

Traditional and biblical concepts of the afterlife

Proposal for LOU ALA I MALO –Dr. Juliet Boon-Nanai

Tamari Mulitalo-Cheung

Traditionally speaking, when a Samoan dies, depending on their status, they can either go to Pulotu where the spirits of chiefs go, or Salefe'e or Nu'u o Nonoa where the spirits of the commoners go. From the biblical point of view (although there are variations from different denominations), the concept of hell for those who have not accepted Jesus into their lives and heaven for those who do is the most commonly known one. However, when selected people were asked they responded with a mixture of ideas some of which were influenced by movies and outside influence. This paper is an attempt to research the Samoan concept of afterlife. It is a search about the current mode of thinking –whether after a 100 years of religion we have been totally won over, or whether the Samoan phrase applies here –E le sala upu mai anamua”

PROPOSAL

a) **INTRODUCTION** –BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Konai Thaman claims in “Decolonizing Pacific Studies” that it is about reclaiming indigenous, oceanic perspectives, knowledge and wisdom that have been devalued or suppressed because they were not important or worthwhile” (p2). Tuiatua is a word of encouragement to local artist Momoe Von Reiche said she should make use of her local legends and myths to inspire more artistic work.

The area of afterlife is an area in the fa’aSamoa that has been the source of proverbs and flowery phrases of the talking chief like every other aspect of a Samoan’s life. Aumua Mataitusi Simanu speaking at the 2005 Faleula Conference hosted by the local chapter of the Faleula said –there were several villages who announced on the radio on the local media that the faaSamoa would not be practiced during someone’s funeral. As she put it “To stop parts of the culture means to stop our children from accessing knowledge and the language that carries that cultural practice.

Over the years, i have learnt that local ideas and western ideas sometimes get mixed and then locals start calling the new practice a traditional thing. As Albert Wendt said in his article on a new oceania –it’s not as easy to identify what is traditional and what is Samoan because there are many aspects involved in such as task. Before this research was done most of the people who answered my questions on Samoan beliefs on the afterlife spoke about the Christian part of it which only came around in the 1830s. Other

than a vague idea of Pulotu there were more answers from the biblical side than anything else.

This paper then intends to first of all feed my quest for Samoan beliefs on the afterlife. then I dare to say that students such as the ones I teach (whom I have some time to share some information with) are my other audience. But mostly the researcher whose quest is for more of his/her faasinomaga. In the process we may understand where some of our phrases come from and when they are used. Although some of the ways of preserving our ancestors are not good for the weak stomachs, learning about them is fueling a search for the missing pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that we opted to leave out from our current beliefs. In finding them, we find where have come from and perchance where we are going from there.

When a certain *matai* asked me to express my opinion on whether the *va'a* ritual carried out by the *Salelesi* for the Head of State's *o'o* (presentation of food after his coronation??-2008) should be continued, I remember my first reaction was "this is one ritual with its expression and seemingly mockery of the Head of State that I would feel very uncomfortable to watch or observe together with my brothers, my parents and least of all with the young one in my family." It seemed to go against the respect due to such a high chief, especially so where the leader of the group exposed his backside, as part of the ritual in the direction of the VIPs, and a crew member urinated in a coconut shell and showered the crew with it. In addition, having been brought up to *teu le va* or mind my relationship with my brothers and elders, I would not be found in the same room with them if such a video clip would be aired on tv. However, it would be a great idea to make it available for academic research and discussion in the local library or museum - to those who want to have access to it. In saying so, I may be guilty of over simplifying a ritual that was appreciated in the pre-christian era since this is the first time for decades it has been practiced. I therefore beg the indulgence and forgiveness of the reader and those who performed it.

In the trying period of having to formulate a Research Proposal and meeting a deadline, I am now faced with the same task—to go out and ask people in the community whether they think the idea of *fafā o Saualii* with its concept of afterlife is one Samoan belief that should be perpetuated and appreciated

whether there are contradictions with the bible that make it. Usually at the beginning of conversations people usually say “Do you still believe in those?”

Is the traditional idea of afterlife in the *fafa o saualii, sa le fe’e, nuu o nonoa* one of those indigenous oceanic perspectives that should be reclaimed or should they remain a part of the past, left on the wayside?

