

Thinking like an Archipelago: Beyond Tehomophobic Theology

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Abstract: Feminist theologian Catherine Keller claims that embedded in Christian theology is a vast fear of the deep – or *tehom* – that leads to eschatologies of final endings rather than edges of open possibilities. This article draws on Keller’s “green” hermeneutic, yet deepens and extends her eco-eschatological analysis by questioning the way humans live in relation to the sea. The oceans cover 71% of the world’s surface and make up 97% of the world’s water. Yet we treat the sea as a vast *mare nullius*. How can we live toward “a new heaven and new earth” (Rev 21:1) without hope for the sea as well? The Spirit of the vulnerable God “gives life” in even the deepest, darkest and most remote of places. Through an “archipelagic imagination”, we can “sea” and “fathom” our faith towards hopeful possibilities for the whole of God’s creation.

*At the foot of this cliff a great ocean beach runs north and south unbroken,
mile lengthening into mile. Solitary and elemental, unsullied and remote,
visited and possessed by the outer sea, these sands might be the end or the
beginning of a world.*

Henry Beston¹

*luminous universe
between the black crags
and the running sea
this was the place.*

Dorothy Hewitt²

INTRODUCTION: DIVING DEEPLY FROM NEW HORIZONS

WHAT MIGHT IT MEAN for Christian theology today to live with and love the deep mysteries of life? And, to live with and love what the apostle Paul names “the depths of God” (1 Cor 2:10)? In 1948, Paul

1. Henry Beston, *The Outermost House: A Year of Life on the Great Beach of Cape Cod* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1992 [1949]) 2.

2. The lines are from Dorothy Hewitt’s poem, “Epiphany”, in her collection *Peninsula* (South Fremantle, Western Australia: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1994) 64.

Tillich preached a sermon entitled "The Depth of Existence" in which he claimed that,

Depth is a dimension of space; yet at the same time it is a symbol for a spiritual quality.... The depth of thought is a part of the depth of life. Most of our life continues on the surface.... We are in constant motion and never stop to plunge into the depth. We talk and talk and never listen to the voices speaking to our depth and from our depth.³

Now Tillich is known for his depth-metaphor of God as the "ground of being", but his "imaginative geography" places him along the sands of the tehom, the vast oceanic abyss.⁴ Reading his theology, we might wonder whether the ocean or sea serves as a "deep symbol" for Tillich.⁵ From his vantage point, only by diving below the surface to hear the suffering cries from our own psychological depth and the suffering cries from the depth of our fellow human beings, can we ever hope to reach the true depth of divine joy. Tillich writes, "For in the depth is truth; and in the depth is hope; and in the depth is joy."⁶

Today, over fifty years later, we may question whether in our postmodern "diving" we can as Tillich suggests, "learn what things really are".⁷ But does this then mean we refrain from diving at all?⁸

3. Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948) 52, 55-6.

4. Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations*, 57. The term "imaginative geography" is used by Edward Said in *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978) to explore the construction of "Orientalism" by Europeans, who "set up boundaries in (their) own minds" between the Oriental and the Occidental: "So space acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here.... (I)maginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away" (54-5). Said's concept and its implications for disclosing relations of power and "who belongs and who does not" are explored by Gill Valentine in "Imagined Geographies: Geographical Knowledges of Self and Other in Everyday Life", in Doreen Massey, John Allen and Philip Sarre (eds.), *Human Geography Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999) 43-61. As Valentine explains, we map out imaginative geographies to enable us to imagine connections of sameness or difference with others. These connections thus, "can make us more certain in our own identities, and thus foster an insular sense of 'us' versus 'them'. On the other hand, connections offer us new possibilities of sharing in difference through interaction. The important challenge for geography is how we can use geographical knowledge in everyday life not to dramatize the distance between what is close and what is far away, or to contain and incorporate 'the Other', but to produce constellations of relations that are never bounded, never inhibited" (58). In this essay, I am exploring the imaginative geography of an archipelago to speak of our relations with others.

5. Edward Farley, *Deep Symbols: Their Postmodern Effacement and Reclamation* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1996) 3. Farley, though, considers ocean and water to be a cross-cultural archetype, rather than a deep symbol. Yet, as I am discovering, in contexts where people have a coastal sense of place, ocean does function as a deep symbol – according to Farley's categories of normativity, enchantment, fallibility and narrative location (3).

6. Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations*, 63.

7. Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations*, 53.

Should we just play along the safe shores, running down and back when the waves approach and recede? Perhaps today “diving deep and surfacing” can take on new meaning, as it did for Carol Christ in 1980 when she followed the spiritual quests of women writers toward a new vision of “women’s wholeness”.⁹ Yet by now, feminist theology recognises “the interlocking systems of oppression”, and thus understandings of wholeness need to be problematised to disclose the diversity of women’s perspectives.¹⁰ But as Grace Jantzen claims, the partiality and diversity of standpoints can fund a “rich and textured” imaginary for the disruption of the “symbolic order of Western modernity” with its disembodied, discrete and rationalistic subject, freeing women’s (and men’s) desires for new “horizons” of human flourishing.¹¹ It is from these new horizons that women in their diversity can dive into the deep mysteries of life with God.

Catherine Keller is one such diver who has challenged theology to renew its relation with tehom, the salty, fluid “eco-social” depths of a feminist relational ontology.¹² In this essay, I re-imagine an eco-social poetics of community based on Keller’s horizon toward a more “specialised” and “situated” oceanic horizon.¹³ I do this by “expanding the scope” of a coastal sense of place and diving more deeply into an imaginative oceanography.¹⁴ I believe that what theology needs today

8. This question is reminiscent of the debates regarding dogmatic realism, critical realism and non-realism in the “Sea of Faith” movement, inspired by Don Cupitt’s own nautical exploration, *The Sea of Faith* (London: SCM Press, 1994 [1984]) 238-65.

9. Carol P. Christ, *Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1980) 119-31.

10. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 222-27.

11. Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana Press, 1999) 121, 59, 12-13. Jantzen examines the ways classical Western philosophers of religion and Christian theologians have constructed conceptions of divinity based on male images for God and a binary logic that privileges reason over embodiment, aseity over interdependence, mortality over natality, and male experience over female experience. Drawing on the work of Luce Irigaray, Jantzen claims that language for God reflects human desire, thus the question for critical analysis in contemporary philosophy of religion and theology becomes, “Whose desire?” What if feminist philosophers and theologians began speaking their desires, disrupting the binary logic and creating space for alternative horizons of human flourishing? Jantzen writes, “Critical reason...could very beneficially be supported by...a wider understanding of reason that includes sensitivity and attentiveness, well-trained intuition and discernment, creative imagination and lateral as well as linear thinking” (69). Fortunately, today women and men are questioning the binary or dualistic logic of our philosophical and theological legacy toward re-imagining religious intersubjectivity, including the relation of humanity and divinity.

12. Catherine Keller, “Seeking and Sucking: On Relation and Essence in Feminist Theology,” in Rebecca S. Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney (eds.), *Horizons in Feminist Theology: Identity, Tradition and Norms* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1997) 56, 75.

13. Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 188, 195-6.

14. Edward W. Soja, “Thirdspace: Expanding the Scope of the Geographical Imagination”, in *Human Geography Today*, 272.

is an integrated eco-social vision, as in Ursula LeGuin's imaginative map of Earthsea, where land and water, wind and waves, people and creatures belong together.¹⁵ Thus, in taking up the contextual challenge of what Peter Hodgson calls "the ecological quest", I seek to renew theology's relation with the deep.¹⁶ I will explore the theological and ethical implications of thinking like an archipelago instead of thinking like a discrete island. As a feminist ecotheologian, I hope to "raise questions of value" concerning the relation of humans and the ocean, as well as contribute to an emerging poetics of community in what Rachel Carson called "the world of waters".¹⁷

SAND IN MY SOUL

But first I want to set forth the currents of my own context. Barbara Kingsolver confides in her novel, *Prodigal Summer*, that by growing up between farms and forests, her particular way of looking at the world has been "colored heavily in greens".¹⁸ Since moving to Perth six years ago, I can say that my own particular way of looking at the world has become heavily coloured in blues – beautiful blues – deep, dark blues, cerulean blues, aquamarine blues.¹⁹ My research horizon may be thought of as an exploration in *littoral love*. Littoral, a term I borrow from geography meaning the land's edge, the coast or seascapes – these

15. Ursula K. Le Guin tells the story of a young man's archipelagic journey in *A Wizard of Earthsea* (Berkeley, California: Parnassus Press, 1968). I am picking up Jay B. McDaniel's suggestion of new maps for ecological spirituality. In *Earth, Sky, Gods & Mortals: Developing an Ecological Spirituality* (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1990) he writes, "We need maps to guide us in our daily activities, maps that give us the confidence to trust the living waters of Spirit. We need maps of God, ways of thinking about God" (38).

16. Hodgson claims in *Winds of the Spirit: A Constructive Theology* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994) that there are three cultural quests today for contextual theology: the emancipatory, the ecological and the dialogical (7-8). But rather than "sail" with Peter (and I have enjoyed sailing on the water in his boat), I am now learning to "dive" in the water of the sea (3).

17. On the public role of ecotheology, see Clive Pearson, "On Being Public about Ecotheology", *Ecotheology* 6 (July 2001 & January 2002), 59. The earliest horizon of Rachel Carson's ecological vision was written as an introduction to a 1935 U.S Bureau of Fisheries brochure entitled "The World of Waters". It was judged too lyrical for a government report, so she submitted it to the *Atlantic Monthly*, which published it in 1937 as "Undersea". The article is included in Linda Lear (ed.), *Lost Woods: The Discovered Writing of Rachel Carson* (Boston MA: Beacon Press, 1998) 3-11.

18. Barbara Kingsolver, *Prodigal Summer* (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 2000) p. viii.

19. Thus, this study is offered from the perspective of a newcomer, and yet as Neil Darragh reminds us, ecotheology is also a newcomer to theology and the Christian churches. See his article, "Adjusting to the Newcomer: Theology and Ecotheology", *Pacifica* 13 (June 2000), 160-180. Like Darragh, I am concerned with the "large gaps in our traditional theologies" and the way ecotheology "realigns our concepts of human responsibility" through "its focus on interdependence among a great variety of beings most of which are not human" (161). This issue of *Pacifica* provided a series of articles on ecotheology in preparation for the ANZATS/ANZSTS conference in Christchurch, 3-7 July 2000.

are the places that have come to figure prominently in the currents of my own imagination. This horizon has returned me to my own “oceanic memory” of sitting along the New Jersey shore in the U.S. with my mother and two sisters, making drip castles with our hands, and walking along the coast at sunrise with my father.²⁰ I grew up with a littoral naiveté, a coastal sense of wonder gained through “close encounters” with tidepool communities I could lovingly touch and directly experience.²¹ No wonder I have now returned to an imaginative oceanography. Since living in Perth, I have come to realise that in my own spiritual depths I have “sand in my soul” with all its watery and scratchy elements!²²

After my family and I first arrived in Western Australia, it was not long before we began exploring the places of the coast and learning about the ambiguous legacy of colonial-crossing. In coming into country, we sought to see in new ways, without arrogance. We gradually grew familiar with the shallow snorkeling places right along the city beaches, where I found that my whole perspective of the coast changed by encountering the communities of life under the surface. But then we journeyed down the coast to Yallingup, which in the Noongar language means “place of betrothal”. As a strong swimmer, I had no trouble snorkeling out to the furthest points of the reef, but nothing had prepared me for the edge. I swam up against the breaking waves and had to hold on to the weathered reef in order to look over. To my utter amazement, the edge gave way to a vast deep, like an inverted cathedral, where the light descended from blue-green to dark blue, then down to deep purple. All along the steep slope of the reef were amber, red and green sea-grasses, waving in the currents.

At first I was terrified with this close encounter, but then I sensed that the edge did not lead to an antagonistic abyss or vast *mare nullius*. There was life all the way down as far as I could see – fish were swimming in and out of the grasses. For me, this epiphany of life’s continuity between land and sea expanded my learning, for not only do many of us map other human beings as enemies, deviants and monsters, but we place “nature” in those categories as well. I swam back to the beach

20. The term is used by Karen Baker-Fletcher about her experience of living in Southern California, in *Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit: Womanist Wordings on God and Creation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998) 22-4.

