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WAS EARTH CREATED GOOD?
REAPPRASING EARTH IN GENESIS 1:1-2:4a FROM A SAMOAN
***GAFATAULIMA* PERSPECTIVE**

by

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**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in Theology, The University of Auckland, 2016.**

ABSTRACT

This thesis offers a reappraisal of Earth as presented in Gen. 1:1-2:4a from a Samoan *gafataulima* (accomplish/fulfil/capable) hermeneutical perspective. The inspiration for the study arose out of a personal dilemma concerning my religious beliefs and the reality that I am experiencing in the world today, specifically, the tensions between Earth's perfect portrait in Gen. 1:1-2:4a and recurring natural disasters that I suffer from in my Samoan local context. Attentions to my ecological situation gave rise to questions that challenge the repeated divine evaluation of Earth as 'good' in Gen. 1:1-2:4a. 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, I propose 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 of narrative-grammatical criticism that I refer to as a *tala-mamanu* reading.

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. Establishing Earth's capabilities to *gafataulima* her given functions will provide a response to the topic question: Was Earth created 'good'?

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my dear wife, Soifualupa, whose unwavering love and support gave me the capacity to *gafataulima* (accomplish) this work.

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Bless the Lord, my soul; with all my being I bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, my soul, and forget none of his benefits. (Psalm 103: 1-2)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Bibles:

KJV	King James Version
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NKJV	New King James Version
NIV	New International Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version

Old Testament Books:

Gen.	Genesis
Exod.	Exodus
Lev.	Leviticus
Num.	Numbers
Deut.	Deuteronomy
Josh.	Joshua
Judg.	Judges
Ruth.	Ruth
1-2 Sam.	1-2 Samuel
1-2 Kgs.	1-2 Kings
1-2 Chron.	1-2 Chronicles
Ezra.	Ezra
Neh.	Nehemiah
Esth.	Esther
Job.	Job
Psa.	Psalms
Prov.	Proverbs
Eccl.	Ecclesiastes
Song Sol.	Song of Solomon
Isa.	Isaiah
Jer.	Jeremiah
Lam.	Lamentations
Ezek.	Ezekiel
Dan.	Daniel
Hos.	Hosea
Joel.	Joel
Amos.	Amos
Obad.	Obadiah
Jonah.	Jonah
Mic.	Micah
Nah.	Nahum
Hab.	Habakkuk
Zeph.	Zephaniah
Hag.	Haggai

Zech.
Mal.

Zechariah
Malachi

Commentaries and Theological Dictionaries:

BDB	Brown-Drive-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon
GBC	<i>Global Bible Commentary</i>
ITC	International Theological Commentary
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
NAC	New American Commentary
NIDOTTE	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>
OTS	Old Testament Studies
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
TLOT	<i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
TWOT	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

Journals:

AUSS	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
BS	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
CTJ	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
DRev	<i>Dunwoodie Review</i>
Ethics	<i>Ethics</i>
JLT	<i>Journal of Literature and Theology</i>
JPS	<i>Journal of Pacific Studies</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JSem	<i>Journal of Semitics</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
LTJ	<i>Lutheran Theological Journal</i>
OTE	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
PJT	<i>Pacific Journal of Theology</i>
Span	<i>Span</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>

Others:

CCCS	Congregational Christian Church of Samoa
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EFKS	Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa
MNRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
SBS	Samoa Bureau of Statistics

GLOSSARY OF SAMOAN WORDS AND PHRASES

Words:

<i>'a'ano</i>	body (of the story)
<i>'aiga</i>	family, extended family
<i>'aigōfie</i>	a traditional Samoan club match
<i>ānotala</i>	content or body of the story
<i>āo</i>	daytime
<i>aogā</i>	responsibility or function
<i>aotelega</i>	summary
<i>ātualoa</i>	centipede, the long god of healing
<i>ātule</i>	mackerel
<i>āumau</i>	dwellers, occupants
<i>'ava</i>	kava
<i>'ele'ele</i>	soil
<i>fa'aaloalo</i>	respect
<i>fa'a'anufe</i>	worm
<i>fa'aātualoa</i>	centipede
<i>fa'aauau</i>	continuous
<i>fa'aā'upega</i>	net
<i>fa'a'autū</i>	character
<i>fa'a'aveāu</i>	star fish
<i>fa'afa'atusa</i>	metaphors and similes
<i>fa'agafatia</i>	to be able or to afford
<i>fa'agāsologa</i>	plot (of the story)
<i>fa'ailogā</i>	signs
<i>fa'aī'uga</i>	ending
<i>fa'alaumei</i>	turtle
<i>fa'alaupaōgo</i>	pandanus leaf
<i>fa'alavelave</i>	cultural occasion, art of traditional exchanges
<i>fa'aleōga</i>	sounds, pronunciation
<i>fa'amasina</i>	moon
<i>fa'amatala</i>	narrator
<i>fa'asigago</i>	pandanus bloom
<i>fa'ata'atiāga</i>	structure or setting (of the story)
<i>fa'ata'imuāga</i>	what is first laid out, introductory scene
<i>fa'atinoga</i>	characters' actions in the story
<i>fa'atomu'aga</i>	introduction, made to come first
<i>fa'atōmūliga</i>	conclusion, made to come last
<i>fa'atūmoa</i>	banana pod
<i>fa'atusatusāga</i>	comparisons with other characters
<i>fa'atusilīli'i</i>	straight and wavy lines
<i>fa'a'ūpuga</i>	phrasing and word plays
<i>faiā</i>	relations or relationships
<i>faifaipea</i>	continuous
<i>faife'au</i>	church minister, preacher, pastor
<i>fala</i>	traditional sleeping mats
<i>fanua</i>	land or the embryonic sac that engulfs an unborn child in the mother's womb

<i>fale</i>	Samoan house
<i>faumea</i>	maker, creator, builder
<i>fausaga</i>	style, to fasten
<i>fatu</i>	stone
<i>fesili</i>	questions
<i>folafolaga</i>	cultural announcements
<i>fono</i>	council, meeting
<i>fuāinnumera</i>	numerals
<i>gafa</i>	measure of length or a fathom, genealogy or family tree, or responsibility
<i>gafataulima</i>	ability to perform a function
<i>gafataulimaina</i>	sustainable
<i>gogo</i>	noddy bird
<i>‘ietoga</i>	fine mats
<i>īlu</i>	immensity
<i>ī’ulautalo</i>	tip of the taro leaf
<i>lā</i>	sun
<i>lagi</i>	sky, heaven
<i>lalolagi</i>	under the heavens
<i>laūga</i>	oratory
<i>laumei</i>	turtle
<i>lē</i>	not
<i>lima</i>	the number five or the hand, total capacity
<i>mafai</i>	ability, capacity
<i>mafui’e</i>	earthquake
<i>mafuolo</i>	stench bunker
<i>mago</i>	huge sea creature
<i>malaga</i>	visitors, visiting groups, travelling parties
<i>malosi’aga</i>	positive abilities/strengths
<i>malu</i>	traditional Samoan female tattoo
<i>mamano</i>	vocabulary / letters / words / motif / image / design
<i>mamao</i>	space
<i>mana</i>	spiritual power
<i>manatu</i>	occurring and reoccurring themes
<i>masina</i>	moon
<i>matāfaioi</i>	functions and responsibilities
<i>matai</i>	chief
<i>mātua</i>	mother, parent
<i>nafa</i>	responsibility or function
<i>nu’u</i>	land or island, village
<i>pā</i>	inclusion, borders
<i>papa</i>	rock
<i>pe’a</i>	tattoo, male tattoo
<i>pili</i>	lizard
<i>pō</i>	night
<i>pute</i>	umbilical cord
<i>sā</i>	prohibitions
<i>safulusā</i>	sacred feather
<i>sa’o</i>	high chief/head chief
<i>siapo</i>	traditional tapa cloth

<i>soa</i>	a second, a partner, or a companion
<i>soāfaumea</i>	assistant maker
<i>soāmamanu</i>	mamanu expressions
<i>tala</i>	story, narration or news
<i>talanoaga</i>	discourses or dialogues
<i>tatau</i>	tattoo, tattooing, male tattoo
<i>tau (noun)</i>	cost, climate, leaves covering a Samoan earth oven, a cluster or bundle
<i>tau (verb)</i>	to count, to fight, to connect, to tell or to hit against something
<i>taua</i>	war
<i>taugatā</i>	expensive
<i>taugofie</i>	inexpensive
<i>tauī</i>	reward/cost
<i>tauiviga</i>	wrestling
<i>taule'ale'a</i>	untitled man or young lad
<i>tausiga</i>	provision of nourishments and dwellings for guests
<i>tausimea</i>	caretaker, host
<i>tausoga</i>	cousins
<i>tautai</i>	head fisherman
<i>tautua</i>	servitude, to serve others, servant-hood or service
<i>tua</i>	behind, out of sight or the back
<i>tulāfale</i>	orator
<i>tulaga</i>	point of view, status or location
<i>tulī</i>	plover bird
<i>tusi</i>	to point out, write or mark
<i>ū'a</i>	paper mulberry plant used in tapa or siapo making
<i>ulutala</i>	heading of the story
<i>va'aiga</i>	scene
<i>vaega</i>	sections of an essay or story
<i>vaevaēga</i>	sub-sections of an essay or story
<i>vaivaīga</i>	negative abilities/weaknesses
<i>vaosā</i>	sacred forest

Phrases:

<i>'a'ao māfola</i>	give with open arms/hands
<i>atina'e gafataulimaina</i>	sustainable development
<i>atina'e lē gafataulimaina</i>	unsustainable development
<i>E fa'avae i le Atua Samoa</i>	Samoa is founded on God
<i>E gafataulima e le solofanua le āmoga</i>	The horse has the ability to carry the load
<i>E gafataulima e le taga le mamafa o le āgone</i>	The sand has the ability to withstand the weight of the sand
<i>E gafataulimaina e le tama le su'ega i Malua</i>	The young man has the ability to pass the Malua entrance exam
<i>E lē gafataulimaina e le va'a le sou o le vasa</i>	The boat does not have the ability to withstand the rough seas

E lelei le tautua a la'u tuai
E le'i mafu lava lenā olo?
E tau o tā gafa
fa'afitifitiga a tulāfale
ī'a mafanafana
kaukala/tautala leaga
lagi ūli
lagi mā
lē gafataulima(ina)
Lelei tele le tautua a si a'u solofanua
lima lelei
lima malosi
lima vaivai
mafai fa'alemafaufau
mafai fa'atino
mafai feso'ota'i
O ai lā e tau mai fāfō?

O le ā le tau o lou 'ofu?
O le gafa o le 'ava
O le gafa o le matou tānoa
O le tala oi le matā'upu muamua a Mataio

O le tusi a Isaia matā'upu muamua
O lenā ua i ou lima mea uma
O ou faiva alofi lima
Ou te tau i ā Sina
tala fa'anū'upō
tala-mamanu
tala o le foafoaga
tau 'aīga
tau lima
tau 'upu
tautala lelei
tautua lē pisa
tautua malie
tautua toto
Ua fa'agafatia tau lima
Ua lē fa'agafatia tau lima
Ua loa le tautua a le 'ulu i le tatou 'aīga

Ua lava le tautua a si a'u sapelu
Ua tala le gafa o le matou pua'a

My scraper's service is satisfying
 Is not that bunker filled with stench?
 Our lineages are connected
 orator's sarcasm
 warm fish
 informal speech, bad language
 dark sky
 clear sky
 inability
 My horse provides excellent service
 good hands
 strong hands
 weak hands
 intellectual capacities
 physical or performative capabilities
 social abilities
 Who is working outside or who is
 responsible for doing the work outside?
 What is the cost of your dress?
 The genealogy or heritage of the kava plant
 The pedigree of our kava bowl
 The text or story in the first chapter of
 Matthew
 The book of Isaiah chapter one
 You got everything in your hands
 The responsibilities of your hands
 I am related to Sina
 stories of the dark lands
 narrative-grammatical
 the story of Creation
 relatives or family connections
 fight with the hands
 a war of words or a verbal fight
 formal/polite speech
 silent service
 pleasing service
 blood service
 Able to fight or serve with the hands
 unable to fight or serve with the hands
 The breadfruit tree's service to the feeding
 of our family is more than enough
 My machete's service is more than ample
 My pig has extended his/her genealogy

PART I: INTRODUCTION AND TOWARDS THE READING

METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: SITUATING THE STUDY

1. INTRODUCTION

Was Earth really created ‘good’ and even ‘very good’ as Gen. 1:1-2:4a¹ claims? This question has arisen out of my real life situation as a Samoan Christian who has witnessed the impact and devastation wrought by natural disasters (including earthquakes and tsunamis) to human lives and the environment. This devastation brought forth by natural disasters has revealed for me Earth’s² destructive forces, leading to devastation of property, livelihood, and human life. From a Christian Islander perspective, I am acutely aware of Islanders’ reliance on Earth for survival and livelihood; these natural disasters therefore raise the following questions concerning Earth’s functionality: Are natural disasters disclosing Earth’s inability to perform her functions in creation? Are they a sign that Earth is not functionally ‘good’ or ‘very good’, as the divine in Gen. 1:1-2:4a claims her to be?

¹ Choosing to focus exclusively on Gen. 1:1-2:4a does not necessarily mean that the final form of Gen. 1:1-2:4a should only be read on its own or we should stop reading the creation story in Gen. 2:4a as source-critical scholars have often claimed. My reasons for choosing to focus exclusively on Gen. 1:1-2:4a are, first is because of the impact of Gen. 1 on Samoan beliefs as mentioned above; second is because Gen. 1:1-2:4a is Earth oriented compared to Gen. 2-3 which is human oriented. Therefore, the quality of Earth which is the subject of my study is more explicit in Gen. 1:1-2:4a than the subsequent text; a third is that in accordance to Samoan *Tala* (narrative) criticism Gen. 1:1-2:4a can be seen both as a complete story on its own because it imitates Samoan *tala* structures which consist of three *vaega* (sections); *fa’atomu’aga* (introduction), *ānotala* (body) and the *fa’atōmūlīga* (conclusion).

² There is no equivalence for the English term Earth (planet) in the Samoan language. The closest term we have is *lalolagi* (literally: under the heavens). This Samoan term is inclusive of every created entity except humanity and non-human creatures. Therefore, for the purpose of this study I will use the English term Earth in such sense, referring to every created entity with the exception of humanity and non-human creatures. This Samoan worldview of Earth will be discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3. This usage of the term Earth as a proper name is in alignment with the Earth Bible project’s adoption of the convention of referring to Earth with an uppercase ‘E’ and no article. See, Norman Habel, “Introducing the Earth Bible,” in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth, The Earth Bible*, vol. 1, ed. Norman C. Habel (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 27.

In light of these questions, I therefore address Gen. 1:1-2:4a not to find answers as to why natural disasters occur or to answer questions around the theodicy of these disasters but to reappraise the portrait of Earth given in Gen. 1:1-2:4a; in other words, my thesis will examine if the narrative itself upholds the divine claim that Earth was created ‘good’. In order to do this, I will transpose Earth to the centre of the interpretive process, making Earth the subject of investigation.

Biblical scholars studying Gen. 1:1-2:4a often fail to read this narrative in light of the reality of natural disasters; they rarely focus in their interpretation on the quality of Earth to serve her purpose or question the divine claim in the text that asserts Earth was created ‘good’. Yet questioning the quality of Earth is important from a Christian Islander perspective; the biblical traditions are read and understood as reflecting a living reality. Even though Gen. 1 has long been claimed to be a myth belonging to a ‘lost utopia’ it has been read and understood as reflecting a real world.³ If Gen. 1:1-2:4a claims that Earth is ‘good’ and ‘very good’, this is taken as a claim to truth, a reality that shapes Islander life and the life of all humanity. Holding onto this truth in the presence of natural disasters therefore raises difficult questions: how can Earth be ‘good’ when it acts in ways that devastate lives and environments? How can a ‘good’ Earth also be a destructive Earth? And how can Christian Islanders hold these two opposing realities in tension with each other, or even resolve the contradictions implicit therein? This study will attempt to answer these questions, and will therefore make a significant contribution to the scholarship of Gen. 1:1-2:4a, by offering an alternative reading of the narrative that takes into account the impact of natural disasters on Islanders’ lives; this will involve determining the quality, or ‘goodness’, of Earth by closely examining her portrait in the narrative using a Samoan hermeneutic and reading approach.

To carry out the intended reappraisal of Earth in Gen. 1:1-2:4a, I will design and use a Samoan *gafataulima* (ability to perform) hermeneutical approach. In brief, the *gafataulima* approach is a

³ See, Walter J. Houston, “Justice and Violence in the Priestly Utopia,” in Matthew J. Coomber, ed., *Bible and Justice* (London: Equinox, 2011), 93-105. In this article Houston asserts that applying Gen. 1 to the real world is problematic. He claims that Gen. 1 depicts a mythical world therefore a literal reading of the text is unfeasible and we can only draw out its theological and ethical implications. I agree with Houston however, I am only adopting the Samoan literal interpretation of Gen. 1 as a point of departure in my engagement with the text.

Samoan ability-based hermeneutic that deals with the functional capabilities of a given subject. It consists of three distinct but interrelated hermeneutical lenses, which are designated using the three little words intrinsic to the term *gafataulima*: *gafa* (relation/responsibility), *tau* (cost) and *lima* (abilities).⁴ The *gafa* analysis identifies a subject's functions, the *tau* analysis estimates the costs to the subject of performing these functions and the *lima* analysis calculates if the subject has the resources to cover these costs and thus perform their functions successfully. I choose this approach because, as explained in more detail below, I presuppose that the 'goodness' of Earth that Gen. 1:1-2:4a is alluding to is more to do with her functionality - her ability to perform certain functions and responsibilities adequately - than her aesthetic appeal. When natural disaster strikes, questions are raised concerning Earth's aptitude to perform her functions in creation.

The methodology I will use to interpret Gen. 1:1-2:4a using this Samoan hermeneutic is the Samoan *tala-mamanu* (narrative-grammatical) reading methodology.⁵ This *tala-mamanu* methodology is a fusion of Samoan *tala* (narrative) and *mamanu* (concepts/patterns/motifs) reading strategies which not only focus on texts as *tala* but also analyse the *mamanu* or concepts in the text. The *tala* reading resembles narrative criticism, focussing on narrative devices such as the narrator, setting, characters, and plot in deciphering the text's meanings. This *mamanu* reading strategy is comparable to grammatical criticism, being attentive to individual words, vocabulary choices, and linguistic features in the narrative in order to unravel the text's meanings.

Reading Gen. 1:1-2:4a using the Samoan *gafataulima* hermeneutic and *tala-mamanu* reading approach will enable me to contribute new reading methodologies and strategies in biblical studies, particularly Islander biblical studies.⁶ My consideration of Pacific Island hermeneutics and

⁴ See Chapters Two and Three where I will be dealing with the subtleties of this hermeneutical approach.

⁵ This interpretive methodology will be explained in Chapter Three.

⁶ For examples of current Islander hermeneutics, see the works of Jione Havea, "The Future Stands Between Here and There: Towards an Island(ic) Hermeneutics," *PJT* II, no. 13 (1995): 61-68; *idem*, "Shifting the Boundaries: House of God and Politics of Reading," *PJT* II, no. 16 (1996): 55-71; *idem*, "Numbers," *GBC*, ed. Daniel Patte (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 43-51; Nasili Vaka'uta, *Reading Ezra 9-10 Tu'a-Wise: Rethinking Biblical*

interpretive methodologies was aided by the introduction of reader-oriented literary theories into biblical studies. Reader-oriented criticism⁷ is an umbrella term for various approaches⁸ to textual interpretation that arose in the 1970s and 1980s as a reaction to New Criticism.⁹ The latter approach grew as a response to historical criticism, which values authorial intent in the construction of a text's meaning. In contrast, New Criticism emphasises the autonomy of the text as a self-contained and self-referential object, which can be analysed through close reading and careful attention to the language used therein. That is, New Criticism asserts that meaning is inherent within the text, therefore the roles of the author and reader are unimportant in the interpretive process.¹⁰

In contrast, reader-oriented criticism gives emphasis to the part played by the reader in the interpretive process. This position can be clarified by examining its five foundational principles.¹¹

First, authority is given to the real reader in the interpretive process. The real reader is not the

Interpretation in Oceania (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011); *idem*, "Island Making Text: Engaging the Bible in Oceania," in *Islands, Islander, and the Bible: RumInation*, ed. Jione Havea, Margaret Aymer, and Steed V. Davidson (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015), 57-64; Arthur Walker-Jones, "A Celebration of the Vanua," in *The Earth Stories in the Psalms and the Prophets, of The Earth Bible*, vol. 4, ed. Norman C. Habel (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 84-97; Iutisone Salevao, "Burning the Land: An Ecojustice Reading of Hebrews 6:7-8," in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth, The Earth Bible*, vol. 1, ed. Norman C. Habel (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 221-231; Peni Leota, "Ethnic Tensions in Persian-Period Yehud: A Samoan Postcolonial Hermeneutic" (PhD Thesis, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2005); Frank Smith, "The Johannine Jesus from a Samoan perspective: Towards an Intercultural Reading of the Fourth Gospel" (PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 2010). Below I will engage with some of these readings from Oceania to situate my proposed reading approach.