This search is multifaceted. It is an attempt to reconstruct for myself the journey the Samoan takes when the body gives up the spirit/life force in it and the body is buried. In doing so I can understand what many Samoans mean when they discuss a conversation held with the dead. Or when they chose to bury the dead next or inside the patio of their houses. It also looks at the influence of Christianity in changing the concept of afterlife for Samoans. In the end an overall feeling will be gauged about the prevailing thinking –whether despite Christian teachings people still claim ‘E le sala upu mai anamua”

Although the comparison is with the biblical view I have also included the Judaism viewpoint to show the differences between Messianic belief from where our local bible comes and the orthodox belief.

b) **STATEMENT OF INTENT** –research questions

Qs.

1. What are the differences and similarities between the Samoan concept of afterlife and the biblical one?
2. Which belief is the most prevalent in Samoa right now?

Working Definition of “afterlife”

Concise Oxford dictionary defines “Afterlife” as ‘life after death for some religions, as well as later life. When the breath of life is taken away and the body is ready to back to dust that it came from.

c) **A LITERATURE REVIEW**

SAMOAN VIEW OF THE AFTERLIFE

Felela Fred Henryⁱ writes in his history of Samoa or “Talafaasolopito o Samoa” as translated by K Faletese, that Samoans believe Pulumotu is far, far to the west where ancestors used to live in their original land Hawaiki. Henry writes that travelling parties used to meet spirits of the dead also journeying along on the wide ocean going westward towards Pulumotu. Some of these spirits would be crying others singing and laughing while others would be playing some instrument especially the conch shell.

In the middle to the late 1940s one residentⁱⁱ of Apolima island recalled often travelling by canoe from the island and meeting a ghostlike canoe going the opposite direction in the early hours of the morning. Upon asking the adults of the malaga, they would explain the decaying coconut stench carried by the wind as the signal the *aitu* or *saualii* were around. They would leave them alone without a word of greeting from them.

Henry also mentions something Nagley and other writers do not talk about –the river/*vaituloto* in Pulotu where a spirit may plunge to receive eternal life. This is one belief that the church efforts have succeeded in removing because not a single person I spoke to mentioned this river. Interesting enough during a class discussion (June 2008 - ASCC) some of the teachers who read Henry’s account in the class brought up the similarity in Henry’s book and the current popular Filipino movie called “Maging sino ka man” where the major character dies and travels around unseen by the living folks. He decides to jump into the river to attain eternal life. One student said :

Following the theory that we came from Madagascar, Asia and down into the Pacific the Filipino account is probably the same as ours.ⁱⁱⁱ

Henry gives different names other than the common *Lualotoali’i* (for chiefs) and *Lualotootufanua*(for commoners) to the *fafā*. These names *Luaō* and *Luavai* are similar to the Maori place where spirits gather called “*Honi Wairua*”. It is a deep place and is the entrance to the secret road to Pulotu.^{iv} The idea of Samoan commoners is refuted by Le Tagaloa who says there are none for all are related to chiefs.

At the door of the *fafā* according to Henry the doorkeeper *Leosia* stands to direct the spirit to the right place. Although Henry was referring to the early years of western entrance to local shores when he wrote :

even now when a high chief dies people still quote ‘Ua to’oto’o atu le va’aloo” referring to the departure of the long boat escorting the spirit of the high chief to Pulotu””, Henry is still correct today because talking chiefs still use this when a high chief passes away.

Before the high chief can continue the journey to Pulotu Fanaafi Aiono Le Tagaloa notes in her published thesis 'Tapua'i-Samoan Worship' that the high chief must have a lagi.

"This ceremony is where the inner personhood enters the realm where all dead matai go. through this ritual the dead body touches the soil –*fanua and eleele*'.^{vi}

New to the researcher is the idea that the 'aitu can choose whether to go with the body to Pulotu. Again like Henry and Nagley below Aiono-Le Tagaloa adds the term "*ala o'o* a seemingly endless way that does reach its destination which stretches from *Manu'a*, the *Matasaua* ... to *Falealupo*."

Winfield D. Nagley(1954) presentation entitled Religion in Samoa known only as part of an interdepartmental academic found in the Pacific Collection of the American Samoa Community College Library, is a six page reflection on the Pre-Christian Religion of Samoa and is one of the few sources contributing to the literature on Pulotu and *Sā le Fe'e*.^{vii}

Nagley quotes Rev.Stair in saying that :

"the *agaga* or soul when disembodied was supposed to retain the 'exact resemblance of its former self". On leaving the body, the *agaga* began a westward solitary journey to the *fafā* or hole which was the distributing center for the future life."