21. Sallie McFague, in *Super, Natural Christians: How We Should Love Nature* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1997) writes of bringing spirituality “down to earth” by “close encounters with nature” and educating our “loving eyes” through the sense of touch (118-137). The “sense of both wonder at and connection with other living things” that we experienced as children – our first naiveté – can become a secondary, imaginative interpretation through nature writing as “geo-graphy – earth/writing” (121, 137).

22. Leone Huntsman offers a cultural and historical commentary on the connection of non-Indigenous Australians and the coast in *Sand in our Souls: The Beach in Australian History* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001).

knowing that while the cathedral sea is not my home, I live in relationship to the sea, which must be included in any eco-social vision of Christian hope. We need to move beyond our fear of the tehom.

DIVING WITH CATHERINE KELLER

Catherine Keller is another swimmer who has ventured into maritime mystery. She invites us to dive into the deep, to see things from a shimmering, fluid perspective, where the inflowing and outflowing of water embraces all beings in interdependent relation. Keller invites us into the *tehom*, the deep of Genesis 1:1-2, the vast primordial chaos. Keller recognises that with the rediscovery of the *Enuma Elish* and the Ugaritic texts, we could hear in the words "a wind of God swept over the face of the waters", echoes of the divine mythical battle against chaos. For Keller, "(T)his is an improvement over the classical theist tradition of reading the tehom as nothing at all, as the needed absence for the *creatio ex nihilo*."²³ But Keller swims along a different current. The wind or spirit of God hovers along the edge, at the interface of the deep, "preparing to unfold the deep into the upper darkness of outer space and the lower darkness of the terrestrial sea – a relation of interdependence by which the no-thingness of the indeterminate yields potentiality for difference, and actualization".²⁴

The problem is, *tehom* does not remain pacific for too long. In fact, the complex reality encoded in the figure of *tehom* becomes suspect and is often portrayed in biblical texts as an evil, disobedient creature in need of damming and damnation. Keller claims the Christian theological tradition reflects a vast "tehomophobia" that maintains "a general squeamishness toward all things mortal, fleshy, feminized, unpredictable and complex; that...works itself out as the indifference and vengefulness of church and culture toward creation".²⁵

Recall that in her early work, Keller swims through the semiotic, psychological and socio-political depths of *tehom*, challenging both modernist and feminist versions of the discrete, "separative self" toward re-claiming "tidal, connective" subjectivities for women and men.²⁶ In her more recent work, Keller advocates for an "eco-social ontology", which calls into question the tendency in postmodern, poststructuralist feminist theories to write-off theories of relation in the name of anti-essentialist theory.²⁷ By doing so, feminist theories jeopardise the

23. Catherine Keller, "No More Sea: The Lost Chaos of the Eschaton", in Dieter Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether (eds.), *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000) 187.

24. Keller, "No More Sea," 187.

25. Keller, "No More Sea", 196.

26. Keller, *From a Broken Web: Separation, Sexism and Self* (Boston MA: Beacon Press, 1986) 9, 92, 218-224.

27. Keller, "Seeking and Sucking", 56, 75.

possibilities for keeping their own “fluidity flowing” through dynamic relations with others, including the others of our complex ecologies.²⁸ Keller fears that the linguistic turn prevalent in feminist theories evidences a bias fraught with anthropocentric danger. So she warns:

We will not want to reconstruct our intersubjective relations in merely interhuman terms, as though only speech can mediate an ethical posture, as though only human culture inherently matters, and as though human speech and culture could be understood severed from the vast, pre-linguistic animal-emotive ecologies which contain them.²⁹

Where the symbolic order of Western modernity separates humans from our embeddedness in creation, Keller seeks to honour the connective, eco-social identities constituting human beings. She calls theology back to the tideline of the *tehom*, in order to dive again into the mystery of embodied being. Rather than run from the encroaching wave of the other, or demonise the connective currents of selfhood, Keller challenges theology to face the monstrous deep, as a place of open and playful possibility.

THE SEA IS NO MORE?

So what might this fear of the deep – tehomophobia – mean for theology, even feminist theology and ecotheology? For Keller, the consummate sign of tehomophobia can be found in Christian eschatology, where the book of Revelation holds a privileged place.³⁰ Over the years, John of Patmos’ apocalyptic vision has brought Christians to the very edge of a “new heaven and new earth” (Rev 21:1). Even today, in the renewal of eschatological vision for social justice, the image of a new heaven and new earth plays a central role.³¹

For example, in Margaret Farley and Serene Jones’ recent collection *Liberating Eschatology*, theologians as diverse as Ada María Isasi-Díaz, Joan Martin, Jürgen Moltmann and Sharon Ringe focus on the prophetic hope of Revelation’s ending.³² As Isasi-Díaz explains,

We need to realize the enormous urgency to bring about a real new heaven and new earth for the women, children and men around the

28. Keller, “Seeking and Sucking”, 58.

29. Keller, “Seeking and Sucking”, 59.

30. Catherine Keller, *Apocalypse Then and Now: A Feminist Guide to the End of the World* (Boston MA: Beacon Press, 1996) 68-9.

31. For example, see Duncan Reid’s attempt to re-earth and re-embody interpretations of Revelation in “Setting aside the Ladder to Heaven: Revelation 21.1-22.5 from the Perspective of the Earth”, in Norman C. Habel (ed.), *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, Vol. 1 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000) 232-45.

32. Margaret Farley and Serene Jones (eds.), *Liberating Eschatology: Essays in Honor of Letty Russell* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999) 175-239.

world who are living in the worst of conditions and are dying precisely because of the present world order.³³

But in adopting John's image, these theologians stop short of the full vision, for in the rest of the verse John sees "a new heaven and a new earth, *and the sea was no more*" (21:1). With the evacuation of the salty sea, he further envisions the drying up of salty tears shed by dying Christian martyrs. As Allan Boesak and Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza show, John's vision arose in the hope of liberation against the kyriocentric powers of empire with its imperial economics and military enforcement.³⁴ But still, for an eco-social vision of hope and healing, questions must be raised about reducing the sea to an evil and corrupt entity beyond hope and healing.³⁵ Keller concludes that tehomophobic theology leaves us with "an ecologically degraded Christian eschatology".³⁶

Isasi-Díaz does point a way beyond by questioning *what kind* of new earth we should live towards. For Keller, any kind of new heaven and the new earth will need a *tehomophilic* horizon; we need ways of living openly along the edge of mystery, potentiality, embodiment and interdependence. So for an eco-social poetics of community, how can we move beyond tehomophobia? How can we find "a tehomophilic strategy for Christian hope which neither demonizes nor annihilates the deep"?³⁷ An invitation is extended by Luce Irigaray, who as the "marine lover" speaks to "man", but her words resonate with those of us seeking an eco-social tack:

Could it be that the unexplored reaches of the farthest ocean are now your most dangerous beyond? Though they lie just outside your present project. No doubt they promise new discoveries. But will you not need to move beyond yourself, lowering your sail even, if you are to approach another sight?³⁸

33. Ada María Isasi-Díaz, "Mujerista Narratives: Creating a New Heaven and a New Earth", *Liberating Eschatology*, 229.

34. Allan A. Boesak, *Comfort and Protest: The Apocalypse from a South African Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987) and Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

35. In "Introducing the Earth Bible", Norman Habel claims that ecotheologians need to "move beyond a focus on ecological themes to a process of listening to, and identifying with, Earth as a presence or voice in the text" (35). See *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, 24-37, as well as his article, "The Challenge of Ecojustice Readings for Christian Theology", *Pacifica* 13 (June 2000), 125-141. My ecojustice reading of Rev 1:1 is concerned with the absence of the sea, which means the extinguishment of many Earth-voices, including the voice of the sea itself.

36. Keller, "No More Sea", 183.

37. Keller, "No More Sea", 187.

38. Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) 38.

A BLUE-GREEN OIKOUMENE

So let us take up Irigaray's invitation to go beyond our known boundaries. Like Keller, we can dive into the deep and learn to swim with the currents of embodied life. But what if we deepen Keller's reflections on oceanic subjectivity in the direction of recognising human ecological relatedness with the sea? What if we enter "a door into ocean", which may seem to us as our most dangerous beyond?³⁹ When we leave the land and shift our perspective toward the sea, we discover that the Earth's oceans cover 71% of the Earth's surface and make up 97% of the world's water.⁴⁰ The Northern Hemisphere is 61% sea and 39% land, and the Southern Hemisphere is 81% sea and only 19% land. The longest mountain range in the world is under the sea, the mid-Atlantic Range stretching 1200 miles long. The total volume of the ocean is approximately 324 million cubic miles. The average depth of the ocean is 12,247 feet and the deepest point is 36,163 feet. At this point, the pressure is 8 tonnes per square inch, the equivalent of one person trying to hold up 50 jumbo jets! While this body of water makes up only a thin layer compared with the earth's mass as a whole, it comprises 90% of the biosphere by volume.⁴¹ The vastness and density seem unimaginable, for the oceans exceed our perceptual limits.

While scientific study of the sea dramatically increased during WWII, it is only in more recent years that we have come to realise the importance of the oceans to the well-being of the world's environment. Everyday there is new knowledge about plate tectonics and thermohaline circulation – the flowing conveyor belt of heat and cold around our world.⁴² Through new technology, we now know that the ocean depths are neither silent nor still. Pictures from the bottom of the oceans show underwater lakes, rivers, and hydrothermal vents surrounded by tall tubeworms coloured red from chemosynthetic bacteria (*Archea*).⁴³ And we have only explored 1% of the total seafloor! Some scientists believe there may be more species diversity in the sea than on land: "Of the 33 types of animal life or phyla on the planet, 32 are found in the ocean, with 15 found only in the ocean."⁴⁴ Yet less than

39. Joan Slonczewski's novel, *A Door into Ocean* (New York: Avon, 1986) tells the story of a world entirely covered with ocean.

40. These figures are from Mário Soares, *The Ocean, Our Future: The Report of the Independent World Commission on the Oceans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 164-65.

41. James W. Nybakken and Steven K. Webster, "Life in the Ocean", *Scientific American* (Fall, 1998), 36.

42. Alyn C. Duxbury, Alison B. Duxbury, and Keith A. Sverdup, *An Introduction to the World's Oceans*, 6th edition (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2000[1997]) 174-85.

43. From the television series, "The Blue Planet", Australian Broadcasting Company (21 October -11 November, 2001).

44. Soares, *The Ocean, Our Future*, 169.

1% of the oceans has been designated as protected, compared with 6% of the planet's land surface.⁴⁵

When we enter a door to ocean, we receive a new look at what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr termed, "the great world house".⁴⁶ Perhaps we need more than a "greening" of theology for a just and sustainable household – we need a blue-green renovation!⁴⁷ For example, a blue-green world challenges the work of Trinitarian theologians who have found new imaginative energy in the image of God's *oikos* or household. As Douglas Meeks claims, the *oikonomia tou theou* (economy of God) applies to the life of the Christian community (Col 1:25; 1 Cor 9:17, Eph 3:2, 1 Tim 1:4) as well as to God's work of creating salvation for the household of the creation (Eph 1:9-10, 3:9-10).⁴⁸ But if the household of creation includes the ocean, then we will need a blue-green dimension to God's economy of salvation and a new poetics of hope and healing. Yet, how is the blue-green *oikoumene* faring these days?

SIGNS OF THE TIMES?

In 1998, the United Nations celebrated the "International Year of the Ocean", but in that same year, the Independent World Commission on the Ocean (IWCO) reported that the oceans are undergoing a tremendous crisis that cannot be seen in isolation from the problems affecting land and air.⁴⁹ In the last few decades of the twentieth century, the basic condition of the oceans has shifted from apparent abundance of life to growing scarcity, and from accommodation between people to conflict.⁵⁰ We can no longer accommodate virtually all uses of the oceans, as in the past, when human populations were smaller and the solution to pollution was dilution.

According to the IWCO report, growing coastal populations have increased the problems for oceans, including territorial disputes that threaten peace and security, over-fishing, habitat destruction, species extinction, pollution, illegal trafficking, congested shipping lanes, clandestine movement of persons, terrorism, and the disruption of

45. Soares, *The Ocean, Our Future*, 199.

46. Dr Martin Luther King, *Where Do We Go From Here? Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967) 167. See also the discussion of *oikos* and *oikoumene* in my book, *The Raging Hearth: Spirit in the Household of God* (St Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2000) 2-4.

47. Catherine Keller calls for a "green ecumenacy" based on the "greening power of the Spirit" inspired by Hildegard von Bingen's mystical image of *viriditas*. See "Eschatology, Ecology and a Green Ecumenacy", in Rebecca S. Chopp and Mark Lewis Taylor (eds.), *Reconstructing Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1994) 345.

