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TUVALU: A SINKING NATION

A Theological Reflection on the Impact of Global Warming

from the Perspective of Tuvalu.

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By

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ABSTRACT

The reports on how Tuvalu is affected by the rising sea level and climate changes caused by Global warming, and especially the prediction that Tuvalu will sink in the future, shake us completely. But when one experiences the reality of such situation, it shakes the very foundation of one's faith and being. This author speaks from experience of the very nature of the problem.

This thesis is, therefore, a theological reflection on the problem of facing the possibility of becoming landless, from the perspective of Tuvalu, a nation facing the reality of that threat. A straightforward presentation of the coming into being of Tuvalu and its people and culture with their religious ideologies will start this discussion. The whole idea is to have a clear picture of the nature of the islands and the kind of life the people live in relation to the environment. It is a re-visioning of the whole Tuvalu ethos in order to retrieve the life-affirming elements in the culture of the people for a better understanding of where the people of Tuvalu stand today.

That Tuvalu of the past which was clean and untouched by the negative forces of life is now crying out for hope. It is not easy to live with such a threat of becoming landless in the future, especially when things are not likely to get any better but worse. The Church at this stage must say something about that situation and what the people should do about it. For the Church, the message of hope must be emphasized and amplified so that people do not lose hope in the face of hopelessness.

This thesis points towards God as the only hope for the people of Tuvalu and all the victims of global warming around the world; peoples who wake up the next morning to find out that they no longer have homes and even land. Hope here is not sitting around doing nothing about a situation but taking the lead in changing the situation.

Acknowledgement

I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to the LORD Almighty, whose loving kindness has made the completion of this dissertation possible. Throughout this work, I have come to realize that indeed "nothing is impossible in God," (Luke 1: 37; 18:27) "LORD! You are so good and kind to be at my side always."

Secondly, thanks for the support of the Ekalesia Kefunano Tivatu (Christian Church in Tivatu) for financial sponsoring my studies at Malua Theological College, Samoa. Thank you also to the Church in Samoa and Tivatu for remembering us in your prayers. Indeed, the Word of God is as a hidden treasure revealed to those that search it out with faith (Matthew 13:44-46). Your support and prayers have been a light to illuminate a path in my search for the hidden treasures of the "Word of God."

Thirdly, a big "Alofa" and "Fa'afetai" to the Principal of Malua Theological College, the Faculty and other members for the kind reception, instructions and encouragement in bringing me to this institution. A special thanks to Rev Dr Tapaia Lefele, for his expertise, instruction, patience, and direction in supervising this dissertation. I also extend my sincere thanks to the staff and wife for their encouragement and assistance throughout this work. I would like to thank my fellow colleagues and all those who helped me in different ways for your support and suggestions. I receive all the assistance that you gave. Thank you all and may God bless you. I also extend my sincere thanks to Tito Iala for his assistance in providing source material and background information for this dissertation, "fakafetai ia!"

Finally, but certainly not the least is my huge thanks to our living families for their endless prayers. Thanks especially to my wife Lavinia Fusi and children, Tevalafasi, Avarele, Soteria, Loini, and Tella for your patience and support. You have kindly taken up much of my family responsibilities that I may spend time working on this dissertation. At times when the work was demanding, your kind words encouraged me to strive on. Your warm support is indeed a hidden treasure.

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CONCLUSION

SINKING BUT NOT SILENCED

Picturing of a Greedy World

To the World with Love

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INTRODUCTION

Tuvalu is sinking. This is an unavoidable consequence of the rising sea level because of global warming. Some Tuvaluans believe that nothing like this is going to happen; the rising sea affects the small-uninhabited islands only. But the threat of the frequent changes in the climate and the rising sea level is real and must be addressed by the church today. This attempt is a theological reflection from the perspective of Tuvalu on the theology of land – as home, as a gift of God – and also looking at a theology of hope for a people being threatened by the impact of global warming.

The call to do theology contextually has motivated this author to take up this burning issue in the context of Tuvalu. Theology for John Macquarrie is “the study which, through participation in and reflection upon a religious faith, seeks to express the content of this faith in the clearest and most coherent language available”.¹ The church needs to participate in the life and faith of the people in order to know the real issues that the people face in life, and then seek to express the teaching of the church which is relevant to the issue concerned in a language that is clear and understandable to the people. When faith encounters a situation in any context the gospel reaches, a theology starts to grow.

Thesis Statement:

In an attempt to address the issue of Tuvalu being submerged or sinking underneath the sea because of global warming, God is seen as the giver of the land and also the hope for Tuvalu if she loses the land. Thus, theological aspects of our relation to land and to the rest of God's creation are visited. The aim is to reveal the facts and the reality of the situation in order to raise the awareness of the people not only of the Pacific but also the rest of the world about the devastating impact of global warming. The fact that Tuvalu will one day sink has prompted this author to speak of a theology of hope. The people of Tuvalu must have faith in God as they face the reality of becoming landless. Hope therefore takes the Tuvaluans on the right path towards an enriched relationship with God and with his creation.

¹ John Macquarrie, Principles of Christian Theology, rev. edn., (London: SCM Press, 1977), 12.

Methodology:

When theology is one in a particular context, the method or approach is apparently contextual. Stephen B. Bevans says, "The contextualization of theology – the attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context – is really a theological imperative."² This approach is taken up in this work because of the particularity of the situation in Tuvalu and especially the issue of global warming. The church and its theology must always be able to speak to the people in whatever situation they face in life and whenever a new situation is encountered.

This work seeks to highlight the importance of land to the people of Tuvalu as home and as a gift of the gods to their ancestors. Against that sense of comfort in which the people of Tuvalu seem to appreciate their home, the reality of global warming and its impact is presented with pictures so that any reader of this work can feel the actual pain that is felt by the people themselves. From within that darkened situation, the loss of hope and of land, the faith of the people is awakened by the fact that the God of Israel is the God of love and of hope.

Structure:

The thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter one will lay out the different aspects of the life of Tuvalu from its origins, its people, its culture, the coming of Christianity, and the impact of colonialism and westernization. Then in chapter two, the situation in Tuvalu of the impact of global warming will be discussed. The use of pictures will be of vital importance because they will certainly speak more loudly and clearly of the kind of situation the people of Tuvalu really experience. The last chapter will concentrate on the biblical and theological perspective to find a way of formulating clearly the meaning of land in the Bible and in the history of Israel to help establish a new understanding by the Tuvaluans of their relationship with God and with land. Such a concept of hope is a vital ingredient in any development of a theology that is relevant for the people of Tuvalu in our uncertain journey into the future. Finally, the conclusion will raise some concerns of the people of Tuvalu in relation to the problem of global warming.

² Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Faith and Culture Series, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 1.

CHAPTER ONE

TUVALU: A GIFT FROM THE GODS

Tuvalu has always been understood by the Tuvaluans as a gift from the gods. The ancestors knew and believed that the gods created the islands of Tuvalu for the people of Tuvalu to treasure forever. They believed that the gods were part of creation and always involved in the lives of the people.

The Coming Into Being Of Tuvalu:

Tuvalu means a cluster of eight or eight (*valu*) standing together (*tu*)³. The reference is to the eight islands of Nanumea, Nanumaga, Niutao, Nui, Vaitupu, Nukufetau, Funafuti, and Nukulaelae which, together with a ninth island, Niulakita, make up the modern day country of Tuvalu. The earliest known written reference to Tuvalu was by the London Missionary Society missionaries in their newspaper *Sulu Samoa*⁴. Niulakita, the smallest and most southerly of the nine islands, is administratively part of Niutao and is not regarded from that point of view as a separate island.

The previous name of the country was the Ellice Islands. Captain Arent de Peyster, an American who discovered Tuvalu, gave it the name Ellice. He was in command of the British brigantine *Rebecca*, who discovered a group of islets in May 1819, which appeared to be inhabited.⁵ In certain circumstances, Captain Arent de Peyster called the group of eight islands, Ellice, after "Edward Ellice, the Member of Parliament for Coventry and the owner of the *Rebecca's* cargo ship. Ellice was also a London merchant, a financier of wide imperialist interests and a leading figure in the Hudson's Bay Company in Canada⁶. The change of the name Ellice to Tuvalu took place on 1 October 1975⁷ when the country was separated from what was then the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony. The name "Tuvalu" has a unique meaning among native Tuvaluans, who agree that it traditionally refers to the cluster of eight islands.

³ Tuvalu literally means: - 'Valu' means eight (8) and 'Tu' means 'to stand'

⁴ Doug Munro and Michael Goldsmith. *The Accidental Missionary*, (Christchurch: Design and Print Services), 2002, xvi.

⁵ A source obtained from the internet: <http://www.tuvaluislands.com> (April 2005)

⁶ <http://www.tuvaluislands.com> (April 2005)

⁷ Munro and Goldsmith, xvi.

The islands in Tuvalu are a spectacular formation of coral atolls. It is geologically very young with most of the islands poorly developed, infertile, and with sandy or gravel coralline soils. The islands are of sediment, produced by the forces of the sea, and fringed reefs. The highest point of land stands no more than four meters above sea level and have a combined land area of 25.9 square kilometers⁸ with a population, according to December 2004 census, of 10326⁹. Tuvalu, as stated earlier, is a low-lying group of islands badly affected by coastal erosion during major storms. It suffers from severe flooding from waves washing inland during the cyclone seasons. While this situation is unavoidable, Tuvalu continues to survive.

The coming into being of Tuvalu has been told in a myth which is observed as part of Tuvalu's pre-history. The myth is commonly known by most of the Tuvalu people. According to Sevati Tuwere, myths were determined as the "outcome, not of a faithful memory, but a most lively imagination which does indeed draw its inspiration from facts, but so transform them that we can scarcely recognize them"¹⁰. This, however, is the myth about the origins of Tuvalu that has been passed through orally from generation to generation:

Once upon a time, 'te Pusi (the eel) and 'te Ali (the flounder)¹¹ who were once great friends lived in the sea. One day, they decided to carry a huge rock to test who was the stronger of them. They argued till they ended up fighting. Te Ali (the flounder) was seriously wounded because he was crushed underneath the rock. Fortunately he managed to escape death. When he freed himself, he chased te Pusi (the eel). At that time te Pusi was vomiting due to the heavy blow which struck him on his belly. As te Pusi ran for survival while still vomiting, his body grew thinner and thinner. He managed to escape into a hole, while te Ali hunted for him. While te Pusi was still in the hole, he chanted some magic words that may help him to escape. He said, "Wide and flat, wide and flat, to feed on you te Ali. Wide and flat, wide and flat, you will never kill me."

⁸ Tuvalu: National Environmental Management Strategy, (Brisbane: ABC Printing), 1997, 5

⁹ Figures obtained through internet correspondence, see Kataoatu Hauma kjhauma@hotmail.com and Semu Malona.

¹⁰ Ilaitia S Tuwere, ed. Hocart, A. M. *Kingship: Sense of the Vanua-Thesis*. (Suva: Pacific Theological College), 1995, 29

¹¹ Tuvaluan 'Te Pusi' means 'The Eel,' and 'Te Ali' 'The Flounder,' cf: Talakatoa O'Brien, et. al. *Genesis*, Edited by Hugh Laracy, (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies), 1983, 14

After te Pusi had said these magic words, he saw that te Ali's body turned flat. A shape that provided a model for a flat land that one day would form an island. Te Pusi's body turned thin shaping like a coconut tree. This shape was referred to by the Tuvaluan as coconut trees that grew on the islands of Tuvalu. Te Pusi returned home in the sea unsatisfied with what happened. Later, te Ali died and te Pusi remembered the big stone they carried. He saw different colours on the stone and he began creating by throwing the stone into the sky. From pieces and colours of the stone when it was broken, the islands were formed in the north, east, south, west, sea and sky. Finally he broke the remaining part of the stone into eight pieces and formed the islands of Tuvalu¹².

The myth reflects some theological elements of the actual biblical creation story. *Te Ali* and *te Pusi* as gods signify the almighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth in the biblical creation story. The magic chants totally represent the Creative Words by which God created heaven and earth. The huge rock that breaks into pieces characterize the different nations in the world as well the small islands of Tuvalu which were formed from the last eight pieces left. According to the myth when looked at theologically, Tuvalu and all nations in the world are all included in this biblical creation story.

According to the biblical narratives, God created heaven and earth and everything in it (Genesis 1&2). When Christianity was introduced into Tuvalu, the myth about the creation or the coming into being of Tuvalu faded away. The reason being that the people of Tuvalu believed and adopted the Creation story of Genesis to be the reason for the existence and coming into being of Tuvalu. Thus, the biblical story was adopted as the creation narrative of Tuvalu which led the people to take cautious actions in using and taking care of their islands, believing that the islands were God's property. They believe, therefore, that it is man's duty and responsibility to maintain, cultivate the land properly and look after it carefully. The Tuvaluans believe that once humans misuse the land, it will be a sin before God and therefore the land will produce less. This is based on the belief that God is the Creator and all good things in this world must all be attributed to God.

The displacement of the creation myth of the Tuvaluans needs to be addressed properly. Before the coming of Christianity, the Tuvaluans believed in the gods, which were part of nature and therefore closer to them all the times. The God of the

¹² Talakatoa O'Brien, et. al. *Genesis*, Edited by Hugh Laracy, (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies), 1983, 14-15

missionaries was known to be in heaven, which was taught to be up there somewhere. They introduced this heavenly God into the faith of the people, but the Tuvaluans always believed in earthly gods, which were with and around them. Something significant was therefore missing in the new beliefs of the people; the belief that the gods were always with them. This is the aspect of the faith of our fore-parents that needs to be reintegrated into our faith in the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator of all things.

The People And Their Culture:

Each island of Tuvalu has its own version its beginnings. For instance, on the island of Nanumea, the first to settle on there were two women named Pai and Vau. They were sent away because Tefolaha managed to tell them their names. Tefolaha was a warrior from Tonga who was believed to be partly spirit and partly human¹³. The story has it that Tefolaha, exhausted after the battles between Tonga and Samoa, came to Nanumea and made it his dwelling island. The same female who lived in Nanumea, Pai and Vau¹⁴ were believed to be the first inhabitants of the island of Niutao.

The people of the island of Nanumaga have a story of their origins. The story tells of a substance called *Te Atua o Heka* which laid between earth and the heavens. Because of its being slippery, *Te Atua o Heka* moved about and caused earth and heavens to shift and it became expanded and gradually forced the earth and the heavens apart. The human race was also formed from this substance and the first products of it were spirits, both good and bad, who possessed supernatural powers. After many years, they lost their powers and eventually became human beings¹⁵ who were believed to be the first inhabitants of the island.

Nui does not have an exact tradition of its settlement. But a story¹⁶ was told that a group of spirits who lived beyond the horizon decided to swim around the ocean. When they rested, their leader urged them to gather together in a circle and also marked a spot. They dived down to the ocean bed and started heaping up stones, mud and sand into a pile that eventually appeared above the waves. They then swam on, and marked each

¹³ Talakatoa O'Brien, 15

¹⁴ <http://www.tuvaluislands.com> (February 2005)

¹⁵ <http://www.tuvaluislands.com> (February 2005)

¹⁶ <http://www.tuvaluislands.com> (February 2005)

resting spot in a similar manner. In this way, Nui and many other islands were formed. Funafuti and Vaitupu claim they were originated from Telematua, a giant from Samoa¹⁷. According to the story, Telematua visited Funafuti where he left his first wife Futi, and his second wife Tupu was left on Vaitupu. He then allocated his time between the two islands and it was told that he lived on both islands.¹⁸ The Tongans were believed to be the first people to settle on the island of Nukufetau. And according to tradition¹⁹, Valoa and his family from the island of Vaitupu were the first to settle on the island of Nukulaelae.