Like others, Nagley identifies *Pulotu* as the place for the chiefs to go while the commoners go to *Sa le Fe'e* or hell. Unlike others though Nagley makes no mention of the *va'aloa* that has been explained by others to be used by the chiefs as obvious in the mournful phrase "*Ua to'oto'o atu le va'aloa*"^{viii} referring to the coming of the long boat to take the spirit of the chief. The commoner's spirit however had to swim to the *fafā* having to go through the *Fatuosofia* location (tip of Upolu) to get to the entrance of the *fafā* in *Savaii*. Unlike the *va'aloa* story Nagley states that the *agaga* on beginning its journey from the eastern tip of *Manu'a*, travelled to the western most part of the island and plunged into the sea to get to *Tutuila* and continue from there to the western tip of *Savaii* now identified as *Tufutafoe* where the *fafā o saualii* is.

Nagley quotes from George Turner's book when he says there are two basins for chiefs and commoners. Although the meaning of the word "basins" here is unclear, it seems they are referring to a place for the chiefs and for the others underground which was like "present life though it also contained a heaven, or *Pulotu* for chiefs.

In saying that there is life like our current one in the underworld, a story related by one chief comes to mind. While working for the Water Authority in *Apia*^x the chief usually had to travel around the island and around the rural areas where the mountains decline to great valleys he used to hear singing at the end of the day when it was getting dark while he was riding back to town. Since it was far away from human habitation it raised several questions every time he passed by there in the evenings.

In his book “Melanesians and Polynesians” (1910) Nagley quotes George Brown who said that although Samoans he came across could not explain why they believed in immortality no one ever questioned the belief.^x Similar to Turner’s explanation Brown also :

judged the character of this other place to bear some analogy to this life in that hunting, fishing, cooking, planting, harvesting and marrying all took place though nevertheless the mood of this place was dismal .^{xi}

Nagley ends his presentation by stating the obvious –there is no consensus amongst writers regarding the commoner’s afterlife.

In Brother Herman’s book on local customs translated by Department Of Education’s Moega Tuitele to “*O Tu ma Amioga Taua FaaSamoa*” Brother Herman recalls Samoan people used to believe that the spirits were heading towards Pulotu to be happy with a lot of wealth while their bodies were slowly decaying and going returning to the dust.

“The Samoan Hades” in *Myths, Legends and Old Customs of Samoa* adapted by C.Steubul, A,Kramer, Brother, Herman is the only source I have come across where a name is mentioned of a person who wanted to go and live there because they could not reconcile themselves with the fact their loved one was dead. Steubul et al writes that “In the opinion of the people of Upolu and Tutuila and certain Savaiians there is only one Hades. Falealupo folks will show the two different entrances to the underworld; one for the chiefs and one for the commoners.

The two entrances were shown by a Tufutafoe tour guide during a field trip by former Samoan and Pacific Studies director Tuiasosopo and members of his department more than 6 years ago. Two tour guides were caught on camera showing the trenches where the spirits

from Upolu and elsewhere are supposed to enter after swimming from the end of Upolu to the tip of Savaii. The raw footage also showed the entrance where the souls were supposed to enter to be directed by the doorkeeper.^{xii}

Steubul et al share a story in this story of Samoan Hades where *Tofoipupū*, a woman who missed her handsome husband decided to follow him to the land of the dead. When she got there *Leosia* warned her about the village but to no avail.

It avails you nothing to cry over your dead husband ...in the land of spirits. it is a land you could never live in especially at night.^{xiii}

Due to her insistence he relented and she entered the underworld where she met her husband. The same warning was given to her.

“Indeed when night came, the lady saw the souls bounding about, whilst their entrails lay on the ground.”^{xiv} She was frightened out of her wits and returned to the earth.

Steubul et al conclude that there is a constant movement in the underworld since:

during the night, the spirits wander about the earth; at daybreak they return to the Underworld. Some of the poor souls are very restless. Some are red like sparks of fire, others are as black as charcoal, others again are blue.

How does Steubul et al explain the ghosts wandering about Samoa? Steubul et al claims that “it is believed they are inmates of the underworld because like them some are fiery red others are black or blue”^{xv}.



