

PMB 1395/20

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Congregational Christian Church in Samoa
And Investment

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty

Of

Malua Theological College

In Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

By

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2002

ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to establish a profound biblical interpretation upon which 'investment' is to be understood and appreciated in the context of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS). In doing so, this paper challenges an existing misconception that the CCCS should isolate itself from almost all forms of economic activities.

It has been noted in the past and is still being overhead that 'investment' is immoral. Its unethical nature (inappropriate for any ecclesiastical development approach) stems from a narrow understanding of the term. However, 'investment' – as this thesis ventures to unravel - consists of a biblical meaning that has a direct bearing on attaining a further appreciation of God's economy and the idea of stewardship. Such an understanding of the economic term is vital for the developments of the CCCS and its mission.

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INTRODUCTION

The Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS) allows its parishes to do fund-raising by means of raffles, games of bingo and other economic activities like advertisements and investment. Many people criticize these activities; especially the proselytes based on their conviction that the practices are evil in the sense that they exploit people (Alosina Vavae 1980, 85). Those critics even questions the CCCS *faiga-taulaga*¹ saying that the practice is hard and oppressive. They believe that the practice of *faiga-taulaga* involves the principle of coercion and tends to make people poorer. Moreover, they state that the CCCS has become an 'empire builder' with its materialism to expand its assets like the building of the six-storey building in Apia (1980, 85).

Those people (critics) suggest that the church should not involve in moneymaking business but it must maintain its holiness by separating itself from the world of economic activities (Falelua Lafitaga 1979, 84). They also claim that the practice of "investment" is not ethical for the church since investors reap what they do not sow.

In this regard, however, Douglas M. Meeks suggests that there is a great need to relate economic issues including investment to God, as God is the source of everything. That is, the church leaders and theologians must say something about economy² in reference to God, and that economy requires certain views about God for its justification.

¹ *Faiga-taulaga* is a yearly money offering for the CCCS church.

² The usage of economy here covers all economic issues and activities.

Meeks classifies God as the Economist and recognizes God as a principle or code of its society's economy (1989,75).

Therefore, this paper argues that investment is biblical. Such a biblical understanding of the concept validates the money-making practices adopted by the CCCS, since the utmost goal of money-making practices mentioned is to raise funds towards the development of the church both locally and nationally, thus fulfilling practically the given stewardship nature of CCCS.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter One explains the Investment Theory and its Purpose, and also defines its associated terms in the secular world. These terms as commonly used in the modern economical world are frequently mentioned throughout this paper. Chapter Two discusses Investment from a biblical perspective. Here, I would explore the Parable of the *mina* in the gospel of Luke, and reference is made to its parallel in Matthew's account. The third chapter deals with the concept in the way of life in the Samoan culture and the investment of the CCCS. This section highlights the Samoan infrastructure with its various functions, and special attention directs to the reciprocal practice of giving and services that disclose the concept of Investment.

Finally, the Conclusion sums up the whole discussion.

CHAPTER ONE:

INVESTMENT THEORY AND DEFINITIONS OF ECONOMIC TERMS IN THE SECULAR WORLD.

Investment is an economic activity. Before we look at the definition of Investment and the theory it associates with, it is helpful to attain an understanding of the term economy first.

A. Definition of Economy

When we hear the word economy, we immediately think of money and trading. Indeed, that is the modern sense of the word. However, the term economy is an ancient word and has a long history with a rich array of meanings and functions³ (1989, 2).

According to the Macquarie Concise Dictionary, economy is "*management or the science of management of the resources⁴ of a community with a view to productiveness and avoidance of waste*" (CD ROM Infopedia 1987). Miller puts it as a "*system of how the individuals and societies satisfy their needs and wants*"⁵ (1996, 3).

The Greek word *oikonomia* (*οικονομία*) from which economy is derived is a compound word made from *oikos*, (*οίκος*) household, and *nomos*, (*νόμος*) law or management.

Economy then literally means "*the law of management of the household,*" and household is connected with the production, distribution and consumption of the needs or the necessities of life (Meeks 1989, 3).

³ I will not touch on these other meanings and functions but adopts Macquaries meaning for our purpose.

⁴ Resources are what is used to produce goods and services. For example, land, sea, workers, equipment or even skills.

⁵ Needs are essentials for life sustenance like food. Wants are luxuries like TV and radios.

B. Definition of Stewardship

Stewardship, from the word steward according to the Macquarie Concise Dictionary is *"one who manages another's property or financial affairs, or one who has charge of the household of another, providing for the table, directing the servants and many other duties"*. However, the English word 'steward' is derived from the Middle English *stigweard* or *styward*. A *styward* is one who keeps the pigpen in the summer so that the household would not starve in the winter. *Styward* became steward, which signifies one who cares for the livelihood and survival of the household (Meeks 1989, 76).

C. Definition of Investment

Investment is a broad and a complex term as defined by many economists. For instance, Paul A Samuelson⁶ defined it as *"a capital formation or the additions to the nation's stock of buildings, equipment, and inventories"*⁷. This can be simply put as *"the use of money to earn income or profit"*⁸. The term also refers to the expenditure of wealth to enable a future production or using present income to produce earnings at some future date.

⁶ Paul Samuelson is a U.S. economist. Professor of Economics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 1940; He was also an adviser to U.S. government agencies. See CD ROM Infopedia: The Complete Reference Collection; Compton's House Library, 1997.

⁷ An inventory is a list of goods with their Values.

⁸ Profit is a gain resulting from the employment of capital (any form of wealth capable of being employed in the production of more wealth) in any transaction.

The means of making an investment vary with the type of investment and this becomes a complicated process. For instance there is investment in stocks⁹, bonds¹⁰, real estates¹¹, collectibles¹² and savings.¹³

When money is deposited in a savings account, anyone who is ⁱⁿ need can borrow that money from the bank to build a house. The borrower (the needy) is really renting the bank's money or more specifically the depositor's money for a specific amount of time. For this privilege the borrower pays the bank back more money that was initially borrowed. This extra amount, is the interest on the loan. It increases the bank's holdings and, from the bank's point of view, the loan is an investment. By allowing many such loans and other investments, the bank can regularly add a specific amount of interest to the money in the savings account of its depositors. It is, after all, the depositor's money that is used to finance the bank's investments.

Investment promotes economic growth and contributes to a nation's wealth, because the depositors' money in a bank savings account can be invested by loaning the funds to various business companies. These firms in turn can invest the money in new plants (a

⁹ Stocks are certificates of ownership when you have a share in a corporation where if you buy it, you are entitled to earn dividends from the corporations profit.

¹⁰ Bonds are loan certificates representing money loaned to a corporation or government. States and local governments sell bonds in order to finance construction of schools, bridges and other public improvements and these bonds represent debts that will be repaid with interest over a long period of time, usually 20 to 30 years.

¹¹ Real estate investment is buying lands and buildings for the purpose of income or development. This type of investment was proved to be a very profitable because land values are always increasing.

¹² Collectibles includes anything that an investor thinks will increase in value in the future. For instance, diamonds, paintings, jewelry, classic cars and many more.

¹³ For our purpose here, I would not touch on these other forms of investments because of its complexity, but I would use the simplest way of investing by putting money into the bank to explain the investment theory.

factory or works) and equipment to increase their production. All such investments (as mentioned above) by individuals, businesses, and governments involve a sacrifice of income to get an expected future benefit. In other words, you are doing a sacrifice by lending your money to benefit someone else now (a needy) in order to get a future benefit for yourself from the interest.

Every investment involves some risk¹⁴ or a chance for loss.¹⁵ An individual should carefully examine the expected income from an investment in relation to the degree of risk involved. Investments that yield a large profit or interest usually associates with a high risk or little safety but those that earn a small profit usually provides almost a complete safety.

D. Why People Invest

Many individuals and organization tend to invest part or all of their income rather than spending them immediately. There are a variety of reasons and motivations for doing that.

The most common goal is the desire to pass money from the present into the future and to get a financial gain. Others make investments to protect the purchasing power of their money against rising prices or inflation¹⁶. This is to make sure that their dollar can afford to buy the same good or to pay for the same service now as the following year.¹⁷

¹⁴ Investment in stocks (as an example) is time-consuming and requires a large amount of ready money- usually thousands of dollars that the investor must be able to afford to lose. It is a risk.

¹⁵ We could see this consequence in the downfall of the World.Com in America where millions of investors saw their money went down the drain.

¹⁶ Inflation is the rise in the prices of goods. This may occur due to a shortage of supply.

¹⁷ Note that the needs and wants of people are unlimited, therefore as needs demand, prices of goods increase.

Another motivation is to increase wealth, that is, to accumulate money. The desire to become wealthy in the future prompts people to take risks. For instance, the purchase of lottery tickets only increases the probability of becoming wealthy, but usually only a small chance at a high cost.

There are also other motives for investment; for example, charity.

Some people invest to make something happen that might not happen without investing. They invest to build a hospital, or to finance a school or a monastery. The dividends¹⁸ from these kinds of investments may not be accountable. However, for most investors, (leaving charitable goals aside), the key measure of benefit derived from the investment is the rate of return¹⁹.

E . Conclusion

In any economy, individuals and household have two ways to use their income. They can either spend it straight away or invest it in the bank. Much of what is invested is used to further invest in the companies that produce the goods. If too much is spent and too little is invested, the economy's capacity to produce will be diminished. In other words, without investment, economies would not grow and flourish. Therefore, Investment is a vital feature for any economy. Investment is necessary for beneficence purposes because the needy in societies may borrow from the privileged to develop their homes and pay back their debt at an affordable rate. This eventually lead to equality

¹⁸ Dividend is a sum of money paid to shareholders of a company out of earnings or profits.