This was the traditional understanding of who were the first settlers of the Tuvalu islands. But according to the evidence of linguists, working out how old a language and how long people had been speaking the language of Tuvalu, it was indicated that it goes back about 2,000 years²⁰. The traditional stories and genealogies also go back only about 300 years. It was also stated that the earlier ancestors came mostly from Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga and Uvea (Wallis Island). These settlers were all Polynesians with the exception of Nui, which many people regard as descendants of people from Kiribati²¹. The Polynesian races were also traced as people from the so-called "Lapita, people from South-East Asia and spread through Melanesia, New Guinea and New Caledonia".²²

Cultural living in Tuvalu were expound in nuclear family and the extended family. The way of life or culture is rooted in the extended family system. They observe and practice communal living where every individual in the family has a major role to play for the well-being of the family. In this communal living, everyone in the family shares everything and respects each other at all times. One major reason why Tuvalu still strongly observes communal living is because of the small sizes of its islands.²³ The biggest island, Vaitupu, is 5.60 square kilometers and the smallest island, Nukulaelae, is 1.82 square kilometres.²⁴ Their populations are also small, which range from 35 persons

¹⁷ Talakatoa O'Brien, 15

¹⁸ <http://www.tuvaluislands.com> (December 2004)

¹⁹ <http://www.tuvaluislands.com> (December 2004)

²⁰ <http://www.tuvaluislands.com> (December 2004)

²¹ <http://www.tuvaluislands.com> (December 2004)

²² Talakatoa O'Brien, 16.

²³ Te'o Ian Fairbairn, *Tuvalu Economic Situation and Development Prospects*, International Development Issues No. 29, (Canberra: National Capital Printing, 1993), 46

²⁴ Te'o Ian Fairbairn, 46

on the smallest island, Niulakita, to 4253 on the most populous island, Funafuti.²⁵ Thus, unity of hearts in communal living is always evident when members of an extended family come together in special functions such as weddings and funerals, and many other family occasions.

All family members are expected to help in one way or another - in cash or in labour. At the community level, this unity of hearts is also evident when all families help when the leaders of the community (the leaders may be the pastor, the high chief, councillor and leaders of organizations) ask for their assistance whenever an occasion takes place. Such occasions include the welcoming of visitors, the maintenance of the community hall or the construction of a new one. It is considered shameful if one does not answer the call from a leader to help. The community spirit of the Tuvaluans is what makes the Tuvaluan society vibrant.

The culture of Tuvalu, therefore, is based around the family and the community. The bonds that bind family members and community members together are strong. This bonding also includes the whole environment - the land and sea. The environment is so treasured by the people because of the scarcity of natural resources. But now these bonds are threatened by the individualistic attitudes of some members of the community. Being individualistic means wanting to be on one's own, and not bothering about the community or the calls from its leaders for help.

The other threat to communal living comes from the introduction of new religious movements, the advance in educating people about their individual rights, and increase in paid employment. New religious movements bring with them a new way of looking at one's obligations to the family and the community. Some of these religious movements do not stress the importance of communal living, hence their followers stop attending community functions such as fund raising, feasts, and *fatele* (local dance). If the community is not important to these people, then the land and sea are also not important, which means their only home is not important at all.

Once people become aware (through education) of their rights, some become convinced that they have the right to do whatever they want. They forget about their community obligations. They put up in defence of their non-attendance at community

²⁵ Tuvalu: 2002 Population and Housing Census, vol.1, Table P1.

functions the argument that their rights give them the freedom to do what they want. One of the strongest bonds that have bound family members together on each of the Tuvalu islands is land. For many years the land was the only source of sustenance and income for most Tuvaluans. Because land was family owned (*kaitasi*)²⁶ and it had a pivotal role in the survival of the people on these islands, it was natural for people to work together and help each other to ensure their survival. The '*matai o te kaaiga*'²⁷ controlled the land; the family members worked it because the *matai o te kaaiga* alone cannot work all their lands to feed all the family members. The interdependence of family members, therefore, ensured their survival.

On the other hand, education has changed this. Education gives the Tuvaluans paid jobs away from the land. Educated Tuvaluans are working and living away from their home islands, became less depended on other family members for their day-to-day survival. Thus, there are tensions because of the challenges posed by the new changes which are quite different from the way people used to in the past. Therefore, the way of life of the people of Tuvalu changes from time to time because of the influx of new changes.

Colonialism and Westernization:

Colonialism is a political governing policy which focuses on ruling other nations that fall within its declared territories and ownership²⁸. Thus, Tuvalu fell into British jurisdiction in 1877, then later was made part of the British Protectorate of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands in 1892²⁹. The reason why Tuvalu became a colony was because of a certain obligation involved.³⁰ Sir John Thomson, the British High Commissioner for the Western Pacific based in Fiji recommended that Gilbert (now known as Kiribati) should

²⁶ 'Kaitasi' is a Tuvalu word meaning- 'equal share in family's lands and properties'.

²⁷ '*matai o te kaaiga*' means- 'an elder or head of the family in the Tuvalu family'.

²⁸ Richard Bready, ed. *Microsoft Encarta World English Dictionary*. (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc), 1999

²⁹ <http://www.janeresture.com> (April 2005)

³⁰ <http://www.tuvaluislands.com> (April 2005)

be ruled by Britain to forestall possible action by Germany and the United States of America³¹. The acquisition was highly recommended to forestall the recruitment of labour, the sale of guns and liquor and also to end the growing confusion within the group. In 1892 the British Government realized if they fail to declare a Protectorate then it would probably lead to acquisition by Germany. In this requisition they ordered the Commander-in-Chief of the H.M. Ships in Australia, to send a warship to the Gilberts to declare a Protectorate. Captain Davis, R.N of the H.M.S. Royalist was sent to carry out this task.³² Captain Davis was also ordered to visit the Tuvalu Islands but not to declare a Protectorate there. But he reported³³ that the leaders of each island on Tuvalu requested him for a Protectorate. This was later approved and Captain Gibson R.N. of H.M.S. Curacao was therefore ordered to the Tuvalu Islands on September, 1892, to declare a Protectorate on each island³⁴.

During the colonial times, there was confusion amongst the natives about which authority they should comply with. According to what was stated by William Telfer Campbell³⁵, he found out that the laws of the Mission held greater legitimacy.³⁶ Among some of the incidents was the arrival of the H. M. S Royalist. When the natives were told to put on their best clothes, they simply replied, "No, *misionale*³⁷ big boss."³⁸ Some of the remarkable incidents which occurred need to be mentioned:

1. *At Nukufetau; with the arrival of the H.M.S. Goldfinch (Commander Ash).*

"The natives requested permission to have a dance in the evening on account of the visit of the man-of-war. I (Campbell) granted permission.

And on telling the Tupu (the High Chief), he asked me if the missionary

³¹ Doug Munro, *The Lagoon Islands*, (Hobart: Sassafras Books), 1988, 296 (ed, Paraphrase of telegram from Governor of Fiji to Lord Knutsford, 16 June 1892, encl in CO 225/38/12151; Thurston to Knutsford (confidential), 23 June 1892 CO 225/38/18865)

³² <http://www.tuvaluislands.com> (April 2005)

³³ Doug Munro, 295 (ed, Davis, 1892 *Royalist* Report CO 225/39/23076; published as FOCP 626. For a colourful but somewhat suspect accounts of Davis's activities in Kiribati see Farrell 1928: 384-89.)

³⁴ Doug Munro, 293

³⁵ Doug Munro, 302

³⁶ Doug Munro, 303

³⁷ *misionale* is a Tuvalu word that describes and refers to a missionary

³⁸ Doug Munro, 303 (ed, Mrs. Davies 1899: 273 -74).

had given permission on which I assured him that the missionary was not the person to give permission."³⁹

2. At Funafuti.

*"Permission was asked to hold a dance in the chief's village. As the complaint had reached me concerning the action of the Samoan Missionary who had interfered recently, opposing the native government who had given permission for a dance when H.M.S Penguin was at Funafuti. The Samoan Missionary inquired if the people were to be ruled by the Bible or by the Law. I (Campbell) told him by the Law and that he was not to interfere with the native government."*⁴⁰

The above mentioned incidents reflect the attitudes and beliefs of the people. They respected the missionaries more than the colonial administrator and their laws. It is noted also that they obeyed the teachings of the Bible rather than of colonizers' laws. The influences of the colonizers' laws and even the Church traditions continued throughout. Today, when people or organizations from overseas want to help Tuvalu, the community leaders insist that we must do what these people want otherwise they will not help. This, for the Tuvaluans, is neo-colonialism. When people say "yes" to everything that is proposed to them without any critical analysis of such proposal, they are simply being colonized. For Tuvalu, colonialism came to an end when it gained Independence on the 1st of October 1978.

The effects of westernization, however, were felt in Tuvalu long before the coming of colonialism.⁴¹ It may be traced back to the middle of the 16th century as well as the 1860s, when foreign traders and missionaries were residing on most of the islands⁴². The passing traders in their schooners and later voyages visited and settled on each of the Tuvalu islands; like Nitz on Vaitupu, Louis Becke on Nanumaga and Jack

³⁹ Doug Munro, 304 (ed, Campbell to Thurston, 17 October 1896 (WPHC 4, 392/1896)

⁴⁰ Doug Munro, 304 (ed, Campbell to Thurston, 17 October 1896 (WPHC 4, 392/1896)

⁴¹ Laumua Kofe, ed, al. Palagi and Pastors: Tuvalu A History. Edited by Hugh Laracy, (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies), 1983, 102

⁴² Doug Munro, 25

O'Brien on Funafuti⁴³ introduced western ideas to the people of Tuvalu. There were also agents of westernization⁴⁴ who arrived and settled on the islands.

Westernization is indeed a continuing phenomenon which continues to affect Tuvalu. On a philosophical level, we can also think of colonialism and westernisation as a state of mind. All the activities and ways of assistance from wealthy nations and organizations do introduce aspects of colonialism and westernization which influence the people of Tuvalu in one way or another. The local people adopted the culture of the colonizers which means the accumulation of wealth and power as well as individualism. Everything about westernization revolves around power and wealth to be enjoyed by every individual. There is also the impact of material things associated with the kind of life style the new culture demands. These things include all household items like electrical appliances – washing machines, refrigerators, freezers, televisions, videos, etc. all these things will one day end up in the rubbish dump, or rather on the shore, in the sea, behind the house or wherever. This is another contributing factor to the problem of global warming which is damaging our home. The Tuvalu people, therefore, should strongly maintain and preserve the cultural identity and tradition of communal living.

Christianity:

Before Christianity was introduced to the islands of Tuvalu, the people believed in many gods. Each island had its own god or deity.⁴⁵ The practice of worshiping the gods was also varied from island to island. Each performed its worship in its own preferable and desirable way. On the island of Nanumaga, as stated by a source reported by Whitmee in 1870, the people believed that Foelagi and Maumau were their gods.⁴⁶ The people in Niutao worshipped Kulu as their principal god. Nanumea people worshipped Tuafale, while Funafuti, Vaitupu and Nukufetau worshipped Foilape.⁴⁷

⁴³ Laumua Kofe, ed, al. 105

⁴⁴ Laumua Kofe, ed, al. 105

⁴⁵ Laumua Kofe, et, al, 29

⁴⁶ Laumua Kofe, et al, 30.

⁴⁷ Laumua Kofe, et, al, 33.

Kofe, as quoted in Kennedy's records⁴⁸, stressed that among the ways and beliefs in the gods and deities, the people of Tuvalu had a common chanted prayer that addressed a god in heaven that was powerful and mighty - *koe mai a luga na* (you up or above there).⁴⁹ It was proposed that perhaps, before Christianity was introduced, the people believed that there was a supreme god because of the prayer they offered to a god that dwelled in heaven.⁵⁰ They chanted this prayer as a form of asking god for divine aid or guidance especially on certain occasions.

The practice of worshipping the idols or the gods continued until Christianity arrived when they denounced most of their beliefs and believed the God of the missionaries. It was also stated that before 1840, traders and beachcombers who visited and settled on some islands in Tuvalu⁵¹ - Jack O'Brien, an Australian, George Westbrook and Alfred Restieux agents for the Deutsche handles-und-Plantation Gessellschaft, - sometimes taught the people little about the Christian God.⁵² Gradually the Tuvalu people were influenced and therefore anxious to receive and to learn more about Christianity. An interesting source⁵³ stated that an old lady known as Kafoa on Nukulaelae Island prophesied the coming of Christianity, saying:

*"E isi se mea tela ka vau mai te kapakapalagi. Kafai e oko mai ki ou taliga, e lei ki te fakalogo, kae teu foki ne ia tou loto. A ko mea la konei ki te pouliga, te tapuakiga ki tupua mo mea faka-tau-laitu, ko se iloa atu me tefea te koga ka olo latou ki ei"*⁵⁴.

"Something is coming from beyond the horizon. When it comes it is good for you to listen to it and take it to your

⁴⁸ Laumua Kofe, 29

⁴⁹ Laumua Kofe, 29

⁵⁰ The Bible (NRSV). Genesis 1-2,

⁵¹ Laumua Kofe, et, al. *Palagai and Pastors*. (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies), 1983, 105

⁵² Laumua Kofe, 104 -105

⁵³ *Program of the Centenary of the Coming of the Gospel to Tuvalu Islands!* (Vaiaku: Office of Tuvalu Church), 1961, 9

⁵⁴ *Program of the Centenary of the Coming of the Gospel to Tuvalu Islands!*, 9

heart. But as for these superstitions and worship of idols and magic, we do not know what will happen to them"⁵⁵.

At this stage, a summary of the history of the Church in Tuvalu is appropriate. The Christian mission landed on the island of Nukulaelae on the 10th of May 1861⁵⁶ through a deacon named Elekana from Manihiki of the Cook Islands. Elekana and others were washed onto the shore of Matamotu, an islet in Nukulaelae, after their ship had been stricken by a storm and they drifted for eight weeks with his son Tavita and four other men - Tuitolu, Parana, Ninoko and Larilari.

Another source stated that there was a woman named Teata and her child⁵⁷ in the group. When they got ashore, Elekana saw that Christianity was needed to be taught to the people. He attempted to draw the attention of the people to learn the Word of God and it worked successfully. He could see that the people were so desperate to learn more about the Word of God, but required someone that had been trained in order to cater for the need to continue the ministry. He therefore planned to gain more knowledge in God's ministry by attending the Malua Theological College in Samoa. Before he left, he tore some pages of his Cook Islands bible and gave the pages to those whom he thought would continue the missionary work. On his way to Samoa, they also stopped on Funafuti, where he also taught the people and they responded with curiosity. When Elekana reached Samoa he reported to the London Missionary Society the need of teachers for the Tuvalu mission. It was stated that after Elekana completed his training, he was appointed with two other teachers to start the work in Tuvalu. Matatia and Ioane were the two who accompanied Elekana under the leadership of Rev A Murray on their trip to Tuvalu. On their journey to Tuvalu, they visited 5 islands in Tuvalu.

