

**A READER'S RESPONSE TO REVELATION
1:12-20 FROM THE CONTEXT OF THE 'AIGA
TAULAGI, MAOPU AND FALEFITU' IN
SAMOA**

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by

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ABSTRACT

The *Aiga Taulagi*, *Maopu* and *Falefitu* are the honorifics accorded to my village of *Fasitoo-tai* in Samoa. These refer to the High Chiefs and Orators of the village. As chiefs, they hold the authority and the responsibility over the land and people and everything in the village. Their roles and responsibilities to make peace, and harmony of the village, is their highest priority. Their wisdom can guide the village to prosperity and peace, or to destruction if wrong decisions are made. Their authority can bring peace, or conflict amongst their people. In all deliberations of the village council (which comprises all chiefs) God is always to be praised and sought as refuge. I have grown up in the security of their guidance, and in one or two occasions, I have been threatened by their administration. The book of Revelation gives me this feeling of hope in the security God promises, and fearful of the judgement it also promises. For this reason, I have decided to use my own context or honorific to read Revelations 1: 12 – 20 to find out the roles and responsibilities of each character, whether I can find possible analogies between the *Aiga Taulagi*, *Maopu* and *Falefitu* and the text of Rev 1:12-20. In carrying out this task, I felt it best to use the Reader-Response approach and my hermeneutical lenses to construct a contextual Samoan reading and perhaps answer the questions: Who are the *Aiga Taulagi*, *Maopu* and *Falefitu* in the book of Revelations 1: 12-20? Do the roles and the relationships amongst the *Aiga Taulagi*, *Maopu* and *Falefitu* reflect the message of hope and love for both the believers and the unbelievers, the faithful and the unrepentant?

DECLARATION

I declare that this work has not used without due acknowledgment of any material that has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in another institution. I also declare that the work has not used any material, heard or read, without proper acknowledgment of the source.

Signed: _____

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my grandmother Pogai Manupopo Afamasaga, whose dream keeps me going in times when I am down, malo Tapuai faafetai Tatalo.

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“Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness. Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?” Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases.”

I would like to give a special thank you to my supervisor, Rev. Karanita Petaia for his guidance and patience which has ensured that this task is completed. Faafetai tele lava i lau Susuga le Faifeau Faiaoga. I extend my gratitude to my teacher and his family, Susuga le Sui Pule, Rev Alesana ma Rita Eteuati ma le fanau including members of my spiritual family (auaiga) for their insights and encouragement; it motivated me to keep pushing through and complete this paper.

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To God be the Glory now and forever!

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCCS	Congregational Christian Church Samoa
EFKS	Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa
Lk	Luke
Mk	Mark
Matt	Matthew
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
Rev	The Book of Revelation

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to draw and explore relative analogies between the texts of Revelation 1:9-20 and my contemporary experience as a descendant of the “*Aiga Taulagi, Maopu ma le Falefitu*” of my village of *Fasitoo-tai*.¹ This will be the hermeneutical lens which will form the interpretative part of the methodology used in this research. The aim here is to clarify the relationships among these titles and their roles as this will be my context as a reader, which I will bring to my reading in order to make meaning of the text. I will use the Reader-Response criticism to analyse the text. This method will be explained further in the methodology section, considers the importance of the reader’s experience in forming a contextual reading of the biblical text. It is important therefore to understand my hermeneutical lenses at this point, as this will lead to questions I will use in the reading.

Who are the *Aiga Taulagi, Maopu ma le Falefitu*?

Aiga Taulagi

Aiga Taulagi refers to the high chiefs (*Tamalii*) of my village *Fasitoo-tai*. They are the chosen leaders of families who are part of the council of chiefs which deliberate on all village affairs as well as district matters. As leaders they are charged with the responsibilities of providing ethical and moral guidance for the village. One of their duties is to give advice and encouragement to the people of the village. This also involves disciplinary punishments for those who have broken village protocols. At times they also help to save those punished to lessen their punishments, or to pardon the offenders. Their roles are to give hope to the villagers through their will (*tofa*) and all the villagers will depend on their leadership.

¹The terms used in this hermeneutic are honorific in my village of *Fasitoo-tai* in Samoa.

The term *Aiga Taulagi* is an honorific which finds its origin in the story of *Tuiaana Faumuina's* children, *Fonoti*, *Vaafusuaga*, and *Samalaulu*. The paramount chief *Tuiaana* was the king of the *Aana* district, on the western part of *Upolu* island in Samoa. When these children were blessed by their father, they all became kings, hence was the name *Tupufia* (many kings) was formed. When *Fonoti* became ill, his brother *Vaafusuaga* decided to visit his brother but kept deferring it until his son (*Afamasaga*) went and visited his uncle. *Fonoti* said, that he was waiting for his father to visit him but he came on his behalf. He heard that his father had long contemplated (*taulagi*) visiting him but he had come instead. To this day, descendants of the family of *Vaafusuaga* bear this honorific of *Aiga Taulagi*.²

Maopu

The *Maopu* refers to one person named *Tuigamala* who holds both the *Taulagi* and the *Falefitu* roles and responsibilities hence he is a *tulafale-alii* (both a high chief and an orator). His specific title within the village and the district is: “*ua na faalanumaaveave*” which literally translates to the rain which brought the rainbow.³ His specific role is to mediate between the *Aiga Taulagi* and *Falefitu* when disputes arise. In matters of dispute where both sides are unable to come to an agreement, the *Maopu* becomes the mediator to ensure an agreement is reached so that peace and harmony is maintained in the village. (Refer Appendix I)

Falefitu

The *Falefitu* refers to all the *tulafale* (orators). Their role in the village is to serve the *Aiga Taulagi* through their oratory. Blessed with the gift of fluent and persuasiveness in public speaking the *Falefitu* are the messengers who deliver the

²*Aiga* means family, *Taulagi* means contemplate

³Rainbow is used as a metaphor for ‘peace’ hence *Maopu* (*Tuigamala*) is the rain that brings peace.

decisions or the will of the *Aiga Taulagi*. They are also the voice that brings matters which require the council's deliberation and judgement, and are the first to suggest relevant disciplinary action or penalties for the disobedient in the village. This role of the *Falefitu* in serving the *Aiga Taulagi* also extends to the district.

The term *Falefitu* originated out of one of the Samoan myths. When *Malietoa* requested warriors of Samoa for an impossible favour, *Taotai* and *Toouta* from *Aana* answered the request and they succeeded. Upon completion, *Malietoa* gifted them the honorific of 'the seven posts (*pou*) of the house of *Malietoa*'⁴ as a reward for these two men. (Refer Appendix 1)

Purpose of this Research

This thesis attempts to study and draw possible analogies between the revelation to John in Rev. 1:12–20 and the roles of the *Aiga Taulagi*, *Maopu* and *Falefitu*. The field of Biblical interpretation has evolved greatly from traditional approaches focusing on the author or the content and form of the text, to those which give emphasis to the world of the reader.⁵ It considers important the reader's questions that he/she brings to the interpretations of the text, and which eventually help form his/her interpretation. It recognizes that finding a meaning of a text is shaped by the questions and issues that the reader brings from his or her contemporary situation. For this study, to find the meaning of the text, I ask these questions of the text. Do the roles and the relationships amongst the *Aiga Taulagi*, *Maopu* and *Falefitu* reflect the message of hope and love for both the believers and the unbelievers, the faithful and the unrepentant?