¹⁹ The investor's return is a measure of the growth in wealth resulting from the investment.

among people and can raise the economic standard of any society or nation. It is therefore appropriate to define Investment (as this paper's contention) as 'a process of working, participating, producing and distributing of wealth to build God's economy, through the mission and a stewardship role of the church to the people of the world'.

A. God's Economy

Views of the biblical traditions represent God engaging in creating, sustaining and nurturing households. Household according to Mark, refers to the people of Israel, the church of Jesus Christ, or is the most comprehensive model to the whole creation (1989). If Jesus God has made Himself responsible for the church, the households of the nation and the household of every people, God's own economy is God's work and His stewardship of the life of the creation. That is, we can say that the doctrine of God's household is the doctrine of the church because the church exists for the sake of God's love of the world (John 3:16)²⁶. Therefore, God's law of the household is God's gospel and this the economy of God with which we should apply to the life of the Christian community as well as God's work of salvation for the household of creation (1989, 4).

CHAPTER TWO

INVESTMENT AND STEWARDSHIP IN THE BIBLE

The aim of this chapter is to look at the Investment understanding in the Bible. Here, we will examine the parable of the *mina* in the gospel of Luke (19:11- 27). Before entering into an exegesis of the text, it is necessary to theologize the concept of economy and define the term stewardship based on Luke's theology for our discussion.

A. God's Economy

Many of the biblical traditions represent God engaging in creating, sustaining and recreating households. Household according to Meeks refers to the people of Israel, the church of Jesus Christ, or in the most comprehensive sense, to the whole creation (1989, 3). Since God has made Himself responsible for the church, the households of the nations and the household of every people, God's own economy is God's work and His maintenance of the life of the creation. That is, we can say that the doctrine of God's household is the doctrine of the church because the church exists for the sake of God's love of the world (John 3 : 16)²⁰. Therefore, God's law of the household is God's gospel and that the economy of God (*oikonomia tou theou*) applies to the life of the Christian community as well as God's work of salvation for the household of creation (1989, 4).

²⁰ All citations and translations in this thesis are taken from the NRSV unless otherwise stated.

With this dimension of theology as a stepping stone, the following discussion will correlate God and the economic activities especially the understanding of Investment.

B. Stewardship based on Luke's Theology

(must have breathing)

The term *οικονομος* for a steward figure is peculiar to Luke. This peculiarity is found in the parable of the faithful and wise steward: (Lk. 12:42) and the parable of the dishonest manager (Lk. 16:3).²¹ This 'technical term' refers to a slave among the slaves, the one who is given authority over the whole household and sometimes the whole property of his master (Kim 1998, 137).²² This image of authority according to Luke Timothy Johnson is one of service to others. It means that a steward directs the affairs of other slaves, to see that they do their work, and also to serve their needs (Johnson 1991, 206).²³

In the parable of the faithful and wise steward, Luke defines the duty and role of a steward as a unique sort of slave who is entrusted with material possessions by a Master and takes charge of them. The two terms *ἐδόθη* 'has been given' and *παρέθεντο* 'has been trusted' utilized by Luke here demonstrate the significant element of Luke's idea of stewardship (Kim 1998, 138). The steward does not hold any possessions and property of his/her own, but just take care of his/her Master's belongings entrusted to him/her.

It also means that a steward is not to dispose these belongings at his/her own will and for his/her own sake, but to use them according to the will and order of the Master. A

²¹ Matthew with the same parable uses the term *doulos* (δουλος). See Bible Works.

²² Kim also added that the servant's role and function in this parable is better disclosed by *οικονομος* than the more general meaning of *δουλος*. Goulder on the same line states that Matthews consistent use of *doulos* probably has nothing but the ordinary Christian in mind.

²³ This image of authority as a servant was expressed in the table service in Jesus declaration about himself in the Last Supper "I am among you as one who serves" (Lk. 22:27)

steward has to bear in mind that his/her position as a steward does not continue for good but can be put under examination at any time (Johnson 1991, 205). Therefore, a steward is supposedly watchful in carrying out his/her duty, for the crisis of an eschatological catastrophe will come unexpectedly as the Master returns. When this happens, the steward is supposed to account for his/her work and be judged in the end.

Based on the steward's service during the allowed period, he/she will be either praised or punished. If he/she does his/her work well, he/she will receive the reward of greater authority. But if he/she abuse the privilege, he/she will meet disgrace and loss (1991, 206).

C. The Sitz im Leben of Luke-Acts.

The motif of eschatology prominent in the parable of the faithful steward as described in the previous section requires some knowledge of the *Sitz im Leben* of the book of Luke in order to understand Luke's theology of Wealth and Stewardship. In this regard the major elements to be considered are the audience at which Luke is writing to, the social setting in which he wrote it, and the purpose behind his book.

(i) The Audience of Luke.

The identification of the audience of Luke-Acts (which constituted Luke's community) can be achieved by taking the prologue into account. In this prologue, Luke's work is dedicated to a man called Theophilus (Luke 1:3). Some have supposed that Theophilus was a name which was artificially coined to represent any 'lover of God', or 'anyone

loved by God', and could be understood in a symbolic way as a discreet pseudonym for 'the average Christian', or 'the typical convert.' However, by taking the title that Luke accords to Theophilus (*κρατιστος*), Kim suggests that the term is too artificial for use in relation to an imaginary figure, especially in a formal and official letter like Acts 23:26 and Acts 24:3 (1998, 37). Based on this fact, F.F. Bruce suggests that this title *κρατιστος* in Luke-Acts is used as a title attached to real persons who hold official positions in the Roman government or higher rank (Bruce 1972, 31). Taking this title *κρατιστος* as a title of a Roman official, this would naturally take Theophilus as a real person who hold high office in the Roman government, or one who is socially respected and highly placed in the society to which Luke is writing (Kim 1998, 37).

On the same line, Leon Morris states that Theophilus is unlikely to be a symbolic name (despite the meaning, 'lover of God'). He suggests that the title points to a real person who would probably, as Luke's patron, have met the costs of publishing the book, and the epithet '*most excellent*' probably indicates a person of rank (Morris 1974, 66).

Furthermore, the title *κρατιστος* suggests that Luke's work are designed to be presented to a real person which might entail that he is endowed with the education and culture of contemporary Hellenistic society (Marshall 1989, 39).

Therefore, putting the above views together we can deduce that Theophilus is a Christian who has received formal Christian instruction in certain ways, and is very interested in it. This also suggests that when Luke write to Theophilus, Theophilus is probably already a Christian, and Luke's work is dedicated to him in order to supplement his insufficient knowledge about Jesus and his gospel (Kim 1998, 41).

(ii) The Cultural Background of Luke's Community

It is widely held that Luke has written his gospel for a Gentile Christian audience, or at least one that was predominantly Gentile Christians. This view is based on Luke's obvious concern to relate his account of the Christ-event and its sequel to a Greco-Roman literary tradition (e.g. in the prologue of the Gospel), his dedication of his two volumes to a person bearing a Greek name (Theophilus), and his manifest desire to relate the salvation promised to Israel in the Old Testament to Gentiles or non-Jews (Fitzmeyer 1970, 57). On the same point, Kim suggests that this audience also includes Jewish Christians based on the fact that Luke presupposes that his readers have a knowledge of the Old Testament and Jewish history as in Lk 1:5-7 (Kim 1998, 42).

Close examination of the preface of Luke's gospel with identity on Theophilus (as discuss above) has revealed that Theophilus is not only a patron of Luke by whom the publications of Luke's work was made possible, but also a recipient of Luke's information. As such, he could also represent the intended audience whom Luke would have had in view when writing (1998, 43).

Based on the above views, we can then say that the readers envisaged by Luke in his writing are mainly Gentile Christians in a predominantly Gentile setting, and Theophilus is one of them. This would also suggest that the contemporary community of Luke for which the work ^{is} written probably include those who are rich and educated gentiles. Those people possess some knowledge of the basic conceptions of the Christian gospels and are interested in having a historical account of the origin of Christianity (1998, 43).

(iii) The Social Setting of Luke's Community:

The prevailing theory concerning the primitive Christianity suggests that the Early Church is composed of the lower classes or proletariat. That is, Christianity has been a movement of the lower classes. This theory was disproved by G. Theissen and W. A. Meeks with their sociological method that analyzed social stratification of the Pauline congregation (1998, 45). In their investigation, Theissen and Meeks find that there are certain numbers of wealthy people in Luke's community as there are in Paul's (1998, 47). In addition, the material in the gospel which Jesus uses as warnings and exhortations towards the rich as to how to use possessions in a Christian way confirms that there were wealthy Christians in Luke's congregation (1998, 48). Meeks also argues that there were poor people in Luke's community. However the poor in Luke's context are not ordinary poor, but the crippled, the blind, and the lepers, those who are not able to provide for themselves and are in great need of others donation to survive (1998, 49). In other words, in terms of their socio-economic status, there was both rich and poor, representing the extremes of the spectrum of contemporary society. With this understanding of the social background of Luke's community, we find it easier to discern Luke's motives behind his work with regards to wealth.

(iv) Purpose of Writing

In Luke 1 : 4, the purpose is stated thus: "*So that your Excellency may realize what assurance you have for the instruction you have received.*"

According to Fitzmeyer, Luke writes from the period of the early church. Luke's intention is to assure Theophilus and other readers like him that what the church teaches and practices is rooted in the period of Jesus. This is to strengthen them in fidelity to that teaching and practice. The "assurance" is, then, mainly doctrinal or didactic: to explain how God's salvation, first sent to Israel in the mission and person of Jesus of Nazareth, has spread as the Word of God-without the Law-to the Gentiles and to the end of the earth (1970, 9).