⁵⁵ *Program of the Centenary of the Coming of the Gospel to Tuvalu Islands!*, 13

⁵⁶ *Program of the Centenary of the Coming of the Gospel to Tuvalu Islands!*, 9

⁵⁷ *Tusi Pese Ekalesia Tuvalu (Hymn Book of the Tuvalu Church)*, (Suva: Oceania Printers Ltd), 1983, iv; and *Program of the Centenary of the Coming of the Gospel to Tuvalu Islands!* (Vaiaku: Tuvalu Church), 1981, 7

At these five islands, Murray was so surprised to see that people on Nukulaelae totally renounced heathen worship and they were eager to receive a teacher to teach them more about Christianity. Murray was touched by their repeated request so he agreed to leave Ioane to be their teacher. This was more or less the same throughout the islands of Tuvalu. By 1878⁵⁸, Christianity was well established in Tuvalu, where London Missionary Society was the only denomination observed in Tuvalu. Every Island had teachers to look after the mission work. Even though there were sometimes few setbacks but fortunately the mission ran progressively and it was a remarkable success. Tuvalu was counted as a district of the Church in Samoa. It was administrated from the London Missionary Society stationed in Samoa but remained directed by the Samoan Pastors. Throughout the life of the church, the people had been trained spiritually and at the same time with the influence of some of the Samoan culture and traditions. The Tuvalu people knew how to read the Samoan Bible and even how to sing the Samoan hymns fluently. Worship was done in Samoan language and the Samoan way of living was also practised by the Tuvaluans. Through all the great tasks and successful work done by the Samoan teachers, under the control of the London Missionary Society, a Mission School was established on Vaitupu with the intention to educate the local people. The successful candidates were sent to Samoa to be trained as pastors at Malua Theological College.

The increased number of local graduates from Malua Theological College and other Mission Colleges, emerged a proposal in 1952 at the General Assembly in Samoa if the mission work in Church could be handed over to the Tuvalu teachers and start to repatriate the Samoan teachers back⁵⁹. However, their request was not accepted until 1958, when the first permanent missionary of the London Missionary Society arrived to assist and organise the church of Tuvalu.

Reverend Brian Ranford was later appointed in 1959 during the General Assembly to be the first President of the Tuvalu Church. One of the important things within the agenda in that assembly was to write a letter to thank the London Missionary Society in Samoa for the prolonged nourishment and great care it had given, in teaching

⁵⁸ Doug Munro, 131-132

⁵⁹ Laumua Kofe, 119

and Christianising the people of Tuvalu. In 1968⁶⁰, the first draft of the Constitution of the Church of Tuvalu was approved. A resolution was also proposed by the London Missionary Society that Tuvalu should have a bible of its own translation, and Ranford was given the responsibility of arranging the means of translating the bible into Tuvaluan.

In 1969, the Church of Tuvalu was given completely into the leadership of the Tuvalu teachers⁶¹. The Tuvalu Bible was on the way and the New Testament was completed first, in 1977. The Old Testament finished later on and the two were put together and the completed Tuvalu Bible was officially launched and published in 1987. Now, the Tuvalu Church, known as the Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu (Tuvalu Christian Church), is administered by the Tuvalu Trained Ministers with the support of its members and congregations.

The seed of the Christian Gospel is deeply rooted in the heart and lives of the people of Tuvalu, but this author believes that the old religion of the people had paved the way or had cultivated the soil for its coming. God was always with the Tuvalu people from eternity and He had been taking care of Tuvalu since. Thus the coming into being of Tuvalu must always be understood as a divine act of God (or the gods). There was always a divine conception of the culture of the Tuvaluans, which was deeply rooted in their worship life and the respect they had for their gods. But the coming of the foreign missionaries (which included Europeans and Pacific islanders) displaced that divine nature of the culture of the people which included respect for the environment – sea and land. The environment in this sense was part of the people's culture and religion. This happened throughout the spread of the new religion called Christianity.

Thus, something of the old cultural-religious *mana* (a divine power) had gone missing from the lives of the people.⁶² The problem really was the abstract teachings of the missionaries about Jesus Christ and God which somehow gave the wrong impression that God lives in heaven out there somewhere and we can only communicate with him through prayers. This understanding of God puts God outside of creation and outside of the private lives of the people as well as their culture.

⁶⁰ *Te Tusi Pese Ekalesia Tuvalu*, 3

⁶¹ *Te Tusi Pese Ekalesia Tuvalu*, 3

⁶² Taipisia Leilua, Eco-theology Class discussions, TH 408, 2004.

With the old religion, the people felt the presence of their gods all the time in their environment and in all aspects of their everyday life. This author believes that this was caused by the negative attitudes of the white people against the cultural practices and beliefs of the native people calling them heathen beliefs and evil practices. It must be said that there were life-denying aspects of the culture of the people which was good to get rid of. But there were so many life-affirming beliefs and practices which could have been so useful for the caring needed for the environment and the people.

The Modern Tuvalu:

Since the beginning of the 1900's the Tuvalu people experienced new changes. These new changes impacted upon the lives of the people in all aspects of life—economically, sociologically, politically, culturally and religiously. The people began to question the meaning of life especially with the negative impact of the new changes. People seemed to be unsure of the relationship between the old traditional ways and the new age of technology and other phases of new changes brought in by westernization. After Tuvalu gained independence in 1978, the people began to adjust themselves to the new changes, which were supposed to improve the situations the people faced in life. The new changes saw the involvement of leaders in their high expectations of new changes to improve the development of the nation.

The Government, for example, has created new posts to make available more opportunities for employment. In the commercial side, there are several private sectors and even some families who manage to establish their own businesses. Economically, the Government could finance its projects rather than depending too much on funds from abroad. In the education level, some of its scholarship students trained abroad have reached the doctorate level of studies. People manage family and community commitments because they receive enough money from the salaries of family members who work in the government, in the private sectors, sailors who are employed on foreign vessels and even families working abroad.

Amidst all the new changes and their impact upon the lives of the people, Tuvalu still sees itself today as an improvement from the past. However, despite the influx of new changes brought about by forces of different natures - the economy, sociological

issues, education, individual rights, freedom, and even new religious beliefs - the culture and the tradition and communal life of the people of Tuvalu still remain strong. Tuvalu remains as Tuvalu.

In contrast to the positive things about the ability of Tuvalu to remain strong despite the negative impact of new changes, we find the threat of the global warming which shakes the confidence of the people. The rise of the sea level means the decrease of land surface on the islands upon which the people live. This becomes the most important environmental issue for the Tuvalu people of today. Tuvalu is literally sinking, and the government, the church as well as all the people of Tuvalu are summoned to act now before it is too late.

Our Home – Sweet Home:

Home defines a place for a person to dwell or to live in. It provides security, stability, comfort and assurance. It is also referred to as the gift of God to a person, and it is therefore his/her responsibility to protect it, to look after it and to maintain it. Tuvalu is referred to in this work as a home for the people of Tuvalu. The people who were being called by God to inhabit these islands and to protect it and treasure it as their only home; a home created and blessed by God for those who were chosen to possess it as a gift from God. Within this blessing of the gods, our ancestors claimed the eight atoll islands in the Pacific region as their home and the only identity they had. This blessing has been passed down through generations and it is becoming our home today and we are hoping to pass it on to our children and future Tuvaluans.

Even though our home was characterized as the fourth smallest nation in the world, but we still continue to protect and to maintain its beauty. We still belong to it and we love to live in it. Tuvalu has poor soil, no known mineral resources, no rivers and no natural forest⁶³, but we still love our home. We could sense the mercy and loving nature of God who cares for the poor and undeveloped nations. Tuvalu is a unique nation where we still find peace and unity.

⁶³ Tuvalu: National Environmental Management Strategy, 5

Even though we travel abroad for education, employment, and pleasure, but still in our hearts we like to come back home where we belong, which is our only true identity.

According to reports on global warming, it is indicated that the Tuvalu Islands known as 'Our Home' was around 4 – 5 meters above sea level, will be sinking within the next 50 years. It is indeed quite hard to hear and to accept the report that the sea will cover our home.

This is painful. But it is the reality we now need to cope with. With the continuity of the emission of carbon into the air mostly by the developed and highly developed countries in the world, our islands that we refer to as 'Our Sweet Home' will vanish from the face of this earth. Tuvalu will vanish and sink due to the 'Big Homes' of those who enjoy gaining more wealth and even power and who fail to have mercy and compassion for the low and poor homes like ours. However, the blame must not always be upon the big countries of the world because the people of Tuvalu have also failed to look after their only home. This is therefore a big challenge for the Tuvaluans to look carefully upon its role and responsibility in maintaining the beautiful home that God had created and blessed to be theirs forever.

As mentioned earlier, a home always has an important purpose for the well-being of humankind. So to maintain it, the responsibility falls on the shoulders of those who dwell in it. When a home is damaged or destroyed the first to be blamed must be the people living in that home. People tend to be so cruel to the environment when they become greedy for wealth and for power. They simply destroy the richness of the ocean and the land and the atmosphere as they seek to satisfy their selfish needs. France tested its nuclear bombs at Mururoa Atoll for the purpose of gaining power. With all of these greedy habits and struggle of the big nations of the world for power, people continue to destroy the homes of many unfortunate communities like Tuvalu. But at the same time, they destroy the earth, the home for the world.

CHAPTER TWO

TUVALU: A SINKING NATION

In this chapter, some information regarding the geographical features of Tuvalu in relation to the rest of the world will be given. Moreover, the situation in Tuvalu regarding its environment and the threat of global warming will be highlighted. The environmental concern about how the Tuvaluans face the impact of global warming, is of paramount importance in this work. From the sources of the global warming and the greenhouse effect we will learn more of how serious the situation in Tuvalu is; how we survive as victims of global warming. The attempt to suggest ways of how Tuvalu could minimize the impact of global warming and how Tuvalu could avoid being submerged underneath the sea will end this chapter.

Geographical Features:

In the Pacific Ocean and in the western triangle of Polynesia just south of the equator, irregular northwest-southwest axis within the area defined by latitudes 5°39'S and 10°45'S and longitudes 176°08'E and 170°52'E lies a group of eight islands called Tuvalu Islands⁶⁴.

Rainfalls vary throughout the groups. The southern islands receive around 3,500 mm per year, while the islands in the northern part sometimes decrease to 2700 mm per year. Dry spells and droughts are relatively uncommon. The air temperatures are almost uniform at maximums of 31°C and minimums of 25°C. Sea temperatures vary little from a mean of 29°C. Waves and swells are less than 3-4 meters and mostly have an easterly direction.⁶⁵ Sea surface temperature is thought to have risen by 0.5 to 1.0°C since the beginning of the 20th century.⁶⁶

Tuvalu is located in the south-east Pacific trade wind belt just south of the dry belt of the equatorial oceanic climate zone. It lies outside the southern cyclone belt. Its

⁶⁴ Munro Doug, i

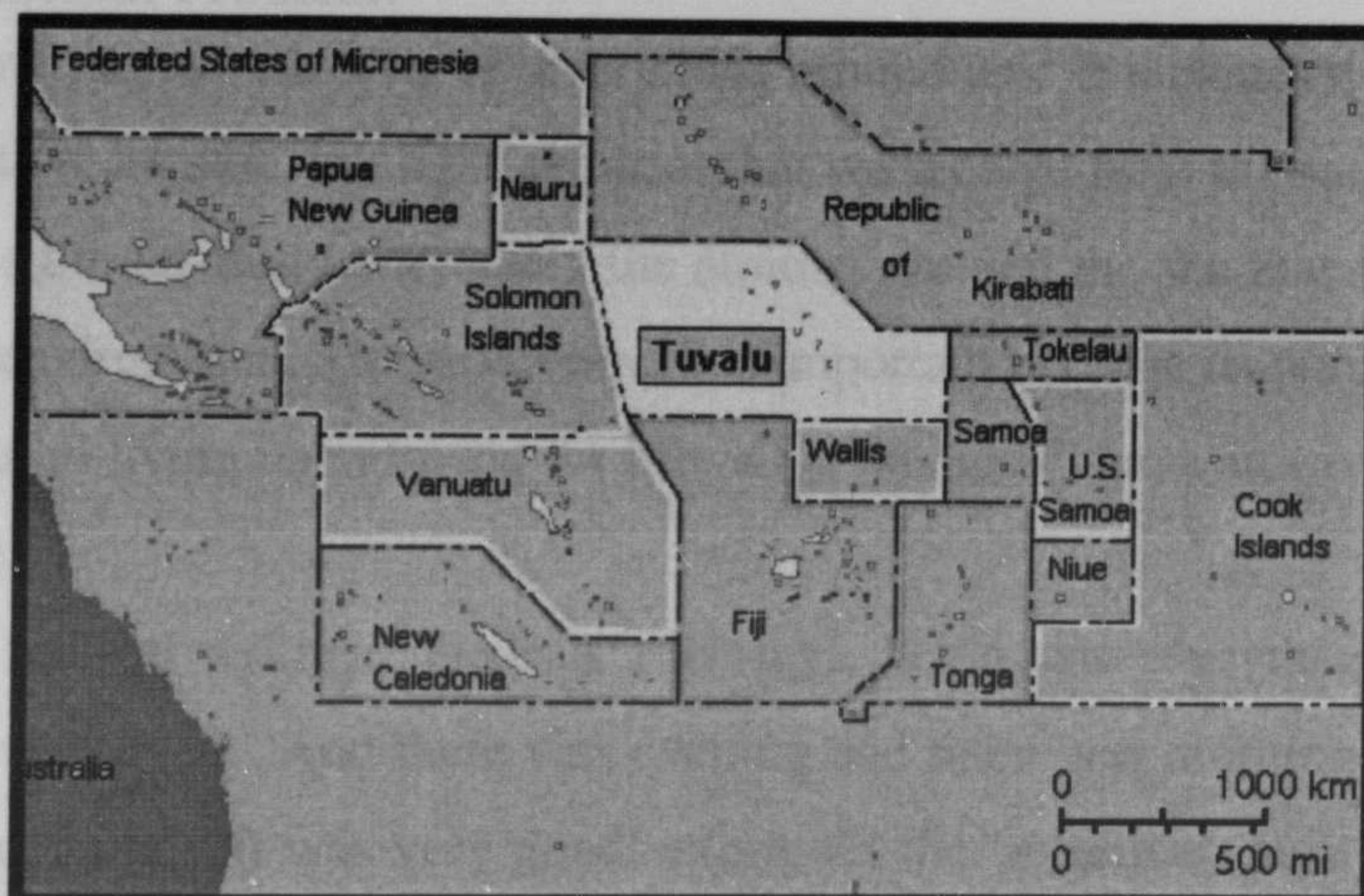
⁶⁵ National Environmental Management Strategy, 6

⁶⁶ National Environmental Management Strategy, 6

weather is mostly fine throughout the year. However, Tuvalu was devastated by hurricanes, like Hurricane Bebe in 1972. There is an apparent increase in the number of cyclones affecting the islands. It was later determined that the cyclones were due to the changes in the weather patterns not only in the region but around the globe as well.

