TĀFEA A POPOULI RE-READING OF GENESIS 3

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ABSTRACT

There are many stories in the Bible that portray messages dominated by their traditional meanings and patriarchal influences. One of these is in Genesis 3, the story of the “Fall’, as it is traditionally labelled. It’s a fascinating story that we all learnt while growing up; however, the most maligned character is the woman. Moreover, the word “fall” is not mentioned in the text. In an attempt to bring out a positive message and to redeem the image of womanhood, I invoke a Samoan hermeneutic towards the re-reading of Genesis 3.

DECLARATION

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

Signed: _____

Date: _____

DEDICATION

Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory.

We dedicate this work to God, who has called us in this calling.

Also dedicate to the memories of my late grandparents,

Savea Faumuina Vaafuti Faumuina & Tufosa Autagavaia Savea.

And to my late father,

Savea Tui Alauni Leleisiuao,

Who have silently wanted one of his children to be a *faifeau*.

You are forever in my heart.

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FAAFETAI, FAAFETAI TELE, FAAFETAI TELE LAVA

List of Abbreviations

ANE	-	Ancient Near East
CCCS	-	Congregational Christian Church of Samoa
EFKS	-	Ekalesia Faapotopoga Kerisiano Samoa
JSOT	-	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOT Supp	-	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
NIV	-	New International Version of the Bible
NRSV	-	New Revised Standard Version
NKJV	-	New King James Version
NT	-	New Testament
OT	-	Old Testament

Chapter 1

Introductory

Introduction

This short chapter serves as the introduction to this thesis. It aims to put us into perspective and provide a map to reading it. In doing so, this chapter will include; a section discussing the aim, purpose and inspiration for the study. The thesis statement and focus questions; a brief literature review on the interpretation of Genesis 3, within which I wish to situate this thesis; and a brief thesis outline with explanations of the content of the chapters proceeding from this current one.

Aim and Purpose.

The main aim of this thesis is to present a Samoan contextual interpretation of Genesis 3 from a *Tāfea a Popouli* (drifting coconut) perspective. I was taught from early childhood that Genesis 3 tells the story concerning the fall of humanity with the finger pointed at Eve as the culprit behind humanity's demise. Such an interpretation was problematic for me as I grew up, especially since I am very fond of my mother, later on my wife and four daughters. They are the most important women in my life. Their love, care and support have made me who I am today. My life is a blessing with them at my side. My feelings towards my mother, my wife and daughters contradicts with the labels and stigmas towards women, due to the events of Genesis 3.

This contradiction inspires and motivates me to revisit and re-read Genesis 3 to redeem the image of womanhood. To do this I propose the use of a contextually fashioned hermeneutics from my Samoan context to re-read the narrative of Genesis 3. The use of such reading from my local and indigenous contexts will allow me, the

interpreter, to be involved in the process of interpretation with special consideration of my beliefs, culture, identity and way of life.

Thesis Statement

This study is set out to prove that the Genesis 3 narrative can also be interpreted as a story of hope for humanity. It is my hope here that achieving such a feat could lead to positive perceptions that could liberate the character of Eve and women from the negative labels attached to womanhood, resulting from the traditional patriarchal readings of Genesis 3. In order to achieve this, the study is set out to answer the following focus questions.

Focus Questions

A lot of questions can be asked of this interesting tale. However, the following 4 questions have been designed to streamline the focus throughout the study.

1. Why do scholars consider Genesis 3 a story portraying the fall of humanity?
2. Are there readings of Genesis 3 that disclose the narrative as a story of hope?
3. Can reading Genesis 3 with a Samoan hermeneutic of hope lead to positive readings as well?
4. What are the implications of such readings?

To answer the questions above it is imperative to survey scholarly views on Genesis 3. This will be the next step for this study where I will provide a literature review to highlight scholarly interpretations of the selected text. This process will allow me to identify scholars that I side with, and whose work this study can be located with.

Scholars' Interpretation of Genesis 3

The perception of Genesis 3 as a story of the Fall can be traced back to ancient Judaic interpretation, and it was consecrated through the Apostle Paul's conception of the First Adam who brought sin to this world. James Barr claimed that the conception of 'Fall' is foreign to Genesis 3 and Old Testament scholars have long recognized that such a perception of Genesis 3 cannot hold out to close scrutiny.[1] However, despite this knowledge there are still a number of established Old Testament scholars who still view Genesis 3 as the story of the fall and humanity's demise. In this case, this brief literature review will attempt to highlight both sides of the debate. On the one hand are selected established scholars who uphold the traditional view, and on the other hand are those who see the conception of the fall as foreign to Genesis 3, and thus presented a liberating view of the character of the first woman and womanhood in general.

Traditional Patriarchal View of Genesis 3

The first example of an Old Testament scholar who upheld the traditional view of Genesis 3 is Gerhard Von Rad. For him the story presents the distancing of humans from God because of their willingness to be divine. This human enthusiasm was the core that the serpent, who was the craftiest of all animals, attacked. The serpent's attack targeted the woman who Von Rad views as a weak character, whom the snake had easily led astray due to her ingenuousness, as evidenced in her exaggeration of God's speeches.[2] Her inexperience led to ignorance towards the divine command and to her actions of plucking and eating the fruit of the tree. The woman then became the temptress and took the fruit to her husband, who followed her advice, causing both to

[1] James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (Minneapolis, USA: Fortress Press, 1992), ix.
[2] Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis*, trans. John H Marks (London: SCM Press Limited, 1972) 88-78.

disobey God. Their actions led to their expulsion from Paradise, and humanity's hopeless struggle with evil now a permanent fixture of mortal life.[3]

Another established scholar who views Genesis 3 as a story of the Fall is James G. Murphy. Similar to Von Rad, Murphy also sees the woman as inexperienced, from a Christian perspective. Such inexperience led her to accept the devil's falsehood and thus her instinctive desire for knowledge and equality with God,[4] exposed her to the risk of sin. According to Murphy the eating of the first food was the origin of an evil consciousness and the loss of the divine favour. Humanity fell and became morally corrupt. The consequences of the first sin involved the woman becoming a slave or an inferior to her male counterpart, and exclusion of both from the Garden of Eden.[5]

Gordon Wenham is another renowned Old Testament scholar who sees Genesis 3 in a negative light, as a story of temptation and the fall of humanity.[6] However, unlike Von Rad and Murphy, Wenham sees the woman's covetousness as the source of her failure to recognise the snake's half-truths. The woman's covetousness can be seen through the expressions "good to eat," delight in her eyes" and "giving insights" which describes the woman's hopes of eating the forbidden fruit.[7] Wenham goes further, describing the woman enacting God's role in creation. For instance, the expressions "good to eat" and "delight in her eyes" suggest imitation, as evident in the phrase: "and God saw that it was good." Also the woman's taking of the fruit echoes God's creative action of 'taking' the rib of the man to create the woman.[8] Wenham's view discloses the

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[3] Von Rad, *Genesis*, 100.

[4] James G. Murphy, *The Book of Genesis* (Eugene, USA: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998), 124.

[5] Murphy, *The Book of Genesis*, 128.

[6] Gordan J Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 1-15* (Dallas USA: Word Books Publishers, 1987), 120.

[7] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 143.

[8] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 144.

woman as a strong character whose greed forced her to play God, leading to the fall of humanity.

Moreover, another established scholar who supports the traditional patriarchal view of Genesis 3 is Umberto Cassuto. Cassuto sees the woman as cunning. His portrayal of the woman derives from his understanding of the interchange between the snake and the woman as a 'duologue' that occurs within the mind of the woman. According to Cassuto, the woman's cunningness led her to the verdict that "the interdict was not imposed upon us in order to preserve us from death, but because God, who knows good, and evil is jealous of us and does not wish us also to have knowledge of good and evil like Himself. On the basis of this conclusion, she acted as she did."[9] In hindsight, it is apparent that Cassuto not only saw Genesis 3 as a story relating the demise of humanity but also points the finger to the woman as the sole culprit behind humanity's fall.

Another advocate of the traditional patriarchal view of Genesis 3 is Kent R. Hughes. Viewing Genesis 3 from a patriarchal Christian perspective he also sees Genesis 3 as a story of temptation and fall of humanity. This was the result of Eve's ingenuousness. This is reflected in her sad revisions of God's command in Genesis 2:16 "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden," during her dialogue with Satan in Genesis 3:3. Eve's revisions diminish, exaggerate and soften God's word. First, Eve diminishes God's command by leaving out the term "every." This omission diminishes God's generosity. Furthermore, God's command concerning the forbidden tree is also exaggerated by Eve adding the phrase "neither shall you touch it." This addition yields a harsh portrait of a strict God. Finally, Eve softens God's word by omitting the term

[9] Umberto Cassuto, *From Adam to Noah: A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Illinois: Varda Books, 2005), 143.

"surely" in God's word in Genesis 2:17 which states that "you will surely die." Eve's revisions of God's word disclose her as a liar who opened up God's word and character to be attacked by Satan. This led to the descent of Eve and humanity as a whole. In summation, Hughes sees Eve as the perpetrator who bears the blame for humanity's demise.[10]

Another view seems to water down the 'Fall' metaphor, and takes Genesis 3 as story of a 'fall-out', rather than a story of destruction. Representing this view is Terrence C. Fretheim, who sees the word 'Fall' as alien to Genesis 3.[11] For Fretheim this interpretation of Genesis 3 originated in Judaism and New Testament sects. The metaphors that appear more central to Genesis 3-6 include "those of estrangement, alienation, separation and displacement with ever increasing distance from Eden, each other, and God."[12] In this light, Fretheim sees the sin of Genesis 3 as originating as a *process of the Fall*, that only comes into fruition in Genesis 8, with the flood narrative.[13]

In summation, it is clear from this brief literature review that there are scholars who uphold the traditional patriarchal view of Genesis 3. These scholars solely blame the woman's inexperience, greed or cunningness to be the culprit behind the fall of humanity. Furthermore, there are also scholars who seem to water down the fall metaphor and thus view Genesis 3 as a story of an original sin that ignites the process of humanity's alienation and fall out with God and with each other, and eliminates the utopian[14] view of creation (Eden).