⁴ The seven posts of the house of *Malietoa* (origin of *Falefitu*) is considered a spiritual gift in the art of oratory as the seven posts refer specifically to seven of the best orators tasked to serving *Malietoa*.

⁵ This development in hermeneutics is found in, David Jasper, *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 104-06. See also, Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutical Philosophical Description with special references to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer and Wittgenstein* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), 24-47.

These questions lead me to developing a Samoan understanding that will be utilized in this study as the hermeneutic, to see the selected text, Revelation 1:12-20.

Revelation 1:12-20

Why this text and not another text?

The book of Revelations has different views and interpretations especially with its many symbols and imageries within the contents of the book. It also includes interpretations from various contexts about the different roles each character plays within the book itself. Furthermore, the book of Revelation uses the number seven constantly throughout. This would also allow me to explore this number in relation to the characters that interact within the text. Another reason why I chose this text was because of its value and use to my own environment. Within this text it also shows the importance of the Son of Man and his “roles and responsibilities” in relation to the Seven Angels. But it also shows the importance of the “roles and responsibilities” of the Seven Angels in relation to the Seven Churches. Can analogies be drawn from these roles and responsibilities, comparisons and similarities can be made to roles and responsibilities within my own context?

To conduct this research, I needed to understand my own context well enough so I conducted interviews with the chiefs of my village to understand the hermeneutic of *Aiga Taulagi, Maopu and Falefitu*. As the *Falefitu* is a gift from *Malietoa*, I also interviewed chiefs and orators from the village of Malie (village of the *Malietoa* title).

For the biblical analyses of the text, I sought resources from the Malua Theological College Library for expert commentaries, dictionaries, articles and theological analyses. This library research would allow me to conduct a literature review to obtain critical scholarship on the text.

I will use Reader-Response criticism to guide the interpretation of the text using the hermeneutic described above.

There was a need to use Reader-Response methodology as a microscopic lens to read the text of Revelation. The Reader-Response methodology is the response of the reader towards the text. The text itself has no meaning, but it is only upon the reader's interpretation that meaning can be found. In other words, the text is dead unless someone interprets it and gives life to it. The Reader-Response methodology also provides a path in understanding how a text should be read.

By offering a fresh perspective towards the text and interpretation on its own merits, it is to make text more meaningful to its reader, by allowing the reader to better understanding the Biblical text from their context. In doing so, it may reveal a different message which may be encouraging because it gives the text, and the bible, another perspective in understanding its application in relation to whichever context the reader is located. However, this does not mean that the word of God nor the message should be minimised at the level of man because this would then affect the way God is seen. What is important is to contextualise the text within our own contexts. In that way, God is not minimised to a human level, the message remains important as ever, and the respect the reader has for God in being a Christian. Undertaking this research gives purpose and meaning towards the selected text. There is no issue in providing meaning to a text, but it also must be done with respect and humility for God.

Outline

Chapter 1 contains two sections. The first gives a brief literature review of the scholarship on the text for this study. The second discusses the reading methodology for this research, which includes the *Aiga Taulagi*, *Maopu* and *Falefitu* as the hermeneutic and Reader-Response as the reading criticism for text analysis.

Chapter 2 is the main part of this study, the exegetical analysis of the text. This exercise interweaves the traditional analyses features with the hermeneutical reading to form a contextual reading.

Chapter 3 gives a synthesis of the text and the context to attempt to draw meaningful analogies for myself as a reader, my village and the church.

The study closes with a conclusion and some implications for the community such as my village, and the church. This part of the research summarises my findings and how the study responds to the questions I brought to the text. Attempts will be made to make recommendations for the life of church based on the findings from the study.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The emphasis in this chapter is to discover the views of scholarly work on Rev. 1:12-20. The relevance of the literature review to this study is to highlight some of the readings and interpretations of the text used in this study from published scholarly work. The purpose however is to attain an adequate level of understanding of some of the literature available on the text of Revelation 1:12-20. It also helps build knowledge about the subject of my research. While the main focus is on findings, consideration is also given to the various reading methods used by scholars.

There is a brief description of the reading method and the lenses that will be used as well as how the study may contribute to biblical studies on Rev. 1:12-20. I also intend to contribute to the discussion concerning the strong connection between the Church and contemporary Samoan society.

Literature Review

According to Eugene M Boring⁶, when John was ‘in the spirit’ while receiving the visions, he (John) was sought by God to spread his message to the seven churches.

⁶ Eugene M Boring, *Revelation Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2011), 82.

He was aware of handling the message about Jesus and his office including prophetic-revelatory, priestly and the kingly functions. He used such language to express his conviction that God, who revealed himself to him, was definitively Jesus. His feet were burnished bronze and His voice like the sound of many waters; these are also symbols that appealed in the description of heavenly messenger in Daniel. The seven stars in Christ's right hand also serve in the first instance to communicate the sheer cosmic magnitude of the church's Lord. "The same hand that holds the stars touches John literally unimaginable, another indication that we have here no mere report but a scene fraught with symbolic meaning."⁷ The 'two edged sword' which is interpreted by Boring is the Word. The only spiritual weapon granted to John to deliver the message. It shows that Jesus will be there no matter what he goes through. Jesus appears before John to write to the churches what is to come and to show their purpose. John is overwhelmed by the holiness of God in his visions but still obeys and writes them down.

Moreover, Wilfrid J. Harrington⁸ provides context to the passage by explaining, much like the other scholars such as Boring, the audience he is writing to. The audience are the seven churches of Asia at the time. But John writes to them in this passage to tell them of the rewards that await them if they keep pushing through this pressure and focus on Jesus. John is told by a 'voice' to write down what he sees. The seven churches are represented by the 'seven lampstands' he sees in the vision and sees a human figure dressed in a priestly robe which is meant to be Jesus. Harrington refers to Jesus here as

⁷Boring, *Revelation Interpretation*, 82.

⁸Wilfrid J Harrington, *Revelation* vol. 16, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993)., 77.

a ‘heavenly landlord’ who is always present with his earthly residents unlike a human landlord who is usually absent.⁹ This is meant to show God’s omnipresence.

Additionally, Harrington agrees with Boring¹⁰ about God being represented through Jesus and refers to some of the symbolic figures, the seven golden lamps suggested by the seven branched lampstand (*menorah*) referring to the seven churches. The Son of Man in the midst of the lampstand is a symbolic figure representing the saints of the Most High.¹¹ A robe that came to his feet is the figure of the priests. His head and hair were white as white wool and white as snow was an Ancient of Days.¹² The voice was referring to God’s all powerful voice.