“Underworld” by Chris Lafoa’i –Ne’i Solo le Falute Vol.1. ^{xvi}

F.J.H. Grattan in his book “An Introduction to Samoan custom^{xvii}” (now available electronically through the generosity of the NZETC.Org) adds to the sources on the topic by discussing other inhabitants of the underworld. Although no information has been given about a systematic way of running the show in the underworld, it has been said that chiefs aspire to be posts of the temple of the Lord of the underworld. Grattan makes mention of *Saveasi’uleo* as Lord of *Pulotu* but does not expand whether the *aitu* that inhabit the fafa include *Nafanua*, *Saveasi’uleo’s* daughter and *Nifoloa* whom he also mentions briefly.

Mention is made however of the first cooked food in Samoa when Mafui’e derived fire from the regions below. Grattan quotes Rev.Stair in saying “three abodes of spirits such as Fafa, Sa le Fe’e :

seemed to have something in common, or at least the distinctions, like so many other in Samoan custom, were not clear-cut. *Fafā* was apparently the entrance both to *Sa-le-Fe’e*, the lower regions or place of punishment, and to *Pulotu*, the Samoan Elysium or abode of the blest.

^{xviii}

Like Aiono-Le Tagaloa, Turner and Brown Grattan claims in his writings that

Spirits of the dead were supposed to retain the identical images of their former selves and to commence at once a journey westwards towards the *Fafā*. Some at least of the human limitations persisted, the spirits having to walk across all intervening land and swim from island to island.^{xix}

BIBLICAL VIEW

Since the entrance of the London missionaries resulting in the “Taeao nai Mataniu-feagai-ma-le-ata” at Sapapalili’i, the Wesleyan or the Methodist church leading to the second religious event recorded in the history of Samoanalua –“Taeao nai Faleu ma Utuagiagi” and the third major denomination – the Catholic resulting in the oft quoted phrase ‘Taeao nai Malaeola ma Gafoaga, missionaries have had a great effect on what they labeled “pagan and heathen values of Samoa.” Such include the conversing with the dead, embalming them as well as other rituals not including the worship of family deities. As mentioned by Aiono-Le Tagaloa in her published thesis “*Tapua’i-Worship*” the missionaries were successful in removing the fanaafi o faamalama –worship done in the evening unto family gods, worship led by chiefs or in their absence the sisters.

There are many denominations on island and one of the big ones is the Catholic church. Like other denominations they too have their own answers about the afterlife as seen in the following question about the catholic version.

Question

what happens to a Christian after death? does s/he goes to heaven and be with God immediately? or in a state of sleep until the resurrection? What about non-believers? do they go to hell straightway or in a state of sleep until the judgement day?^{xx}

According to the expert Bro. Ignatius^{xxi} Mary(OLSM, L.Th) the church never taught that so it must have come from somewhere else:

the idea of "soul sleep" (state of sleep until judgment day) is not a biblical idea and has never been taught by the Church. There have been some offshoot groups and some pseudo-Christian groups that have mis-interpreted the bible on this, but it is a concept never taught by Jesus or the Apostles or the Church.

When a person dies they are judged immediately in what is called the "particular

judgment". This judgment determines whether the person is heaven-bound or condemned.^{xxii}