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[10] Kent R. Hughe, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessings* (Illinois: Crossway Books, 2004), 70-71.

[11] Terence E. Fretheim, "Is Genesis 3 a Fall Story?" Word and World: 14/2 (1994), 144-153.

[12] Fretheim, "Is Genesis 3 a Fall Story?" 153.

[13] For a similar view see: Mark Smith, "Before Human Sin and Evil: Desire and Evil in the Garden of God," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly | 80 (2018):215-230.*

[14] Utopia meaning is the perfect society in which people work well and are happy. So utopian view of creation is its perfect and ideal view.

Liberated View of Genesis 3

The emergence of feminist hermeneutics coincided with attempts to eradicate the oppressive patriarchal views on Genesis 3 by predominantly female biblical scholars and theologians. I admit I will not be able to expand on the literature and the many attempts to revisit and reinterpret Genesis 3 to liberate the female image. However, for my purpose I will draw upon a few examples from biblical scholars (mainly women) to illustrate the scholarly attempts to liberate the traditional perception of Genesis 3, and the image of the first woman presented in Genesis 3.

The first to be mentioned here is Carol L. Meyers, who produced a number of works in her attempt to exonerate Genesis 3 and liberate womanhood from patriarchal tendencies. For her, the fall of humanity, or the sin of the woman, are either absent from the text or are not as manifest as other more salient themes. She proposes that the conception of a 'Fall' is extra biblical, and derived from traditional Midrash theology and Orphic thought that was prevalent in the Ancient Near East. Moreover, she explains, the absence of a categorical allusion to sin in the story, the strong aetiological flavour of the Eden story, and the absence of the terminology of sin, all point to a need to reconsider the text, to produce sound liberating readings for women.[15]

Secondly, Phillis Trible presents a depatriarchal view of Genesis 3 through the use of feminist hermeneutics. She depatriarchalise Genesis 3 by reflecting on the following; "[L]et a female speculates. If the serpent is 'subtler' than its fellow creatures, the woman is more appealing than her husband. Throughout the myth, she is the more

[15] Carol L. Meyers, "Gender roles and Genesis 3:16 revisited in the feminist companion to Genesis," A. Brenner (ed.), FCB 2 (Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1993), 127. For another related work see *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

intelligent one, the more aggressive one and the one with greater sensibilities."[16] Apparently, as the patriarchal view diminishes the image of a woman, the matriarchal view highlights Eve's intelligence. Therefore, Eve is no longer an insignificant character in the story, drawing on attention to herself is especially why the serpent dedicated special attention on her.[17] Trible's reading clearly eradicates patriarchal tendencies in the story and traditional interpretations, thus elevating Eve to an equal level as her male counterpart.

Another significant reading in the quest to redeem Eve's character, is the attempt by Julie F. Parker in her article.[18] Here, Parker liberated the character of Eve by proposing that the man was also present at the scene of the fall. She saw that the preposition ['with her'] points to the man's presence at the scene of the events between the serpent and the woman overhearing the duologue between the two. If such is the case, then Eve should not be solely blame for the demise of humanity. In other words, the man should not be excused, but should also bear the blame for the fall. He too is responsible.[19]

Karen L. Edwards argued that the best approach to Genesis 3 is "to accept and reconsider rather than to deny Eve's role as the archetypal femme fatale,"[20] since the portrayal of Eve in Genesis 3 manifests characteristics peculiar to a femme fatale. She noted that, "Eve offers the fruit to Adam, she makes him a partner - in crime, many

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[16] Phillis Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in the biblical interpretation," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 41(1), 1973 30-48.

[17] Phillis Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in the biblical interpretation," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 41(1), 1973 30-48.

[18] Julie F. Parker, "Blaming Eve alone: Translation, omission, and implications of in Genesis 3:6b," Journal of Biblical Literature 132(4), (2013), 729-747.

[19] Parker, "Blaming Eve alone: Translation, omission, and implications of in Genesis 3:6b," 729-747.

[20] K.L Edwards, "The mother of all femme fatales: Eve as temptress in Genesis 3," in H. Hanson & C. O'Rawe (eds.), *The femme fatale: Images, histories, contexts* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 36. *Femme fatale*, refers to a woman considered to be sexually attractive and likely to cause problems to person attracted to her.

would say. Tempting a man is the defining action of the femme fatale: as Webster's definition puts it, 'she leads men into difficult, dangerous, or disastrous situations'."[21] However, Edwards goes further, denying that Genesis 3 relays a story of a fall due to the absence of related terms such as 'fall' 'sin' and 'disobedience'. She claims that what Eve offered her husband was 'wisdom' and adulthood and far from destruction.[22]

Judging from the views of these feminist scholars it is apparent that their readings of Genesis 3 are driven by feminist tendencies to liberate womanhood from patriarchal perceptions. In their quest they have highlighted that there are elements that are central to traditional interpretations, that are actually absent from the text of Genesis 3. For instance, the concept of sin, the fall, and so forth. In addition, the feminist critics of Genesis 3 also open up the narrative for further elucidation, and thus invite interpretation from differing hermeneutical perspectives. Nevertheless, this paper opens up a space for consideration my Samoan contextual hermeneutic of *Tafea a popouli* for the reading of Genesis 3. To do this, this thesis will closely follow the following outline.

Thesis Outline.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter one is the introductory chapter, informing the readers regarding the thesis purpose, thesis statement, and questions to guide the research. The readers are then directed into the literature reviews, where the biblical structural interpretations are sorted.

The second chapter will discuss my approach to the text. Here, I will discuss and develop my hermeneutical perspective, namely *tāfea a popouli,* followed by a discussion of my chosen interpretive methodology known as *tala* criticism. In addition,

[21] Edwards, "The mother of all femme fatales," 43.

[22] Edwards, "The mother of all femme fatales," 36.

I will make mention of some renowned works by Samoan biblical scholars who adopted similar contextual approaches, along which I wish to locate this study.

Chapter Three is the exegesis of the passage using the methodology discussed in the previous chapter. The text, Genesis 3, will be analysed in its final form using the method of *tala* criticism from a *tafea a popouli* perspective.

Chapter Four is the conclusion of the whole study. It will outline and summarise all the findings of the work. Finally, I will highlight the contributions of this reading to Island Criticism and also acknowledge its relevancy to the ministry of the EFKS Church.

Summary

This introductory chapter sets out to outline what the whole thesis is about. It describes and briefly discusses its purpose and aims, to put the reader of this thesis into perspective. Moreover, a brief literature review was given to highlight the issue in the interpretation of Genesis 3 that I wish to engage in; namely, the debate concerning the traditional patriarchal interpretation of Genesis 3 and portrayal of the woman given in the story. In addition, the structure and contents of individual chapters are briefly explained in order for the reader to have a fair picture of the overall work.

Chapter 2

Approaching the Text

Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections - Hermeneutics and Methodology. The first section will begin with a brief explanation of hermeneutics and its meaning, as explained by some of the well-known names in the field. This will be followed by acknowledging a few who have deployed Samoan perspectives as hermeneutics to read biblical texts. Thirdly I will bring to light my own hermeneutical perspective through the Samoan saying *tafea a popouli*. The analysis aims at drawing out nuances of the phrase to develop lenses that can be used to interrogate biblical texts. The second section in this chapter involves the development of an interpretive methodology to draw out meanings from the text. Drawing on narrative criticism and the works of Samoan biblical scholars such as Arthur Wulf and Brian Fiu Kolia, I will be constructing a methodology that I define as *tala* criticism, that employs *tala* – the Samoan word for story – as an indigenous way of interrogating the narrative in light of the hermeneutic, *tāfea a popouli*.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics pertains to the interpretation of literary texts. It comes from the Greek word *hermeneuein* which means to interpret.[1] L Berkhof states that the word 'hermeneutic' is derived from the verb *hermeneuo.*[2] According to William Scott, Plato

[1] Alexander H. Irvines, *The Webster Universal Dictionary* (Toronto and Glasgow: Collins, 1963), 466.

[2] L Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1950),11.

was the first to employ 'hermeneutics' as a technical term.[3] Further, Scott also stated that,

> We must distinguish between general and special Hermeneutics. The former applies to the interpretation of all kinds of writings; the letter to that of certain definite kinds of literary productions, such as laws, history, prophecy, and poetry. Hermeneutica Sacra has a very special character because it deals with a book that is unique in the realm of literature, viz., with the Bible as the inspired word of God. It is only when we recognise the principle of the divine inspiration of the Book that we can maintain the theological character of Hermeneutica Sacra.[4]

Thomas Aquinas' contributed to the 'hermeneutic' circle often examined. The move toward developing a new understanding of s*ensus literalis* had been initiated by Hugo of St Victor, but Thomas brought to the praxis a new hermeneutical sophistication, which broke with the Augustinian theory of multiple senses.[5]

According to Moisés Silva, hermeneutics has become increasingly popular in recent decades. Some writers call it the *science* of interpretation; others prefer to speak of the *art* of interpretation, (with an implication, either you have got it, or you don't!).[6] This growth has reached the shores of the Pacific and is heavily utilised in Biblical readings.

Contextual Hermeneutic

The use of local concepts in reading and interpreting biblical texts is the currently popular movement among scholars and students, not only in the Western world but the

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[3] William A Scott, *Hermeneutics*, Dissertation by William Scott in fulfilment of the requirement for his Doctor of Theology, on May 24, 1990. A copy is in Malua Library.