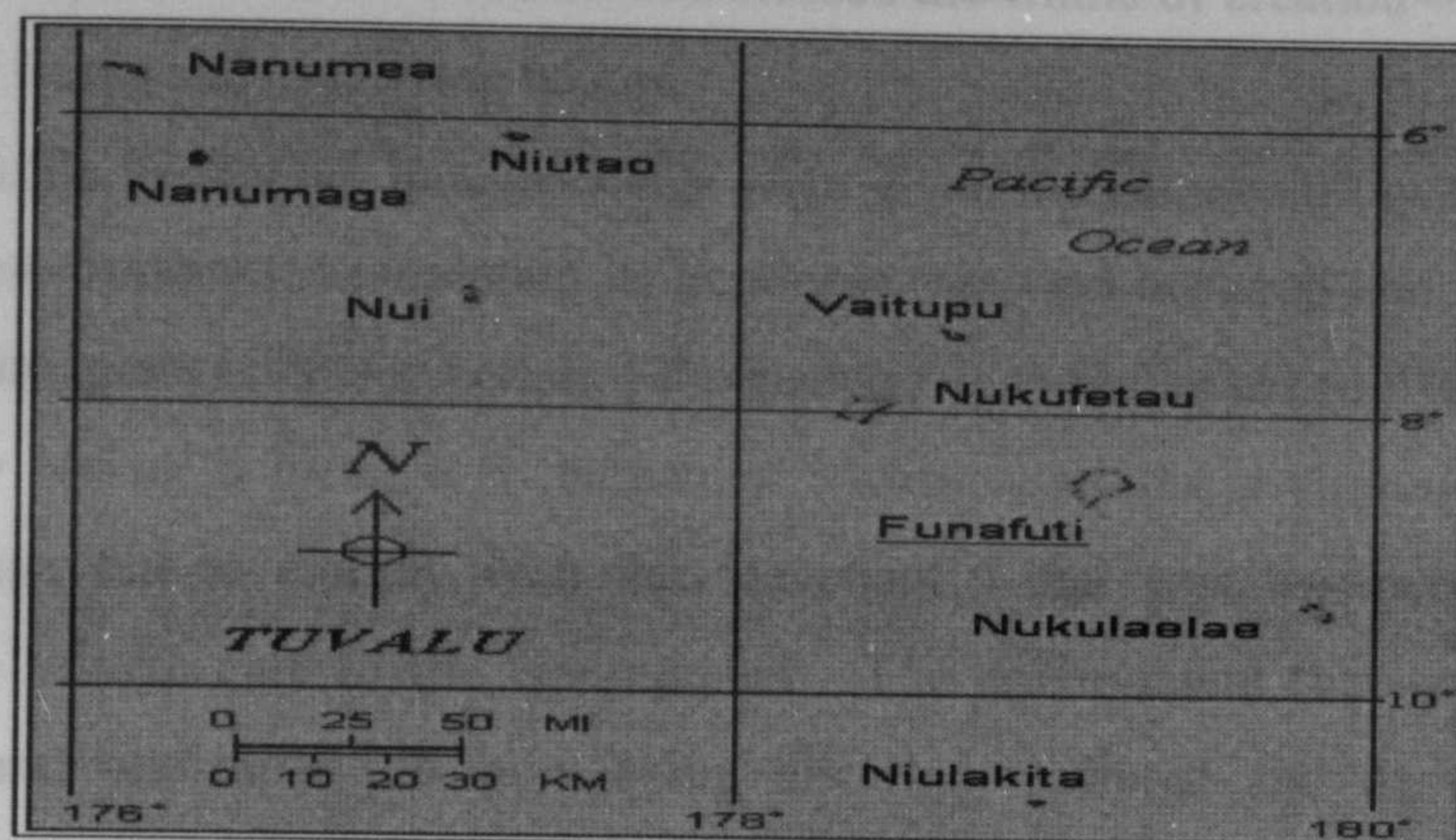
The islands themselves are subjected to continual erosion. Some of these erosions occurred over long periods of time but some occurred rapidly as a result of major storms. As mentioned earlier, the islands of Nanumea, Nui, Nukufetau, Funafuti and Nukulaelae are considered as true atolls while Nanumaga, Niutao and Vaitupu are characterized as atoll and table reef islands⁶⁷. The islanders struggle to live on what they manage to harvest from the sea and limited land they have.

Maps of Tuvalu in the Central Pacific Location⁶⁸



⁶⁷ National Environmental Management Strategy, 5

⁶⁸ Map extract from Internet; Website: <http://www.janeresture.com> (December 2004)

Map of the individual Islands⁶⁹

The Environmental Problem:

The environment consists of 'everything around us'. It includes the earth we walk on, the air that we breathe, the light and heat that we receive from the sun. The stars, the galaxies across the far-flung universe⁷⁰, the atmosphere and the sea that surrounds us are all part of the environment. The environment is important because its purpose is to supply everything that all living beings need for life. God intends to have an environment that is clean and pure.

In the biblical writings, Genesis 1:31 says, "God saw everything that he made, indeed it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." The expression 'indeed it was very good' expresses the 'excellent, purity, completeness and perfection' in which God created earth and heaven with its environmental nature⁷¹. According to Wenham⁷², this expression indicates that creation is good and there is no

⁶⁹ Map extract from Internet; Website: <http://www.tuvaluislands.com> (February 2005)

⁷⁰ Taipisia Leilua, *Ecological Theology*, TH 408 204 Notes, (Malua Theological College), 2004; compare Arthur L Dahl, *Unless and Until*, 2.

⁷¹ Francis. Brown, S. R Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc). 2003, 374. Gordon. J Wenham. *Word Biblical Commentary Genesis 1-15. Volume 1*. (Waco Texas: Word Books Publisher). 1987, 34. *The New Interpreter's Bible. A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, Vol.1*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press). 1994, 343 – 344. Raymond. E Brown, Ed., al. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc). 1990, 11. Claus. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11 A Continental Commentary*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), 1994, 165 -167.

⁷² Gordon. J Wenham. *Word Biblical Commentary Genesis 1-15. Volume 1*. (Waco Texas: Word Books Publisher), 1987, 34.

evil in it. In other words, God created and blessed the whole of creation – human beings and all other living and non-living beings.

From the beginning, human beings were given the responsibility of taking good care of the environment; to maintain its goodness that God declared and affirmed. But now the environment is facing a crisis. The question is therefore asked, 'Who causes this crisis?' The answer is clear: it is 'humanity'⁷³ who causes the environmental problem. Human beings fail to comply with the 'covenant'⁷⁴ that was bestowed upon them. Humans fail to take care of the environment. The environment that was once clean, unpolluted and undisturbed is now being distorted, polluted and damaged. These problems happen due to the greedy and unwise desire of humans taking advantage of the goodness and beauty of the environment. At the global level, the situation is getting worse. It is indeed a great challenge for humans to take urgent action to restore the environment to its original beauty and goodness if it can ever be done.

The environmental crisis poses new threats to the life of the whole planet. Tuvalu, even though a remote place in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, is very much part of the planet and it is regarded as one of the most vulnerable places in the world. We find in the news reports about holes in the ozone layer, global warming and the rising of the sea level, the destruction of rainforests, the testing of nuclear weapons, the poisoning of rivers and the seas, the extinction of the many species of animals and plants, the expansion of desert areas and many more. All this, as many believed, have been caused by human beings. For Jurgen Moltmann, "The environmental crisis is not merely a crisis in the natural environment of human beings. It is nothing less than a crisis in human beings themselves."⁷⁵

Tuvalu is badly affected by global warming. Because of this, Tuvalu now faces: (a) the rise of sea level, (b) rapid changes in the climate. It is appropriate at this stage to

⁷³ I used the description of 'man' referred to 'human being'.

⁷⁴ The Bible (NRSV). Genesis 1:28-30; God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."²⁹ God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food."³⁰ And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so

⁷⁵ Jurgen Moltmann, God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation, (London: SCM, 1985), xi.

say more on the nature of the problem the Tuvaluans face – the problem of global warming.

Global Warming:

Global warming is undoubtedly the most serious threat to the environment of the small island nations of the Pacific including Tuvalu. It can be explained and described in many ways. But briefly, it is referred to as “the increase in the average temperature of the earth's surface, which in turn causes changes in climate. A warmer Earth may lead to changes in rainfall patterns, a rise in sea level, and a wide range of impacts on plants, wildlife, and humans”.⁷⁶ According to Taipisia Leilua, “Global warming is real and it is an inescapable threat for the Pacific islands.”⁷⁷ In dealing with the ecological crisis in general, Desmond Tutu is certainly correct when he says, “Resolving the ecological crisis of our planet is no longer a problem that we leave to the scientists. Just as we are all part of the problem, we are also part of the solution.”⁷⁸

The increase of temperature on the earth's surface is caused by the increase of gases often referred to as ‘Greenhouse Effect or the Increased Emissions of Greenhouse Gases’.⁷⁹ The gases that are released to the atmosphere such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxides, chlorofluorocarbons take place due to the usage of fossil fuels⁸⁰ for energy. With the consistent emission of the greenhouse gases, there will be climate changes and therefore lead to the continuity of global warming and the rising sea level. The more usage of fossil energy leads to more gases released into the atmosphere which, therefore, resulted in the enhancement of greenhouse effect.⁸¹

Because of this increase of temperature (caused by the gases released into the atmosphere from the surface of the earth), the atmosphere behaves as a blanket that traps radiation. This radiation is then reflected, in the form of long-wave infrared radiation (much of which is absorbed by molecules of carbon dioxide and water vapour in the atmosphere), back to the surface of the earth as heat. In other words, greenhouse effect

⁷⁶ Internet source: <http://www.epa.gov> (February 2005)

⁷⁷ Taipisia Leilua, “Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth”, Buenos Aires, 2003. A presentation on the current ecological situation in the Pacific.

⁷⁸ Taipisia Leilua, *Ecological Theology (TH 408) Notes*, 2004.

⁷⁹ Internet Website: <http://www.solcomhouse.com> (February 2005)

⁸⁰ Fossil Fuel- any carbon-containing fuel, for example coal, peat, petroleum, and natural gas, derived from the decomposed remains of prehistoric plants and animals

⁸¹ Source from Internet Website: <http://www.solcomhouse.com> (February 2005)

refers to the earth as a small glass house⁸². A greenhouse is used to trap heat from the sun. The glass panels of the greenhouse let in sunlight and then keep heat from escaping. This causes the greenhouse to heat up, much like the inside of a car parked in sunlight, and it keeps the plants warm enabling them to live in the cold weather.

Some of the heat energy passes back into space, but much of it remains trapped in the atmosphere by the greenhouse gases, causing our world to heat up. James E Hansen,⁸³ head of the Goddard Institute for Space Studies, stresses that "he was 99 percent sure that the greenhouse effect was causing global warming".⁸⁴ Even though the greenhouse effect is important for providing warmth for human lives, but if intensifies, it could make the earth warmer than usual. A little extra warmth may cause problems for humans, plants, and animals alike. Global warming is evident in icecaps and glaciers on the high mountains as well as the north and south poles melting. Given below is a diagram which shows a clear understanding of the greenhouse effect.

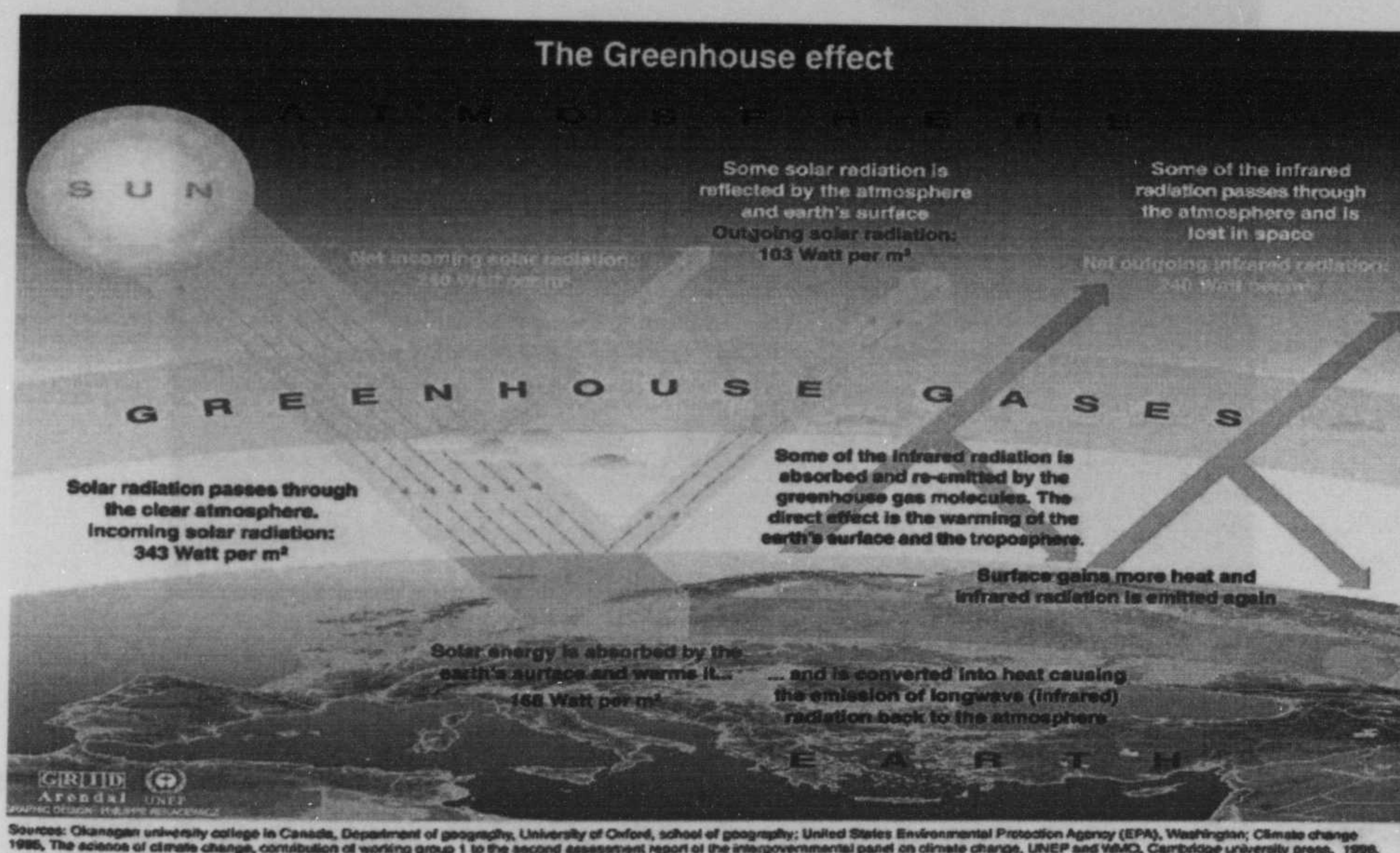


Diagram from Internet⁸⁵

Sources state⁸⁶ that many glaciers in the world are melting so rapidly. For example, glaciers are melting in Montana's Glacier National Park and even the North

⁸² Website: <http://www.epa.gov> (February 2005)

⁸³ Michael S Coffman, *Saviors of the Earth?*. (Chicago: Northfield Publishing), 1994, 39.

⁸⁴ Michael S Coffman, 39

⁸⁵ Website of diagram down loaded: <http://www.solcomhouse.com> (February 2005)

Pole. Information collected shows that the average temperatures in the Arctic region are rising twice as fast as they are elsewhere in the world. Arctic ice is getting thinner, melting and rupturing. "For example, the largest single block of ice in the Arctic, the Ward Hunt Ice Shelf, had been around for 3,000 years before it started cracking in 2000. Within two years it had split all the way through and is now breaking into pieces. The polar ice cap as a whole is shrinking. Images from NASA satellites show that the area of permanent ice cover is contracting at a rate of 9 percent each decade. If this trend continues, summers in the Arctic could become ice-free by the end of the century"⁸⁷.

Shown below is the aerial view of the Arctic Region which shows the devastating effect of the global warming. The sad news is, what happens to the Arctic affects the rest of the world especially the low-lying islands of the Pacific, like Tuvalu.