48. M. Douglas Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989) 4. See also Geiko Muller-Fahrenholz's discussion of "ecodomy" as "building the house of life" in *God's Spirit: Transforming a World in Crisis* (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1995) 108-112.

49. Soares, *The Ocean, Our Future*, 16.

50. Soares, *The Ocean, Our Future*, 26.

coastal communities.⁵¹ Seventy percent of the world's fish stocks is already being exploited at, or beyond, sustainable limits.⁵² The oceans have become "the ultimate sink" for discharges of waste and chemicals carried by rivers from land-based sources.⁵³ Walk along many beaches and we can find all kinds of debris. In the U.S., the Los Angeles County Department of Beaches and Harbors reported that during the 1995 Labor Day weekend, beachgoers covering a 31-mile stretch of beach produced 50 tons of debris.⁵⁴

But the problem is not only what human beings put in or take out of the oceans. In February 2001, the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change officially declared that global warming will cause the world's temperatures to increase by 2.5 to 10.4 degrees (F) over the next 100 years.⁵⁵ Sea levels have risen 9 inches in the last century and may continue rising anywhere from 3.5 inches to 34.6 inches by 2100 due to thermal expansion and melting glaciers.⁵⁶ Already we have seen pictures from U.S. satellites revealing the collapse of the Larsen B ice sheet in Antarctica.⁵⁷ The scary thing is the computer models predicting the Larsen B break-up are also calculating that the circulation of the world's deep ocean currents will slow significantly and may reach a virtual halt by the middle of this century.⁵⁸

But global warming and rising sea levels impact people too. In Tuvalu, an exodus of people to Aotearoa/New Zealand has been agreed upon beginning in 2002 and continuing until 2030, maybe even 2050.⁵⁹ As Paani Laupepa describes the vulnerable situation in Tuvalu:

We have coastal erosion, droughts, and in the last decade we have also experienced an unusually high level of tropical cyclones. Salt-water intrusion is becoming a problem and this has affected our traditional food crops. Perhaps the most pronounced effect of climate change that we are actually seeing is the flooding of low-lying areas. A couple of decades ago the flooding was not so bad as last year's and to us living on the atolls, this is an increasing *sign of the times*.⁶⁰

51. Soares, *The Ocean, Our Future*, 15.

52. Soares, *The Ocean, Our Future*, 98.

53. Soares, *The Ocean, Our Future*, 98.

54. Tucker Coombe, *The Shoresaver's Handbook: A Citizen's Guide* (New York: Lyons & Burford Publishers, 1996) 10.

55. Nancy Shute, "The Weather: Global Warming Could Cause Drought, Disease and Political Upheaval", *U.S. News and World Report* (5 February 2001) 46.

56. Shute, "The Weather", 48-50.

57. Natasha Bitá and Amanda Hodge, "Gone with the Floe", *The Australian* (28 March 2002) 12.

58. Bitá and Hodge, "Gone with the Floe", 12.

59. Alex Kirby, "Pacific Islanders Flee Rising Seas", *BBC News Online* (October 9, 2001), http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/sci/tech/newsid/_15810001581457.stm.

60. Quote cited in Kirby, "Pacific Islanders Flee Rising Seas". Emphasis added.

In response to these changes in climate, Samoan climatologist Penehuro Lefale remarks, "We are like the warning system for the whole world to see."⁶¹

The question is will the people in over-developed nations have the eyes to see what is happening to the people of the "paradise"?⁶² The U.S. produces one-fourth of the world's greenhouse gases, but according to Ian Lowe of Griffith University, Australians are "the world's highest per capita emitters of greenhouse gases".⁶³ This is partly due to the 17% jump in Australia's emissions from 1990.⁶⁴ Thus we need to see how the social and economic structures of our society and the degradation of living conditions for Pacific Islander people are related. In the U.S. and Australia, national leaders talk of maintaining "our way of life" in light of threats to national borders. Both George Bush and John Howard have rejected participation in the Kyoto protocols believing that the commitments are not in the interests of their nations. But what happens when our way of life – our greenhouse emissions – threaten the way of life and the borders of others? Is this a new form of environmental terrorism? How will the over-developed nations respond to the increasing flood of environmental refugees expected in the next few decades, or even this very year now that war has been waged in Iraq?⁶⁵ Do we have enough will to repent and change to long-term interests for the global good?

Instead of thinking of ourselves as dwelling on isolated, discrete islands, we need new imaginative maps that picture people dwelling in eco-social relations incorporating both land and sea. A blue-green *oikos* will need not only a land-ethic, but as Carl Safina suggests, a sea-ethic as well.⁶⁶ The challenge will be for humans to cooperate, because the issues of sustainability for the oceans and human beings cannot be confined to particular nations or geographical regions. The oceans flow as one body, species migrate across vast areas, people seek refuge beyond borders and most of our world of waters is under no single jurisdiction.

61. Interview from "Rising Waters: Global Warming and the Fate of the Pacific Islands", *SBS Cutting Edge Series* (31 July 2001). See also Jon Barnett and Neil Adger, "Climate Dangers and Atoll Countries", Working Paper 9 (Norwich, United Kingdom: Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, 2001), www.tyndall.ac.uk.

62. In her article, "Why Contextual?", *The Pacific Journal of Theology*, Series II, Issue 27 (2002), Keiti Ann Kanongata'a laments, "We try to explain to the super-power nations that we are in trouble, but they do not hear us. Instead, they always look at us as 'paradise'" (32).

63. Quoted by Richard Yallop in "Carbon: Slash or Burn", *The Australian* (6-7 April, 2002), 26.

64. Yallop, "Carbon: Slash or Burn", 26.

65. Grover Foley, "The Looming Refugee Crisis", *Cold Catches Fire* (Amsterdam: Action for Solidarity, Equality, Environment and Development Europe, 2000) 60-63.

66. Carl Safina, *Song for the Blue Ocean: Encounters Along the World's Coasts and Beneath the Seas* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997) 439.

These days, the signs of the time come bearing suffering and judgment. But they also bring new discoveries. Will we have eyes to see? Again, Irigaray's words function evocatively, "For there is no peril greater than the sea. Everything is constantly moving and remains eternally in flux. Hence with a thawing wind, bad fortune arrives. As well as salvation."⁶⁷ Today, we need to understand the relation of land and sea together. We need a blue-green, interdependent vision – an archipelagic vision.

