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IMAGES OF GOD.

"A Theological Perspective of God's Image in the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa. "

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DEDICATION.

This work is dedicated to my parents,

Uatea Muliaumalu and Valuao Leali'ie'e.

God bless you both.

ABSTRACT.

This thesis discusses the different Images of God from the perspective of a Samoan person within the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS). These images of God can be embracing, liberating and empowering whilst at the same time, they can also be oppressive and restrictive to knowing and understanding God as well as human life. The objective of this research is to discuss how a one dimensional image of God, that of a 'king' was planted in the soil of Samoa by Christian missionaries and the implications of this kingly role of God has become the dominant image in the theology of the CCCS. This paper attempts to embrace the sacredness and immanence of God as present in Samoa's pre-Christianity. This paper further suggests a renewed interpretation of a 'spirit' image of God that is more inclusive for the CCCS people in particular its parishes overseas.

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Secondly, I would like to express my sincere thanks to my supervisor Rev. Peletisala Lima for sharing his wisdom and knowledge that has contributed greatly to this work. Thank you for encouraging me to believe in myself to accomplish anything by putting my faith in God. Thank you for your patience and time.

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INTRODUCTION.

This paper suggests that the way we think about God and image God in our Christian lives is very important. That is, the type of language and images we use in referring to God can either consciously or unconsciously influence not only our relationship to God, but it can also determine how we live out our Christian lives in the world.

Growing up as a Samoan in the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS), who has lived most of ones life in Australia, the images of God that the church theologizes has often caused confusion; and is therefore questioned by the author of it relevancy today. The aim of this research paper is to determine whether the CCCS image of God namely the "kingly image", is the most appropriate image that provides comfort, strength, direction and hope to a person's life today. Special focus on the appropriateness of this image will be from the perspective of the diaspora churches of the CCCS. This paper also articulates an alternative image of God, a 'spirit' image, which the author believes is more coherent to Samoans living overseas.

The research of this paper was conducted in Samoa. The methods used in gathering essential information for this project, was mainly through literary reading and reviews of appropriate sources, available from the Malua Theological College Library, the Nelson Public Library in Apia, the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa *Ia-Malamalama* Book Store in Apia, and the National University of Samoa Library. In addition, personal interviews with *matai's* (Chiefs), Church ministers, and informal discussions with students and some of the lecturers of the Malua Theological College, have greatly help shape this theological paper. Furthermore, my own personal experiences and observations

as a Samoan Christian with a social and cultural background in both Samoa and Australia, together with the studies I have undertaken of four years in Malua Theological College, have also contributed enormously to the development of this research paper.

In the process of researching the above intentions of this paper, the First Chapter looks at a number of different Biblical Images of God in Scripture and the theological significance of these images. Chapter Two focuses on pre-Christian Samoan images of their deities and the significance of these particular images. The final part of this paper, Chapter Three discusses renewing a traditional image of God, that of 'spirit.'

CHAPTER ONE.

A BIBLICAL EXAMINATION OF THE IMAGE OF GOD.

1.1. Introduction.

God's relationship with humankind has always been a peculiar one. At best of times it has been intimate and personal as testified to in the creation narrative of Genesis, as well as the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ in the New Testament. At other times, it has been one of distance and uncertainty as highlighted by many of the prophets of the Old Testament such as Isaiah (6:1, 27:1, 30:27, 34:1-2, 66:1-2), in the sense that human beings are metaphysically separated from God.[1] Within these two extreme relationships of God and humankind, there has always been a desire of God to express God-self to humanity, and humankind's continuous need to envisage God in some form.

This chapter aims to explore God's active participation in both the Old and New Testament that portrays His many different images, and how people perceive Him. It is theologically associated with the changing context' of Gods people[2] as well as how people interpret the different revelations of God to them.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first explores the concept of images as applied to a transcendent God and how these images were reflected in the lives of the people. The second part aims to reveal how the totality of God's nature is seen in the person of Jesus. It also discusses how Jesus, the image of God is also associated with the image of the Church. The last part of this chapter aims to reveal the presence of

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[1] Milliard J. Erickson, Christian Theology, (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), 488.

the power of God as an invisible image of God, in the Holy Spirit but yet visible through the deeds of Jesus.

1.2. Definition of Image and Idol.

In the Bible, the word 'image' or 'idol' originally refers to statues, pictures and idols.[3] In the Hebrew language, there are many terms that define its different forms. For example, the word *pesel* means, "to hew," or "hew into shape," or "to shape stones." The words *masseka, nesek* and *nasik* means "to pour out." These terms refer to molten images associated with liquids such as gold, silver, bronze, plastic, and cement to create images of various god(s). In the Old Testament, these images normally represented either a great ruler or a lifeless object that symbolized the people's deity[4] (Judges 18:17-20, 2 Chronicles 33:7&15, Isaiah 40:19, Jeremiah 10:14, Daniel: 11:8).[5] On the other hand, *tabnit* means "copy" or "pattern," which resembles as its prototype.[6] The most common Hebrew term for Image or Idol in the Old Testament is *selem,* which appears seventeen times. Of these occurrences, twice the term means "shadow" or "dreams".[7] Shadow literally means "a reflected image", "a representation" or "an inseparable companion".[8] Nevertheless, all these forms of the word 'image' are associated with objects that represent something that is greater than it. P. Humbert states that the materialistic meaning of image is dominant throughout the Old Testament. Claus Westerman states that, "all the Old Testament passages

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[2] Victor H. Matthews and James C. Moyer, The Old Testament: Text and Context, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Inc, 1997), 57.
[3] George Arthur Buttrick, et.al., The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopaedia, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 682-683.
[4] Geoffrey W. Bromiley, et.al., International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Volume Two: E-J, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982),796-797.
[5] The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version, (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989). Note: All Biblical passages in this paper throughout, is taken from the New Revised Standard Version Bible.
[6] David Noel Freedman, et.al., The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Volume 3: H-J, (New York: Doubleday Dell Publishing Group Inc, 1992), 376-377.
[7] Buttrick, 683.
[8] Microsoft Encarta Standard Version 2005.

understand *selem* solely in the sense of a material image, a concrete representation, without any spiritual or moral dimension."[9] However, this paper does not discuss the 'Image of God' in this respect. Moreover it uses the term 'image' as meaning the different and colourful expressions of God, that has been made available through His revelation to humanity, and how humankind has both in the past and the present interpreted God's interaction to humankind.[10] For this is the only avenue that humankind can gain some sense and understanding of how God relates to them and vice versa. Metaphorical 'Images of God' capture in the language the way God's people express and relate to God in their daily lives.

1.3. Old Testament: Israel's Images of God.

In the Old Testament, the transitional periods of the life of Israel from slavery in Egypt to the establishment of the monarchy mark the different phases of contextual and social changes that have influenced how they relate to their God. The idea that God is transcendent and incomprehensible raises the questions, 'How then is it possible for Gods people to picture God'? In addition, 'how are they to understand God's interrelatedness in their context and social environment'? Especially when in the Old Testament God clearly forbids the making of idols, *"You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth"* (Exodus 20:4-6). Behind this instruction, is the prohibition of creating any images and idols as referred to by the definitions above, for it leads to the sin of idolatry.

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[9] Claus Westerman, A Continental Commentary: Genesis 1-11, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 146.
[10] Allan Coppedge, Portraits of God: A Biblical Theology of Holiness, (Illinois: Downers Intervarsity Press, 2001), 39-40.

Thus, it is quite clear that the people of Israel were forbidden to physically create any image or idol that formed a representation of God and then pay homage to it as if it was their supreme God. This paper strongly supports this directive by God as recorded in the Bible. For God the Creator is without any physical form, and the desire of Gods people to capture God in some tangible form, highlights not only their limited thinking, but also their attempt to confine and reduce God to some visible image.

However, what does exist in the Old Testament are certain perceptions of God by the people of Israel, as to how He reveals God-self and relates to His people through out certain periods in history and different situations in their lives. These images acknowledged and witnessed the divine God in their testimonial lives.[11] It is these particular images of God that this chapter wishes to deliberate on; the different interpretations of God throughout time and space.

In reading the Pentateuch narratives in the Old Testament one gets the impression that God constantly interacts with ancient Israel personally, appearing and speaking to the patriarchs and to Moses (Genesis 12:1-3, 35:1, Exodus 3:1-2, 6:1-3ff, 9:1ff, 13:21-22, 19:16).[12] The question arises; 'how does one explain the Old Testaments witness to God's divine physical appearances to the patriarchs, prophets and people of Israel, especially when it has already been pointed out that this is impossible'? What we do learn from the Old Testament is that all of God's appearances to His people are in fact defined by symbolic languages of how people claim God has revealed God-self to them. His ongoing and changing relationship with Israel and its people is captured in

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[11] W Sibley Towner, Clones of God: Genesis 1:26-28 and the Image of God in the Hebrew Bible, (A Journal of the Bible and Theology, October 2005), 350.

the form of a speech, metaphors, attributes, images and roles that represent God.[13] The use of 'Images' that represented God in the Old Testament were important because they helped the people of Israel understand and relate to a transcendent God who could not be physically seen or heard personally. In other words, understanding the use of images to relate to God, and how these images present the revelation of God, helped explain the type of relationship Gods people had with Him.[14] Although there were other ways God's divine presence could be represented, Israel's Images of God best captured and explained how they understood God interacting in their lives. The people of Israel came up with a number of different 'Images of God' that were greatly influenced by the particular situations that they were facing at the time.[15]

In Karl Barth's relational approach of the image of God, the people of Israel perceive the images of God through two levels of understanding.[16] First, it looks at how they relate themselves to God, and secondly, how they relate to one another. This is an important concept because as we reflect back to God's relationship with the people of Israel, these two types of relationships clearly stand out.[17] The vertical relationship between a person and God influences not only their worldview but also how they related to other people. This is called the horizontal relationship.[18] This highlights critically the importance of understanding the 'Image of God' and its interpretation. The point is how people relate to God also expresses the type of theology that they

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[12] Coppedge, 11-12.
[13] Marcus Borg, The God we never knew: Beyond Dogmatic Religion to a more authentic Contemporary Faith, (New York: Harper Collins Publishing Inc, 1997), 58.
[14] Coppedge, 21.
[15] Matthews and Moyer, 61-62.
[16] Erickson, 505.
[17] Bernhard W. Anderson, The Living World of the Old Testament Third Edition, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc, 1975), 78-81.
[18] Coppedge, 11.

uphold and adhere to, which is communicated to others through personal and communal relationships.

There exists in the Old Testament a variety of different 'Images of God' that represent God as relating to the people of Israel in a particular role. These 'Images of God' in the Bible were either of human form for example, warrior, king, father or farmer, or of non-human form such as lion, rock and eagle to name a few.[19] These 'Images of God' also denotes a certain type of relationship, either "near," to God or one of "distance" from God. However, this paper will only focus on the human 'Images of God.' There are three particular metaphorical images of God that are found in the Old Testament that has been selected for further discussion: 'God the Warrior'; 'God the King,' and 'God the Farmer'.

1.3.1. God the Warrior.

The image of an Ancient Near East warrior depicts a soldier that is well equipped, brave, strong, disciplined and ready to defend and die for his king and people. The people of Israel in the early accounts of the Old Testament narratives, such as in the Book of Genesis and Exodus, were assembled in a loose groups of communities or tribes.[20] Their type of life style was that of wandering nomads, leading their livestock to places where they could find fresh pastures and water holes for their stock. It was inevitable that they would encounter countless other nomadic tribes or indigenous people of the land in their travels. Some of these tribes would be friendly, but at most times they were in constant conflict in such engagements. It was not surprising then at

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[19] Borg, 58.

