Indonesian Journal of Theology
Vol. 13, No. 2 (Desember 2025): 155–169
E-ISSN: 2339-0751
DOI: https://doi.org/10.46567/ijt.v13i2.644

DEMONETIZING GOD THROUGH A PACIFIC ECOTHEOLOGY OF LIFE, REST, AND RESTRAINT

Faafetai Aiava
Pacific Theological College, Fiji
faafetai.aiava@ptc.ac.fj

Abstract

This article explores how the commodification of time and theology under the global cash economy has contributed to ecological and spiritual disconnection in the Pacific. It interrogates what happens when God is shaped by market logic, becoming a transactional figure aligned with material prosperity rather than the flourishing of all life. Rather than drawing from stewardship models, it proposes a divine economy that honors Earth's rhythms, embraces Pacific wisdom and values, and upholds the whole of life as sacred. To "demonetize" God, then, is not merely to critique capitalism, but to recover a theological vision in which rest, restraint, and kinship with all life point toward ecological justice.

Keywords: relationality, capitalism, Indigenous, stewardship, restraint, Pacific, commodification, economy

Published online: 12/25/2025

DEMONETISASI ALLAH MELALUI SEBUAH EKOTEOLOGI PASIFIK TERKAIT KEHIDUPAN, ISTIRAHAT, DAN PEMBATASAN

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana komodifikasi waktu dan teologi di bawah ekonomi keuangan global memengaruhi keterputusan ekologi dan spiritual di Pasifik. Tulisan ini memeriksa apa yang terjadi ketika Allah dibentuk oleh logika pasar, sehingga menjadi sebuah figur transaksional yang terkait dengan kemakmuran material ketimbang kesejahteraan seluruh kehidupan. Alih-alih mengikuti model-model penatalayanan, tulisan mengajukan sebuah ekonomi ilahi yang menghormati ritme-ritme Bumi, merengkuh nilai-nilai serta kebajikan Pasifik, dan mempertahankan prinsip bahwa seluruh kehidupan adalah sakral. Dengan demikian, "demonetisasi" Allah bukanlah sekadar kritik terhadap kapitalisme, melainkan bertujuan untuk memulihkan sebuah visi teologis yang mengedepankan istirahat, pembatasan, dan relasi dengan seluruh ciptaan demi tercapainya keadilan ekologis.

Kata-kata Kunci: relasionalitas, kapitalisme, *Indigenous*, penatalayanan, pembatasan, Pasifik, komodifikasi, ekonomi

Introduction

The well-known idiom "time is money" presupposes, among other things, two key assumptions. First, that a direct link exists between the efficient use of time and the monetary gains or losses it yields. Second, that paid work is the only kind of work worth engaging in, as it holds measurable economic value. This way of thinking not only devalues unpaid labor performed for the well-being of others—such as domestic tasks, planting, fishing, and farming—but also neglects the necessity and generative role of rest. This article interrogates what happens when our understanding of God is shaped by this money-driven logic, with particular attention to its impacts on the Christian faith and the well-being of the planet. It does so in three corresponding steps. The first step examines how the cash economy commodifies time, disrupting not only the rhythms of Pacific Indigenous life but also reducing God to a mere means of material prosperity. The second step explores how theology, economy, and ecology have been fragmented by colonial and capitalist forces, and argues for the recovery of Pacific Indigenous frameworks that uphold the sacredness of all life. The third step invites a reimagining of God beyond the grip of

commodification—where rest becomes a sacred act, restraint a spiritual discipline, and restoration a return to the life-sustaining rhythms of creation.

Time and God in the Cash Economy

I begin with the proposition that material wealth and prosperity are not inherently evil. In fact, the ongoing viability of any organization in today's economy relies on the responsible management of its resources. Thus, instead of problematizing money, my concern is with the ubiquitous use of money as the main frame of reference with respect to time, including the subjection of God that follows.

The sense that time is elusive feels almost instinctive for finite beings. Yet, when viewed through the lens of economic wealth, time not only seems scarcer but also becomes entangled in a dehumanizing cycle—one in which how we live, and why we live, becomes secondary to the accumulation of wealth. Within this cash economy, time is transformed into a tool that not only resists the natural cycles of rest and regeneration but also turns all things, including time itself, into commodities. As Jonathan Crary observes, "24/7 is a time of indifference, against which the fragility of human life is increasingly inadequate and within which sleep has no necessity or inevitability. In relation to labor, it renders plausible, even normal, the idea of working without pause, without limits."[1] In this world of ceaseless productivity, rest becomes an act of resistance against the commodification of life itself.