⁷ Reader-oriented criticism is also known by various names such as reader-response criticism, audience criticism and reception criticism. I prefer the name reader-oriented since it emphasizes the central role of the reader in the interpretive process.

⁸ Stanley E. Porter, "Why Hasn't Reader-Response Criticism Caught on in New Testament Studies?" *JLT* 4, no. 3 (Nov. 1990): 278, sees reader-response criticism as an inclusive term that covers all post-formalist interpretive models that emphasise the role of the reader in the interpretive process. This means reader-oriented criticism can include post-colonial, contextual, feminist, ecological, Marxist, and queer readings.

⁹ 'New Criticism is a movement that promotes literary theories and approaches that interpret the intrinsic features of the text with the belief that the meaning is inherent within the text rather than with the author or the reader. For an overview see Lynn Steven, *Texts and Contexts: Writing about Literature with Critical Theory*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1998); M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1981). For examples of 'New Criticism' in biblical studies see, John Gabel and Charles Wheeler, *The Bible as Literature: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University, 1986); Randolph W. Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*, rev. ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publisher, 1997), 67-152.

¹⁰ Edgar V. McKnight, *Post-Modern Use of the Bible: The Emergence of Reader Oriented Criticism* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 15-16.

¹¹ Porter, "Reader-Response Criticism in New Testament Studies," 279.

implied or intended reader of a literary work but the present-day, flesh-and-blood reader who is involved in the act of reading a text. Second, the reader engages with the text to create meaning.¹² This interaction is guided by the reader's presuppositions and pre-understanding, biases, interests, skills, experiences and methodologies to generate meanings.¹³ In this sense, the reading experience is no longer an objective, but a subjective event. Third, meaning is not a propositional truth intrinsic to the text but is rather generated by the reader's response to the text, or the significance of the text to a situation, concept or any other conception in the reader's world. Fourth, and following on from this, all meanings formulated are thus valid as the product of the reader's reading strategy. This means a text can have multiple meanings and can mean different things to different people. Fifth and finally, the reader belongs to a reading community or to a particular social location which can impact the reading process. As Mark A. Powell asserts, the reader's social location comes into play in the interpretive process, including factors such as 'age, race, gender, career, social class, income, education, personality, health, marital status, emotional stability and so forth'.¹⁴ All of these factors influence the meaning that the reader brings forth from the texts they read.

Clearly, the above foundational principles all point to the reader's role in interpretation and the situatedness of the interpretive process. Michael Hull verifies the position of reader-oriented criticism by claiming that, 'No one reads the Bible in a vacuum. Each of us reads the Bible within some venue, within a setting, within some place of contextualization-wherever it may be-and knowing one's place is key to biblical interpretation'.¹⁵ Similarly, and speaking from a post-

¹² Robert M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 3. Here Fowler sees the search for the meaning of a text as the interaction between readers and literary elements within a text. He writes '[r]eading takes place through time, and the rhetorical effects of narrative are often the cumulative effects of temporal experience of reading...meaning becomes a dynamic event in which we ourselves participate'.

¹³ Randolph W. Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*, 3rd edn. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), xiii. Tate refers to what the reader brings to the interaction with the text as the 'reader's repertoire'. Similar to Fowler, he also describes reader-oriented criticism as the formulation of meaning where meaning is 'an invention of the reader in collaboration with the text'.

¹⁴ Mark Allan Powell, *Chasing the Eastern Star: Adventures in Biblical Reader-Response Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 18.

¹⁵ Michael Hull, "Knowing One's Place: On Venues in Biblical Interpretation," *DRev* 26 (2003): 83.

colonial perspective, Fernando F. Segovia summons all readers to be honest in their reading approaches by acknowledging their social and cultural influences as well as their preconceived presuppositions.¹⁶ Furthermore, from an ecological standpoint Norman Habel also supports this view, proposing that '[t]wo dimensions of the current context are crucial here as we begin reading text: our environmental crisis and our ecological orientation'.¹⁷ Since I am dealing with an ecological issue in this study - that of natural disasters - I will take heed of Habel's advice as a point of departure for this study.¹⁸ I will bring to the fore both my experience as a victim of natural disasters and my Samoan cultural and Christian worldviews of the created order in fashioning my approach to Gen. 1:1-2:4a. My social location will shape my *gafataulima* hermeneutic and my *tala-mamanu* reading methodology. However, this does not mean that I will divorce myself from other aspects of my social location, such as economic, intellectual, religious, and political. I cannot separate my reading from these entirely, and I am aware that they will all intersect to impact my reading. As Tate notes, '[r]eaders always wear tinted glasses and make sense of the text according to the particular shade of the lenses'.¹⁹ In this sense, I am engaging Gen. 1:1-2:4a with an array of reading optics from my social location, whilst focusing explicitly on my experiences as a Samoan Christian whose community life has been impacted by the trauma of natural disasters. But rather than seeing these as something to 'put aside' while I interpret the Genesis creation account, I acknowledge that they stand at the centre of my reading, shaping and guiding my understanding of this biblical text.

¹⁶ Fernando F. Segovia, "Biblical Criticism and Postcolonial Studies: Toward a Postcolonial Optic," in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2006), 42. Also see: Charles H. Cosgrove, "Introduction," in *The Meanings We Choose: Hermeneutical Ethics, Indeterminacy and the Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Charles H. Cosgrove (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 3.

¹⁷ Norman Habel, "Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics," *LTJ*, 46, no. 2 (August 2012): 98.

¹⁸ For this study, I am focusing my attention on natural disasters and will not consider the implications of 'man-made' ecological crises in relation to Earth's created 'goodness'. This is a separate issue which I do not have the space to cover in the confines of this thesis. This distinction is not a biblical distinction, as some biblical texts perceive natural disaster as a consequence of human sin. For examples see Hos. 4:3, Jer. 4 and Deut. 28.

¹⁹ Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, 188.

Having highlighted the need to acknowledge my context in the interpretive process of Gen. 1:1-2:4a, I will now address the following issues in more depth. First, I will explain my situation as a reader who experienced the devastation of natural disasters and how this shaped my worldviews of Earth in my Islander location. Second, I will identify scholarly views on God's evaluation of Earth in Gen. 1:1-2:4a to assess how pertinent they are to my situation; particularly, I will identify the gaps in these previous readings of the text and what questions they leave unanswered that will be essential to my own reading. Third, I will discuss the current status of Oceanic biblical hermeneutics for the purpose of locating this study within a wider framework and to identify their significances to my location as a reader. Finally, I will provide a brief outline of the course of this study in developing a methodology for the reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a influenced by my specific context as a Samoan who has experienced the devastation of natural disasters.

2. MY SITUATION AS A READER

I am a Christian Samoan born and raised in Samoa, which is a small island country in the Pacific.²⁰ The majority of Samoans living on the islands and abroad are devoted Christians. Samoa's devoutness to Christianity is expressed in the motto on Samoa's national crest which reads *E Fa'avae i le Atua Samoa*, meaning 'Samoa is Founded on God'. Like many Samoan children, I was brought up in an ardent Christian family where it was imperative to attend family prayers in the morning and evening, daily pastor's school, Sunday school and morning and evening worships on Sundays. In this setting, I was taught by the elders of my family, my parents and the pastor to treat the Bible with the utmost respect and care. It was forbidden to vandalise the

²⁰ Geographically, Samoa comprises of four inhabited islands and six uninhabited smaller islands of volcanic origin. It is approximately 3275.07 km from New Zealand and 4160.65 km from Hawaii and lies within the Polynesian region of the South Pacific. Topographically, the land area of Samoa consists of rugged terrain surrounded by flat and rolling coastal plains. Climatically, Samoa has a tropical climate with two seasons: the wet season from November to April and the dry season from May to October. Demographically, the latest Population Census in 2011 record Samoa's total population at 187,820. However, the population is unevenly distributed with the majority living in the vicinity of the Apia urban area. For background information on Samoa see, Samoa Bureau of Statistics, *Population and Housing Census 2011* (Apia: SBS, Government of Samoa and AusAID, 2011); Samoa Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, *Samoa State of the Environment Report 2013* (Apia: Commercial Printing Ltd, 2013).

Bible in any form or blaspheme against it. For most Samoans, committing such acts would bring a curse upon oneself or one's family.

Moreover, most Samoans consider the Bible and its stories as factual; no one is encouraged to question the historicity of biblical stories or characters. The biblical accounts of how the world came into existence (Genesis 1-2) are therefore considered by most Samoans as historically accurate. There is a widely held belief that God created everything in the cosmos to perfection and any flaw in the world is humanity's doing. This Samoan-Christian understanding of the world is based on the reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a in light of the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2-3. In this context, scientific theories of Human Evolution and the Big Bang, which explain creation as the result of biological and chemical events, are considered wicked; even traditional Samoan cosmogonies are considered *tala fa'anu'upō*, or 'stories of the dark lands'. The general consensus among Samoans is that upholding these scientific or traditional beliefs is a profanity against God.²¹

However, my Christian beliefs and worldview were challenged with my experience of natural disasters that seemed to reveal a malign side of Earth. In Samoa, severe natural events such as tropical cyclones, flooding and storm surges, prolonged dry seasons and earthquakes are common occurrences.²² These natural events not only cause damage to building infrastructure, homes and livelihoods, but also devastate natural habitats and decimate plant and animal species.²³ I have personally experienced the four tropical cyclones that have made landfall in Samoa: Cyclone Ofa

²¹ SBS, *Population and Housing*, iv. The latest census reveals that 98% of Samoans living on the island are Christians. Unfortunately, the percentage of Samoans living abroad who are Christian is unavailable.

²² Natural disasters are natural phenomenon that cannot be influenced by any human intervention. Bryant Edwards expresses this by calling natural disasters 'acts of God'. Edwards is not making a theological claim here but is highlighting the irrelevance of human activities to natural disasters and the fact that natural disasters are caused by climatic, seismic and tectonic activities. Bryant Edwards, *Natural Hazards*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-2. I am also aware of studies that indicate human influence on natural disasters especially to the frequency of their occurrences and the extension of their impacts on humans. See, Ned, Halley, *World of Disasters* (London: Kingfisher, 2005); Gerry Bailey, *Changing Climate* (New York: Gareth Stevens Pub., 2011); Rajiv Sinha and Rasik Ravindra, *Earth System Process and Disaster* (Berlin/New York: Springer, 2013).

²³ Samoa MNRE, *Samoa State of the Environment*, 131.

(1990), Val (1991), Heta (2004) and the latest, Evan (2012). The swirling winds of these cyclones uprooted trees, displaced roof tops and overturned cars, revealing Earth at her most destructive. The costs of these cyclones for the Samoan economy ran into millions of dollars. In human costs, 21 people lost their lives, with the injured accounted for and thousands lost their homes, properties and belongings. Thus, as well as human loss, these natural disasters caused massive damage to the natural environment, including the destruction of natural habitats (coastal and marine) and the decimation of flora and fauna, landscapes, and water resources.²⁴

These cyclones were some of the most petrifying experiences I have ever been through. For example, on the night cyclone Ofa made landfall in Samoa, half of the roof of our house got blown away within a few hours and water poured in through the openings. We could not go outside because it was dark and debris was flying around. Our family had to cluster in the dry areas of our home and wait nervously, expecting the whole house to come tumbling down on top of us. Throughout the night, we listened to the howling of the wind, the roaring of falling trees and the demolition of our neighbours' houses. In the morning, we joined other village members who sought refuge in the village church where we sat out the remaining three days of the cyclone with little food and no electricity or running water. When Ofa ran its course, my village was like a warzone. There was debris and wreckages everywhere; tree trunks rested on people's properties, roof irons and tree branches littered and blocked the road, carcasses of dead animals stench the air and gardens and plantations were flattened. Everyone was traumatised, mourning on our losses and not knowing what to do and where to begin with the clean-up. The sight of precious belongings destroyed was mentally and emotionally painful.

However, my most fear-provoking experience of natural disasters was the 2009 earthquake and tsunami that bore terrible human casualties. Samoa is susceptible to earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions because of its location close to the most seismically-active zone in the world

²⁴ Ibid., 24-28.

known as the 'Pacific Ring of Fire'. The earthquake in the early hours of September 29, 2009 generated a tsunami that affected Upolu Island, leaving destruction in its path. This earthquake and tsunami manifested the forces of Earth and their potential to cause havoc. The value of properties and infrastructure destroyed was estimated at around \$123 million USD. However, the most heart-breaking costs of the tsunami were the 143 registered fatalities (excluding the five people still missing), the unrecorded number of those with (minor and major) injuries and the thousands of people left homeless. The tsunami also caused damage to the natural environment. Similar to tropical cyclones, it devastated the coastal regions and low lying areas destroying coastal habitats (mangroves, marsh, and barrier reefs), marine life, decimating flora and fauna, and causing damaging alterations to the physical landscape.

The earthquake that morning shook our home violently. It broke several louvers and cracked the concrete wall of our house, forcing my wife and I to flee for the safety of the open space in our backyard. While running outside, I could feel the ground beneath me shaking and tumbling as though it was about to sink. Afterwards, there was a tsunami warning on the radio and we evacuated our school campus and headed inland for higher grounds. When we returned, news came in of a tsunami hitting the other side of the island with possible casualties. In response to the fact that a number of our students and some of my co- teachers hailed from that side of the island, our school immediately organised a relief effort and headed for the affected areas.

I was part of the team that went to my village and on arrival I shuddered to see the devastation. There was chaos everywhere-the village had literally been washed away by the wave. There were piles of ruins everywhere, and people had to dig in the rubble to find their precious belongings. The injured were being carried and assembled at one place, while the strong searched for the missing. Fearing for the lives of my loved ones, I quickly looked for anyone I knew to see if they had any information. The news was not good. One of my cousins and her son were among the fatalities, with several other close and distant relatives suffering minor or life threatening injuries. The

tsunami did not affect me physically but the emotional pain of losing loved ones and seeing family properties reduced to rubble was hard to bear.

The destructive forces of nature that I experienced has encouraged me to approach with a hermeneutic of suspicion the claims of Earth's 'goodness' repeated throughout the Gen. 1:1-2:4a creation story. How can Earth be 'good' or 'very good' if she can wreak devastation and death upon her own inhabitants and landscapes? As a Christian Samoan, I believe biblical teachings have real life relevance and I understand the declaration in Gen. 1:1-2:4a that Earth is 'good' to be a living reality. Although, Gen. 1:1-2:4a is widely been accepted as a myth, presenting a utopian image of the world, this study, will approach Gen. 1:1-2:4a as a text that relays a picture of the real world. I have seen and experienced a different side of Earth. Through natural disasters, Earth has shown that she is a potent force of which we should be cautious. To settle my misgivings about Earth's 'goodness' in Gen. 1:1-2:4a, a personal evaluation of the created Earth in Gen. 1:1-2:4a is therefore in order. I want to scrutinise closely, the Gen. 1:1-2:4a narrative and see if there are structures within the narrative that undermine the image of a 'very good' Earth. However, before I begin, I will review some of the ways that biblical scholars have previously interpreted God's evaluation of creation as 'good' in Gen. 1:1-2:4a. I wish to evaluate the applicability of these interpretations to my own reading situation and also identify the questions they leave unanswered that will be important to my own reading.

3. PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF GOD'S EVALUATION OF EARTH IN GEN. 1:1-2:4a: AN OVERVIEW

In this review I will bring to the forefront scholarly interpretation of God's evaluation of Earth as 'good' or 'very good' in Gen. 1:1-2:4a. This is seldom regarded as a major issue or debate in the interpretation of the text and biblical scholars have tended to gloss over it in their exegetical inquiry, or at least, they have not questioned the narrator's claims about Earth's 'goodness'. Furthermore, I will also identify what these past studies can contribute to my Samoan reading of

Gen. 1:1-2:4a and how they might inform my own contextual approach to the question: Was Earth created ‘good’ or ‘very good’? The following scholars are mostly (male) readings of Gen. 1:1-2:4a from Western perspectives using a variety of reading approaches. How might these contribute to my Samoan reading of this biblical text, given the different reading location of their interpreters? Also what questions (relevant to my own contextual reading) might they leave unspoken that are relevant to my own Oceanic approach? This review will be divided into three sub-sections where the scholarly works will be grouped under historical, literary and reader-oriented readings of God’s evaluation of Earth. To clarify the context of these readings, I will provide a brief synopsis of God’s evaluation of Earth in the text of Gen. 1:1-2:4a.

3.1 God’s Evaluation of Earth in Gen. 1:1-2:4a

God’s evaluation of Earth and other created entities in Gen. 1:1-2:4a develops around the Hebrew masculine singular adjective טוב (*tob*). The adjective is rendered by most English translations of the Bible as ‘good’.²⁵ In the Gen. 1:1-2:4a creation account, טוב appears seven times, in vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25 and 31. In all these occurrences the adjective is associated with the Hebrew verb רָאָה (*rā’āh*) meaning ‘to see’ (God saw that his creative works were good), thus, indicating that טוב refers to something with a physical appearance and a bodily existence that God can evaluate through the means of observation. Of these usages, טוב is used four times to evaluate Earth and her created components; the light (v. 4), the dry land and waters (v. 10), the vegetation created by Earth (v. 12), and the luminaries (v. 18). Two other usages of טוב refer to the aquatic and flying creatures God has created (vv. 21, 25). The last usage of the term in v. 31 is a modified form depicting God’s appraisal of creation as a whole. Here, טוב is attached to the Hebrew adverb מְאֹד (*m’od*) meaning ‘very’, ‘exceedingly’ or ‘force’ to form the expression ‘very/exceedingly good’.

²⁵ For examples see the KJV, NRSV, NIV and NJB.

The term טוב in the Hebrew language can have a wide semantic range. H. J. Stoebe affirms this by listing a broad array of English adjectives that correspond to the term, including ‘agreeable, pleasant, satisfying, satisfactory, favorable, useful, purposeful, right, beneficial, ample, pretty, well-formed, fragrant, friendly, benevolent, joyous, worthy, valiant, true’.²⁶ Apparently, Stoebe’s list of possible meanings does not give priority to the moral connotations of the term טוב. This is also evident in his groups of the different usages of the term into five broad categories:

- a) Judgment regarding the suitability of an object for a function. E.g. Gen. 3:6; 1 Sam. 19:4; Prov. 31:18; Ruth 4:15; 1 Kgs. 12:7; Josh. 21:45; Jer. 12:6; 29:10; Prov. 15:30; Exod. 14:12; and Num. 14:3.
- b) An indication of quality (value). E.g. Exod. 3:8; Num. 13:19; 14:7; Judg. 18:9.
- c) Characterization of people. E.g. 1 Sam. 8:16; 9:2; 1 Kgs. 20:3; Amos 6:2; 1 Sam. 15:28; 1 Kgs. 2:32; Gen. 24:16; 26:7; 2 Sam. 11:2; 1 Kgs. 1:6; 1 Kgs. 8:66; Prov. 15:15; Esth. 5:9; Gen. 25:8; 1 Chron. 29:28.
- d) Evaluation (positive attitude). E.g. Gen. 40:16; 41:37; 1 Sam. 9:10; 1 Kgs. 2:38; Exod. 18:17; Deut. 1:14; Gen. 41:37 2 Sam. 19:19; Num. 36:6; Judg. 15:2; 1 Kgs. 21:2; Psa. 111:10; Prov. 15:23; Eccl. 5:17.
- e) Use of טוב in conjunction with ‘evil.’ E.g. Gen. 2:17; 31:24, 29; 2 Sam. 13:22; 1 Sam. 24:18; Prov. 31:12; Lev. 27:10, 12, 14, 33; Job 2:10; Lam. 3:38.²⁷

Evidently, the moral connotation of טוב in the Hebrew Bible begins in Gen. 2:17 thus suggesting the ‘goodness’ in Gen. 1:1-2:4a may perhaps be referring to the functionality, quality, character and value of Earth and her components. However, all the above connotations of the term

²⁶ H. J. Stoebe, “טוב” *TLOT*, vol. 2, eds. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody: Hendrickson Publisher, 1997), 487.

²⁷ Stoebe, “טוב” 486-495. Also see, Höver-Johag, “טוב (*ṭōb*),” *TDOT*, vol. 5, eds. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, trans. D. E. Green (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 296–317; Andrew Bowling, “טוב (*ṭōb*),” *TWOT*, eds. R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, and B. K. Waltke (Illinois: Moody Publishers, 1980), 346.

(including its moral connotation) are applicable to the reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a from a *gafataulima* perspective. The various nuances of the word can be used as indicators to appraise Earth's functionality and quality. The following review will therefore identify how scholars perceive Earth's evaluation in Gen. 1:1-2:4a as 'good' and outline how they arrived at their respective interpretations.