[4] Scott, *Hermeneutics*.

[5] Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theological of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (USA: Fortress Press, 2011), 41.

[6] Walter C Kaiser Jr and Moises Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 15.

Pacific regions. This trend has been encouraged through Islander Criticism, as an approach to reading biblical texts. The underlining idea of using local concepts, traditions, and culture as hermeneutics and reading lens, perhaps forms the basis of such criticism. Because I read from a Samoan standpoint, I will highlight a few works by a few Samoan biblical scholars, as examples of the above approach. This would serve to outline my own methodology in reading Genesis 3. Ideally, this reading will provide an alternative voice to the interpretative process as argued by other scholars. Indeed, it would be a Pacific voice, as one of the leading theologians in the Pacific region, Sione' Amanaki Havea, has been arguing for:

> …Pacificness in a theology, that speaks clearly in our quest, for the revelation and redemption in his hiddenness…before, the Gospel was foreign and Western. Now it is relevant and meaningful. Before our Christ had blue eyes and spoke English or French, now we see him brown-eyed; he speaks our language and is one of us. Before it was wheat and grapes, bread, and wine. But they are foreign to us. Today it is the coconut.[7]

Samoan New Testament scholar, Vaitusi Nofoaiga also acknowledges the significance of the work of Sione' Amanaki Havea when reading discipleship in the book of Matthew as he remarks, "…along this pathway, I add "coconut discipleship"[8]. Here he utilises the Samoan proverb, *O le pau a le popouli* (fall of a ripe coconut), as a Samoan hermeneutic, a perspective to read through the Matthean discipleship. Looking back at the commissioning of the disciples as in Matt 28:19 through the viewpoint and declaring the localisation of his true family (Matt 12:46-50) in local places. The essence of the *pau a le popouli* would grow abundantly, providing life for the people. Reading

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[7] Sione ‘Amanaki Havea, “Remarks 6th Assembly, World Council of Churches, Vancouver, 1983,” International Review of Mission 72 (1983), 578-580, here 579-580.

[8] Vaitusi Nofoaiga, “O le pa’u a le popo uli: A Coconut Discipleship Reading of Mathew 12:46-50 and 28:16-20” (Malua Theological College) 207-217.

the text from that sense, the abundant growth of the Gospel in our local places provides hope and life.

In his book titles, *A Samoan Reading of Discipleship in Matthew*, an earlier work, Nofoaiga also explores discipleship in Matthew. He draws on his own experience of "discipleship" in his Samoan world, as an approach to understanding discipleship in Matthew's Gospel. Nofoaiga critically assesses the globally emphasised traditional view of discipleship in Matthew, by considering his Samoan perspective, accentuating the need of people in a local place as part of the work of a *tautua* (service/servanthood) in the Samoan world.[9]

Leota, in his study of "Ethnic Tensions in Persian-Period *Yehud*", uses an analogical approach in his engagement with the text. His study is a cross-cultural study of Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles. He explores the ethnic tensions in Persian-Period *Yehud*, in light of the issue of land tenure as a growing human rights issue in Samoan society. In other words, Leota explores the analogies between contemporary Samoa and Persian *Yehud* to allow the biblical world to inform contemporary issues of culture and rights in Samoa. In his thesis, Leota, with the influence of post-colonial premises, proposes criteria for a Samoan hermeneutic and the responsible use of the Bible in the Samoan context.[10]

Smith in his study of the Gospel of John, analyses the Gospel's characterization of Jesus from a Samoan perspective. Particularly, Smith attempts to resolve the interpretive problem of 'distanciation' (distance between the world of the text, world encoded in the text and world of the reader) faced by readers in interpreting biblical

[9] Vaitusi Nofoaiga, A Samoan Reading of Discipleship in Matthew (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017).

[10] Peniamina Leota, *Ethnic Tensions in Persian-Period Yehud (*2005), 1.

texts.[11] To bridge this distance, Smith draws on his experience and understanding of the Samoan social and cultural world and develops an analogical approach to reading biblical texts.[12]

For example, Smith's reading of John 3:1-5 evokes for him the Samoan analogy of *tautua* (service). This is the result of the way the narrative characterises Jesus' role in the washing of the disciples' feet. The image of a *tautua* speaks of a person's service to the family and village.[13] The *tautua* means the forsaking of one's individuality and work towards the collective good, thus expressing Jesus' love towards the other. Additionally, reading John 3:1-5 in light of the *tautua* analogy also reveals the commitment required and the risks involved in following Jesus. That is, allegiance to Jesus should reflect that of a *tautua* who is willing to forsake his or her individuality even in the possibility of facing death.[14] Smith's analogical approach utilises Samoan cultural concepts, experiences and beliefs in the interpretive process. This approach is significant in my own proposed reading method, which will also make use of Samoan cultural categories, realities, experiences and worldviews.

Another Samoan scholar whose work I will draw on in this study is Iutisone Salevao. In his article[15], 'Burning the Land: An Ecojustice Reading of Hebrews 6:7-8', Salevao reads Heb. 6:7-8 from the ecological perspective of The Earth Bible Team. In this reading, Salevao fuses Samoan cultural worldviews of the land and ecojustice principals of kingship and voice. According to Salevao, the context of this biblical text envisions the burning of the land for the purpose of total destruction. This is disclosed

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[11] Frank Smith, "The Johannine Jesus from a Samoan perspective," (2010), 1.

[12] Smith, "The Johannine Jesus from a Samoan perspective," 109.

[13] Smith, "The Johannine Jesus from a Samoan perspective," 216-217.

[14] Smith, "The Johannine Jesus from a Samoan perspective," 218-220.

[15] Iutisone Salevao, "'Burning the Land': An Ecojustice Reading of Hebrews 6.7-8." The Earth Bible; 1: Readings from the perspective of Earth (2000): 221-231.

by the surrounding verses, which speak of an apostate being beyond restoration (v. 4-6). As an apostate is to be doomed, so too is the fruitless land to be utterly burned and destroyed. Salevao uses the Samoan positive worldview that Earth is a living entity, the source and womb of life as a reading lens to interpret Heb. 6:7-8. From this perspective, Salevao therefore sees the burning of the land in Heb. 6:7-8 not only as a way of destroying the land but also as a means of destroying life. Thus, he argues that Heb. 6:7-8 'remains a disturbing text' for him both as an eco-theologian and a Samoan because 'it stands in conflict with the principles of eco-justice espoused by Samoans and echoed in the Earth Bible Project series'.

In saying this, I commend Salevao's study for the usage of Samoan ecological concepts and worldviews in designing his hermeneutical perspective to interpret biblical texts and draw out meanings relevant to readers located in a Samoan context. The use of Samoan worldviews is the intended path for this study and Salevao's approach is valuable in developing my *tāfea a popouli* perspective.

The next work I would like to take into consideration, is that of Arthur Wulf.[16] Wulf in his work offers a reappraisal of Earth as presented in Gen. 1:1-2:4a from a Samoan *gafataulima* (accomplish/fulfil/capable) hermeneutical perspective. Here Wulf addresses questions between Earth's perfect portrait in Gen. 1:1-2:4a and recurring natural disasters that he suffers in his Samoan local context. These questions identify the need for context specific hermeneutical frameworks that take into account our local ecological situations in the interpretive process. In this light, Wulf proposes the Samoan cultural concept *gafataulima* as an ecological hermeneutic to re-evaluate the quality of Earth as presented in the Gen. 1:1-2:4a creation narrative, utilising the Samoan version

[16] Arthur John Wulf, "Was Earth Created Good?" (2016).

of narrative-grammatical criticism known as a *tala-mamanu* as a reading tool.[17] The Samoan *gafataulima* hermeneutic is a tripartite hermeneutical approach based on abilities. It measures the quality of a subject in relation to its capacity to achieve a function. Its three-fold approaches take into account a Samoan worldview of Earth and natural disasters, evident in Samoa today. It involves: 1) the identification of Earth's relations and functions; 2) establishing the cost in terms of abilities for Earth to accomplish the identified tasks; 3) highlighting Earth's capabilities and determining if Earth acquires during creation the required capacity to *gafataulima,* her given responsibilities. According to Wulf, establishing Earth's capabilities to *gafataulima* her given functions will provide a response to the question: Was Earth created 'good'?

Another Samoan biblical scholar, Brian Fiu Kolia diverts our attention away from the usual Western approaches to reading by utilising Samoan indigenous storytelling known as *fagogo*, as way of considering the originality of the Eve and the Serpent story in Genesis 3.[18] Through this lens, Kolia sees that the *fagogo* of Eve and Serpent echoes the well-known Samoan *fagogo* of Sina and the *Tuna* (eel). A love story of a Samoan girl who got into a love relationship with an eel. The eel fell in love with the human (Sina) and urged her to live with him. Unfortunately, the two were from two different worlds (the eel from the water and Sina from the land) and found it impossible to be together. Ultimately, the eel found little reason to be alive as Sina could not be with him, and so asked Sina that his head be buried, a dying act of his love. From the eel's head grew a coconut, so that when Sina drank the coconut, she would be reminded of

[17] Wulf, "Was Earth Created Good?".

[18] Fagogo is the art of Samoan storytelling that involves a space where animals possess human-like qualities, a space where animals have conversation with humans, and in some stories, have relations with humans. See Brian Fiu Kolia, "Eve, the Serpent, and the Samoan Love Story: A Fagogo Reading of Genesis 3:1-19 and Its Implications for Animal Studies", The Bible & Critical Theory, Books & Culture Vol 15, No 2, (2019),156-163.

the *Tuna* and his sacrifice. Here, Kolia argues the echoes of Sina enjoying the fruit and the relationship with the snake-like *Tuna*, could be heard in the Eve and the Serpent story.