[20] Walter Brueggemann, edited by Patrick D. Miller. A Social reading of the Old Testament; Prophetic Approaches to Israel's Communal Life, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 16-17.

these early stages in the history of the people of Israel that their God was interpreted and understood as a mighty 'Warrior,' (Judges 5:1-31, Psalms 3:3ff, 20:5, 35:1ff).[21] In the Exodus story, the life and situation of the people of Israel strongly reflected this particular image, 'God as a Warrior'. The Exodus account begins with the enslavement of the Hebrews in Egypt. Joseph had passed away before this period along with the Egyptians who showed compassion upon the Hebrew people. In this period the Pharaohs and Egyptians despised the Hebrews and viewed them as mere foreigners whose primary purpose were to work as slaves and labourers (Exodus 1:8-14). Under the ruling of Egyptian power and law, the influence of Egyptian culture, and religion, had a negative impact upon the lives of the Hebrew people (Exodus 2:13-14). They faced suffering and oppression meaning they were restricted in various facets of their livelihood. Moreover, they were unable to worship freely their God, Yahweh. This dilemma caused the Hebrews to cry out to God to be their leader who would liberate them from the cruelty of the Egyptian nation (Exodus 2:23-25).

Pharaoh's hardened and stubborn heart against the Hebrews supported by his mighty army made it virtually impossible for the Hebrew people to leave Egypt. This situation of suppression and oppression readily meant that the Hebrews would have a natural yearning for a leader that would come in the form of a mighty warrior. This mighty warrior would effectively release them from their captivity. It is from within such a context of oppression that God related to His people in the role of a mighty 'Warrior'. God's military powers, miraculous acts and leadership were seen at the Red Sea incident (Exodus 14:21-31). Exodus Chapter 15 records a song that the people of Israel sang after their enemies were drowned in the Red Sea. Known as the song of Moses, it described God as "a man of war" (Ex. 15: 3), who has defeated the

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[21] Matthews and Moyer, 62-68.

mighty army of Pharaoh, making God superior, the strength and salvation of the people.[22]In the wilderness, the Hebrew's were without land and lacked any kind of formal structure between various families and tribes, once again travelling as nomads through out foreign lands. They confronted many foreign nations along the way, resulting in many conflicts and wars. During this period of wandering, God was always consulted as their divine leader, their Warrior God who would bless His people and gave them victory over their enemies.[23] This particular 'Image of God' remained the central character of God for the Hebrews in this early stage of their history. The Hebrew tribes lived out this warrior role in their everyday lives while living a tribal life style (Judges chapter 1). The people were constantly prepared for war, either in defending their people or raiding other gentile tribes for necessities. God viewed as a 'Warrior' greatly influenced the Hebrew people, in unifying them in a common goal of survival against her enemies and in justifying the type of life style they lived. However, on their arrival to the Promise land, their vision of God as their mighty 'Warrior' gradually became distorted because of the influences of the Canaanite wealth, culture, tradition and religion.[24]

From the period of nomadic life style when the Hebrews were a wandering tribe, the 'Image of God' as a warrior was important and relevant for them. It was an image that portrayed leadership, protection and might. It also conveyed one of distance and respect since one could not get too close to warriors. This implies the transcendence being of God.

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[22] John Bright, A History of Israel. Third Edition, (London: SCM Press Ltd, 2000), 148.
[23] Matthews and Moyer, 70.
[24] Lawrence Boalt, Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction, (New York: Paulist Press Mahwah, 1984), 214.

1.3.2. God the King.

The two books of Samuel and the two books of Kings in the Old Testament trace the last days of the Judges, and the beginning of Israel as a monarchical state. When the Hebrews finally settled in Palestine, they were surrounded by foreign cultures and religions that influenced their own religious-cultural life.[25] Now that the Hebrews were no longer a wandering nomadic tribe, the need for a more unified and systematic structure of the Hebrew tribes was required. This period in history saw the birth of a unified nation of Israel with a monarchical form of government.[26] It is believed that Israel's request for a king to govern them was influenced by its foreign neighbours (1 Samuel 8:5). Saul emerged as the first king of Israel (1 Samuel 9:15-17, 15:1), followed by David (1 Samuel 16:11-13). However, despite the establishment of a visible kingship structure, the people's understanding of their earthly king was done so in light of their view of God as the supreme King.[27]

The establishment of the nation and the king resulted in the 'Image of God' in this phase of Israel's history as that of a "king." In this Image, God was viewed as the lawgiver from where society's laws originated from, as well as the judge who enforced them. It was God that legitimated the king's position at the top of the hierarchical social order centered in Jerusalem.[28] God's dwelling place on earth was in Jerusalem, which was where the earthly king's rule was also located. According to Old Testament tradition, the king in Jerusalem was seen as the Son of God, and God promised him and his descendents continuous rule on the throne.[29] The political and religious structures that existed in society were believed by the people to be ordained

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[25] Anderson, 162.
[26] Anderson, 159.
[27] Coppedge, 101.
[28] Borg, 62.
[29] Borg, 62.

and supported by God. Viewing God in the Image of a king had certain implications for the people in their relationship with God and to one another. Like an earthly king, God was powerful, yet He was more than that. In fact, God is "all powerful". Similar to an earthly king God serves both as a lawgiver and judge, but with more severe results. Therefore, the people's relationship to God could be interpreted as one of obedience and distant so as not to provoke the anger of the king. The people's roles with one another flows on from their perception of God as king; one of service towards the common goal of pleasing and serving the king. However in 1 Samuel 10:25, Samuel made it clear to both the king and Israel that if they followed the Lord their God, they would prosper, but if they rebelled against God, He would be against Israel and their king. Behind this perception is God's Sovereignty as the King of kings.[30]

1.3.3. God the Farmer.

This particular imagery of God as a Farmer evokes one of provision and care for the people of Israel in a new land. The people were no longer wanderers of the land herding their livestock, but had settled in their new land. The transition from herders to farmers for the people was not an easy one since this was all fairly new for the Israelites. However, it was critical that they adjusted quickly to their new occupation of being able to till the land in order for their survival. A farmer in the Ancient Near East was a hard working person, working long hours in harsh conditions and climate. But the farmer was also a family man who cares for and protects his family, livestock and crops. God perceived as a Farmer provides the appropriate environment for their crops to grow was a very important imagery for the people of Israel during this time period. This was because the Farmer 'Image of God' described the close relationship and love God has for His covenant people, Israel. In the sense that He nurtures and

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[30] Borg, 62-63.

protects His people, just like a farmer would do in caring for his family, crops and livestock.

This paper has so far focused on three specific 'Images of God' from the Old Testament that have been used as metaphors to describe human relationship with God. Such images were the only possible way that people could relate and understand God. They also influenced the way people lived and related to one another. In the New Testament, the theology and understanding of God in the form of images takes a whole new direction.

1.4. The New Testament: Jesus Christ the image of God.

Christians believe that the 'Word' of God', the *logos,* descended into the world in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and resided with humanity. (John 1:14), "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth…" Irenaeus said of the incarnation, "Jesus Christ, in His infinite love, has become what we are, in order that He may make us entirely what He is."[31] This statement thus denotes the significance of God's saving act. It was Himself who wanted us to imitate His Being so He became flesh. However, this incarnation of God through Jesus has become one of the most challenging quests for many scholarly opinions in an attempt to try and identify the two natures of Jesus Christ, and how each nature identifies God in the midst of our understanding. The inseparable "divinity" and "humanity" of Jesus became the Christological teaching of the New Testament.[32] To speak of these two natures of Christ, we must do so in the understanding that they are distinct from each other in

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[31] Donald G Bloesch, Jesus Christ Lord and Savior, (U.S.A: Intervarsity, 1997), 26.
[32] Bloesch, 55.

the sense that one does not interfere with the other, but are one in the being of Jesus.[33] The difficulty of this distinction was to identify critically the life of Jesus as a full human being, from that of his life of full deity. However, in Colossians 1:15, Paul identifies these two natures as one. Clarifying the two natures reveals the authentic presence of God in humankind as seen through Jesus.

Therefore, this paper does not see Jesus the Image of God as a lessening of the person and nature of Jesus Christ. Rather it uses image in the sense that Jesus Christ is both divine and human, upholding the Chalcedon Council 451 A.D formula of Jesus Christ, "two natures, one person," 'as the touchstone of Christological orthodoxy'.[34] However, because Jesus Christ was Himself restricted in time and space in order to fulfill God's redemptive plan in history, we see only an image, a limited view of God although it is a real and unique aspect of God in Jesus Christ. In the New Testament especially in the Gospels, it is evident that the focal point of its content is the recording and witness to the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is the true Image of God on earth. Ernest Kaseman sums this up, "They all locate what they had to come to see, decisive for our understanding of God within the real life of a real person, Jesus."[35] Since Jesus is the central message of the Gospels, they take time in emphasizing the life and ministry of Jesus as the Image or the identity of God, to give us a standard understanding and knowledge of God.[36]

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[33] Louis Berkhof, Manual of Christian Doctrine, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1933), 181-185.
[34] Harold O.J. Brown, Heresies: Heresy And Orthodoxy In The History Of The Church, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Inc, 1998), 180-181. See also. John Macquarrie, Stubborn Theological Questions, (London: SCM Press, 2003), 140-141.
[35] Stephen J Patterson, The God of Jesus; The Historical Jesus & the search for meaning, (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Trinity Press, 1998), 38.
[36] Tim Stafford, Knowing the face of God, (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 58.

Moreover, the New Testament makes it abundantly clear that God the Father has never been seen by humankind. For example passages like John 5:37, 6:14 and 1 Timothy 6:14, 1 John 4:12 suggests that God has physically never been seen by man. The question is, 'who was then the one called "God" (*'elohim*) or "the Lord" (YHVH) who appeared and spoke to Noah, Abraham, Moses and others in the Old Testament'? The primary Christian teaching is that the New Testament advocates that the genuine Image of God is Jesus Christ himself.[37] Although the Gospels do not speak directly of the Image of God, its reference to and witness to the life and ministry of Jesus reflects the Image of Godliness. The Apostle Paul suggests that it is only through one's relation to Christ that man can attain the likeness of God. To Wolfhart Pannenburg, this is why God had to become human.[38] It is also clear in Colossians 1:15 that Christ as the beloved Son of God is the Image of the invisible God. However, Paul develops his idea of the image symbolically in the form of the Church, where the new Image of God is seen. In this case, Paul understands that Jesus was the revealer not only of human life in its perfection, but also of divine reality itself (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). That is, living a humanly and a physical life like Jesus, results in a divine and spiritual relationship with God.

The term "Father" in the sayings of Jesus reveals a life that was both intimate and having direct and personal access to God (John 8:39, 10:37, 14:23).[39] Through all that Christ was and did, the hope was, for his followers to share in the life of the Father in heaven and could themselves become children of God. Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, to which early Christians referred to when they spoke about him as the

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[37] Karl Barth, The Gottingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion Volume One, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 130-131.
[38] Wolfhart Pannenburg, Jesus, God and man, (Great Britain: SCM Press Ltd, 1968), 40.
[39] William Barclay, Jesus as they saw Him, (London: SMC Press Ltd, 1962), 47-48.

one who had reconciled humanity to God,[40] made the cross the chief focus of Christian faith and devotion and the principal image of the saving love of God the Father.