3.2 Historical-Critical Readings of God's Evaluation of Creation

Historical-critical readings of Gen. 1:1-24a encompass those readings that attempt to make sense of the text by focusing on the author and the world of the author. Historical critics search for the author's intention, which in turn were influenced by the author's historical-social location. To know the authorial intention, the reader must enter into the author's world and be familiar with the religious, social, political, economic, ideological, intellectual and environmental contexts within which the text was produced. With regard to God's evaluation of creation, biblical scholars employing historical-critical approaches seek to determine what the original author thought by using the term טוב to describe God's evaluation of creation.²⁸

One historical-critic to address the text of Genesis is Gerhard von Rad. In his commentary on Gen. 1:1-2:4a, von Rad perceives the creation account as a post-exilic Priestly (538-450 B.C.E) doctrine that was carefully revised and enriched over the centuries to make a comprehensive account of God's creation.²⁹ By viewing Gen. 1:1-2:4a in this context, von Rad argues that the use of טוב in

²⁸ For other examples of historical-critical readings of Gen. 1:1-2:4a see, Hermann Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12*, trans. William K. Whitney Jr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns Publishing Co., 2006), 78-80; John H. Walton, "Creation in Genesis 1:1-2:3 and the Ancient Near East: Order out of Disorder after Chaaskampf," *CTJ*, 43 (2008): 48-63; Donald E. Gowan, *Genesis 1-11: From Eden to Babel*, ITC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1988), 1-32; John J. Scullion, *Genesis: A Commentary for Students, Teachers, and Preachers*, OTS, vol. 6 (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1992), 1-31; Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11*: 26, vol. 1 (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1996), 113-182; Mark G. Brett, "Motives and Intentions in Genesis 1," *JSOT*, 42, no. 1(1991): 1-16; L. C. Jonker, "Religious Polemics in Exile: The Creator God of Genesis," in *Religious Polemics in Context: Papers Presented to the Second International Conference of the Leiden Institute for the Study of Religions (Lisor) Held at Leiden, 27-28 April, 2000*, vol. 2 (Uitgeverij: Van Gorcum, 2004), 235-254.

²⁹ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1961), 48.

the narrative is less an expression of a judgment of beauty than that of functionality and relational.³⁰ In other words, God's evaluation is based on the creatures' functional and relational capacities rather than their aesthetic appearances. According to von Rad, God's evaluative statement is a theological statement by the Priestly editors to reveal that no evil was laid upon the world by God.³¹

Von Rad alludes to the overall condition of Earth in his discussion of the concluding formula of approval, *מאד טוב*. He suggests that the Hebrew expression proclaims the cosmos to be 'completely perfect', referring to the propriety and harmony of the created order.³² That is, creation is perfect because the created elements are suitable to perform their functions and because they relate to each other in harmony. Therefore, in the context of the Priestly redactors the final approval formula expressed a statement of faith that 'no evil was laid upon the world by God's hand...God created the world perfect'.³³ In this light, Earth can be seen as flawless because it is part of a world without imperfections. Furthermore, von Rad does not specifically define the functions and purposes of each created element, or how they contribute to the overall 'goodness' of Earth. This makes it hard to draw any personal assessment of the quality and functionality of the individual components of creation, including Earth. That is, while von Rad ties the narrator's claim that Earth is created 'good' to the perfection of Earth, he does not explore how this perfection or goodness might be measured or confirmed within the text itself. As I will discuss below, this will be a key aim of my *gafataulima* hermeneutic, as I wrestle with the contradiction of a 'good' Earth that sustains life-destroying natural disasters.

³⁰ Ibid., 52.

³¹ Ibid., 61.

³² Ibid., 59. Von Rad also acknowledges that the notion of a 'perfect creation' is very typical of P's vocabulary.

³³ Ibid., 61.

Similarly, Claus Westermann also reads Gen. 1:1-2:4a as a Priestly document with Ancient Near Eastern influences. According to Westermann, the repeated divine declaration that creation is ‘good’ in the creation narrative is a priestly revision of the Babylonian motif of acknowledgement and praise of the divine. This Babylonian motif is evident in the *Enuma Elish*³⁴ in the praise of the god Marduk and the Sumerian creation myth where the god Enlil was exalted and praised at the conclusion of creation.³⁵ For Westermann, this implies that the divine assessment of the created order in the creation narrative can be seen as praises towards God.³⁶ This suggests that the term טוֹב is used in a liturgical sense to depict the goodness of God and creation.

According to Westermann, the term טוֹב used in the divine assessment of Earth’s creation in Gen. 1:1-2:4a is shaded by a functional sense in the Old Testament. That is, the term could mean ‘good for [something]’; even the nuances ‘beauty’ and ‘nice’ can have functional overtones.³⁷ For example, Westermann points out that when the Old Testament speaks of the beauty of the forest of Lebanon, it is considering not so much the visual splendor of the forest but the significance of the forest to the lives of people and the land.³⁸ In this light, when God declared the elements of creation good, the deity was acknowledging that they were appropriate for their functions in creation. These evaluations culminate in the final assessment of v. 31, where God declared

³⁴ In the Babylonian creation epic, the *Enuma Elish*, the god Apsu (fresh water) and the goddess Tiamat (sea water) who emerged from the whirlwind formed a union and gave birth to the younger gods who were very loud, disturbing Apsu who decided to kill them. Tiamat, warned her eldest son, Ea (also known as Enki) of Apsu’s plan and Ea put Apsu to sleep and kills him. Tiamat was furious that they had killed her husband and so summoned the forces of chaos and created eleven monsters to wage war upon her children. The younger gods fought against Tiamat unsuccessfully until the rise of the warrior Marduk (son of Ea) from among them. Marduk killed Tiamat by shooting her with an arrow which split her into two halves from which Marduk creates heaven and earth. Qingu (Tiamat’s new husband) was also killed and from his blood, Marduk created the first humans, to aid the gods in maintaining order in creation. See, Leonard W. King, *Enuma Elish: The Seven Tablets of Creation; The Babylonian and Assyrian Legends Concerning the Creation of the World and of Mankind*, vol. 1 (New York: Casimo Inc., 2007); and Timothy J. Stephany, *Enuma Elish: The Babylonian Creation Epic: Also Includes ‘Atrahasis’, The First Great Flood Myth* (Charleston: CreateSpace, 3013).

³⁵ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 166.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 166-167.

creation ‘very good’. Westermann asserts that the author’s use of מאד here (‘very’, ‘extremely’) yields the impression that creation as a whole is ‘extremely good’- it is a creation without any flaws and all of its components made to perfection.³⁹

Like von Rad, Westermann does not give special attention to critically evaluating the narrator’s claims about the quality of Earth or her functions in creation. However, in light of his description of the notion of a perfect creation, it appears that Westermann, like von Rad, sees Earth as an entity without flaws, and one that is functionally viable. This again, however, leaves open the questions about Earth’s capacities for destruction through natural disasters. Again, this is the question I will address in this thesis using my *gafataulima* hermeneutic.

By the same token, Gordon J. Wenham also views Gen. 1:1-2:4a in light of its Ancient Near Eastern context. Wenham, following Herman Gunkel,⁴⁰ specifically sees the Genesis creation story as a Hebrew response to the *Enuma Elish*.⁴¹ In this sense, Gen. 1:1-2:4a is a polemic against Babylonian cosmogonies, promoting a portrait of the supremacy of the Israelite god. According to Wenham, God is primarily the one who is ‘good’. This divine goodness is embedded and revealed through the created order.⁴² Similar to von Rad and Westermann, Wenham also sees the

³⁹ Ibid., 166.

⁴⁰ Hermann Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos*, 78-80.

⁴¹ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC, vol. 1 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), xlix-1. Also see, Gordon J. Wenham, *Rethinking Genesis 1-11: Gateway to the Bible*, Didsbury Lectures Series (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publisher, 2015), 1-17. See, J. Richard Middleton, “Created in the Image of a Violent God?” *Interpretation* 58 (2004): 352-353. Here Middleton outlines three dimensions in Gen. 1:1-2:4a that implies a peaceable process of creation thus, contradicting the violence of the *Enuma Elish*. First is the role given to the chaotic elements from the Ancient Near Eastern combat myths – the primordial waters (Gen. 1:2) and the sea monsters (Gen. 1:21) are not portrayed as God’s enemies. Second is the ease with which God creates – revealed through the immediate and unproblematic response of the creatures to God’s creative speeches. Lastly is God’s evaluation of each created elements as ‘good’ and creation as a whole as ‘very good’. God’s evaluation ‘good’ not only reveals the aesthetic quality of creation but also its non-rebellious nature. Middleton’s second and last points could be questionable. First, there are elements in Gen. 1:1-2:4a that depict the unresponsive of the created to God’s creative speeches – Gen. 1:26 the unresponsiveness of the addressee to God’s invitation in the creation of the human. Second, not every created entity was pronounced ‘good’ thus suggesting flaws in creation. Also the unresponsiveness of the addressee in v. 26 reveals the rebellious nature of the creatures. However, my intended reading strategy for this work is a literary approach using a reader-oriented perspective therefore, less priority will be given to the *Chaoskampf* debate.

⁴² Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*.

term טוב in the creation story as indicating the quality and suitability of the created elements for their purposes. He goes on, asserting that the term טוב in the Israelite context is closely associated with God's thoughts and judgment.⁴³ In this sense, Wenham sees God's final evaluation of creation as 'very good' in Gen. 1:31 not only as a reflection of the harmony and perfection of creation in its entirety but also as a revelation of the perfect God who created it.⁴⁴ Although Wenham did not address the quality of Earth directly, his view on creation as a revelation of the perfect nature of the divine alludes to Earth as an entity without imperfections. Again, this reading does not address my questions about the seeming 'un-goodness' of an Earth that sustains natural disasters. A closer reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a using my *gafataulima* Reader-oriented hermeneutic, will therefore assess the meaning of Earth's goodness in Gen. 1:1-2:4a in light of my own experiences of Earth's abilities to destroy life.

Another scholar who reads Gen. 1:1-2:4a in light of its Ancient Near Eastern context is John H. Walton. In his book *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*, Walton reads Gen. 1:1-2:4a in light of the Ancient Near Eastern cosmological cognitive environment.⁴⁵ In deciphering Egyptian and Mesopotamian myths, Walton identifies the basic features of the Ancient Near Eastern cosmological cognitive environment which includes; functional ontology; centrality of order and control of functions; model of cosmos as kingdom with functions; deities exist inside the cosmos; theogony – both elements of the cosmos and their archetype deities have inseparable functions; theomachy – creation is the result of conflict among the deities; cosmic geography – the cosmos is seen as one component; there is an established relationship between cosmos and temple; and

⁴³ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 34.

⁴⁵ John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 2. Also *idem*, *Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2010).

humans are the center of the cosmos. These elements according to Walton emphasise functions rather than material origins.⁴⁶

Walton's in his reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a draws parallels between the text and its broader cognitive environment such as the functions of the cosmos, divine rule, human care for creation and the close link between temple and cosmos. His reading leads him to the conclusion that the Genesis creation epic like the Egyptian and Mesopotamian myths of creation 'pertains to functional origin rather than material origins and that temple ideology underlies the Genesis cosmology'.⁴⁷ Therefore, Earth is viewed as a temple designed to serve humanity.⁴⁸

To support his thesis, Walton provides and identifies relevant textual evidence from Genesis 1:1-2:4a. I will draw upon few examples here. First, is the Hebrew term בָּרָא (*bārā'*) meaning 'to create' in Gen. 1:1-2:4a. For Walton the term does not imply material creation. Second, is the primordial condition depicted in Gen. 1:2 through the Hebrew words תוֹהוּ (*tōhû*) meaning 'formless' and the *mamānu* בְּהוּ (*bōhû*) translatable as 'void' or 'emptiness'. According to Walton the two terms refer to a state of disorganisation lacking in functions. Third, is the creation of functions before the functionaries depicted in the creation of day and night (as functions) prior to the creation of the two great lights. This is also shown in the creation of the רָקִיעַ (*rāqī'a*) meaning 'firmament' which Walton describes in functional terms – as a separator of waters.⁴⁹ Fourth, is the divine pronouncement that it 'was good'. Similar, to von Rad and Westermann, Walton also claims that the use of the Hebrew term טוֹב in Gen. 1:1-2:4a implies functional quality thus suggesting that the 'cosmos functioned well'.⁵⁰ Lastly, is the notion of the divine rest on the seventh day. For Walton, the divine rest in the Genesis creation

⁴⁶ Ibid., 9-12.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 190.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 189-190.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 160.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 169.

story does not mean an act of disengagement from activities but an act of engagement where God settles into the temple.⁵¹

Walton's assertion that Gen. 1:1-2:4a concerns with the creation of functions corresponds to the intention of this study, as I endeavour to reappraise Earth on the basis of her functional capabilities from a Samoan *gafataulima* perspective. However, I have a few reservations with Walton's thesis. One, is his adoption of the Hebrew term *בָּרָא*. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, the term describes the creation of material objects rather than functions. For instance, the term is used in Gen. 1:21 referring to the creation of the sea creatures, Gen. 1:27 to describe the creation of humans, Isa. 4:5 to depict the creation of a cloud of smoke and Job 28:24 referring to the creation of the wind. Another of my concerns is his claim that the creation of functions precedes the creation of functionaries in Gen. 1:1-2:4a. Such a view is not attuned with the creation of the sea creatures and humanity. For example, the creation of sea creatures comes before the divine mandate that describes their reproductive function. Similarly, the creation of humanity precedes God's mandate that reveals their functions in creation.

Another scholar who reads Gen. 1:1-2:4a in light of its Ancient Near Eastern context is Mark Smith. In his book *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* he reads Genesis 1 in light of the three predominant creation models in ancient Israelite traditions.⁵² These models overlap one another and they are interrelated – the three contain elements of kinship. Smith labels them as; divine power, divine wisdom and divine presence.⁵³ First, the divine power creation model presents creation in terms of God's victory over opposing cosmic powers.⁵⁴ The second model entails creation as powered by divine wisdom and presents creation to be the work of a divine

⁵¹ Ibid., 180.

⁵² Mark Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010).

⁵³ Ibid., 12-17.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 12-13.

craftsman.⁵⁵ The third model presents the universe as the palace-temple of divine presence.⁵⁶

According to Smith these three models are carefully interwoven in the composition of the narrative. In this regard, he uses the three models to reveal the particularity of the priestly vision for Genesis 1 and as hermenutical devices to guide his reading of the text.

In Smith's reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a he accepts the view that the passage is a composition of the priestly authors dated to the sixth century B.C.E. He highlights this through drawing close connections between Genesis 1 and Leviticus 11 and the blessings in the story and those in Numbers 6. After establishing the parallels between Genesis 1 and other priestly documents Smith concludes that as a priestly document '[t]he picture of the world in Genesis 1 - even as it contradicts human experience - is offered by the priestly writer as a faithful response to his perception of God's goodness; it is presented as something that has to be taken on faith'.⁵⁷ In this light, Smith echoes the views of von Rad, Westermann and Wenham who also see the goodness of creation as presented in Gen. 1:1-2:4a to be a confession of faith professing the perfection of the God who created the universe. This world does not contain evil or have defects. This is apparent in Smith's view of the primordial waters. He perceives the primordial waters not as evil because it does not rebell against the Creator and becomes a habitat for the sea creatures.⁵⁸ However, this latter view raises questions concerning the priestly author's adoption of earlier Israel traditions. Why would the priestly author (who relied heavily on Israelite traditions – as illustrated by Smith's three creation models) ignore the general view of the waters as evil? Why would the priestly author reject allusions to creation (as in Job. 40: 25-32) that portrayed the waters as the abode of the beasts?

⁵⁵ Ibid., 13-14.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 14-15.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 61.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 59-64.

In the same way, Jon D. Levenson also views Gen. 1:1-2:4a in light of its Ancient Near Eastern context. In his book *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* Levenson addresses the issue of theodicy by providing a response to Yehezkel Kaufmann's idea of the 'absolute sovereignty' of God.⁵⁹ For Levenson the 'absolute sovereignty' of God lacks confirmation in the Hebrew Bible therefore it is just a mere confession of faith.⁶⁰ This is because Kaufmann failed to take into account the continued existence of the devastating forces of chaos that were contained in the creative activities through the mastery of the creator God. Levenson observes that '[c]reation itself offers no ground for the optimistic belief that the malign powers will not deprive the human community of its friendly and supportive environment'.⁶¹ In other words, the malevolent elements of creation are actively working and reasserting themselves in God's creative order.

In his reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a Levenson highlights the fact that the primordial chaos does not disappear. In Genesis 1 the primordial waters did not vanish but was transformed and confined to two places; the space above the sky and the sea on Earth. Similarly, the darkness did not disappear as well. God's creation of light had no such effect instead it alternates with the darkness to form time. This leads Levenson to the conclusion that the priestly view of creation presented in Genesis 1 is not an attempt to banish evil but rather an attempt to confine it through the creative processes of separation and distinction which was effortlessly done by God through divine speeches.⁶²

So, what are the implications of Levenson's reading on the issue concerning the goodness of creation? For Levenson, the goodness of creation is a 'gross overgeneralisation' simply because

⁵⁹ Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 18.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 47.

⁶¹ Ibid., 47-48.

⁶² Ibid., 122-123.

evil and chaos still persist in creation.⁶³ Therefore, the goodness of creation is yet to be realised when God's sovereignty is manifested. Levenson's reading resonates with the portrait of creation I experienced during natural disasters. It specifically identifies flaws in the quality of Earth which this study ventures to assess. However, the only point of difference between Levenson's work and my intended approach is that I am not going to address the question of theodicy and my evaluation of Earth will be conducted through the use of a Samoan indigenous interpretation.

The aforementioned scholars focus on the historical and religious context of Gen. 1:1-2:4a in their interpretations of the text. They see the creation narrative in its Ancient Near Eastern setting functioning as a witness to the God of Israel. The evaluation formula of Earth as 'good' and 'very good' in such a context is therefore seen as a confession, praise and response of faith that reveal the perfection of both God and creation. In addition, the above historical critics generally see the flawlessness of creation as a reference to the functional qualities of the created elements rather than merely as an aesthetic judgment. Although Earth was never a focus of these scholarly works, their interpretations of creation as perfect in terms of functionality disclose Earth to be functionally immaculate as well. However, the only exception is Levenson who perceives the creation process in Gen. 1:1-2:4a as containment of evil and chaos rather than eradicating them. Levenson's view seems to be in the minority among historical critics of the creation narrative. From the perspective of a Christian Samoan who has experienced natural disasters and questioned the functional quality of Earth, these readings raise a number of questions. For example, how does the depiction of Earth as 'good' in Gen. 1:1-2:4a relate to my real world experiences? What are the functions of Earth according to the Gen. 1:1-2:4a account, and how do these functions relate to Earth's capacity to host natural disasters? Is Earth really portrayed as functionally perfect in Gen. 1:1-2:4a, or are there hints that Earth is created with a capacity for destruction? These questions manifest the need to re-evaluate Earth's goodness in this creation account in light of my experiences of natural disasters.

⁶³ Ibid., 50.

3.3 Literary Readings of God's Evaluation of Creation

This section encompasses works by literary critics that maintain the autonomy of the text in the interpretive process. These scholars see the meaning of Gen. 1:1-2:4a inherent within the text. These readings therefore focus on the text as literature, concentrating on literary devices such as genre, structure, syntax, repetition, vocabulary, word play, characterization, plot and so on.⁶⁴

One of the leading scholars in this literary approach is Bruce K. Waltke⁶⁵ who, with Cathi J. Fredricks, produced a commentary that treats Genesis 1:1-2:4a as theological literature. They note that, in Genesis 1:1-2:4, the narrator specifically plays with poetic devices to convey God's character. This includes intensification, patterns, inclusio, irony, chiasm, and summarization irony together with narrative features like point of view, discourses, gaps, characterization, plot, and symbols.⁶⁶ In terms of the repetition of 'good', Waltke and Fredricks see it as a key word used by the narrator to present God's viewpoint and satisfaction over the created elements. That is, the created components are beneficial and desirable for God's purpose.⁶⁷ According to Waltke and Fredricks, even the 'surd evil' (physical features hostile to human existence including darkness and the chaotic sea) are contained within God's positive evaluation. The narrator repeats 'good' to assure the audience that although such features are hostile to life, humans can rest assured that these malicious forces are under divine control and constriction. This is then accentuated in the

⁶⁴ For more examples of text-oriented readings of Gen. 1:1-2:4a see, Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 3-6; Karen Armstrong, *In the Beginning. A New Interpretation of Genesis* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1996); Laurence A. Turner, *Genesis: Readings: A New Biblical Commentary* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 19-24; Martin Kessler and Karel Deurloo, *A Commentary on Genesis: The Book of Beginnings* (New York and Mahwah (New Jersey), Paulist Press, 2004), 13-39; Benno Jacob, *The First Book of the Bible: Genesis*, ed. and trans. E. I. Jacob and Walter Jacob (Jersey City: KTAV Publishing House, 2007), 1-11. Unfortunately, most of these literary scholars overlooked the issue of God's evaluation of creation.

⁶⁵ Bruce K. Waltke has also written from a historical critical perspective, reading the Genesis creation story in the context of Ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies. See Bruce K. Waltke, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1: 1-3," *BS* 132, no. 527 (1975): 216-228; *idem*, "The Creation Account," *BS* 132 (1975): 25-36; *idem*, *Creation and Chaos: An Exegetical Study of Biblical Cosmogony* (Portland: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1974).

⁶⁶ Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 31-43.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 56-57 and 66-67.

final evaluation in v. 31 where the expression ‘very good’ is used to present God’s view of creation before the fall of humanity in Genesis 2-3.⁶⁸ Thus, for Waltke and Fredricks, the perfection of creation is dependent on God. Even though there are obvious flaws in the created order (watery chaos, darkness), God’s control will ensure human safety.