One of the main aims of these approaches is to apply and utilise contextual perspectives - as alternatives in making sense of Biblical texts and producing other relevant meanings local to us. My methodology resonates with the approaches used in the above examples. In my own approach, I will explain my Samoan concept and use its elements to construct a lens to read the biblical text. This will provide a basis for a Samoan reading and understanding of the biblical text.

Tāfea a Popouli Hermeneutic

From this hermeneutical enquiry, I will be using the *muāgagana* (Samoa proverb), *Tāfea a Popouli,* (translated as "the dark brown coconut[19] carried away, moved, or drifted away"), as the basis of my hermeneutic. It is a slight variation of the original Samoan proverb: *Pa'u a le popouli* (the fall of a ripe coconut).[20] Normally, the *popouli* would land on a place or space when it falls off the coconut tree.[21] It will then strike roots and grow into a new coconut tree.

While the emphasis seems to be on the *popouli* and its journey, an important factor that I want to emphasise is its final destination. At times, not all *popouli* would

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[19] Dark brown coconut is the coconut that is fully ripe. I will use dark brown coconut sometimes interchanging with ripe coconut. They are basically the same thing. "*tafea*" in English translation - being carried away, G B Miller, *Samoan Dictionary* (NZ: Pasifika Press, 1995) 226. In general, the word has two different spellings - the first one is tafea and the second one is tāfea. This paper is concentrated on *tāfea*. "*popouli*" sometimes spelt as "*popo uli"*, in English translation - coconut fully ripe, George Pratt, *Pratt's Grammar Dictionary of the Samoan Language* (Apia, Samoa: Malua Printing Press, 1977) 254. The popo is at its best stage of ripeness.

[20] Vaitusi Nofoaiga, "O le pa'u a le popo uli: A Coconut Discipleship Reading of Mathew 12:46-50 and 28:16-20", In: Havea, J. (eds) Theologies from the Pacific. Postcolonialism and Religions. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-74365-9_15 (2021): 207-217.

[21] This space has various definition. It can be rocks, on top of other grasses, in the water, on the roads and or on the grounds.

remain where they initially land, as some move or change position depending on certain circumstances. In some cases, external forces such as human activity, whether intentional or unintentional, would cause the movement. In other cases, environmental factors may cause movement. For instance, where the tree grows. If a coconut tree is on an elevated site or a cliff edge, the coconut would fall on the ground - then roll until it finds the flattest piece of land, or the lowest point of the area. If the tree is by a riverbank, a sea boundary, or next to a stream or a watery section - then some coconuts would likely fall on the bank but then roll into the river/stream/sea. Others would fall directly into it. Therefore, each coconut would have a different final destination, ultimately determined by the movement of the water. Some waters remain still, whereas others will flow downhill. Still others will be driven by the wind.

For Samoans, despite their Christian heritage, many still believe in supernatural factors that may influence the coconut's movement. This is noted in the *muagagana* (*O le popo e pa'u ile po*), like a coconut falling in the night. It is believed that when a coconut falls at night, it should not be picked up, as according to an old tradition, a demon (*aitu*) would be lurking near the popo.[22] To be on the safe side, Samoans believe it is best to wait till morning to pick coconuts. Indeed, the validity of the coconut not only lies in its utility value, but also in the lessons its movements can generate.

When a coconut is *tāfea* (drifts or is cast away), the current will determine its direction and movement. And it will just keep on drifting until it finds dry land. Surely, this coconut, while drifting, floats like an endangered species. There is no hope for the coconut until it lands on a dry land. Landing at a new destination means hope and also an opportunity to restart and make a fresh beginning.

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[22] E. Schultz, *Alagaupu Faa Samoa: Samoan Proverbial Expressions* (Auckland NZ: Pasifika Press, 2008), 89.

Yet, as it seeks life, the coconut also gives it. Every living organism needs food to sustain life. Let us picture this: when someone is cast away or stranded in the sea, all that person will hope and pray for is dry land. For Samoans, it would be land with a coconut tree in particular, as coconuts are deemed to be lifesavers. As the human drifts towards this land, the coconut itself makes a similar "drift". The "drifting" coconut, will find a deserted land, strike roots, and grow into an abundant coconut tree. It will then become a source of food for all who will come across this deserted island. Here the drifting coconut has found a new home on a newly emerged empty piece of land. It then goes through the usual growing process – shooting roots and growing - which marks a continuation of creation. Indeed, this new coconut has extended the creation that started in the initial landing space. This process(es) of landing, drifting, growing and extending creation are hallmarks of my *'tāfea a popouli'* perspective, which I will use to re-read Genesis 3.

The Coconut (Popo)

Coconut trees in the Pacific islands have many uses and values to its people. Generally, the various parts of the coconut tree, from its roots to the leaves, each possess their own unique purpose. Back in the days before drinking bottles and water coolers, when the villages cultivated the land and worked on their plantations, one of the main sources of life and nourishment was the coconut tree. They would drink the juice and eat the kernel. Whether it is ripe, green (*niu mamata*[23]), or half ripe/brown (*popo sami*[24]), the coconut is edible. Aside from its nutritional value, the coconut also

[23] *Niu mamata* sometimes refer to *niu mata*. Immature coconut at the stage when it can be drunk or consumed. G.B. Milner, *Samoan Dictionary* (Auckland NZ: Pasifika Press), 157.

[24] *Poposami* and *niu sami* are the same thing. Pratt, *Pratt's Grammar Dictionary of the Samoan Language* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1977), 234. The coconut in the last stage before becoming a popo.

serves other significant purposes for the Pacific islanders. After consuming its juice and flesh, the coconut shell can be turned into a cup (kava cup / *ipu tau'ava*) or used as firewood for cooking when it is dry. The shell can also be used for handicrafts, as women create beautiful ornaments from its shell. The husks of the coconuts are useful as they are utilised to make the *'afa* (Samoan sinnet or rope), which is used in Samoan architecture. It can also be used as traditional flannel for bathing, and also can be used for fire for cooking.

Samoans rely on its dry leaves for sheltering, where it can be weaved into a thatched roof for its traditional *fale* (house). The dry leaves can also be used to start a fire to cook food, and for *suluaulama*[25] (or a torch at night). The fresh leaves can be weaved into baskets, hats, and to create handicrafts. The trunks are for buildings, fences, and firewood when dried. Moreover, the roots can produce traditional medicines.

Other meanings of *tāfea*

There are other meanings of the term that are also important to note such as to provide further nuance to the word tāfea. Some phrases that reflect this diversity of meaning include – *tafea le tauofe*[26]*, tafea le utu a Taufau*[27]*, tafea le futu*[28]*and faatafea*[29]

[25] Suluaulama, made from dried coconut tree leaves. They were used as lights in the dark when travelling from one village to another. Were also used for light when catching fish at night.

[26] George Pratt, *Pratt's Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1960), 309. To die. *Lagi o le aiga sa Malietoa*. It is how to respectfully address when someone from the Malietoa royal family dies.

[27] Faumuina Manu Samuelu, *O le Tōfā Tatala part two* (Apia: Government Printing, 2009), 226-227. Taufau was crowned the Queen of Samoa at the time. And when she became very ill and was near death, she called for her son Tupuivao in order to take over the Reign and to lead the government. He was in the woods at the time, catching pigeons, (*seu lupe*). Unfortunately, he did not come after several messages. Which was a childish and disrespectful behaviour, not only it hurts the Queen but also upsetting. She then made a royal call and informed her government (*Tumua ma Faleupolu*), that the crown will be given to her sister Sina and her descendants will take over. It meant Taufau, and her line's right and the blessings to kingship/queenship has been stripped off and terminated. But granted to her sister Sina and her descendants.

[28] The leaf of the *futu* tree felt into the sea and then floating.

i nu'u le 'ainā. The first two phrases share a same meaning whereby the word *tafea* marks an end through death or via termination of rights, respectively. The last two phrases are expressions of hope, expressing the forgiveness of shortcomings, and the marking of new beginnings.

Summation

From the above searches of the phrase *tafea a popouli* a number of deductions can be made. First the term carries the meaning of procreation (*foafoaga*). This is evident in the fact that a drifting coconut can rest and spring to life in its new location. Second, the phrase alludes to *olataga* (life saver). That is, a drifting coconut can save those (humans and animals alike) desperate for nourishment on remote locations. Third, it designates a source for life (*punaoa o le ola*). This is apparent through consideration of a drifting coconut as not only a source for nourishment, but also a potential source for new life on a remote and deserted island. And lastly, the phrase carries the nuance of hope (*faamoemoe*). This nuance is expressed through the etymological search above. That is, the phrase alludes to the forgiveness of shortcomings for a new beginning. These connotations of the phrase *tafea a popouli* will be utilised in this study as lenses of my *tafea a popouli* hermeneutical perspective, to view Genesis 3. In hindsight, a closer look at the four lenses reveals *tafea a popouli* hermeneutic, as a collective Samoan hermeneutic of hope.

Interpretive Methodology

In terms of my approach to the text, I draw on the methodological constructs of Kolia and Wulf, who are Samoan scholars of the Hebrew Bible. They employ Samoan interpretive methods in their readings of biblical texts, which I use to frame my own inquiry of the text of Genesis 3.

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[29] Translated as, to be exiled into a deserted land. Which is one of a harsh punishment in the Samoan tradition to banish those who rebelled against the village council. For example, Sione Lauaki was ban from Samoa for standing for Samoa against New Zealand.

The first example is *Talanoa*[30], a method proposed and employed by Kolia with his *Fāgogo* reading of Genesis 3:1-19. As he argues, the word *talanoa* is a combination of two words which are *tala* and *noa*. *Tala* has many meanings, but importantly for Kolia's purposes, it can mean a story or tale. But it can also mean, to 'undo' or 'untie'. The second word, *noa*, has more than one meaning. *Noa* can mean "nil", "none", or "nothing", whereas another meaning refers to a knot. Talanoa, as Kolia proposes, can refer to the untying or opening of the knot. He states that *talanoa*, used in *fāgogo,* is a process of untying *noa* or "knots" (representing discrepancies, ambiguities, contradictions, and questions in the text) that can open up (*tala*) other meanings in the text (*tala*).

