:3-12 cf. Lk. 6: 20-23) he uses word pictures that are common and familiar to his Jewish hearers. He refers to circumstances that are related to the Mosaic Law and Old Testament prophecies. This is the point that C.S. Song is making when he says:

From what we know from the four Gospels, Jesus is a marvelous storyteller. He does not teach as do most of the rabbis. Jesus has inherited a profound sanity from the Old Testament prophets - the

sanity that enabled them to penetrate the surface of everyday things and everyday happenings, and grasp the divine meaning in them.²⁰

(1) "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." (Mat. 5:4, cf. Luke 6:21)

The saying is in a form of beatitude, where a blessing is pronounced on an individual by someone in authority. Jesus' beatitudes are in a form that corresponds to a wise king instructing his followers and pronouncing blessings on those embracing his Kingdom. To Hildebrandt,²¹ beatitudes are often pronounced by Hebrew figures like father, teacher, priest or king. This saying is looking at something about the relationship of God to human beings. It is teaching that God is always with his people. So for those who are sorrowful, God is always there to offer a helping hand.

Because this beatitude does not mention any specific cause for grief and sorrow, one has no reason to limit its scope to one or the other of possible issues. This context will also clarify whether the mourning in question refers to specific losses such as the death of loved ones, to grief over the sins of Israel, or to sorrow over one's own sinfulness, loneliness and despondency. "The immediate reason why the beatitude about mourning follows on poverty seems to be connected with the important passage, Isaiah 61:1-3, where verses 2 to 3 elaborate on God's eschatological promise."²²

(2) "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven." (Mk. 10:25)

It is difficult to comprehend the above saying because the camel is a large animal with a hump back and very difficult to go through a needle hole. According to Linsey P. Pherigo, there was a Needle's Eye Gate into Jerusalem that a camel could enter only on its

²⁰ C.S Song, *Theology from the womb of Asia*, (Mary Knoll, New York: published by Orbis Books, 1986), pp.43-44.

²¹ D. B. Sandy and R. L. Giese, op cit, p.243.

²² Betz Hanz Dieter in), *Sermon on the Mount*, (ed.) Adela Y Collins, (Augsberg Fortress, Minneapolis, 1995), p. 121.

knees.²³ The plain meaning is that it is impossible for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. The above saying is a comparative saying.²⁴ The proverb uses a metaphor or simile to heighten the impact of the message. As C. Fontaine stated:

The metaphorical proverb allows its users to move easily from message to application, and provides its users with protection from those who might disagree by means of the indirection of its language.²⁵

It is believed that sayings of other Jewish teachers have survived, and speak of the impossibility of some vast objects, like an elephant getting through the eye of a needle. Therefore, to N E. Nineham, this is clearly proverbial. It is clear that the saying is about human-God relationship from the Jewish school circles.

(3) "For David himself says in the book of Psalms, The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'" (Lk. 20:42-43, cf. Mt. 22:44. See Psalm 110:1).

The saying to which Jesus refers is an oracle probably delivered by a prophetic or priestly figure in the Old testament. It is recorded by the Psalmist. The "footstool" refers to the practice of victorious kings placing their feet on the backs of their captured enemies.²⁶

It has been continuously mentioned by the scholars that most of the priestly, scribal, and prophetic oracles are fulfilled in the New testament. So while this saying about the Ancient Near East practice of a conquering king is something that belongs to the ancient past, its fulfilment is now apparent in the coming of Jesus. So the saying refers to the sovereignty and might of God. Also, because Jesus lived in Palestine and grew up as a

²³ Linsey P. Pherigo, "The Gospel according to Mark" in The Interpreters one volume commentary on the Bible, (ed.), Charles M. Laymon, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), p. 662.

²⁴ Refer to p.19.

²⁵ C Fontaine, Traditional sayings in the Old Testament: a contextual study, Bible and Literature series, (ed.), D. M. Gunn, (Sheffield:Almond Press, 1982), p.80.

²⁶ David L. Tiede, "Luke" in New revised Standard Version Study Bible, (ed.), Wayne A Meeks, (New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 1989), p.994.

loyal Jew, his teaching and ministry were deeply consistent with Jewish culture. This is what John Stacey is indicating in the following statement:

The reasons for the inclusion of the Old Testament as an authority alongside the New are as follows: Jesus himself was a Jew; he thought and lived in Jewish ways which were deeply coloured by the Old Testament; and all the early interpreters of Jesus (the New Testament authors) expressed their faith by affirming that Jesus had fulfilled the Old Testament.²⁷

ii. APOSTOLIC TEACHINGS

(1) For the scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The labourer deserves to be paid." (Timothy, 5:18)

The above text is first mentioned in Deuteronomy 25:4. It is again mentioned in Luke 10:7 in relation to Jesus ministry. Here it is mentioned for the third time in connection with the ministry of the apostles. It is apparent therefore that the apostles continue to use the old insights of the Sages and Jesus in their own preaching and teaching. The above saying, as quoted by Paul, is concerned with elders who exercise a leadership role, especially in teaching and preaching. To Paul, the saying is speaking about the fact that the worker is entitled to be rewarded for the work he/she does. What one sows is really what one should reap.²⁸ This saying has a human to human nature and derives from agricultural activities.