AN ARCHIPELAGIC IMAGINATION

In the main hall of the Divinity School of Silliman University on the island of Negros in the Philippines, the Religion and Arts students of 1995 have painted a vibrant mural.⁶⁸ The theme is based on Matthew 4:19, with the island of Negros portrayed as a traditional fishing boat, sailing over the beautiful blue-green waters of the sea. In the boat, a Filipino Christ extends his hand out over the waves, surrounded by the colourful faces of Filipinas and Filipinos from Negros. The mural portrays an image of hope as people of various cultures, ages, faiths and livelihoods together extend a community fishing net across the brilliant water.

But the mural portrays more. The mural invites people into a relation of partnership, rather than colonialist dominance or cultural paternalism. While the dream of reaching out in partnership across the sea is far from the daily, lived-experience of fisherfolk in Negros, this horizon of hope is still held passionately.⁶⁹ For fisherfolk, the sea connects them with others, rather than separates them – an amazing and risky reality for an archipelago of 7100 islands!

From my perspective as a newcomer, the mural illumines the possibility of an alternative world inspired by an archipelagic imagination. The word, archipelago, can be defined as "a group of islands" or more holistically, a "sea studded with islands".⁷⁰ Thus, to imagine our world as an archipelago would mean to recognise diversity between beings and places without losing the possibility of relationship between them.⁷¹ An archipelagic imagination seeks fluid boundaries

67. Irigaray, *Marine Lover*, 37.

68. A photo of the mural can be seen in Nancy Victorin-Vangerud, "'The Sea is Our Life!' Cross-Cultural Reflections on a Coastal Sense of Place", *In God's Image*, 20.4 (December 2001), 34.

69. See Eleazar Fernandez, "Cross-Cultural Mission to Postcolonial Masters in a Globalized World", in Deborah Lee and Antonio Salas (eds.), *Unfaithing U.S. Colonialism* (Pacific and Asian American Center for Theology and Strategies, California: 1999) 86-106.

70. G. A. Wilkes and W. A. Krebs (eds.), *Collins English Dictionary*, 3rd edition (Sydney: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1991) 78.

71. For the image of archipelago, I am grateful to Liana Joy Christensen and her "science dreaming" in *See the Islands* (Curtin University, PhD thesis, 2001). I am also grateful to Tess Williams who explored this image with Liana and me through her science

without reducing any one subject to “the Same”.⁷² The image opens up a horizon where one’s identity is constituted in and through a communal, even cosmological ontology of “interbeing”, where people remain responsive and accountable to each other, other beings, the land and the sea.⁷³

For example, an archipelagic imagination can be heard in the contextual theologies of women and men of Oceania.⁷⁴ As Keiti Ann Kanongata’a from Tonga explains, “the Pacific way” is doing theology in communion and not in isolation, thus “unity in a freedom of diversity” produces life for the people of Oceania.⁷⁵ While globalisation seeks to bring people closer together, from Kanongata’a’s perspective, the bonds of Oceania as a “people community” are being weakened at the local level through new forms of colonialisation, greed and false promises.⁷⁶ She yearns for the recovery of “Pacific wisdom” drawn from the diversity of peoples “that will...re-ignite in us our gift of extended family, *ainga/kainga*”.⁷⁷ Thus, contextual theology is about interdependence and kinship across the ocean of island nations.

Sevati Tuwere of Fiji claims that in the future, “the setting for the articulation of Oceanic theology is the sea, the Ocean”.⁷⁸ He draws from the Fijian concept of *vanua*, meaning literally land and sea, which holds together the place of traditions and ancestors, the people’s means of livelihood, the sense of time and event, and a reassuring sense of

fiction novel, *Sea as Mirror* (Sydney: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000). The imaginative oceanography of “thinking like an archipelago” also draws its meaning from Aldo Leopold, who suggested people “think like a mountain” in order to become biotic citizens rather than conquerors of the land-community. See *A Sand Country Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968 [1949]) 132.

72. For an “economy of the Same”, see Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985) 74.

73. John A. Grim, “Introduction”, John A. Grim (ed.), *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology: The Interbeing of Cosmology and Community* (Harvard University Press, 2001). Grim acknowledges his use of the term “interbeing” is indebted to Thich Nhat Hahn (vi).

74. My intent at this point as a newcomer is to indicate potential connections, not to give an extensive account. From the context of Western Australia, one would also need to consider connections through the Indian Ocean as well. Rather than the big picture, I am exploring interconnections of local and global currents, which means as Clive Pearson has argued in “Towards an Australian Ecotheology”, *Uniting Church Studies*, 4.1 (March 1998), that “ecological and contextual theologies” are related (26). As he explains in “Constructing a Local Ecotheology”, *Ecotheology* 3 (1997), ecotheology is not simply about “addressing specific problems and devising an appropriate theory of stewardship”; it involves “a construction of an anthropology that is very specific about what it means to be human in this place” (38). Thus, living as a coastal person in Western Australia has brought to surface in me ponderings about an archipelagic anthropology.

75. Keiti Ann Kanongata’a, “Pacific Women and Theology”, *The Pacific Journal of Theology*, Series II, 13 (1995), 17.

76. Kanongata’a, “Why Contextual?”, 31-2, 38.

77. Kanongata’a, “Why Contextual?”, 38.

78. Sevati Tuwere, “What is Contextual Theology: A View from Oceania”, *The Pacific Journal of Theology*, Series II, 27 (2002), 13.

identity.⁷⁹ Tuwere claims that there cannot be two histories – one before and one after the missionaries' arrival. He explains, "The history of the land and sea which includes our myths, and belief and value systems is part of this history of salvation."⁸⁰

We can hear in the words of Kanongata'a and Tuwere how people and place cannot be separated. As testified to in the Inaugural Pacific Consultation of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians:

Developers from the outside come into the region, they look at the forests and think the forests are empty, they look at the beaches, reefs, lagoons and think they are empty. They are not empty. They maintain the history of the Island people. They keep our identity, they speak to us everyday of the past; and it is our library, our diary that speaks to us everyday of our own identity and who we are within our island nations.⁸¹

This deep interbeing of people and place, community and cosmos, is summed up in Leslie Boseto's plea, "Our land and sea are us and we are them. Do not separate us, if you do so, you are murdering us!"⁸²