This purpose serves to provide some kind of legitimization for the Christian community in a context of external threats²⁴ (Christopher Tuckett 1996, 67). Luke stresses the connection and the continuation between Judaism and Christianity and to show that Christianity is rooted in Israel by the birth of its founder to Jewish parents and by the mark of the covenant (circumcision). This also suggests that Christianity has as much right to be recognized as a lawful religion in the Roman Empire as Judaism itself (Fitzmeyer 1970, 10).

Beside this apologetic concern, Luke is writing to tell his audience how to put Christian ethics into practice (Tuckett 1996, 94). One of the major features of these ethical values is the issue of possessions. This issue is explicit when Luke emphasizes the fact that Jesus' disciples gave up everything and followed Him (Lk. 5: 11).²⁵ On the same issue, Luke

²⁴ Threats here refer to the powerful Jewish hostility and antagonism to the Christian movement.

²⁵ The parallel of this calling in Mark 1: 20 simply said they left their homes and followed Jesus.

(alone of the evangelists) stresses the importance of giving and sharing by relating to the teaching of John the Baptist, advocating generous sharing or giving of goods by those who have plenty to benefit those who have few or none (1996, 97). These issues and many others in Luke's gospel indicate Luke's concern for the equality of all people. It is an essential feature of stewardship, and Luke intends to show how to use wealth and money properly to improve the economy of God.

D. The Parable of the Ten Minas (Luke 19:11 – 27)

One of the main concerns of Luke and a consistent motif in the gospel is the right use of material possessions as mention above. The parable we have here adds weight to Luke's case to Proper Stewardship of Wealth. In this section therefore, we will explore the meaning(s) of the parable and the model of Stewardship intended by Luke from exegetical work.

(i) The Mina

In the New Testament, various terms are used for money. Matthew 22:19 uses the term *νυμια*, which is generally for money. The Greek word *αργυριον* is translated both for "silver" (Acts 3:6) and "money" (Mt 25:18), but the term *κερματα* is used by John when Jesus overturned the moneychangers table (John 2:15).

Among these Greek coins, the *mina* is a monetary unit equal to 100 *denarii*, and one *denarius* is equivalent to 16 cents in the U.S. currency. Therefore, 1 *mina* (or pound) is equivalent to 16 U.S. dollars.²⁶

²⁶ Wycliffe Bible Dictionary on page 1797 gave a table of Weights, Measures and Coins of the Bible.

(ii) **Composition:**

There is no unanimity on the subject of composition for this parable. On the one hand, many scholars²⁷ hold that the parable is made up of two subset parables such as the parable of the ten *mina* and that of the throne claimant (or the rejected king) which are then fused together into one (Jeremias 1963, 59). On the other hand, some scholars do not regard the so-called sub parable of the rejected king as a parable but it is an additional extension (Creed 1950, 232). In spite of the fact that the scholars are divided on this issue, the parable as it is presented to us has two motifs, namely the meaning of stewardship and the rejected king (Ellis 1980, 221). The explanation of true stewardship is given by the faithful and the profitable service of the servants who invested their *mina* where as the rejected king motif is an attempt by Luke to correct the misunderstood concept of the *Parousia*²⁸ (Kim 1998, 161).

In addition, there is another unsolved problem in this parable compared to the parable of the talents in Matthew (Matt. 25 : 14 -30). That is, are these two parables variant versions of one parable, or are they different parables spoken by Jesus on different occasions and times?

I. H. Marshall, on this issue mentions that scholarly opinions do not appear to be unified on the issue. On the one hand, a group of scholars suggest that there is one parable with two versions as supplied by Luke and Matthew with 'Q'²⁹ as their common source (1989,

²⁷ Fitzmyer in his book "The Gospel according to Luke (2 vols. AB; Doubleday, New York) on page 1230 lists scholars and their opinions on this matter.

²⁸ *Parousia* is a Greek term that is used in the NT to describe the rapture and the return of Christ to the earth.

²⁹ Q source (abbreviation for German "*Quelle*" source) is the name scholars have given to the hypothetical body of teachings that would account for the gospel material that are common to Matthew and Luke but does not appear in Mark.

701). Fitzmyer is one of the scholars who thinks that underlying both gospels is a common parable, but states that the Matthean form is closer to the original form, as it is found in the 'Q' or sayings source (Fitzmeyer 1981, 1230). Gundry on the same line supports this view of a common parable but he claims that Luke's complicated version is closer to the original (Gundry 1981, 502).

Others however, hold that the two parables in Luke and Matthew are accurate reports of two different parables (Plummer 1922, 437).

Despite the differences in scholar's views, the fact remains that both accounts give the central motif of good stewardship, and therefore we will discuss both parables as they are fitting for our purpose.

(iii) The Setting (Lk. 19 : 11)

This is Passover season for the Jews and it was always an emotional time for them because of the memory of the deliverance from slavery in Egypt. This annual celebration inflames the affliction of their subjection to Rome and makes them yearn all the more for a deliverer (Wiersbe 1989, 75). Jesus has just told Zacchaeus (Luke 19: 1 – 9) that "*salvation had come to his house*". Some people who heard this believed that Jesus meant that salvation had also come to the nation in the form of the kingdom of God since Jesus and His disciples were drawing ever more nearer to Jerusalem, the focal point of biblical prophecy.³⁰

³⁰ This mentality could be easily understood if we review the following Old Testaments texts (Refer to Isaiah 40: 9, Jeremiah 3: 17, Joel 2: 32, Micah 4:2, Zechariah 8:3 and many others.

The Lord has His face set towards Jerusalem for some time (cf. Luke 9: 51). He has spoken very specifically to His disciples about his rejection, suffering, and death at Jerusalem (cf. Luke 18: 31 – 34), but His disciples are unable to understand.

They at least have regarded Jesus as the Messiah, but as the distance between Jesus and the crowds that followed Him and Jerusalem diminish, the expectation is inversely proportionally multiplied. That is, the closer they get to Jerusalem, the greater the expectation (Ellis 1966, 222).

The disciples, like many people, have had their heads filled with glorious thoughts of this kingdom of God, the appearance of which they expect at any moment.

Jerusalem has not only been understood as the capital of Israel, the throne of the king (including the Messiah, the Son of David), but also has been the place where Jews have expected the kingdom to be commenced as Old Testament prophecies have predicted. Therefore, Jesus' arrival at Jerusalem is viewed to be the official inauguration of that kingdom. They believe that the kingdom of God is imminent and that will seem to be the cause of the problem. And that is the very reason why Jesus had told the parable.

Somehow, the parable has been given to correct, or at least to clarify the situation at hand (Luke 19:11).

(iv). Text Analysis

(a) The Noble man and His Departure 19:12-14

Verse 12: εἶπεν οὖν, "Ἄνθρωπός τις εὐγενὴς ἐπορεύθη εἰς χώραν μακρὰν λαβεῖν ἑαυτῷ βασιλείαν καὶ ὑποστρέψαι.

So he said, "A nobleman went to a distant country to get royal power for himself and then return.

It has been said that the parable of the ten *minas* reflects an actual historical fact, and Fitzmeyer states that it is only built into the parable for verisimilitude (Fitzmeyer 1981, 1234). The people who listened to Jesus no doubt connected this parable with an event in Jewish history that had occurred many years before. When Herod the Great died in 4 BC, he left Judea to his son Archaelus, who had to go to Rome to have the inheritance approved. Not wanting Archaelaus as their ruler, the Jews sent fifty men to argue their case before Augustus Caesar, who did ratify the inheritance without giving Archaelus the title of "king" (1981, 1235).

With this Jewish history integrated into the parable, Luke intended to teach his contemporaries a lesson concerning the coming of the Kingdom of God (Kim 1998, 163). The man of the story was a person of position and power, a nobleman or an aristocrat. He was soon to be a man of even greater power and position. He was about to become king, but in order to be appointed as such, he had to travel to a distant country, which according to Geldenhuys, Luke used this to correct the misconception of the immediate coming of the kingdom as the people expected (Geldenhuys 1977, 474).

Verse 13: καλέσας δὲ δέκα δούλους ἑαυτοῦ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς δέκα μνᾶς καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς, Πραγματεύσασθε ἐν ᾧ ἔρχομαι.

He summoned ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business with these until I come back.'

Knowing that he would be absent for a time, the nobleman called ten of his slaves to him so that he could give them their orders for the period of time of which he was to be absent.

He gave each of the ten slaves one *mina*, (which is equivalent to the pound according to the NRSV Translation). The marginal note we found in NRSV at verse 13 stated that this is equivalent to 3 months wages for a Hebrew laborer at the time. In the Samoan context today, the average salary for a laborer in three months is \$1000 Samoan Tala,³¹ (which is a considerable though not an enormous amount of money).

The Master's command is very specific. "*Do business with these until I come back.*"

The word *πραγματευσασθε* as used by Luke in this command occurs only once in the New Testament (Bible Works, 1997). This can mean that Luke specifically want to stress the importance of doing business as an element of stewardship.

The form of the word is a –first aorist middle imperative of *πραγματευομαι*, an old verb from *πραγμα*, meaning business,³² therefore *πραγματευσασθε* is to do business, to trade or carry on profitably. That is, to invest and to take the risk.

The slaves are commanded to do business with the money, or to give the money to investors and earn interest, or even purchase goods and sell them for a profit. In fact, the Master does not specify how to do it, but we can assume that it is up to them, as long as it is legal and profitable (Wiersbe 1989, 75) until the Master returns (*εν ωι ερχομαι.*)

³¹ Tala is the Samoan currency equivalent to the dollar.

³² See William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1993, p 387.

The most important thing is that they must employ the money and produce more before the Master return.