(2) "Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins." (I Peter 4:8) cf. (1:22, 2:17)

This is one of the most important sayings and instructions of Proverbs 10:12, where the significance and value of love is emphasised. Likewise, in Jesus' preaching and teachings, "love" is central. It characterises his ministry on earth. This love comes to

²⁷ John Stacey, Doing Theology: an introduction for preachers, (Hertfordshire: Garden City Press, 1972), p. 41.

²⁸ Ralph P. Martin, "1st, 2nd, Timothy and Titus", in Harpers Bible Commentary, (ed.) James L. Mays, (New York: Harper Collins publishers, 1988), p.1240.

ultimate expression in the event of the cross. That is, the pouring out of his whole life for the sins of the whole world.

This is the essence of Jesus ministry and teachings. God is love, therefore love must be the determining principle in the life of a disciple. The love between people, reflects the love between people and God. It is not surprising then to hear Ernst Best say that the primacy of love "is characteristically a Christian emphasis."²⁹

**(3) "I reprove and discipline those whom I love. Be earnest, therefore, and repent."
(Revelations 3:19)**

The author speaks about the love of God as well as the fact that Laodicea lacks "zeal" or passionate concern which is a vital aspect of love in the Biblical sense, especially God's love. According to John Sweet, "...Proverbs 3 was much used by early Christians, and fits the theme of Christ, the true wisdom, over and against the foolishness of the Laodiceans."³⁰

The saying is concerned with the relationship between God and human beings. According to Hildebrandt, the saying speaks of God's love as in Proverbs 3:12. Also it is an abomination saying. As such, it underscores God's view of right and wrong in the world.³¹

F. SUMMARY

The whole purpose of the above exploration is to see whether proverbial sayings were important to biblical writers and how they used them in their writings. It has been seen that proverbial sayings as already been explored is an ancient concept of indigenous Hebrew. Yet, such method of Hebrew wisdom was also used in ethical and theological

²⁹ Ernest Best, "1st Peter," in *The New Century Bible Commentary*, (eds.) Ronald E Clements and Mathew Black, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B Eerdmans, 1977), p.159.

³⁰ John Sweet, *Revelation*, (Suffolk: SCM and Westminster, 1990), p. 108.

³¹ I D. B. Sandy and R. L. Giese, op. cit., p.243.

teachings of neighbouring nations like Egypt and Mesopotamia and had prevailed many years ago. They showed the intentions and insights of the sages. Because the genres of the Old Testament were used as forms of ethical and importantly theological truths, the writer believed that our own *alagaupu* and Samoan concepts of ancient time are warranted to serve the same purpose.

We have seen that proverbial sayings are found in every section of the bible. They are used by writers of the Pentateuch, the prophets, wisdom writers, and some apochryphal books. They are also used by Jesus himself as well as the apostles in the course of their respective ministries of preaching and teaching. In essence, the ancient insights and wisdom of the pioneers always has a contemporary theological significance for the different generations. If that is so, we suggest that we can also use *alagaupu* in expressing the Christian message about God.

CHAPTER THREE

THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND APPLICATION

A. THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ALAGAUPU

Dyson once wrote, "all theological categories emerge from, and are responses to, contexts of one kind or another."¹ What this suggests is that the character of any theology reflects the categories of thought which are typical of the people in a particular historical setting. In a similar vein, Koria claims that a Pacific theology is at liberty to utilize and appropriate all available cultural resources for expressing the message of the gospel. Resources such as "linguistic idioms, proverbial sayings, imagery, symbols and metaphors," to mention only a few, are all viable means for the "expression and articulation of the Christian faith."²

In the light of these statements, it is clear that one of the tasks of theology is to find a language to give expression to Christian beliefs. Not just any language but one that is relevant and intelligible to people living in a particular historical locality. If this is so, then *alagaupu*, as a cultural linguistic category, is a viable means for theological discourse. In other words, *alagaupu* have obvious theological significance. They can serve as a theological resource for expressing the many themes of the Christian faith.

In the particular context of Samoa, the use of *alagaupu* as a theological category can certainly make the themes of the bible much more relevant and intelligible to local people. Let us examine some of the *alagaupu* and see how they bear on the understanding of the following theological themes.

¹ A. O. Dyson, "Dogmatic or Contextual Theology?" in *Study Encounter*, Vol. 8, no. 3 (1972), p. 5.