But John Havea warns about seeing the connection of land and sea in too solid or discrete a way.⁸³ According to his "islandic hermeneutic", the sea is the boundary, but one that moves back and forth, ebbing and flowing, taking and returning parts of the island so that it is always changing. Thus, there is no original island to which one can return. As Havea explains:

Since we live off the ocean, the islandic boundary is essential to our existence; we live off our boundary by means of the food that we draw from the ocean, and we live off our boundary by inhabiting the islands. We cannot stay away from our islandic boundary because not only do we find nourishment from the ocean but also it is what links one island with another. The islandic understanding of boundary then is not only something that limits and separates, but also something that provides and links. We are people of/f the boundary.⁸⁴

In exploring an archipelagic imagination, we can learn from the island wisdom of Oceania that the coastal edge is not the end of something and

79. Sevati Tuwere, "An Agenda for the Theological Task of the Church in Oceania", *The Pacific Journal of Theology*, Series II, 13 (1995), 10. See also Arthur Walker-Jones, "Psalm 104: a Celebration of the Vanua", in Norman C. Habel (ed.), *The Earth Bible, Vol. 4: The Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets* (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 2001) 84-97.

80. Tuwere, "An Agenda for the Theological Task of the Church in Oceania", 11.

81. Cited in *The Pacific Journal of Theology*, Series II, 13 (1995), 14.

82. Leslie Boseto, "Do not Separate Us from Our Land and Sea", *The Pacific Journal of Theology*, Series II, 13 (1995), 69-70.

83. John Havea, "The Future Stands Between Here and There: Towards an Is-land(ic) Hermeneutics", *The Pacific Journal of Theology*, Series II, 13 (1995), 61-68.

84. Havea, "The Future Stands Between Here and There", 61.

the beginning of nothing. The ocean is not a void or emptiness that isolates us and rigidly defines people as separate from others. In thinking like an archipelago, we can acknowledge the fluid, elemental and non-possessable matrix in which we move and live and have our being. Thus the coast may be understood as a margin, an edge, but it need not be an end, for with an archipelagic imagination, edges lead to new possibilities.

The connection of land and sea in Oceania resonates with the interbeing of place and people in coastal communities of Indigenous Australians. For example, we can honour the relationship of land and sea, people and place in the "saltwater" words of Lanani Marika, of north-east Arnhem Land:

I will say this with my own feelings. How I am feeling toward this saltwater.... We sing from the shore to where the clouds rise on the horizon. And from where the clouds rise we sing of the seaweed and of the clouds rising. Clouds always rising and raining on the ocean. And then after the rain the calm sea will sleep there. The song cycle of the sea starts there; of this water, of this saltwater, for this country.... Everything that exists in the sea has a place in the sacred songs...

For this is why we always have to live here. So that we can see the water going out and coming in. Watching the exposed beach at the lowest tide, the water coming over the beach at the fullest high tide, seeing the rock islands in the distance. Here we will stay. This is our place. This is what we have heard from the beginning. Our fathers told us these stories. That is why we speak for this water.⁸⁵

For Marika, land and sea share one world, where land beings and sea beings, people and place, live within the tidal flow of kinship. Thus, the struggle for reconciliation between the Indigenous custodians of saltwater country and non-Indigenous Australians means that the concept of land rights now includes sea rights as well.⁸⁶

Let me summarise. The students' mural of the island of Negros, emerging contextual theologies of Oceania and the Australian Indigenous sense of belonging to the land and sea challenge theology to re-imagine community and cosmology within a blue-green *oikoumene*. With an archipelagic imagination we can sing anew with the psalmist

O God, how many are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;

85. Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre, *Saltwater: Yirrkala Bark Paintings of Sea Country, Recognizing Indigenous Sea Rights* (Yirrkala: Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre, 1999) 19.

86. On 18 September 2001, the Australian High Court recognised native title to seas claimed by the Croker Islanders in *Yarmirr v. Northern Territory*, 2001. On the significance of sea-dreaming and seamarks for saltwater people, see Nonie Sharp, *Saltwater People: The Waves of Memory* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2002).

the earth is full of your creatures.
Yonder is the sea, great and wide.... (Ps 104:24):

With an archipelagic imagination, we too can honour the currents that flow throughout the Earth and value the migration patterns of many species that know no national borders. We can gain a deeper understanding of the eco-social relation between people on different shores, and thus re-imagine a global accountability and responsibility for the integrity of people and places. Today, we can acknowledge that the oceans are no longer a void or inexhaustible commons. In fact, an archipelagic imagination enables us to make a new "return to the sea", as Mario Soares of the IWCO envisions:

We need a return to the sea, not in the mode of colonialist expansionism, but as a vocation of equity, cooperation, common security, solidarity...especially for the least developed nations, indigenous people, traditional fishing communities, poor coastal populations, small island countries and land-locked nations.⁸⁷

An archipelagic imagination infuses us with the horizon for encountering a world of hope and possibility.

SEA-ING FAITH, FATHOMING FAITH

In the previous sections, I have argued along with Catherine Keller that tehomophobic theology, with its loss of the oceanic other, leaves us with a Christian eschatology that is ecologically deficient. But in situating ourselves along an archipelagic horizon, we can reclaim the "edge" to eschatology, what I have called a "sacred edge".⁸⁸ From this littoral place, in which edge is not an end but the possibility of connection, we can imagine a tehomophilic hope, which neither demonises nor annihilates the deep. Thus in this final section, I would like to propose tehomophilic metaphors for more deeply understanding and practising a feminist eco-social theology.⁸⁹ The two metaphors are *sea-ing* Christian faith and *fathom-ing* Christian faith. Both metaphors challenge the dualistic position of humans over against nature, which funds "the deep structures of mastery" in Christian philosophy and theology.⁹⁰ Not only is environmental mastery challenged, but cultural,

87. Soares, *The Oceans, Our Future*, 10, 61-63.

88. Nancy M. Victorin-Vangerud, "The Sacred Edge: Seascape as Spiritual Resource Toward an Australian Eco-eschatology", *Ecotheology*, 6 (July 2001 & January 2002), 165-185. A preliminary article exploring Keller's work and issues of gender, spirituality and coastal culture can be found in "The Sacred Edge: Women, Sea and Spirit", *Seachanges: Journal of Women Scholars of Religion and Theology*, 1 (2001), 1-28, www.wsrt.com.au.