Verse 14: οἱ δὲ πολῖται αὐτοῦ ἐμί σουν αὐτόν καὶ ἀπέστειλαν πρεσβείαν ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ λέγοντες, Οὐ θέλομεν τοῦτον βασιλεῦσαι ἐφ' ἡμᾶς.

But the citizens of his country hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to rule over us.'

According to Luke, the Master not only has slaves (*δουλοι*) who are obligated to serve him, but there are also citizens (*πολιται*). William R. Herzog II suggests that there are two sets of servants in those societies. *Δουλοι* are loyal subjects with literal status as slaves and *πολιται* or citizens are virtually slaves (Herzog II 1994, 158).

In this story however, it seems that the citizens are silent as the nobleman left their country. They do not like this man, nor do they want him to return to rule over them, once he is officially king. They seem to have got their courage in the nobleman's absence and therefore sent a delegation to that distant place, informing their king that they did not want him to return and strongly suggesting that he should not return.

(b) The Kings Return: Accounts Settled (19: 15 –26)

Verse 15: Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ἐπανελθεῖν αὐτόν λαβόντα τὴν βασιλείαν καὶ εἶπεν φωνηθῆναι αὐτῷ τοὺς δούλους τούτους οἷς δεδώκει τὸ ἀργύριον, ἵνα γνοῖ τί διεπραγματεύσαντο.

When he returned, having received royal power, he ordered these slaves, to whom he had given the money, to be summoned so that he might find out what they had gained by trading.

After some time, the nobleman did return, but now as the king. The first thing he did as king was to settle accounts with His slaves. Apparently Jesus did not mention any more than three of the slaves, but Ellis suggested that the three slaves represent the three types of response from the ten of them (Ellis 1980, 223).

Verse 16: παρεγένετο δὲ ὁ πρῶτος λέγων, Κύριε, ἡ μνᾶ σου δέκα προσηργάσατο μνᾶς.

The first came forward and said, 'Lord, your mina has made ten more minas.'

One of them did very well, getting a ten-fold return of his master's money.

Note the prefix *προσ* here before *ηργάσατο* is to get the meaning "in addition, besides or more" `implied that he has earned ten more.

Verse 18: καὶ ἦλθεν ὁ δεύτερος λέγων, Ἡ μνᾶ σου, κύριε, ἐποίησεν πέντε μνᾶς.

Then the second came, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made five minas.'

Another slave managed to use his master's money to obtain a five-fold return.

Verse 20: καὶ ὁ ἕτερος ἦλθεν λέγων, Κύριε, ἰδοὺ ἡ μνᾶ σου ἣν εἶχον ἀποκειμένην ἐν σουδαρίῳ·

Then the other came, saying, 'Lord, here is your mina. I kept and wrapped it up in a piece of cloth,

The third slave had no increase at all, for a very understandable reason; he had never put the money to any use. Instead, he simply wrapped it up in a piece of cloth. According to Goulder, keeping the money in a cloth was a Palestinian custom that reflected an early form of the story (Goulder 1989, 684). However, Herzog stated that hiding the *mina* in a cloth rather than in the ground indicated his irresponsibility (Herzog 1994, 151). In effect, he was not productive for he did not take the risk for the sake of his Master.

'I kept' (ἐἶχον) is imperfect active of ἐχῶ (a linear tense according to Wenham)³³ which stress the meaning of 'I kept on keeping' or no trading at all, therefore showing no effort at any point of time to put the money to work.

ἀποκειμένην is Present passive participle of ἀποκεῖμαι- (to be laid up). This is often used as perfect passive of τίθημι and here, it is 'laid away/ off'. Therefore the money was laid away.

Verse 17 and 19:

The master dealt with the first two slaves in a similar way. The first slave, who seems to have been more diligent (he had the greatest increase, twice as much as the second slave), received his masters commendation; "Well done!" This slave presented his Master with ten *minas* and received as his reward, the rule of ten cities. The phrase ἴσθι ἐξουσίαν ἐχῶν (in verse 17) is a *periphrastic present active imperative* that means 'keep on

³³ See J. W. Wenham, *The Elements of the New Testament Greek*, University Press, Cambridge, 1965, p54.

having authority', and this emphasizes the continuity of this action as a man of authority as a reward.

The second slave was not commended with the same words as the first, but he was rewarded in the same manner. He received a position of authority in proportional to his faithfulness with regard to the Master's money.

This second slave presented the master with five *minas* and received the rule of five cities as his reward. The phrase: *Καὶ σὺ ἐπάνω γίνου* (verse 19) is a *Present middle imperative* that can mean 'keep on becoming over'.³⁴ In spite of the assertion that this secular reward is a Lucan redactional adaptation of the original parable to suit his allegorizing parable (Fitzmeyer 1981, 1236), the fact remains that they were faithful with their appointments.

Verse 21: ἐφοβούμην γάρ σε, ὅτι ἄνθρωπος αὐστηρὸς εἶ, αἵρεις ὃ οὐκ ἔθηκας καὶ θερίζεις ὃ οὐκ ἔσπειρας.

for I was afraid of you, because you are a harsh man; you take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.'

The third slave who was mentioned treated differently as reflected in his Master's response. This slave according to Blomberg was the focus of the parable and the decrease in return from the first two servants simply serves to build up to a climax in this slaves unfaithfulness (Blomberg 1990, 214).

³⁴ Wenham explained the meaning of the periphrastic form of the tense on page 156 and Present Imperative on page 74 in the book *"The Elements of the New Testament Greek"*.

The word *ἐφοβούμην* is an imperfect middle of *φοβέομαι* (to fear) which means 'I continued to fear' was the slaves reason for not following the instruction, and the word *αύστηρός* meaning 'rough to the taste or stringent' is used by this slave to address the Master, when he gave his answer.

Verse 22: λέγει αὐτῷ, Ἐκ τοῦ στόματός σου κρινῶ σε, πονηρὲ δοῦλε. ἤδεις ὅτι ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος αὐστηρὸς εἰμι, αἵρων ὃ οὐκ ἔθηκα καὶ θερίζων ὃ οὐκ ἔσπειρα;

He said to him, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked slave! You knew, did you, that I was a harsh man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow?

ἤδεις (you knewest) is the second past perfect of *οραω*, "to see", and this word can also be used as an imperfect of *οιδα*, "to know". This can be either taken as a question or be understood as sarcasm as the NRSV has it.³⁵ Here, the words of the wicked slave "by your own words" are turned to his own condemnation by the Master.

Verse 23: καὶ διὰ τί οὐκ ἔδωκάς μου τὸ ἀργύριον ἐπὶ τράπεζαν; καὶ γὰρ ἐλθὼν σὺν τόκῳ ἂν αὐτὸ ἔπραξα.

Why then did you not put my money into the bank? Then when I returned, I could have collected it with interest.'

³⁵ Robertson's Word Pictures in Bible Works.

ἐπὶ τράπεζαν is translated by the NRSV as “into the bank”, but this literally means upon a table (Mounce 1993, 454).

The word bank according to Nolland comes from old English “bench” and he stated that this could refer to the table of “money-changers” which Jesus overturned as in John 2:15 (Nolland 1993, 916).

σὺν τόκῳ (with interest) is not referring to usury but proper and legal interest³⁶, and in the light of Deuteronomy 23:20-21, where the law allows the Jews to lend money on interest only to foreigners, Fitzmyer asserted that the “Master thought that the servant could at least lent the money to non Jews for an interest” (Fitzmeyer 1981, 1237).

Verse 24: καὶ τοῖς παρεστῶσιν εἶπεν, "Ἀρατε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὴν μνᾶν καὶ δότε τῷ τὰς δέκα μνᾶς ἔχοντι

He said to the bystanders, 'Take the mina from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.'

As a consequence of the unfaithfulness of this servant, his *mina* was taken away and was given to the one with ten *minas*. The good servant came in for an unexpected gift, where as the wicked one is deprived of the bounty that was originally granted him.

³⁶ Robertson's Word Pictures in Bible Works.

Verse 26: λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι παντὶ τῷ ἔχοντι δοθήσεται, ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ μὴ ἔχοντος καὶ ὃ ἔχει ἀρθήσεται.

'I tell you, to all those who have, more will be given; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.

The phrase τοῦ μὴ ἔχοντος "the one not having" "keeps on not having" probably approaches the idea of acquiring or getting, which is the law of nature and grace, as reflected by the proverb "winners win yet more and losers lose all" (Nolland 1993, 919).

(i) Reflection on the Settling Accounts

The fact was that we are only given reports about three slaves out of ten. The first two were faithful even though they were promised no rewards when the Master returns. The Master expected the slaves to take his words literally and seriously, which the third slave failed to do.

Furthermore, this third slave's description of his master was far from flattering because he labeled his master a harsh man. The master did not challenge this viewpoint of the slave, but this does not mean that the slave was correct. This was his perception of the Master, whether it was correct or not. William Herzog strongly supports what the third slave did with the money. He mentioned that by the slave's action, he dissociated himself from the system the Master has so cleverly exploited to attain his position of power and influence. Herzog said further that the Master was an exploiter who lived off of the productive labor of others (Herzog 1994, 164). However, I personally think that the Master was not harsh and was not an exploiter. After all, in allegorical sense the Master is

a picture of our Lord, who owns the world and everything, and who will come as the King of the Earth.

With regards to the third slave's speech, we can see that his words are hypocritical when he told his Master that he feared him. If he had truly feared his Master, he would have made an effort to produce a profit for him. That is, if he was truly fearful and continued to fear, he would have been obedient. Judging by his words, the third slave is revealed as a spokesman for the citizens who opposed the ruler (1994, 151) and with this, he fluently and coherently expressed their discontent towards their master.