Comparisons will also be made of other Christian denominations

CATHOLIC	<p>Heaven bound presented to another judgment. Works judged/not a Salvation judgment.-those presented to Judgment seat of Christ are Saved and heaven bound. How lived lives important. Bad works are burned away –left only with pure good works – Get reward from heaven. 1 Corinthian 3:15 described this "Judgment Seat of Christ". Spirits remain with God until resurrection then reunion of bodies and souls to live glorified with God forever. Those reject God are condemned to torment in a temporary hell until resurrection. At resurrection condemned souls reunited with their bodies and cast inot everlasting hell with the devil ad fallen angels Those maim, blind and ignorant of Christ will be saved by grace</p>
METHODIST	<p>There is no "Methodist" view of the afterlife. Like other Christians, we note that two views appear in scripture. Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "You will be with me in Paradise today." And Paul wants to go to be with the Lord. On the other hand, Paul writes about the trumpet.^{xxiii}</p>
SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST	<p>When Jesus Christ returns to earth for the second time, He will take to heaven the people who died believing in Him, as well as the people who will be alive at this time and believe in Him. People who do not believe in Christ will die. The Bible says Christ's coming will be literal, personal, visible and worldwide, but it does not reveal the exact time of this event. That is why we need to be spiritually ready at all times.^{xxiv} For a period of a thousand years the earth will be utterly desolate and only Satan and his angels will be on earth. At the end of the thousand years the the Holy City in heaven will descend to earth. The unrighteous dead will be resurrected and with Satan and his angels, they will surround the Holy City to attack God and His people. God will destroy Satan and his followers, hence removing sin forever.</p>
MESSIANIC JEWS	<p>Believe in the resurrection of Jesus or Yeshua Hamashia who was prophesied about. We believe in Yeshua (Jesus) as Messiah because He alone gives sense to the words of our Jewish prophets. There is Isaiah 53 with its minute description of the suffering servant who was despised and rejected, afflicted with pain and stripes, by whose "stripes we are healed." He then dies, is buried, yet is revived and suffers all this "for the affliction of my (Isaiah the prophet's) people." All this can best be applied to one person only - Yeshua of Nazareth.^{xxv} The same blessing can be received by those who accept him.</p>
ORTHODOX JEWS	<p>There is no dogma in Judaism about what awaits us after life in this world, but Jewish sages have speculated extensively and discussed two distinct, yet intertwined notions: spiritual immortality (the belief that each of us possesses a soul which continues to exist after our physical body dies) and resurrection of the dead (the belief that at some time in the future, time as we know it will end and God will resurrect the dead, restoring their bodies to previous health and vigor and breathing new life into them). Spiritual Immortality and Resurrection of the Dead were ideas not original to Judaism, but they have been interpreted and woven into the fabric of Jewish life, and are an integral part of Jewish culture and thought. The Bible does not refer to life after death. Indeed, the Bible makes it clear that existence ends with death. In the Book of Genesis we read, "Dust you are and to dust shall you return" without any concomitant assurance that anything comes after death."NOTE : the New Testament is not referred to only the Old.</p>

PENTECOSTAL	Those who do not accept Jesus as their Lord and savior go to hell where there is gnashing of teeth and endless torment. Those who do accept him get to reign with him. This is why we have an endless drive to reach out to the lost so they may have a personal relationship with Christ. Revelation seems to suggest what can happen in the future but other than that a time where there will be no more tears is guaranteed, no more sorrow but rejoicing
--------------------	---

The influence of the bible goes is very much evident in our literature as seen in the popular song below and a poem written in 2006 by the researcher.

Local song : Moomoga Sa molia i Talosaga

1. Moomooga sa molia i talosaga
ta nonofo faatasi i lenei olaga
a 'o lenei ua valaauina oe
e leova lo taua leoleo mamoe
2. Fai mai Paulo o le Kerisiano e faamaoni
sa tigaina i puapuga se'ia o'o i le oti
nofo i le tuugamau i mea tiga ae olioli
le tau i le lagi o lo o iai lo ta nuu moni

This Samoan song is a lament of a loved one lost to death. The words are contemporary as obvious by the influence of the bible in it. The first verse deals with wishful thinking to reside with the loved one for life. The third line shows the belief in the shepherd nature of God as taught in the Psalm 23. The second verse quotes the apostle Paul's comment on faithfulness til death and the last line points to heaven as the real place for Christians. This is the typical scenario of Samoan music to do with the topic unless you're a Mormon, then as a LDS student said "her aim is to get to the Celestial degree where it is the brightest."

TUSI PA'IA MA TALA O LE VAVAU^{xxvi}

Sa tu'ufesilisili le mafaufau
I talitonuga mai le Tusi Paia ma tala o le vavau
Po 'o fea e aga'i i ai le agaga pe 'a oti le tagata
Pe 'a liu efuefu ma toe fo'i i le palapala
Faamata e tulituliapū le fafā o saualii
Pe pei o Lasalo ma le mau'oa pei ona fetalai le Alii

Fai mai upu a ni isi tagata matutua
E le muta lo tatou ola i (lua)loto e lua

'Aua o lo o faamau i lagisoifua
Le fafā o sauali'i i le si'u a fanua
Ma e fa'auau pea le fesootaiga
'A ē maliliu ma o latou aiga

Finau fo'i ni isi e lē sālā 'upu mai anamua
Le lua mo tamali'i ma le isi mo tufanua
O lo o i le 'a'ai e sao i ai na 'o agaga
Fai mai e faavaitaimi ma faimalaga
Ni isi e toe fo'i ma asiasi i aiga
Ni isi e faasoesa ma soona fai tifiga