Furthermore, the seven stars are identified as the angels of the seven churches, the heavenly counterpart of the churches. The two edged sword symbolizes the word of God, the powerful and only weapon of the exalted Christ.¹³ He understands the sword in the time of Roman emperors. However, he declares the message of Rome was not in control but only Jesus Christ the exalted. Moreover, he agrees with the meaning of the sword as a word of God’s judgment and no one can hide from it.

In addition, the right hand of Christ is a mighty power and authority over His messengers or Angels. The stars held in his right hand depict the important roles of Christ which is to care and protect His messengers – those who are faithful to Him.¹⁴

For Christopher C Rowland, the passage is about John’s greetings to the seven churches of Asia from the island of Patmos where he writes from. He writes about his

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Boring, *Revelation Interpretation*, 82.

¹¹Harrington, *Revelation*, 51.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Grant R Osborne, *Revelation Verse by Verse* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016)., 38.

¹⁴Ibid.

confession of Christ, God's sovereign rule, the final victory of God and restoration of God's people and the punishment of God's enemies upon Jesus' return to earth.¹⁵

John is called by a voice, which is meant to be God. He sees seven lampstands which represent and symbolise the seven churches of Asia, who are the intended audience to receive his visions. John identifies the voice that calls to him as coming from the 'son of man'. This title has strong references to the Old Testament in Daniel's visions where he is similarly called. The 'true Israel' is also revealed in how he is being portrayed, that is, as beautiful sight. John writes of Jesus' lordship over the churches, which establishes his power. For the reader, this would encourage Christians facing persecution under Rome, with the hope that the rewards in heaven far outweigh their sufferings on earth. The seven stars represent the seven churches of Asia which he holds in his right hand. It is seen as a political authority over Rome.¹⁶

Rowland¹⁷ also reiterates that John fears the presence of Jesus and falls at his feet as if he was dead. This shows how much honour and respect he has for Jesus who then responds to John in a comforting way. Jesus is the 'alpha and the omega', the 'beginning and the end' and has power over death this should be comforting because his people's bondage to sin is broken by the power of Jesus.¹⁸

Informed by this brief review of literature, I agree with Boring and Harington's interpretations of the symbols in the text rather than Henry. The former agrees that the seven golden lamps suggested by the seven branched lampstands (*menorah*) refer to the

¹⁵Christopher C Rowland, "The Book of Revelation Introduction Commentary and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible a Commentary in Twelve Volume Volume Xii* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 279.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷ Christopher C Rowland, "The Book of Revelation Introduction Commentary and Reflections," in *The New Interpreters Bible a Commentary in Twelve Volumes Hebrews James 1&2 Peter 1 2 & 3 John Jude Revelation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998).

¹⁸ Matthew Henry, *The New Matthew Henry Commentary*, The Classic Work with Updated (Harper Collin: Zondervan, 2010), 1398.

sevens churches. The lampstands, which has the Son of Man in its midst, are symbolic figures representing the saints of the Most High. A robe that reaches his feet resonates with the priests. The 'voice' refers to God's all-powerful voice. The seven stars represent the angels of the seven churches, the heavenly counterpart of the churches. The two edged sword symbolizes the 'Word'; the only weapon of the exalted Christ.

In contrast Henry's understanding of the Lampstand, Son of Man, Robe on his chest and the Voice of God, are relatively the same as Boring and Harington's. However, he interprets the seven stars as a political authority over Rome. In the biblical text, John provides a commentary for the meaning of the seven stars as the angels of the seven churches, and the instructions to write and send the messages, are specific messages to these seven churches.

Reader Response as Reading Methodology

In this section I will describe the reading methodology which I will use to interpret the text of Revelation 1:12-20 using the Reader-Response Criticism from my context in the *Aiga Taulagi, Maopu ma le Falefitu*, as a Samoan reader in my village of *Fasitoo-tai*.

The choice for the Reader-Response criticism as the reading method to read and interpret the chosen text, was mainly due to its ability to allow the reader to communicate with the text and express what the reader thinks of a particular passage, from her/his contextual stand point. In other words the reader will have an opportunity to explore his/her opinion with regards to his/her context or experience.¹⁹ Reader-Response holds that the role of the reader is necessary to create or develop meaning for the text - the text is given life and is meaningful when the reader reads the text. The text

¹⁹Todd F Davis and Kenneth Womack, *Formalist Criticism and Reader-Response Theory* (Macmillan Press: Palgrave 2002), 123.

is given life when one interprets the text from one's own context. Reader-Response criticism also provides us with models for understanding the reading process itself, as well as with tools for exploring the ways in which the construction of literary works shares in the production of meaning.

“Literary critics have not really looked into the world of the reader and the reading experience. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, in *The Nature of Narrative*, describe narrative as distinguished by two characteristics: the presence of a story and a storyteller. For writing to be narrative no more and no less than a teller and a tale are required”²⁰.

It only needs the person to tell the story or in the case of literature, someone to read it. But it begs the question as to why would someone write a story if not to be read²¹ instead readers focus on the text.

Reader – Response theory is not singular; it is plural in the sense that it is a family of diverse hermeneutical theories that piece a concentration on the lively character of the reader or communities of readers in understanding.²² There are several issues theorists disagree on. These include how much control texts have in interpretation, how much influence does the role of communities of the readers have, the role of the interpretative histories of text, whether the readers they speak of are experts or ordinary readers, and so on.²³

For Stanley Fish, Reader-Response is a communication between the reader and the text where the reader is considered related to the text. Inside the text there are instructions for the reader to develop interpretation. In other words, it seems as if the

²⁰Robert M Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader - Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Trinity Press International: Harrisburg, 1996), 9.

²¹Ibid.

²²Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader - Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark*.

²³Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Reader - Response Criticism," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005).

text relies on the reader to find what it means. In other words, the story is meaningless without the reader.²⁴

Furthermore Reader-Response identifies an 'Implied Reader' to name the reader now.²⁵ According to Wolfgang Iser²⁶, we as readers were not there at the time and place of the author. Therefore, we are not actual readers that were there at the time of the author. We are Implied Readers, or those whose role is to interpret the text, in light of instruction surrounded in the text. This is true when we consider the Bible as a text talking about things which happened two thousand years ago. We are unable to know the author in his/her time in order to know exactly what it means. The work of interpreting the text relies heavily on the reader now or the implied reader. As an example, Wolfgang Iser uses his interpretation of stars - he compares the text as a group of stars. According to Wolfgang Iser, when two people look at this group, each person will have a different interpretation. One may look at this constellation as a plough, while the other may see it as a bird.²⁷ What this means is that, there is one text but different interpretations.

²⁴Stanley Fish, *In There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretative Communities* (Harvard University: Harvard, 1980), 272.

²⁵Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1978).

²⁶ Wolfgang Iser, ""The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," in *New Literary History*. Vol. 3, No. 2, on Interpretation: , (Winter, 1972).

²⁷Wolfgang Iser, *ibid.*, 279.