In the life of Jesus, we discover in his experiences with his environment certain qualities and attributes that personified the "Image" and 'Likeness" of God.[41] Jesus' life presented us with numerous metaphorical images that relate His mission to our lives. Within these metaphorical images such as a teacher, a priest, prophet, a shepherd etc, were certain moral qualities that reflected the nature of God. These qualities included "righteousness" (Ephesians 4:24), "ethical perfection" (Matthew 5:48), "purity" (1 John 3:2ff.), "forgiveness" (Matthew 6:14ff.; Colossians 3:13), "humility" (Philippians 2:3-11), "holiness" (Ephesians 4:24; Leviticus 19:1), "knowledge" (Colossians 3:10) and especially "love" (John 13:14, 35ff.; Titus 3:4; 1 John 3:10, 16-18; 4:7-20).

Love in the New Testament is the most decisive among the attributes of God. Christians teach that God is almighty in dominion over all that is in Heaven and on Earth, righteous in judgment over good and evil, beyond time and space and change; but above all they teach, "God is love" (John 4:16). The creation of the world out of nothing and the creation of the human race were expressions of that love, and so was the coming of Christ (John 3:16). The classic statement of this trust in the Love of God came in the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26). Early Christianity

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[40] Gordon J. Spykman, Reformation Theology: A new Paradigm for doing Theology, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 552-555.

found in such words evidence both of the special standing men and women have as children of a Heavenly Father, and of the even more special position occupied by Christ. That special position led the first generations of believers to rank Him together with the Father and eventually the Holy Spirit, whom the Father sent in Christ to represent His power in Him.[42]

This paper will now turn to discussing some popular Images of God in the Gospels as revealed through the person Jesus Christ. These images are human orientated and thus project a specific kind of relationship and understanding between Jesus Christ and those that witnessed Him.

1.4.1. Jesus as a Teacher.

Using Capernaum as a base,[43] (Matthew 4:13, Mark 2:1) Jesus being accompanied by his 12 chosen disciples travelled to neighbouring towns and villages, proclaiming the advent of the Kingdom of God, as did many of the Hebrew prophets before Him. When the wounded in body and spirit asked him for help, Jesus sought to heal them with the power of faith. He stressed the infinite Love of God for the lowest and weakest individuals, and he promised pardon and eternal life in Heaven to the most hardened sinners, if their repentance was sincere. The essence of these teachings is presented in Matthew 5:1-7,27, in the Sermon on the Mount containing the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) and the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13). Jesus' emphasis on moral sincerity rather than strict adherence to Jewish rituals incurred the enmity of the Pharisees. They feared that his teachings might lead to a disregard of the authority of

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[41] Buttrick, 684.
[42] Gordon D. Fee, God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Inc, 1994), 6.
[43] David Friedrich Strauss, The Life of Jesus Critically Examined: Edited with and Introduction by Peter C. Hodges, (Great Britain: SCM Press Ltd, 1973), 271-272.

the Torah because it was central in their practices and teachings.[44] Other Jews feared that Jesus' activities and followers might prejudice the Roman authorities against any restoration of their traditional belief of a messiah.[45]

Despite this growing opposition, Jesus' popularity, especially with social outcasts and the oppressed increased. Eventually, the enthusiasm of his followers led them to attempt to "take him by force, to make him king" (John 6:15). Jesus however, frustrated with this attempt, withdrew with his disciples by ship over the Sea of Galilee (Lake Tiberius) to Capernaum (John 6:15-21). In Capernaum, he delivered a discourse in which he proclaimed Himself as "the bread of life" (John 6:35). This discourse which emphasized spiritual communion with God,[46] bewildered many in his audience. They thought of the discourse as a "hard saying"[47] (John 6:60), and thereupon they "drew back and no longer went about with him" (John 6:66). Jesus then divided his time into periods of traveling to cities in and outside the province of Galilee and periods of instruction (of his disciples) and retirement in Bethany (Mark 11:11-12) and Ephraim (John 11:54). The synoptics generally agree that Jesus spent most of His time in Galilee, but John focuses Jesus' public ministry in the province of Judea, reporting that Jesus made numerous visits to Jerusalem. The discourses and the miracles he performed at this time particularly the raising of Lazarus in Bethany (John 11:1-44), made many people believe in Him (John 11:45).

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[44] N.T. Wright, Jesus and the victory of God, Volume Two, (London: SPCK, 1996), 264, 550-551.
[45] Wright, 550-551.
[46] Barclay, 258-259.
[47] "Hard sayings" here means the discourses and sayings of Jesus that are unrealistically understandable to the naked eye, and seems irrational. For example, "The Bread of Life." The fact that Jesus talks about the Bread of Life in a spiritual sense, it is difficult for His audience/crowd to accept the fact to eat His flesh to gain life. This has also been difficult for the Early Church and Christians because it gave a connotation of cannibalism, which was prohibited.

The most significant moment in Jesus' public ministry, however, was Simon Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi that Jesus was the Christ, (Matthew 16:16; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20), Jesus however had not previously revealed this to Peter or any of the other disciples. This revelation and the subsequent prediction by Jesus of his death and resurrection, with the conditions of discipleship that he laid down, "was the climax of His teachings."[48]

Jesus' teachings must not be distinguished from his preaching, because literally, teaching is a way of preaching, and preaching is a way of teaching. Both methods of instruction were activities of Jesus' vision and knowledge of God.[49] We discover from the teachings of Jesus an Image of God who educates His children about the ways they can relate to Him. Through Jesus, God teaches to exhort and provide knowledge for His children to face the challenges of evil. The main community of people his teachings were addressed to were those who had heavenly desires or future hopes and expectations. It is worth noting that the central message of Jesus' teaching was the Kingdom of God, through the proclamation of repentance (Matthew 4:17) for the forgiveness of sins. However, they cannot be differentiated because the requirements to enter the Kingdom of God, is by way of repentance. As a preacher, Jesus aims to enlighten the hearts and spirit of the listeners of the new hope. This was done by way of repentance. They were exhorted to turn from their evil ways in order that they may be restored to the Creator and God. Other than the Jewish community, Jesus travelled to many neighboring towns proclaiming God's Word to different contexts and

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[48] Johnston M. Cheney, et.al.editors, The Life of Christ in Stereo; The Four Gospels combine as One, (Portland: Baptist Seminar Press, 1969), 80.
[49] Bruce Chilton, Pure Kingdom: Jesus vision of God, (Michigan: William B Eerdsmans Publishing Company, 1996), 127.

customs. This indicates that the Word of God is applicable to any context and social life.

This particular role of God in Jesus Christ as a teacher expresses a relationship of close proximity, of trust and sharing, revealed through the way Jesus related to the people and how they responded back to Him.

1.4.2. Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

In John 10:11-21, we find a perfect example of this metaphor as seen through Jesus. This metaphor is presented in a parabolic form to simplify the true functions and responsibilities of a veritable Shepherd, and his relationship to the flock.[50] A reflection of this responsibility is confirmed in the notion that, "The Father gives his Son for the life of the world; the Son gives back his life to the Father, and thus the Glory of God is revealed in the world."[51] This fact is proof that there is a special character in the sheep of Christ's flock, which the Shepherd recognizes with pleasure in order for the Shepherd to give up His life. In fact, the Lord knows them as His own for they possess certain spiritual marks, which indicate his property in them.[52] However, the sheep's knowledge of their Savior is based upon His knowledge of them which reveals a reflective relationship between the Shepherd and the sheep. It is a knowledge which is associated with gratitude, and affection that leads to cheerful obedience. The sheep who know the voice of the Shepherd follow Him in accordance with the Christian's life as obedience to the Master. Those who know the qualities of the Shepherd, His power to save and bless will make Him known to those who need

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[50] Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia Standard Version 2005.
[51] Leslie Newbigin, The Light has come, (Michigan: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 129.
[52] R. T. Kendall, The Complete Guide to the Parables: Understanding and Applying the Stories of Jesus, (Michigan: Chosen Books Publishing, 2004), 244-245.

His love and care. The Lord Jesus is the Good Shepherd, under whom all other spiritual pastors are called to labor for the welfare of the flock. He is the great Shepherd, who has proved his power to deliver and to save. What more could he do when he laid down his life for the sheep (John 10:11-21). Even this Divine Person, in executing a purpose so gracious, found it necessary to submit to suffering, to offer Himself as a sacrifice, to consent to death. He gave up His life that we might live. The Good shepherd of Jesus Christ certainly relays an understanding of God that is close to His people, who cares for and will do His utmost to protect them. Even if the people go astray, the Good Shepherd will find and rescue them to safety.[53]

1.4.3. Jesus as the Great Servant.

Jesus Christ assumed the lowliest life of man when He took upon Himself the form of a Servant. This quality was evident in His ministering to others, healing the sick, cleansing lepers, and casting out demons. He was always accessible and He never became weary of teaching. In Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45 "…the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." This statement clearly states Jesus as identifying Himself as a Servant.

For God to take up this lowly position of servanthood reveals God's humility that He came to serve humanity. Similarly, the whole life of Jesus was to serve humankind as the Father had sent him. This statement of Jesus was prompt from the request of James and John's mother in Matthew 20:20-27. What these passages imply is for man to cloth himself with the garment of a servant, for whoever serves rather than to be served, shall be exalted greatly in the presence of God.

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[53] Kendall, 245.

The greatness of the Son of Man showed itself in His Service, and was realized in the washing of the disciples' feet (John 13:4). When Jesus was born into this world, He was born into a world of pain and shame of sinful acts of humanity. However, in humble social circumstances, He was accustomed to labor and obedience of authority. Jesus' work in his life, teaching, and miracles, was a ministry. What humanity needed was help, and he gave it because this was his purpose in coming into the world. In relation to God in the demands of his Law, he obediently fulfilled all righteousness required of the Law. His sacrifice is the conclusion and seal of His service and indicates the climax of His service (Philippians 2:6), through obedience unto death on the cross.

The image that Jesus portrayed as a Servant reveals another character of God, not normally associated with a divine being in the Ancient Middle East. Most divine deities are seen as supreme mighty beings that rule and control the lives of their worshippers. God as a Servant displays a humble, willing servant whose desire is to assist, aid and even die for His people. God in Jesus Christ illustrates the role of a servant.

1.4.4. Jesus as the King of kings.

The Hebrew word Messiah means the Anointed One in the Old Testament. Its parallel in the New Testament is translated by the Greek word *(Christos),* from which "Christ" is derived.[54] In Hebrew, the concept of Messiah evolved into a special figure, a promised deliverer of humankind. This often refers to a Davidic type of king who would once again bring unity and strength to the nation and people of Israel.

In Christian theology, Jesus is seen as the fulfillment of the long awaited Messiah. According to the first three Gospels, the Messiah-ship of Jesus was proclaimed by

angels at the time of his conception (Matthew 1:20-23), at his birth (Luke 2:9-14), and during his baptism (Mark 1:11). It was later acknowledged by demons (see Luke 4:41) and finally, by his disciple Peter and Jesus Himself (Matthew 16:16-17). In the Gospel of Mark (see 14:61-64), it was Jesus' admission that he was the Messiah that led to his crucifixion. From its theological use, the term has come to be applied in a more general sense to be any liberator of a country or people, or an expected savior in any of the non-Christian religions.

Judaism believes that the Messiah has not yet come because the life and ministry of Jesus does not fit the descriptions of their expected King. The most common image of the expected Messiah in early Judaism was a warrior type king who comes with the sword to destroy all nations and enemies of God's people.[55] However, the true King is a King of peace, a king who comes to save, not to destroy. This image of a King of peace is different from the Image of God as a king in the Old Testament. This peaceful kingship is governed by a rule of peace and love. It is a king that comes to serve and help his people, rather than leading them into warfare.

A kingship role that bridges the distance between the king and his subjects. A king of peace is close and understands his subjects.