Another Samoan indigenous methodological framework is proposed by Wulf which is called *autalaga*, where his criticism method is used to unravel the Hebrew poetic features found in the Genesis 1 creation story. In a nutshell, *autalaga* defines the process of peeling off the layers of an object. According to George Pratt, the term derives from the Samoan verb *autala*, which refers to the process of picking away the bones of a fish to make it edible for the sick and elderly.[31] Another version of the Samoan dictionary also sees the term *Autalaga* as a noun (that also derives from the verb *autala*) which refers to the removal of the thorns from pandanus leaves in the process of mat making.[32] Wulf further explains that, using the method of *autalaga* as an interpretive tool to interpret literary texts, requires the interpreter to carry out two

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[30] *Talanoa* is a common term in the Pasifika to denote conversation. As Jione Havea states, talanoa is the confluence of three things: story, telling and conversation. See, Jione Havea, "The politics of climate change: A talanoa from Oceania." International Journal of Public Theology 4.3 (2010): 345-355. See also, Brian Kolia, 2019. "Eve, the Serpent, and a Samoan Love Story: Fagogo Reading of Genesis 3:1-19 and its Implications for Animal Studies", Books & Culture, Vol 15 No 2, 159-163.

[31] George Pratt, *Pratt's Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1960), 17.

[32] G.B Miller, *Samoan Dictionary* (Auckland: Pasifika Press, 1966), 36.

related steps. Firstly, the interpreter is required to *tala* (dismantle or peel) the text into two different layers. Secondly, the interpreter must *au* (pick and sort) the dismantled components into groups. These two tasks can aid in identifying and highlighting various features of a text that are important for its interpretation. In this case, using *autalaga* to interpret texts means the interpreter must approach a text with the supposition that a text is made of various parts that need to be *autala* (peeled away) and categorised to reveal the meaning of a text. Also, the various terms within the text contain various meanings that need to be *autala* (unfolded) to reveal their multiple nuances.[33]

In another example, Wulf, in an earlier work, uses what he terms as *tala-mamanu* methodology, which is a fusion of Samoan *tala* (narrative) and *mamanu* (concepts/patterns/motifs) reading strategies that not only focus on texts as *tala* but also analyse the *mamanu* or concepts in the text. The *tala* reading resonates with narrative criticism, as it too focuses on narrative devices such as the narrator, setting, characters, and plot in deciphering the text's meanings. According to Wulf, the major difference between Samoan *tala* criticism and narrative criticism is the fact that Samoan stories were meant to be told in front of an audience and the narrator seems to be unbound and laconic in relaying the story. This *mamanu* reading strategy is also comparable to grammatical criticism, by being attentive to individual words, vocabulary choices, and linguistic features in the narrative to reveal the text's meanings.

For this thesis, I will employ *tala* criticism to read Genesis 3 to focus on its narrative characteristics. A *tala* reading allows us to identify and explore the plot (*tulaga*), structure (*auivi*), characters (*faatagataina*), setting (*nofoaga*), and narration shifts in the narrative of Genesis 3.

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[33] Arthur J Wulf, "Anthropogenic Climate Change Un-Creates God's Creation in Genesis 1", Samoa Journal of Theology Vol 1, No1, 2022, (APIA: Malua Theological College, 2022), 3.

Summary

In this chapter, I have explained my approach to reading Genesis 3. My interpretative approach will be framed by my Samoan methodology of *tala*, while the questions I ask of the text will be shaped by my Samoan hermeneutical lens. For my hermeneutic, I will employ the four nuances of the Samoan proverb of *tāfea a popouli* to view Genesis 3. I hope that using this Samoan-fashioned approach will allow me to make sense of the text for my particular context and resolve the aforementioned interpretive issues with regards to Genesis 3.

Chapter 3

Tafea a Popouli Reading of Genesis 3

Introduction

This chapter is a re-reading of Genesis 3 from *tafea a popouli* (drifting of the black coconut) hermeneutical perspective, using *tala* criticism as an analytical tool. Briefly speaking, *tāfea a popouli* hermeneutics is a Samoan perspective. In this case, it contains four dimensions that can be used as lenses to view the text - namely, *foafoāga, olataga, punaoa o ole ola, faamoemoe*. On the other hand, *tala* criticism is a Samoan version of narrative criticism, with special attention on the narrator or *faamatala*. According to Wulf, Samoan narrators are ever present and terse with the freedom to hop from character to character while relaying the story or *tala*. Other than this, the application of *tala* criticism will dictate the progression of the chapter.

Auivi (Narrative Structure) of Genesis 3 from *Tafea a Popouli* perspective

According to Walter Brueggemann,[1] there is no text in Genesis that has been more used, interpreted and misunderstood than the story of Eden in Genesis 2:4b-3:1-24. Scholars divide and structure the narrative from various perspectives. Brueggemann himself divides the story as follows:

I. 2.4b-17 Placement of the man in the garden
II. 2.18-25 The formation of a "helper."
III. 3.1-7 The disruption of the garden
IV. 3.8-24 Judgement and expulsion from the garden.

[1] Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation a Bible commentary for teaching and preaching* (USA: Westminster John Knox Press, 1982), 41.

Brueggemann's fourfold structure traces movements into and out of the garden of Eden, which seem to occur swiftly. Thus the movement into and out of Eden mark the boundaries of the narrative with the other sub divisions portraying the events inside the garden. However, as aforementioned this thesis solely focuses on Genesis 3, which includes the events in the latter half of Brueggemann's structure of the narrative. As such, Brueggemann's structure aids this thesis by identifying the placement of Genesis 3 and its immediate literary context.

Another example can be found in the work of Victor P Hamilton.[2] With special focus on Genesis 3, Hamilton divides the narrative into four frames as follows.

> Genesis 3:1-7 A subtle, craft serpent.
> Genesis 3:8-13 God was walking in the garden.
> Genesis 3:14-19 Consequences of the sin detailed.
> Genesis 3:20-24 Adam names his wife, Eve.

Hamilton's, fourfold structure seems to be based on the characters and their roles in the Eden events. In the first division (Genesis 3: 1-7), we find the subtle and crafty serpent as the main character initiating the movements within the story. The second and third sections seem to focus on God's actions as they determine the movement with the narrative. The last section however reveals a shift to the man as the major player, who causes the last movement within Genesis 3. Hamilton's structure of Genesis 3 from a *tala* critical perspective can aid interpretation of the text, since it identifies movement within the narrative and the shift in major players in the narrative.

The final example I would like to make mention of here is Allen P. Ross's chiastic structure of the Genesis 3 narrative.[3]

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[2] Victor P Hamilton, *Commentary on Genesis* (Michigan USA: Baker Publishing Group, 2012).

A. The serpent and the woman access to the tree of knowledge (v1-2)
B. "lest you die" (v3-4)
C. serpent: you will be like God, knowing good and evil (v5)
D. man and woman made coverings for themselves from leaves (v7)
E. fearful of the Lord God, they hide (v8)
F. Lord God confronts the man, "From the tree I commanded you not to eat, you ate?" (v9-12)
G. The Lord confronts the woman (v13)
H. Lord God sentences the serpent (v14-15)
G'. Lord God sentences the woman (v16)
F'. Lord God sentences the man, "…you ate from the tree I commanded you shall not to eat from it" (v17-19)
E'. The man trusting the Lord God's promise, he names his wife Eve (v20)
D'. After sentencing Adam and his wife Lord made coverings for them from skins (v21)
C'. Lord God: the man is like one of us, knowing good and evil (v22a)
B'. Lord God: the threat of endless life ("lest he…live forever) (v22b)
A'. Lord God: expulsion from the garden, access to the tree of life denied (v23-24)

According to the above arrangement, the central point focuses on the serpent, which is the cause of the problem. He first appears in chapter three of Genesis with a compelling mission to ruin not only Eden's goodness, holiness, and peace, but also the human being within Eden.

Looking at each point of the chiastic structure, A and A' highlight the two special trees - the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil with its special purpose. The trees constitute a core element of creation. They symbolise living and a provision of life. Points B and B' stress God's theodicy over death eternal life. In point C, the serpent assures the man that he may become God – possibly God of knowledge. God responds by sending the knowledgeable man away from the tree of life in case he

[3] Allen P Ross, *Creation and Blessings: A Guide to study and the Exposition of the Book of Genesis* (Michigan USA: Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1988), 141-143.

partakes of it also and lives forever, as we saw in (C'). Although they make themselves coverings from fig leaves (D), it is only enough for a short while. Thus God makes for them garments from animal skins (D'). In fear of the Lord, they run and hide as stressed in (E), but then in (E'), they resume fearfulness and begin trusting the Lord. Adam renames his helper Eve. In point (F), God confronts the human for breaking his commandment. Point (F') outlines the consequence of breaking the commandment. After confronting Adam, as we have seen in the previous point, God turns to the woman' (G) and announces her penalty (G'). The snake wins the woman's heart but loses his case against God. The Lord severely punishes it. From a *tala* critical perspective, Ross's chiastic structure can assist in interpretation since it identifies corresponding events, themes and motifs in the narrative that are useful in the interpretive process.

Moreover, from a *tafea a popouli* perspective I see the Genesis 3 narrative presenting a threefold surface structure as indicated below;

A. Genesis 3: 1-7: *Tafea ese ma le Atua* (Drifting away from God)

B. Genesis 3: 8-19 *Tafea ma le Atua*, (Drifting with God)

C. Genesis 3: 20-24 *Tafea ese ma Etena* (Drifting away from Eden)

This threefold structure represents bodily and spiritual drifting of the characters (the man and the woman) to and from God. It also represents a physical drifting of the characters within and away from Eden. Therefore, the following evaluation of Genesis 3 will follow this structure closely.