² Paulo Koria, "Moving Toward a Pacific Theology: Theologising with Concepts," (Unpublished paper, 1999), p.1.

i. Sovereignty and Lordship of God

As explained in chapter 1, the *alagaupu*, "*Sasaa faaoti le utu a le faimea*" highlights the complete disclosure of the master's treasured possession to one who seeks his help. Like a master tradesman who does not hesitate but pours out his skills and knowledge for the benefit of the one who seeks. God, as the sovereign lord of all creation has provided everything for the needs of human beings. Theologically speaking, God has fully revealed himself to human beings in and through the son. Nothing of his divine being has not been disclosed. God in the fullness of his divine life has been totally laid open for the whole world to see. This inevitably points to the sovereignty of God over all. Such an act on the part of God is compared to the act of the *faimea*.

ii. Grace, Incarnation, Salvation

These are important theological themes. They constitute some of the important doctrines of the Christian church. Each of the three serves to give expression to the way the Christian God, in Jesus Christ, relates with human beings. How can *alagaupu* give expression to these themes of theology? Let us recall the selected *alagaupu* we discussed in chapter 1.

"*Ua pii oa le foe a le tautai i aauloa.*"³ As we have seen, the saying has the meaning of a finished, or completed task. It embodies the idea of an executed plan that has successfully come to an end or a goal that has been finally achieved. In relation to the above themes, the *alagaupu* can help illuminate all by relating them to the situation depicted in the *alagaupu*. For example, like the successful return of the fisherman from his arduous maritime activity, God has completed his work for the redemption of humankind. God's grace has come to its full manifestation in the act of incarnation. The coming of Jesus into the world, his life and ministry, his passion and resurrection brings to fulfilment God's promise of salvation and his redemptive purpose for the world.

On the cross, Jesus said, "...it has finished..." (John 19:30). What is meant here is that in spite of the suffering and agony of the cross, salvation has been accomplished.

³ Refer Chapter 1, p. 8.

Like the docking on shore of the fisherman's canoe after the gruesome task of fishing in the deep ocean with all its dangers and risks, God has now completed the work of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

"*Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai'i.*" As explained in chapter one, this *alagaupu* refers to a person enduring hard times and being attended to by another concerned person. In parallel to this, is the story of the Israelites cry for freedom from oppression in Egypt. God heard and, with the help of Moses, freed the Israelites.

"Then the Lord said, I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters...and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey.."(Exodus 3:7 f).

Furthermore, the *alagaupu* can be explained as the Grace and the fatherly care of God as highlighted in the given biblical narrative which can be clearly and meaningfully explained to an audience. *Pulotu*, the abode of the spirits and the divine according to Samoan beliefs, was where assistance was given to the distress experienced by *Tai'i*. Again, through out the history of Israel since the promise to Abraham, Gods love for his elected people was to follow and nurture them.

"*E le tu'ua fa'apo evaga o tama le mafutaga, e pei o le suaga-ipo nai Avalua*" The said *alagaupu* can be explained in several ways, but what has to be emphasised here is the message that one has to struggle with perseverance in order to achieve his or her goals in life. Therefore cynicism and pessimism are indirectly condemned in the teaching of this *alagaupu*.

Despite difficulties and testing moments, Jesus did not give up like that of the meeting of a peer group when they are out at night. His ministry involved sharing without malice or prejudice which can be compared to the self-centredness of a worm fisherman at *Avalua*. According to the Gospel, Jesus' sufferings at Gethsmene was tested by the unavoidable issue of death. As prophet Isaiah stated, "...he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed..." (Isaiah 53:5) Jesus during his earthly ministry left no stone unturned in his work on earth, spiritually and ethically. His province was to

do his Fathers will and that was to bring justice. He thereby gave his disciples the greatness commandment, "...This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down ones life for ones friends." (John 15:12-13)

"*E a ulu tafega, 'ae selefutia ai Vaisigano.*" With reference to the meaning given in chapter one, the above *alagaupu* can be used to explain a mutual relationship between two parties where one takes the blame or suffers for the sake of another. The *alagaupu* itself, without referring to the bible, teaches about loving care and concern for those who are in trouble. Such meaning and application of the *alagaupu* signifies what God had done to free people of their sin. Jesus Christ died on the cross to redeem a sinful world. In the Old Testament, such a message is revealed in the story about what Esther went through for the sake of the Jews in relation to Haman's evil plans. "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night and day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. After that, I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish," (Esther 4:16) Jesus suffered so that humans can be cleansed and saved from their sins. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." (John 3:16) It is Gods love for humankind which can be vividly explained in the whole history of the *alagaupu*.

iii. Human relationships: fellowship, perseverance, gratitude

"*Ta'ape a fatuati.*" As it is mentioned in chapter one, the main idea behind this *alagaupu* is that of a harmonious relationship. The *alagaupu* in its allegorical interpretation relates the scattering of stones to the scattering of a fellowship because of some disputes and misunderstandings amongst members. The gathering of stones back in to their original places allegorises the joyful and harmonious relationship between members of a fellowship after their differences have been reconciled. The *alagaupu* can also be applied to the explanation of the relationship between Christians in that, despite the great number of people in different church denominations, the fact remains that they are all Christians.