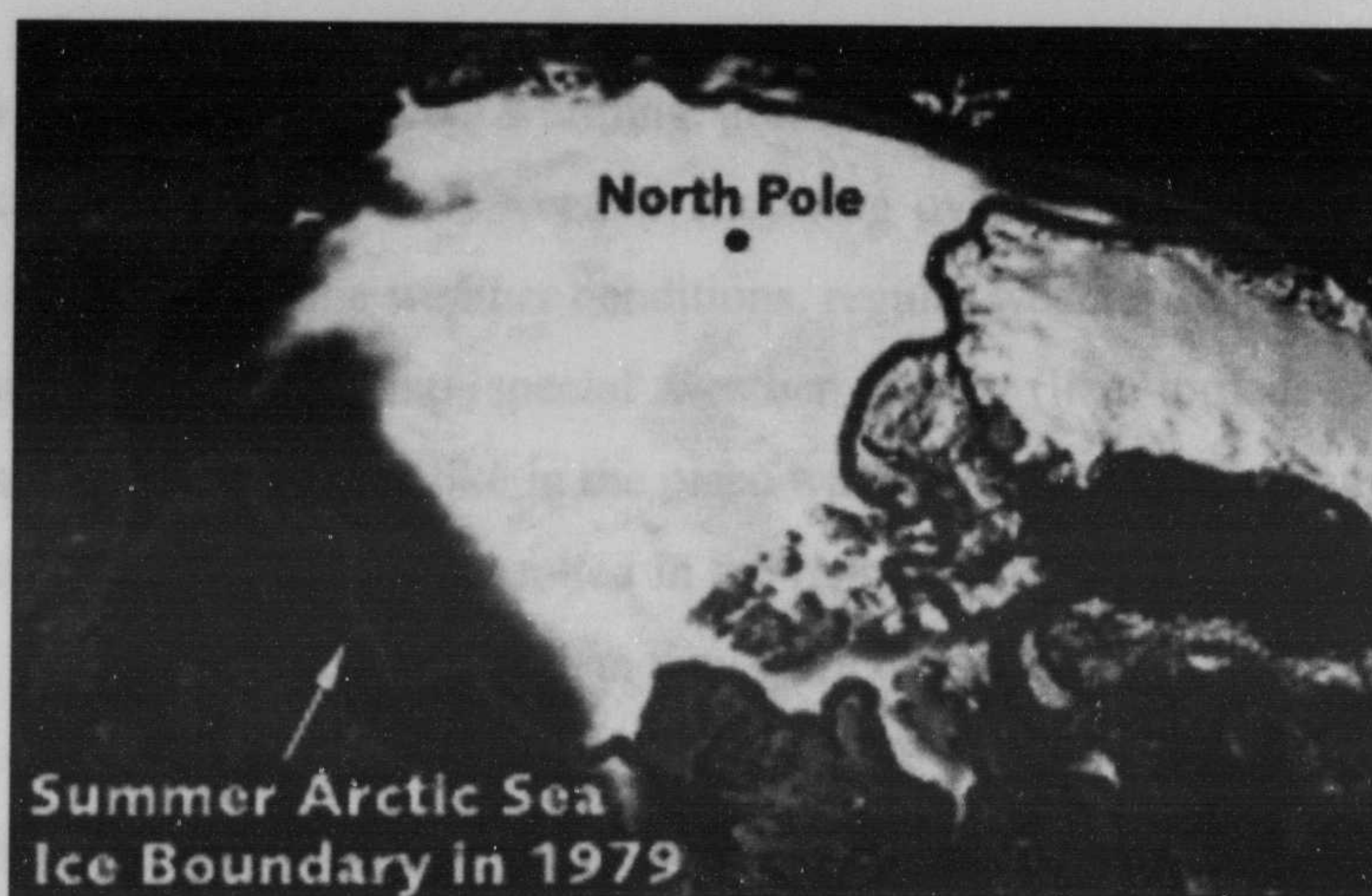


Diagram of the Arctic Region at the North Pole⁸⁸

Also at Mount Kilimanjaro of South Africa, it is found out that since 1979, the size of the summer polar ice cap has shrunk more than 20 percent.⁸⁹ Taking account of the sources, it is evidently indicated that the ice caps were melting due to the high concentration of heat. Heat increase caused by global warming has an impact that could not be minimized.

⁸⁶ Website: <http://www.epa.gov> (February 2005)

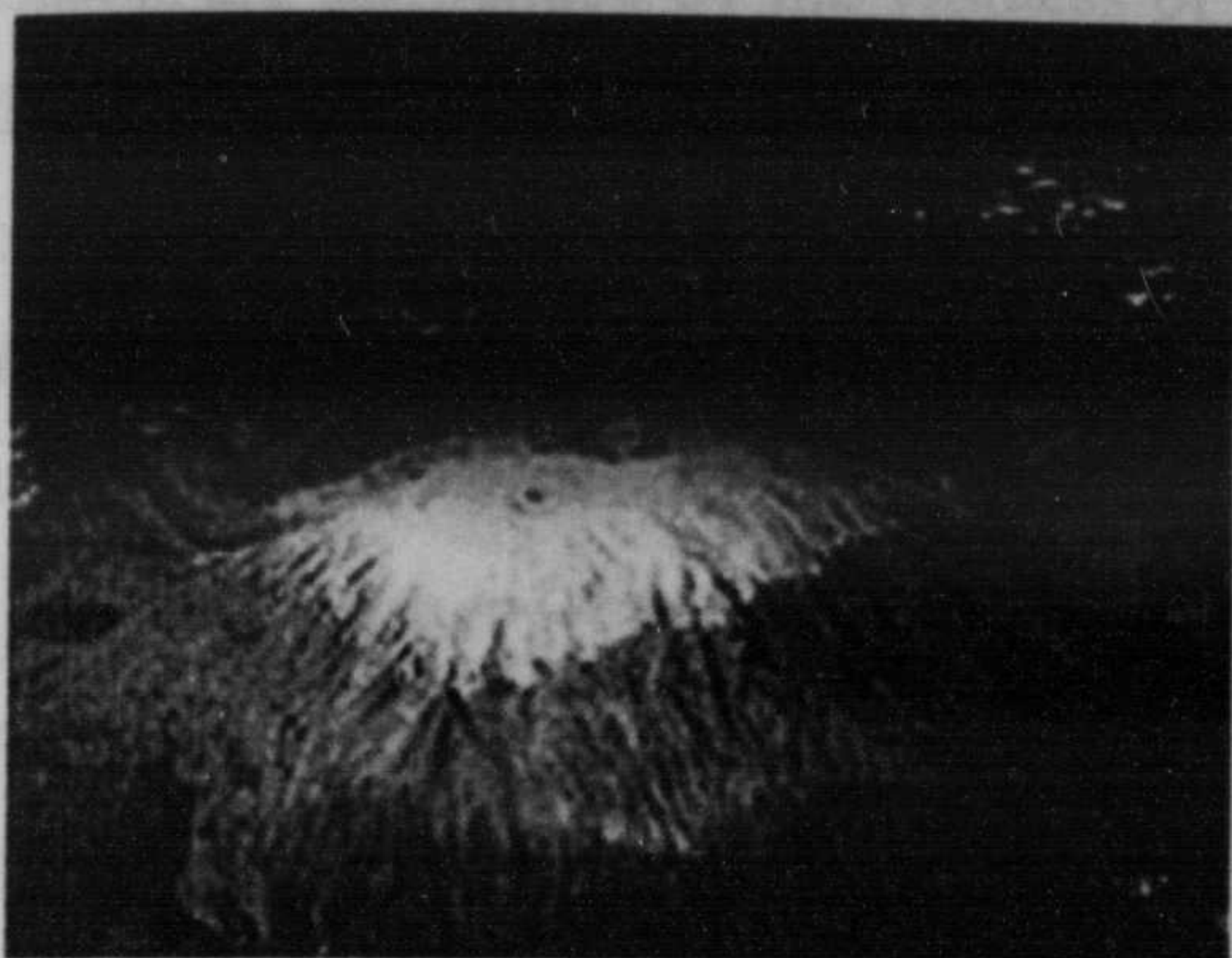
⁸⁷ Website: <http://www.nrdc.org> (February 2005)

⁸⁸ Website: <http://www.nrdc.org> (December 2004)

⁸⁹ Abstract from Internet Website: <http://www.nrdaction.org> (February 2005)

Photos of Mount Kilimanjaro

1



Mt. Kilimanjaro— February 17, 1993

2



Mt. Kilimanjaro— February 21, 2000

Diagrams 1 & 2 were from Internet⁹⁰

Due to the increase of global warming, greater changes occur with the climate. The climate describes the total of all weather occurring over a period of years in a given place. This includes average weather conditions, regular weather sequences (like winter, spring, summer, and fall), and special weather events (like tornadoes and floods). Climate tells us what is usually like in the place where one lives. The change of climates and even the melting of icebergs resulted in the rising of sea level. Now the level of the sea is rising, so high tides are higher than they were before. Over the last “100 years, the level of the sea has risen about 6-8 inches worldwide”⁹¹. When the sea level rises, the tide goes further up the beach and soil erosion takes place. Since the sea level rises, the most affected areas are atolls and low volcanic islands.

Victimized?

Global warming affects the whole world, although the impact varies from place to place. In terms of the rise in sea level resulting from global warming, there are also some areas in the United State, Europe, Asia and Africa⁹² which will go under water. Some of the coastal areas are very low lying and so will be flooded if the sea level rises. The

⁹⁰ Diagrams 1 & 2 Abstract from Website: <http://www.earthinstitute.columbia.edu> (December 2004)

⁹¹ Sources from website: <http://www.epa.gov> (February 2005)

problem however seems to be more serious for the Pacific islands because the small islands are surrounded by the vastness of the ocean on all sides. In the Pacific region, therefore, Tuvalu is one of the island nations expected to sink in the future if there are no other preventive measures and serious effort to minimize the impact of greenhouse effect. The fear that the people are starting to feel and experience is that Tuvalu will definitely sink in the years to come.

In some of the collected information in the recent past⁹³ regarding climate changes, high tide (usually happens in February and March) went to a new level as it came up through the ground and flooded the area. But in August 28, 2002, the tide suddenly rose much higher than normal again, flooding the islands without warning. So the people of Tuvalu were worried that one day, high tides and even cyclones and storms would damage and wash Tuvalu away from the face of the earth. Tuvaluans had known already that the sea level had risen higher than normal. The sea bubbled up from the '*pulaka*'⁹⁴ pits so often causing their tubers to rot in the ground. As Siosi Finiki,⁹⁵ a chief representative in the capital island of Funafuti who worries for his children and grandchildren, says gesturing to his beloved *pulaka* pits, "My *pulaka* are not growing too well now, some salt water is getting inside. There is a change now in the sea, so I have to plant my *pulaka* in tin cans. I fear for the young people, the 'West'⁹⁶ is too strong." Even though the voices from Tuvalu and the Pacific are calling for mercy and concern, but others still strongly oppose due to commercial demands. An address given by the head of the Saudis for adopting the Kyoto climate-change protocol says, "If we ratify Kyoto, and industrial countries cut back their emissions, it means they will buy less oil, which translates into \$400 billion lost for us.' It's crazy – they're thinking about their status as leaders, we are thinking about our very existence!"⁹⁷

By looking at the implications of what those big countries do, we know that we are facing the problems created and caused by the gases released from their industries. Our islands are going to sink partly because the Bush administration abandoned the

⁹² Website: <http://www.epa.gov> (February 2005)

⁹³ Sierra Club Magazine July/August 2003 Edition: <http://www.sierraclub.org>

⁹⁴ 'Pulaka' is Tuvalu word refers to giant taro crop.

⁹⁵ Website: <http://www.tuvaluaislands.com> (December 2004)

⁹⁶ West here referred to the Industries Countries

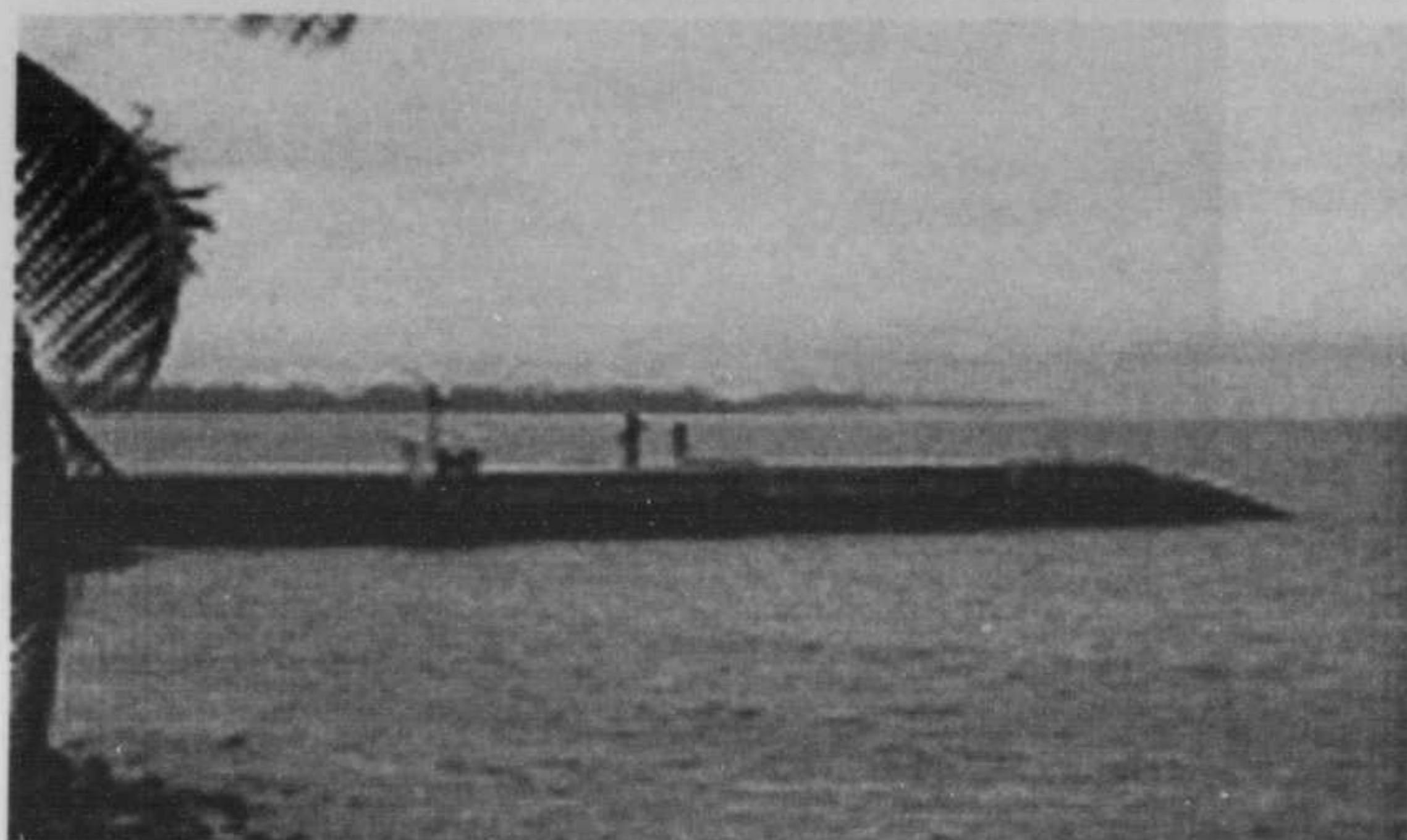
⁹⁷ Sierra Club Magazine July/August 2003 Edition: <http://www.sierraclub.org>

Kyoto Protocol in 2001, arguing that it would hurt the US economy. Australia also refused to sign the Kyoto Protocol and it, therefore, contributed to the plight of the Tuvaluans and the rest of the Pacific nations.