Genesis 3: 1-7: *Tafea ese ma le Atua* (Drifting away from God)

This section can be looked at as the opening scene of the narrative and it begins with the introduction of the serpent who appears unexpectedly and interrupts the life in

the garden.[4] The serpent is described as more crafty/subtle/cunning in comparison with other creatures, and it comes with an agenda. Though it is described as crafty, it is unclean and therefore a fitting anti-God symbol,[5] or the principle of evil or death.[6] Thus, it only acts as a device that shifts the story in a different direction. Upon inspection, it is evident that prior to the Genesis 3, the serpent is never explicitly mentioned.[7] The serpent is never identified as being present when *adam* is placed in the garden (2:15) and given his divine instructions (2:16-17), moreover, divine commands.[8] Both the serpent and the woman were not even created when God announced the divine command. However, the serpent claims that he knows the mind of God.[9] It represents one who is intent on undermining the authority of God, and not lacking in ability, as it is described as shrewd.[10] Its plan of attack is based on subtlety.[11] The snake thus begins to interrogate the woman with questions designed to provoke her.[12] Here I can see the Samoan *faamatala* (narrator) breaking frames and making gestures to highlight the serpent's role as a tempter, and thus presenting him as the perpetrator to be blamed.

On the other hand, the woman wisely seeks to correct the serpent by stating God's prohibitions.[13] But in stating the prohibitions, she makes three alterations.[14] She first

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[4] Duane E Smith, "The Divining Snake: Reading Genesis 3 in the Context of Mesopotamian", *JBL 134, no. 1 (2015): 41-42*, DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.15699/jbl.1341.2015.2757.

[5] Gordon J Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Michigan USA: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2019), 77.

[6] Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation a Bible commentary for teaching and preaching*, 47.

[7] Milton Gonzales, "A Narrative Analysis of Genesis 3 and the Theological Significance of the Serpent" (2019). *Master's Thesis*. 144, 26.

[8] Gonzales, "A Narrative Analysis of Genesis 3 and the Theological Significance of the Serpent", 26.

[9] Wilma Ann Bayley, "Through the eyes of a Serpent: A Political/ Economic/ Ecological Interpretation of Genesis 3", Encounter 67.1 (2006), 84.

[10] Tremper Longman III, *How to read Genesis* (Illinois USA: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 110.

[11] John Philips, *Exploring Genesis: An Expository Commentary* (USA: Kregel Publications, 2001), 50

[12] Longman III, *How to read Genesis*, 110.

[13] John E Hartley, *Genesis: New International Biblical Commentary* (USA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), 65.

adds that the person must not touch (*naga*) the tree in the middle of garden - an addition that made God's command appear more stringent than it was.[15] It is hard to know whether her addition of נגע(*naga*)[16] meaning touch or strike, is a misrepresentation of an original meaning. Some have suggested that the addition was based on the woman's misunderstanding and weakness, foreshadowing her coming failure.[17] However, it may be that such an oversight was the serpent's intention all along. That is, to stir the woman and pull her in a direction away from God.[18]

Moreover, the serpent's success on the woman here can be looked at from a *tafea a popouli* perspective, as drifting away from God. It is clear from the above analysis and character profile of the serpent, that it is the culprit behind the woman's drifting away from God. The serpent pulls and stirs the woman to the opposite direction. Unfortunately, the one that creeps upon the earth wins out[19] and finds tremendous success.[20] The woman sees that the tree is good, pleasant and desirable for knowledge; she takes its fruit and eats, then gives it to her husband. Viewing the woman's actions here from a *tafea* perspective reveals a woman determined to hold on to her man, one who is willing to drift together with her husband no matter what. And the husband's compliance also reveals a similar trait on the husband's side.

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[14] Hartley, *Genesis: New International Biblical Commentary*, 65.

[15] Hartley, *Genesis: New International Biblical Commentary*, 65.

[16] *naga* is the Hebrew word for, (1) to touch to do harm, (2) strike or (3) to be smitten. Please see, Frances S Brown and S R Driver, Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon (Unbridged*), (USA: BibleWorks LLC, 2001), 619, Bible Works 7.

[17] Gerhard Von Rad, *The Old Testament Library: Genesis*, Revised Edition (Philadelphia USA: The Westminster Press, 1976), 88. Ian Provan, *Discovering Genesis: Content, Interpretation, Reception* (Michigan USA: Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2016), 64.

[18] Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation A Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (USA: John Knox Press, 1982), 51.

[19] Mark Brett, *Genesis: Procreation and the politics of identity* (USA: Routledge, 2000), 33.

[20] John Philips, *Exploring Genesis: An Expository Commentary* (USA: Kregel Publications, 2001), 59.

Furthermore, the four eventualities outlined by the snake come to pass.[21] These are; you will surely not die; your eyes shall be opened; you will be like gods; and you will know good and evil. Such eventualities lead to the man and woman to the realization that they are naked, prompting them to make coverings from leaves as aprons to cover their nakedness. Such actions can be seen as an alteration of God's intention for creation, thus placing the first couple on opposite spectrum with God. This is further proof of their drifting away from God.

Of further significance is what the serpent has to offer. There are four aforementioned propositions, and although the proposals are against the divine commandment, the serpent argues for their truth. Ironically, as mentioned above, the serpent was not even created when God announced the divine command. However, the serpent claimed that he knew the mind of God.[22] It represents one who is intent on undermining the authority of God, thus the articulation of the serpent as 'shrewd'.[23] In this case, the first couple's compliance with the serpent's urgings not only manifests their drifting away from God, but also depicts them as unsteady, drifting in their quest to find understanding and knowledge of their new home.

Moreover, from a Samoan *tala* critic's perspective, this short scene or *vaega* reveals a chiastic structure. This structure is presented as follows;

A – (v1) crafty serpent (*arum nachash*)

B – (v2) woman with the serpent (isha with *nachash*)

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[21] Norman Habel, *The Birth, the Curse, and the Greening of the Earth: An Ecological Reading of Genesis 1-11* (UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011), 58. The four eventualities were: (1)The person will not necessarily die; (2), it will lead to enlightenment: their eyes will be opened to realities previously unknown to the human beings, (3), with their eyes opened to new realities, life is more than experiencing the good and the innocent world of Eden, and (4), once the humans know good and evil, they will become 'like God'.

[22] Wilma Ann Bayley, "Through the eyes of a Serpent: A Political/ Economic/ Ecological Interpretation of Genesis 3", Encounter 67.1 (2006), 84.

[23] Tremper Longman III, *How to read Genesis* (Illinois USA: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 110.

C – (vv3,4,5), v3b – touch (*naga*), v4 – will not die, v5 – eyes will be opened, will be like gods

B' – (v6), woman with husband (*isha* with *ish*)

A' (v7), realised they are naked (*erum/arummim*).

The (*arum*) subtle serpent at point A matches with the (*arummim/erum*) nakedness of the couple in point A'. The (*isha*) woman talking with the serpent at point B matches with the (*isha*) woman talking to her husband at point B'. This then, leads us to the centre of the chiastic structure, which reveals the serpent's devices (*naga*) that will cause the woman and man to drifting. The expressions mentioned in the structure above reveal what the serpent has on offer to disrupt the drifting, causing the couple to drift away from God. This is further proof that the serpent is the perpetrator instead of the woman.

Genesis 3: 8-19: *Tafea ma le Atua* (Drifting with God)

This section of the narrative can be further subdivided into two scenes as follows;

A. Genesis 3: 8-13 *Tafea a le Atua agai i le tagata* (God drifting towards humanity)
B. Genesis 3: 14-19 *Fesouaina ma le Atua* (Rough Drifting with God)

Genesis 3: 8-13 *Tafea a le Atua agai i le Tagata* (God Drifting towards humanity)

From a *tafea a popouli* perspective, this scene begins with God drifting towards the first couple as they began their drifting away from God, due to their compliance with the serpent and its advice, and because of their newfound knowledge. The couple's drifting away from God can be seen through the use of the Hebrew term חבא (*haba*)[24] meaning withdraw or hide. The couple's actions of withdrawing and hiding are actions

[24] Frances S Brown and S R Driver, Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon* Unbridged (USA: BibleWorks LLC, 2001), 285, Bible Works 7.

prompted by fear of God, which leads them to distance themselves and drift away from God. Testament to this claim is the man's answer to God in verse 12. He confesses that he hid because he was afraid and naked. The man's fear is expressed in verse 12 through the use of the Hebrew term יראּ (*yare'*)[25] meaning afraid or fear. The use of the term *yare'* together with the adjective עֵירֹם (*arum*)[26] seems to intensify the man's situation thus allowing us to picture the man and woman trying in vain to hide from God.

Consequently, fearing God as the man and woman did can be seen in a positive light. In the Old Testament, fearing God is associated with proper and good living (see: Lev 19:14; Lev 25:17; 2Kings 17:34; Deut 17:19). In this sense, what the man and woman did can be seen as an attempt to put things right with God, based on their realization that their non-compliance and disobedience to God's commandment has led them astray. Viewing this observation from a *tafea a popouli* hermeneutical perspective reveals a situation of hope or *faamoemoe* for the first couple, as they learn from their mistakes and know the proper way to achieve good living in the sight of God. In other words, the man and woman have realized that the only hope or *faamoemoe* for them, is to fear and drift together with God.

On the other hand, God's drifting is also described in verse 8 through the use of the Hebrew terms קוֹל (*qol*)[27] meaning sound or voice; הלך (*halak*)[28] meaning to walk or to come; and the term רוּחַ *(ruach)*[29] meaning breath or wind. The three terms depict God's wandering into the garden as a hallowing and whiffing wind. I can imagine the

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[25] Frances S Brown and S R Driver, Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon* Unbridged (USA: BibleWorks LLC, 2001), 431, Bible Works 7.