1.5. Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

According to the Gospels, there are many events that we find the Holy Spirit at work, in Jesus Christ and after his departure. For example, the day Jesus was born in

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[54] Microsoft Encarta Standard Version Encyclopedia 2005.
[55] John J. Collins, Editor, The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, Volume 1: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity, (New York: The Continuum Publishing Group Inc, 2002), 225.

Bethlehem, His Baptism, and casting out demons; the crucifixion, his resurrection and ascension into heaven. After Jesus ascension into heaven, the work of the Holy Spirit continued on the day of Pentecost, (Acts 1-2) as well as the missionary work of the Apostle Paul and his workers. Although these are different events in time, they all come under one major event in history, which is 'The coming of God for the Salvation of the world."[56]

In light of this Trinitarian recognition, (Matthew 3:16-17, 12:28) Jesus' history of the Spirit is Himself.[57] He was born of the Spirit, baptized by the Holy Spirit and His death and resurrection was of the Holy Spirit. It is also notable that the Christian belief in the Trinity is the two aspects of the Being of God, unity in trinity, and trinity in unity.[58] This unity in trinity of the Being of God, is the identification of the Godhead, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit three in One and One in three. In this understanding, the entire life of Jesus from his birth to the sending of the Holy Spirit after his ascension was of this Spirit. The Holy Spirit is frequently presented in Scripture through symbols: the dove (Mark 1:10), symbolizing peace and reconciliation; a whirlwind (see Acts 2) symbolizing strength; and as tongues of fire (Acts 2), symbolizing the ecstasy of believers. The Holy Spirit is considered as the sanctifier, who leads and guides the Church and its members. The divine qualities of the life of Jesus, and the nature and purpose of His deeds, represents the power of the Holy Spirit. This means that through Jesus, the power and Spirit of God is in action.[59]

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[56] Jurgen Moltman, Source: The Holy Spirit and Theology of Life, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 15.

[57] According to the Apostle Paul, he suggests that the Greek word '*pneuma*' meaning 'Spirit' "is a functional concept and describes the means by which Christ is at work in the Church – the dynamic presence of the '*kurios*" (Lord). See: 2 Corinthians, "The Lord Is the Spirit" in, James D. G. Dunn, The Christ & The Spirit: Christology, Volume 1, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 115-116.

[58] Berkhof, 75.

[59] Fee, 35.

Of all the different images we have discussed so far of God in the New Testament, this particular Image of God as 'Spirit' certainly conjures up a sense of personal relationship and feeling of warmth between a person and God.

Summary.

This Chapter has discussed and highlighted some of the different Images of God that has been conveyed throughout the Bible. These images not only depict a particular understanding of God, of either being distance or near, but they also influence how a person or nation lives out their lives in relation to others within their community. In the person of Jesus Christ, God's Image takes a new turn as being more intimate and personal with humankind. The Holy Spirit of God enhances this close and warm relationship with Gods creation. In the next chapter, I will discuss the Samoan culture and traditions to discuss the types of images of their deities that existed then.

CHAPTER TWO.

PRE-CHRISTIAN IMAGES OF SAMOA DEITIES.

2.1. Introduction.

This chapter discusses the pre-Christian images of Samoan deities and the type of relationships the people had with their religious gods. It begins with a etymology of Samoan words that have the meaning of 'Image'. Secondly, the chapter discusses the religiosity of the Samoan people, followed by an explanation of the significance of the *atua* gods and then the *aitu* gods in the lives of the Samoan people. A deliberation of the importance of the Samoan culture will be followed by a discussion of the impact of the London Missionary Society missionaries Christian God. Finally, the chapter looks at the introduction of the role of the *feagaiga/faifeau* or Pastor within the Samoan context.

2.2. Etymology of Image in the Samoan language.

The Samoan words *fa'atagata* and *tupua* both imply 'image' in the English language.[1] Etymologically, the word *fa'atagata*, *fa'a* is a causative prefix, which means, "to make a comparison."[2] When this causative prefix is attached to "*tagata,*" which means man or mankind, *fa'atagata* therefore mean's "to make a comparison of mankind."[3] The word 'make' refers to a sculpture or an idol, which symbolizes what, is compared to mankind. *Tupua* on the other hand, not only emphasizes *fa'atagata,* but it usually refers to "idols." *Tupua* represents objects that have a lifeless form but

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[1] George Pratt, Pratt's Grammar and the Dictionary of the Samoan Language, 4th edition, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1911), 118.
[2] Pratt, 2.
[3] Pratt, 2.

represent something more important than "it".[4] Certainly, there is no sign of Samoa worshipping idols or any type of object that comes under the definition of *fa'atagata* or *tupua.*

2.3. Samoan Pre-Christian Religiosity.

As the Christian Bible contains a Creation Story in the book of Genesis, Samoan myths and legends also has an account of creation, that does not only identify who the Samoan people are, but also explains where they came from and their association with a divine being.[5] The use of the phrase 'Pre-Christian' in this paper refers to a particular period in Samoan history prior to the arrival of the London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries in 1830. According to the early LMS missionaries, Samoans believed and worship many gods.[6] Perhaps that was the reason why the early LMS missionaries claim Samoans to be Polytheistic worshippers.[7] However, the LMS missionaries did not understand the Samoan religious belief system, in which each individual or family worshipped their own god(s).[8] That is, Samoans did not worship many different gods; rather they worshipped specific spirits that had some significance to their own family, village, or to the people's worldview. The deities of Samoa could be classified into two main groups,[9] and how they worshipped and related to their gods depended upon which category their deity was in.

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[4] Featunai Liuaana, Resurrection *aitu* as a Contemporary Theological concept (Bachelor of Divinity Thesis. Suva: Pacific Theological College, 1991), 20.
[5] Augustine Kramer, The Samoa Island: An Outline of a Monograph with Particular Consideration of German Samoa, (New Zealand: Auckland Polynesian Press, 1994), 24.
[6] Alosina Vavae, The Church in a Changing Society, (Bachelor of Theology Thesis. Suva: Pacific Theological College, 1990), 5.
[7] Malama Meleisea, Lagaga; A Short History of Western Samoa, (Apia: USP, 1987), 35.
[8] Leanavaotaua Sekuini Seva'aetasi, A study of the Cultural and Indigenous Beliefs, and their help and influence in the understanding and the accepting of Christianity in Samoa, (Bachelor of Divinity Thesis. Suva: Pacific Theological College, 1987), 12.
[9] Seva'aetasi, 14-15.

2.4. The *atua* god: *Tagaloa-i-lagi* (Supreme god).

In the first category, there were the *atua* god's who were understood as having divine status. These gods were not venerated through the use of objects or idols, for such material things were unable to represent *atua* gods. Instead, these *atua* gods were explained and understood through the oral creation myths of the Samoan people.[10] Such creation myths pointed towards the mountain ranges and sky as to where these *atua* gods resided. The *atua* gods were venerated with great respected and awe, playing a key role both in the religious lives of the Samoans during the Pre-Christian era, and also shaped how Samoans viewed the world as they knew it."[11]

The Samoan people worshipped only one *atua* god, known as *Tagaloa-i-lagi.*[12] *Tagaloa-i-lagi* or *Tagaloa* in the heavens (*lagi*),[13] was known to the Samoans as the god of the heavens, and the creator of all the existing world of the Samoan people, therefore making him a national god of the Samoans.

> *"The god Tagaloa dwelt in the expanse; he made all things; he alone was there; not any sky; not any country; he only went to and fro in the expanse; there was also no sea; and no earth; but, at the place where he stood there grew up a rock. Tagaloa Fa'atupunuu was his name; for all things were about to be made, by him, for all things was not made nor anything else…"*[14]

There are some traditional stories that believe *Tagaloa* created the *aitu* gods, which indicates the superiority of the *atua Tagaloa.*

> *"If one wants to draw a comparison between the Samoan myth and the remaining heathen religions. One again finds that aspect which it has in common with all others, namely that the supreme gods withdrew early into their heavens and left the rule over mankind to the demons, the lower gods, to whom the people prayed and whom they obeyed, harkening to the voice of the priests, who naturally accepted willingly their food offerings and the tributes in the form of fine mats."*[15]

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[10]Kramer, 24.
[11] "Inwardly." The use of this term refers to the spiritual and mental meditation type of worship of the *atua* gods, spiritually and consciously felt, oppose to the physical worship of the *aitu* gods.
[12] Seva'aetasi, 14.
[13] Kamu, 37.
[14] Seva'aetasi, 13.
[15] Kramer, 24-25.

These metaphorical images helped explain the type of understanding and relationship the people had with their god *Tagaloa.* The god *Tagaloa* dwelt in the heavens, but there where times when he would intervene into the lives of the people for a particular purpose. It was in such occasions that specific images of *Tagaloa* would emerge forth. One of these images of *Tagaloa* as understood by Samoan people is that of a 'warrior'.

2.4.1. *Tagaloa* as a warrior god.

Tagaloa was commonly viewed as a warrior god, who was consulted in times of war and battle. The most revealing evidence of *Tagaloa* as a warrior god was his association with Samoa's common cultural object, the 'conch shell'.[16] The conch shell was and still is a significant instrumental object in the Samoan life. It was blown either to celebrate a successful fishing quest, or in greeting visitors; especially welcoming other *matai* (chief) and village members. The conch shell was also blown to notify *Tagaloa's* presence amongst his people.[17] Samoan people had great respect, loyalty and obedience towards *Tagaloa* in any situation of life, especially in times of war.[18] Therefore, when the warriors of a village would prepare for war, the *matai* as their representative would have the honor of blowing the conch shell. When the sound is of low pitch, it was a sign to wait, meaning, not to attack because they would fail. However when the sound is of a high pitch, it was a sign to advance and move into battle for they had gained favor of *Tagaloa's* guidance.[19]

The Samoan people strongly believe that *Tagaloa* was their leader and a warrior that would always lead them into victory. *Tagaloa* was viewed as Samoa's national god, he was supreme and divine, much respected and often feared. Yet, at the same time he

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[16] Seva'aetasi, 19.
[17] Vavae, 16-17.
[18] Falenu'u Tagataese, Interview with author, 20th April 2006.
[19] Seva'aetasi, 14-15.

was not completely disengaged and inactive in the lives of the Samoan people. From time to time *Tagaloa* would intervene in the lives of the people to advise or lead them into battle like a warrior.

2.5. The *aitu* gods (spirit gods).

The *aitu* gods or spirit gods formed the second category.[20] These *aitu* gods were in fact ancestral spirits who instead of moving on to residence in *Pulotu*[21] when the person has died, the *aitu* or spirit instead returns to the world of the living. The purpose for the spirits return, is either to protect its family or provide them with helpful advice and well-being; because if the spirit is unhappy with a person or family, they return to correct the errors in their way. These *aitu* gods usually dwell in living objects such as in animals example, eels, sharks or birds and trees.[22] A few *aitu* gods have returned and taken the form of half-human and half-gods.[23] *Aitu* gods can be classified into two main types, the household or individual gods, and the gods of the village commonly known as war gods.[24]

2.5.1. Household and individual gods.

In Samoa's pre-Christian era, each individual had his/her own god that he/she worshipped, freely choosing any form or object he/she decides to venerate his/her god.

According to Samoan oral tradition, these individual *aitu* gods were more genealogically related with the individual than the *atua* god *Tagaloa.* For example, traditionally when a baby was about to be born, the *matai* of the family acting as a

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[20] Liuaana, 26.
[21] Pulotu is a shared concept in the Pacific Islands. The name refers to the place where the spirit of the dead travel to and is considered in the Pacific as a good place.
[22] Seva'aetasi, 15.
[23] Liuaana, 26.
[24] Seva'aetasi, 14-15.

priest would call out the various names of the gods known to him. The god that would respond to his announcement would eventually be the god of the baby for life.[25] The individual *aitu* god was often consulted to meet the every day needs and guidance of the individual, such as in times of sickness, hunger and protection from others of the community. The individual worshipped his/her own *aitu* god in ones own time and space.