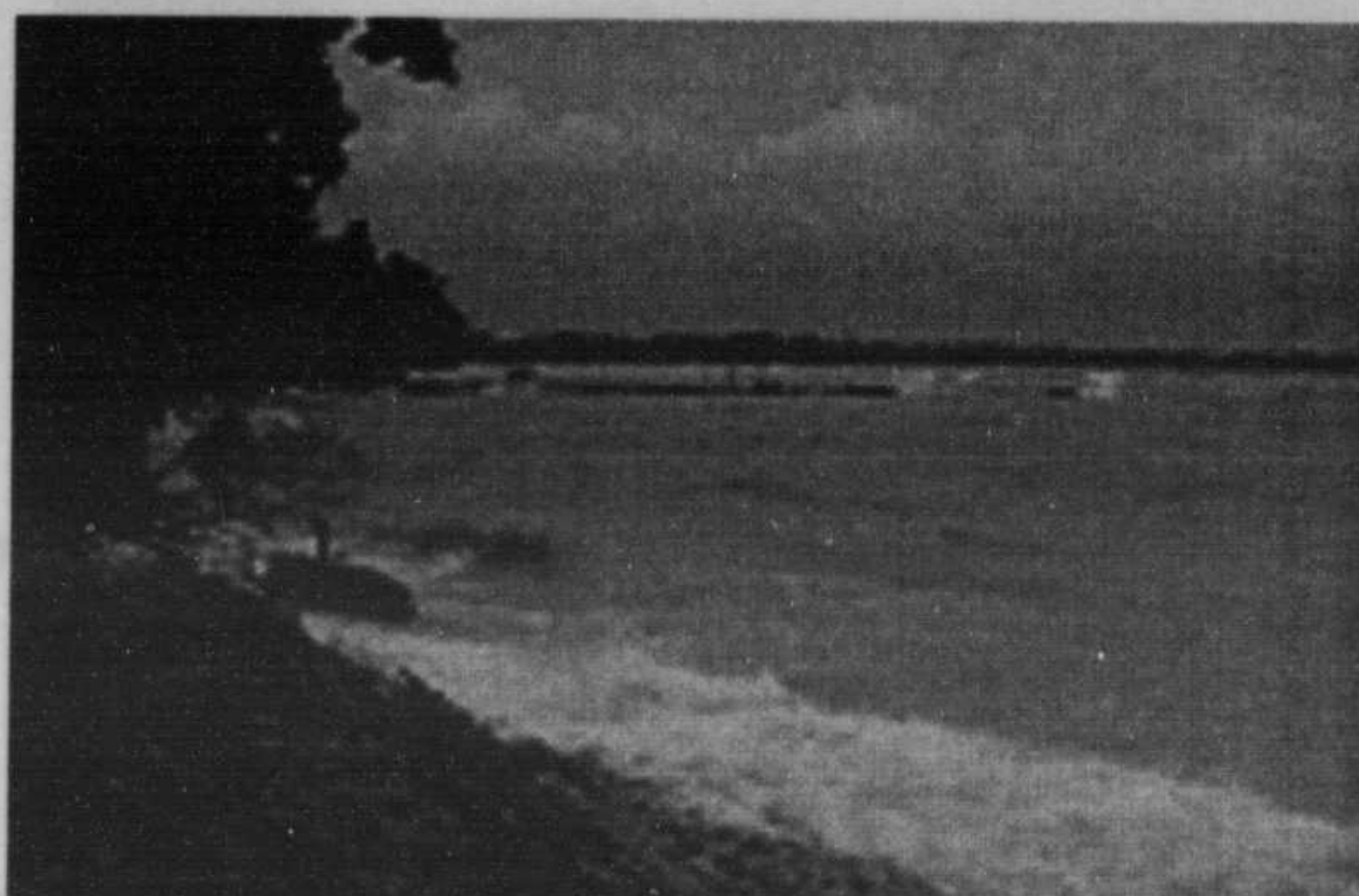
Tuvalu and other nations are facing the same problem. They have been voicing their concern and requesting the big countries to minimize the level of emission from their factories to the internationally sanctioned level, but all to no avail. The big countries do nothing at all to minimize emission of gases that created the greenhouse effect. Due to such attitudes from the big and wealthy nations of the world, Tuvalu will certainly sink.

The following photos show clearly how Tuvalu is affected by unexpected rough seas and changing weathers. A picture speaks a thousand words. Pictures are therefore used deliberately here for the purposes of this chapter as well as this work as a whole.

Below photos were abstract from internet⁹⁸



Vaiaku Wharf, Funafuti, November, 2004, Low Tide



Vaiaku Wharf, late afternoon, Wednesday,
February 9, 20

⁹⁸ <http://www.tuvaluislands.com> (April 2005)



Western side of the Lagoon at Hotel at low tide and calm.



Waves crash on to the western side of the atoll from the Lagoon, 3.50pm, February 9, 2004.



Looking north along the Funafuti Air Strip, while in good weather



Above when sea water seeped caused extreme high tide

Waves from the lagoon managed to go over the islands at the north side of Funafuti



The above photos were abstract from internet.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Internet Website: <http://www.tuvaluislands.com> (April 2005)



Funafuti – "Hit once again by strong winds and high tides. 5.00pm, Tuesday, Feb 8, 2005. Waves crashed one meter away from the main road bringing rocks, debris of all sorts right into the middle of the main road, slowing traffic and endangering the lives of local people".

The above photos were abstract from internet.¹⁰⁰

Below is the picture of an island called Tepuka in Tuvalu in times of healthy and later causes by sea erosion due to Climate Changes.

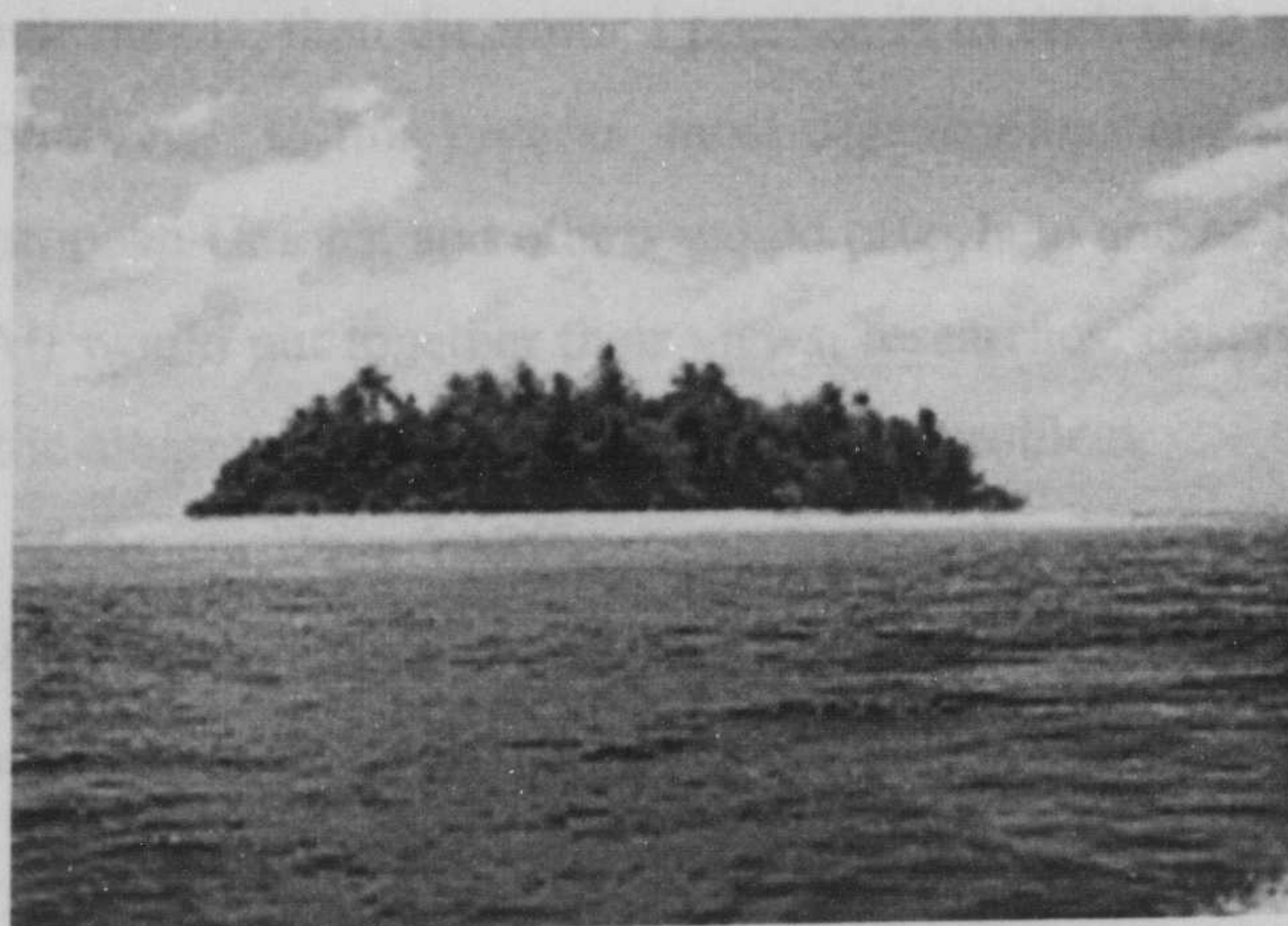
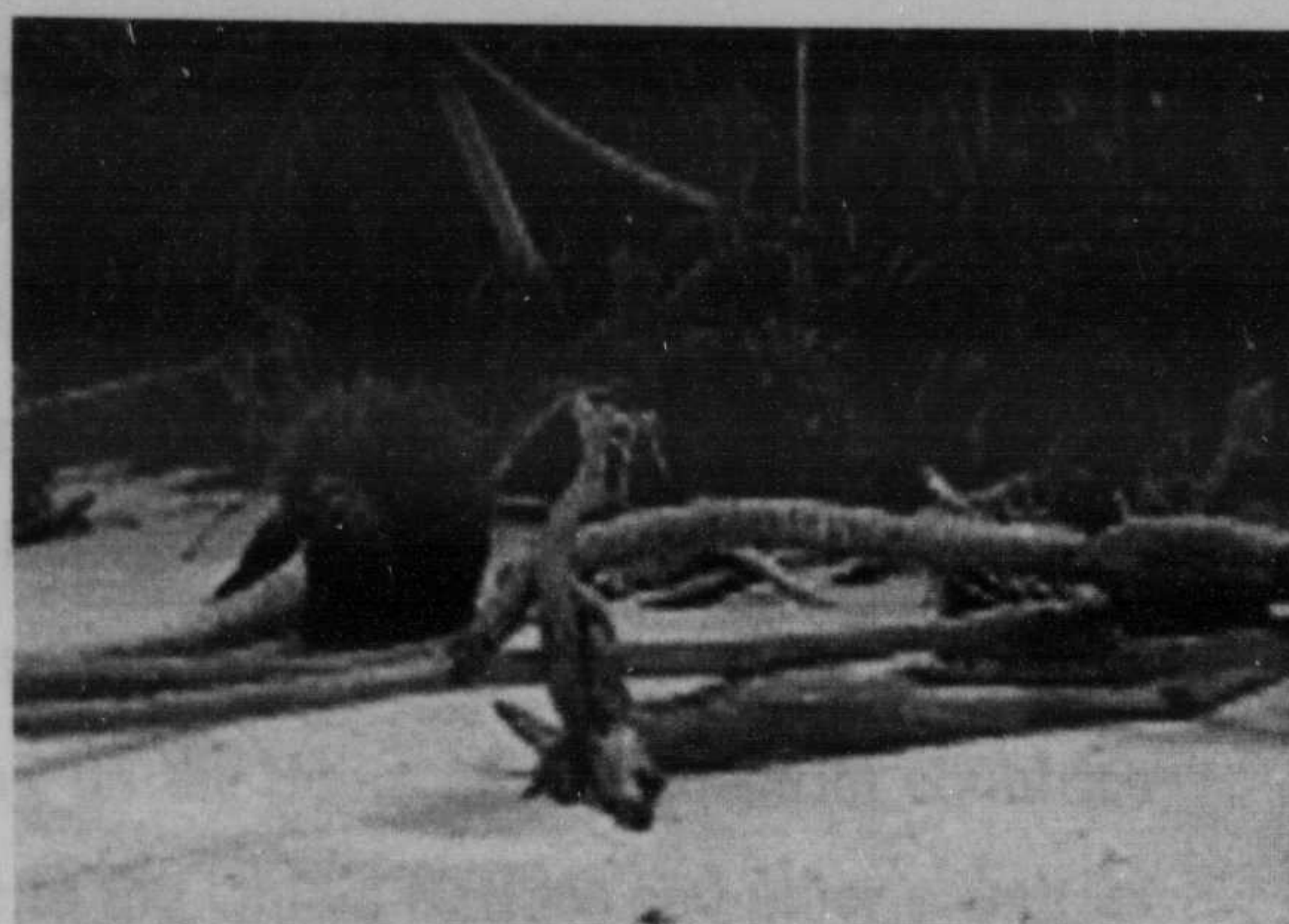


Diagram above is Tepuka in 1997¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Internet Website: <http://www.tuvaluislands.com> (April 2005)

¹⁰¹ Website: <http://www.tuvaluislands.com> (December 2004)

Below are pictures of Tepuka today.



On Tepuka - fallen coconuts and pandanus palms brought down by severe erosion.

Above photos were abstracts from the internet.¹⁰²

Is there any way out?

When there is a problem that threatens any country, the leaders' top priority is to find solutions at any cost to prevent or eliminate such a problem. If they cannot find solutions within their means, then the normal practice is to seek help at the international level through negotiations. In this process, most organizations and unions such as the United Nations, European Unions, and others would offer help and assistance but always with conditions. All would put together their views, researches, observations, funds and other resources in the attempt to find ways of solving the problem.

In the case of Tuvalu, there is difficulty in finding the right and the most efficient solution. Global warming threatens the whole planet and is therefore a global issue; an issue that requires a concerted effort of the whole global community in solving. As mentioned earlier, the problem is the failure of the big and wealthy (America and Australia) nations of the world to cooperate with the rest of the world in finding ways of solving global warming - like the Kyoto Protocol. Industrial countries continue to establish more and more factories for the benefit of their economic growths, while Tuvalu

¹⁰² Website: <http://www.tuvaluislands.com> (December 2004)

and other low lying island nations will be sinking because of the rising sea level due to global warming.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol¹⁰³ provides the most appropriate global framework to reduce greenhouse gases emissions. It seems so disappointing that there is a great failure and lack of leadership on the part of industrialized countries in the implementation of commitments, and in the ratification and enforcing of the Kyoto Protocol.

The only logical suggestion of a way to solve the problem is for our leaders to continue and firmly press further and knocking on the doors of the industrial countries until they listen. Continue to address the issue to the United Nations and other countries who could listen until they hear us. Tuvalu is living in constant fear of being sunk. The threat is real and very serious. It can be described as 'terrorism against Tuvalu'.