CHAPTER 2: EXEGESIS OF REVELATION 1:12-20

Introduction

There are many interpretations of the Revelation account and the imageries and symbols in the book, which includes the interpretation of the end of the world and the second coming of Jesus Christ drawing near. Some interpretations make references to prophetic texts such as Daniel and Ezekiel to help offer a clearer explanation of an eschatological chronology.²⁸ The visions John saw appear to be related to their ancient first-century context and commentators often use Old Testament descriptions to explain symbols that are written in Revelation. The imageries appear to be representations in an account of the struggles the Christians are facing in their journey of the soul to God.²⁹

Overview of the Book of Revelation

Despite the debate about John and his authorship of Revelations, it is clear that John is the writer, based on internal evidence within the book itself (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). It is also believed that John who wrote the book of Revelation is a person who was respected in the Christian faith by Christians of Asia Minor.³⁰

Background and Dating

This book was written during the time when Christians were persecuted under Emperor Nero. They were persecuted because Christians were blamed by Nero for the

²⁸Christopher C Roland, Rowland, "The Book of Revelation Introduction Commentary and Reflections."

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Brian K Blount, *Revelation A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 5.

fire that almost burned most of the city of Rome.³¹ Nero committed suicide in 68AD. From this event, scholars believed that the book of Revelations was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in September 70AD. This fulfilled the prophecy in the suffering of the Christian followers (Mark 13). There is also another belief that the period in which the book of Revelations was written, was during the end of the reign of Domitian (81-96 AD), the time when John was at Ephesus.

Occasion and Purpose

There is a held belief from the Old Testament, a part of the prophecy according to Joel (2:28), that says: “Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.” This profession is part of Joel’s prophecy based on the bad conditions that had damaged the cattle, agriculture and produce of Judah. It shows that with caring love, God will eventually restore Judah. It is a love and care that comes by way of the direction of the Holy Spirit, for the person, to do what is needed to be done in accordance with the will of God.

This belief in the Book of Acts chapter 2 and the words of the prophet Joel widens the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit in filling each of Jesus’ disciples in Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost. It shows with certainty that the love of God is still with His people.

The importance of belief shows the significance of prophecy. Prophecy is about a revelation upon people by God through a person that is used as a mouthpiece to communicate that message. An important prophecy for Israel was when they were chosen as God’s people, as was prophesied by Isaiah, amongst other prophets. Many

³¹ G K Beale, *The Book of Revelation. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1999), 66.

other prophecies from the Old Testament were fulfilled in the New Testament and in the book of Revelation. There is a continuing effort by God by showing his people revelations since the beginning of time. This is like Paul, who saw the revelations of the resurrected Jesus on his way to Damascus, which shaped his life thereafter.

These revelations were not only limited to those who were Prophets as shown in the Old Testament but also other people who were specially chosen by God. The common belief that only prophets communicate with God, was confusing to the people of Israel in their relationship with God during the Inter-Testamental period. Some believed that during this period God had left Israel. It was a period in which there were no more prophets. However, others in Israel believed, that there were people who carried out the duties of prophecy, even though they were not believed to be prophets by the majority of society like high priests, leaders who looked after the temple or Levites who continued in their duties. These people were seen as the mouthpiece of God or those who reveal His will to the people. These were also the people that actually had a time when God did reveal His will to them. For example, as it is known in the story of the baptism of Jesus, John saw a vision of a dove flying above with a voice from heaven. There is also the vision that Stephan had during his persecution in the book of Acts. This is where the words of Joel were fulfilled, "...your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." God's revelations are known by the Holy Spirit, which has poured itself, upon the faithful people, especially during times of suffering and persecution of the Christian faithful under the rule of Rome. Thus, the book of Revelation is a book that is about providing encouragement and warmth to the faithful with a message of hope and that God will not abandon His people.

Content

The central theme of the book of Revelation: “for the Lord our God Almighty reigns” (19:6). This message becomes clear with the victorious lamb, “Lord of Lords and the King of Kings” (17:14). It shows the Almighty Power of God to those who believe and have faith in Him. It is a witness that is shown by unwavering faith through times of suffering and hardship in their spiritual journeys. The emphases on patience and perseverance through suffering with hope that their lives are in the hands of God not only in this life but the life beyond that as well.

Exegesis of Revelation 1:12-20

This part of chapter 2 is the exegetical work on Revelation 1: 12-20 using the Reader-Response as a method of reading, by examining how the text can create meaning in contemporary Samoa, from the context of the *Aiga Taulagi, Maopu and Falefitu*.

The word Revelation comes from the Greek word ὁποκαλυψις which means “unveiling” or “revealing”.³² This means that what is going to happen in the future is now revealed - God through Jesus and his angels to his servant John.³³ Christ commands John the apostle of Christ to write down what he sees.³⁴ Three main issues are clear from the command. First, he is to deliver the vision of Christ that he receives; second describe and to be clear to the churches about how bad situation they are. Third is to instruct church people about the future. Now John declares that the message

³²Michael H Burer and Jeffre E Miller, *A New Reader's Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2008), 473.

³³Rev Finis Jennings Dake, *Revelation Expounded Eternal Mysteries Simplified* (Lawrenceville Georgia: Dake Publishing Inc, 1948)., 29.

³⁴D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *Second Edition: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 700.

contained in the vision he has seen is “trustworthy and reliable” and behind of this trustworthy and reliable will be a reward granted on those who remain faithful and true. Jesus Christ is coming soon and will reward those who are patient in faith before his second coming.

He begins his vision by telling us that he was in the spirit on the Lord’s Day. The Lord’s Day in the Jewish belief refers to the “Sabbath” (a day observed as Holy in reverence to God) For Christians this day is Sunday, John was in the Spirit on the day he received the vision is a sign of spiritual perfection – a complete pure blessing from the enthronement for the chosen messenger who is going to deliver the message.³⁵

The relationship between the *Aiga Taulagi* and the *Falefitu* in the village and district council gatherings, is that the *Falefitu* always invokes approval and blessing from the *Aiga Taulagi* before he delivers his speech to convey their will. In this manner the will (*tofa*) of the *Aiga Taulagi* empowers the *Falefitu*’s task and gives hope for their (*lauga*) speech.

The first vision was a glorious vision of the Lord Himself. Once John heard a voice he turned to see who it was. This is one of the awkward connections; how can John see the voice, but the voice is just a sound? Rowland³⁶ says the voice will be seen when translated into writing of the prophecy. However, Andrew of Caesarea said the voice shows here not a physical form but a spiritual hearing, meaning not hearing as we understand by deep in his heart.

The awkward image here is how John turned to ‘see’ whose voice it was, however as stated by David E. Aune³⁷ on his turning to ‘see’, no one was there, therefore the voice was a divine message. So in the beginning of the vision, it can be questioned

³⁵ Rowland, "The Book of Revelation Introduction Commentary and Reflections."

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ David E Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary* vol. 52A, Revelation 1-5 (Dallas, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1997).

whose voice that was, because it does not specify the voice referring to God. Johnson³⁸ identifies the voice as the Lord himself by using of the word, ‘Alpha and Omega – the first and the last’. This is the title that is the Son of Man which is the Christ. This is signifying the sovereignty over both the ends and history and everything in between.