Household gods or family *aitu* gods were also very common because it was thought that when a member of the family dies, that person may return in the form of a spirit to protect the whole family.[26] The god *"Alomasina"* (Child of the moon*)* for example, "In worshipping this god, there was much feasting and prayers. The head of the family would pray that the god would help the family to prevent disease and death from entering their home…"[27] What is certain is the fact that there were types of ancestral or household gods that a family paid tribute to.

2.5.2. Village god *Nafanua:* The goddess of war and a revealer of secrets.

Village and district [28]war gods usually came in the form of a half-human and half god. What is common about these gods is their ability to go to battle without fear or failure. Before a village or district goes to war, these gods are consulted for their help by way of giving them food, fine mats and other goods that would please the gods. Samoans believe that with favor of these war gods, their battle will be a successful one. However, alongside their ability to bless the village before a battle, some of these gods were also consulted for general blessings of the village for a good harvest as well as cursing their enemies.

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[25] Seva'aetasi, 15.
[26] Liuaana, 26.
[27] Seva'aetasi, 15.
[28] District refers to the combination of two or more villages, this term in Samoan is *itu-malo*.

The most famous Samoan village *aitu* war gods is *Nafanua*, in fact, she was commonly referred to as the "goddess of Samoa".[29] *Nafanua* gained great favor amongst the people for her spiritual powers, and courage to lead her village and district into war. Notably, she was known by many *matai* titles, such as *'aitu fafine o Samoa"* (the woman spirit of Samoa), *"aitu tau mo Samoa"* (fighting spirit of Samoa), *'aitu vavalo o Samoa"* (prophesying spirit of Samoa), and was seen as the *"aitu atua of Samoa"* (the spirit god of Samoa).[30] *Nafanua* was consulted in times of war, and if the people had remained faithful in venerating her, she would respond by leading them into battles. There are many Samoan traditional legends that tell of the exploits and bravery of the woman spirit *Nafanua*, for example,

> *"Nafanua made two clubs and a paddle...Nafanua ordered the people of Falealupo to gather through the chief Matuna. Before the battle started, Nafanua killed with her clubs the two children of chief Matuna. This was to test the effectiveness of the weapons. Nafanua took one side of the road and Matuna the other; the people were to help throw the dead bodies in a cave near the sea so that no one would know a war was being fought".*[31]

Not only does this indicate the viciousness of *Nafanua,* but she was also known as a god who was physically active and present with the people. Alongside her ability for war, was her ability to reveal secrets (the prophesying *aitu* of Samoa). Traditionally, *Nafanua* is said to have hold the four highest chiefly titles of all Samoa that is known to Samoa people as the four kingdoms of Samoa, the *"Tafa'ifa"* title.[32] When one holds all of these four titles, that person is identified as a ruler or the paramount king. *Nafanua* is thought to have played a major role in the advent of Christianity in Samoa. Before the arrival of Christianity, a paramount chief *Malietoa Fitisemanu* was seeking to hold one of the kingdom titles *Nafanua* held at the time. However when *Malietoa*

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[29] Seva'aetasi, 20.
[30] Liuaana, 28.
[31] Liuaana, 27-28.
[32] Uatea Muliaumalu Lealiiee. Interview with author, 15th April 2006.

found *Nafanua*, he was disappointed to find that *Nafanua* had already distributed the four kingdom titles. Nevertheless, *Nafanua* replied with these prophetic words to *Malietoa* that are still remembered and often quoted in formal speech's to this day, "*Tali i lagi se ao o lou malo*" (Wait for a kingdom from heaven).[33] This prophecy of *Nafanua* has been interpreted as predicting the arrival of the Good News message of Jesus Christ to the shores of Samoa, fulfilled in 1830 C.E the year when the London Missionary Society arrived.

2.5.3. *Moso:* The god of blessing and curse.[34]

Moso was feared greatly in Samoa because if anyone displeased him, a curse will fall on that person or family. *Moso* was also the god of blessing, and god of the land. *Moso* was consulted for the several needs of the people, for example, for the recovery of the sick, to curse thieves and to provide for their economic daily needs. *Moso* was worshipped similarly to other gods previously mentioned; where people would offer what they regarded as most valuable in their possession in order to gain favor of the god. Blessings for the good soil of the land, enabling the people to grow many crops that lasted a period of time. They understand that *Moso* is responsible for the good crops, and perceived as a blessing of food for life.[35] For most Samoans, *Moso* was the only source of providing food and because of this; their lives were determined by how they responded to *Moso.* Worshipping *Moso* entailed giving some of the grown crops as an offering to him, during time of the harvest. However, if the people failed to offer some of their blessings to *Moso,* he would rise in fierce anger and spoil the land so that no crops would grow. This led to the primary source of food being cut from them.

These *aitu* gods played a very important and influential role in the lives of Samoan people. The interaction with the *aitu* gods on a daily basis brought about a definite

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[33] Uatea Muliaumalu Lealiiee. Interview with author, 15th April 2006.

awareness of the sacred and divine being present amongst them. Although the relationship between the people and their *aitu* gods varied from being close and warm to one of fear and avoidance, this did not deny the belief that their *aitu* gods were present with them. A continuous consciousness of the *aitu* gods also meant a respect and reverence towards creation because it is in creation that their *aitu* spirits dwelt.

Samoan pre-Christian religiosity had a influential role to play in the way it shaped Samoan culture, in particular its structure as well as human relationships.

2.6. The Samoan Culture.

The Samoan culture or the *fa'a-Samoa* (literally meaning the Samoan way) perceives its culture as having divine origins.[36] The originator of Samoan culture was the creator *atua* god *Tagaloa,*[37] and because the culture has divine roots, it therefore gives the cultural structure of the Samoan community divine significance. Culture was seen as a direct avenue in which *Tagaloa* could interact with the Samoan people, and vice versa.

Fundamentally, the Samoan culture was made of three main organized and formal structured groups, known as the *aiga* (extended family), *nu'u* (village) and *itu-malo* (districts made up of two or more villages).[38] It was the "*matai* (chief) system," which governed and maintained the harmonious function and relationship within these three groupings. The *matai* chiefly rule and authority therefore extended to the social, political and religious lives of the Samoan people. According to Samoan tradition, the

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[34] Tapaleao, 3.
[35] Tapaleao, 3.
[36] Lalomilo Kamu, The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel; Towards a Theological Understanding of the Samoan Culture, (Suva: U.S.P, 1996), 36.
[37] Talia Tapaleao, Fa'avae i le Atua Samoa: Samoa founded on God, (Bachelor of Divinity Thesis. Suva: Pacific Theological College, 1991), 2-3.
[38] Saifoloi Saifoloi, The Concept of Tautua: Service, (Bachelor of Divinity Thesis. Apia: Malua Theological College, 1991), 9-10.

first *matai* family were believe to have been born from an *aitu* or spirit god, giving the *matai* a deity type of image and role.[39]

2.6.1 The *matai* (chief) and the 'image of god.'

The *matai* in the social structure of Samoa is held in very high regards because they are seen not only as leaders but also as the physical representations of their god on earth. As stated above this view is based upon the understanding that both the Samoan culture and the *matai* system have divine origins. They are representatives on earth and so continue this important and sacred role. Such a perspective justifies the *matai* to rule with great power and authority over families, villages and districts.[40]

There are two types of *matai* titles in the Samoan culture,[41] (a) the *ali'i* title and (b) the *tulafale* title. Although both *matai* titles come under its common name *matai,* they have different roles and responsibilities within the culture. The *alii* title is of higher rank and authority than the *tulafale* title. Malama Meleisea explains,

> *"The alii titles were those which traced its sacred origin through genealogies which began with Tagaloa, the creator god, and linked to major aristocratic lineages. The tulafale titles had more utilitarian associations, in accordance with their role of rendering service to and oratory on behalf of the alii."*[42]

One cannot understand the concept of the *matai* system without understanding the concept of the *aiga* (family). Both the *aiga* and the *matai* inherently belong and interact together in what is commonly known as the *matai* system. Each Samoan family is governed by their own selected *matai* as the head of their nuclear and extended family.[43] A *matai* cannot be active without the consent of the whole *aiga* *potopoto* (extended family).[44] Therefore, it is imperative that each family selects their

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[39] Kramer, 24.
[40] K R Howe, Where the waves fall "A new South Island history from the first settlement to Colonial rule (Australia: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd Company, 1984).
[41] Saifoloi, 9-10.
[42] Saifoloi, 10.
[43] Howe, 231.
[44] Kamu, 39.

matai carefully, because the family's past history, present existence, and future development relies heavily upon the leadership and guidance of the *matai.*

The *matai* responsibility involves conducting and controlling how matters are to be dealt with both in his immediate and extended family. For example, when the family receives gifts like food, fine mats and other material goods from friend's or visitors, it is the *matai's* responsibility to decide how they are to be used or equally distributed amongst family members. Therefore, the *matai* was responsible for the good wealth and stable living of the family in times of economic, social, political and cultural crises.

Another very important role of the *matai* during the pre-Christian era was that they were also the *ositaulaga* (the offerers of prayers and worship) to their deities as representatives of the family. It was the *matai* that acted the priestly role, the mediator between their *atua* or *aitu* gods and the rest of the family or village.[45] Due to the many important roles the *matai* played not only within the context of the family, the *matai's* were greatly respected and viewed upon as obtaining divine authority from their *atua* gods and chosen by their *aitu* gods to lead the family.

2.6.2. The *Nu'u* (Village).

Pre-Christian Samoan society was well organized and structured; each grouping within the village community clearly understood their roles and responsibilities that needed to be performed. A Samoan village is different from the definition of a European city or town, it is made up of many different families living in the same locality, making up a communal family. The traditional Samoan village was divided into three main groupings. Firstly there was the *fono* or council of *matai's* who made all the decision of the daily running of the village. The essential purpose of the *fono* is

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[45] Kamu, 41- 42.

to maintain unity and harmonious relationships between families. According to Samoan tradition, the *fono* originated from *Tagaloa,* thus giving it a sacred and important role within the village.[46] The *fono* as the authority of the village governed the way people lived, meaning the *fono* settled village disputes and enforced punishment upon anyone who breaks the village laws hence disrupting the unity of the village and its people. Punishment is administered through fines, confiscation, destruction of property and corporal punishment to discipline the people.[47] In much worse matters, a punishment called *"ati ma le lau'* (bite also the leaf) is active.[48] The most severe form of punishment is banishment. Despite the harsh punishment, the authority of the *fono* served the purpose of promoting peace, justice, caring and sharing. George Turner, stated that those who disobeyed the village laws, *Tagaloa-i-lagi* would punish them through the authority of the *fono* to establish his peaceful ruling for his people.[49]

The second group within the village structure is the *aumaga* or untitled young men of the village who form the basic work force of the community.[50] The *aumaga* were referred to as the arms and legs of the *matai* as they would serve the council of *matai's* by implementing their wishes.[51]

The third group the *aualuma* consisted of the unmarried daughters of the chief as well as some of the unmarried women of the village and they conducted worked that related to them as young women such as weaving and light labour chores.[52] The interpretation of the *matai* as a human representation of the peoples 'image of god' not only elevated the matai to a different level with ordinary people but also bestowed