So the only way out is to reduce emission of gases or even better to stop it. This could be the only option that our leaders could pray for in order to maintain our only identity. There is always the option of seeking countries that could receive us as refugees. Otherwise the Tuvaluans can accept the situation and keep on praying for a miracle to happen.

What now?

We are faced with a hopeless situation. Every attempt seems to be failing miserably. There are too many empty words in the form of proposals and resolutions but no actions or implementations. When every human effort fails, then the only way out of a problem is faith in God. The faith that held together our people in the past must be revived and strengthened. The old people always believe that God will provide ways for us to deal with a problem we encounter in life. The present generations of Tuvalu people must go back to God in faith seeking renewal of life in relationships with God and with others and also with creation. But, that is not all about relationship with God in faith. It is really about repentance. It is about a new way of life in how we live, and how we see God, others and the environment. It includes protesting against injustices in the

¹⁰³ Internet Website: <http://www.tuvaluislands.com> (June 2005)

governments of the world and the ways of the big and rich nations of the world. This means speaking the truth and voicing the concerns that we have about life.

The next chapter will elaborate the meaning of faith in God in relation to the land (including the sea) and how we see God in life as we encounter the problem of becoming landless.

This chapter attends to contemporary views on the biblical concept of land. The aim is to explore the ingredients for a theology of hope that is relevant to the environmental problem in Tuvalu. From a phenomenological perspective, Walter Brueggemann describes the ways that land shaped the biblical faith of Israel, and relates this to our contemporary sense of displacement and yearning to belong.¹²⁴ Norman Habel, who identifies various biblical ideologies of land in the Hebrew Bible, is interested in their ideological functions.¹²⁵ While ideological interests, for instance, do they serve? Finally, from a sociological perspective, Daniel Smith Christopher takes the biblical concept of landlessness and exile as a model of a defiant Godly faith of marginalized peoples.¹²⁶

These perspectives treat different dimensions of the biblical concept of land, from its theological promise to its socio-political functions, and together they give vitality to any theological reflection on land. These perspectives are also required given that the environmental crisis in Tuvalu, as highlighted in chapters 1 and 2, combines a mixture of socio-political issues. Any theological reflections on the crisis in Tuvalu to have any relevance have to be sensitive to these issues. Following Brueggemann's description of biblical Israel as a landless and landless people, this author draws on Habel and Smith-Christopher to explore the larger social functions of these two biblical paradigms.

For Brueggemann, the Hebrew Bible is Israel's reflection on what it means to belong with and without land before God, where the theological focus is on land as divine place, gift, and promise. As Israel's response to that promise, the biblical hope for land

¹²⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (OBT: Philadelphia, 1977), 67.

¹²⁵ Norman Habel, *The Land is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies* (Augsburg Fortress Press, 1995), 10-13. Habel distinguishes between "ideology," as a set of doctrines or discourses about God and "ideology," as a wider complex of associated ideas, values, and symbols, which shape and legitimate a particular social group.

¹²⁶ Daniel Smith-Christopher, *The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile* (Minneapolis: Meyer Stone Books, 1987), 5-8; D. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2002), 5-6.

CHAPTER THREE

ISRAEL AS A LANDLESS PEOPLE:

A Biblical and Theological Perspective on Tuvalu being a Landless People

This chapter attends to contemporary views on the biblical concept of land. The aim is to explore the ingredients for a theology of hope that is relevant to the environmental problem in Tuvalu. From a phenomenological perspective, Walter Brueggemann describes the ways that land shaped the biblical faith of Israel, and relates this to our contemporary sense of displacement and yearning to belong.¹⁰⁴ Norman Habel, who identifies various biblical theologies of land in the Hebrew Bible, is interested in their ideological functions.¹⁰⁵ Whose ideological interests, for instance, do they serve? Finally, from a sociological perspective, Daniel-Smith Christopher takes the biblical concept of landlessness and exile as a model of a defiant Godly faith of marginalized peoples.¹⁰⁶

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¹⁰⁴ Walter. Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*. (OBT; Philadelphia), 1977, xii, 6-7.

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¹⁰⁶ Daniel. Smith-Christopher, *The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile* (Bloomington: Meyer-Stone Books), 1989, 5-8; D. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile Overtures to Biblical Theology*; (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), 2002, 5-6.

gives meaning to its history and life. Brueggemann begins by summarizing the moments of Israel's biblical memory,¹⁰⁷ and then discusses them more fully within their canonical order.

Israel As a Landless People:

The first moment of biblical Israel's landlessness is evident in Genesis. Here, according to Brueggemann, they embody Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as sojourners on the way to a land.¹⁰⁸ Yahweh, tells them very little about himself, asks for a radical trust whereby they are to leave and accept landlessness as a posture of faith (Gen 12.1, 15.7). The sojourner (גר) is a technical term that describes a "resident alien,"¹⁰⁹ which for Brueggemann, means to sojourn in a place, but to be an outsider there, never really belonging, and with rights are ambiguous in situations that count. In Brueggemann's view, the theme of "resident alien" is not remote from contemporary experience. People today know what it means to live waiting for the notice of transfer, or of "urban development," or for the irresistible and unidentified forces of urban life reflecting displacement. The sojourner is sometimes called pilgrimage (Gen 47.9; Exod 6.4), but a pilgrim is also one who does not belong, all because of the promise.

The second moment of biblical Israel's landlessness was the Exodus. Here, they remembered themselves as a "wanderer."¹¹⁰ In the wilderness traditions, they were distressed (Exod 16-18; Num 10.10-12), lacked resources, and exposed to drought and hunger, and the Amalekites. In the Wilderness, they only appear to be there rather than on their way. Unlike the sojourner-pilgrim, survival is the key issue for the "wanderer," who is not on the way anywhere. According to Brueggemann, traditions of the wilderness reflect a mixed memory, whereby Israel was not only on the way to the land, but also encountered death (Num 32.13). In the wilderness when faithlessness connects to landlessness, they were on the way nowhere.

At the boundary, then, as they prepare to end their landlessness, there is a long pause for reflection, which for Brueggemann, is longer than in any other period in Israel's

¹⁰⁷ Walter. Brueggemann, *The Land*, 6-15.

¹⁰⁸ W. Brueggemann, *The Land*, 15-27.

¹⁰⁹ W. Brueggemann, *The Land*, 7-8.

¹¹⁰ W. Brueggemann, *The Land*, 28-44.

history.¹¹¹ Here, they reflect on life beyond the Jordan when land will become a gift, a temptation, a task, and even a threat. In the context of land remembering at the boundary, Brueggemann identifies three land management tasks.¹¹² First is the prohibition of images (Deut 8.17) to prevent the domestication of Yahweh's divine transcendence. Second is the keeping of Sabbath for freeing slaves (Exod 21.1-11, Deut 15.12-18), resting the land (Lev 25), and for canceling debts (Deut 15.1-11). The third task of land management remembered at the boundary is care for the brother and sister. These are the poor (Exod 23.6, Deut 15.7-11), the stranger (Exod 21.21-24, 23.9), the sojourner (Deut 10.19), the widow and orphan (Deut 24.19-22), and the Levite (Deut 14.27). All the landless poor are full participants of the promises of the covenant (Lev 25.25-55, Deut 15.1-11, 12-18, 22.1-4).

Habel's discussion of the social interests of the land in the Sabbath vision of Lev 25-27 is interesting because it has an impact on the use of this material for theological reflections on land. For Habel, the agrarian ideology of the jubilee legislation is promoting a radical social order designed to preserve the economic integrity of the landed peasant farmer:

There is a strong concern in this proposed social order to preserve the traditional landholdings of the peasants and maintain their independence over against rich landowners. The ideal of the peasant society depicted in Leviticus 25-27 is that peasant farmers will be completely free from domination by the urban elite.¹¹³

These jubilee regulations are part of the priestly Holiness Code, and the key to their ideological impact is their dating, but Habel is uncertain here. In a later historical study of the Holiness Code by Jan Joosten, who supports an interpretation of the Holiness Code as agrarian ideology, he dates it to the period of the monarchy.¹¹⁴ Habel, however, had followed Jeffrey Fager, who argued that the "inclusion of jubilee in the Priestly Code may be seen as an attempt to aid the returning exiles in regaining the land they were

¹¹¹ W. Brueggemann, *The Land*, 45-70.

¹¹² W. Brueggemann, *The Land*, 62-67.

¹¹³ Habel, *The Land is Mine*, 97, 111, 112-113.

¹¹⁴ J. Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code: An Exegetical Study of the Ideational Framework of the Law in Leviticus 17-26* (Leiden: Brill), 1996, 84-86, 165-166.

forced to abandon."¹¹⁵ This would locate the text within the social interests of the returning from Babylon, who were the ruling classes that Nebuchadnezzar deported. Joosten's date, on the other hand, would seem to support the interests of peasant farmers during the monarchy. These views are not mutually exclusive since there was probably a reshaping of a text that initially served the interests of peasant farmers to serve the interests of exilic elites. If anything, Habel's approach highlights the importance of attending to the social interests behind this or any other biblical concept of land.

Returning to Brueggemann's framework, a third moment of biblical Israel's landlessness is the exile, and he sees exile as beginning with the push towards landlessness and beyond. Although Assyria exiled the northern tribes in the eighth century BCE, the sixth century Jews in Babylon provided the central image of exile for the Bible. There was displacement and alienation from the place that gave identity and security. For Brueggemann, exile is the strongest point of discontinuity when the old traditions or conventional institutions no longer seemed valid or trustworthy. Without land or any prospect of land, exile was biblical Israel's lowest point when Yahweh's promises seemed void. This exilic landlessness stirred as a cause of rage (Ps 137), but also a yearning (Lam 1).

Although exile means to be cut off with no way back, Brueggemann argues that exile also became the context for Israel's extraordinary expressions of faith, with liturgical celebrations of God's faithfulness to exiles. This exilic landlessness became the setting for the radical gospel of newness where Israel sensed the promises coming into view (Jer 31.17-18; Ezek 37.5-6; Isa 43.18-21). Exposed and without resources, Israel received the promises that risks have run their course, and hope is energizing.

In this regard, Smith-Christopher discerns several cultural adaptations or mechanisms of survival, or resistance, among enslaved exilic populations. One of these cultural adaptations that relates to land is the agnatic family unit "houses of the fathers." As a term that features mostly in exilic-postexilic biblical texts, it refers to as exilic family groups allocated to settle royal estates where they provided a steady source of human labor. This term was an adaptation of the pre-exilic "houses of the father," a

¹¹⁵ J. Fager, *Land Tenure and the Biblical Jubilee: Uncovering Hebrew Ethics through the Sociology of Knowledge* (JSOTS 155, Sheffield: JSOT Press), 1993, 111.

family unit based on kinship ties, which settled its own family property. For Smith-Christopher, exilic "houses of the fathers" was an innovative amalgamation of a number of "houses of the father" under a fictitious common ancestor, which constituted exilic work crews fictionalized as family units.¹¹⁶ In Smith-Christopher sociological approach, the renewal of religious faith among the exiles was only one aspect of larger cultural mechanisms of survival, even resistance, among exilic peoples (see below).

Israel As a Landed People:

Israel's memory also had several moments of landedness in which they controlled, celebrated, and exploited the land.¹¹⁷ In this way, their possession of the land was for Brueggemann, just as problematic as not having land. Israel's first moment of landedness is its settlement of Egypt under Joseph. Possessing the best of the land, they had security and prosperity (Gen 47). Their Egyptian landedness, however, soon resulted in oppression (Exod 1.7-9), and the Exodus story tells of their agony as slaves in the land. Land as the space of slavery was a choice Israel repeatedly made, where Yahweh's promise of land became a problem.

A second moment of Israel's landedness is the monarchy, which spanned from the splendor of Solomon to the frightened, pitiful days of Jehoiachim and finally his helpless son who ends in disgrace and exile.¹¹⁸ For Brueggemann, the biblical literature does not indicate that the Israelite monarchy began out of any general belief in Yahweh, but was an accident of historical necessity. The introduction of royal prerogatives redefined human possibilities in the land. Despite prophetic warnings, King Solomon personified the greed of his bureaucratic royal state as built on coercion and enslavement.¹¹⁹ For Brueggemann, monarchy is a story of getting land, keeping it, and defending against losing it. The land that Yahweh promised to create space for human joy was problematically a source of dehumanizing exploitation.¹²⁰ Jeremiah expressed grief at the

¹¹⁶ Daniel. Smith, *The Religion of the Landless*, 101-102, D. Smith, "The Politics of Ezra: Sociological Indicators of Postexilic Judean Society," in P. R. Davies (ed.), *Second Temple Studies 1*; (JSOTS 117; Sheffield: JSOT Press), 1991, 73-97.

¹¹⁷ W. Brueggemann, *The Land*, 9-15.

¹¹⁸ W. Brueggemann, *The Land*, 10-106.

¹¹⁹ W. Brueggemann, *The Land*, 107-130.

¹²⁰ W. Brueggemann, *The Land*, 95-96.

reality that land given would become land lost (Jer 22.18-19, 28-29). After the last of the kings, the grieving of the land for Yahweh's promise is a compelling statement of the end of the promise (Jer 4.28, 12.4, 9.19).

Israel's third and final moment in the land went unnoticed and, in contrast to the monarchy, was low key. The restoration by Ezra and Nehemiah under Persian approval and governance was less than full freedom. Life in a land controlled by another was a problematic existence as the leadership yearned for land (Neh 9.36-37). Israel covenanted for land again (Neh 9.38), with a careful honoring of the rules of land keeping. The Ezra community managed the land with a rigorous obedience, choosing not to live like their royal fathers whose sinful ways they confessed (Neh 9; Ezra 9). Their concern for Sabbath (Neh 13.15-22) and passion to end mixed marriages (Neh 13.15-30) emphasized purity (Neh 13.30).

Smith-Christopher discerns in this biblical literature a strong priestly theology of purity that is resisting the dominance of Persian colonial culture. This increase in the language of purity, and the concern to break up mixed marriages reflects mechanisms of survival among enslaved populations.¹²¹ For Smith-Christopher, the Persians had encouraged marriages among its leaders and conquered populations in order to control local resources, including lands.¹²² Ezra's marriage ban had therefore resisted Persian marriage practice and secured local land rights. The Levitical concern to "separate" impurity, and separation of non-community members reflect a minority subculture.¹²³ While Smith-Christopher model of a priestly theology of purity may work to resist external colonial rule, there are questions about the internal situation. It is one thing to secure local land rights, but the groups claiming land rights at this time were returning exiles, the former ruling elites. If anything, Smith-Christopher's model highlights the need to view theologies of hope and liberation both externally and internally.

¹²¹ Smith-Christopher, *The Religion of the Landless*, 10-13, 93-120; Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile*, 35-44, 137-146.

¹²² See D. Smith-Christopher, D. Smith-Christopher, "The Mixed Marriage Crisis in Ezra 9-10 and Nehemiah 13: A Study of the Sociology of Post-exilic Judaeon Community," in T. C. Eskenazi and K. Richards (eds), *Second Temple Studies 2* (JSOTS 175; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 243-265.

¹²³ Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile*, 160.

Brueggemann is perhaps right that this purity was no more than power in land management.¹²⁴ The grim holding action of morality had its day, but when it had spent itself, a succession of foreign powers came and seized the land, and Israel was again landless, grieved, and without power, turf, or identity.