Psalms 133, 1 John 4:20 and many other teachings of the scriptures emphasises the significance of harmonious and mutual relationships between Christians. In fact one of the

prime reasons why Jesus came to earth was to reconcile human beings so they may live in a life of Peace and Love. The *alagaupu* therefore preaches the same message which the bible teaches and therefore it is biblical and theological in nature.

"*E pipi'i tia 'ae mamao ala.*" The *alagaupu* applies to two parties or people who are closely related, but may be separated in spirit. In theological education, this *alagaupu* emphasises human to human relationships. It would be appropriate then to give it in its negative context, by warning the two parties that such a relationship is not welcome. Two people who are related, like a brother and sister, should be encouraged to work out any differences which may arise in their relationship because this is the Christian way.

This theological interpretation of the *alagaupu* is in level with Jesus' sermon on the mountain as recorded in Mathew (5:5,8) which says, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth...Blessed are the pure in heart, for they see God." Jesus is in effect, condemning the positive side of the *alagaupu*, thereby giving it an ethical and a theological value when used or explained negatively.

iv. Human-divine relationships

"*E tulituliloa le atu a le sa'u.*" With the explanation of the *alagaupu* in chapter one, the *alagaupu* can then be used as a theological admonishment by encouraging a Christian to ignore worldly things that may interfere in his/her attempt to make Christ a cornerstone in his/her life. The uninventive and the unfailing attempt of the swordfish to pursue its special bonito shows a good lesson for a Christian in his/her quest for Christ. It is nevertheless in human peoples nature that when a person changes from evil to good, temptations will always exist.

In the book of Phillipians (3:2-16), St. Pauls teachings of running for Christ is in line with the theological interpretation of the *alagaupu*. Paul claims that he is not without the worldly honours of the Jewish laws, but they are not important to him in his search for Christ as his saviour. The *alagaupu* therefore, without reference to St. Paul, can still give the same message if it is applied to a Christian and worldly entanglements in his/her struggles to find Christ. It also gives good preparation for a human to God relationship.

"*Mua mea i Matautu-sa.*" The emphasis here is a relationship of the worshipper to his or her God. In the relationship of a Christian to the almighty God, the *alagaupu* strictly

demands that a Christian above all things must first give thanks to God. The history of Israel showed this kind of relationship of the Israelites to their God. In fact, there are Laws in the Old Testament that require worship and of course sacrifices from the Israelites for their God. This is also what we have seen in Jesus' life in the New Testament. He often retired to a remote place to worship God.

So the *alagaupu* in its theological sense is a general command for all Christians that their utmost duty towards God is to give praise and magnify his holy name. Like the preceding *alagaupu*, this one also speaks of a human to God relationship.

v. Eschatology

"*E lutia i Puava 'ae mapu i Fagalele.*" The *alagaupu* gives hope for a Christian sojourner. It assures faithful Christians that after suffering and the tests of time, there is a place for peaceful rest and fellowship. It recalls Jesus teachings in Mathew (24:9-14) that hardships in life will be part of all Christians lives, but if they work hard there will always be light at the end of any hard path. If this teaching by Jesus is contextualised in Samoan situations, the said *alagaupu* fits very well.

All *alagaupu* given here (as well as all others in use today), can be interpreted in such a way so as to give theological encouragement for Christians. Despite the fact that many *alagaupu* originate from pagan practices of the Samoans in the pre-Christian era, their theological importance is clear and therefore relevant in Christian teachings.

A point needs to be made here about the existence of *alagaupu*. The missionaries who brought Christianity to Samoa condemned the use of *alagaupu*, otherwise *alagaupu* could have been incorporated in to the Samoan bible when it was translated. Therefore, apart from the fact that *alagaupu* can be religious and theological in nature, present and future generations can appreciate and find importance in the use of *alagaupu* when in search of their roots and identity.

B. ALAGAUPU AND THE ART OF PREACHING

As it has been mentioned, *alagaupu* link Samoans to their roots and gives them a sense of identity. It has been noted that young Samoans, especially those born overseas, have a need to explore and research the origins of the different *alagaupu* as well as the legends which come with them. This is so that they can socialise and familiarise themselves with where they come from, in effect their own origins or the origins of their families-Samoa. They have also been enthusiastic in using *alagaupu* in their speeches. This observation mainly comes from the experiences of the many New Zealand and Australian born Samoan students at Malua Theological College, which I observed during my time at Malua (1995-1998).

These students found the Samoan language foreign, but in the second year, where they have to start preaching, they used *alagaupu* in their sermons for sermon classes despite their difficulty in grasping certain aspects of it. Many of them were criticised for using it wrongly or in different contexts and so forth. When asked why they do not just use the general language, they said that the use of *alagaupu* would identify them as 'real' Samoans as well as it being more interesting and meaningful to them.