89. I have also explored these metaphors in "Sea-ing Faith, Fathoming Faith: Reflections on a Coastal Sense of Place", *Eremos: Exploring Spirituality in Australia*, 79 (May 2002), 17-21.

90. Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993) 190.

racial and gender mastery as well. Like Keller, I am seeking to revalue the *tehom* and all beings who have been associated with the deep darkness.

The first metaphor, sea-ing Christian faith, plays with the two words in English, "sea" and "to see". The latter means to perceive with one's eyes, aesthetically, or to understand something, as in "I can see that is true." So in sea-ing Christian faith, we can perceive and understand the integrity and interdependence of the whole of life with God in our blue-green *oikoumene*. We can affirm that there is no part of creation void or empty of God's life-giving and transformative potential. As Leslie Boseto sings,

The power of God is there
In land, sea and sky.
We can never escape it,
The spirit of God in all places.⁹¹

In valuing land and sea together, we can honour a fluid, salty sense of interbeing, which challenges the discrete, "island mentality" of Kantian subjectivity, where the human being is separate, self-contained, and moored to the grounds of Divine Reason, away from the changing, lapping waves of embodied being.⁹²

In sea-ing Christian faith, we have the opportunity to learn something important about our spiritual belonging in creation. In the past, we have thought of the oceans as inexhaustible, invulnerable and beyond our influence, as if the oceans would never suffer! But now we realise that they are vulnerable, and the life that they sustain is endangered. While they are vast and complex, flowing and deep, the oceans are not perpetually replenishing. Might this realisation also say something about our image of God? Maybe we need to understand God in a new way, as fluid, connective and vulnerable as the oceans themselves? How often systematic theology has presented God as the Great Father – invulnerable, non-suffering, all-powerful and beyond our influence!

Curiously, process theologian Charles Hartshorne turns to an archipelagic imagination. In *The Divine Relativity*, Hartshorne introduces his panentheistic model of God and the world by characterising God as the most irresistible of influences precisely because God is in Godself the most open to influence.⁹³ This inflowing between God and living

91. The lyrics are from a song composed in response to the question "Where does our God reside?" by delegates at the Luru Land Conference and quoted by Leslie Boseto in "Do not Separate Us from Our Land and Sea", *The Pacific Journal of Theology*, Series II, No. 13 (1995), 69.

92. Pamela Sue Anderson, *A Feminist Philosophy of Religion: The Rationality and Myths of Religious Belief* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998) xi, 10-11.

93. Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1948).

creatures is a sensitive, tolerant and persuasive relativity. Since God is open to our influence, and we are “rivulets poured into God’s ‘ocean of feeling’”, we too can seek a sensitive, tolerant and persuasive reverence for all of life.⁹⁴ Thus, as the sea touches all shores, might not the infinite relatedness of God be open to such risk and vulnerability? As a saying in the Philippines goes, “The kindness of God is as wide as the ocean.”⁹⁵

The second metaphor, fathom-ing Christian faith, invites us to venture beyond the “shallow” ethical perspective (as deep ecologists would say) toward knowing and acting from the depths of justice and compassion.⁹⁶ Now when human beings dive into the oceanic abyss, we learn that there is life all the way down, as Don Walsh and Jacques Piccard discovered in 1960, 5933 fathoms deep at the bottom of the Mariana Trench.⁹⁷ In fathoming faith, we have the opportunity to deepen our environmental ethics to the point of realising that what we do impacts the people, creatures and habitats of the remotest places (to us). Perhaps it is only when we follow the flowing, vulnerable God of the deep, that we will be able to experience the divine compassion for ourselves and for all creation.

Today, in sea-ing and fathom-ing Christian faith, we can turn away from master narratives of Christian imperialism, where the oceans serve as a colonising medium for extending territorial authority. We can embrace eco-social narratives of Christian ecumenism and work towards inter-religious and multi-cultural solidarity for making peace today. In sea-ing faith and fathom-ing faith, the risen Christ meets us on the edge with fish and bread (John 21) and the elemental Spirit invites us out further into the deep of God’s new possibilities (1 Cor 2:10).

CONCLUSION

What does it mean to love and live with the deep things of life in God’s blue-green *oikoumene*? In this essay I have explored the recovery of theology’s relation with the deep – the *tehom* – within our eco-social environment including the indwelling God and ourselves. Rather than envision the evacuation of oceanic others for the sake of our own security, control, purity and certainty (as in Rev. 21:1-2), we can honour an open, ontological interbeing, in which we seek to live justly and with integrity. We can live along the hopeful edge of creative potentiality

94. Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, p. xvii.

95. *Ang kalooy sa Ginoo may gilapdon sa dagat*. Translated by Eleazar Fernandez in personal conversation (14 July 2001) from the worship bulletin of The Chapel of the Evangel Fellowship, Silliman University.

96. Arne Naess, “The Shallow and the Deep, Long Range Ecology Movement”, in George Sessions (ed.), *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1995) 151-6.

97. Robert D. Ballard, *The Eternal Darkness: A Personal History of Deep-Sea Exploration* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000) 54-5.

without funding our visions of flourishing out of the supposed lack, emptiness or evil of others. Can we live in hope of our own possibilities without closing off the possibilities of others? Will we have eyes to see the deep, flowing interconnectedness of ourselves with others, to whom we remain accountable and respond-able?

I have made the case that a blue-green *oikoumene* calls for a new eco-social poetics of community based on an oceanic horizon for theology. Our passion for God and our passion for Earth are not separate, but like land and sea, sky and deep, one interdependent relation. No longer need we think of ourselves or of our communities as invulnerable islands separate from the crises for survival in our world. In a blue-green *oikoumene*, where the Spirit of the vulnerable God "gives life" and brings "the life of the world to come" (Constantinopolitan Creed, 381 ACE) to even the deepest, darkest and densest of places, we can "sea" our faith and "fathom" our faith through an archipelagic imagination. We can dive more deeply and surface beyond tehomophobic theology by maintaining the sacred edge to our connectedness with even the most abysmal of people, creatures and places. In thinking like an archipelago, where edges are not ends, but new possibilities, our eschatological narratives of hope and healing can flow in ways that keep open or dis/close God's transformative possibilities for the whole of creation, until "all things" (Eph 1: 10) are brought to fulfilment.