A malaga atu ma le lē fiafia
Ulu loa i tagata e aunoa ma se valaaulia
Faamo'amo'a ma faatigaina
Amata mai fanau iti e o'o i toea'i'ina
Ua lauvivilu ai le atunuu i a latou tapu
Nofo pologa ai fua isi e aunoa ma se mapu

Ae fai mai ni isi o faifeau
Faitau le Tusi Paia ma le mafaufau
Su'esu'e ma sailiili i aiatatau
Le tofi 'o ē ua ta'ua e le Atua o lana fanau
Ua fa'aauppegaina i le pule e soli ai gata
Tutuli ai temoni ma faapupula ai mata

O le tala ia Lasalo le mativa na i'u fiafia
Ae i'u le mau'oa na iai i le pagatia
Maliu le mativa mapu i le fatafata o Aperaamo
Ae talofa i le mau'oa ua i le itu 'o ē ua fano
Toe tagi i se vai se'i faamalu ai lona galala
Tali Aperaamo, ua tuai ua oti ma le agasala

Fai mai fo'i auauna a le Atua
A lavevea isi i aitu ua toe foi i tupua
Ae ana malamalama tagata Kerisiano
I le mana o le faatauanau o a latou tatalo
Po o penei e le toe sulu i fofō temoni
Aua o le iuga lava o le sitiseni i Seoli.

E moni ai le fetalaiga paia
A amia o tatou agaga e tatau ona fiafia
Aua 'o ē ua oti ia Keriso Iesu
E malolo se'ia le aso toetu
Faatalitali ai i le tausamiga tele
Ae tagitu'i ē na lē talia le Alo pele!

O le fagufagu faatauanau
Nofo uta i tatou ma saga mafaufau
O le olaga nei e pei o le 'ai a le matagi
O fa'aosoosoga e tami mai ai le vaega a satani

O la latou manulauti po o le anava tau
Faatama'ia ē fia faatasi ma Keriso e faavavau.

(Ia sausaina i le toto o le tama'i mamoe lou agaga, ia i'u atu ai i le Atua.)

7.32am062106ottoville

The above poem which deals with the poet's stance as far as legends versus the bible was concerned. It was written in response to several things that took place a couple of years back. Firstly, my older sister and her husband went to visit one of their nieces who was said to have been possessed or "ma'i aitu" for more than a week. The usual symptoms for that would be the person has shadows under their eyes, when they are having a fit they froth at the mouth, kick around and often people sit on them to stop them from hurting others. They can also hear very acutely and can speak in the voice of someone else as well as possess extra strength.

When my sister and her husband went over to visit, they said their key broke in their car, they met an old woman on the road and when they got to the house where the girl was a strange voice like an old woman's spoke to them and told them she had broken the key and met them on the road. In addition she started to claw at the floor as if she wanted to bite at something. My sister explained her next move as something that was not planned.

"Something came up from the pit of my stomach and I got mad at whatever was possessing her. I yelled at the family to come together to pray then I started to tell the demon/s to get lost in the name of Jesus. I felt really bold as I spoke and finally a voice said 'O le a ou alu, o le a ou alu. I'm going, i'm going.' Finally my niece was able to sleep. Early next morning while everyone was still asleep, i sat up all of a sudden and felt the need to pray. There was the stench of decaying coconut/popo masa and it was the sign demons were around. I started singing hymns out loud and praying the blood of Jesus over the land and everyone. The rest of the family sat up. My niece was able to sit up and eat after that.^{xxvii}

Afterwards it was explained to us that she had a case of "faafaiavaina" where sexual intercourse takes place between her and demons claiming to be her dead ancestors. Since she got married she hasn't had any more cases as such.

This was not the case with the sister of one of my students. According to him she got possessed by a man that was supposed to have been dead a while back. She has been hitting a frog during a youth group clean up and had been loud as usual. When she got home she got possessed and started talking in an old man's voice.

When my parents heard who the spirit was^{xxviii} they were very apologetic and started to treat my possessed sister like a royalty. I remember saying to someone she's faking it and he must have bionic ears because he told my parents to teach me proper manners. Then my parents apologized again saying I was fresh from the states, that's why I was acting like that.^{xxix}

Two cases here show different approaches where one is authoritative in dealing with the possessed person and one where people show respect because they are supposedly of a high position.