Similar to the historical critics above, the quality of Earth is not the particular focus of Waltke and Fredricks’ reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a. However, in light of their view of a perfect creation, they regard Earth as ‘very good’, despite her malevolent aspects that are already restrained by God. Waltke and Fredricks’s interpretation of creation in Gen. 1:1-2:4a is thus comparable to those of Von Rad, Westermann and Wenham. The only point of difference is that Waltke and Fredricks acknowledge the presence of aspersive aspects in creation, although insist that these are under the full control of God and therefore pose no threat to the created order. From the perspective of a victim of natural disasters, this depiction of Earth raises some serious theological and interpretive issues. Are natural disasters a sign of God losing control of creation? Are they revelations of God deliberately unleashing Earth’s malign forces? Is creating devastation another function of Earth intended by God? These questions strongly suggest the need for a reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a that takes into account the historical reality of natural disasters and their impact on life and the environment. In subsequent chapters of this thesis, I will perform such a reading, using my *gafataulima* hermeneutic as an interpretive tool that carefully assesses the ‘goodness’ of Earth in this creation account.

James Barr in his article “Was Everything that God Made Really Good?” also takes a literary approach to Gen. 1:1-2:4a and directly addresses the issue concerning the goodness of creation.⁶⁹ For Barr, such a question comes to the fore by interpreting Gen. 1:1 as a summary of the entire story rather than as an initial act of creation previous to the creation of light in v. 3 or as a temporal

⁶⁸ Ibid., 66-67.

⁶⁹ James Barr, “Was Everything that God Made Really Good? A Question in the First Verse of the Bible,” in *God in the Fray*, eds. T. Linfolt and T. Beal (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 55-65.

statement attached to the description of chaos in v. 2.⁷⁰ Reading Gen. 1:1 as a summary of the subsequent creative events is suggestive of the existence of uncreated elements in creation. That is, not everything in the created order was created by God and chaos of v. 2 is not a repudiation of existence but a source from which God drew certain elements of the created world.⁷¹

Accordingly, this creation process raises the question about the goodness of creation due to the presence of oblique elements like darkness and water in creation. Elsewhere in the Old Testament darkness and water were considered as negative elements. For example, water in large quantities was regarded as dangerous in the flood narratives of Genesis 6-8. In view of the Flood narrative Barr proposes two dispensations. One is that the goodness of Adam's world does not prevent the corruption of Noah's time; the other, is that the expiating of corruption of Noah's time by the flood reveals a degree of uncertainty in things to come. Considering these two paradoxes disclose that there is a degree of uncertainty in how far we can rely on the goodness of creation depicted in the Genesis creation account.⁷² In addition, there are also biblical texts and phenomenon that challenge the goodness of creation in Gen. 1:1-2:4a. Biblical texts include Isa. 45:7 and Amos. 3:6 which both depict that God created evil while antinomies include the notion of death and the presence of diseases and poisons in creation.⁷³ For Barr, these issues were not the major concern of the implied author(s) of Genesis thus creating a general hermeneutical problem. However, according to Barr, seeing the first verse of the Genesis creation account as a summary of the story suggests that the implied author(s) is starting to address these issues (although with less clarity). That is, by making the chaos less conspicuous but keeping it as a cause for the negative elements in

⁷⁰ Ibid., 55.

⁷¹ Ibid., 60.

⁷² Ibid., 64.

⁷³ Ibid., 61-62.

creation.⁷⁴ So, was creation very good and without faults? Barr infers that there are a few indemnities in the created order therefore the perfection of creation is an overgeneralization.⁷⁵

Barr's reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a is in agreement with Levenson's reading mentioned above. They both identify faults in the created order and challenge the notion of a perfect creation. Barr's reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a is valuable for my proposed reading of the text. It hints at answering some of the questions that arise during natural disasters. Claiming that creation contains malevolent aspects hints at the quality of Earth experienced during natural disasters. However, what differentiates my work from Barr's is that I will pay special attention to the goodness of Earth rather than creation in general and I will address the question concerning the goodness of Earth from a Samoan *gafataulima* perspective.

Another scholar who takes a literary approach to Gen. 1:1-2:4a is Hulisani Ramantswana.⁷⁶ In his article, "Humanity Not Pronounced Good," Ramantswana deals specifically with God's repeated evaluation in Gen. 1:1-2:4a that creation was 'good'. He tries to solve the anomaly in Gen. 1:26-31 about the absence of God's evaluation of 'goodness' with regard to the creation of humanity. In solving this literary irregularity, he reads Gen. 1:1-2:4a using a dialogic approach, where Genesis 1-3 is viewed as a polyphonic text. This is a Bakhtinian concept that regards current discourses in dialogue with past, current and future discourses. Texts as forms of discourses are therefore in dialogue with past, present and future texts.⁷⁷ In this sense, Ramantswana sees Genesis 1-3 as a literary unit creatively put together by an author who placed two narratives in a dialogical relationship. In this dialogue, Gen. 2:4b-3:24 elaborates and expands Gen. 1:1-2:4a (in particular

⁷⁴ Ibid., 63-64.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 65.

⁷⁶ Hulisani Ramantswana, "Humanity Not Pronounced Good: A Re-Reading of Genesis 1: 26-31 in Dialogue with Genesis 2-3," *OTE* 26, no. 2 (2013): 425-444. Also see, *idem*, "From Bad to Good: A Dialogic Reading of Genesis 1," *JSem* 21, no. 2 (2012): 237-268; *idem*, "Conflicts at Creation: Genesis 1-3 in Dialogue with the Psalter," *OTE* 27, no. 2 (2014): 553-578.

⁷⁷ Ramantswana, "Humanity Not Pronounced," 426. For further explanations of polyphonic texts see Carol Newson, "Bakhtin, the Bible, and Dialogical Truth," *JR* 76 (1996): 297.

Genesis 1:24-30). In light of this, Ramantswana sees the omission of the evaluative formula in the creation of humanity ('And God saw that it was good') as a gap deliberately devised by the author to invite a dialogue between the two narratives. As Ramantswana explains, 'The absence of the evaluation formula serves as an intentional literary technique by the author to create openness in the text. In so doing, the author generates suspense and anticipation in the story'.⁷⁸

According to Rawantswana, the fact that humanity was not pronounced good in Gen: 1:26-30 is explained by the apparent negativity in Genesis 2-3 of humanity's projected transgression against God. In other words, humanity was not declared 'good' in Gen. 1:26-30 because of its potentiality for destruction in Genesis 2-3. Although Rawantswana does not pay special attention to other facets of creation such as Earth and non-human creatures, he concludes that the absence of God's declaration of humanity as 'good' reveals the existence of deterioration in the created order before it was completed.⁷⁹ Rawantswana's reading may therefore hint that creation as was presented in Gen. 1:1-2:4a was not perfect after all; this is contrary to the interpretations of von Rad, Westermann, Wenham and Waltke and Fredricks. Furthermore, Rawantswana's reading also opens up a gap for my proposed reading, in that it also hints that the narrative may not be attesting, after all, to a faultless creation. That is, if the absence of a divine evaluation of humanity's creation as 'good' indicates the non-perfection (or non-sustainable perfection) of this creative act, then there may also be structures in the narrative that allude to the non-sustainable perfection of Earth's creation.

Meanwhile, another critic who offers a literary reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a is John W. Rogerson.⁸⁰ He interprets Gen. 1:1-2:4a by considering its wider literary context in Genesis 1-11. After considering the recurring motif that 'God saw that it was good' (v. 4, 9, 12, 18, 21, 25 and 31) in light of the

⁷⁸ Ramantswana, "Humanity Not Pronounced," 432.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 441.

⁸⁰ John W. Rogerson, "Genesis 1-11," in *Genesis and Exodus*, ed. J. W. Rogerson, L. W. R. Moberly, and W. Johnstone (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 36-94.

cursing of the land in Genesis 3 and the flood in Genesis 7-8, Rogerson rejects the idea of a perfect creation. Instead, he asserts that the motif should be understood in a weaker and much more limited sense to express the goodness of creation only as providing a locality for the existence of humanity and other creatures.⁸¹ In his words, understanding ‘good in a weakened sense then enables us to say that, in spite of the curse, the flood and the compromise (Gen. 9:1-7) the creation is still “good” in that it provides order and stability in which the life given by God can be lived out’.⁸² Rogerson thus equates ‘creation’ to Earth, which is the setting for life to exist; moreover, he regards the evaluation of Earth in Gen. 1:1-2:4a as ordinary but not immaculate.

Rogerson’s reading echoes those of Waltke and Fredricks and Ramantswana, in that he too realizes the possibility of deterioration and the existence of malevolent elements (such as the fall [Genesis 3] and flood [Genesis 6-9]) in creation. Rogerson, however, does not look in depth at Gen. 1:1-2:4a to see if there are possibilities hinted at within this text for Earth to be destructive. His assessment of creation and understanding of God’s evaluation of creation open up possibilities to evaluate Gen. 1:1-2:4a as a text that alludes to the imperfection of Earth despite its ‘goodness’. What this suggests is the need for a viable approach in assessing the quality of creation, in particular the quality of Earth, based on the variables intrinsic to the narrative. That is, what this study intends to put forward is a methodology that reappraises Earth with regards to the evidence obtainable from the confines of Gen. 1:1-2:4a.

Unlike the historical critics above, the aforementioned literary scholars produce readings of Gen. 1:1-2:4a that challenge the primary notion of a perfect creation presented in the narrative. Waltke and Fredricks recognize this by identifying malevolent aspects of the created order; Ramantswana contributes to this view by revealing the existence of deterioration in creation through the fall; and Rogerson alludes to the imperfections of Earth by identifying certain hazards that creation is

⁸¹ Ibid., 78-79.

⁸² Ibid., 79.

capable of generating. From my own perspective, as a person who has experienced natural disasters and questioned the functionality of Earth, these interpretations disclose correlations between the world of Gen. 1:1-2:4a and the troublesome world of today.

These readings are also significant for the development of my own reading approach. Not only have they offered some reflections on the quality of Earth, they also identify potential ‘faults’ or flaws in the portrait of creation given in Gen.1:1-2:4a. Such faults raise questions concerning God’s evaluation of the Earth as ‘good’, echoing those I raised earlier about a ‘good’ Earth’s capacity for natural disasters. Does Gen. 1:1-2:4a really testify to Earth’s goodness? Is there evidence in the creation story to support such a divine attestation? To resolve these questions, I will use my *gafataulima* hermeneutic to perform a reader-response analysis of Earth in Gen. 1:1-2:4a. To situate my reading within the context of previous biblical interpretation, I will now consider a number of other reader-response interpretations of this text, to see what issues this methodological approach has previously raised.

3.4 Reader-Oriented Readings of God’s Evaluation of Earth

As mentioned above, reader-oriented readings accentuate the reader’s role and social location in the process of interpretation. In this section, I will offer some examples of how scholars using this approach read Gen. 1:1-2:4a from different social or contextual orientations. In doing so, I will also identify the implications of these readings on the understanding of God’s evaluation of creation and Earth.⁸³

The first of these scholars is Norman Habel, who is one of the forefathers of ecological hermeneutics. In his commentary, *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth*, he reads Genesis 1:1-2:4a from Earth’s perspective, guided by the six eco-justice principles of the Earth

⁸³ For more examples of Reader-oriented readings of the Gen. 1:1-2:4a creation account see, Luise Schotoff, “The Creation Narrative: Genesis 1.1-2.4a,” in *Genesis: A Feminist Companion to the Bible*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 24-38; Howard N. Wallace, “Rest for the Earth? Another Look at Genesis 2: 1-3,” in *The Earth Story in Genesis*, eds. Norman C. Habel and Shirley Wurst (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 49-59.

Bible Team. The six principles can be summarised as follows: (1) intrinsic worth (Earth and all her components have intrinsic value); (2) interconnectedness (Earth is a community of interdependent living things); (3) voice (Earth is a subject capable of voicing her grievances and joy); (4) purpose (Earth and her components are parts of a cosmic design within which each component has a place in the overall goal of that design); (5) mutual custodianship (Earth is a balanced and diverse domain where responsible custodians function as partners to maintain balance and a diverse Earth community); and (6) resistance (Earth and her components are capable of resisting human injustices).⁸⁴ These six principles are to encourage readers to read biblical texts with a special focus on Earth, identify with Earth as Earth creatures, listen with empathy to what Earth has to say, and act as mouthpieces for Earth and the Earth community.

In his analysis of Gen. 1:1-2:4a, Habel asserts that the narrative is a fusion of two myths. The first of these is what he calls the *Erets* (Earth) myth in Gen. 1:1-25 and the second is the *Tselem* (image) myth in Gen. 1: 26-2:4a. The *Erets* myth contains the story of Earth. This includes an account of her birth from the primal womb (Gen. 1: 1-10) and a description of her works in the emanation of other creatures in creation (Gen. 1: 11-25). On the other hand, the *Tselem* myth is the story of the creation of humanity who was made in the image of God. According to Habel, the ‘image of God’ motif refers to the transfer of power from the deity to humans so they can rule over all the domains of Earth; this, however, only serves to expose Earth to humanity’s oppressive actions. For Habel, the expressions ‘good’ and ‘very good’ in these two myths manifest God’s positive reaction to what has been created. In the *Erets* myth, the idiom ‘good’ articulates God’s delightfulness in the birth of Earth as that of a parent delighted in their child.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Norman Habel, *The Birth, The Curse and The Greening of Earth: An Ecological Reading of Genesis 1-11*, The Earth Bible Commentary Series 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011), 1-2.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 32.

In the *Tselem* myth, the expression ‘very good’ reveals God’s acknowledgement that creation is ‘intrinsically good’.⁸⁶

However, Habel’s retelling of the two myths that he puts in Earth’s mouth exemplifies a contradictory view of creation. In this rendition of the *Erets* myth, Earth agrees with God’s delightful evaluation because of the intimate relationship she experienced with God and other creatures. However, in Habel’s construction of the *Tselem* myth, it is clear that Earth recognizes the myth as a dark story, one that reveals a different side of God. Here in this myth, God relegates Earth to the background and uses the creation of humanity to suppress and subjugate her as evident in Gen. 1:28.⁸⁷ Clearly, from Earth’s point of view, creation as a whole is therefore not ‘good’; rather, the creation of humanity as God’s representative serves only to grant humanity a destructive power over Earth and the rest of creation.

Similar to Rawatswana’s reading above, Earth’s rendition of creation that Habel presents reveals the creation of humans as the cause of creation’s deterioration. This implies that without humanity, creation can be ‘very good’. If we take creation to be both *Eretz* and humanity then creation is not ‘good’ as a whole. The creation of humanity introduces an element of imperfection into God’s perfect creation. Evidently, Habel reaches such assertion through viewing Gen. 1:1-2:4a in light of ecological concerns around the man-made environmental crisis faced by humanity today. However, from my perspective as a victim of natural disasters, Habel’s reading fails to take the implications of these disasters into account. From what many people have experienced, natural disasters are not a sign of Earth’s vulnerability or oppression but of her dangerous potency. Did this potency exist at the time of creation, before humanity made their appearance? Is it something intrinsic to Earth, rather than a response to human stewardship and subjugation? Within this thesis, my own reading

⁸⁶ Ibid., 41.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 44-45.

of Gen. 1:1-2:4a will attempt to answer these questions in light of Habel's own contextual response to this text.

While Habel's reading leaves questions unanswered about the issue of Earth's role in natural disasters, Terrence E. Fretheim attempts to tackle these in his own reader-oriented interpretation of Gen. 1:1-2:4a. In his book *Creation Untamed*, Fretheim sets out to read God's evaluation of creation in light of the recurrent problem of natural disasters and attempts to identify God's role within these disasters. Fretheim concludes that God's created world is good but not perfect,⁸⁸ thus, challenging the view of a perfect creation proposed by Von Rad, Westermann and Wenham.

To set the basis for his argument, Fretheim firstly defines what it means for Earth to be evaluated as 'good'. Being 'good', he suggests, is not tantamount to being perfect. The latter envisions something that is without flaws and that has no need for improvement.⁸⁹ Fretheim posits that this connotation does not correspond with the creation account considering that things went wrong during subsequent events, as evident in the 'not good' divine evaluation in Gen. 2:18. On the other hand, being evaluated as 'good' does not mean creation is fixed as forever imperfect, but assumes an ongoing process of adjustments and developments.⁹⁰ Fretheim argues that Genesis does not present the creation as complete but as a work in progress-that is, a creation that is moving towards goodness. In his words, 'Genesis does not present creation as a finished product, wrapped up with a big red bow...It is not a onetime production'.⁹¹ In other words, the goodness of creation was not fixed in Gen. 1:1-2:4a but is yet to be realized.

⁸⁸ Terrence E. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed: The Bible, God and Natural Disasters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 9, 11. Also see *idem*, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 41, 52.

⁸⁹ Fretheim, *Creation Untamed*, 13.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

In support of his argument, Fretheim brings forward textual evidence from Genesis 1-2. First, he notes the divine command given to humanity to subdue Earth in v. 28. For Fretheim, the command to ‘subdue’ in the context of creation means ‘to bring order out of disorder’, but not as an exercise of power over the other as evidenced elsewhere in the Old Testament (e.g. 2 Sam. 8:11; Esther 7:8; and Jer. 34:11). Rather, the activity of ‘bringing order out of disorder’ assumes that creation is yet to be fully developed.⁹² Fretheim also sees this mandate as Law built into the creational structures from the very beginning. According to Fretheim, this mandate was given for the benefit of the world. The establishment of the divine law not only reveals God’s concern for the future of creation but also humanity’s calling that involves the development of creation.⁹³ The second factor that Fretheim uses to support his claim of creation progressing towards good is the divine rest on the seventh day. According to Fretheim, Gen. 2:2-3 clearly states that the Sabbath rest was meant for God alone, but not for humanity and the creatures. The suspension of divine activities frees up the creatures and humanity to act and participate in the progression of creation towards good.⁹⁴

The final set of evidence, Fretheim brings forward to support his claim that creation is progressing towards good, is the ‘creational moves’ God makes in the creation process.⁹⁵ According to Fretheim, God creates ‘in community’ by inviting the created creatures to participate in the creation activities. The divine invitation for all creatures (the elements, plants, luminaries and animals) to participate in the process of creation is a call for these creatures to engage and remain active in the coming-to-be of the created order. The invitation to humanity to have ‘dominion’ over Earth, together with the participation of other creatures and Earth in the creation process reiterates the

⁹² Ibid., 14.

⁹³ Ibid., 16.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 19-36.

claim that the perfection of creation is yet to be achieved.⁹⁶ In this light, Fretheim therefore sees natural disasters as a creational process instigated by God to bring new creation into existence and part of creation's progression towards good.⁹⁷

From the perspective of a victim of natural disasters, Fretheim's claim implies that the pain and suffering of natural disaster victims and the devastation to the environment that these disasters can cause are all part of God's creation progressing towards achieving its goodness. This, however, raises questions concerning Fretheim's definition of 'good'. Is it 'good' to watch dead bodies pile up at the side of the road? What is 'good' about seeing homes, crops and coastal areas wiped away by tsunamis? Is this *really* the cost of creation in progress? These questions lead me to some of the points I struggle with in Fretheim's reading. Firstly, in defining 'good', Fretheim overlooks the final divine evaluation 'very good' in v. 31. The positioning of the expression at the conclusion of creation just preceding God's rest signals the completion of creation. Thus, clashes with his view of creation in progress. Secondly, Fretheim's definition of the term 'subdue' in v. 28 as 'to bring order out of disorder' is problematic. Such a definition is not expressed anywhere else in the Old Testament where this verb is used. The term in all its appearances connotes suppressive actions. The verb connotes the enslaving of people as in s Sam. 8:11, the subjugating of land in conquests as in Jer. 34:11 Josh 18:1 and Neh. 5:5, and the overpowering and raping of women in Esth. 7:8. It is therefore likely that, in Gen. 1:28, the verb likewise reveals the harsh reality that God is anticipating humanity's oppressive dealings with Earth.

All in all, Habel and Fretheim's readings raise some difficult questions concerning God's evaluation of creation in Gen. 1:1-2:4a. Habel's reading implies that God's evaluation from the perspective of Earth seems to be inadequate by overlooking the impact that the creation of humans

⁹⁶ Earth's participation in the creation process can be seen in the creation of vegetation in Gen. 1: 11-13 and the creation of land creatures in Gen. 1:24. The participation of other creatures can also be seen in God's command to the aquatic and flying creatures in Gen. 1:22 to 'be fruitful and multiply.' Earth and the creatures in creation activities act as God's agents (co-creators) to fulfil the divine intentions and commands.

⁹⁷ Fretheim, *Creation Untamed*, 37.

will have upon her. Meanwhile, Fretheim's interpretation of God's evaluation yields that the goodness of Earth is yet to be realized. So, if that is the case, why then did God declared Earth to be 'very good' and then rest, signalling the completion of creation? Fretheim's reading, like Habel's, infers that God's assessment seems to be adequate to a certain point. These readings raise questions concerning the meaning of God's evaluation of Earth and creation as a whole. What exactly does God mean by declaring creation as 'good'? Is it possible that God's evaluation of Earth as 'good' means something other than the 'perfection' some scholars have suggested? Does 'goodness' include the potentiality of flaws and imperfections in God's created Earth? These questions draw attention to the need for a reappraisal of the portrait of Earth in Gen. 1:1-2:4a to determine the meaning of God's evaluation of the Earth as 'good' and 'very good'. Hence, these are the tasks my thesis will investigate, which I will carry out using my Samoan *gafataulima* hermeneutic and reader-oriented approach.