For Pacific Island cultures, time is not governed by the hands of a clock, but rather through the seasons and rhythms of the Earth. This notion suggests that time is not linear (*chronos*) but rather measured through moments and events (*kairos*). While some might argue that making money constitutes an event, in the Pacific context, an event is understood as the nurturing of relationships. As Jione Havea notes, "We measure time according to our relationships, and we manage our relationships according to our keeping of time."[2]

Climate scientist, Penehuro Lefale, maintains that these relationships are not limited to humans but rather part of an ecological matrix of life. Advocating for the integration of traditional knowledge, Lefale is convinced that time flows with Earth and not over it. These rhythms guide community practices

---

[1] Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (Verso, 2013), 9–10.

[2] Jione Havea, "From Reconciliation to Adoption: A Talanoa from Oceania," in *Mission and Ministry of Reconciliation*, ed. Robert Schreiter and Knud Jørgensen (Regnum, 2013), 297.

such as planting, harvesting, fishing, and ceremonies, hence why the calendar months in the Samoan traditional year are named after events like *Fa'aafu* (withering of the yam vines in March) or *Palolo mua* (the first swarm of *palolo* or edible seaworms in July).[3] This knowledge not only reflects an intimate and continuous relationship with Earth's processes but also demonstrates the deep connection between human and other-than-human life.

For Upolu Lumā Vaai, the imbalances rife in today's world are a consequence of the neoliberal capitalist obsession with speed, referring to what Pope Francis calls "rapidification"—a force that prioritizes "development over wellbeing."[4] In contrast, Vaai presents a Pacific alternative where slowness signifies wisdom and an "ethic of restraint" ensures that human rhythms are attuned to Earth's regenerative processes.[5]

In a different work dedicated to the slowness of Pacific life, I echoed a similar call with respect to economic development within the region and the need to resist the desire for instant gratification.[6] In contrast to the dominant economic paradigms—where time is quantified by productivity, monetized for efficiency, and often sacrificed for instant reward—I demonstrate that time, according to the cosmic worldviews of the Pacific, is malleable and relational. In this context, true wealth is not defined economically, but in our ongoing capacity to live in harmony with one another and with the Earth.

Although the environmental impacts spurred on by capitalism have garnered global attention in more recent decades, Pacific Church historian Latu Latai contends that the roots were planted centuries ago, with the introduction of Christianity to the Pacific. For Latai, the widespread success of the Christian mission in Samoa was predicated on the close association between the Christian God and material wealth, where the growing desire for

---

[3] Penehuro Lefale, "Ua 'afa le Aso Stormy Weather Today: Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Weather and Climate. The Samoa Experience," *Climatic Change* 100 (2010): 328, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-009-9722-z.

[4] Upolu Lumā Vaai, "We Are Earth: reDIRTifying Creation Theology," in *reSTORYing Pasifika Household*, ed. Upolu Lumā Vaaiand Aisake Casimira (Pacific Theological College Press, 2023), 78.

[5] Upolu Lumā Vaai, "Climate Change in Pasifika Relational Itulagi," *Toda Peace Institute Report No. 212* (2025), 11–13. https://toda.org/assets/files/resources/policy-briefs/tr-212_climate-change-in-pasifika-relational-itulagi_vaai.pdf

[6] Faafetai Aiava, "Be Still and Know: Contextual Lessons on Delayed Gratification from Pasifika," in *The 'Whole of Life Way:' Unburying Vakatabu Philosophies and Theologies for Pasifika Development*, ed. Upolu Lumā Vaai and Aisake Casimira (Pacific Theological College Press, 2024).

the latter became an incentive for conversion.[7] Local figures like Fauea, who helped introduce Christianity to Samoa, emphasized the superior status of European clothing, technology, and goods as evidence of the power of the Christian God. While missionaries did little to challenge these assumptions, the appeal had already taken root with the early missions focusing on productivity, industriousness, and the commodification of nature. Over time, the gospel of salvation would be indistinguishable from a gospel of material gain.