The word “voice” in the Greek translation is *ἐπιστρέψας* verb participle aorist active, emphasises the meaning that the voice was not just a voice but more than a voice, which means the great voice that appealed to John and commands him to write, was in form of trumpet.³⁹ The trumpet signifies the urgent, dramatic message that generally allows the encouraging tone of future judgment. The trumpet usually reminds the theophany of Exod 19:16, where the cloud, thunder, and lightning on Sinai were accompanied by the foreboding blast of a trumpet. Moreover, the trumpet here has a close relationship with the movement of God’s judgment.⁴⁰

The trumpet in the text signifies the urgent and dramatic message of judgment. In my context, bells ringing signify the similarity of the use of the trumpet in Revelation.

Once our village hears the bell ring, they automatically think that something is going to happen. For example: when the bell rings in my context, it either the message of punishment or message of something good. So the importance of the voice from these two things - trumpet and bell - is informing the people to stay alert of something later.

³⁸ Dennis E Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb a Commentary on Revelation* (New Jersey: P&R Publishing Company, 2001).

³⁹ Frederick William Danker, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 379.

⁴⁰ Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb a Commentary on Revelation*.

Brian K. Blount⁴¹ understands it like a powerful, trumpet voice as a volume of many waters; meaning the voice of heaven brings the same might, as do the voices crying “Hallelujah. So, the voice is connected to the moving of God’s judgment, and the brining of salvation to those who remained faith in God. A similar voice from heaven invited John to come up, and the voice identify the Christ that stand in the midst of the seven lampstands.

The “voice” that John heard can bring ‘judgement’ of God. The trumpet is a sign of the urgency to deliver of the message. This is similar with my world view or my own environment. The voice of the *Aiga Taulagi* can give life or even death. For example: if someone breaks the rule or disregards it, he/she is going to be punished. However, where the offenders are believed remorseful, it is the voice of the *Aiga Taulagi* that will lighten the punishment or even forgive and pardon the offenders.

The function of the trumpet is similar to the bell in our village. It signals the beginning and end of curfew; that it is time for worship. It is also used to signal an alarm for an urgent meeting of the village council. This usually concerns serious matters which demand immediate attention regarding the safety of the village or matters of conflict which threaten peace and harmony within the village. The bell therefore is not only an alarm but also a sign of the urgency. Dennis E. Johnson views the trumpet as a calling of the troops to battle and the congregation to worship. In the environment of *Aiga Taulagi* this is one of the roles of the bells when ring; not so much of physical battle by a calling for spiritual battle and worshipping.⁴²

⁴¹ Blount, *Revelation*

⁴² Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb a Commentary on Revelation*.

The seven lampstands, from the Greek term translated “*menorahs*”⁴³ is *λυχνιας*⁴⁴ from *λυχνια* commonly rendered “lampstand” which symbolize the seven churches that represented all churches in Asia Minor.⁴⁵

The word is the transliteration of the Hebrew term ⁴⁶מְנוֹרָה *menorah* is a technical term to remember the first lampstand that stood in the wilderness tabernacle and later in the first and the second temples.⁴⁷ The role of the number seven here is very important, it appeals as a heavenly number expressing the will and sovereignty of God, in other words it is a whole complete number.

For Grant R. Osborne, the Son of Man in the midst of the lampstands is Christ being involved in the situation of His people and being their leader. Christ holding the seven stars in His right hand means He is deeply committed and acting on behalf of his people.

As stated above, the Christ in the midst of lampstands He fully commit to His people to care and to guide. So, this is another role of the *Aiga Taulagi*, to commit to our village and care them by saving from punishment, and to guide them by their will.

In the text the seven lampstands seem to be specific churches located in Asia Minor. Similarly, with the role of the *Falefitu* seem to specific to our village and district. The *Falefitu* are the seven orators who represent the families in our village as well our village in our district when getting together. Their oratory delivers the will of the *Aiga Taulagi* not only in our village people but also our district and in Samoa. (Refer Appendix II).

⁴³ Rowland, "The Book of Revelation Introduction Commentary and Reflections."

⁴⁴ Michael H Burer and Jeffre E Miller, *A New Reader's Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2008), 473.

⁴⁵ Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary* 52A, 95.

⁴⁶ Rowland, "The Book of Revelation Introduction Commentary and Reflections."

⁴⁷ Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary* 52A Revelation 1-5, 65.

“Clearly, the seven lampstands were created from the Exodus image of the stand of seven lamps made from pure gold, designed for placement in the tabernacle of the Lord (Exod 25:31–37; 37:17–24.)” So that means the lampstand or the church should be pure gold because it burns by the power of God’s Holy Spirit. This is another picture of ‘spiritual perfection’ of the lampstands; with hope to send the message with full perfection. It is the responsibility of the *Falefitu* that they are well prepared and faultless with their oratory at all times. As messengers, the execution of their roles must effectively deliver the will of *Aiga Taulagi*.

The lampstand is a term from the Old Testament. This by extension also represents the faithful Israel (Zechariah 4:6-9) which is required to live not by earthly might nor by power, but by the Spirit. John saw a human figure “one like the Son of Man” standing in the midst of the seven lampstands, was a divine figure that drawn from mysterious figure that first saw in Ezekiel 1 and Daniel 7. The lampstands according to Beale and McDonough⁴⁸ is God’s presence or Spirit.

Aune interprets the lampstands and the seven torches of fire burning before the throne, and Christ as the one whose responsible for keeping them burning. This image gives a picture of the High Priest’s role, supplying the oil for the lamps. The ‘throne’ presents the seat of the King or the power of a kingdom. Christ serving and praising the King points to God - the lampstands or the seven torches burning fire are the seven churches, and the oil Supplier is the Christ and the one on the Throne is God. Therefore, the Christ will keep burning the lamps or the churches in front of the Throne. The throne itself is where the sovereign God is seated and receiving worship from these seven churches. Christ in the midst of the seven churches is the cornerstone or the

⁴⁸ G. K. Beale and San M. McDonough, "Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament," (Grand Rapid: Baker Academic, 2007), 175.

foundation of the whole universal church symbolized by the number seven (7) as a complete whole number.

The Son of Man clothed with a long robe *ποδήρη* the same term used by John to describe the garment worn by the child of humanity and with a golden sash across his chest.⁴⁹

Osborne sees the “long robe” and “golden sash” as an allusion to the high priest role but it can also refer to personages and rulers in the ancient world, which means a special person. The long robe signifies the authority status, and the golden sash the exalted or high-ranking status.

The significance of the long robe for them was revealing of their importance in the historical background of the village and the golden sash signifies their ranking in the structure of the village.

This imagery reflects on the *Aiga Taulagi* and their responsibilities in their relationship with the people of the village. The importance in the historical background of my village is valuable in different ways, their ranking in the structure stand out by doing right decision.

Moreover, this imagery represents the high priest in the ancient period. In ancient times, the high priest is the only one who exists to go in the tabernacle to make offering for forgiveness of sins. Anyone else who enters will die.