4. TOWARDS A SAMOAN READING APPROACH

As I have mentioned above, reader-oriented criticism has created a space for Oceanic and Pacific Island biblical hermeneutics. The accentuation of the reader and their location in the interpretive process permits Pacific Island scholars to bring their local contexts into engagement with biblical texts. It allows them to employ aspects of island life such as experiences, worldviews, cultural and religious beliefs within their biblical interpretation. Nasili Vaka'uta observes that most Pacific Island scholars embrace the interpretive modes introduced by post-colonial and ecological hermeneutics.⁹⁸ According to R. S. Sugirtharajah, post-colonial hermeneutics is 'a way of engaging with the textual, historical and cultural articulations of societies disturbed and transformed by the historical reality of colonial experience'.⁹⁹ This mode of biblical interpretation has been given

⁹⁸ Vaka'uta, "Island Marking Text," 58.

⁹⁹ S. R. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 11.

prominence by Pacific Island scholars such as Vaka'uta, Jione Havea,¹⁰⁰ Peni Leota and Frank Smith.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, ecological hermeneutics is the integration of ecological theory into biblical studies, so that biblical readers can interpret and understand texts from the perspective of the Earth or listen to Earth as a subject in the text'.¹⁰² This ecological approach to biblical interpretation has been embraced by a few Pacific Island scholars, in particular Arthur-Walker Jones and Iutisone Salevao.¹⁰³

By definition, however, the *gafataulima* reading approach that I have developed for this study does not strictly conform to the guidelines of the two hermeneutical approaches above. The *gafataulima* approach differs from the post-colonial approach in that it does not attempt to revolt against colonizing or oppressive tendencies in my specific context as a Samoan. However, the post-colonial inclination to acknowledge a reader's context is of value to this study. It opens up a gap for the consideration of my context and methodologies pertinent to my culture in the interpretive process. Additionally, the *gafataulima* approach can in some respect be regarded as an ecological hermeneutic, considering that it is Earth-centered and deals with Earth as the subject of its

¹⁰⁰ Havea is a Tongan biblical scholar of the Old Testament who makes a significant contribution to the development of Pacific Island Hermeneutics. He is arguably the leading proponent of Pacific Island Hermeneutics with numerous publications in the field. For example, in his study "The Future Stands Here and There: Towards an Island(ic) Hermeneutic," he proposes what he calls an 'island(ic) hermeneutics' or *lau faka-motu* in Tongan. *Lau faka-motu* literally means 'reading island ways'; this is developed from the term *lau* meaning 'to read', 'interpret', 'recite', or 'count' and *faka-motu* meaning 'ways of the island'. Havea also takes into consideration other nuances of the term '*motu*' ('gaps', 'breaks' and 'fractures') to fashion his approach to gaps, breaks and fractures in biblical texts. Havea also proposes three categories of analysis for *lau-fakamotu* molded from island experiences of dipping into the fluid ocean boundary. First, *lau-fakamotu* identifies the main points and dominant subjects within texts. Second, *lau-faka-motu* retrieves the ignored or oppressive subjects within texts. And last, *lau-fakamotu* scrutinises the activities of subjects at the underside of texts (pp. 61-68). Havea's integration of his cultural context into his study is of value to my proposed reading approach. For examples of other readings by Havea see, "Shifting the Boundaries: House of God and Politics of Reading," *PJT* II, no. 16 (1996): 55-71; "Engaging Scriptures from Oceania," in *Bible, Borders, Belonging(s): Engaging Readings from Oceania*, ed. Jione Havea, David J. Neville and Elaine M. Wainwright (Atlanta: SBL, 2014) 3-19; and "Numbers," *GBC*, ed. Daniel Patte (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 43-51.

¹⁰¹ See, Leota, "Ethnic Tensions in Persian-Period Yehud"; Smith, "The Johannine Jesus from a Samoan perspective." Similar to Smith, Leota also use 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 that is in conflict with human rights in Samoan society.

¹⁰² Norman C. Habel and Peter Trudinger, *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics* Society of Biblical Literature (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature), 3.

¹⁰³ Walker-Jones, "A Celebration of the Vanua,"; Salevao, "Burning the Land."

investigation. Nevertheless, it differs from ecological hermeneutics in the sense that the reader is not expected to read texts from the perspective of Earth but will maintain a degree of anthropocentric objectivity when examining her.

As indicated above, emerging from within post-colonial and ecological hermeneutics are studies by Samoan biblical scholars besides which I wish to place this study. In the remainder of this section, I will present a conversation with Samoan biblical scholars, in particular Smith and Salevao, to highlight their reading approaches and explain how they contribute to my proposed hermeneutical strategy.

In his study of the Gospel of John, New Testament scholar Frank Smith analyses the Gospel's characterization of Jesus from a Samoan perspective. Particularly, Smith attempts to resolve the interpretive problem of 'distanciation' (temporal and cultural distance between the world of the text, world encoded in the text and world of the reader) faced by readers in interpreting biblical texts.¹⁰⁴ 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. This analogical approach uses analogies from the present day reader's socio-cultural world (in his case, his Samoan cultural context) to foster intercultural understanding with the original readers of a text. Such analogies are evoked for the present day reader when a text is read. These evoked analogies can therefore be utilised as hermeneutical lenses to read and construct the text's meanings.¹⁰⁵

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.¹⁰⁶ The *tautua* means the forsaking of one's individuality and work towards the collective good, thus

¹⁰⁴ Smith, "The Johannine Jesus from a Samoan perspective," 1.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 109.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 216-217.

expressing Jesus' love towards the other. In addition, the theme of Jesus' death in John 3:1-5 also provokes another version of *tautua* known as *tautua toto* (blood service) which is a service that results in death or blood being spilled for the honour of the *matai* (chief), *'aīga* (family) and *nu'u* (village). For Smith, perceiving Jesus' death in light of the analogy of *tautua toto* reveals Jesus' death as a *tautua toto* for the honour of his 'father'.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, reading John 3:1-5 in light of the *tautua* analogy also reveals the commitment requires and 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.¹⁰⁸

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. However, my only query of Smith's work is his uncritical adoption of Samoan understandings and realities as analogies for reading Jesus presentation in the Gospel of John. The Samoan cultural concepts and realities that Smith employs are also attached to negative nuances, which might yield opposing interpretation. For example, the Samoan institution of *tautua* is also affiliated with exploitative intentions,¹⁰⁹ and can be a mode of exploitation employed by those in power for their own gains and to suppress the weak. Reading these other nuances of *tautua* into the Gospel narrative of Jesus washing his disciples' feet can produce a reading that sees the institution of discipleship as an exploitative mechanism for the benefit of those in power. It is for this reason, that there is a need to be critical towards such idealistic usage of Samoan cultural concepts and understandings as reading approaches for the interpretation of biblical texts. Samoan cultural concepts are open to critique and this critique can in itself bring fresh insights to the reading of biblical text. I will bear this in mind

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 220.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 218-220.

¹⁰⁹ Some *matai* use the concept of *tautua* as ideological propaganda to encourage their *'aīga* (subjects) to serve them wealth and respect.

in the development of my proposed reading approach for this study, which will employ Samoan cultural concepts and worldviews as a framework to read Gen. 1:1-2:4a.

Another Oceanic scholar whose work I will draw on in this study is Iutisone Salevao. In his article, ‘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 principles of kingship and voice.¹¹⁰ According to Salevao, the context of this biblical text envisions the burning of the land for the purpose of total destruction. This is disclosed by the surrounding verses, which speak of an apostate being beyond restoration (v. 4-6).¹¹¹ 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 life¹¹² 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’.¹¹³

In saying this, I commend Salevao’s study for the usage of Samoan ecological concepts and worldviews in designing his hermeneutical optic to interpret biblical texts. Also I applaud his attempt to make biblical texts relevant to readers located in a Samoan context. These two achievements are also the intended path for this study. Focusing on Earth as the subject of investigation, I have developed my *gafataulima* hermeneutic around Samoan perceptions of Earth. However, what sets my study apart from Salevao’s is that I will also give attention to more

¹¹⁰ Salevao, “Burning the Land,” 221-231.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 227.

¹¹² This Samoan worldview of Earth will be discussed below in Chapter 3.

¹¹³ Ibid., 231.

pejorative worldviews of Earth that are present in the Samoan cultural and oral traditions.¹¹⁴

Samoan culture and oral traditions reveal Earth as an entity with tremendous forces that can cause devastation and harm to humans. A consideration of this view together with the positive Samoan worldviews offered by Salevao reveals a dualistic portrayal of Earth, where there is both invigoration and destruction. My proposed *gafataulima* approach will embrace this Samoan dualistic view of Earth. Compared to Salevao's claims about the fragility of Earth, I will also consider Earth's potency as the host of natural disasters.

In summation, Smith and Salevao's studies highlight interpretive elements that are significant for this study. First, both studies place emphasis on the reader's context in the interpretive process, drawing on their experiences and perspectives as Samoans to read biblical texts. This is also the intention of this project, where my experience of natural disasters sets the questions that will be addressed in my reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a. Second, Smith and Salevao also draw attention to the utilization of Samoan cultural concepts, practices and realities in the process of interpretation. Such a move also corresponds to my proposed reading approach, although; unlike these two scholars I am not looking only at the positive elements of Samoan tradition but also consider the more negative aspects in designing my reading approach to Gen. 1:1-2:4a.

5. WHY GAFATAULIMA?

My intention behind developing a *gafataulima* reading hermeneutic has been shaped by a number of factors. The first of these is the need to make the biblical message relevant and accessible to the Samoan general reader(s). Biblical interpretation has long been the work of academics and biblical scholars and written in ways that are not always accessible to readers outside academia. The effect of this is evident in my Samoan context where biblical interpretation is considered as a sacred undertaking that only the *faiife'au* (pastors) have the authority, expertise and *mana* (spiritual power) to carry out. Although traditional biblical interpretation is often inaccessible to non-academia

¹¹⁴ See discussion in Chapter 3.

readers, it is my intention that the reading approach I have developed for this project will overcome this barrier. One of the strengths of the *gafataulima* approach is that it is a general method of analysis which is accessible and readily comprehensible to most Samoans, rooted as it is in everyday methods of Samoan social, political and cultural analysis. I hope therefore that this will allow both academic and non-academic readers to engage with my interpretations of Scripture and to continue this interpretation on their own.¹¹⁵

In saying that, however, I am also aware of the potential pitfalls that a contextual or reader-oriented reading may bring to the table of biblical interpretation. Vaka'uta, outlines and name five concerns involved with contextual biblical interpretations.¹¹⁶ First, there is the issue of 'naïve contextualism' which is the failure to realize that local cultures also have oppressive forces embedded within them. This study will be attentive of this issue and will critically scrutinize my Samoan culture and *gafataulima* approach to identify oppressive elements that could affect other people and the way I read Gen. 1:1-2:4a. The second concern is 'reverse contextualism', that is, the attempt to directly translate foreign concepts into local languages rather than using cultural traditions as the bases for developing hermeneutics. To resolve such issue the interpreter therefore must use his or her own culture as the basis for constructing his or her reading approach. However, there may be instances where local concepts overlap in meanings with existing non-contextual concepts. In such cases, the interpreter must be upfront and admit the recognized similarities. This study will be mindful of this advice and will admit any overlaps with non-contextual concepts if they arise.

The third concern outlined by Vaka'uta is 'purist contextualism', which is the tendency to ignore the diversity of cultures. All cultures are complex in nature and the interpreter doing contextual or reader-response readings must acknowledge the diverse character of cultures. Embracing the

¹¹⁵ Vaka'uta, *Reading Ezra 9-10 Tu'a-Wise*, 9-10; Smith, *The Johannine Jesus from the Samoan Perspective*, 3. Both scholars allude to this problem in the Tongan and Samoan contexts respectively.

¹¹⁶ Vaka'uta, *Reading Tu'a-Wise*, 6-7.

diversity of one's culture may possibly open up more avenues for developing reading approaches. Similarly, this study will also explore the diversity of my Samoan culture to enrich the development of my *gafataulima* reading approach. The fourth issue to be aware of in reader-oriented readings is, according to Vaka'uta, 'ethnocentric contextualism', that is the over-emphasizing of local cultures and the failure to realize that local cultures also possess biases and epistemological limitations. To resolve this issue, the interpreter must critically evaluate culture and identify their biases and prejudices. Within this study, I therefore am therefore guided by the conviction that my Samoan culture may not contain all the answers and may also have its own biases and prejudices. The last and fifth concern mentioned by Vaka'uta is 'hegemonic contextualism', which is a lack of awareness that contextual interpretation can also impose oppressive tendencies on others, in its pursuit of liberation from Eurocentric interpretations of texts. To avoid such a lack of awareness, the interpreter must be critically engaged in the formulation of his or her reading approach to ensure it does not initiate any repressive tendencies. Vaka'uta's critiques of reader-oriented approaches to biblical interpretation are worth taking seriously and this study will adopt them as guidelines for charting the *gafataulima* hermeneutical approach.

Additionally, I would also admit at this stage that my reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a is not definitive or authoritative. A biblical scholar using another approach and reading from a different location may come up with a totally different but equally valid interpretation, taking their own unique context into account. In designing my reading methodology, I therefore undertake such a task with the conviction that I am not attempting to speak for *all* Samoans, because that my reading methodology can only represent my own specific location within the wider Samoan context. Here, I am providing my own response and contribution to the conversation regarding the state and quality of Earth in Gen. 1:1-2:4a thus, offering an alternative reading (of interest to Samoan and non-Samoan biblical readers alike) that can be placed alongside those interpretations that have already found recognition in biblical scholarship.

Moreover, the meanings that I will arrive at throughout my study will be from my own interaction with the text, a reader using the Samoan *gafataulima* reading hermeneutic. In other words, I strive to present an alternative reading approach emergent from my cultural context that can be used to read biblical texts in light of the lived reality of natural disasters. Furthermore, the *gafataulima* hermeneutical approach that I use will not be looked at as *the* Samoan hermeneutical approach; rather, it offers a contribution to the bigger task of designing a wider Samoan hermeneutic within biblical studies. In other words, this hermeneutical approach adds another pertinent voice to the emerging voices of Oceania biblical scholars, and in particular, Samoan biblical scholars, who are often overlooked within the wider academy of biblical studies. It is the aim of this study that my voice and the voices of those scholars already established will raise awareness and inspire more biblical scholars from Oceania to contribute to this movement.

6. PLAN OF STUDY

This project will be divided into two parts. The first part is devoted to the development and formulation of the *gafataulima* hermeneutic. In Chapter 2, I will explore *gafataulima* in search of its various nuances and connotations. The aim of this chapter is to gain a thorough understanding of *gafataulima* for hermeneutical reconstruction. I will therefore explore the various cultural and contemporary usages of the term to illustrate the Samoan contexts in which *gafataulima* analysis can be applied. In Chapter 3, I will develop this general Samoan analytical tool into a practical hermeneutic that can be used for the interpretation of biblical texts. Here, I will also define the three stages of analysis in the *gafataulima* hermeneutic-*gafa*, *tau*, and *lima* -and identify my approach to Gen. 1:1-2:4a using these three stages. The purpose of this chapter is to define the subtleties of the *gafataulima* hermeneutic and meld it with the chosen *tala-mamanu* interpretive tool.

The second part of this thesis will be guided by the *gafataulima* reading approach, interpreting the biblical text through the lens of each analytical framework. Chapter 4 is a *gafa* reading of Gen. 1:1-

2:4a, which attempts to identify the *faiā* (relations) and *matāfaioi* (functions) of Earth inscribed in the text. Chapter 5 then moves onto a *tau* reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a, which considers the costs for Earth of fulfilling her *matāfaioi* in terms of *mafai* (resources and abilities). And, in Chapter 6, I offer a *lima* reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a, seeking out the *mafai* (resources and abilities) possessed by Earth in order to determine if Earth has the capacity to perform her *matāfaioi* satisfactorily. Through my threefold inquiry into this biblical text, I will ascertain if the text presents Earth as an entity that can fulfil her roles in creation – in other words, the *gafataulima* reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a reveals the quality and ‘goodness’ of Earth by determining Earth’s capacity to *gafataulima* her functions. In using this *gafataulima* reading strategy, I will thus be able to determine the functional quality of Earth and seek an answer (from the *gafataulima* perspective) to the question: Was created Earth created ‘good’ and even ‘very good’ in Gen. 1:1-2:4a?

In my final chapter (Chapter 7), I will offer a summary of this study, highlighting its significance for biblical interpretation and Samoan and Oceania hermeneutics. I will also consider the implications of the portrait of Earth yielded through the *gafataulima* reading within my context as a Samoan who has experienced the impact of ecological disasters.

CHAPTER TWO

GAFATAULIMA: NUANCES AND MEANINGS

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will define the term *gafataulima*; I want to draw out its different connotations and implications that are relevant to the development of a Samoan hermeneutical framework for interpreting biblical texts. To achieve this objective, I will first conduct a linguistic analysis of the term to identify the multiple meanings attached to the concept that are significant in designing the *gafataulima* hermeneutic. In this process, I will look at the term both as a compound word and as a proverbial saying. I will then highlight usages of the term in different contexts to illustrate its practicality. These analyses will not only identify the implications of the term *gafataulima* but will also identify its various semantic values, which are relevant to developing the *gafataulima* hermeneutical reading strategy.

2. GAFATAULIMA AS A CONCEPT

In Samoan linguistics, the term *gafataulima* is a compound word joining three short words *gafa*, *tau* and *lima*. Etiologically, the term seems to derive from the Samoan proverbial saying *ua lē fa'agafatia tau lima* meaning 'a person does not have the ability to fight with his/her hands'. That the three little words of *gafataulima* are also inherent in this proverbial saying suggests correlations between the term and the proverb. The appearances of the terms *tau* and *lima* are straightforward, but *gafa* appears in the proverb in its derivative form *fa'agafatia* (to be able or to afford). For a better understanding of the concept *gafataulima*, I will therefore analyse the three short terms and the proverb to identify meanings significant for the development of a hermeneutic viable for the reading of biblical texts.

2.1 *Gafataulima* as a Compound Word

The three short words that constitute *gafataulima* - *gafa*, *tau* and *lima* - have multiple meanings and nuances. The word *gafa* can mean ‘to fathom’, ‘genealogy, family tree’ or ‘responsibility’. The word *tau* carries the meanings ‘to count’, ‘to fight’, ‘to serve’, ‘to relate’, ‘to connect’ or ‘to reach’. The word *lima* means ‘the number five’ or ‘hand’. The term *gafataulima* can therefore literally mean ‘measuring of a fathom by the hand’, ‘measuring of a genealogy by the hands’ or ‘counting responsibilities using the fingers on the hands’. The three short words are interrelated and they share relational, functional, and evaluative attributes. The meanings of *gafa*, *tau*, and *lima* will be further explored in the following sections in order to shed more light on *gafataulima* and to retrieve nuances for the formulation of the *gafataulima* hermeneutic.

2.1.1 *Gafa*

The word *gafa* carries several meanings as mentioned above. Its multiple nuances suggest the term to have evaluative, relational and functional implications. The term’s evaluative implication is clear considering that it can be used as a noun representing a Samoan unit of length. According to Tauanuu Sitagata Tapu, the Samoan *gafa* is measured by the extension of one’s arms, which is typically a length between four to six feet.¹ George Pratt and Papalii Semisi Ma’i’ai equate the Samoan *gafa* to a fathom.² A fathom is a linear measurement used mainly to measure water depth and is approximately six feet or 1.8 meters.³ However, the fathom is a fixed and specific unit of measurement, unlike the Samoan *gafa*, which is an approximate measurement depending on the lengths of the arms of the person doing the measuring. The *gafa* is used to measure and give approximate distances and measurements; for instance, Samoans refer to the depth of the sea or a

¹ Tauanuu Sitagata Tapu (high chief/Samoan teacher McAuley College), personal communication with author, January 26, 2012.

² Papalii Semisi Ma’ia’i, *Tusi’Upu’Samoa: Samoan and English Dictionary* (Auckland: Little Island Press, 2010), 193; George Pratt, *A Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language, with English and Samoan Vocabulary* (Papakura: R. McMillan, 1984), 169.

³ *Oxford Dictionary*, s.v. “fathom,” accessed June 2, 2014, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/fathom>.

hole in the ground in terms of *gafa*. It is also used around the Samoan home to measure the length and width of items such as mats or *tapa* cloths, fishing lines, twines, timber, and houses.

In addition, the word *gafa* also denotes relations. This is apparent in the meaning of the term as ‘genealogy’, ‘pedigree’, or ‘descendant’.⁴ *Gafa* in this sense is of utmost importance in Samoan culture and society. One’s family connections, identity and inheritance are all preserved in one’s *gafa*. Fuimaono Faatitipa, a former teacher and a high chief of the village of Salani, claims that a person’s knowledge of his or her genealogy (*gafa*) is more precious than economic wealth.