Identifying someone within a particular context would also mean that that context is meaningful to who ever identifies with their culture by using *alagaupu* in speech making. It may take a long time to explain to the generations of today the meaning of the Samoan concept "*fetu'utu'una'i*" or "*faautauta*" (careful or prudent). But to explain the meaning of such can be clear when using the *alagaupu* "*seu le manu 'ae taga'i i le galu.*" (Snare a bird at the same time watching out for a wave). This *alagaupu* derives from the traditional fishing of bonito. Fishermen, when fishing bonito usually come across a fleet of seagulls, whose feathers are useful for fishing lures. In most cases, they took with them nets to catch the birds. Sometimes, a fisherman was found to be too busy trying to snare a bird and would be caught unaware by a dangerous wave that could capsize his canoe. According to Fao Sooalo Avau, an elderly orator of Asau, "...a fleet of seagulls (*gogo*) which hovers continuously above seawater is a good sign for bonito fishermen that

this area has plenty of fish. Especially when the sea is rough and there is no idea where the school of bonito is heading. At the same time, the birds can be easily caught..."⁴

Another example from the scriptures which further supports this argument is the teaching of Jesus in Mathew (9:14-17). This parable speaks of using the new wine with the new wine skins, but not with the old. The point Jesus is trying to make is that new generations bring new changes and so the new match with the new and not with the old. Jesus parable is effective to the Samoan people when it is explained by using the *alagaupu* "*O le fuata ma lona lou.*" (When the breadfruit harvest comes, the long pole will be found too.) One Talking chief (*tulafale*), explained that this *alagaupu* "is generally believed to have originated from ancient Samoan wisdom. Usually when a breadfruit tree bears fruit for the first time, a short pole is used to pluck the fruits, but when the next harvest comes, a longer pole is needed because the tree has grown higher."⁵

One reason for the new pole being used is because Samoa does not have wine skins but we do have breadfruits and poles. The analogy, then is that of breadfruit and poles, because Samoan people are able to relate to it.⁶

The use of *alagaupu* socialises and familiarises the new generations to the skills and various cultural practices of the past and are therefore educational in nature. Recently, the Samoan government has tried to revive one of the traditional indoor games called "*Taulafoga*" (disc throwing) through the Teuila Festival. This was to promote tourism and in effect help the Samoan economy. One way which helped the government in reviving this game was to use the *alagaupu* "*Ua atoa tupe i le fafao.*" (The set of discs in the box is complete). The game, "*Taulafoga tupe*" is an ancient one played by the high chiefs. Ten small discs made of coconut shell are thrown alternatively towards a finishing line marked out on a mat. "*Fafao*" is a box made of two coconut shells fitted together, in which the discs of the "*taulafoga*" are kept.⁷ This explanation is confirmed when an

⁴ Interview. Fao Sooalo Avau, age 69, tulafale of Asau; Salelologa Market, 29th May 1999, 4.30pm.

⁵ Interview. Fatiau La'au Aitofele, age 55, tulafale of Lotofaga. Malua, 19th May 1999, 8.00pm.

⁶ E. Schultz, p.50, no. 183.

⁷ E. Schultz, op. Cit. pp.66-67, no's. 248 and 251.

elderly chief, Manusauloa Afakasi,⁸ was interviewed. The *alagaupu* explains the basics of the game, so the generations of today can learn about how the game is played, and is then educational. In relation to the bible, if the *alagaupu* is used to explain or to illustrate what the bible says, the usage of the *alagaupu* is educational.

There are a lot of *alagaupu* that are religious in meaning. For example "*Sei muamua mea i Matautusa*" (First are things to Matautusa); "*Sou sao ia Manuvao*" (Before bird catching, an offering must be made); "*Momoli laau i Fogaa*" (To take the clubs to Fogaa - the royal residence of Malietoa); "*Logo i Pulotu le mapu a Tai'i*" (The distress whistle of Taii is heard from Pulotu) and many others. All these *alagaupu* speak of humankind and their divine superior. They can also be used to explain the relationship of the Christians and God. Hence, they are religious and can be made theological. Other *alagaupu* which are not religious can also be used theologically.

The *alagaupu* "*Sou sao ia Manuvao*" is said to be religious and can also be made theological. It originates from the event of making traditional canoes in the past. When the builder cuts down a tree for canoe building, "he has to cut the leaves and pile them up on a stump as a sacrifice to the God *Manuvao*."⁹ If this is not done, the trunk will surely have cracks in it. Another version is that "*Manuvao* or *Manualii*, which is a bird that eats bananas, was usually hunted for food. Before going out to catch the *manuvao*, a sacrifice is offered, otherwise nothing is caught."¹⁰

We as Christians believe that a plan or a project that is first offered to God for his blessings and protections is one that will be fruitful and successful. This message can be vividly brought to the hearing of an audience if it is delivered throughout the use of the *alagaupu* "*Sou sao*" or "*Ia muamua se faasao ia manuvao*" (literally the same meaning).