In her analysis of the Christian mission in Southern Africa, Marion Grau concludes that the contemporary expressions of Christianity, including the rise of prosperity gospel churches, have been "problematically enmeshed with capitalism," dating back to earlier missionary entanglements during the colonial era.[8] Similar to Samoa, notions of salvation had been reconfigured to align divine favor with economic success, effectively baptizing industrial capitalism as "the apex of world history."[9]

These capitalist narratives not only influenced the theological imagination of early Christian converts but also pre-empted the view of God as being a means to, or guarantor of, material prosperity. The danger with this perspective is that it would ultimately foster a fragile hope in the market economy, postponing or even neutralizing any real challenge to the status quo under the belief that it is divinely sanctioned. As Joerg Rieger puts it:

> [e]conomic hope derives from what might be called an 'otherworldly' perspective. Economic indicators that would demand changes in the actual course of economics take a back seat. What rules is limitless faith in the reality of unstoppable progress. Hope, even in the midst of severe economic crises, is built on the faith that 'things' will somehow take care of themselves and that 'things' will eventually get better if the reign of free-market economics is affirmed. This hope in the otherworldly reality of progress also covers up the role of human failure in the creation of economic decline and hardship.[10]

---

[7] Latu Latai, "Failed Promise of Abundant Life: Revisiting 200 Years of Christianity in Oceania," in *Theologies from the Pacific*, ed. Jione Havea (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 163.

[8] Marion Grau, "Signs Taken for Polydoxy in a Zulu Kraal: Creative Friction Manifested in Missionary–Native Discourse," in *Polydoxy: Theology of Multiplicity and Relation*, ed. Catherine Keller and Laurel C. Schneider (Routledge, 2011), 233.

[9] Grau, "Missionary–Native Discourse," 226.

[10] Joerg Rieger, "Alternative Images of God in the Global Economy," in *Out of Place: Doing Theology on the Crosscultural Brink*, ed. Jione Havea and Clive Pearson (Routledge, 2011), 28–29.

It is worth returning at this point to an earlier observation. When money becomes the main frame of reference, it not only affects our experience of time but also reshapes the "why" of our lives. For Pacific Christians, this "why" is inseparable from divine purpose. When that, too, is monetized—to borrow a business term made popular by online content creators hoping to generate income—then even God becomes commodified. The result is a life stripped of meaningful relationships with one another, with the cosmic community, and with God.

Competing Narratives: Theology, Economy, and Ecology

The Pacific Islands, as seen above, are not immune to global movements and are often described as a "microcosm" because they mirror political and religious trends worldwide.[11] One such change was the realization that our lands and oceans were in grave need of protection. It also prompted a reframing of what is understood by ecology and economy, as sounded in a recent publication from the region. The publication claimed that "the study of the house" (or *oikos-logos*) and the discourse on the rules or management of the house (or *oikos-nomos*) were not supposed to be separate disciplines or houses for that matter. Instead, "they were meant to relate in ways that would and should make the home work for the common good."[12]

Upolu Vaai reckons that the threefold division of the home had to do with the different empires that forcefully seized its individual sectors for their own use. He argued that *oikumene*, once a vision of a shared inhabited earth, was taken over by institutional Christianity and made into a system serving religious power. Economy, meant to responsibly manage household resources, was turned by capitalism into a profit-driven machine that catered to the interests of powerful economies at the expense of vulnerable nations. Meanwhile, ecology was reduced by science to an object of study, rather than a living system we belong to and are accountable to.[13]

---

[11] See Manfred Ernst, *Globalization and the Re-shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands* (Pacific Theological College Press, 2006).

[12] Cliff Bird, Arnie Saiki, and Meretui Ratunabuabua, *Reweaving the Ecological Mat Framework: Toward an Ecological Framework for Development* (Pacific Theological College Press, 2020), 2.

[13] Upolu Lumā Vaai, "We Are Therefore We Live: Pacific Eco-Relational Spirituality and Changing the Climate Change Story," *Toda Peace Institute Policy Brief No. 56* (2019), 7. https://toda.org/assets/files/resources/policy-briefs/t-pb-56_upolu-luma-vaai_we-are-therefore-we-live.pdf.