According to Fuimaono, knowledge of ancestral connections informs Samoan people of their rights to family land and *matai* (chiefly) titles. Genealogy (*gafa*) determines who you are, where you come from and where you belong.⁵ These emphases provoke an enthusiastic attitude towards *gafa* among Samoans. As anthropologist Derek Freeman notes, ‘Samoans, living as they do in a society based on lineage principles have an intense interest in all matters genealogical. Indeed there is no subject which more eagerly provokes discussion’.⁶

Samoan *gafa* (genealogies) also carry Samoan worldviews of nature and the environment. Tui-Atua Tupua alludes to this point by claiming that most Samoan genealogical lines not only reflect one’s ancestral connections but also linkages to gods, plants and animals, the land, spiritual beings and other elements of nature.⁷ This is evident in the *gafa* (pedigrees) of *Lu* and *Pili* (Samoan gods)

⁴ Ma’ia’i, *Tusi’Upu Samoa: Samoan and English Dictionary*, 193; Pratt, *Grammar and Dictionary*, 169.

⁵ Fuimaono Faatitipa Fuimaono (high chief/former lecturer of Samoan language, Samoa Secondary Teacher’s College), personal communication with author, February 25, 2012. Fuimaono is a high chief of the village of Salani, located in the south-west of Upolu Island.

⁶ Derek Freeman, *The Social Structure of a Samoan Village Community*, ed. Peter Hempenstall (Canberra: Australian National University, 2006), 18-19. For more information on the importance of genealogies to Samoan people see Sharon W. Tiffany, “The Lands and Titles Court and the Regulation of Customary Title Successions and Removals in Western Samoa,” *JPS* 83 (1974): 42-43. Tiffany explains the usage of genealogies as a measure to make title and land claims in Samoan Land and Titles court. She writes that a person claiming rights to land or *matai* (chiefly) title must be a consanguineal member of the *’aiga* (family). They must be able to illustrate their genealogical connections to the ancestors.

⁷ Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Tupuola Efi, *Talanoaga na loma ma Ga’opo’a* (Apia: Pacific Printers and Publishers Ltd, 2001), 15-16.

recorded by Augustin Krämer, a German ethnographer in his book *The Samoan Islands*.⁸ The *gafa* of *Pili* reveals marriages and interactions between elements of nature, the gods and humanity. In *Pili*'s *gafa* the first human named *Tupufua* (which literally means 'came into being out of nothing') was the result of a union between *Nu'u* (land or island) and *Palapala* (mire or soil). *Pili* on the other hand was the outcome of the union between the most supreme god *Tagaloa'alagi* and *Lagimafola* (the spread of the sky). *Pili*'s genealogy indicates *Pili*'s connection to humans, to the gods and to other elements of nature. The pedigree of *Pili* therefore is a classic example of a *gafa* depicting the Samoan worldview that nature is a living entity with the capacity to reproduce and yield offspring. This worldview includes the belief in the interconnectedness of the elements of nature, humanity and the gods - a kinship bond between the gods, humanity and the elements of nature. *Pili*'s genealogy is an integral part of the Samoan stories of creation, which stress the belief that the Samoan people originated in the Samoa Islands from the union of the gods and the elements of creation.

Similarly, *gafa* as genealogy also applies to non-human living and non-living things. This is evident in the Samoan phrase, *o le gafa o le 'ava* (the genealogy or heritage of the kava plant). *Gafa* in this case refers to the origin and development of the kava plant. Using *gafa* to depict the history of non-human and non-living things is part of Samoan mythical beliefs and traditions, whereby the interactions between humans and other aspects of creation are normal occurrences. On some occasions, such as in vernacular conversations, Samoans use the term *gafa* to describe the relationships among animals mostly in a joking way or as slang. This is manifest for example in the phrase, *Ua tala le gafa o le matou puā'a* (our pig has extended his/her genealogy) referring to one's pig siring offsprings with another family's pig. Another example can be found in the phrase, *O le gafa o le matou tānoa* (the pedigree of our kava bowl). In this phrase, *gafa* is used to refer to the

⁸ Augustin Krämer, *The Samoa Islands: An Outline of a Monograph with Particular Consideration of German Samoa*, vol. 1, trans. Theodore Verhaaren (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 26-28.

bowl's origin and the tree that it was carved from. Thus, *gafa* in these cases is used in a figurative or metaphorical sense to denote interrelationships among non-humans as well as non-living things.

On the other hand, the functional implication of *gafa* is evident in the term often being used synonymously with the word *nafa*, to mean 'responsibility' or 'function'. Samoans see the difference between the two words as mere variations in their spellings and pronunciations and both terms refer to a person's responsibilities or an object's functions and usages.⁹ The term *gafa* in this sense is equivalent to other Samoan terms such as *matāfaioi*, *aogā* and *tofī* that also carry these same meanings of 'responsibility' or 'function'. However, in light of the nuance 'genealogy' or 'heritage', the term *gafa* yields the idea that it refers specifically to one's *heritable* functions and responsibilities.

For example, Samoan traditional society has its own distinct division of labour with specific *gafa* that are inherited by the people. These duties can be seen as a form of *tautua* (service) in which an individual serves his or her '*aīga* (family) and *nu'u* (village). In a traditional Samoan village, the elders and the *matai* are usually appointed the role of decision-making. They serve the '*aīga* and the *nu'u* through making wise judgments to maintain village welfare. These judgments include, for example, the use of village resources, land and sea resources, and the behaviour of the people. Such decisions are usually formulated through rounds of deliberations with the *fono* (village council). The women and the wives on the other hand are given the *gafa* of raising children and taking care of the household, which include tasks such as weaving, food preparation and family hygiene. The able-bodied men on the other hand are appointed to work outside the *fale* (Samoan house). Their

⁹ Ulrike Mosel and Even Hovdhaugen, *Samoan Reference Grammar* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1992), 8-9. Ulrike Mosel and Even Hovdhaugen explain this variation as the difference between two phonological systems. On the one hand, we have *kaukala leaga* (bad language) because of the use of the letter *k* instead of *t* and the letter *g* rather than the *n* as in *gafa*. On the other hand we have a system known as *tautala lelei* (good or polite language) where *t* replaces *k* and *n* replaces *g*. Some Samoan linguists refer to *tautala leaga* as the oratorical language and the vernacular language as *tautala lelei*. See, Aiono F. Le Tagaloa, *O La Ta Gagana (Our Language)* (Apia: Lamepa Press, 1996).

tasks include gathering food and cultivating the land for family and village use.¹⁰ In the Samoan village context, the allocation of *gafa* is often based on gender.

In summation, the above analysis of *gafa* indicates that the term has evaluative, relational and functional implications. *Gafa* is evaluative in that it alludes to the act of measuring lengths and depths. The term is relational in the sense that it makes reference to existing relations between humans, non-humans and objects. Lastly, the functional implications of *gafa* are indicated by the term's allusions to human responsibilities and the function of non-human and non-living entities.

2.1.2 *Tau*

The second word in the construction of *gafataulima* is *tau*. Like *gafa*, *tau* has multiple meanings, which refer to its evaluative, relational and functional implications. *Tau* alludes to relationships when it serves as a verb referring to family connections. This is evident in the Samoan terms *tau 'aīga* (relatives' or 'family connections) and *tausoga* (cousins), and in the phrases, *E tau o tā gafa* (our lineages are connected) and, *Ou te tau i ā Sina* (I am related to Sina). In these terms and expressions, *tau*, like *gafa*, also signifies a person's relationships and family ties. *Tau* also relates to functions and responsibilities; it can carry the meaning 'to fight', indicating verbal and physical confrontations between two or more parties thus portraying the context of war. Such a usage is depicted in the words *tau 'upu* means to fight with words (a war of words or a verbal fight) and *taua* means 'war'. In Samoan traditions, fighting battles is the responsibility of the able-bodied men who fight to defend the honour and dignity of the *nu'u* and the *'aīga*.¹¹ *Tau* also conveys the functions 'to reach' and 'to arrive at', referring to either a trip that has reached its destination or an occasion or event whose aims and goals have been achieved. This carries the implication that such

¹⁰ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 28.

¹¹ This service of Samoa men is referred to as *tautua toto* (blood service) where in wartime men shed blood for the honour of the family and village.

outcomes cannot be achieved without the participants performing their roles and functions satisfactorily.

Similar to *gafa*, the term *tau* also has functional implications. This can be seen in its meanings, ‘to work’ or ‘be responsible’. This is obvious in the phrase: *O ai lā e tau mai fāfō?* (Who is working outside or who is responsible for doing the work outside?). This question is often heard within the family setting where a person inside the house inquires about the person performing the chores outside. The functional implication of *tau* is also evident in its association with the Samoan term *tautua* (servitude), which literally means ‘to serve from behind or from the back’. *Tautua* is closely associated with being responsible for doing work or service to others especially to the *matai* (chief), ‘*aīga* (extended family) and *nu’u* (village). The term *tau* is ‘prefixed’ to the term *tua*, ‘the back of the house’ or ‘behind the *matai*’ to make up the term *tautua* meaning ‘to serve’ (as a verb) and ‘service’ or ‘servant-hood’ (as a noun). The term *tautua* refers to any form of service that will benefit other people in the ‘*aīga*, church, village, or the country as a whole. One example of *tautua* would be the services of a *matai* who *tautua* or serves his or her ‘*aīga*, village and church as a leader through oratory, decision making and by representing the family in the *fono* (village council). The services provided by the women of the ‘*aīga* and the village mentioned above (household chores and child bearing) are also referred to as *tautua*.

Furthermore, *tautua* can also be used informally to denote the function or service of non-human living things and inanimate objects.¹² An application of the term *tautua* to a non-human is evident in one who sees the benefits that a family receives from the breadfruit in front of the house as a form of *tautua*. The phrase; *Ua loa le tautua a le ‘ulu i le tatou ‘aīga* (the breadfruit tree’s service to the feeding of our family is more than enough) depicts this usage of the term. The expression, *Lelei tele le tautua a si a’u solofanua* (my horse provides excellent service) is an example of an animal’s service being understood as *tautua* - the horse serves the family by ‘mowing’ and

¹² Tofaeono Ama’amalele, *Eco-Theology: Aiga – The Household of Life: A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa* (Erlangen: Erlanger Verlag für Mission und Ökumene, 2000), 300.

beautifying their lawn (by eating the grass in front of the house) and by carrying the heavy loads. The functions of non-living things such as the machete that aids the *taule'ale'a* (untitled man or young lad) in farming the land and the scraper used for scraping coconuts are also seen as forms of *tautua*: *E lelei le tautua a la'u tuai* (my scraper's service is satisfying). With reference to a machete's service, one might say, *Ua lava le tautua a si a'u sapelu* (my machete's service is more than ample).

As well as evoking notions of service, *tau* also has evaluative properties. The term conveys the cost or the price of something. This is apparent in the phrase, *O le ā le tau o lou 'ofu?* (What is the cost of your dress?). In this phrase *tau* refers to the monetary cost of the dress. This usage of *tau* is also evident in a number of its derivatives, such as in the terms *tauī* (reward/cost), *taugofie* (inexpensive) and *taugatā* (expensive), all of which allude to cost. This utilization of *tau* echoes the institution of *tautua*, in that *tautua* is the price one pays for higher honours. A good *tautua* is rewarded with special privileges when one acquires a *matai* title for one's services to the *matai* and the *'aīga* (extended family). Also through performing the responsibilities of a *tautua* a person exhibits that they can afford to pay the price in *mafai* (abilities) of becoming a *matai*.¹³ *Tau* in this case therefore refers to the price one pays to fulfil a responsibility.

This analysis of *tau* reveals the term to have relational, functional and evaluative implications. *Tau* is relational in that it makes allusions to relationships. Moreover, its functional premises are clear with its semantic nuances of 'work' or 'responsibility' and its link to the term *tautua*, meaning service. Lastly, the evaluative property of *tau* is evident in its meaning of cost or price. Melding

¹³ Unfortunately, sometimes *'aīga* (families) put a higher *tau* (price) on their *matai* titles. In *matai* considerations, *'aīga* may identify the *mafai* they wish to use as criteria for *matai* selection. These criteria may include *mafai* that are not accessible by everyone such as, high education achievements, economic wealth and a prestigious job. This leads to the elimination and marginalisation of others from the selection process even though they showed competence through the services of a *tautua*. Regrettably, this Samoan notion of the *tautua* is sometimes abused by those in positions of power or used by some for their own personal gains. Some chiefs treat their *tautua* in oppressive ways for their own gains while others make demands that are near impossible for the *tautua* to achieve. This effect is heightened by the expectations that a good *tautua* should perform their duties in silence (*tautua lē pisa* [silent service]) or satisfy the needs of a *matai* at all costs (*tautua malie* [pleasing service]).

these aspects of *tau* yields the notion that *tau* could be seen as an evaluative exercise of determining the costs of fulfilling the relational functions of a subject.

2.1.3 *Lima*

The last word in the *gafataulima* compound is *lima*. In comparison to *gafa* and *tau* the term is not very extensive in meaning. *Lima* refers to the ‘number five’ and ‘the upper limbs’, or ‘arms’.¹⁴ However, like the two previous terms, *lima* also has relational, functional and evaluative properties. The relational sense of *lima* is apparent when we consider some metaphorical uses of the term. First, one’s *lima* (hands) represent one’s *tautua* (service) to the family and village. It is through the fulfilment of these duties that a person maintains relationships with other family members and villagers. Another metaphorical use of the term *lima* is in the expression ‘*a’ao māfola* (open arms), which denotes a generous person. Such a gesture in the Samoan way of life is a manifestation of love and reciprocity which are vital in the preservation of harmonious relationships. Furthermore, the hand (*lima*) is also offered to greet visitors; it is an act of hospitality to accept an individual into one’s home and into the community. *Lima* in this context depicts a person who is welcoming and hospitable, and who is receptive to new associations.

In addition, the functional implications of the term *lima* are evident in the fact that metaphorically, *lima* represents one’s strength, ability and financial capacity to perform a function properly.¹⁵ This usage is exhibited in the sentence, *O lenā ua i ou lima mea uma* (you got everything in your hands). *Lima* in this phrase is metaphorically used to refer to someone who possesses the physical, social, economic and intellectual capabilities to satisfactorily carry out cultural duties and responsibilities. The metaphorical expression *lima malosi* (strong hands) also illustrates the functional application of *lima*. The metaphor refers to strength and wealth and it points to a wealthy individual or family who can afford to perform any obligation to the community. Another metaphor is the phrase, *O ou*

¹⁴ Ibid., 236; Allardice, *A Simplified Dictionary of Modern Samoan* (Auckland: Polynesian Press, 1985), 79-80.

¹⁵ Fuimaono, personal communication; Tapu, personal communication.

faiva alofi lima (the responsibilities of your hands) also signifies the functional implication of *lima* and its use to denote the specific functions that a person is capable of. In summation, the above examples of the metaphorical usages of the term *lima* echoes its functional aspects. They illustrate that *lima* signifies the resources and capabilities possess by an individual or family to enable them to fulfil their obligations and functions to the village.

Lastly, *lima* also has evaluative properties. This is evident in its metaphorical use to signify the act of counting and measuring with the hands. The counting in question alludes to the act of naming and listing things to determine a sum or a total, while measuring involves the tasks of determining the size, amount and value of a subject. Some Samoans use their fingers to count objects and the lengths of the hands for measurement. Another example of *lima*'s evaluative nuances can be seen in the use of this word to allude to the process of distribution. This is clear in the expression *lima lelei* (good hands). The phrase refers to someone who distributes the family's or village's goods fairly and accordingly without the intention of achieving personal gain. However, the distribution of goods in a Samoan context is often based on rank, where high ranking chiefs (unfairly) get the lion's share. The distributor must therefore evaluate people's ranks and determine the shares they are due. In this light, the term *lima* refers to the evaluative act of distribution.

Evidently, this short etymology of the term *lima* reveals its relational, functional and evaluative implications. *Lima* is relational in the metaphoric sense that it makes allusions to people's relations. Also, *lima* is functional because it manifests one's capabilities and resources that could assist in fulfilling different functions and responsibilities to other in the community. Lastly, the evaluative aspect of *lima* is apparent in the fact that the term denotes the evaluative acts of counting, measuring and ascertaining peoples shares in the act of distribution. Merging the three properties of *lima* together yields the impression that that the term designates the process of counting and measuring a subject's worth in terms of the capabilities and wealth it possess.

2.1.4 Summary

The above analysis of the terms *gafa*, *tau* and *lima* not only yields the literal and deeper meanings of the three short words but also the notion that the terms all have relational, functional and evaluative implications. This suggests that the concept *gafataulima* as a whole carries similar properties. First, *gafataulima* is relational in the sense that it alludes to the relations of a subject (humans, non-humans and non-living things). Second, *gafataulima* has functional inferences considering that the term makes reference to the responsibilities and functions of a subject. Third, *gafataulima* is evaluative as it refers to the assessment of a subject's capacity to fulfil their functions. Fusing these three dimensions of *gafataulima* leads to the conclusion that the term refers to the evaluation or appraisal of a subject's various capabilities to perform a relational function satisfactorily. This understanding of *gafataulima* will be explored further in the next sections through the analysis of the term as a proverb and the identification of its various usages and applications.

2.2 *Gafataulima* as a Proverb

As mentioned above, the compound word *gafataulima* also reflects the Samoan proverbial expression: *Ua lē fa'agafatia tau lima*, literally meaning, 'unable to fight or serve with the hands'. *Ua lē fa'agafatia tau lima*, is a pejorative expression indicated by the negative adverb *lē* meaning 'not'. However, the affirmative form of the statement is basically, *Ua fa'agafatia tau lima* (able to fight/serve with the hands). This aspect of the proverb is compounded to form the three syllable word *gafataulima*. This explains why the proverb and term are used interchangeably in the Samoan language. In addition, the conversion of the proverb into a compound concept is a typical process of word formation in the Samoan language. For example, the word *mafuolo* (stench bunker) is the compound form of the saying, *E le'i mafu lava lenā olo*, which can be translated 'isn't that bunker filled with stench'. Another example can be found in the formation of Samoan names. For instance,

the proper name *Ī'ama*fana is the compound form of the phrase *ī'a mafanafana* (warm fish).¹⁶

Given this Samoan tradition of word formation, understanding the proverbial saying, *Ua lē fa'agafatia tau lima* is therefore vital to the study of its compound form *gafataulima*. This analysis could offer more nuances of the term for the development of my hermeneutic to read biblical texts.

Erich Schultz has identified a deeper interpretation of the saying, *Ua lē fa'anafatia tau lima*, claiming that it is the humble words of a defeated opponent in a match.¹⁷ This suggests that the proverbial saying in question here derives from the milieu of Samoan traditional games. Pologa Tuisamoa agrees with Schultz and points to the games of *'aigōfie* (club match) and *tauiviga* (wrestling) as possible original contexts for the proverb and the term *gafataulima*.¹⁸ According to Tuisamoa the way these two traditional Samoan sports were played reflects the description given in the proverb. That is, these games involve grappling and battering opponents, echoed by the phrase *tau lima* (fight with the hands) in the proverbial saying.¹⁹ The following paragraphs therefore present an analysis of the proverb in light of one of these two traditional games to identify meanings and implications vital for the formation of the *gafataulima* hermeneutic.²⁰

¹⁶ Tui-Atua, "The Riddle in Samoan History," 27.

¹⁷ Erich Shultz, *Alaga'upu Fa'aSamoa: Samoan Proverbial Expressions* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1980), 63.

¹⁸ Pologa Tuisamoa (high chief/ Samoan teacher at Avele College), personal communication with author, December 20, 2012; Toese Tuia (minister CCCS/former Samoan teacher Faleata/Leulumoega College), personal communication with author, March 23, 2013. Both agree that the proverb reflects the ways the *'aigōfie* and *tauiviga* are played.

¹⁹ Tuisamoa, personal communication.

²⁰ Due to the word limitation for this project, I chose the game of *'aigōfie* as an example since it is one of the most famous ancient Samoan games (more famous than *tauiviga*). However, I also agree with Tuisamoa that the proverb could also derive from the context of the game of *tauiviga*. This sport is similar to the game of *'aigōfie* where the competitors rely on the strengths of their hands to accomplish the objectives of the game and to win the contest, thus, echoing the phrase *tau lima* inherent in the proverbial saying. For an explanation of the game of *tauiviga*, see Fepuleai Seua F. Taeao Salua, *O le Tafafa o Au Measina Samoa*, ed. Fepuleai Sinapi Moli (Apia: Government Printing, 2007), 111-113. Basically there are two types of Samoan *tauiviga* (wrestling). In one type, the two wrestlers wrap their arms around each other and attempt to hold and throw their opponent on the ground. The first to either force his opponent to submit or throw him to the ground is declared the winner. The other form of wrestling is where two wrestlers face each other and grab hands. Again, the task is to throw one's opponent to the ground or to lock the opponent's hands in order to force a submission; the first to do so wins the contest.

The game of *'aigōfie* was one of the most popular Samoan games in ancient times. This game tested the bravery and strength of young Samoan men because it could lead to players' injuries or even fatalities. The game is a club match between two brave lads where the club is made from the midrib of the coconut leaf. These clubs are shaped and parched in Samoan ovens to make them hard and solid for the matches. In the match, both men try to eliminate the other by striking their opponent haphazardly with the club. Sometimes when clubs are damaged the participants fight with their hands. The duel continues until one can no longer ward off the blows of his opponent and surrenders or falls unconscious.²¹ In this context, the proverbial saying, *Ua lē fa'agafatia tau lima*, takes on the rhetoric of defeat, expressing a plea of submission by an opponent who can no longer sustain and parry the other's blows. On the other hand, if the words were uttered by the winner, a spectator, or an official who is officiating the match, the words could instead be an expression of mockery, scorning the loser's lack of strength and inability to continue with the match.