In another case another family lost a little girl because she was possessed by an ancestor who was unhappy about the land that we were staying on. They were not happy and wanted us to get off it. Then they started talking through the girl.

In yet another case from Vaitogi, a family was watching their relative next door walking around outside her fale. They were wondering what she doing going around and around the house when they heard shrieks coming from that house. When they got there the very person they were watching walking around had been on the floor for some time convulsing and frothing at the mouth. Later they said ancestors(dead uncle and others) of the Vaitogi family didn't like her trying to compete with the real family members.

Preacher and head of the Worship Centre church Viliamu Mafo'e^{xxx} is popular for topics like 'E le se tala faafagogo Seoli/Sheol is not a myth" challenging listeners to prepare their hearts for the Lord Jesus Christ the head of the church. His sermon on Lazarus and the rich man who did not make it to Abraham's bosom aired on *Uaga o Faamanuiaga FM104.7* is similar to. Dr.David O Taylor's claim about the reality of reaping in the afterlife what you sow into the present. In his presentation "Living to Live Again" Dr.David o Taylor^{xxxii} of the Holy Ghost Pentecostal Church said "when both men died they were not disembodied spirits without the ability to feel anything. In fact he said they both had their full senses. One unfortunately could feel the pain and agony of being separated from grace the other felt the warmth of being loved and comforted.

Dr.James D.Tabor^{xxxii} who wrote the "The Jewish Roman World of Jesus" says :

“although the practice of consulting the spirits of the dead was forbidden in the Torah and Prophets it still went on. Bringing back of Samuel seemed to indicate that the dead “are viewed as gods, of sorts, resting below in Sheol but capable of coming back.

This view he explains is not static. Interesting enough, within the Jews themselves there were conflicts regarding the concept of the afterlife. While the Sadducees denied the resurrection and its power for believers the Pharisees took the stance on the importance of good works for the afterlife.

For interviewees like Peseta^{xxxiii} the research questions tackle the question of “how far” our commitment goes.

“How far are we willing to go in your belief in Jesus, the power of his name, the authority of his blood and the atonement he paid for you to enter into the afterlife? It’s a daily battle for a Christian in a place where the phrase “E lē sala upu mai anamua” Where the claim is - the words of yesteryears prevail.

As Peseta puts it, a lot of people say

“We’re all churchgoers but our pagan belief prevails. Our ancient beliefs never go wrong. When someone gets possessed we take them to the taulasea that deals with witchcraft^{xxxiv} We fast and pray but we still take them to those.

A proposed METHODOLOGY –

Qualitative mostly. There is a believe still more literature out there for this paper especially from local sources. The internet has been very helpful.

Since this is a proposal I would like in the future to do more interviews and compare the comments as done here but more to answer the last question.

- in the future there should be more questionnaire assisted interviews across a better selection of people.
- **Focus Groups** where there are old people who prefer to interview like that.

CONCLUSION

To go back to the questions of the day –what are some of the comparisons between the concepts of afterlife in the traditional Samoan sense as well as the biblical view. What is the prevailing view of today?

The Samoan and biblical view both support the idea of two places where the spirit of the dead go to. The Samoan view says the two entrances are called “*Lualoto o alii*” and *Lualoto o Tufanua*.” Heaven and hell are the biblical equivalents. The fact that both *lualoto* are underground is closer to the Bosom of Abraham concept where Judaism believe both Lazarus and the rich man were in a place underground. On one side was the lake of fire while on the others side where Abraham sat also known as the resting place or the Elysium.

While the Samoan traditional stories explain the singing and noise made as well as the wailing that can be heard some evenings by people or the stench of the decaying coconut to show spirits were around, the bible is not clear on any singing by spirits except as an act of worship. IN the act of worship itself there is a lot said about the God we’re worshipping, his likes, his dislikes, his concerns and his blessings. This is especially so because it is written down. Unfortunately we don’t have any good news like that from the traditional view. As Peseta puts it “the difference is the bible is the good news. The good news is we can have an afterlife in heaven. That good news is not only while you’re alive where the sinner is forgiven, changed, filled with joy, love and peace - but it continues at your death. Paul acknowledges the blessedness of death in Jesus by say “O lo’u oti o lo’u manuia lea...” There’s something to look forward to. This part is not clear in the traditional view except where some say the dream of a chief is to be a doorpost for the house of the lord of Pulotu. That sounds like ‘the psalmist saying ‘I would rather be a doorkeeper in your house than to spend my life without you..” Where it is abominable in the bible to speak to the dead or through a medium or divine being, the rush to the local healers is still going on nowadays.