Whatever the reasons behind the household divisions, the Pacific household as a whole—its politicians, economists, theologians, and scientists—had become increasingly cautious of the development initiatives arriving on our shores and its inherent threats to our natural systems. Though long overdue, there was widespread agreement that, for Pacific Indigenous communities, respect for ecology was not meant to be part of a movement, but a revival of our way of life. This was not meant as a retreat into mysticism or belief in (super)natural gods in order to satisfy environmentalist agendas. Rather, it marked a timely return to sustainable ways of living practiced for millennia by societies whose identity cannot be separated from their intimate relationship with nature.

This fragmentation of the household has not only impacted our economies and politics, but also the theological narratives we tell about creation and our place within it. It is to that end that I often hesitate to subscribe to theologies of stewardship. In addition to its anthropological emphasis, where humans are seen as managers of creation, there is also a heavy reliance on biblical translators to reinterpret texts like "subdue" and "have dominion" as found in Genesis 1:28. Even if a consensus were reached, the resulting theology, still promotes a top-down hierarchy that does not portray the interconnectedness of life in Pacific thought. This is not to say that the efforts of human responsibility are misplaced, but rather to say that stewardship theologies are not nuanced enough to encompass God's embodied presence in creation.

I was comforted when I came across Joseph Sittler, a Lutheran theologian and one of the pioneers of ecotheology, known for bringing the environmental crisis forth when it was not yet a theological priority. Dissatisfied with the managerial tone of some ecotheologies, Sittler contended that only a doctrine as expansive as God's grace could truly reconnect nature with the divine, famously declaring that "nature is a theatre of grace."[14] In his view, grace is the way God shows love and works to restore creation to its intended purpose—a restoration that unfolds through the full life of the Trinity, Creator, Redeemer (Christ), and Spirit. Among these, Christ held a central place in Sittler's theology. As emphasized in his 1962 address to the World Council of Churches, redemption through Christ can only make sense when viewed within the broader context of creation.[15]

What makes Sittler's theology especially compelling, particularly in relation to Pacific spirituality, is his understanding of

---

[14] Joseph Sittler, *Evocations of Grace: The Writings of Joseph Sittler on Ecology, Theology, and Ethics*, ed. Steven Bouma-Prediger and Peter Bakken (Eerdmans, 2000), 35, 157.

[15] Sittler, *Evocations of Grace,* 40.

the divine not as distant or above creation, but as radically immersed within it. This is why being selective of our theologies is a vital task. If we are not careful, any narrative that threatens the sacredness of creation—or avoids our participation with the whole of life, rather than over it—risks stripping humans of proper accountability.

This lack of accountability is especially evident in many economic strategies that disregard Indigenous communities, their traditions, and their belief that land is alive and sacred. Naden and Havea, reflecting on the experiences of Aboriginal communities dispossessed of their lands in Australia, describe this as an act of spiritual and cultural violence. It is a profound rupture, not only because it severs sacred ties between people, their lands, identity, and language, but also in the way it leaves behind a lasting negative impression of Whitefellas and their religion.[16]

In some cases, however, the repeated denial of our deep connection to land—and the ongoing separation of theology from ecology and economy—has become systemic. In Jerusha Neal's analysis of how the climate crisis is preached within the Fijian Methodist context, this systemic issue becomes visible in two ways. The first is an underlying mistrust between Fijian Christians and Western climate science as a whole.[17] The second is a troubling tendency for preachers to internalize blame as though it were a divine call to local repentance, making themselves wholly responsible for the climate catastrophes rather than the most destructive actors in the household.[18] These patterns, I believe, warrant a reimagining of God—not as a distant transcendent other, nor through the lens of a divided house, but through a theology grounded in rest and restoration for the whole of creation.

Demonetizing God: Towards Life-Sustaining Alternatives

Theologically speaking, this work's call to demonetize God seeks to shift the dominant frame of reference from material wealth back to the abundance of life. Only then can we begin to reimagine God in an ecosystem that promises rest and restoration for all. To support this vision, I propose two specific appeals.

The first invites the notions of rest and restraint. In the last three or more decades, there has been a growing interest within the

---

[16] Neville Naden and Jione Havea, "Colonization Has Many Names," in *Indigenous Australia and the Unfinished Business of Theology: Cross-Cultural Engagement*, ed. Jione Havea (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 2–4.

[17] Jerusha M. Neal, "The Edge of Water: Preaching Sovereignty in Rising Tides," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 75, no. 2 (2021): 115–16, https://doi.org/10.1177/0020964320982743.