Moreover, reading the proverbial saying in the context of the *'aigōfie* manifests its relational, functional and evaluative implications. The proverb is relational in the sense that it hints at a relationship of respect between the two opponents. The losing fighter utters the proverb not only to indicate submission but also to show respect for the strength and skills of the victor. In other words, the proverb is spoken in such circumstances by the loser as words of self-abasement to show reverence to the superior fighter and to reconcile and mend their relationship that could be affected by the brutal ways the game has been played. Furthermore, viewing the proverb in the context of the *'aigōfie* highlights its functional connotations, in that it hints at the roles of the contestants in the game. This is indicated by the phrase *tau lima* (fight with the hands) and it demands the players to function as fighters pounding each other into submission with clubs and hands. Finally, reading the proverb in light of the *'aigōfie* also reveals its evaluative implication. This is apparent considering that the proverbial saying could be seen as an utterance of defeat spoken by the

²¹ Salua, *O le Tafafa o Au Measina Samoa*, 98-99; Tapu, personal communication; Fuimaono, personal communication.

battered opponent who sees no need to continue; he has already evaluated his strength and skills in relation to those of the other fighter. On the other hand, if the words were uttered by the winner, a spectator, or an official who is officiating the match, the words could be seen as an evaluation of the loser's weakness and the victor's strength. In this light, the proverb is therefore spoken as an assessment of the loser's inabilities to win the game.

All in all, this analysis indicates that the proverb, *Ua lē fa'agafatia tau lima* carries relational, functional and evaluative properties that are vital in the formulation of the *gafataulima* hermeneutical lens. In view of the analysis of the three short terms *gafa*, *tau* and *lima*, it is apparent that the relational, functional and evaluative properties of the proverbial saying also transpose onto its derivative *gafataulima*. Thus, depicting that, *gafataulima* denotes a Samoan form of analysis in which the abilities of the fighters are appraised in relation to the objectives of the game.

2.3 Summary

Examining *gafataulima* as a compound word and as a proverbial saying, reveal the meaning and implication of the term. First, the above analyses disclose that *gafataulima* refers to the functional capabilities of a subject. That is the abilities of a subject to perform and complete a given undertaking. Second, the term signifies a Samoan form of evaluation in which the abilities of a subject are assessed in relation to the objectives of a function. In other words, it is an evaluation to determine if a subject possesses the abilities to satisfactorily fulfil a specific task. The following section, will further investigate *gafataulima* to identify its additional meanings and implications by highlighting its usages in different Samoan settings.

3. GAFATAULIMA IN CONTEXT

In this section, I will explore how the term *gafataulima* is used in various contexts. It can be heard in the milieus of government discourses (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment), Samoan

fa'alavelave (cultural occasions), and everyday conversations. These usages of the term will be explored in this section not only to draw out other meanings through the interpretation of the term in different contexts but also to highlight the various situations in which the *gafataulima* analysis is applicable. Findings from this investigation will be invaluable in enhancing the *gafataulima* analysis as a hermeneutic for the reading of biblical texts.

3.1 *Gafataulima* and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

One of the most popular usages of *gafataulima* today is the employment of its derivative *gafataulimaina* by the Samoa MNRE and Samoan environmentalists as the official translation of the English term 'sustainable', usually when referring to sustainable developments (*atina'e gafataulimaina*).²² The usage of *gafataulimaina* to translate 'sustainable development' is evidenced in the Puma Act of 2004 (also known as the *Gafataulimaina* Act),²³ where *gafataulimaina* is used to describe the utilization, development and management of natural and man-made resources cautiously designed and carried out without disturbing ecological process and genetic diversity. In this sense, *gafataulimaina* designates those developments and practices carefully conducted to manage natural resources and to meet the needs of the present without diminishing these natural resources and compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Here, *gafataulima* is used as an adjectival verb (indicated by the prefix '*ina*') to describe a certain type of development. The term is treated as the direct translation of the word 'sustain' (strengthen, undergo, cause to continue, uphold²⁴) thus adding other nuances to *gafataulima*. That is, it refers to a subject's ability to sustain, uphold, or continue functioning.

²² Taulealeausumai Laavasa Malua (Former CEO of Samoa MNRE), personal communication with author, March 5, 2012. He further states that there were other Samoan terms proposed such as the term *fa'aauau* (continuous) and *faifaipaea* (continuous) but the term *atina'e gafataulimaina* was more appealing because it carried nuances that reflect the definition and aims of sustainable development since it refers to the maintenance of the environment's ability.

²³ Government of Samoa, Planning and Urban Management Act 2004, 70-71.

²⁴ *Oxford Dictionary*, s.v. 'sustain', accessed June 4 2012, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/sustain>

The MNRE's usage of *gafataulima* also reveals the evaluative properties of the term. The evaluative implication of *gafataulima* is apparent in the MNRE's employment of the term to name its developmental assessment plan (*gafataulima* assessment plan) for any proposed project. The aim of this assessment is to determine the environmental impact of proposed development and the environment's capacity to sustain such disturbances.²⁵ This highlights the practical potentials of *gafataulima* as an appraisal tool for the sustainability of natural resources. In this context the objective of the *gafataulima* analysis is to evaluate if the subject (environment) has the ability to sustain the demands of the anticipated project (proposed development).

3.2 *Gafataulima* in Samoan Cultural Contexts

The term *gafataulima* or the proverbial form, *Ua lē fā 'agafatia tau lima* is often heard during Samoan *fa'alavelave* and oratory. Samoan traditional exchanges usually occur during *fa'alavelave* such as weddings, funerals, dedications and blessings of new buildings, consecration of *matai* titles and the welcoming and the sending-off of a *malaga* (visitors/visiting group). On these special occasions traditional goods and food are exchanged between the families, villages or districts involved.²⁶ During these traditional exchanges *gafataulima* is often used in orations accompanying the exchanges by orators representing the families, villages or whatever party is involved. In these instances *gafataulima* in its negative state - *lē gafataulima* - is repeatedly used to express self-abasement and humiliation for their family's inability to ensure a fair exchange. Samoan traditional exchanges are considered unfair when one party is unable to match the value of what the other side has given. So, in traditional exchanges the following words are often heard in orations that accompany the exchanges:

²⁵ Planning and Urban Management Act 2004, 75. The factors for assessment include population and development trends, land tenure; water catchments and drainage; provision of infrastructure; hazards; environmental capacity; and heritage.

²⁶ Samoan traditional currencies for these exchanges include food items, *'ietoga* (fine mats), *fala* (sleeping mats), *siapo* (tapa) and *'ava* (kava).

*Faamalie atu i le nā itū. Ua pau o se mea ua gafataulima e lenei itū auā le faamoemoe. Ua matou lima vaivai ua tua i papa ae lumāfale i moana.*²⁷

We express apology to that side of our family. It is just what this side of our family is able to provide for the occasion. We are poor, because we have a rocky backyard and the deep ocean at the front.

Obviously in this extract, the speaker is using *gafataulima* to reference their family's inability to match the exchange. The speaker is expressing apologies to the other side for the inadequacy of their contribution or for their economic inabilities to provide accordingly. The speaker goes further, attributing their inadequacy to their family's limited natural resources (capacity of land, sea resources); that is, the rocky backyard is uncultivable and unproductive and the deep ocean at the front is inaccessible for fishing. This suggests a deeper meaning to the speaker's usage of *gafataulima*; it is used not only to refer to their economic, social and ecological inabilities to participate in the traditional exchanges but also as a mechanism of self-abasement to sooth any ill feeling caused due to the unfair trading.

On occasion, the speaker's utterance (such as the one above) can also be regarded as sarcastic by some observers, especially when the party represented by the speaker is contributing more than enough and exceeding what the other side had brought to the *fa'alavelave* or the exchange. This rhetorical technique is known as *fa'afitifitiga a tulāfale* (orator's sarcasm). It is common in the Samoan art of *laūga* (oratory) to boast about one's family's social and economic capacity. The sarcastic orator is therefore not apologizing for the inabilities of their family but is boasting of the inability of the other side to match their side's contribution, or expressing discontent over the unfair trading. However, despite the variation in tone suggested here it still does not affect the meaning of *gafataulima*. Even when expressed in sarcastic tones, the term still refers in this context to the economic, social and ecological capacities of the two families involved.

²⁷ Tauaola Leva Iakopo Emele (*matai* /orator), Funeral Closing/Thanksgiving Speech (*Ligaliga* Funeral Home, Auckland, February 12, 2015). Used with permission.

On another occasion *gafataulima* may be used by orators and speakers in their *laūga* (Samoan traditional speeches) to express self-abasement and humility for their inability as speakers and the inability of their words to properly address the honorifics of those present. Proper acknowledgement of a person's, family's or village's honorifics is vital in Samoan customs and oration. If a speaker is unable to do so, he or she can become the subject of scolding and ridicule. Hence, it is the norm that a speaker issues a foreword of acknowledgment to soothe the potential for an offence when error occurs. Words like these are often heard in Samoan orations:

*Ia e muamua lava ona fa'amalūlū atu e lē gafataulimaina i se matou 'upu ma se matou fa'amatalaga ona agatonuina outou sā ma faigā.*²⁸

First, I apologise to the distinguished guest because of our inability and the incapacity of our words to properly address your honorifics and privileges.

In this phrase, *gafataulima* is equated to the English term 'ability' and 'capacity'. Though, here *gafataulima* is used in its prohibition state *lē gafataulimaina* meaning 'inability' to express the inadequacy and inability of the orator in the art of *laūga* (traditional Samoan speech). The speaker here is expressing humility for his or her inability to properly address those present according to their honorifics at the outset of the speech. In other instances, the above words may be uttered by an orator of lesser standing who is speaking in the presence of those with higher status. In Samoan customs it is considered impolite and offensive for a person of lesser standing to speak in the presence of or in direct response to a person of higher status. However, in unavoidable circumstances, it is proper on the part of the speaker to offer apologies and acknowledge his or her inability and unworthiness to speak in such presence or on such an occasion. In this light, the speaker of the utterances above could be seen as using *gafataulima* not only to express his or her inability and lack of words but also to express remorse and worthlessness to speak.

In summary, the use of *gafataulima* in the context of Samoan *fa'alavelave* and oratory highlights its relational, functional and evaluative meanings. First, the relational property of *gafataulima* is

²⁸ Leota Vaiese Lealiifano (orator), Welcoming Speech (CCCS Blockhouse Bay Church gathering, March 20, 2014). Used with permission from speaker.

evident in the context of traditional exchanges and oratory when the term is employed as rhetoric to apologise to and soothe the relationship between the parties involved. *Gafataulima* in these instances is therefore a device that a family or an orator employs to maintain harmonious relations. Secondly, the functional implication of *gafataulima* is also evident in the two traditional settings mentioned above. On the one hand, in Samoan *fa'alavelave* (art of traditional exchanges) *gafataulima* is used as a standard to indicate the capabilities of the families involved to fulfil their obligations. That is, the family using the term to convey contrition is at the same time making allusion to their failure to perform their function in the commodity exchanges because of their limited natural resources. On the other hand, *gafataulima* in Samoan oratory is employed as an indication of the orator's abilities to fulfil the function of *lauga* presentation. Hence, in Leota's *laūga* above, he used the term *gafataulima* to make known his incapacity to achieve what is required in Samoan *laūga*. Finally, *gafataulima* is employed in the two examples offered above to make reference to the economic, social, ecological and intellectual capabilities of a person or persons. In this sense, *gafataulima* can be seen as the evaluation of a person's or group's capabilities. This usage of the term highlights its evaluative property. That is, *gafataulima* is a form of analysis that focuses on the capabilities of a given subject. The evaluative sense of *gafataulima* is also apparent in Samoan traditional *fa'alavelave* and oratory. In *fa'alavelave*, the term refers to the appraisal of a family's wealth and capacity to participate in traditional exchanges, while in oratory it refers to the assessment of an orator to properly deliver a *laūga*. Thus, together, these three aspects of *gafataulima* suggest that in the Samoan traditional setting, this word designates the appraisal of a family or an individual's capabilities to accomplish their relational functions.

3.3 *Gafataulima* in Everyday Conversation

Gafataulima is also often echoed in everyday conversations by Samoans, both locally and abroad. Not only, as a reference to the ability of humans and the capacity of the environment but also to refer to the ability of objects in relation to a task or function (thereby anthropomorphising these

objects). For instance when referring to objects, one might say, *E lē gafataulimaina e le va'a le sou o le vasa*, that is, 'the boat does not have the ability to withstand the rough seas'. This conclusion about the boat could be the outcome of a careful analysis of its age, design and materials used to make it in relation to the sea conditions. Another example can be seen in the phrase, *E gafataulima e le taga le mamafa o le agone*, 'the sack has the ability to withstand the weight of the sand'. Here, *gafataulima* is used to refer to the durability of the sack for the purpose of carrying sand; its quality is assessed in relation to the weight of the sand, considering such features as the fibre that it is made of, its age and size.

Moreover, another example of the everyday usage of *gafataulima* is evidenced in the phrase, *E gafataulimaina e le tama le su'ega i Malua*, 'the young man has the ability to pass the Malua entrance exam'. Clearly, the utterer of these words is using *gafataulima* to describe the mental and intellectual capability of a young man sitting the entrance exam to Malua Theological College, claiming that the lad has the mental competence to pass the exam. Again this supposition is arrived at with a careful consideration of the mental capability of the lad through exploring his educational experiences and background and the task of sitting the exam. *Gafataulima* is also used to make reference to the ability of animals, as isobvious in the phrase, *E gafataulima e le solofanua le āmoga*, 'the horse can bear the load' or 'the horse has the ability to carry the load'. In this phrase *gafataulima* is used to describe the horse's ability to carry the load on its back. To arrive at such a conclusion the speaker considers the weight of the load in relation to the size and strength of the horse.

These aforementioned examples of *gafataulima* in the context of everyday dialogues not only suggest that the term refers to the capabilities of humans, animals and inanimate objects, but also hints at its functional and evaluative implications. On the one hand, *gafataulima* is functional in the sense that it alludes to the functions of an object (the boat, sack, the lad and the horse in the examples above). On the other hand, the term is evaluative as it designates the appraisal of the

durability of objects, intellect of humans and strength of animals in relation to a specific usage or task.

4. IMPLICATIONS OF *GAFATAULIMA*

The above examples and analyses in section 3, illustrate that *gafataulima* contains multiple meanings and nuances. The terms literally means ‘measuring of a fathom by the hands’, but refers figuratively to the ability, capacity, or capability to sustain a function or service. *Gafataulima* reflects Samoan cultural traditions, worldviews and beliefs. It makes reference to the Samoan social and cultural institution of *tautua* and the division of labour. In addition, the term also carries Samoan worldviews about nature and the environment, depicting the interdependence and interconnectedness between humanity, nature and the gods. The above analyses also suggest that *gafataulima* can be used in any general context - social, economic, ecological and cultural - and with reference to any subject. For example, in the social sphere, *gafataulima* refers to the ability of a person to maintain his or her relations through performing responsibilities towards others. In the economic context, *gafataulima* refers to a person’s or group’s capacity to match an economic exchange. In the ecological sphere *gafataulima* describes the capacity of the land, sea, river or ecosystem to perform their functions. In these various milieus, *gafataulima* exhibits relational, functional and evaluative implications. It is relational in the sense that it alludes to a subject’s relationships. It is functional because it makes reference to a subject’s functions and obligations. It is evaluative as it denotes an assessment of a subject’s capabilities to fulfil its functions. Melding these three notions of *gafataulima* suggests that the term designates a Samoan ability-based perspective, that is, a critical perspective focussing on the ability of a subject to fulfil its relational functions. If a subject can achieve a certain function, then they are deemed able to *gafataulima* a task or have the ability to accomplish it. In contrast, if the subject lacks the capacity to fulfil this function, then they are considered to *lē gafataulimaina* the task. This discloses the fact that the *gafataulima* perspective values the ability of the subject under investigation. The principle behind

this perspective is the assumption that the subject has certain levels of abilities to fulfil its relational functions.

In practice, *gafataulima* analysis can be seen as an attempt to match the subject's abilities with the demands or costs of their achieving a function or service. This requires a three-tier investigation. First, we must attempt to identify the functions or services expected or demanded of the subject. Secondly, we need to establish the costs and demands required of the subject to fulfil these identified functions or services. And thirdly, we will survey the subject's abilities and resources that could help them accomplish these function or services. These three stages of the *gafataulima* analysis are depicted by the three roots *gafa*, *tau* and *lima*. *Gafa* designates the first part of the investigation that focuses on identifying the subject's relationships and functions. The term *tau* denotes the second part of the analysis which aims at making an estimation of the cost needed by the subject to fulfil the identified functions and services. The third part of the investigation can be termed as the *lima* analysis, which identifies the resources and capacity of the subject that could aid in accomplishing their functions. If the subject possesses the required capabilities and resources to perform a function, then we can confirm that the subject is able to *gafataulima* the task that they are expected to perform.

5. CONCLUSION

The above analyses reveal nuances and implications of *gafataulima* that are essential in developing my Samoan hermeneutic for reading Gen. 1:1-2:4a. The term denotes a Samoan method of analysis that involves the evaluation of the subject's ability in relation to the fulfilment of its functions. So, the issue that I will wrestle with in the next chapter is this: how can I use this general method of analysis (*gafataulima* analysis) as a hermeneutical tool to interpret and read biblical texts? What are the relevant aspects of *gafataulima* that can be used to draw out meanings from biblical texts? And how can *gafataulima* shape my reading and interpretation of Gen. 1:1-2:4a?

CHAPTER THREE

GAFATAULIMA AS A HERMENEUTIC

1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided an analysis of the term *gafataulima* and yielded nuances and implications of the term that are essential in designing the *gafataulima* reading approach. Central to the present discussion is the understanding that the term *gafataulima* designates a Samoan ability-based perspective that sees capabilities to perform functions as indicators of a subject's quality. This chapter will therefore explain the subtleties of this Samoan hermeneutic and highlight its relevance in biblical interpretation, especially as an ecological hermeneutic for the purpose of this study: to re-evaluate the quality of Earth portrayed in Gen. 1:1-2:4a. My intention here is to fuse the *gafataulima* hermeneutic with Samoan worldviews of Earth. This fusion will provide a Samoan ecological hermeneutic relevant for the Samoan reader facing the impact of natural disasters. In addition, I will also explain the proposed *tala-mamanu* (narrative-grammatical) interpretive tool that will be used in this study to read Gen. 1:1-2:4a.

2. GAFATAULIMA - A TRIPARTITE HERMENEUTIC

The *gafataulima* hermeneutic that I will develop is a Samoan ability-based hermeneutical approach that can be used to appraise the *mafai* (capacity) of a subject in relation to a function or responsibility thus providing a clear portrait of the subject's calibre and quality.¹ The *gafataulima*

¹ I am also aware of other ability-based perspectives in the fields of Social Science, Ecology, Economics and Feminist Studies to list but a few. See the works of Amartya Sen, *Commodities and Capabilities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Martha C. Nussbaum, *Woman and Human Development: The Capability Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Elizabeth Anderson, "What is the Point of Equality," *Ethics*, 109 (12) (1999): 289-337; Denis Saleebey, *The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Allyn and Bacon, 2002); Walker, B., C. S. Holling, S. R. Carpenter, and A. Kinzig, "Resilience, adaptability and transformability in social-ecological systems," *Ecology and Society* (2004), 9(2): 5; and Fikret Berkes, Colding J., and Folke, C. (eds.), *Navigating Social-Ecological Systems: Building Resilience for Complexity and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For example, Saleebey outlines the philosophy and principles that guide the strength-based perspective as 'The strengths perspective is a dramatic departure from conventional social work practice. Practicing from a strengths orientation means this - everything you do as a social worker will be predicated, in some way, on helping to discover and embellish, explore and exploit clients' strengths and resources in the service of assisting them to

hermeneutic is based on the idea that a complete inventory of the subject's *mafa'i* yields a true picture of their capacity and the tasks or functions that they are capable of fulfilling. The Samoan term *mafa'i* generally refers to any capability possessed by the subject that could aid or prevent the fulfilment of a function or task. These *mafa'i* can be categorized under *mafa'i feso'ota'i* (social abilities, e.g. interactive and communicative abilities), *mafa'i fa'alemafaufau* (intellectual capacity, e.g. ability to be rational and comprehend) and *mafa'i fa'atino* (physical or performative capabilities). *Mafa'i* includes the subject's *malosi'aga* (strengths) and *vaivaiga* (weaknesses). *Malosi'aga* refers to strengths which are characteristics or assets in the subjects' possession that aids their fulfilment of a task or function. *Vaivaiga* are the subjects' weaknesses which include their negative qualities and characteristics that could hinder the fulfilment of certain tasks and functions. The *gafataulima* hermeneutic incorporates the idea that a complete inventory of the subject's *malosi'aga* and *vaivaiga*, yields a true picture of their *mafa'i* (ability) and the tasks or functions they can satisfactorily fulfil. In this light the true *mafa'i* of a subject is the *malosi'aga* plus the *vaivaiga*. Hence, it is the task of the interpreter using the *gafataulima* hermeneutic to identify the subject's *mafa'i* in order to determine their overall aptitude.