There are many other *alagaupu* which are not religious but can always be put in a religious context, like "*ia tili i le papa i galagala*." According to sources from Fagalii, it is believed that the wife of a high chief from Fagalii had an affair with the son of a high chief from Solosolo. When the matter came to light, the high chief of Solosolo, Leota, who

⁸ Interview. Manusauloa Afakasi, 89 years of age, Ali'i of Lalomalava. 10th June 1999, 5.00pm.

⁹ Efi, Tupua Tamasese, "Man is therefore God descended" in *Observer: The Sunday Samoan*, (ed.) Porotesano Malifa, (Apia: Observer Printing Press, 1999), pp. 10 and 13.

¹⁰ Interview. Leota Sinoumea, farmer of Ti'avea, Aleipata, 26th My 1999, 4.00pm.

had a good relationship with Salima Galemai, whose wife was involved, told Leota to have his son seek refuge in his house at *Papa i Galagala*, Galemai's land inland of Fagalii. Generally high chiefs houses in the past were recognised sanctuaries for criminals. The Fagalii people were after Leota's son to try and kill him.¹¹ This is also in line with the version of Schultz.¹²

The theological message this *alagaupu* teaches is that "refuge" is found only with a paramount chief or superior. For Christians, they can be reminded that the paramount God, Father and redeemer is the only one they can find peace and joy in times of sufferings and sorrow.

What has been said earlier is in support of the argument that *alagaupu*, whenever they can be used, ought to be used in the preaching ministry. New generations of Samoa are eager to learn and know the meanings of *alagaupu* because they want to identify themselves as true Samoans. This secures any possible fear that new generations are not interested or even ignorant of *alagaupu*. Preaching the Gospel therefore, through the use of relevant *alagaupu*, is certainly warranted.

As illustrated earlier, *alagaupu* are meaningful when they are used in preaching. Even though we are far removed from the past due to certain changes taking place, some of the materials from which *alagaupu* gave birth still remain and are explorable to our generations and to the future. For example, *alagupu* which originated from fishing in the sea using traditional methods and canoes still exist even though modern fishing technologies have been introduced. The traditional fishing from which the *alagaupu* "*Taape a fatuati*" gave birth is still practiced by the older people of the villages around Samoa. Therefore, to speak of *alagaupu*, would be meaningful in this context. If they are used to exegete the meaning of the scripture which bears the western context, then it would be contextual and then of course effective to our generations. This usage of *alagaupu* in preaching is educational.

Chiefs and orators (*Alii* and *Tulafale*) often use *alagaupu* in their counselling speeches. Rarely do they make reference to the bible, but through the use of *alagaupu*, they

¹¹ Ati, Fuamatu, Porotesano, Interview with writer, 26th March 1999, Fagalii.

¹² E. Schultz, op. cit. p. 98, no.401.

conclude with the same message which the bible teaches. Such use of *alagaupu* is then very theological. According to one Elder minister,

Before the gospel arrived and the bible was translated to our language, the chiefs and parents bible was tradition and culture. With the use of *alagaupu*, disputes were settled in counselling speeches. No reference was made to the bible, yet love, peace and forgiveness which the scripture teaches were all delivered through the use of *alagaupu* in highlighting the Samoan concepts of 'Faaaloalo' and 'Agalelei'.¹³

Apart from the fact that *alagaupu* can be made theological themselves, they can also be used as an allegory explaining some of the teachings in the bible. The 'Deutronic Theology' or 'principles' of "Do good to God and you are blessed" or "Do evil and you are cursed" can be expressed theologically through the use of the *alagaupu* "*Afai e te iloa a'u i Siulepa, 'ou te iloa foi oe i Togamau*" (If you had been

good to me at *Siulepa*, you shall also be blessed and loved at *Togamau*). The story behind this *alagaupu* says that, "It is generally accepted that in the old days the people of Safata district used to travel by foot from village to village. One day the high chief of Vaiee went past Sataoa while the villagers were meeting at *Siulepa* (meeting place) and food was served. The said Te'o (Vaiee high chief) was hungry and tired but Taoa, the high chief of Sataoa never invited him for food and rest. Later on, Taoa was passing Vaiee while fine mats were being presented at the *malae* (village grounds) of *Togamau*, of which Te'o was the sole leader. Taoa sent his talking chief to Teo asking for a tribute to be presented to him (Taoa) and where Teo responded by uttering the above *alagaupu*."¹⁴ Just by telling the story behind this *alagaupu*, the listeners would get a clear picture of the so called Deutronic principles.