[18] Neal, "Rising Tides," 40.

region and in the global community regarding the mining of our Pacific Ocean. What started covertly as a series of pilot explorations for minerals is now being hailed as the solution to the planet's environmental woes. This has put the leaders of Pacific Island nations in a predicament. On one end is the need to seize the opportunity to potentially improve the economic conditions of its citizens. On the other is the ability to do so effectively without accruing further financial and environmental risks often bundled in colonial development strategies. This has unsurprisingly garnered mixed responses, with the call for restraint being one of the most prominent.[19]

According to Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, the call for restraint is not just a matter of reducing consumption, but rather an ethic of living responsibly within Earth's limits.[20] In her view, the planet can

---

[19] There remains ongoing tension between the International Seabed Authority and local governments regarding how the EEZ (exclusive economic zones) laws will be policed in regard to seabed mining. After the 10 year venture between the Canadian-based Nautilus project and PNG's government ended in a high-profile collapse in 2019, the PNG government faced internal pressures on the transparency of its consultation processes. The reports of the failed venture revealed that the country was now $375M Kina in debt (or $157M AUD). This was somewhat expected because the trade, which promised the country employment opportunities, was so specialized that the workforce was primarily outsourced. While it made other Pacific nations weary of the alleged benefits of seabed mining, island nations like the Cook Islands, Fiji, Tonga, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu still entered exploration contracts to assess the mineral deposits in their territorial waters. In 2020, Nauru, Kiribati and Tonga also sealed a partnership with The Metals Company (formerly known as *DeepGreen Metals*), promising the said countries opportunities for employment, capacity building and royalties from future production. The company boasts that it is at the forefront of a more eco-friendly future that will be sustained with solar technology and of course, more batteries. In 2014, Tuvalu entertained the possibility through its Seabed Minerals Act, mandating that a full consultation of coastal communities take place before any mining project is approved. This decision was reversed in 2022 after critical internal and regional discussions. It goes without saying that the mining of our ocean has been the topic of much debate in government forums and faith-based organizations throughout the Pacific. In a joint statement, the CWM endorsed not just a regional but a global ban on deep sea mining together with the Pacific Blue Line comprising the Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG), Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC), Pacific Islands Association of NGOS (PIANGO), World Wide Fund for Nature Pacific (WWF), and the Development Alternatives with Women for a new era (DAWN).

[20] This call for restraint is not intended as a moral burden placed on communities already disproportionately affected by capitalist extraction. Rather, it is a communal ethic grounded in Indigenous wisdom, offering a restorative lens through which to resist the logic of accumulation. Restraint, in this sense, is not an act of passivity but a form of self-determination—a prophetic call to withdraw from practices that commodify life and erode ecological integrity. It signals a reorientation toward sacred interdependence and cosmic accountability. While this work offers a theological critique of commodification, its engagement

no longer sustain the demands of unchecked, profit-driven capitalism, and continuing with such an economy is no longer viable. Similarly, Ellen Davis links the lack of human restraint to the first eating violation in Genesis, seeing it as the starting point of ecological exploitation.[21] In calling for an agrarian reading of scripture, Davis reminds us of the importance of sabbatical rest and the need to relearn our place within creation. While Moe-Lobeda and Davis begin from different starting points—one grounded in the realities of economic injustice, the other in scriptural tradition—both call for a reorientation of life in harmony with creation, a vision deeply resonant with Pacific worldviews.

In Samoan cosmogony, rest is not merely a pause from labor or an idle state, but a sacred and generative condition that precedes creation itself. As Ioelu Onesemo explains, it was while the god Tagaloa rested that material reality became visible in the form of papa (rock), positioning rest as the origin of existence rather than its conclusion.[22] This contrasts with the Genesis narrative, where God's creative acts culminate in rest; in Samoan mythology, rest comes first. As John Fraser recounts, the Samoan progenitor Tagaloa journeyed across the vast expanse before choosing where to rest—and it was during this rest that the first cosmic beings emerged.[23] This narrative suggests that it was not activity, but rest, that gave rise to our becoming.

This call for rest and restraint is not foreign to Pacific Island cultures, where significant opportunities for growth and development are often preceded by purposeful rest and meditation, and where community consensus is sought—even when the process is slow and painstaking. This ethic is also reflected in traditional diets based on fermented and slow-prepared foods, which require patience and deep attentiveness to time. Together, these cultural and theological insights point toward an alternative ethic—one in which rest and restraint serve as essential foundations for environmental preservation, guiding us to live more responsibly within Earth's limits.