It is clear that what the Master needed was the profit that must be collected from the unfaithful servant, and this profit can only be made if he is faithful with his stewardship role. So what is taken here as the cause of punishment is the failure of this servant with one *mina* to serve and to do business with what he was given.

(c) The Citizens (19: 27)

πλὴν τοὺς ἐχθροὺς μου τούτους τοὺς μὴ θελήσαντάς με βασιλεῦσαι ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἀγάγετε ὧς
δε καὶ κατασφάζετε αὐτοὺς ἔμπροσθέν μου.

But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them-- bring them here and slaughter them in my presence."

The Master's final act was to deal with His rebellious citizens, those who had become bold when he left, and had sent a delegation to stop the return of this 'king to be'.

The word *κατασφάζετε* which is the *first aorist imperative* of *κατασφάζω* 'to slaughter' refers to his rebellious enemies.

(d) Allegorical Interpretation of the Parable

Analyzing this story, it is not difficult for us to understand its intention, nor is it difficult to see its meaning with reference to Jesus "Departure", His "Rejection", and His "Return."³⁷

Like the nobleman, Jesus came to earth with great position and power. In addition to that, Jesus' power greatly increased as a result of His departure.

He was rejected by men, hung on a cross, put to death, buried, raised, and then ascended to heaven, where He is now seated at the right hand of God. Jesus power is now even greater than it was when He first came to the earth (cf. Phil 2: 9 – 11). His return to reign over His people and His citizens has been delayed (Parousia), but He will surely come.

On his return, the king commanded that his enemies, those wicked citizens of his kingdom who rejected him, be brought before him, where they would be killed.

These enemies are clearly representative of those inhabitants of the nation Israel who would reject Jesus as their Messiah. Just as these people refused to have 'this one' as their king, so the nation Israel would reject Jesus as their king. They would profess to having only one king-Caesar (John 19:15). In other words, they would say, "We will not have this man to reign over us". However Jesus quoted Psalm 69:4 and told his disciples, "They hated me without a cause"(John 15:25) (Wiersbe 1989, 78).

³⁷ Culpepper's suggests that the parable's use of this *cultural type scene* rules out any possibility of interpreting the parable as an allegory in which the king represents either God or Jesus since it portrays greed and vengeance. See Gospel of Luke in *The New Interpreters Bible* (vol. ix), Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1995, p 362.

(e) Eschatological Feature in The Parable

This parable, which explains the departure of the king to a distant land and his return signaled a time delay in the arrival of the kingdom of God. The people expected the kingdom to be established almost immediately, but the parables taught that there were some intervening events that must take place first. The delay of the kingdom's arrival has at least two reasons as we derive from the parables. Firstly, the king has to go away in order to gain the right to rule. Our Lord had to lay the foundation for His kingdom by laying down His life for the sins of the world, by making a provision for righteousness on the base of his grace, so that people could be pronounced righteous and be allowed to enter into His kingdom. Jesus had to go up to heaven to be crowned king and to wait for the Father's appointed time for Him to return and to reign.

Furthermore, the delay of the kingdom provided a time for the king's servants to be proven, to be tested, so that those who are faithful would be rewarded with greater responsibilities in the kingdom. The delay in the coming of the kingdom enables the Master to test His servants in the use of money, a small amount that has been entrusted to them. To the degree that the slaves were faithful in the use of money, they will be given greater authority to rule in the kingdom.

Finally, while the people and the disciples (especially) thought of the kingdom of God in terms of political revolution and of personal position and power, this parable reminds them that the coming of the kingdom would begin with a time of judgement. A

judgement in terms of those who rejected Christ as Savior, and also a judgement of the followers of the Lord as to their faithfulness in serving Him, which will be the basis of their rewards in the kingdom.

(f) Interpretations for The Mina.

In the interpretation of this parable, many scholars inclined to give it a spiritual application, regarding the *mina* as spiritual gifts or talents of some kind. Wiersbe suggests that the *mina* probably represent the message of the gospel (1989, 76).

His interpretation is based on passages such as 1Thes. 2:4, 1Tim. 1:11, and 1Tim. 6:20.

He stated that our gift and abilities were different, but our job was the same, which was to share the word of God so that it multiplies and fills the world. He implicates that our job is to invest in and to do business with the gospel until Jesus returns.

On similar lines but focussed on the third servants attitude, Jeremias (1963, 61), Caird (1968, 210) and Fenton (1963, 399) blamed the Jews, the scribes and the religious leaders for not utilizing the spiritual gifts such as the Word of God and the grace of God which God has entrusted to them. Jeremias declares that the object of condemnation was the scribes, who assumed that they could keep the treasure of God's word to themselves by hedging the Torah with many prohibitions (Hill, 1972, 328).

Some people on the other hand hold that the *mina* actually stands for financial reality.

In this regard Kim states that the work demanded in 19:13 is action in the world, or secular activity (Kim 1998, 165).

For whatever interpretation of the *mina* we take, the teachings implied in the parables is that vigilance is not simply a matter of fervor, joy or even faith, it entails active and

responsible service (Hill 1972, 328). Those who do them are promoting God's economy and will be acceptable to God at the end.

(v) Summary.

- (1) Like the master, God entrusts all people with a portion of his resources, expecting them to act as good stewards of it. An often-cited rabbinic maxim according to Blomberg commends the burial of money as one of the safest ways of protecting it, which may be a good sign of stewardship (Blomberg 1990, 215). However, in the parable we looked at, the Master specifically intended the money to be invested.

Therefore, **wise stewardship involves investment**. A good steward is supposed not only to carry out faithfully his responsibility of taking care of the property and capital assigned to him, but also where appropriate, to make some profit out of the assets and material possessions his master entrusts to his care (Kim 1998, 164). In other words, a good steward and a good disciple must be productive for the Lord. In this regard, if we take the interpretation of Wiersbe of the *mina* as the gospel, then the profit is measured in the amount of souls we can win for the Lord and how far we can spread the gospel.

- (2) Like the two good servants, God's people will be commended and rewarded when they have faithfully discharged that commission. We, as Christians are expected to be responsible sons and daughters. Good Stewardship and discipleship are rewarded when our duties are assessed on the judgement day. Entrusted by Christ, we are made investors to invest the gospel in every way we can for the growth of Christianity on

its own feet. Faithful servants would be given more assets and responsibilities if they can prove that they can make full use of wealth and property entrusted to them.

Taking the risks of working for the Lord would make us good disciples and would make us rulers in the kingdom of God.

- (3) Like the unfaithful servant, those who fail to use the gifts that God has given them for his service will be punished by separation from God and all good things. According to Carson:

"the ratio of the amounts given to the various servants, (like the 100% returns which each of the first two servants gained), has no exact proportional equivalent in spiritual realities, although the differentiation may suggest that grace never condones irresponsibility; even those given less are obligated to use and develop what they have". (Carson 1984, 517).

And finally, to be like a citizen as in the parable is rejecting Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the king of the world. If we are to be true stewards, we must accept him as the Messiah, the King of Earth, and we should be his servants, doing what he commanded. That is, "doing business" with our gifts faithfully until he returns. Our eternal destiny is determined by whether we are wicked citizens or faithful servants. And if we are his servants, may you and I be faithful ones. Faithful slaves are productive for the Lord, those whom He would say to on the day of judgement, "Well Done". This is because we are destined to do business by being obedient to His word.

E. Matthew's Version (Mt. 25: 14 – 30)

Although the parable in Luke is related to the parable of the talents here, its distinctive features and its context makes it a different story. While there are some obvious similarities between the two, their differences are far greater. For example, out of approximately three hundred words in verse 11-28, only about sixty words or parts of words are the same in Matthew and Luke (Geldenhuis 1951, 477).

In the Matthean parable of the *talents*, the Master was not a king, and the reason for his journey was not explained. He entrusted his property to three servants, giving them five *talents*, two *talents* and one *talent* respectively according to their abilities. The talent³⁸ is a large sum of money, equal to the wages of a day laborer for fifteen years (Boring 1995, 453).

Matthew reads the Q parable as an allegory of the *Parousia*, rewriting it to serve that particular purpose. Matthew uses the story to fill in the content of the nature of the Christian life as "waiting" for the *Parousia*. This is also reflected in the note of the eschatological joy; "good and faithful" servants enter the joy of their Master (Augsburger 1982, 281). The meaning of "good and faithful" is not mere theological correctness, passive waiting, or strict obedience to clear instructions, but active responsibility that takes initiative and risk (Boring 1995, 453). In the story, the Master gives no instruction as to what is to be done with the money (cf. Lk. 19:13). Therefore

³⁸ Talent is equivalent to 6000 *denarii* (compare to *mina*).

faithfulness is not merely obedience to directions, but prudent action. That is another component of stewardship. That was the same attitude exercised by the unjust steward (Luk. 16:1 – 13) when he prudently showed reciprocity by distributing material possessions to those in need. To overcome the crisis confronting him, he invests the material possessions of another, in making friends by way of helping those in need with an expectation that they will later accept him into their houses once he has been stripped of his stewardship. Although the action was unjust, He was commended by the Master and approved as a right use of material possessions for the purpose of almsgiving (Kim 1998, 160).

F. Old Testament Echoes of Investment

Based on the discussion in the previous section about requirements of Luke's stewardship, we can see that one aspect of this stewardship is almsgiving. Luke intended to urge the rich Christians in his community to remember their identity as stewards, and to distribute their wealth to the poor as alms. In this section therefore we will look at this concept of almsgiving in terms of tithes in Israel.

(i) Tithing in Judaism.

The word tithe comes from the Anglo Saxon word *teotha* which means a tenth part (Encyclopaedia 1987, 236). The Hebrew word *maaser* (מָאָסֶר), and a Greek word *dekate*, (dekate) both gave the same meaning the tenth. The explanation of why the tenth part has been chosen is said to be due to the mystical significance of the number ten, which signifies totality (Tenney 1963, 857).