Jesus as high priest who makes offerings through his death for forgiveness of sin represents all of sinners.

What the Son of Man did in the offering of his life for the forgiveness of sins is similar to one of the important roles of the *Aiga Taulagi* in the village; especially in times of deliberating punishments for the disobedient persons. The will (*tofa*) of the

⁴⁹ Burer and Miller, *A New Reader's Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 473.

Aiga Taulagi always tries to lessen or save the disobedient completely through forgiveness.

His right hand holds seven stars, the angels of the seven churches. Osborne⁵⁰ sees the stars as power and authority. Holding the stars in the right hand reveal control and protection; the glorified Christ is in complete control.

The *Aiga Taulagi* holds the authority to control over the village, and the responsibility for peace and harmony of its members. The *Maopu* and *Falefitu* respect that authority as the will of God, and themselves as the messengers and executors.

The two-edged sword *στοματος αυτου ρομφαιαδι στομοσοζεια* symbolizes two things - either attacks the failures of the faithful or surely destroy those who would harm them.⁵¹ Dennis E. Johnson⁵² says it will conquer everything that opposes the rightful King. His face was like the sun shining with full force *ὁ ἥλιος φαίνει ἐν τῇ δυνάμει αὐτοῦ* it declares that the word of God is the weapon to be used against the powers and enforce the lordship of Rome.⁵³ The sword is not a literal reference to violence, but a metaphor for peaceful battle. His face was so amazing, like the sun shining with full force. The word shining in Greek *φαίνει* (indicative present active) translated as “shine or give light” meaning nothing can be hidden from him, that gives light to the darkness and turn the darkness to light.⁵⁴

The symbols seen by John identifies Jesus as the searcher of hearts, full holiness and wisdom, the perfect priest interceding for his people before the Father, the perfect King defending them against the devil.

⁵⁰ Osborne, *Revelation Verse by Verse*.

⁵¹ Burer and Miller, *A New Reader's Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 474

⁵² Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb a Commentary on Revelation*.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

John fell into a deep sleep on his face, with his face to the ground. Signify that John felt the presence of God, and he was not supposed to face His presence. He declares the power and might of God. The Lord touches him and set him trembling on His hands and knees. Placing His hands on him in the Greek language *εθηκεν την δεξιαν* reveals that John received blessings and a new beginning.⁵⁵ God commanded him not to fear - and why he should not be afraid *ειμι ο πρωτος και ο εσχατος*.⁵⁶ I am the first and the last meaning God and Jesus Christ are same. He will remove the fear of John of the Roman emperor and encourage him to remain faithful to Jesus Christ, He is the living God.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

CHAPTER 3: SYNTHESIS

Introduction

Analysis of Rev 1:12-20 in light of “*Aiga Taulagi, Maopu ma le Falefitu*”.

This Chapter analyses the Revelation to John on the Island of Patmos, (Rev 1:12-20) from the perspective of the *Aiga Taulagi, Maopu and Falefitu*. The aim of this research is to identify and compare the ‘roles and responsibilities’ of *Aiga Taulagi, Maopu and Falefitu* with those of Christ who stands in the midst of the seven lampstands, Seven Stars and Seven Churches. In doing so I will be looking first to the ‘Relationship’ of Christ to the Seven Stars and Seven Churches; the Seven Stars to Christ and the Seven Churches; and the Seven Churches to the Christ and the Seven Stars of *Aiga Taulagi* to the *Maopu and Falefitu*; the ‘Relationship’

Moreover, I will also be looking at the ‘Relationship’ of *Maopu* to the *Aiga Taulagi and Falefitu*; and *Falefitu* to the *Aiga Taulagi and Maopu*. Lastly, is an attempt to synthesize the two for an interpretation from my context.

Relation between *Aiga Taulagi, Maopu ma le Falefitu*.

Relationship of *Aiga Taulagi* to the *Maopu and Falefitu*.

The *Aiga Taulagi* are the high chiefs of my village who are chosen leaders of their individual families, and together they form the legislative and executive body of the village council, as well as the district council with neighbouring village chiefs where they convene and deliberate regarding matters of district and national importance. One of the connotations of the term *Aiga Taulagi* is that the family that finds its origins in

royalty and are descendants of a king.⁵⁷ They are treated with respect ‘fit for a king’ and their wisdom is greatly valued by the people they govern.

Their ‘relationship’ with the *Maopu*⁵⁸ is very unique. The *Aiga Taulagi* respects the *Maopu* because of their role as a mediator. But the relationship of the *Aiga Taulagi* to the *Falefitu* is very different, the *Aiga Taulagi* use *Falefitu* as their mouth-piece. They (*Falefitu*) are able to deliver the will (*tofa*) of the Taulagi to the village people. The *Aiga Taulagi* depends on the *Falefitu*’s roles to help in guiding the people to the right path.

Relationship of *Maopu* to the *Aiga Taulagi* and *Falefitu*

The *Maopu*’s relationship with the *Aiga Taulagi* and *Falefitu* is important and vital. The *Maopu* refers to one person. He plays the important role between *Aiga Taulagi* and *Falefitu*. If there is a matter which arises from both sides and it is hard to find a solution, then the *Maopu* will act to sort out the case in order to maintain peace.

He is to respect the *Aiga Taulagi* and their will (*tofa*). In their relationship in the village, the *Maopu* allows the *Aiga Taulagi* to speak first.

⁵⁷ <https://chrisb1967.wordpress.com/2008/08/01/o-le-aiga-aulagi-o-samoa/> Accessed 25th July, 2019.

⁵⁸ The one who holds both the *Aiga Taulagi* and *Falefitu* roles and responsibilities; hence he is a *tulafale-alii* (both a high chief and an orator).

Relationship of the *Falefitu* to the *Aiga Taulagi* and *Maopu*

The relationship between *Aiga Taulagi*, *Maopu* and *Falefitu* is very important. They respect the will (*tofa*) of *Aiga Taulagi* whatever they wanted. They honour *Aiga Taulagi* as their lord; whatever they may say they respect.

The relationship of *Falefitu* to the *Maopu* also important in their environment. The *Falefitu* used the *Maopu* to send their message to the *Aiga Taulagi* if they want something to the *Aiga Taulagi*.

All in all, it simply means the *Aiga Taulagi* has the power or the authority over the *Falefitu*. It is because the important of their functions is to give life through their will (*tofa*).

Relation between Christ, Seven Stars and Seven Churches.

Relationship of Christ to the seven Stars and Churches

Eugene M Boring⁵⁹ experience human figure who stands in the midst of the lampstands is Christ. The mighty one who holds the seven stars in His right hand. This symbolise the authority of Christ over the seven stars or the angels. The relationship of Christ to the seven churches is their functions; they are also the messengers of the seven churches.

Wilfrid Harrington⁶⁰ views the Son of Man as a high priest. His dress and His appearance (robe and sash, white hair) give the audience the impression of a saint.

⁵⁹M Eugene Boring, *Revelation Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011).