My second and final appeal is to prioritize the whole of life and its life-sustaining systems. It may seem like a simple call, yet each year I am struck by how many of my students—including

---

with capitalism is necessarily shaped by the limits of scope and thematic focus. Readers seeking a more sustained economic-theological analysis may wish to consult studies dedicated to that specific horizon.

[21] Ellen F. Davis, "Learning Our Place: The Agrarian Perspective of the Bible," *Word & World* 21, no. 2 (2009): 118.

[22] Ioelu Onesemo, *Faiva: A Relational Work Theology from Samoana*, PhD diss., (Pacific Theological College, 2024), 193.

[23] John Fraser, "The Samoan Story of Creation," *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 1, no. 3 (1892): 167–68.

senior pastors—are unaware that the command to "be fruitful and multiply" was first given to fish and birds (Gen 1:22). It is a rather concerning revelation, especially given the rising number of species now endangered or extinct.

Reclaiming this broader theological vision, which decenters humans and affirms our place as part of an interconnected cosmic community, was central to the "Reweaving the Ecological Mat" (REM) strategy, launched in 2017 by the Pacific Theological College, the Pacific Conference of Churches, and the Oceania Centre for Arts. Designed as a self-determination initiative, the task of REM was to respond to the ecological crisis in the Pacific, where lifestyle changes driven by consumerism and highly extractive development have led to environmental degradation, climate change, health issues, and the commodification of natural resources. It is precisely this context of crisis and the systems that fuel it that make the REM strategy both urgent and prophetic.

Regarding development, Achille Mbembe warns that in today's global system, particularly in postcolonial contexts, it often prioritizes economic gain at the expense of human and ecological life. He links modern economic systems to a logic of death and control, where power decides who gets to live and who must die—a central tenet of his theory of necropolitics.[24] For me, these life-denying systems upheld by neoliberal capitalism cannot accommodate a theology of life. Even if theology were able to speak into such systems, its focus on salvation would risk reinforcing colonial values—offering abundance to a few while creating what Mbembe calls "death-worlds," where the masses are reduced to the status of the "living dead."[25]

Pacific Island nations, however, have not been passive recipients of foreign development models and their destructive consequences. We, too, have contributed to the environmental crisis and the disruption of nature. This is why the ongoing work of the Reweaving the Ecological Mat (REM) strategy remains vital. Ecological restoration is not only about respecting the Earth and its resources, but about seeking harmony with all forms of life it sustains. For development to be truly responsible, it must be shaped by the culture, spirituality, and Indigenous wisdom of its context. This is a call to all members of the household—across the Pacific and beyond—to envision a future together rooted in whole-of-life values and the sacred interconnectedness of creation and its Creator.

---

[24] Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Duke University Press, 2019).

[25] Mbembe, *Necropolitics,* 92.

Conclusion

To demonetize God means to recover a theological vision that resists commodification and reclaims the sacredness of life in all its forms. This article has argued that rest, restraint, and the prioritization of the whole of life are not merely cultural values, but urgent theological imperatives in a world shaped by speed, consumption, and economic growth.

As shown above, the cash economy has reshaped our relationship with time, turning it into a commodity governed by profit and productivity. This shift has displaced the ecological rhythms once revered in Pacific societies and distorted our theological imagination of God. In systems where time is money, God becomes transactional—mirroring capitalist values rather than challenging them. Drawing on Samoan cosmogony and broader ecotheologies, I have sought to offer alternatives that affirm mutuality over hierarchy, slowness over urgency, and the primacy of life over control.

This call to reframe our theologies is not simply a rejection of neoliberal capitalism but a reorientation of values toward a divine economy—one where time, creation, and community are no longer measured by profit, but valued by the flourishing of all life. In the Pacific, this vision is already taking shape through initiatives like Reweaving the Ecological Mat, where Indigenous and religious wisdom guide development as a form of restoration rather than domination. If theologies are to speak meaningfully in our time, they must help dismantle life-denying systems and embody a gospel that brings healing not only to human communities but to the Earth itself. In this sense, to demonetize God is also to rehumanize ourselves and to take our place, once again, as kin among creation.