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[46] Kamu, 48.
[47] Kamu, 49.
[48] Sala'a Fiti, Interview with author, 15th April 2006.
[49] Kamu, 47.
[50] Saifoloi, 9-10.
[51] Uatea Muliaumalu Leali'ie'e, Interview with author, 25 April 2006.

upon him much power and authority. This often lead to a relationship of distance, between the *matai* and his immediate and extended family members because no one could just freely visit or enter a *matai's* house at their own will as this would be seen as being very disrespectful.[53]

2.7. The London Missionary Society (LMS): Missionary and the 'Image of God' in Samoa.

The *Tafa'ifa* title, consists of four paramount titles, the *Tuiatua, Tuiaana, Gatoaitele* and the *Tamasoalii* title.[54] Those who sought to obtain these four paramount titles would traditionally result in political wars between the different paramount chiefs of Samoa. Each paramount chief calls upon his/her own village or district god to bless and lead his/her side into battle. However, eventually these brutal wars and the desire to obtain these titles would soon subside, as the arrival of a new 'Image of God' to Samoa would bring about a dramatic change to the Samoan peoples' culture, worldview, and most importantly their religious beliefs and relationships with their deities. This important event in the history of Samoa was the arrival of London Missionary Society (LMS) missionary. John Williams with other LMS missionaries, and with the help of local Samoan and Tahitian missionaries; together they brought the Gospel Message of Jesus Christ to her shores. According to tradition and the recollection of Samoan orators, a high chief in the village of *Sapapalii*[55] in *Savai'i*

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[52] Peletisala Lima, Interview with author, 15 September 2006.
[53] Kamu, 42.
[54] Uatea Muliaumalu Lealiiee. Interview with author, 19th April 2006.
[55] A village in the district of *Saleleaga* in *Savaii*; the larger of the two Islands that make up Samoa.

name *Malietoa Vaiinupo,*[56] is honored today because he was the very first paramount chief that accepted Christianity into Samoa.[57]

John Williams not only brought with them this new message about Jesus Christ but more significantly, a new image and understanding of God. An 'Image of God' that would completely change the Samoan peoples thinking, personalities, behavior, social behavior and most importantly their religious understanding of their old traditional gods, which were eventually replaced by the new God of Christianity.

The task of John Williams and his missionaries in evangelizing the Samoan people was not an easy one, because the Samoan people's culture and pre-Christian religious beliefs were tightly interconnected. The new God of the LMS was not an easy concept for the Samoan people to understand and embrace. A Christian God that was invisible and transcendent, residing far beyond the heavens seemed impersonal, inactive and distant. It was different from their understanding of *Tagaloa* who resided on the mountain ranges, still within the sphere of humans. The God of the LMS stood in stark contrast also to the *aitu* gods of Samoa, who were immanent and constantly engaging in not only the people's lives, but also in the environment.

However, it is thought that one of the influencing factors that assisted in converting the Samoan people to accept the Christian God had more to do with the superiority of the people who promulgated the Christian God, than the *atua* and *aitu* gods of Samoa. That is, the Christian God's power and might was conveyed through the tools and

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[56] The son of *Malietoa Fitisemanu.* Apparently, *Nafanua's* prophecy was not fulfilled to *Malietoa Fitisemanu,* but with his son *Malietoa Vaiinupo.*

[57] Uatea Muliaumalu Lealiiee. Interview with author, 20th March 2006. See also. Featunai Ben Liuaana, Samoa Tula'i: Ecclesiastical and Political Face of Samoa's Independence, 1900-1962, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2004), 1-2.

equipment's the missionaries came with, such as guns, axes and cooking utensils, rather than a genuine spiritual conversion.[58]

Another prominent factor that assisted in the acceptance of the new Christian God and rapid yet peaceful conversion of the Samoan people was the ability of the missionaries to see the value of the *matai* system, and used it as a strategic method of evangelizing the gospel message.[59] This is by converting the *matai* of the family and village, where by culture determining that the rest of the family and village will quickly follow.

The evangelizing of Jesus Christ as the human 'Image of God' was another important factor and method of bringing the people to accepted the LMS new religious faith. Viewing God in the light of Jesus Christ assisted in enlightening the peoples understanding of the Christian God as they could find parallels of Jesus with their *atua* god *Tagaloa.* It had brought their mental images of *Tagaloa* to reality where they can experience close relationships through the person and life of Jesus Christ. Lalomilo Kamu states,

> *"Rather than the idea of a God who is remote and hard to reach, he now must be understood in the light of Christ the Savior of all. He is now a God who comes to us in his revelation in Jesus Christ and is present in our midst through his Holy Spirit".*[60]

This statement further suggests that the power and supremacy of this new image can at one time in the person of Jesus, unite the infinite and finite appearances of their *aitu* and *atua* gods.

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[58] Featunai Liuaana, History of Christianity in Samoa. Lecturer in Pacific Church History, Malua Theological College, Samoa, 30th June 2004. See also his book "Samoa Tula'i."
[59] Kamu, 48.
[60] Kamu, 48.

It was clear that once the Christian God was introduced and embraced by the Samoan people, and their traditional deities and practices to a degree were subdued, there was a mark change in the people's theology and perception of the divine being. With the elimination of the belief in the *atua* and *aitu* gods, there was a sense of the absence of the immanent presence of the divine and sacred not only in the personal lives of the people, but also their inter-relationships with each other as well as the surrounding environment.

2.8. The Samoan *Feagaiga/Faifeau* (Pastor) and the 'Image of God.'

When the LMS missionaries arrived in Samoa, as highlighted previously, the structure of the Samoan village was well defined with its roles and responsibilities. The *matai* of the *aiga* conducted the religious worship of the *aiga* to their deity, and if the *matai* was not available, this task was taken upon by the *matai's* elder sister or *feagaiga*.[61] The *feagaiga* (covenant relationship) is a very important concept in the Samoan culture. *Feagaiga* or the covenantal relationship between a brother and sister is deemed as a sacred and eternal relationship. It is where the brother has the responsibility of protecting and caring for his sister, by providing food and doing most of the chores of the family. The parents and sisters would always be the first to eat their meals, while the brothers would prepare the meals, serve and eat last after everyone else. The brother holds his sister in high regards and this status continues even after his sister gets married. In return, it is the sister's role to respect her brother(s) and remember them in their daily devotion.

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[61] Peletisala Lima, Interview with author, 15th September 2006.

It would have been difficult for the LMS missionaries to establish the role of a Christian Pastor[62] within the Samoan village structure as no separate priestly type of role existed. It was fortunate for the LMS missionaries that *Malietoa Vaiinupo* thought it was wise to take the sacred and prestige's concept of *feagaiga* of the brother-sister relationship and bestows it upon the Pastor.[63] The Christian Pastor became both *Malietoa's* and the people of Samoa's *feagaiga* or sacred representative of God in Samoa.

As a result, the status of the Pastor had a cultural importance, with the respect similar to a *matai,* the head of the family and village. Their role was sacred and eternal as he was God's representative or *feagaiga;* the image of the divine God to the Samoan people. Samoan Pastors are today referred to as *feagaiga*, describing the sacred relationship with the congregation. The Pastor is identified as the sister and the congregation performs the role of the brother in caring for and supporting their Pastor. Another Samoan word for Pastor is *faifeau* (literal meaning "a person who serves") and was given to convey the role of the Pastor as describing the type of work he should carry out, the serving of others.

Due to the bestowal of the concept of *feagaiga* upon the Christian Pastor, his status was elevated to a position of respect within the Samoan culture, but he was also perceived as the symbolic 'Image of God' within the Congregation Christian Church in Samoan.

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[62] The Pastor's role and responsibility can be defined in the term Pastoral which means, "a relating or composed of shepherds or herdsmen devoted to livestock raising.' The meaning of the term is theologically associated with the New Testament witness of Jesus Christ as a "Shepherd." Through the life and teachings of Jesus it stresses its deeper meaning referring to he Shepherd as the guardian of sheep's souls and willingly, gives up His own life to save His sheep (Matthew 2:6, John 10:11-14, 1 Peter 2:25.

[63] Peletisala Lima, Interview with author, 15th September 2006.

This obviously places the *feagaiga/faifeau* or Pastor in a very powerful but also dangerous position within the Church.

Summary

From our discussion in this chapter, it has become clear that Samoans were religious people. A religion that was vibrant and alive interacting in the daily lives of the people. They had *atua* gods that were venerated with respect and dignity from a distance. Samoans also had their *aitu* gods that formed and shaped their daily lives and its events. These gods interacted at an immanent level with the people implanting a sacredness and respect not only in human relationships but also towards the created environment. With the advent of Christianity and the introduction of the Christian God, the relationship of the Samoan people to their divine and sacred beings changed. In the next chapter, we will discuss the theology of 'Images of God' and its relevance to the theology of the Samoan Congregational Christian Church in Sydney Australia.

CHAPTER THREE.

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN SAMOA AND A RENEWED IMAGE OF GOD.

3.1. Introduction.

The introduction of Christianity to Samoa as alluded to in chapter two caused a huge impact on the pre-Christian religious and cultural lives of the people, which became the most dramatic turning point in their history. Not only did it change their understanding of God, but it also challenged the way they related to one another and towards God's creation. This paper believes there was a kind of synthesis of certain pre-Christian deities, together with a specific perception and understanding of the LMS missionary Image of God. Over time, this synthesis of God as 'king' has become less relevant and applicable for CCCS parishes outside of Samoa.

This final chapter aims to explore the effects of modern changes of the CCCS Church and its roles through these changes. The first part of this chapter re-emphasizes the importance and relevance of using images of God to relate to Him. Secondly, it looks at the CCCS and its development overseas, followed by a discussion of the 'kingship image' within the CCCS. Then a deliberation will be undertake that looks at the 'Image of God' in the CCCS ministry in Sydney Australia, this in turn will be followed by discussion of a renewed image of God. The chapter then turns to the implications of this renewed image of God in the CCCS, and how it is to be reinterpreted within its church structure. Finally, the author's viewpoint on this research will conclude this chapter.

3.2. The Significance of 'Images of God.'

The use of metaphorical images are important for humans because they provide a more visual understanding about a certain object. When this concept of image is applied to God, then symbolic images of God help His people to gain some understanding of being able to visualize and relate to a God that is transcendent, immeasurable and unattainable. A God who is beyond any human comprehension can in fact be understood and related to in a metaphorical way. In fact these symbolic images of God have been the only way throughout history humanity have been able to describe and reflect what God is like and how they should respond to God. More so, it also reveals how they should relate to one another as people as well as to God's creation.

This paper has highlighted in chapter one, a number of different 'Images of God' in the Bible, that have been drawn from various contexts of human experience. It has only focused on only a few, for example, 'warrior' and 'king' that emphasize a relationship of distance with God. The 'kingly' image used in the Old Testament is a metaphor, which expresses the superiority of God over human beings. The supreme God resided on His royal throne in heaven, from there He ruled, govern and spoke with divine authority. God's people reacted to God's divine rule with complete obedience and service. It is a relationship characterized by distance because of the kingly perception of God; it was very difficult, virtually impossible for a person or people to enter into Gods presence or royal court.[1]

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[1] Borg, 62-63.

Furthermore, God spoken of as a 'Farmer' presented a different character and relationship to God. As described in chapter one, the Old Testament farmer was a hard working family man, who related to people on a daily basis, showing love and concern for his family and neighbors. God as a farmer cared for and respected the land, an image that people of the Old Testament related very well to and apply this particular understanding of God in their every day lives.