Under the Mosaic Law, the payment of tithes was made obligatory. And since there was a long time before definite legal requirements were set upon tithing, customs in paying the tithes varied (1963, 857). That is, the analysis of tithe legislation in the books ascribed to Moses is a complicated problem, owing to the way in which strata of legislation belonging to different periods are combined and presented to us.

The Hebrews are commanded to offer to God the tenth part of the produce of the fields, fruits of the trees, and firstborn of oxen and of sheep (Lev. 27:30 ; Deut. 14: 22). In paying the tithe, the Hebrews divide the annual harvest into ten parts, one of which is given to the Levites after the first fruits has been subtracted (Numbers 18: 21 -24). This is to be apportioned by them among the priests. A second tithe is to be carried out by the head of the household to the sanctuary to serve as a sacred feast for his family and the Levites. At the triennial tithe (which happens every three years), a tenth part was to be consumed at home by the householder with his family, the Levites, strangers and the poor.

This triennial year was called 'the year of tithes' (cf. Deut 26:12). This third year tithe created a big confusion even among the Hebrew scholars themselves whether there was only one tithe each year or this third year tithe is an extra one on top of the annual tithe (1963, 857). In spite of this confusion, the fact is that it was a part God's commandments to tithes for the lower orders of the society.

(ii) Point of Tithing

In the scriptures God frequently reminds the Israelites of this event when He gave them the divine commandments (Deut. 14:28 – 29; 26:12). These commandments are intended as forms of benevolence for the poor and the lowly ones of the society. Besides the tithing there are also other organized system of relief in the Pentateuch directed specifically to the well being of the poor and destitute. For instance, the Sabbath Law on cultivation of crops (Exod. 23:10-11) and the Law of Redemption in Lev. 25:25 – 28 (Kim 1998, 278).

All those regulations are intended for benefaction. It is a form of stewardship. It is an investment with the Lord since the Hebrew people expects their return to come from God (Prov. 19:17). As the prophet Malachi stated; Tithes opens heavens windows and pour down overflow of blessing to people (Mal. 3:10) and those who tithes are the ones whom the nations will call blessed of God (Mal. 3:12). On the other hand, not giving tithes as the commandments define is robbing God (Mal. 3:8).

G. Conclusion

The point we have discovered is that the nature of Luke's stewardship requires almsgiving, prudence and productivity. The main purpose behind these elements is for benefaction or the equality of all people. It is for the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the people of the Lord. The main emphasis that the parable implies in relation to the lives of Christian believers today is that doing business – involves all Christians who are entrusted with gifts of Christ to work together as parts and parcels of the whole in order to make this whole unit continuing grow. Therefore as we are all

CHAPTER THREE:

INVESTMENT IN THE FAA-SAMOA AND THE CONGREGATIONAL

CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN SAMOA

Prudence and Reciprocity, which are some of the elements of Stewardship as discern from the previous section are the main features of the everyday life of the Samoan people. To understand how the Samoan culture shows these, it is necessary to understand the Samoan social structure first before discussing some of the occasions that disclose the concept of Reciprocity and Benefaction.

A. The Samoan Infrastructure

Oral traditions are the main source and the basis of all knowledge regarding the cultural and organizational structure of Samoa well before the missionaries arrived in 1830. This organizational structure is fundamentally based on the concepts of the *aiga* (family), the *nuu* (village) and the *itumalo* (district) of which the *matai*³⁹ (chief) system serves as the center of the Samoan social and political life (Kamu 1996, 37-38). To understand the Samoan way of life fully, it is important to discuss each constituent of the organizational structure and their functions.

(i) The Samoan Aiga.

The *aiga*, (which is translated as a family) in the Samoan understanding is not confined to the immediate family of parents and children, however it extended to the whole lineage

³⁹ The term *matai* refers to a man or a woman bestowed with a title and he or she is responsible and has authority over all the family properties.

of descendants through blood and marriage. As Turner puts it, it is a combined group of cousins, nieces, nephews, and all the different parties connected with a particular clan (Turner 1884, 146). This collection of people as mentioned is then termed as the extended family (*aiga potopoto*). The extended family does not only points to those who are living in the *aiga* and *nuu*, but it includes those living outside the *nuu* and other parts of Samoa including people overseas. In some linguistic usage of idioms that is common to native speakers, we say that Samoa belongs to one *aiga*. In a sense, this could be right because intermarriages can lead to everybody being related to one another.

The *aiga* (family) is the building cell of the social organization and the infrastructure of the Samoan societies. According to Faitala Talapusi, "*the family is the primary focus of personal loyalty and it holds supreme sway over individual life*" (Talapusi 1989, 173).

This could mean that a Samoan person's life is mastered and molded by his or her loyalty to his or her family. This is the reason why a Samoan person has such a strong bond to his/her parents. A Samoan person never breaks this tie with his/her parents until death. A Samoan person is responsible for his/her parents regardless of age, position and gender. Whereever a Samoan goes, or whatever a Samoan does, his/her first concern is his/her family.

The obligation of the *aiga potopoto* (extended family) is to deliberate and to appoint one person as a *matai* to administer and to control the affairs of the family. In the past, only one *matai* was elected to administer the whole family, however many changes and

influences from the outside world slowly affected this custom, leading to having many *matais* in one family.

One of the many influences that affect our old traditional society is the adoption of the capitalist way of living and ideas. In this capitalist system, wealth becomes the deciding factor more than service, and while political thinking may aim for social harmony and social justice, it is distorted and corrupted to serve selfish ambitions (Tapaleao 1991, 36). Therefore, the deciding factor is no longer the consensus of the people but the power of cash. However, having many *matais* is approved by many Samoan families as a great move for sharing the roles in doing business of the whole family.

(ii) The Matai

According to Malama Meleisea the term *matai* comes from *mata i ai*, which has the connotation of being set apart or consecrated (Meleisea 1987, 7-8). When a person is bestowed with a *matai* title by the *aiga potopoto*, he or she would be responsible for the well being of the family. He/she would be the role model for everybody in the family. He/she should lead the family by examples, and everything is ascribed to him/her. He/she is the only representative for the family in the *fono a matai* (village council) where the village affairs are to be discussed and settled. The *matai's* roles include running, administering, and controlling all the family affairs. He/she also acts as a counselor to give advice to all family members. He/she would be a reconciler and act as a lawyer representing the family members in a village council and also a redeemer to represent a

family criminal when a Samoan act of confession or *ifoga*⁴⁰ is done. Other responsibilities of a *matai* include his/her role as a priest who leads the family in prayers in the evenings and to promote religious participation.

The land in Samoa is owned by the *matais* of the families. The person who holds the *matai* title has the right to dispose it. The lagoon also, as far as the reef, is considered the property of the village it is situated, and the governance is vested in the *matais* of the village.

The *matai* titles are traditionally believed to be of divine origin and it is of this conception that the general people respect and regards them highly. There is a Samoan proverb that says "*ua tofia e le Atua Samoa e pulea e matai*" which literally translated as "*God appoints the chiefs to rule and govern Samoa*". This proverb reflects the conception of *matai* as Gods commissions as mentioned above.

In the old Samoan tradition, a person is elected to be a *matai* because he/she had served his/her people well. Authority is to be seen in the context of well being and common good for all. Therefore when a family decides on its leader, naturally the choice would fall upon those who served well as a young man (Tapaleao 1991, 35).

(iii) The Nuu

The term *nuu* is translated in English as village, a territory owned and controlled by a number of *aiga*, each headed by a *matai* or several *matais* (plural for *matai*). The village

⁴⁰ A *ifoga* is a unique act of confession in the Samoan culture. If a member of a family committed a serious crime like a murder, the *matai* of the convicted family would kneel outside the victim's house covering their heads with a fine mat. This act can last as long as the victim's family wished. Only when they accept this act of apology, then the *matai* with the fine mat (redeemer) would be uncovered.

community of Samoa is not the same as a concept of a city or town in the Western fashion, as a Samoan village is simple, and people share a more intimate relationship and practice communal living. The people in a village prefer to stay together and find communal life more convenient and suitable for them.

Each village has its own village council (*fono a matai*), an authoritative body that form a constitution for the village and makes decisions on all village matters. Each village has its own constitutions and regulations.

The village council or *fono a matai* is the justice department for the village. It is the prime judge, the rulers, and the lawmakers and also police the village. They enforce laws and oversee that each individual is protected from unlawful behavior and conduct. In other words they function to see that the well being and harmony must be equally experienced by everyone.

(iv) The *Tautua* in the Aiga

The term *tautua* simply means service. *Tautua* has a special significance in that; it is rooted in the concept of reciprocal offering of service (Talapusi 1989, 173). In the Samoan way of life, everyone is expected to *tautua* in one way or another to his/her family. There are certain groups in each family, and each group should function to serve for the *aiga*'s welfare. These groups include *taulealea* (untitled men), *tamaitai* (young women), *faletua and tautua* (wives of matai) and *matai*. Each group has its own distinct role to play.

The *tautua* of a *tamaitai* is different from that of a *taulealea*, which is quite different from that of a *faletua and tautua* and also from that of a *matai*. The roles of the *tamaitai*

include housework such as weavings, decorating, cooking as well as taking care of the children. The *taulealea* is responsible for all the hard works and labor in the family. The *taulealea* renders service or *tautua* to the *matai* where as the *matai* gives his/her *tautua* to his/her family, his/her village and the district, but most importantly nowadays to the church through his/her roles as a leader. Any *taulealea* in a family is eligible to be chosen as a *matai* through long and hard *tautua*.⁴¹ This could be the reason why the Samoan proverb "*O le ala i le pule o le tautua*" (The path to the top is through service) was formulated.