In conclusion, Brueggemann regards the Bible as the story of God's people with God's land, and the agony of trying to be fully in history but lacking a standing ground in history. The biblical story of Israel's experience is a story of being in and belonging to a land never fully given, never quite secured. Biblical Israel's destiny in relation to the land is always on the move toward fulfillment:

from promise to the security of slavery, from desert to the destructive power of kingship, from exile to the weariness of moral management.¹²⁵

Israel is always on the move from land to landlessness, from landlessness to land, from life to death, from death to life. Its historical character derives from its quest for Yahweh's rich and fulsome promises, but so burdened with ambiguity and loss. Israel's faith is a journeying in and out of land, and there is organization of its faith around the land. For Brueggemann, this subject of land is worth our attention because contemporary problems are parallel.¹²⁶ We know in our time about the hunger for rootage and the yearning for turf, the destructive power of coveting and the anxiety of displacement, and know from time to time about gifts given and promises kept. In ancient Israel and now persons and communities have been consumed by problems most of which are about land. The promise of the land is both magnificent and problematic.

Tuvalu: From Landedness to Landlessness:

Tuvalu is in the verge of becoming landless and its people are uncertain about the future. In learning, however, about the experiences of the people of Israel as found in the Old Testament, the Church and the people of Tuvalu need to rethink their understanding of God and of the world around them. They need to redefine, for a better understanding, their relationship with God, with others and with the whole of creation. Knowing their

¹²⁴ W. Brueggemann, *The Land*, 13-14.

¹²⁵ Brueggemann, *The Land*, 14.

¹²⁶ Brueggemann, *The Land*, 14.

own responsibility as bearers of the land given to them by God seems to be a good starting point for a renewal of faith as Tuvaluans seek for meaning in the face of calamities.

Israel as a people had been moving from land to landlessness and from landlessness to land. Within their experiences of landedness and landlessness, the Israelites learned more and more about the depth of God's love for them. The prophet Jeremiah assured them of the everlasting love and faithfulness of God when all seemed voided (Jer. 31:2-5).¹²⁷ The Israelites knew that the land was always God's and that their place in it depended entirely on how they lived in relation to God and to the land itself. Their moving from landedness to landlessness was really the consequence of their faithlessness and disobedience, and their waywardness from the conditions of their covenantal relationship with God. But that did not change how God related to them – the God of the covenant whose love is everlasting and whose faithfulness abides forever.

The Tuvaluans should learn from the experiences of the Israelites so that its leaders – political, cultural and religious – must not commit the same mistake of ignoring the will of God. The Tuvaluans always believe that their islands (land) were a gift from God. They also believe that it is their responsibility to take care of the land as part of their faith in God. Their cultural roots connect them to the land as part of God's creation and as part of God's gift. They also understand life as an interconnected whole where God, humanity and other things of creation form a unity. In other words, all things of creation are interrelated to one another and all are related to God or rooted in God. For the Tuvaluans, they need to understand what all this means in the reality that Tuvalu is gradually sinking; that Tuvalu is becoming landless. It simply means that something has gone wrong. Relationships have been abused and broken. When the question is raised as to who has committed the wrong, then the obvious answer is human beings themselves.

The previous chapter dealt with the nature of the problem as well as some idea of those who are responsible for it. However, we cannot just point our fingers at other people and other countries without looking at ourselves first. We need to look into our own attitudes toward nature and the environment, whether we treat them as important parts of God's creation or not. We need to look into our own cultures, whether there are

¹²⁷ Brueggemann, *The Land*, 135.

more life-denying elements than the life-affirming ones. There is also the theology of the Church and the way it interprets the biblical text in relation to the environment, whether our interpretations are anthropocentric or not. All these things are very important and are therefore needed to be looked at carefully as we struggle to deal with the reality of the global warming and its impact upon the lives of the Tuvaluans and others who are facing the same problem of becoming landless.

The whole history of Israel as the people of God is affected by the way she treats the land. In fact the political, sociological, economical and religious life of Israel as a nation is always tested by her relationship to the land.¹²⁸ The prophet Amos saw the disaster (drought and eventually becoming landless) that Israel was heading into because of her decline in faith in relation to the observance of the Sabbath, exploitation of the land and injustice against the poor (Amos 8:4-6). Jeremiah also saw the loss of the land as a consequence of Israel's disobedience and faithlessness (Jere. 8:20-22; 9:10-11).

There is another reason why Tuvalu is becoming landless as far as this author is concerned. Theologically speaking, this author believes that it is God's act, a proclamation to the world making human beings aware of the danger of polluting the environment. It is a message to the world especially to those who continue to pollute the environment to have compassion and caring concern toward the low-lying island nations of the world. It is also a way of making people aware that the damages they caused have led many peoples and countries to suffer and face the danger of becoming landless. Tuvalu becoming landless for the purposes of God is indeed a risk in itself. But even the people of God, Israel, in the Old Testament is portrayed as being used by God for the purpose of saving the rest of the world. This is where faith comes in to strengthen and deepen relationships the Tuvaluans have with God and with one another amongst themselves as well as with the rest of the world. A deeper understanding by the Tuvaluans of their faith in God and their role in the creation and salvation of God would certainly shine new light into the meaning of their lives as Tuvaluans. God is certainly using Tuvalu, as a people becoming landless, not only to educate themselves but also to show the rest of the world that God is the God who is faithful in his love for his creation.

¹²⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *The Covenanted Self: Explorations in Law and Covenant*, ed. Patric D. Miller, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 105.

If this is God's will and purpose, making Tuvalu become landless so that the world may be saved from worse situations in the future caused by global warming, then Tuvalu can depend on God for land. Tuvalu's hope for becoming landed again is in God. This is similar to Israel's understanding of their calling from God. For the Israelites, God is always at the forefront taking control of the situations his people encounter in life, whether being landed or being landless. Even when they were a landless people, they did believe that God would give them land in the future. Tuvalu must therefore depend and rely on God with assurance and confidence that God will provide them with a land – a place for them in God's creation. God will provide land for Tuvalu to live and to treasure as their identity and possession. But this is still in the stage of a vision because Tuvalu of today still has land which is called home, a place of identity for our people. The central concern, however, is when this Tuvalu becomes landless because of the impending disaster of being submerged underneath the sea.

Tuvalu: From Landlessness to Landedness:

Losing Tuvalu, of course, would be a tragic incident to happen. In reality, Tuvalu must take this seriously and start a transformation from within; the sea level is definitely rising and it is not going to stop suddenly because of any human effort. What is meant by 'transformation from within' is the change of mentality and thought-forms. The Tuvaluans need to change the general attitude that nothing is going to happen because only a few small atolls are affected. It is always good to have a positive attitude towards life. But unfortunately, optimism does not apply to the rising sea level. We can be optimistic about becoming a good leader in our society, but not about the sea level going back to its normal nature. We have to deal with the facts and data that are available which are quite frightening in the case of Tuvalu. What is needed is a prophetic voice from the Church to state the facts and to foresee the future. For Tuvalu, the future is in God's hands.

Israel is the best example of a landless people being cared for and were given land which was promised to them by their covenant God. The whole covenantal relationship between God and Israel was really about promises made and fulfilled by God. If God was dealing with Israel in the way he did, calling them through Abraham, Isaac and

Jacob, and promising to them a land, then Tuvalu deserves to be dealt with in the same way. The God of Israel is also the God of Tuvalu; the God who promised a land for Israel must also promise a land for Tuvalu. We are indeed treasuring and enjoying the land, or what is left of it, that God gave to our ancestors. But the fact remains that nature would eventually take control over the vulnerable islands of the Pacific and else where.

When God gave his promise of land to the people of Israel, it was not because of Israel's faithfulness or obedience to the law of God (which never occurred in the whole history of Israel), but because of God's love and grace for his people; it was the unconditional love of God as shown in the book of the prophet Hosea. Israel did not deserve the love of God because of her sinfulness, but God's love was far greater and far deeper than the sins of Israel that God continued to love her in his eternal and everlasting love. It was for that reason only that God gave his gift of land to Israel. For the same reason, Tuvalu can also receive God's gift of land. Tuvalu was never a righteous people and will never be without the grace of God. They are not innocent victims of the global warming because they are also part of the problem. Tuvalu is therefore unworthy of the love of God. However, it is in God's love that Tuvalu and Israel and all the victims of global warming will find hope for land.

There are no new atolls being formed in or around Tuvalu where we can migrate to when needed. And God is not going to create new islands somewhere in the Pacific Ocean specifically for the Tuvaluans. The reality is, the Tuvaluans who are still on the islands will have to migrate to other countries around the world when the situation gets worse. There are in fact more Tuvaluans living abroad than those in the islands. They have called New Zealand, Australia, America, etc. their adopted home but they still say that their hearts are in Tuvalu. For those of us who are in the islands, Tuvalu is more than home; it is our life; it is God's gift to our fore-parents. Thus speaking of migrating permanently is painful because of the sense of belongingness. But God speaks to us and touches our lives in many ways as he guides our lives in his own ways. Tuvaluans are thriving in their second homes around the world, which means that God is always with them, blessing them and nurturing them in every walk of life they live. They are in fact better off than those in the islands. They live as if they are landed. The possibility of buying land and building a home on it changes the whole perspective of landedness in the

present age. This is where faith deepens the meaning of life for our people. Believing that God has given them prosperity and blessing in their adopted home has strengthened their faith. For them, they are certainly landed, even in a foreign land.

Towards A Theology Hope:

It is central to any theology of hope to have a foundational understanding of the relationship between faith and hope. Jurgen Moltmann gives a good account of this faith-hope relationship which is relevant for the purpose of this work. Moltmann begins by saying that "Faith binds man to Christ. Hope sets this faith open to the comprehensive future of Christ. Hope is therefore the 'inseparable companion' of faith."¹²⁹ In clarifying this, Moltmann goes on to say that "Hope is nothing else than the expectation of those things which faith has believed to have been truly promised by God."¹³⁰ That means without hope, faith falls into pieces. For Moltmann it is through faith that people find the path of true life, but it is only hope that keeps them on that path. It is faith in Christ that gives hope its assurance, and hope in Christ gives faith its breadth and it leads faith into life.¹³¹ Even though Moltmann's theology of hope focuses on the eschatological dimension of Christian faith, it speaks directly to the situation of the people of Tuvalu as it highlights the true nature of the relationship between faith and hope.

Faith and hope are indeed inseparable and both are central in any theology of hope for the people of Tuvalu. They do believe that faith in God gives them hope as life takes them to the future. So whether from landedness to landlessness or from landlessness to landedness, the people of Tuvalu are assured that God, the Father of Jesus Christ, has triumphed over all obstacles of life including death itself.

The Tuvaluans must believe in the God of Jesus Christ. For Moltmann, "To believe means to cross in hope and anticipation the bounds that have been penetrated by the raising of the crucified. If we bear that in mind, then this faith can have nothing to do with fleeing the world, with resignation and with escapism."¹³² This is very important in

¹²⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of Christian Eschatology*, (London: SCM Press, 1983), 20.

¹³⁰ Moltmann, 20.

¹³¹ Moltmann, 20.

¹³² Moltmann, 20-21.

any attempt to understand theology from the ecological perspective especially in the situation of Tuvalu. Very often people who lose hope speak of false hope in the beyond and therefore lose touch completely with this world for which Christ died. In doing that, they fail to understand the true meaning of the cross of Christ and of his death and resurrection. For Moltmann, hope "sees in the resurrection of Christ not eternity in heaven, but the future of the very earth on which his cross stands". Moreover, hope sees in Christ "the future of the very humanity for which he died".¹³³

Two very important things that Moltmann mentions in connection with hope are 'earth' and 'humanity'. These must also be central in the understanding of hope in any theology of hope for the people of Tuvalu. What this means is for the people of Tuvalu to take up this world as well as their role as responsible citizens of this world more seriously. Instead of hoping for something in the beyond, it is better to hope for better ways of prolonging the life of our islands, and for a corporate effort by the whole global community to eliminate the emission of greenhouse gases. But if that is an impossibility, then hope is for landedness somewhere here on earth; an earthly heaven is always better than a heavenly earth.

The Church leaders must really be the leading forces in our effort to voice the concerns of the people. The Church has a special duty to lead and to guide. Part of the mission is voicing the concerns of the people against injustice and violence. The mission of the Church grew out of the incarnation itself where God became human and lived with the people. It means that God in Christ participated in the life of the people, listening to the voices of the people who suffered in every generation. God chose to be with the people in their suffering through Christ. That is where the Church should be, to be with the people and helping them to voice their concerns.

Voices of a Greedy World

We need to state firmly that we are victims of a greedy world. Capitalism and all its mechanisms are designed to obtain more profits and the accumulation of wealth have led to

¹³³ Moltmann, 21.

CONCLUSION

SINKING BUT NOT SILENCED

It is sad to know that Tuvalu is heading towards an uncertain future in relation to the impact of climate changes and the rising sea because of global warming. But it is really painful when we know that the rest of the world seems so far away and does not seem to care at all about what is happening in this remote corner of the world. In concluding this work, this author would like to voice few concerns which the people of Tuvalu would like to share with the rest of the world. Even if we are sinking, we are definitely not silenced. We will not be silenced by our smallness, nor by the limitedness of opportunities we have in international arena. Tuvalu needs to speak out so that the world may hear and do something.

There are so many other victims of global warming around the world who have not had the chance of voicing their concerns. Some miracles do happen when people voice their hearts and their minds of the things that are troubling them. Tuvalu is saying this with courage and with dignity, that we will never be silenced even if we sink. Our sinking itself will amplify our voice in urging the nations and peoples of the world as a whole to do something about the global warming before it is too late.

The Church leaders must really be the leading figures in any effort to voice the concerns of the people. The Church has a mission from the Lord of mission. Part of that mission is voicing the concerns of the people against injustices in society. The mission of the Church grew out of the incarnation itself when God in Jesus of Nazareth became one with the people. It means that God in Christ participated in the life of the people, listening to the voices of the people who suffered in many situations in life. God chose to be with the people in their suffering through Christ. That is where the Church should be; to be with the people and helping them to voice their concerns.

Victims of a Greedy World:

We need to state firmly that we are victims of a greedy world. Capitalism and all its emphases on obtaining more profit and the accumulation of wealth have led the

wealthy nations of the world to feed on the lives of the poor countries. In other words, the wealthy nations suck the life out of the rest of the world without any concern about the consequences. This picture is even darkened by the centralization of the economic system of the world in what is now called 'globalization'. This is where the wealth of the world is centralized and controlled by a minority of rich countries of the northern hemisphere. What happens when many countries join the race for more profit and more wealth? More industries and factories are built and developed which means more pollution and more emission of greenhouse gases take place. Who suffers the most? Tuvalu and all the low-lying islands and coastal areas in the world are now experiencing the real threat of the rising sea and climate changes because of global warming.

All the victims of this greedy world, or rather the greedy few of this world, must come together as one to address this issue in an emphatic way. But we need to start from our own homes.

To the World with Love:

With this work, we in Tuvalu would like to contribute to the effort of the global community, those who are concerned for the well-being of the environment or creation as a whole, to combat the threat of global warming. Though it speaks of the situation in Tuvalu, this work has highlighted from the beginning the true meaning of life for any community, and then the ugly faces of the evil that human beings are capable of and finally the hope we have in God when we come face to face with hopelessness in this world. All this has enlightened our hearts and our minds about the deeper meaning of the love of God as we grow from faith into faith with hope in the God of love who gives life in all its fullness.

The church of Tuvalu must address this issue and find ways of educating the people about the reality of the problem. The church needs to analyze the situation carefully and then begin to formulate a theology that is relevant to the changing world of our time. This work is only a humble beginning with the hope that others can take it further so that the church will not be left behind by the fast moving world in which we live.

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