Again this *alagaupu* reveals the importance and parallel to the teachings of Jesus recorded in Mathew 25:31-46, "Then, the king will say to those on his right hand, 'come,

¹³ Interview. Reverend Elder To'ese To'ailoa. (Matagaluga Australia), Faatoia, Apia, 25th May 1999, 9.30am.

¹⁴ Tamotu, Fatiu, Sataoa, 19th May, 1999.

you that are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...for I was hungry...I was naked...I was sick...I was in prison and you visited me."(Mathew 25:34-36).

Preaching of the word is hailed by many in our denomination as the most important part of the whole service. Often when the service ends, the audience always talk about the sermon rather than any other part of it. People always regard a good and well prepared sermon as one delivered in effective and good Samoan language, even though they do not understand the deeper meaning of the theological message of the sermon. The use of relevant *alagaupu* in bringing out such theological message would certainly help the audience in that regard.

CONCLUSION

The main focus of this study, as the title of this dissertation indicates, is the relationship between Samoan *alagaupu*, or proverbial sayings, and the preaching ministry of the Church. Are we justified, theologically or otherwise, to use *alagaupu* in the preaching and teaching ministry of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa? This is how we have formulated the subject under discussion. Our intention is to arrive at some informed resolution to this main question.

As stated in the Introduction, the need for a resolution to the basic question is necessitated by the apparent differences of opinion among clergy, theological students, staff, as well as the laity within the Church. On the one hand, there are those who argue that *alagaupu* are no longer a viable resource for preaching the message of the Gospel. They are outmoded and therefore should be dispensed with. Others, on the other hand, believe that by virtue of their being part of the cultural and linguistic heritage of Samoans, *alagaupu* are therefore a necessary means for preaching ministry of the Church.

Through an examination of the selected *alagaupu* in the first Chapter, we have discovered that they contain a rich deposit of wisdom and knowledge derived solely from the life experiences of past generations. *Alagaupu* embody ethical values which are foundational for Samoan culture and are also at the heart of Christian teachings. The cultural significance of *alagaupu* is thus unquestionable. As we have seen, they provide an important link in time: past, present and future. They enable people of this day and age to find their cultural roots in the past and to establish their own identity in the present so that they can move forward into the future with an assurance of who and what they are. They have the capacity to teach present generations about life itself and the values that support it.

Reflection on the discussion in this chapter has lead me to the following conclusion. The fact that *alagaupu* have the capacity to teach people about life and the cultural values (moral, ethical, religious, social, etc.) make *alagaupu* a most appropriate and fitting tool for preaching the Christian Gospel. This is because the

Christian message is fundamentally about living life. With the cultural meanings and life support values embedded in *alagaupu*, they would certainly help to illuminate the Christian message about God's love for the world.

In Chapter 2, we examined the biblical accounts containing the counterparts of our Samoan *alagaupu*, namely, proverbial sayings. Our main purpose in doing this was to establish whether or not there was any biblical precedent that would warrant the use of *alagaupu* in the preaching of the word of God. In our examination, we found that besides the largest collection of wisdom sayings in the book of Proverbs, proverbial sayings were sprinkled throughout both the Old and New Testaments. We also found that like our Samoan *alagaupu*, these proverbial sayings had their origins in the life experiences of the Hebrew sages; experiences derived mostly from the family situation. Their function was not only to conserve and transmit knowledge of the wise from generation to generation, they also played an educational role. That is, they were used mainly for the edification of people. People were taught in the appropriate ways and morals for living in human relationships, both as individuals and as a community.

Of great significance for the purpose of our study is the discovery that biblical writers used these wisdom sayings and proverbs as vehicles for teaching about human behaviour in relation to God. Frances Randall draws our attention to this insight by saying that, "the activities of Yahweh in the Old and New Testaments were described in a definite cultural art-form and were celebrated in community."¹ Now obviously, if biblical writers made use of this cultural and literary construct to convey their message about God, we too can find no reason why we cannot use our Samoan *alagaupu* for the proclamation of the Gospel message. After all Jesus himself, the preacher per se, did use proverbial sayings and parables in his preaching ministry.

In Chapter 3, we examined the selected *alagaupu*, firstly, in terms of their theological import and secondly in terms of their significance for the preaching ministry of the Church. Regarding the former, we found that each selected *alagaupu*

¹ Frances Randall, SND, "African Proverbs related to Christianity" in *Mission Trends No. 3: Third World Theologies*, (ed.) Gerald H Anderson, Thomas F Stransky. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans, 1976), p.188.

could have important theological implications for people's lives. Each was capable of illuminating certain themes of Christian theology. Put differently, *alagaupu* had the capacity to give expression to theological theme. Themes such as God's sovereignty, grace, salvation, incarnation and eschatology could be expressed and explained quite clearly when couched in *alagaupu*. Concerning the second, it became very clear to us that *alagaupu* could play a very significant role in the preaching ministry of the Church. They are capable of simplifying a sermon in such a way that the message might be received with the required understanding.