B. The Faa-Samoa and Concepts of Investment

The *faa-Samoa* is simply the system or the way people functions socially, politically economically and religiously. It is the Samoan political system according to Meleisea (1998, 70) but Lawson refers to it as a 'socio-political organization' (1996, 119).

It is the way of life that in traditional times sought to serve the community so that it could live in harmonious relationships. True *faa-Samoa* is a servant of the people as Tapaleao puts it. It is a heritage treasured by Samoans for no other reason than because of its core meaning of service. Therefore *faa-Samoa* is viewed as that which serves for the good of all. The *matai* is a true *matai* not because of his status only, but how well he/she serves his people (Tapaleao 1991, 35).

To understand the *faa-Samoa*, one must understand the various groups of the Samoan organization, and their respective functions in the society. The relationship between these

⁴¹ This practice is changed slightly nowadays as money becomes more important in societies and takes the place of service. *Tautua* is now measured with the amount of money you put in the family.

various groups in this organization revolves around the ties and culture that exist between a person and his/her family (Huffer & Soo 2000, 71).

This strong relationship between a person and his family cause people to invest in their families. Without this strong relationship, it is difficult, though not impossible to achieve *matai* status (2000, 72).

These central affective ties among the people in a family focus the *faa-Samoa* on the provision of welfare for all members of the Samoan society. The *faa-matai*⁴² encourages the community to share fruits of labor, as well as goods and presents from special occasions (*or faalavelave*) like wedding ceremonies, funerals and *saofai*.⁴³

When these special occasions are held, everyone in a family are supposed to give his or her *tautua*, and this *tautua* is a form of Samoan investment. Samoans give their *tautua* with the understanding that through the course of life, he or she would get a share of the dividends either when the *matai* of the family distribute the lands and he get his share, or by being selected to be a *matai* of the family in the future.

(i) Samoan Faalavelave

These special occasions are very unique to the life of the Samoans. These occasions are of special importance to the Samoans as times when all members of each *aiga* come together not only to contribute and serve but to fellowship.

⁴² Faamatai refers to the ruling, administration and governance of the matai.

⁴³ *Saofai* is a an occasion where a matai title is bestowed on a person.

(a) Funerals

Funerals in the Samoan culture show great excitement and display. Funeral of a chief is different from that of a commoner. The corpse of a common person must be buried in a few hours or the next day, but that of a chief would be kept unburied for days until all the different parties of the *matais aiga* from various parts of the island assemble. Friends as well would come to show love and kindness. Everyone brings a present either in terms of food or fine mats including money. Food is a big thing on these occasions. It is an occasion where trading is seen with food exchanged for fine mats.⁴⁴ Everybody in the family contributes to the funding of such occasion. After the funeral, the left-over of food and fine mats (or money in modern societies) would be distributed again as that everyone would go back with something in return for what he brought (Turner 1884, 94-95).

(b) Marriage Ceremonies

Marriage ceremony is a big joyous occasion in the Samoan custom. It involves the whole *aiga* for both the man and the woman. Both parties of the bridegroom and the bride are involved in big preparations. When both parties consent and a set date is fixed, preparations commence with the collection of the *toga* from the bride's *aiga* and the *oloa* from the bridegroom's *aiga*. The *toga* includes all kinds of fine mats (and native cloths in the old tradition) but the *oloa* includes canoes, pigs and foreign property of any kind that might fall into their hands, such as knives, cloths and garments⁴⁵. For this collection, all the family and relatives were called upon to assist.

⁴⁴ In modern practice, money is valued more than food and fine-mats.

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In the course of the ceremony, a big feast is held and an exchange of the *tonga* and the *oloa* is to be followed with night dances (Turner 1884, 94 -95).

(c) Dedication of a New Church or Building (*Umusaga* or *Faaulufalega*)

When a newly-built house is finished and ready for occupation, the Samoans have a house-warming party or *umusaga* (oven-consecration) as they call it (Turner, 1884, 159). The dedication of a private house is slightly different from that of a church. In a private house, the *taufale*⁴⁶ summons his *aiga* to come with food and fine mats (or money and goods in modern days). The central feature of the ceremony is the presentation to the *tufuga*⁴⁷. The family of the owner first presents the *tufuga* with a load of fine mats, foods and other household articles which are earmarked for the *tufuga*'s wife (*meanai*)⁴⁸, then a feast is followed.

In a church dedication, Samoans have often been accused of having a church-building obsession. It is an object of village pride in every community and is seen by many as a symbol of religious commitment (Holmes 1974, 72). It is a joyous occasion where *aiga*, relatives and friends all come together to celebrate. This celebration usually took two days. This two-day celebration marks with long speeches, procession to the new church and acknowledgement of the contributors gifts. Every contribution is acknowledged either person by person or village by village, and this custom of publicly acknowledging the contribution induce people to compete on how much they give.

⁴⁶ The term *taufale* refers to the owner of a house being built.

⁴⁷ *Tufuga* is the name given to the chief carpenter or the master builder.

⁴⁸ Theoretically she has played an important function in the construction of the house not only in praying but washing the clothes of the carpenters staff.

(ii) Elements of Samoan Communal Living

(a) Building a Family's New House (Faatuga-fale)

Faatuga-fale (or the causing of the house to stand upright) is a very distinct practice in Samoa. There is a master carpenter (*matai tufuga*), his staff or apprentices as well as the helpers who are the house owner's family members, neighbors and people of the village. The man whose house is being built (*the tufale*) provides the carpenters with food, board and lodging with the help of the neighbors at no cost. The helpers and neighbors help in bringing wood from the bush, scaffolding and every other heavy work. During the actual work of building, there is always a *tapuaiga*⁴⁹ to insure the success of the work (Holmes 1974, 55).

As a remarkable point to notice in the real Samoan custom, a carpenter made no definite charge after the job done, but left the price of his work to the judgement and generosity of the house owner and his whole family (Turner 1884, 154).

That is, the entire *aiga* of the house owner (*tufale*) is entitled for paying the carpenter and his staff. The entire *aiga* is the *bank* for the house owner because he would get a mat from one, native cloths from the other and perhaps foreign properties from others for the carpenter's payment.

⁴⁹ A *tapuaiga* (one who prays for the work) is a member of the family who does not actually pray but merely sits and serves as a conversationalist for the workers.

(b) Tupapa

Tupapa is a term given to a particular act of beneficence in the Samoan custom. This is a practice where someone in need may ask for a favor from someone who has potential or a special talent in any field. For instance, someone with no skills in fishing may ask an expert fisherman (*tautai*) to go fishing for his *faalavelave* at no cost. Similarly a skilful person in pigeon hunting may help someone with no knowledge of hunting to catch pigeons for his *faalavelave*. In the course of life the fisherman and the pigeon hunter would get his share from whom they helped either indirectly through contribution to his own *faalavelave* or for his food from farm harvest since all Samoans are mainly subsistent agriculturists (Holmes, 1974, 40).

(c) Asamoga and Tomaaga (Borrowing)

As Holmes mentioned, everyone in a Samoan society is first and foremost an agriculturist. Even specialists like fishermen (*tautai*), tattooers, and builders spend part of their time on their agricultural lands. There are no agricultural experts, however, some people are more successful than others (1974, 45). In times of need, it is a normal practice for the unsuccessful farmers or even the lazy ones to borrow land products from the advantaged to feed his family or for his *faalavelave*. That is an *asamoga*.

In old days, no lover of money was ever fonder of gold than a Samoan was of his fine mats (*ietoga*). Fine-mats is a valuable treasure in the life of a Samoan. They are carefully protected in family storage chests and passed from family to family as occasions for property exchange arises (*faalavelave*). When a *faalavelave* is held, a family with a

shortage of fine mats can borrow from a family with an abundance with the understanding that they would be returned or replaced in the future. This practice is called a *tomaaga*.

C. Investment of The Congregational Christian Church in Samoa

Samoans are conservative people and most anthropologists who have worked in Samoa are impressed with its extraordinary cultural conservatism (Holmes 1974, 93). This is why the Samoan's religion is part of their culture. This is very unique to the Samoan people because people's way of life these days is molded by a combination of moral principles regarding both the Gospel and Culture. This section therefore, will look at how the Samoan Investment is extended to the Church.

The CCCS started in Samoa in 1830 when John Williams from the London Missionary Society arrived at Savaii on his ship 'Messenger of Peace' with a group of Tahitian teachers. In those days, the organization of the church was under the tight control of the LMS missionaries from abroad. Soon after, the church started to develop into a self supporting and financially independent one. The transition from LMS mission to a local independent church was officially recognized in May 1961 when the Church's General Assembly voted to change the name of the organization from LMS to the present one of Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (Ernst 1994, 166).

From then on the administration and decision making for the development of the church is done by its General Assembly, and each constituent congregation selects its own delegates to this Assembly.

Since the CCCS is self-supported, there is a great need to invest its money and properties to earn a profit.⁵⁰ And that is why the elders committee⁵¹ does not say something to stop these games of bingo and raffles as fund raising.⁵² Those games and raffles according to Tofilau are for a good cause. It is for the purpose of building up the body of Christ and not to gain anybody's wealth. Many people take advantage of these opportunities to contribute to a good cause.

(On this point, I believe that there is a lot of argument about these means of fund-raising, especially bingo and raffles as they are believed to be forms of gambling. This is another issue, however some people believe that the end justify the means).

Certainly, many people consider gambling as a sinful activity since it promotes covetousness. In regards, I am not in a position to produce a debate, however I say that bingo and raffles are games of chances, and that is what investment is. Investments are speculative and they are considered to be virtual gambling because of the element of risk that is involved. Some people describe gambling as an unchristian attempt to get something for nothing or another's expense, but that is the nature of investment as the wicked slave in the Parable of the *mina* criticized the Master. It's a risk taking process that we may either lose or gain.