About the Author

Faafetai Aiava is a Samoan-born theologian and currently serves as the Head of the Theology and Ethics Discipline at the Pacific Theological College in Fiji, where he and his family have resided the past 12 years. He has written, presented at international forums, and continues to teach on the intersections of theology, Pasifika hermeneutics and the ethical issues affecting human and non-human life.

Bibliography

Aiava, Faafetai. "Be Still and Know: Contextual Lessons on Delayed Gratification from Pasifika." In *The 'Whole of Life Way:' Unburying Vakatabu Philosophies and Theologies for Pasifika Development*, edited by Upolu Lumā Vaai and Aisake Casimira, 323–37. Pacific Theological College Press, 2024.

Bird, Cliff, Arnie Saiki, and Meretui Ratunabuabua. *Reweaving the Ecological Mat Framework: Toward an Ecological Framework for Development*. Pacific Theological College Press, 2020.

Crary, Jonathan. *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of* Sleep. Verso, 2013.

Davis, Ellen F. "Learning Our Place: The Agrarian Perspective of the Bible." *Word & World* 21, no. 2 (2009): 109–120.

Ernst, Manfred. *Globalization and the Re-shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands*. Pacific Theological College Press, 2006.

Fraser, John. "The Samoan Story of Creation." *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 1, no. 3 (1892): 167–68.

Grau, Marion. "Signs Taken for Polydoxy in a Zulu Kraal: Creative Friction Manifested in Missionary–Native Discourse." In *Polydoxy: Theology of Multiplicity and Relation*, edited by Catherine Keller and Laurel C. Schneider. Routledge, 2011.

Havea, Jione. "From Reconciliation to Adoption: A Talanoa from Oceania." In *Mission and Ministry of Reconciliation*, edited by Robert Schreiter and Knud Jørgensen, 294–300. Regnum, 2013.

Latai, Latu. "Failed Promise of Abundant Life: Revisiting 200 Years of Christianity in Oceania." In *Theologies from the Pacific*, edited by Jione Havea, 217–37. Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.

Lefale, Penehuro. "Ua 'afa le Aso Stormy Weather Today: Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Weather and Climate. The Samoa Experience." *Climatic Change* 100 (2010): 317–35. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-009-9722-z.

Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics*. Translated by Steven Corcoran. Duke University Press, 2019.

Moe-Lobeda, Cynthia D. "Decolonizing the Privileged: Resistance and Re-building the New Economy." In *Decolonizing Ecotheology: Indigenous and Subaltern Challenges*, edited by S. Lily Mendoza and George Zachariah. Pickwick, 2021.

Naden, Neville, and Jione Havea. "Colonization Has Many Names." In *Indigenous Australia and the Unfinished Business of Theology: Cross-Cultural Engagement*, edited by Jione Havea, 1–8. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Neal, Jerusha M. "The Edge of Water: Preaching Sovereignty in Rising Tides." *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 75, no. 2 (2021): 112–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020964320982743.

Onesemo, Ioelu. *Faiva: A Relational Work Theology from Samoana*. PhD diss. Pacific Theological College, 2024.

Rieger, Joerg. "Alternative Images of God in the Global Economy." In *Out of Place: Doing Theology on the Crosscultural Brink*, edited by Jione Havea and Clive Pearson. Routledge, 2011.

Sittler, Joseph. *Evocations of Grace: The Writings of Joseph Sittler on Ecology, Theology, and Ethics*, edited by Steven Bouma-Prediger and Peter Bakken. Eerdmans, 2000.

Vaai, Upolu Luma. *"Climate Change in Pasifika Relational Itulagi."* *Toda Peace Institute Report No. 212* (2025): 1–16. https://toda.org/assets/files/resources/policy-briefs/tr-212_climate-change-in-pasifika-relational-itulagi_vaai.pdf.

_____. "We Are Earth: reDIRTifying Creation Theology." In *reSTORYing Pasifika Household*, edited by Upolu Lumā Vaai and Aisake Casimira. Pacific Theological College Press, 2023.

_____. "*We Are Therefore We Live: Pacific Eco-Relational Spirituality and Changing the Climate Change Story.*" *Toda Peace Institute Policy Brief no. 56* (2019): 1–15. https://toda.org/assets/files/resources/policy-briefs/t-pb-56_upolu-luma-vaai_we-are-therefore-we-live.pdf.