Now with regard to the main issue that has determined the course of our study, a reasonable resolution seems apparent. As far as this writer is concerned, the evidence thus far considered, leads us to the conclusion that Samoan *alagaupu* and the preaching ministry of the Church are bedfellows. *Alagaupu* is a necessary ally for the Christian preacher and can function as an illuminating light or a highlighter for the preaching of the word of God. As we have discovered, there is no reason why *alagaupu* should be considered a write-off in relation to the ministry of preaching. In sum, the use of *alagaupu* in the preaching ministry of the church is culturally, biblically and theologically justifiable.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<i>Aauloa</i>	Faraway reef
<i>Agalelei</i>	Kindness, to act kindly
<i>Ala</i>	Way, path
<i>Alagaupu</i>	Proverbial expression
<i>Ao</i>	(i) most respectful word for head
	(ii) a title of high ceremonial status
<i>Atoa</i>	to be complete, perfect, all.
<i>Atu</i>	Tuna fish, bonito.
<i>Fa'aaloalo</i>	to pay respect to.
<i>Faaoti</i>	Completely give out
<i>Faapo-evaga</i>	Like an outing at night
<i>Fafao</i>	to pack in a basket
<i>Fagalele</i>	Again another point off Falealupo where the sea is always calm. (refer map 3).
<i>Faimea</i>	a person with a special trade
<i>Fatuati</i>	a heap of stones in the lagoon used to attract fish.
<i>Fogaa</i>	Residence of the king (Malietoa)
<i>Fuata</i>	Season, a crop of fruit
<i>Galagala</i>	Name given to the land of Galemali high chief of Fagalii (Present location of the National University of Samoa.)
<i>Galua</i>	Wave
<i>I'a sa</i>	Turtle
<i>I'u</i>	Tail, end part
<i>La'au</i>	(i) tree
	(ii) wooden weapon
<i>Le tuua</i>	Not to depart
<i>Logo</i>	to be heard by others.
<i>Lou</i>	a long pole for picking high fruit trees (breadfruit, mangoes etc.)
<i>Lutia</i>	to be in pain.
<i>Mafutaga</i>	a gathering, association
<i>Mamao</i>	Faraway distance

<i>Manu</i>	Bird
<i>Manuvao</i>	Wild bird, general name of land birds
<i>Mapu</i>	(i) whistle
	(ii) a rest
<i>Momoli</i>	to present, to take.
<i>Mua or Muamua</i>	to do first, to be first
<i>Oa</i>	Gunnel (of a boat), gunwhale
<i>Papa</i>	Rock
<i>Pipili</i>	(i) Cripple
	(ii) Closeness
<i>Pi'i or Pipi'i</i>	to stick to, to adhere to
<i>Puava</i>	a point at the west end of Savaii near Falealupo of which the sea is rough. (see map 3).
<i>Pulotu</i>	A spirit world where the Gods live.
<i>Sasa'a</i>	to pour out
<i>Sao</i>	to collect together food or property preparatory to presenting it.
<i>Sa'u</i>	Swordfish.
<i>Selefutia</i>	to be struck.
<i>Seu</i>	to catch in a net a pigeon or fish
<i>Si'ulepa</i>	Meeting place of the village of Sataoa
<i>Suaga-ipo</i>	Digging of edible sea-worms
<i>Ta'ape</i>	to be dispersed, to be scattered.
<i>Tafega</i>	a freshnet, to flow in the river
<i>Tama</i>	a child, a boy
<i>Taulafoga</i>	Ancient indoor game of throwing coconut shell coins on a special mat to a certain point. (Compared to the idea of indoor bowling).
<i>Tautai</i>	Fisherman
<i>Tia</i>	a place in the bush from which tree and underwood are cleared for the purpose of pidgeon catching by means of decoying birds.
<i>Tili</i>	To rush, run for cover
<i>Tiu</i>	to go on a fishing voyage
<i>Togamau</i>	Meeting place of Vaiee village
<i>Tulituliloa</i>	to give chase, to pursue.

<i>Tupe</i>	Money, discs or coins made out of coconut shells
<i>Ulu</i>	(i) Name of water pond inland of Apia Harbour. (ii) Head
<i>Uso</i>	Middle, centre
<i>Vaisigano</i>	The point where the river flowing from Ulu water pond enters the Apia harbour. (refer map 2)

VILLAGES

<i>Aleipata</i>	the most east end of Upolu Island (refer map 2)
<i>Fagamalo</i>	Refer to map of Savaii (refer map 3)
<i>Falealupo</i>	The most West end of Savaii Island. (refer to map 3)
<i>Namo</i>	A remote settlement west of Solosolo village
<i>Matautu</i>	Name given to six different places in Samoa
<i>Salega</i>	South West district of Savaii Island
<i>Sapapali'i</i>	Refer to map of Savaii

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