⁶⁰Harrington, *Revelation* 16.

The seven lampstands represent the seven churches. The relationship of the Christ to the Seven Churches is the foundation; standing in the midst can symbolise that Christ is the cornerstone of these churches. He is the olive oil for the lampstands; without olive oil, the lampstands cannot light up.

Relationship of Seven Stars to the Christ and Seven Churches

The seven stars are the Angels of the seven churches. They also play the role of messengers. They are responsible for these churches. God instructs the Angels with what He wants for these churches then the Angels inform each of them in order for them to be saved.

Relationship of Seven Churches to the Christ and the Seven Stars

The role and responsibility of the Churches here is very important. Their decision must be careful. Whatever decision they choose will be either be a blessing or a curse. So for their safety, it is best to stand firm and remain in faith to the one who stands in the midst of them. They have the blessing; they have the curse as well; but it all depends on their decision making to choose which side they fall on.

Compare relationship of the context to the chosen text *Revelation 1:12-20*

As we learn from the role and responsibility of the *Aiga Taulagi* and Son of Man (Christ), are similar. The *Aiga Taulagi's will (tofu)*, can give life of the village members, same as what the Christ is trying to do to the seven churches.

The *Maopu* role and responsibility is to be the mouth piece of *Aiga Taulagi* to the *Falefitu* and *Falefitu* to the *Aiga Taulagi*. It is a mediation role between the two sides to bring any disputes to order so that their role and responsibility to the village to maintain peace and prosperity, is upheld. This can be seen in John's roles and responsibilities. He is portrayed as a mouth piece of God to the seven churches, a true witness of God's true purpose. He saw the vision and wrote it down, and has provided a witness' account of the vision, to bring hope and peace to God's true people.

The *Maopu o le Tuiaana* is the mediator between *Aiga Taulagi* and *Falefitu*. This is another role of John in the text, as a mediator between God to seven churches.

As we see in the text, the seven churches belonging to God. Their role is to remain in Jesus Christ and obey the message of the God through the Seven Angels. In my context, we see this action in the relationship of the *Aiga Taulagi* ma le *Falefitu*. The *Falefitu* tends to always obey whatever the *Aiga Taulagi* suggests. They command the will of the *Aiga Taulagi* that all the villagers must follow.

CONCLUSION

This study focused on re-reading Revelation 1: 12-20 from my experience as a descendant of the *Aiga Taulagi, Maopu and Falefitu*. The text in study is significant because of the visions John saw and the messages conveyed for the churches and the faithful believers, as well as the non-believers.

Do the roles and the relationships amongst the *Aiga Taulagi, Maopu and Falefitu* reflect the message of hope and love for both the believers and the unbelievers, the faithful and the unrepentant? The *Aiga Taulagi, Maopu* and the *Falefitu* each have different roles and responsibilities for the well-being and peaceful living of the village, district, Samoa and the Church. These differences in meanings allowed me take the same approach to the book of Revelations. Even though there are different witness accounts, some took the view in relation to the roles and responsibilities that they were similar with the Book of Revelations.

The *Aiga Taulagi* is made up of high chiefs in the village. It is from their wisdom that the village seeks guidance for the betterment of the community. In terms of how the village is structured, if one is punished for not obeying the village rules, the *Aiga Taulagi* has the authority to save this person from it if the punishment is too harsh. They can provide advice and counsel to the wrongdoers on what they did wrong and how to correct it. They are also the ones to give their blessing to the *Falefitu* before they make their oratory speech on behalf of the village. The *Aiga Taulagi* are well received and respected by the village. They are the highest authority within the village and are seen as those who possess God given wisdom and are expected to guide the village to prosperity, peace and harmony.

In approaching the text and making comparisons, it can be said that it mentions Jesus in the midst of the lampstand, which can be compared to the *Aiga Taulagi*. This is

based upon interpretation of Jesus' and the lamps and the seven stars he holds in His right hand. This can be interpreted as Jesus being the centre of faith for the seven churches. It was His Hope that in sending out the seven angels to the seven churches, the people would believe that He was the one to be their saviour and protector of their spiritual welfare. He is also the one who has authority to rule over the angels, not only this but he also has the power to lead the world like how he represents the seven churches. It is through Him that churches are blessed. His Will is what blesses the rest of the world.

From the perspective of the *Maopu o le Tuiaana* or *Tuigamala*, they are seen as the one that stands between the *Aiga Taulagi* and the *Falefitu* as a mediator or one who brings about communication between the two. If there is a disagreement between the *Aiga Taulagi* and the *Falefitu*, it is the role of the *Maopu* to provide peace. The *Maopu* title is a title that was rewarded to *Tuigamala* based on the good service he did in the past. Moreover, no matter how sensitive an issue can be, once *Tuigamala* speaks, they cannot be interfered with. Not even the *Aiga Taulagi* nor the *Falefitu* can answer back. And most of the time, *Tuigamala* is usually the one who becomes the spokesperson or mediator between the *Aiga Taulagi* and the *Falefitu*.

However, there are duties that are appropriate and those that are not. When compared to how the narrative of the book of Revelation unfolds, the Messengers in this context are the angels because the role they play is to stand in between Jesus Christ and the seven churches. When you make another comparison of the Messenger's role in relation to other parts of the Book, it does not make an appropriate one. Another part of the Messenger's role as it is interpreted to be, is that it seems to make the *Aiga Taulagi* and the *Falefitu* give all their attention and listen to the *Maopu* or Messenger's directions. Whatever the *Maopu* wants, the *Aiga Taulagi* and the *Falefitu* must obey. In

the book of Revelation, this is not right, and this view is inappropriate. Jesus Christ does not listen to the Angels; the Seven Churches do. But both Angels and the Seven churches must listen to Jesus Christ.

From the perspective of the *Falefitu*, they are the messengers of the *Aiga Taulagi*. Not just for the whole village in its own meetings, but also when the village is gathered before the whole district. When preparing for an oratory speech or any other role that the *Falefitu* wants, they will request the blessing from the *Aiga Taulagi*. Whatever wishes the *Aiga Taulagi* want, the *Falefitu* have to listen and obey. From the viewpoint of the *Falefitu* and their relationship with the *Aiga Taulagi*, they speak on behalf of the *Taulagi* to the whole village, with the hope that the village and its inhabitants are blessed. It can be said that the seven stars have other roles which is supported by other scholars. They are the light that shines bright on the village through their duties and responsibilities.

As mentioned in the overall layout of this paper, one should find out what the use of this paper is in relation to my faith as an EFKS member and its progress. There are 2 points in this paper that needs to be revisited:

- 1) As is found in the Constitution, the culture and the Gospel go together. You can change how it is practiced but not its core foundations.

- 2) My attempt at trying to bring my Christian faith closer to my current environment and surroundings.