As for the prevalent thought of the day -In the end the prevailing thought of the day is an individual thing. Sometimes it is a mixture of both worlds. Pastors like Dale Thurlby^{xxxv} put it down to a lack of awareness. They don’t teach that at some churches. That it is an abomination in the sight of the Lord to talk to demons who act as your loved ones. Even the idea of having

graves of loved ones near the house is questionable says Thurlby. Talking to them opens doors for demonic activity that you don't want to have in your life.

For some, the idea of heaven is welcoming and often it is a relief to say that a loved one has gone there –to that better place. Where they can't feel any more pain from diseases and ailments of old age. Whether it is aligned with the bible or with traditional belief for some, is not the point for them but for want of solace and relief,they will hang on to that.

When it comes to the ultimate comparison, Emile says
“no story can beat the king coming from his throne to provide atonement. In that he is providing the means to fellowship forever in the afterlife where he will wipe away every tear”.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Felela Fred Henry. n.d Talafaasolopito o Samoa. Translated by K Faletese. pp3-4

ⁱⁱ Lalotoa Asaua M.R.S. 2008. Talanoa method.

ⁱⁱⁱ F.Vatia. 2008. Introduction to Samoan Literature class discussion.

^{iv} Felela Fred Henry. n.d Talafaasolopito o Samoa. Translated by K Faletese p4

^v *ibid* p4

^{vi} Aiono-Le Tagaloa. F., 2003. *Tapua'i. Samoan Worship*. Samoa : Malua Printing Press. pp45-6

^{vii} Winfield D. Nagley.1954. Religion in Samoa. Interdepartmental Seminar 330. PCVF ASCC Library. (rest info unknown.)

^{viii} usual quote when a chief dies signifying spirits of chiefs are specially escorted to Pulotu.

^{ix} Fa'amalu P.M. 2008. Talanoa method.

^x Winfield D. Nagley.1954. Religion in Samoa. Interdepartmental Seminar 330.p 6

^{xi} *ibid* p6.

^{xii} Tuiasosopo Palauni. n.d. Falealupo Field visits and interviews. Raw footage. Samoan Studies Institute. Pago Pago.

^{xiii} C.Steubul, A ,Kramer, Brother, Herman(adptd). 1995. The Samoan Hades in *Myths, Legends and Old Customs of Samoa*. Pasefika Press. NZ. pg 163.

^{xiv} *ibid* p163

^{xv} *ibid* p163

^{xvi} TMCheung(ed).2007.*Ne'i Solo le Falute*. Class collection of Samoan literature. ASCC.

^{xvii} Grattan. F.J. An Introduction to Samoan Custom. <http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-GraIntr-c10.html> ..

^{xviii} *ibid*

^{xix} *ibid*

^{xx} *ibid*

^{xxi} *ibid*

^{xxii} *ibid*

^{xxiii} Bill Olewiler. United Methodist pastor

^{xxiv} <http://broadmeadowsamoan.adventist.org.au>

^{xxv} Messianic Jewish Quarterly Reprinted with permission of The Messianic Literature Outreach
6161 Busch Blvd., Suite 205 Columbus, Ohio 43229

^{xxvi} TM-Cheung.2006. [Tusi Pa'ia ma Tala o le Vavau](#)

^{xxvii} Fata Fiti. 2008. Talanoa Method.

^{xxviii} Tuliatua –has a reputation for liking beautiful women.

^{xxix} O.Afalava.2008.Talanoa method.

^{xxx} Vlliamu Mafo'e. 2003. E lē se tala faafagogo Seoli. FM104.7 broadcast.

^{xxxi} Dr.David O Taylor. n.d. Living to live again. Holy Ghost Pentecostal Church, Lawton. Oklahoma.

^{xxxii} Dr.James D.Tabor.n.d. The Jewish Roman World of Jesus. accessed 6/3/2008.
www.religiousstudies.uncc.edu/jdtabor/future.html

^{xxxiii} P.T.Sseloti. 2008. Talanoa Method.

^{xxxiv} Paulo. 1999. Talanoa method.(anyone who heals sauva deals with witchcraft because it is demonic. Paulo used to be heavily involved in such and has spoken on the radio against such.

^{xxxv} Dale Thurlby. 2008. Word of Life discussion.