We know that playing bingo is addictive. Money is also addictive, but it is not evil. It is only the Love of money and the love of gambling that is evil.

Furthermore, gambling is a broad term that describes many species of moneymaking

⁵⁰ Elisaia F Kolia interviewed by author (May 22, 2002). Rev. Kolia is the current treasurer of the CCCS.

⁵¹ The Elders committee is made up of only elder-ministers. It is the top committee that oversee all matters concerning the CCCS.

⁵² Hini S Tofilau interviewed by author (May 18, 2002). Rev Tofilau is the chairman of the Elders committee.

games. However, bingo is just a simple entertainment, it is a past time as many people call it. It is not a serious form of entertainment (I am talking about the context here in Samoa) but a casual one. It is mainly a social one. It is not done in a casino, it only play for a few hours, there is no band playing, no beer supplied, and it is mainly a women's game.

With many other development projects of the church, CCCS relies heavily on "giving" by means of a *faiga-taulaga*⁵³. There are a few modes of *faiga-taulaga*. There is a "*taulaga mo le au taumafai*" (an offering for the Christian endeavor), a "*taulaga mo muu ese*" (offering for the missionary work) and "*taulaga mo Samoa*" (offering for Samoa).

The latter is the yearly offering for the church's internal affairs to fund the operation of many high schools, Malua Theological College, pay salaries for the teachers and workers in the administration as well as the maintenance for the church properties.⁵⁴

Apart from these, each local congregation has the greatest need of offering for the minister. All those, done under the moral compulsion of "giving" is believed many people who converted into other denominations to be a burden, and is another factor that contribute to the numerical decline of the CCCS membership (Vavae, 1980, 85).

To me, there is nothing wrong with the *faiga-taulaga*, but it is the involved competitive manner of the Samoan culture as mentioned by Sulufaiga Samasoni⁵⁵ that is wrong.

⁵³ Iosefa Tiata interviewed by author. May 20, 2002. Rev Tiata is the former accountant for CCCS.

⁵⁴ Lale Ieremia interviewed by author. May 22, 2002. Rev. Ieremia is the current chairman of the CCCS Finance Committee. He is a former General Secretary for CCCS.

⁵⁵ Sulufaiga Samasoni interviewed by author. May 16, 2002. Rev Samasoni is the former chairman of the General Assembly of the CCCS. He is the current Vice Chairman of the General Assembly.

Faiga-taulaga is freely giving to the Lord, it is not by constraint, but willingly and of a ready mind according to one's ability. It is parallel to the principle of tithing in the Old Testament except that it is not restricted to ten percent but open to the free will.

Faiga-taulaga is not enforced by the civil power but based on moral principles that tells an individual what is right and what is wrong. It may be hard and oppressive in the eyes of those who have little or no faith in God and His promises; but not so with those who have faith and are committed to their stewardship role.

Offering is an act of faith, it was a matter of offering thanksgiving and investing with God. It was acknowledging that God will provide and that He will supply the increase. Remember what we give, we reap and what we keep we rob and lose.

Furthermore, the Lord requires every child of His to give, in proportion as he has received (Mal. 3:10). And God rewards the bountiful giver (Mal. 3:8). He commands his people to give; and if they do so, he promises to give to them again, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For whatever good thing any man does, the same shall receive from the Lord (Luk. 6:38).

Out of the many forms of Investment in the CCCS, only a few is mentioned above to argue for its eligibility and its main purpose. With this point, I will give a few recommendations to meet the needs that each day brings to the mission of CCCS.

D. Recommendations

With the fact that many people are converting from Congregationalism to other denominations⁵⁶ I have come to realize some of the reasons. As we are in a fast changing society, many social problems arise due to the new political, cultural and economic situations. Most people are educated in the modern way of thinking. Sometimes in confusion, they look up to the church for understanding and help.

In this regard, I suggest that the church must have a proper theological framework to address many ethical issues. The church should not abstain itself from the secular world or fence itself from the unholy people, but must participate in the world activities and take part in the social life of the people. In this way the church can easily pass its message and address the needs of the people. Vavae mentions the irrelevancy of the church with its emphasis only on preaching on the pulpit in the church twice on Sundays (1980, 86). I fully support his view. The church should be more practical and meaningful in addressing the people about the rapid social problems than just preaching the love of God in abstract. For instance, they should address social issues like financial stewardship, Problems with Debt, Self Control, Live within our Means, Wisdom of Buying and Selling and many other issues relevant to the everyday life of the people, in relationship to God's purpose of salvation.

In addition, The church should be actively involved in political and economical affairs like investment, with the return intended for the maintenance of Christ's body. In that

⁵⁶ Ernst has a table on "Growth rates of different religious groups in Western Samoa" on page 164-165.

way, the church can accumulate enough assets and properties for its security and will help the *faiga taulaga* to widen its stewardship role scope. For instance, building more schools for the underprivileged, send more missionaries worldwide, send more students to be trained overseas (not only theological students but other fields), build homes for the ages, and to provide relief fund for the underprivileged.

E. Summary

Generally Samoans do not save their money in the bank but spend it all on their family *faalavelave* with the belief that everybody else would do likewise in return. With all the practices of the Samoan culture discussed above, we can see the stewardship motif displayed by people not only in employing their talents and capabilities at no cost, but in sharing their properties for benevolence purposes.

With the dispersion of Samoan people all over the world in looking for greener pastures, their mode of *tautua* and service to their *aiga* is in the form of remittances. People send money regularly to improve and develop their *aiga*, their *nuu* and their churches.

The remittances as defined by Macpherson is: '*The reciprocal enactment and fulfillment and obligations to those related through blood, marriage and adoption as a function of both duty and love*' (Macpherson 1994, 83). Remittance is proved to be the largest source of income for an average Samoan family and is the leading source of money into the Samoan economy (Alburg 1991, 18). Remittances is essential and vital to the Samoan economy. It has raised Samoa's standard of living.⁵⁷ Many Samoans believe that

⁵⁷ Interview with Agape Petaia. May 27 2002. Miss Petaia is the Statistics Administrator for Central Bank of Samoa.

remittance is a product of reciprocity, a necessary practice to share with one another. Others see it as an act of stewardship to express their *tautua* and love to their *aiga*. To some, they feel they are in debt and therefore obliged to give to others, which they believe is passively giving to God.

But as I see it, as well as many who are in the same view, this is the real Samoan way of Investment.

This way of Samoan investment is extended to his church since the Samoans are an enigma according to Holmes. The attitudes of Samoans is singled out by Oxford geographers as; *a people with such conservative nature that new elements like foreign goods, money, and even Christianity have never been allowed to sweep the land with devastating effects* (Holmes 1974, 93).

Religion is part and parcel of the Samoans social and political system or its *faa-Samoa*. In other words, it was not possible for the society to accept another religion without the authority of the *matais*.

With this conservative attitude of Samoan people, the coming Christianity had little effect on the social structure of Samoa and so stewardship and investment in the Samoan culture is basically what the church adopts.

In this regard, a remarkable point to note is that this Samoan investment is in line with the biblical concept for benevolence and benefaction purposes (cf. Deut. 15:7 & Prov. 3:27).

This is the reason why poverty is not a problem in Samoa according to Samoa Chief Government Statistician Sifuiva Reupena Muagututia based on their Household Survey.⁵⁸

According to this survey, people in Samoa are not as poor as people in Asia and Africa. There are no landless people, no homeless and no people die of starvation here in Samoa. It is a consequence of the good stewardship and good investment practiced by the Samoan culture and within the church.

⁵⁸ This article is at the front page of the Samoa Observer newspaper (Thursday 19th of September 2002)

CONCLUSION

We as Christians are only servants and stewards of Jesus Christ, appointed in His place to minister the gifts He has given us. This is not our choice, but His. In other words, we are in debt and it is our duty to perform according to His will. Through the Great Commission, He has entrusted both His authority and power in our hands, appointing us in His stead, to accomplish the work for God's economy.

In the parable of the *Mina*, He entrusted each of us with a gift of one *mina*. This came with the specific instruction to do business with it until he returns.

If we interpret the *mina* as the word of God, then it is our obligation to be productive and be faithful. Our Lord wants us to be good stewards and a good steward is of blind obedient to the Master. We can see why Paul in his letter to the Romans spoke about being under debt to spread the gospel (Roman 1:14-15). It is because we are destined to spread God's word to which we must be obedient.

On the other hand, if we interpret the *mina* as money as it plainly does in the text, then it suggests that we must be actively participating in the world of economy by employing the money to get more money for the purpose of building up the body of Christ. In this sense therefore, the investment objectives and the practices used by the CCCS in raising funds for its development and the up keeping of its mission is biblically based and it is a vital component of its stewardship function.

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Agape Petaia. Interviewed by author. May 27, 2002. Miss Petaia is the Statistics Administrator for Central Bank of Samoa.

Kolia, Elisaia. Interviewed by author. May 22, 2002. Rev Kolia is the current treasurer of CCCS.

Ieremia Lale. Interviewed by author. May 22, 2002. Rev Ieremia is the current chairman of the General Assembly's Finance Committee. He is also a former General Secretary for CCCS General Assembly.

Sulufaiga Samasoni. Interviewed by author. May 16, 2002. Rev Samasoni is the former chairman of the General Assembly of the CCCS. He is the currently the Vice Chairman.

Tiata, Iosefa. Interviewed by author. May 20, 2002. Rev Tiata is the former accountant for CCCS.

Tofilau Hini. Interviewed by author. May 18, 2002. Rev Tofilau is the current chairman of the Elders committee.

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