This is the very foundation of the Gospel which has been set by our late forefathers. This paper does not try to change that, however, it is a viewpoint made with the hope that it can raise awareness for all to see especially for the Samoan culture and the Gospel. Christians need to stay firm in the faith so that the importance of spreading the Gospel is not just felt here in Samoa but to those abroad. This is the advantage the

EFKS has in spreading the gospel because it goes together with the culture so that it can be understood better. The message of the gospel as in this study, is that of love and hope, which is upheld by the Samoan culture.

From what was mentioned at the start of this conclusion, my attempt at bringing my Christian faith closer to the context of my current surroundings, is to provide a different view and experience of the biblical text. This is what I did in approaching the book of Revelations. Since becoming a student of Malua and learning more of the bible, the need to search for deeper theological meaning for my context of *Aiga Taulagi, Maopu and Falefitu* has now moved in the right direction.

This is also a good reminder for my precious village of *Fasitoo-tai*. Its context has a theology which can be compared to that of the Bible and applied. This also serves as spiritual encouragement to the faithful to seek out God and remain faithful in serving His will.

APPENDIX I

Meaning of Maopu

The *Maopu o le Tuiaana i Fasitoo-tai* is a blessing that was received. What it means is that the *Mamalu* or *Paia* with its honorific in *Aana* is “*ua na faalanuma’ave’ave*” which means it is a high position which has promoted the *Tuigamala* in *Fasitoo-tai*. The expansion of *Maopu* is *Maoputasi*. He is like the one tree that stands between the *Aiga Taulagi* and the *Falefitu*. If problems arise between the *Aiga Taulagi* and the *Falefitu*, *Tuigamala* makes the peace. When *Tuigamala* speaks then all things calm smoothly even though the issue may be very hurtful to both *Aiga Taulagi* and the *Falefitu*. The *Maopu* then is a blessing for *Tuigamala* from the heirs of the *Tuiaana*. The covenant between *Toleafoa* and *Tuigamala*, made *Toleafoa* give the blessing of the *Maopu* title to *Tuigamala*. But *Toleafoa* is an heir to *Tuiaana Tamaalelagi*. *Tamaalelagi* is where *Salamasina* is descended from the first ruler of Samoa. *Salamasina* is descended from *Sina*, who had *Faumuina*, *Faumuina* who had *Toleafoa*, *Vaafusuaga*, *Fonoti* and *Samalaulu*. In other words, the *Aiga Taulagi* at *Fasitoo-tai*, are the *Aiga Taulagi* of *Faumuina*, because it is here that the children of *Faumuina* are mentioned which created the name of the *Aiga Taulagi*. It was a high honour and esteemed position that *Toleafoa* gave *Tuigamala* the role of being the one who would stand in between the *Aiga Taulagi* and the *Falefitu*. *Tuigamala* is also addressed as a paramount orator chief. He is also addressed as the saviour. If a punishment is too much for the transgressor, *Tuigamala* can either lessen the burden or completely pardon the person.

The word *Tuigamala* is from two words. The word “*Tui*” and the word “*mala* or curse”. When *Tui* is mentioned it means “death” but when one talks about “*mala*”, it is about a curse. In other words, it is a curse in nature. But there is also another belief that says

that *Tuigamala* danced in the presence of *Tuiaana* but his *tuiga* fell, which then caused people to think that he is cursed.

The father of *Tuigamala* is *Afemaleta* of *Fasitootai* who met *Aigamanuia* the daughter of *Ama* of *Safata*. *Ama* and *Leituala* came to visit *Aigamanuia* but upon arrival she had already given birth to a boy named *Tuigamala*.

After visiting *Aigamanuia*, *Ama* and *Leituala* were prepared to return to *Safata*, thus the words of ‘*Ama*, “how about you give us something for us to take to *Safata*?” And so they went and took the title *Tuigamala*. The *Tuigamala* title that is in *Safata* traces its origins from *Fasitoo-tai*, it was a covenant which was made between *Afemaleta* and *Ama*. Now the *Tuigamala* of *Safata* has been interpreted as a deal or covenant because of the agreement that was made between *Afemaleta* and *Ama* because *Ama* requested for such title to bring with him on his return. This is where *Afemaleta* once said, “our agreement/covenant/deal is this boy, the name of the boy is *Tuigamala*, who will go with you to be your successor.

But as for the *Maopu*, it is often said that many times when *Tuigamala* goes to *Safata* to visit his family, he will always be visited by *Toleafoa* and catch up over kava. It is then that *Toleafoa* spoke the words, “come we are about to get a blessing, from the blessing you will be called the *Maopu* received from the *Tuiaana Tamaalelagi*. Now that *Tuigamala* has arrived now. But as for *Toleafoa*, he is the *Tuiaana* that accompanies travellers.” His honorific was a blessing from *Fonoti*, the brother of *Mulinuu* and *Sepolataemo*. *Fonoti* said “You are the *Toleafoa* that accompanies travellers for the young men are one in Samoa. So *Toleafoa*, is the *Tuiaana* that accompanies travellers. All the sons agreed to the *Tuiaana*. But the *Tuiaana* is the *Tuiaana* from *Tutuila* and

Ape (Tootai and Toouta) these brothers kidnapped the boy from *Safata* and took care of him in *Leulumoega*.

Faumuina Manu Samuelu

APPENDIX II

The seven *pou* (posts) of the house of *Malietoa*

The seven *pou* of the house of *Malietoa* was found from the *Tuimanu'a*. It is said that upon the farewell of *Tuimanu'a* and *Malietoa* on the sea, they rinsed the *fau* in ocean and the residue from the *ava* coloured the ocean yellow, the *Taisamasama* of the *Tuimanua*. The *taamu's* leaves which drifted were used as a *tanoa* (*ava* bowl) of this fellowship. The *tanoa's* name *Vasavasaolealofi* of the *aiga Sā Malietoā* was formed from this fellowship and the *laufutu* which drifted in the sea which was made an *ava* cup.

The reason there are only seven *pou* from *Malietoa*, it was commonly thought that there were only seven of them. These were said to have been accompanied by the waves of the sea (*Taitafola*) and by the winds of the tide, and there was the title *Auimatagi* was formed and continues to be used by the village of *Malie* and *Tuamasaga* district.

What makes these seven *pou* important to *Malie* is that they are the orators of the village. If there are a title bestowal or the matai title, the seven orator chiefs are responsible for the *ava faatupu* and honouring the *Papa o le Malietoa*. There are no high chiefs (*tamalii*) are allowed to enter the circle as it is guarded by the orator (*tulafale*) and the *Lauti-na-laulelei*.

The importance of the seven *pou* of the *Fale o le Malietoa*, which means that the honour is made whole because of taking care of *Malietoa* who is the *Tama o le Faletuamasaga*. This is further made known when the title of *Malietoa* is bestowed to someone, and the traditional *fa'aloaloga* are given to the *Nofo I Faatoialemanu* because of the lost spirit and the *fa'aalataua* of the *Toafitu* and *Auimatagi*. The houses of the seven have seven

pous much like the designated houses of the *Suafa Si'a Manoo Ulu Kini i Matautualaa* in the village of *Toamua ma Puipaa*.

Auimatagi Faafetai Karanita

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