[26] Frances S Brown and S R Driver, Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 736, Bible Works 7.

[27] Frances S Brown and S R Driver, Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 877, Bible Works 7.

[28] Frances S Brown and S R Driver, Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 237, Bible Works 7.

[29] Frances S Brown and S R Driver, Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 926, Bible Works 7.

laconic Samoan *faamatala* (narrator) making swooshing sounds of a calm wind to add a side effect and a sense of calmness to the scene, since it is the Lord God making an entrance.

Such a description also alludes to the 'hovering' spirit in the primordial conditions of Genesis 1. That is, perhaps God entered the Garden of Eden like an eagle hovering over its young.[30] The divine action here is initiated out of love, thus manifesting God's appearance as motivated by the love for the first couple. God's love revealed here is also a *faamoemoe* (hope) and a *olataga* (life) for the first couple. Despite their disobedience they will find reprieve and solace in God's love.

In addition the company of God rejuvenated and reignited them to be alive again. The rejuvenation is articulated through the word קרא (*qara*)[31] in verse 9, which means "to call out", "be called", or "to proclaim". Here, God called them out of the death pits they put themselves in when they broke the initial command. Viewing this inference from *tafea a popouli* perspective reveals a *olataga* for the first couple. The term *qara* also refers to the summoning of a person for God's service or purpose. In this sense, God's calling of the first couple in the garden can be seen as God summoning them to perform a divine service despite their disobedience. Viewing this depiction from a *tafea a popouli* perspective manifests a *faamoemoe* for the man and the woman. That is, despite their shortcomings God still calls them to the divine service.

The discourse between God and the first couple also reveals a *faamoemoe* (hope) if viewed from a *tafea a popouli* perspective. The discourse reflects an exchange between a concerned parent and the children. This can be seen in the usage of the Hebrew term צו (*ṣaw*) meaning 'to command' or 'take charge'**.** This term is usually used

[30] Mark Brett, *Genesis: Procreation and the politics of identity* (USA: Routledge, 2000), 24.

[31] Frances S Brown and S R Driver, Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 896, Bible Works 7.

in the household conversations between parents and children, as in 1 Samuel 17:20, referring to parental instructions. Reading the discourse between God and the first couple in this light depicts a loving and caring relationship between God the parent and his/her children, the man and the woman. This image of God gives the first couple a *faamoemoe* and a *olataga* despite what they had done.

Genesis 3: 14-19 *Fesouaina ma le Atua* (Rough Drifting with God)

This section discloses the divine announcement of the punishment for the serpent, the woman and the man. Firstly, God's attention turns on the serpent. This is because the serpent is the culprit behind humanity's drifting away from God. This is indicated by the Hebrew phrase כִּי עָשִׂיתָ זֹּאת (*ki asita zot*) translatable as 'because you have done this'. The word עשׂה (*asah*)[32] also implies the notion "commit, " when used of sin as in Hosea 6:9. This discloses what the serpent had done is sinful in the eyes of God. And because of sin the serpent's sin received a twofold curse from God. On the one hand, the serpent will crawl on its belly and eat dust. Such acts can be seen as acts of humiliation, as in Psalm 72:9 and Isaiah 49:23, where such situations are described in terms of humiliation, defeat and dishonour. The other part of the serpent's punishment involves humanity. That is, God will put hatred between the serpent and humanity. This is indicated by the usage of the term אֵיבָה (*êbâh*)[33] meaning hostile, enmity or hatred. This means the serpent and humanity will be enemies for life, they will be perpetually drifting away from each other. In hindsight, viewing this depiction from a *tafea a popouli* perspective reveals a hopeless situation in the serpent-humanity relationship.

[32] Frances S Brown and S R Driver, Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 795, Bible Works 7.

[33] Frances S Brown and S R Driver, Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 33, Bible Works 7.

The only hope (*faamoemoe*) here is for humanity. That is if they will float away from harm's way.

Subsequently, God's attention turns to the woman. Similar to the snake the woman's punishment from God is also twofold. On the one hand, God will greatly increase her pains in childbearing. Here the woman's pains in childbirth are mentioned twice, resembling a repetition or a synonymous parallelism as follows;

הַרְבָּה אַרְבֶּה עִצְּבוֹנֵךְ וְהֵרֹנֵךְ

(your pain in your conception will be greatly multiply)

בְּעֶצֶב תֵּלְדִי בָנִים

(in pain you shall bring forth children)

The repetition here brings forth the idea of unimaginative and unbearable pain for the woman. This can be seen through the repetition of the term רבה (*rãbâ*)[34] meaning 'great' or 'increase' in the first line. Adding on to the idea of an imaginative pain is also 'heighten' עִצָּבוֹן (*'iṣṣābôn*)[35] meaning 'sorrow' or 'toil'. These repetitions yield the idea that in childbearing the woman will face unimaginable pain. I can imagine here the Samoan *faamatala* (narrator) making crowing sounds in agony to escalate the situation for the audience, initiating reactions of sympathy from the audience towards the woman.

However, despite such retribution for the woman there is light at the end of the tunnel. This can be seen in conception being a joy and blessing.[36] Such an attitude towards childbearing is reflected by the Psalmist who says, "Children are indeed a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward" (Psalm 127:3). Viewing this depiction from a *tafea a popouli* perspective reflects the four premises of my

[34] Frances S Brown and S R Driver, Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 916, Bible Works 7.

[35] Frances S Brown and S R Driver, Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 781, Bible Works 7.

[36] Celia Brewer Sinclair, *Genesis Interpretation Bibie Studies* (USA: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 34.

hermeneutic. First, it reveals a situation where the woman partakes in God's creation (*foafoaga*) especially in peopling the earth. Second, the woman can also be seen as a source of life (*punaoa o le ola*) since she partakes in the creation of new life. Third, the woman can also be seen as a *olataga* since she now becomes a vessel to carry unborn children. And lastly, there is a sign of hope (*faamoemoe*) here, in the fact that the woman is spared from death, which is the natural consequence of disobeying the divine command.

On the other hand, the second half of the woman's punishment from God involves her relationship with her husband. That is, she will long for her husband and succumb to his rule. The woman's longing for her husband is expressed here with use of the Hebrew term תְּשׁוּקָה (*t^{e}shûqâ*)[37] meaning long or desire. This term is used only three times in the Old Testament. That is, twice to make reference to a husband-wife relationship (Genesis 3:16 & Song of Songs 7: 10) and the other to make reference to sin as in Genesis 4:7. The usage in Song of Songs depicts a joyful situation where the husband longs for his wife. If we read such a mood into Genesis 3:16 then it depicts that what God gave the woman is actually a gift of joy rather than misery. This depiction resonates with my *tafea a popouli* perspective. In the sense that it reveals a hopeful situation (*faamoemoe*) for the woman and her relationship with her husband.

Afterwards, God's focus turns to the man. The punishment for the man is intense compared to the woman. Maybe because of the fact that he was the one that God directly gave the divine command to. This can be seen in the reiteration of God's command in verse 17. The punishment for the man is also threefold. First, God curses

[37] Frances S Brown and S R Driver, Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 1003, Bible Works 7.

the land man relies and dwells upon.[38] The land that was a pleasure and a blessing for him is now cursed. Von Rad puts it well, stressing that the curse strikes the most elementary realm of human existence.[39] The land is no longer abundant with food; thorns and thistle will grow upon the land to make it more unpleasant for dwelling and cultivation. They will rob the soil of moisture and nutrients and choke out food bearing-plants.[40] Apparently, the utopian image of the land is now ruined and polluted and lost in fertility. The Hebrew term אָרַר (*'ārar*)[41] testifies to this depiction, as it is often used to connote such soil conditions. This condition sets the stage for the next clause of man's punishment.

The next part of man's punishment is the fact that he is made to toil in pain. Westermann sees this as an increase in workload. Prior to his disobedience, he was made to work. In Gen 2:15, the man is called to till and keep the garden of Eden. Only this time he is made to work harder and without resting.[42] His work becomes more challenging as well as painful, and he will eat his food in toil and pain. Man's pain is expressed in Genesis 3 through the use of the term such as עִצָּבוֹן (*'iṣṣābôn*) meaning 'sorrow', 'pain' or 'toil' and the expression זֵעַת אַפֶּיךָ (*zē'â 'apêt*) translatable as 'sweat of your face'. The term and the expression together intensify man's toil and pain, thus portraying a very unpleasant situation for the man. Here I can imagine the Samoan

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[38] Norman Habel, *The Birth, the Curse, and the Greening of the Earth: An Ecological Reading of Genesis 1-11* (UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011), 61-62.

[39] See Gordon Leah' s essay: Gordon Leah, "From the Garden of Eden. Reflections on Disobedience and Restoration EJT (2018) 27:2, 139-146; available on Atala/EBSCO; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* trans. John H. Marks (London: SCM, 1972), 94.

[40] John E Hartley, *Genesis: New International Biblical Commentary* (USA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), 70.

[41] Frances S Brown and S R Driver, Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 779, Bible Works 7.

[42] Claus Westermann, *A Continental Commentary: Genesis 1-11* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 220.

narrator making faces and body gestures in relaying the story to heighten the hardship that man will undergo for his disobedience.