In the New Testament, the ultimate 'Image of God' is found in the person of Jesus Christ. In the services and deeds in Jesus' life and ministry, he re-interprets the Old Testament kingly image to one of complete humility. The Synoptic Gospel writers record his triumphant entry into Jerusalem at the beginning of the week of Passover (Mark 11:1-11). Jesus riding on a young donkey symbolizes the arrival of a humble king of peace. Other New Testament metaphors used to describe Jesus and his ministry on earth are, servant, shepherd, healer and teacher, all implied a relationship of closeness and care between Jesus and those he ministered to. Therefore, images of the person of Jesus were significant because these were the platforms in understanding who God is and how early Christians should relate to him. This paper believes that the process of using biblical metaphorical images to help describe, understand and relate to a person(s), divine God is a similar process that occurred during the pre-Christian Samoan period.

As highlighted in chapter two, Samoans had an understanding of a divine and distant god in the form of the *atua* god *Tagaloa*, who was imaged as residing high up in the mountain ranges, although on a few occasions he would intervene in the lives of ordinary people. Like the 'kingly Image' of God in the Old Testament, *Tagaloa* of the Samoans projected a relationship of distance, authority, power and control. The Samoans related to *Tagaloa*

in obedience and service to appease their *atua* god. How this impacted on human relationships is that one lived out their life in relation to others in light of this understanding of *Tagaloa*, a life of service and obedience to ensure they nor their families do not encounter the wrath of their *atua* god.

However, the *aitu* gods were revered by the Samoans because the people had a far closer relationship with these deities as they would be involved in the everyday lives of the people. The *aitu* gods ensured that the environment and creation was respected and cared for as the *aitu* gods often dwelt in their environment. So people respect and care for their environment so as not to anger their *aitu* gods.

When the LMS missionaries arrived on the shores of Samoa with their interpretation of a mighty and superior kingly 'Image of God', it coincided very well and re-enforced the vertical relationship the Samoans had in their understanding of their *atua* god *Tagaloa*. However, what was lost was the immanent relationship and spirituality the Samoan people had as represented by their *aitu* gods, for these deities were quickly discouraged and faded out by the LMS missionaries. The impact of this action was an increasing and eventual loss of the sacredness and respect the people had towards their environment. The God the Samoans now worshipped was further beyond the heavens where *Tagaloa* resided and much more superior, a God that was distant but needed to be obeyed and served through Gods Image on earth, the "Church."

3.3. The Congregational Christian Church in Samoa and Parishes Overseas.

The Church is an Ecclesiastical symbol of the 'Image of God', where God's people

become permanently part of that image, resembling the body of Jesus Christ (Romans 12: 5). In the New Testament, the Greek word for church is *(ekklesia),* meaning, "those called out", or "those called by God away from their natural communities to form a new and deeper one."[2] The Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS) was originally named and managed by the London Missionary Society (LMS), controlling all aspects of the Churches development both internal and external. Under many speculations and conflicts between the L.M.S missionaries and the Samoan pastors and people, Samoa was looking towards a new establishment of their own. Their intention was to form an independent Church, which meant holding full responsibility for the successes and failures of the Samoan Church in particular its own people. This took place in the year 1962, where the LMS Church in Samoa gained its independence from its governing body in England and became known as the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa.[3] The CCCS was able to self-govern itself, and be self-sufficient making its own decisions and determining its own future.

Another very important historical, social, cultural event that also occurred during this period; were the new CCCS parishes being established overseas, in particular New Zealand. This was a time period that saw a great South Pacific migration of Samoan people. Hundreds at first then thousands traveling towards New Zealand, the land of new opportunities and hope for a better future.[4] The 1950s to 1960s was a time in New Zealand where their manufacturing and agricultural industries were growing rapidly and there were shortage of supply for manual laborers. The people of the Pacific answered the

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[2] Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia Standard 2005.
[3] Aukilani Tuiai, Independence of the Pacific Churches. Lecturer in History, Malua Theological College, Samoa, 30 June. 2006.

labor shortage of New Zealand in assisting in increasing their Labour market. It was a situation that also benefited Samoans as well as they sought better education, health and working opportunities for the parents as well as for their children. [5]

As the Samoans migrated to New Zealand, they took with them their Samoan culture as well as their own Samoan version of Christianity as represented by the CCCS form of worship. Although the initial Samoan settlers to New Zealand joined the local Pacific Islander Congregational Church (PICC) who were under the New Zealand Presbyterian denomination, after settling and being firmly established in New Zealand, many Samoans left the PICC as it was though to have become too Europeanized. Instead they congregated together to form their own CCCS in New Zealand, with its strong congregational form of worship conducted in the Samoan language. Samoan culture has been an attractive force for many Samoans living overseas in bringing them together both socially and religiously.[6]

In the mid to late 1980s, a further migration movement of Samoans took place, this time from New Zealand to Australia the new land of hope and opportunities. Samoa families leaving in New Zealand began re-settling in the big cities of Sydney and Melbourne. This particular migration trend was perceived as being unique because these Samoans re-settling in Australia had already experienced the urban life style whilst living in New Zealand, so it made it easier for many of them to adapt to Australian life.

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[4] The Great Migration of Samoans to New Zealand was an event experienced by the author of this paper, who was born in Samoa in the late 1970s but immigrated to New Zealand with family in the early 1980s.
[5] Danny Ioka, "Origin of the CCCS of Samoa in Aoteroa New Zealand (PHD Thesis), University of Otaga, Dunedin , New Zealand, 1995, 185-186.
[6] Ioka, 183-184.

Despite the large distances between many Samoan families living in Sydney, they still congregated together to form CCCS parishes. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, CCCS in Australia despite their small sizes in terms of the number of churches and the number of families attending, compared to their New Zealand counterparts, yet they are fairly well established now in Australia.[7]

3.4. The kingship Image and the CCCS: *Feagaiga/Faifeau.*

As highlighted in chapter one, the kingship image of God has guided and strengthened many of God's people throughout history and continues to do so today. The image of God as being like a king has also played an important part of Christian faith. Many Christians, who use this kingship image to reflect upon God, keep the love of God as the focal point of this image.[8] When that is done, then the kingly image of God is one of much love and respect, concern and care by God towards His people and in turn, the people will reflect this understanding in their relationships with others. However, this paper analyzes the appropriateness of the kingship model itself and its implications to our understanding of God today, especially when the love of God is not the focus of this image, but other characters of the kingship image take precedent such as power and authority.

Such an image of God that highlights God's power and might, far superior than the *atua* god of Samoa, when transmitted into the Samoan religion and culture, then anything that is associated with God is understood in light of the kingship image. For example, the CCCS Church and the role of the *feagaiga* are re-interpreted in light of the kingship

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[7] Leulu Felise Vaa, Saili Matagi Samoan: Migrants in Australia, (Apia: USP & NUS, 2001), 76.
[8] Borg, 63.

image. Because the king who was Gods representative in the Old Testament was always a male, then the role of the *feagaiga/faifeau* perceived as a representative of God on earth must therefore always be a male. The king was viewed as the lawmaker as well as a judge. The *feagaiga* is also seen in a similar light as the interpreter of God's law through the proclamation of Scripture as well as the enforcer and judge of God's law. What is most interesting and is of concern of this kingship image of God when applied to the *feagaiga* is the relationship of the church people or laity's with this image of God. As the Samoan pastor has been given the honorable role of the *tamaitai* in line with the *feagaiga* concept, the role of the brother is played by the church people, that is one of caring for and providing for their *feagaiga* or Pastor. When the kingship role is also incorporated to the *feagaiga* or Pastor, then it re-enforces the role of the church member's to one of loyalty and obedience to God through His representative the *feagaiga*. This understanding of the *feagaiga* also impacts and governs people's relationship with one another to one of servant-hood towards the *feagaiga*. The implications here are quite significant, especially if the *feagaiga* desires to take full advantage of his status for personal means rather than for the glory of God. This particular image and role of the *feagaiga* from the author's point of view has not been very conducive in CCCS parishes outside of Samoa, for example in Sydney Australia.

3.5. The Image of God and the CCCS ministry in Sydney Australia.

This paper has highlighted in chapter two the important role Samoan religiosity played within its culture; the two are integrally intertwined together. The Samoan culture embraced and respected the kingship image of God of the LMS, adopting and re-

interpreting this image in light of the role of the *feagaiga* and his relationship to the church people. This particular image and understanding of God was transmitted through the migration of the CCCS members to other foreign context and environment. The author is of the belief that there has been a differentiation of attitudes of the Samoan people towards this particular image of God in the CCCS.

On reflecting upon ones own experience living in Australia, as a member of a CCCS parish in Sydney,[9] a different context means new challenges to one's own Samoan culture. These churches are made up of small Samoan families of which the majority of the people have mainly migrated over from New Zealand about 68%. Either they are original migrants from Samoa who have lived long enough in New Zealand to gain citizenship, therefore allowing free access for them to Australia, or a smaller percentage about 17% are made of those coming directly from Samoa and about the same percentage 14% are Australian born. [10]

The majority of those Samoan families that are able to work in Sydney would be employed mainly in the unskilled end of the labour market in jobs such as in manufacturing or agriculture. These types of jobs demand very long work hours with a pay packet unreflective of the time and energy that has been spent.

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[9] There is one major *matagaluega* (district) in Sydney Australia that consists of nineteen (19) parishes. This major district is divided into two sub-districts, the *Saute* (South) and the *Matu* (North). The *Saute* (South) sub-district consists of eight (8) parishes, whereas the *Matu* (North) has eleven (11). Each parish is name according to the Suburb it is located in. For example, my parish is named after one of the Suburbs in Sydney New South Wales, **'Rootty Hill CCCS'.** Both sub-districts is governed and headed by an Elder Pastor who has been elected to undertake this role and responsibility. Either from one of the sub-district a elder is elected to be the leader of the major district, and it is this reverend Elder who finalizes all Church matters and problems. Which is then brought to the General annual meeting held in Malua Theological College every year on the month of May. My parish is located in the *Matu* (Northern district). It is made up of many families who come from different villages and backgrounds in Samoa. My parish minister is Reverend Uilikilifi Vaifale with his assistant Lay Preachers Samoauatasi Asalemo and Uatea Muliaumalu Leali'ie'e. There are at least thirty (30) deacons who are responsible for the up building of the Church materialistically.

[10] Vaa, 74.

The Samoan youth of the CCCS in Sydney Australia face similar problems to their counterparts in New Zealand, one of identity crisis due to the multi-facet cultures that exist in Australia, and the persistence of Samoan parents and the CCCS to uphold the Samoan language and culture. Samoan youth often get lost in the clash of cultures that they begin to lose their own Samoan culture and its meaning for them.

The CCCS continuing to remain faithful to its church traditions and culture, projecting a strong kingship type of image in the role of the *feagaiga* and in turn influencing the particular role that the church members must perform in light of this kingship image. The members of the parish must care for and serve their *feagaiga* as a fulfillment of their religious and cultural responsibilities and a requirement. It is not just financially supporting for the *feagaiga* and his family, but also assisting the mother Church[11] also through financial support in annual Church offerings through out the year. Often the character of the kingly love for his people, clashes with the king's rule with authority and power as represented by the *feagaiga*. Such instances occur when the *feagaiga* insists on a Church project to be done, for example, purchase of land to build a church building in the future. This may cause financial strains on families within the parish as their regular income usually is sufficient only to meet the needs of the immediate family, and thus a major project such as buying land, demands a larger financial contribution from church families who are not very well off.

Samoan parents understand very well of their responsibility to the *feagaiga* and the church because being brought up in Samoa, they have been exposed to the cultural cycle of servant-hood, hence their culture is deeply embedded in them. So despite the hardships

they face financially, culturally and religiously they must do their best to honor their lifetime role of supporting and caring for their *feagaiga*. If the *feagaiga* projects an image of authority and power, this places more pressure on the parish families to fulfill their cultural and religious obligation towards the Pastor, of being obedient and provide what the *feagaiga* demands.

Young Samoan teenagers normally do not understand the cultural and religious obligations and constraints their parents are facing. They often question their parent's actions, motives and service towards the *feagaiga* and church by often comparing their situation of having nothing (e.g. shoes and clothing) with those of their Australian schools friends who seemed to have all they need. Rebellious teenagers emerge when communication links are strained or have broken down between the parents and their teenagers. It is not just a rebellion against their parents and family but it is also a rejection of their Samoan culture as being too materialistic. More importantly, there is a rejection of the Church, and everything associated with it. God is perceived as being too distant, unconcerned and uncaring towards the real needs of His people, especially when they are young teenagers. The eventual impact of this rebellion by the young people is many leave the CCCS church for good, or are attracted to a more charismatic church that addresses their needs. From the author's personal experience living and growing up overseas, believes that the kinship 'Image of God' is not the most appropriate type of image; because often the love of the king is superseded by more authoritarian characters of the king. The author therefore advocates an alternative image of knowing God.

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[11] The mother Church is the (E.F.K.S) Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano I Samoa, translated (C.C.C.S)

3.6. A Renewed Image of God – as 'spirit.'

This paper proposes an alternative image of God that it believes is more conducive to the context of the CCCS parishes in Sydney Australia. It is not a new image but rather the reinstatement of both the Biblical image of God as a spirit together with the pre-Christian image of Samoa that has since been lost due to the advent of Christianity. That is the image of God as a "spirit,"[12] as represented by the *aitu* gods of Samoa. As discussed in chapter two, the '*aitu* spirit' took on a particular form or object that the family would use to worship. The family was not worshipping the object but rather the 'spirit' that dwelt in the object. This idea is parallel to the view of God who reveals Himself to address the lives of each individual and family member in their own context. God seen in this light as a symbol of a 'spirit' certainly has different implications for knowing and relating to God, especially for those living as members of the CCCS parish in Sydney. The spirit image of God (John 4:24, "God is spirit"), as used in Scripture refers to God's presence in all of creation and history. God's image as spirit depicts both a universal understanding and a divine manifestation in all of creation. Spirit expresses both an immanent nature of God as present and engaging in creation (John 3:8, "The wind blows where it chooses"), as well as God's transcendent nature. Transcendent in the sense that as spirit, God is not restricted in the world alone, but transcends places, time and history. The Hebrew word *ruach* has been translated into English to mean, 'wind', 'breath' and 'spirit', in an attempt to describe the activities of the Holy Spirit in creation. Although these descriptions of *ruach* express an invisible nature of the spirit image of God, yet its effects and manifestation are real and can be felt and experienced by the whole of creation. Unlike

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Congregational Christian Church in Samoa, which is based in Samoa.

[12] Borg, 71-74.

the kingship image, which depicts God as a king, Spirit metaphors allow for more inclusiveness. For example, God as *tina* (mother), *mauga* (rock), *fanua* (land/environment), *aiga* (family) and *uo* (companion/friend).[13]

3.7. The Implications of a 'spirit' Image of God for the CCCS.

A spiritual view of God is one that stresses the 'relationship' of a closeness and connectedness to God. This is very different from the kingship theological image combined with the *feagaiga* concept that is characterized by one's 'distance' towards God. Rather the metaphor of the spirit as a *tina* or mother rekindles the fond memories of the author's own mother and her caring, nurturing, life-giving role for her children. Under the spirit image, God is also viewed as a close friend, one who will not let you down or desert you in times of trouble. A close friend who encourages you to believe in yourself and to achieve the impossible, thus making it a very liberating and empowering image of God. God as like a 'spirit,' depicts the sacred is right here, that is the immense of God is present within the religious, social and cultural context of the people rather than being distant. Instead of God being the judge and lawgiver whose requirements must be met, under the spirit image, God is love who learns to be in relationship with us. The Christian life therefore becomes one of turning towards and entering into relationship with God who is already in relationship with us, God who gave us life and who has loved us form the beginning, whether we know it or not. This form and understanding of God would certainly be more acceptable and warming to many young Samoans of the CCCS living in Sydney. Reinterpreted in light of the *feagaiga*, his role as the 'spirit' of God represents

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[13] Borg gives a detail account of the specific metaphors for God as Spirit, 72-75.

a close relationship of friendship, care and concern, of fellowship and love, for his congregation, and young people, which far surpasses the kingship image existent today.

3.8. Reinterpreting the 'spirit' image of God in the CCCS.

Worship is an internal activity of the Church that can be practice in the Congregation, families as well as individuals. It is an attitude or behavior where singing, praying, scripture reading and meditation, are relational activities for human beings to reflect God's grace and blessings. There are two levels of Worship in the context of the CCCS, which aims to strengthen the Christian faith in God, (a) the Congregational worship, (b) family meditations and prayer.

3.8.1. Congregational worship.

CCCS church worship is structured and formal where the *feagaiga* plays the main role in church Sunday services. It is the Congregational tradition that the Bible and the preaching of its message is at the core of its worship, the Pastor bases everything else in the service around the preaching of Scripture. There is rarely an activity in worship the congregation can participate in, apart from the Bible being read together by the *feagaiga* and the congregation, and singing in the church choir which is made of some of the church members. Not much happens during the service, because the church program is the same nearly every Sunday and the danger that emerges is one of boredom and dis-attachment, especially if what is being preached does not address the real issues people are facing on a day today basis.

God as 'spirit' requires a more pro-active approach to church worship that demands more participation of the congregation. For, example the involvement of young people during

the service in singing a song or presenting a skit of a bible story to the church. The image of God as spirit, attempts to embrace the people to show that the *feagaiga* is concerned and cares for them. But it is not just a one off Sunday event, it requires constant engagement with the congregational members to really be in contact with the issues at stake in their lives, either through family visitations or invitations to dinner or being involved in youth group programs to name a few. That way, the church members can identify with the 'spirit' of God of friendship portrayed by the *feagaiga* or Pastor towards the people.

3.8.2. Family worship.

The importance of private family worship reflects the universal image of God's family, where He is the Father and mother, and human beings as His children. Family worship is an opportunity for parents to teach their children about God, also, it is an opportunity for children to learn how to read and pray under the guidance of their parents. For the majority of Samoan families, it is a necessary custom to carry out family meditations both in the morning and in the evening. Evening meditation has become an obligation strongly supported by the religious village law, put forth by the village Pastor and strongly supported by the council of chiefs. This village law activates its support by necessitating punishment to anyone who disrupts this peaceful moment for each individual family.

Living in Sydney, private family worship has become non-existent. The life style Samoans live, with work commitments of parents, school, sports and part-time jobs of the children, there is in fact very little time spent together by parents and their children. A time of family devotion, to share and reflect on God in the lives of His people is very

important. It is in such a forum that parents show the care and love of God towards their children, God as a loving father and mother and where the children sense and feel the 'Spirit' of God amongst them. However sadly, it is a struggle for family members in the CCCS parishes overseas to maintain this important and crucial part of their worship lives. This paper believes it is essential that the *feagaiga* encourage the importance and need for family worship to continue in its parishes overseas, as this would not only strength the family unit, but also the church's position and ability to meet the needs of its people.

3.9. Conclusion

The way we view God also expresses the type of theology we adhere to and how we should live out our lives in the world. This paper is of the opinion that the CCCS has a theology that depicts God in the image of a royal 'king'. A combination of the LMS kingly image of God they had brought with them, combined together with aspects of the *atua* god *Tagaloa*. When love becomes the center of this kingly image of God, especially when represented in the life of Jesus Christ, then this image can be embracing and caring. However, often this kingly image has been distorted by those who seek their own personal agendas, promoting power and authority to oppress others. From ones own experience, the CCCS kingly 'Image of God' often becomes to demanding upon people, as if their lives consisted only of service and obedience to a demanding God, through His representative the *feagaiga*.

This paper believes that the CCCS parishes overseas struggle with this particular image of God as like a king. When faced with multi-cultures, western ideologies, advance technology and globalization, people think twice about meeting the demands of the

church. But then that is what this paper identifies as one of the main issues, congregational people tend to view the appeal by the *feagaiga* as a demand, because of the way the *feagaiga* conducts himself as like a king. Hence, the people see their roles as servants of the *feagaiga* to be obedient and serve.

Renewing the image of God as like a 'spirit' who is with His people, cares and shares in their pain and suffering is far more uplifting and empowering for CCCS Samoans overseas. It calls for the CCCS to renew the Image of God as a 'spirit' within its ministry and theology that promotes the characters of the spirit and images of the spirit to its Church. In that way this paper believes, the work of the CCCS in Australia would be far more effective and useful for the congregation in preaching the message of Jesus Christ to its members.

God as 'spirit' is a God not only for the Samoan's in Samoa or in Australia, but also a God of all races and cultures to all kinds of people. This is a more revealing a universal God that transcends time and space, to reach all of His creation in love.

GLOSSARY.

aiga	nuclear family
aiga potopoto	extended family
aitu	spirits or ancestral gods
aitu atua o Samoa	the spirit god of Samoa
aitu fafine o Samoa	the woman spirit of Samoa
"Alomasina"	the name of a aitu (child of the Moon)
alii	the high chief
aitu tau o Samoa	fighting god of Samoa
aitu vavalo o Samoa	prophesying god of Samoa
"Ati ma le lau"	a type of punishment that means to destroy all possessions including plantations of a family.
Atua	God
aualuma	unmarried daughter(s) of a high Chief
aumaga	untitled man/men
ava	kava or a traditional drink of Samoa used in special occasion
fa'a	a causative prefix which means to make a comparison
fa'atagata	statue
fa'atusa	to compare or a comparison
"Fa'avae i le Atua Samoa"	Samoa is founded on God
faifeau	a pastor or preacher

Falealupo	the name of a village in the Island of Savaii
Faleata	the name of a district in the Island of Upolu
fale mafutaga	hall
fale o le galuega	minister or pastor's house
falesa	church building
fanua	land
feagaiga	covenant
fono	meeting
Gatoaitele	one of the four kingly titles of Samoa
Itu-malo	district
la malamalama	the name of the book store in Samoa
lagi	heaven(s)
Malietoa Fitisemanu	the father of Malietoa Vaiiupo
Malietoa Vaiinupo	a paramount chief who accepted Christianity in Samoa in 1830
matai	a chief
matai(s)	chiefs
Matuna	a chief title in the village of Falealupo in Savaii
mauga	mountain
Moso	the god of blessing and curses

Nafanua	the goddess of war and revealer of secrets
nu'u	village
O le auauna a le Atua	servant of God
ositaulaga	a priest or one who offer prayers and worship
Pulotu	a place where the spirit of the dead travels to and is considered as a good place
Saleleaga	a district in Savaii
Sapapalii	a village in Savaii
Savaii	one of the two Islands of Samoa
Tagaloalagi (Tagaloa-i-lagi)	creator of Samoa and its people
Tagaloa Fa'atupunu'u	another name for Tagaloalagi
tagata	people person
"Tali i lagi se ao o lou malo"	"wait for a kingdom from heaven"
tamaitai	a young virgin Samoan women
tina	mother
Tuia'ana	one of the four kingly titles of Samoa
Tuiatua	one of the four kingly titles of Samoa
tulafale	a speaking chief or orator(s)
tafa'ifa	The paramount and highest

	chiefly title of all Samoa. The title given to someone who has gained all four kingly titles.
Tamasoali'i	one of the four kingly titles of Samoa
tupua	idol
uo	friend or companion
Upolu	one of the main islands of Samoa

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