The final clause of the divine judgement is revealed in verse 19b. Which means: "The certainty of death for all humans, (not just men)."[43] This certainty can be seen by observing the synonymous parallelism below;

עַד שׁוּבְךָ֙ אֶל־הָאֲדָמָ֔ה כִּ֥י מִמֶּ֖נָּה לֻקָּ֑חְתָּ

(until you return to the ground for from it you were taken)

כִּי־עָפָ֣ר אַתָּ֔ה וְאֶל־עָפָ֖ר תָּשֽׁוּב׃

(for dust you are and to dust you shall return)

The synonymous parallelism emphasizes man's destination, that is, he shall return to the ground. From the ground he was made and to the ground he shall return. Viewing this from a *tafea a popouli* perspective depicts a hopeless situation. Now the spectre of death has haunted the earth.[44] There is certainly no *faamoemoe* or *olataga* for humanity.

In summation, viewing the above analysis of Genesis 3: 14-19 from a *tafea a popouli* perspective reveals rough drifting in the Garden of Eden, between God and humanity. However, there are some glimpses of hope in the promise of new life despite the pains and toils in the process of achieving them. Sadly, death has now entered the scene. The only *faamoemoe* and *olataga* here for humanity is that it is not instantaneous. So despite all these it is still a miracle that the first humans are still alive.[45]

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[43] John E Hartley, *Genesis: New International Biblical Commentary* (USA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), 70.

[44] John Philips, *Exploring Genesis: An Expository Commentary* (USA: Kregel Publications, 2001), 62.

[45] Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation a Bible commentary for teaching and preaching*, 49.

Genesis 3: 20-24 *Tafea ese ma Etena*- Drifting Away from Eden

This scene begins with the man giving his wife a name. The name he gives her is חַוָּה (*havah*)[46] translated as Eve. Intriguingly, she becomes the first and the only character explicitly given a proper name in the narrative. Trible sees this as witness to a break in the egalitarian relations of Genesis 2. Moreover, the term *havah* also connotes 'life' or 'tent'. Reading these nuances of the term into Genesis 3 add a glimpse of hope to the dull situation of the preceding scene of the narrative. Adam here seems to put his faith in the woman for the continuation of life post-Eden, even after he is earlier designated as her 'ruler'.[47] In the sense that, by giving his wife the name Eve, he recognises her new role as the mother of life, or as a tent within which her family can find shelter and solace. Her roles are vital for her husband, considering their punishments from God. Eve as 'life' ensures the continuation of life since death has now entered creation. Eve as a 'tent' ensures shelter in their new found lifestyle as drifters beyond Eden.

In verse 21, God made them garments from skins. God produced garments for Adam and Eve. This act became a symbolic seal of God's providential care for the first couple.[48] As such, this prepared the first couple for their newfound calling - to till the land as they are about to drift away from Eden. In the end, God drove them out and sealed the entrance to the garden through the employment of a *cherubim* with a flaming sword to prevent the first couple from returning. In hindsight the first couple are now on their way, drifting away from Eden, and they now have the world at their disposal with

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[46] Frances S Brown and S R Driver, Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 295, Bible Works 7.

[47] Norman Habel, *The Birth, the Curse, and the Greening of the Earth: An Ecological Reading of Genesis 1-11* (UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011), 62-63.

[48] Meredith G Kline, *Genesis: A New Commentary*, E-book Edition, eds Jonathan G Kline (Massachusetts USA: Hendrickson Publisher Marketing, 2016-2017), 41.

the hope of tilling the land for their benefit, and fulfilling their initial calling of multiplying to fill the land. Such could not be achieved if they had remained in the garden of Eden.

Judging all these from a *tafea a popouli* perspective further affirms that there is a *faamoemoe* (hope) for the first couple after Eden. Their hope is in tilling the land. Despite the fact that God punished them by cursing the land, making it hard for the first couple to cultivate there is still hope in the sense that their toil will be rewarded. So despite God's curse the land can still be viewed as a *punaoa o le ola* (source of life) and a *olataga* (life giving). Furthermore, the first couple's role as child bearers makes them partakers in God's creation (*foafoaga*). Such a role is directed towards the fulfilment of their higher calling, to multiply and fill the earth.

Summary

The above analysis of Genesis 3 from a *tafea a popouli* perspective has revealed that the Eden narrative in Genesis 3 can be looked at as a story of hope rather than a story of a fall. Apparently, the first section of the story in Genesis 3: 1-7 identifies the serpent as the culprit, as it tempts the first couple away from adherence to God's command, thus causing them to drift astray from God. The only note of hope disclosed in this section is the unity shown in the man and woman relationship, which lasts throughout the entire narrative despite moments of rough drifting with God. Such rough drifting is portrayed in Genesis 3: 8-19. At the beginning of the second section of the narrative, the first couple attempt to flee from God. However, God drifted towards them and attempts to resolve the situation. After a brief trial God gives the divine verdict and all three characters - the serpent, the woman and the man - are punished. Even so, there are glimpses of hope evident in this section. Such can be seen in the woman's newfound

role of motherhood, producing life. Despite the toil and pain of her conception, God has assured her that she will have offspring. Thus, giving her and her husband the ability to fulfil their duties as co-creators in God's creation: to multiply and fill the earth. This will surely happen now they had drifted away from Eden. Another array of hope can also be found in the assurance that through toil and hard work, the land that God cursed will surely yield and reward man of his labour. In saying all this, Genesis 3 therefore is more about a story of hope in humanity's newfound role in God's creation. In the sense that their drifting can be life-giving thus reminiscing a coconut drifting in the current only to produce life somewhere else.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

My quest for this study was to reconsider the role of the woman in the narrative of the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3. To liberate the imagery of womanhood from the traditional patriarchal oriented interpretations that blame the first woman for the Fall and demise of humanity. In other words, to make a contribution to what Treble calls the depatriachalising[1] of the Genesis 3 narrative.

To fulfil my quest, I employed the Samoan hermeneutical lens of *tafea a popouli* together with the interpretive tool of *tala* criticism to analyze my chosen text. Briefly, speaking, a *tafea a popouli* hermeneutical perspective is derived from a Samoan observation of a matured coconut falling into the sea, drifting away with the currents, only to land at some remote locality to begin a new growth on the shores. Such an image for us Samoans portrays hope, in the fact that the drifting coconut will someday generate new life. So, the *tafea a popouli* hermeneutic therefore requires the interpreter to assess the story in a way that anticipates glimpses of hope, especially with regards to stories predominated by messages of doom, as in Genesis 3.

After reassessing the Genesis 3 narrative from a *tafea a popouli* hermeneutical perspective, I found at that there are glimpses of hope in the story. That is, not only hope for character of the first woman but also that of the first man or humanity as a whole. Firstly, the character of the woman can be liberated from the traditional view - that she is the one to blame for the fall and demise of humanity. Embedded in the Genesis 3 story are literary devices such as repetition and parallelism, that testify that the crafty and cunning serpent, rather than the woman, was the perpetrator behind the

[1] Phillis Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in the biblical interpretation," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 41(1), 1973 30-48.

woman and the man's drifting away from God, due to their disobedience towards the divine command, as it was the serpent that advised them not to eat from the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden.

Fortunately, God soon caught up with humanity's wayward drifting and passed judgment, for eating from the forbidden tree. First, God placed a curse on the serpent. The divine curse ensures that the serpent and the woman will perpetually drift away from each other in hatred. This can be viewed as a note of hope for humanity, since it ensures security from the serpent and its temptations. Second, the woman was punished with tremendous pains in her conception, and in her desire for her husband, who will rule over her. There is also here a note of hope in the divine judgment. This is clear if we consider that despite the pains in childbearing and the notion of being 'ruled over' the divine judgment ensures the woman will be blessed in the bearing of children, and a tight relationship with her husband.

Furthermore, the punishment of the man was more intense in comparison with that of the woman. The man will toil in pain, and he will eat only through hard work in tilling the soil that is cursed by God. Not only that, but his days are numbered, so as the woman. In hindsight there is also hope in the divine punishment for the man. That is, despite the hardships of working the land there is hope in the sense that the Lord God ensures humanity of productive toiling, despite the curse placed on the land. Furthermore, the last section of the Eden narrative in Genesis 3: 20-24 depicts the first couple being sent away from Eden, not to return. This divine act is often portrayed as indicative of the fallen destination of humanity. However, I have revealed that there is an array of hope in humanity's drifting away from the garden. In the sense that they are now in possession of the ability to produce life, to toil the land for their food, and to

fulfill their creative duties in God's creation. All in all, these depictions from the Genesis 3 narrative reveal a situation of hope, rather than a situation of doom.

Placing my reading in light of the aforementioned literature review in the Introductory Chapter, reveals my reading to lean towards the side of feminist scholars, who in their readings of Genesis 3 reinterpret the text to redeem the image of womanhood, and promote reading strategies that could yield gender-sensitive interpretations of biblical texts. Furthermore, the use of a Samoan conditioned perspective and interpretative tool for this study provides valuable knowledge for Samoan biblical studies in general. I admit that my hermeneutical perspective is far from perfect. It still needs to be refined and put to the test for it to be a more practical method for analysing texts. However, at least it is a step towards a Samoan method of interpretation that can be used to interpret Biblical texts. Also, the employment of the *tafea a popouli* hermeneutical perspective as an interpretive lens to read biblical texts, could make the messages of biblical texts more meaningful and relevant to Samoans and the Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa, and all those who are passionate about their place of home and belonging, and ultimately their place of identity.

Glossary

agai	towards
Alii	Lord
Atua	God
faamatala	narrator
faamoemoe	hope
faatagataina	characters
fagogo	Samoan art of story telling
Faifeau	Minister, Servant of God
foafoaga	procreation
gafataulima	accomplish, fulfil or capable
nofoaga	setting
olataga	life saver
pa'u	fall
popo	coconut
popouli	brown coconut
punaoa o le ola	source of life
tafea	drift, float
tagata	human, humankind, human being
tala	story, tale
tala-mamanu	reading strategy that not only focus on telling the story but also analyse it
tautua	servant, servanthood
tulaga	plot
vaega	scene

autalaga	a noun, its root word is autala
autala	to peel or to dismantle

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