The *gafataulima* hermeneutic also incorporates the assumption that every living and non-living subject has a function or various functions to fulfil.² To fulfil these functions, subjects possess various capacities. In this case, the *gafataulima* hermeneutic can therefore be used to assess the functional abilities of any subject and can be broadly employed as a critical lens to view various subjects in any given situation. It has the potential to supplement and compliment sociological, cultural, historical, ecological, political, economic and other perspectives in their appraisals of the

achieve their goals, realize their dreams, and shed the irons of their own inhibitions and misgivings, and society's domination'. The strength-based perspective is a lens that focuses on the abilities and capacities of an individual, family, group or community. My *gafataulima* approach shares the same assumptions with these approaches but differs from these approaches in the sense that the *gafataulima* approach considers both weaknesses and strengths in its consideration of a subject's true capacity.

² For instance, the *gafataulima* hermeneutical approach can be employed to analyse the capabilities of a Samoan *fale* (house) in relation to extreme weather patterns, the abilities of a canoe to withstand high seas, the abilities of an earthworm to fertilise the soil, the abilities of a horse to carry loads, the abilities of trees to provide shelter during cyclones, the potential of a piece of land to support cropping and so forth.

subjects' functions and performances. This broad usability of the *gafataulima* hermeneutic will be made clear below in the different examples chosen from a Samoan context to illustrate the three analytical steps of this hermeneutic. This will demonstrate the practicality and potential of the *gafataulima* hermeneutic when it is applied within a range of different disciplines and perspectives.

The *gafataulima* hermeneutic is also based on the perception that the subject's *mafai* (capabilities) have limitations and they can only fulfil a function to a certain degree of satisfaction or perform certain functions within the limits of their capabilities. The point where the abilities of the subject match the required capabilities to perform a task can be called the *gafataulima* point. This is similar to an equilibrium point or a balance between the subject's abilities and the required capabilities essential to the satisfactory fulfilment of a function. The *gafataulima* point is an ideal position or state for the subject in relation to performing a task. In this state, there is no pressure imposed on the subject and the subject is in a harmonious situation. However, when the abilities required for a function or task exceed the subject's capacity then the subject *lē gafataulima* (cannot fulfil/satisfy) a task; such a state can impose stress and pressure on the subject causing discomfort and dis-ease. The interpreter employing the *gafataulima* hermeneutic is therefore required to identify the requirements of a task in terms of capabilities and assess whether the subject can fulfil these requirements.

In determining the *mafai* of a subject, the *gafataulima* hermeneutic involves three levels of investigation. I designate them using the three little words intrinsic to the term *gafataulima*. These levels will be referred to as *gafa* (relation or function), *tau* (cost), and *lima* (total capacity). Essentially, the *gafa* analysis involves the identification of the subject's relational functions expected of them; the *tau* analysis follows on from this by estimating the costs for the subject (in terms of abilities) to accomplish these functions; finally, the *lima* analysis build on these first two analyses by critically examining the capacity of the subjects to *gafataulima* their functions. The result of these three analysis yields an accurate portrait of the subject's quality and proficiency.

2. *Gafa* Analysis

The aim for the interpreter in the *gafa* step of the *gafataulima* hermeneutic is to determine the subject's *faiā* (relationships) and *matāfaioi* (relational functions and responsibilities) in a given context. Chapter Two revealed that *gafa* is a concept carrying multiple meanings and nuances that reveal the relational, functional and evaluative implications of the term. Particularly relevant for the purpose of this study are the two notions: first, *gafa* denotes the evaluation of the subject's relationships in order to determine their *matāfaioi*, and second, every person or object has special *matāfaioi*. To reveal these *matāfaioi*, an interpreter will attempt to answer basic questions such as: What are the subject's relationships? What are the subject's roles and responsibilities in their relations? What are the factors at play in determining the subject's roles? How can the responsibilities of the subject be defined?

For example, the *gafa* analysis can be used to examine the Samoan *tulāfale* (orator)³ to determine his or her *matāfaioi*. In the *gafa* analysis the interpreter is required to carry out the following interpretive tasks: identify the *faiā* (relations) between the *tulāfale* and other members of the 'āiga (family) and the *nu'u* (village); define the roles and functions played by the *tulāfale*; define factors that lead to the allocation of such responsibilities; determine the value of these roles to the 'āiga and *nu'u*; identify existing patterns, i.e. if the roles are gendered or not; and indicate prevailing issues with regards to the allocation of responsibilities to the *tulāfale* within the 'āiga and *nu'u*. Using these objectives as a guide to applying the *gafa* analysis will allow the interpreter to paint a clear portrait of the *tulāfale*'s relationships and his or her *matāfaioi* within a Samoan 'āiga and *nu'u*, revealing the issues surrounding these relationships and the functions allocated to the people.⁴

³ The example of the Samoan *tulāfale* (orator) will also be used below to illustrate the *tau* and *lima* analyses.

⁴ For an overview of the roles of a *tulāfale* in Samoan 'āiga and *nu'u* see, Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 27; Asofou So'o, *Democracy and Custom in Samoa: An Uneasy Alliance* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 2008), 217; Robert W. Williamson, *The Social and Political Systems of Central Polynesia*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1924), 367-372; and Morgan A. Tuimaleali'ifano, *O Tama a'āiga: The Politics of Succession to Sāmoa's Paramount Titles* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 2006), 1-2.

Applying the *gafa* analysis to biblical interpretation requires the interpreter to examine the characters presented within texts and determine their *faiā* and *matāfaioi*. In doing so, the interpreter needs to establish the nature of the characters' relations with others in the text to aid them in the identification of the characters' *matāfaioi*. For example, a *gafa* examination of Gen. 1:1-2:4a (the selected text for this study) requires the interpreter to establish the *matāfaioi* of the characters depicted within this creation story. In the process, the interpreter is also required to establish the relationships between the characters to determine their obligations to one another and the duties they need to fulfil to sustain their relationships. In this case, the interpreter must present descriptive analyses of the *faiā* between: the Creator and Earth; the Creator and Humanity; Earth and Humanity; Humanity and non-human creatures; Earth and non-human creatures; and Creator and non-human creatures. This follows by the identification of the *matāfaioi* that each character is expected to perform within his or her *faiā*.

For example, when interpreting Earth's *faiā* in Gen. 1:1-2:4a, the reader must attempt the following interpretive tasks. First, they must explain what the text says about Earth's *faiā* with other characters in the narrative. What does the creation story say concerning Earth's relationships with God and other creatures? Second, they need to identify what the text articulates about the functions that Earth is obligated to fulfil in order to sustain her *faiā*. What are Earth's relational functions depicted in the creation story? At the conclusion of this *gafa* analysis, the reader should present a description of Earth's relationships (*faiā*) and functions (*matāfaioi*) as presented within Gen. 1:1-2:4a.

2.2 *Tau* Analysis

After painting a clear portrait of the subject's functions and responsibilities, the next step of the *gafataulima* hermeneutical approach is to determine the costs and demands of the subject's various *matāfaioi* in terms of their *mafai* (abilities). This objective is attended to in the *tau* analysis. As

Meleisea for example claims that '*tulāfale* titles...are executive titles and carried special duties. These duties vary from family to family and village to village'.

identified in the previous chapter, the term *tau* also carries multiple meanings and nuances that manifest its relational, functional and evaluative properties. The term's multiple nuances suggest that *tau* designates the analysis involved in counting or estimating the costs and requirements of the subject's services and responsibilities; in other words, what is required for the subject to fulfil these services to a certain level of satisfaction. Therefore, an interpreter engaging in the *tau* analysis will need to ask basic questions such as: what are the distinct capabilities needed to meet the demands of the subject's functions and responsibilities? Are there indicators of the level of satisfaction required?

For example, *tau* analysis is a viable instrument to examine the Samoan cultural institution of the *laūga* (oratory). Studying the *laūga* using the *tau* analytical approach directs attentions to the costs or requirements for the *tulāfale* (orator) – whom I discussed above – to engage in such an activity. The *laūga* is one of the major cultural functions of the *tulāfale*, a second tier *matai* (chief) who acts as the mouthpiece of the *sa'o* (high chief) and the *'aīga* as a whole. He speaks on behalf of their behalf on traditional occasions where there are oratorical exchanges between different *'aīga*.⁵ A *tau* assessment of the *tulāfale*'s performance of the *laūga* means the observer will ask questions relating to the requirements in terms of *mafai* required for the *tulāfale* to master the constructing and delivering of a *laūga*. What is a Samoan *laūga*? What makes a quality *laūga*? What are the components and content of the *laūga*? How is a *laūga* delivered? Questions like these and more will develop a clear picture of the required abilities for a *tulāfale* to master the art of a *laūga*. Answering these questions could yield a list of *mafai* that includes: intellectual *mafai* such as competency in the Samoan language, the art of *laūga* and proverbial sayings; physical *mafai* such as a strong physical presence and a deep and commanding voice; and spiritual *mafai* - possessing

⁵ See the works of Maulolo Leaula T. Uelese Amosa, *Fausaga o Lauga Samoa*, vol. 1 (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2001) and Kirisimasi Salaa Fiti, "The Impact of Christianity on Samoan Oratory" (B.D Thesis, Malua Theological College, 2006). These works thoroughly described Samoan oratory identifying its components and their significance to the Samoan culture.

mana (spiritual strength). Together, these constitute the required *mafai* for one to be a proficient orator.

Following on from the *gafa* analysis of Earth's *faiā* and *matāfaioi* in Gen. 1:1-2:4a above, the interpreter utilising the *tau* analysis will attempt to evaluate Earth's *matāfaioi* (identified in the *gafa* analysis) and determine the costs of fulfilling them in terms of *mafai*. In this case, the interpreter will be engaged in the subsequent interpretive tasks. First, the interpreter will attempt to determine from the text the expectations on Earth in the fulfilment of her functions. What is the level of satisfaction expected from Earth? Second, the interpreter will try to identify from the narrative the *mafai* or abilities required for Earth to accomplish her functions and meet such level of satisfaction. What are the *mafai* required from Earth to adequately accomplish her functions? By the end of the *tau* analysis of the Gen. 1:1-2:4a, the interpreter should present a comprehensive list of the required *mafai* for Earth to satisfactorily fulfil her functions.

2.2 Lima Analysis

The third form of analysis in the *gafataulima* hermeneutic is the *lima* analysis. In Chapter One, I mentioned that the concept of *lima* carries relational, functional and evaluative implications. Hence, the term *lima* designates an analysis where the interpreter is required to do an inventory of the subject's *mafai* (abilities and resources) to determine if the subject has the required *mafai* to perform a specific function. To achieve this goal the interpreter must closely scrutinise the subject to identify their *mafai* to see if they possess the *mafai* identified in the *tau* analysis. Some guiding questions for the interpreter to focus on in doing a *lima* analysis could include: what sort of indicators shall I use to determine the subject's abilities? What are the obvious abilities of the subject? What are some hidden or obscure abilities of the subject? Does the subject have strengths? What are the subject's weaknesses? Answering these questions will give the interpreter a clear inventory of the subject's capabilities and establish correlations between these and the *mafai* highlighted in the *tau* analysis. If the subject possesses the required *mafai* then the interpreter can

conclude that the subject can *gafataulima* the *matāfaioi* (function) identified in the *gafa* analysis. But if the subject is devoid or short of the required *mafai* then the interpreter might conclude that the subject *lē gafataulima* the *matāfaioi* recognised in the *gafa* analysis.

For illustration, I will use the case study of the Samoan *laūga* used in the *gafa* and *tau* analysis above. The *lima* analysis directs attention to the orator instead of the *laūga*. That is, an interpreter using the *lima* analysis scrutinises the subject (orator) if he or she possesses the required *mafai* identified in the *tau* analysis to master the art of *laūga*. In this case, the subject should possess *mafai* such as: intellectual capacity (thorough understanding of the Samoan language, proverbs and the components of a *laūga*); the physical attributes such as presence and voice; and spiritual abilities (*mana*). If the subject retains these *mafai* then the interpreter can draw the conclusion that the orator could *gafataulima* the oratorical function of *laūga*. However, if the subject lacks the needed *mafai* then one can declare that they *lē gafataulima* to perform a *laūga*.

Following from the aforementioned *tau* analysis of Earth's functions in Gen. 1:1-2:4a, the interpreter using the *lima* analysis aims to identify Earth's *mafai* from the text and to thus determine if Earth has the capacity to perform them adequately. The interpreter's task here can be broken down as follows. First, the interpreter needs to examine the story and identify Earth's various *mafai*. What are Earth's abilities presented in the text? At the conclusion of the *lima* analysis the interpreter should be able to present an inclusive list of the *mafai* in Earth's possession. Second, the interpreter attempts to match the list of Earth's *mafai* with the list of *mafai* presented in the *tau* analysis. The objective behind this critical undertaking is to see if Earth retains the necessary capabilities to satisfactorily perform her roles and responsibilities identified in the *gafa* analysis. If the list of *mafai* in the *lima* analysis matches or exceeds the list in the *tau* analysis then the interpreter can conclude that Earth possesses the capacity to *gafataulima* her *matāfaioi*. In other words, Gen. 1:1-2:4a presents Earth as functionally 'good'. However, if the list of *mafai* in the *lima* analysis is dissimilar and falls short of the list of *mafai* produced in the *tau* analysis, then the

interpreter can conclude that Earth *lē gafataulima* her *matāfaioi*. That is, Gen. 1:1-2:4a presents Earth as functionally ‘not good’. This reading is possible because the term ‘good’ in Gen. 1:1-2:4a conveys the same sense of fulfilling functions that *gafataulima* carries.

2.4 Summary

A *gafataulima* hermeneutic is a tripartite hermeneutical approach based on the supposition that the calibre and quality of a subject can be revealed through the subject’s abilities to achieve a task. In order for the subject’s characteristics to be manifested the interpreter must conduct the three analyses of the *gafataulima* approach: *gafa*, *tau* and *lima*. The *gafa* investigation identifies the subject’s function(s). The *tau* analysis then estimates the required abilities to fulfil these functions. Finally, the *lima* inquiry determines if the subject can *gafataulima* the recognised functions by comparing the subject’s *actual* abilities with the *required* abilities identified in the *tau* analysis. In conjunction, the three analytical steps of the *gafataulima* hermeneutic presents a comprehensive appraisal of a subject’s worth and competence – their ‘goodness’, in other words.

Generally, analysing a subject through the lens of *gafataulima* hermeneutic yields an accurate portrait of a subject’s quality and capabilities. Such knowledge is valuable in fashioning one’s expectations imposed on a subject in relation to a function. In biblical studies, reading texts using a *gafataulima* hermeneutic gives the interpreter a clear picture of what the text reveals about a subject’s calibre and aptitudes. The three analyses of the *gafataulima* hermeneutic are therefore significant in answering the focus question of this study by appraising the functional quality (or ‘goodness’) of Earth as presented in Gen. 1:1-2:4a.

3. GAFATAULIMA HERMENEUTIC AND SAMOAN WORLDVIEWS OF EARTH

In order to survey the quality of Earth in Gen. 1:1-2:4a (the central focus of this study), the *gafataulima* hermeneutic will be fused with Samoan worldviews of Earth. These worldviews are still acknowledged today by some Samoans despite missionary efforts to abolish them from the

moment they arrived on the shores of the islands in 1830.⁶ Traces of Samoan cultural-ecological beliefs and traditional worldviews of Earth are apparent in several cultural traditions currently upheld by some Pacific islanders. For examples, some Samoan families are still preserving genealogies that trace their existence to aspects of Earth; the Samoan land tenure system still maintains that the people do not own the land but belong to the land instead; the ritual burial of the *pute* (umbilical cord) of a new born child maintains the people's connection to the land; and the implementation of *sā* (prohibitions) by village councils prohibiting the cutting and picking of plants give witness to the people's role as custodians of the environment.

Furthermore, the fusion of *gafataulima* with Samoan worldviews of Earth will make my proposed hermeneutic uniquely Samoan, formulated from Samoan hermeneutical keys and cultural and ecological beliefs. Such a move will also shape the *gafataulima* hermeneutic as an ecological hermeneutic that can be used in the interpretation of biblical texts. There are several reasons this Samoan ecological reading is necessary. First, it will foster different ways of readings, using indigenous perspectives other than those already employed in existing methods of biblical interpretation. This will provide an alternative way of interpreting biblical texts that could be placed alongside other already established approaches. Second, it will encourage readers (both Samoan and non-Samoan) to harness cultural and context-specific perspectives relevant to their unique ecological locations. Readers will differ widely in terms of their ecological orientations and ideologies – people see the environment differently and culture plays a significant part in people's relationships with their surroundings. Hence, bringing my cultural beliefs into play in fashioning my hermeneutic will make explicit my uniquely Samoan perceptions of Earth and the natural disasters that occur upon Earth. The following discussion will therefore clarify the cultural

⁶ See, Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga*, 97-107. Tofaeono outlines some of the strategies employed by the early missionaries in abolishing Samoan ancient religion and ecological beliefs. For example is the demonization of local spirits Samoans believed to be resided in elements of nature. This led to the cutting down of sacred forests, sacred tress and the consummation of animals and fishes Samoan believed to be incarnated forms of the gods.

categories that underpin my Samoan understandings of Earth and natural disasters, and will show how they complement my *gafataulima* hermeneutical reading of Earth in Gen. 1:1-2:4a.

Although most Samoans acknowledge the positive side of Earth, Samoan cultural traditions present a dualistic view of Earth. On the one hand, there is the popular egalitarian view based on the understanding that Earth and humanity are inter-related and have the same intrinsic values in the circle of life. That is, they both play equally important roles in the upkeep of the created order. On the other hand, there is a hierarchical view, which treats Earth as an entity that must be revered because of her potent forces such as her abilities to bring both disasters *and* protection to the people. These forces can disrupt (e.g. causing natural disasters) *or* benefit (e.g. as parent of humanity) creation. In this sense, the hierarchical view presents Earth as superior to humanity and other creatures. The *gafataulima* hermeneutic takes both these views seriously. That is, both views will contribute to the *gafataulima* hermeneutic and my approach to the text by providing Samoan ecological insights and categories that will elucidate Earth (and her functions and capabilities) in Gen. 1:1-2:4a. The following sections therefore detail these Samoan worldviews of Earth and explain how they will shape *gafataulima* hermeneutic.

3.1 The Samoan Egalitarian Worldview of Earth

Pre-Christian Samoans thought of the world as the work of the creator god *Tagaloa'alagi*. The world was generally perceived as a flat surface enclosed by a dome with nine layers. The dome and the land were once a unit before Tuite'elagi (the sky popper) popped up the dome to form the sky. This is why Samoans consider Earth and the heavens as one inseparable entity.⁷ The dome now housed everything the land, sea, human and non-human creatures, sun, stars, moon, and the abodes of the gods. What lies beyond the dome is unimaginable. As Malama Meleisea, a renowned Samoan historian, explains, 'Samoans envisaged the universe as a dome, ending at a horizon. The

⁷ See the retelling of the Samoan myth of creation in: Misilugi Tulifau Tofaeono Tu'u'u, *Rulers of Samoa Islands and Their Legends and Decrees* (Wellington: Tuga'ula Publication, 2001), 8-9.

dome had many layers, where the gods lived ... It was generally thought that the world was flat and that if ships sailed too far west, they would fall over the edge'.⁸ For most Samoans, this enclosed world was a place where Earth was considered as a living entity capable of interacting with the gods and humanity in a reciprocal relationship. Ama'amalele Tofaeono supports this view, noting that Samoan '[p]eople did not see such forms as mere objects for their benefit; rather, they were considered as living partners, sharing and interacting in interconnected functions and relationships for growth and survival'.⁹ For Tofaeono, the land, sea and sky were considered by Samoans not as objects of exploitation but as equal partners in the circle of life. The perception of Earth as a living entity can be found in the Samoan pre-Christian creation story where anthropomorphic features are attributed to some elements of creation such as '*Ele'ele* (soil), *Lagi* (sky/heaven), *Pō* (night) and *Āo* (daytime). These elements were seen as living beings possessing attributes of life such as the ability to reproduce, to communicate, rationalise and make decisions, and move about. These anthropomorphic depictions of various elements of creation disclosed Earth's ability to interact with humanity and the gods in creation.

Earth's interconnection with humanity is also clearly envisioned in the Samoan concepts of '*ele'ele* and *fanua* which primarily mean 'soil' and 'land' respectively. Apart from its primary meaning, the term '*ele'ele* can also metaphorically refer to 'human blood'. This reveals a deeper connection between human beings and the land. That is, the land is within the human body and in the blood that gives the body sustenance. Similarly, the term *fanua* not only refers to the land but can also denote the embryonic sac that engulfs an unborn child in the mother's womb'.¹⁰ This sac is

⁸ Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 42-43.

⁹ See, Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga*, 180. Also see p. 177 where he explains this worldview claiming that 'everything in the created cosmos was knitted together in a web of reciprocal and interrelated links. The other components of the created divine order (the environment) were recognised as a living part of the whole system. The survival of the whole habitation was managed as a bio-cosmic system operated, not on an I-It relationship basis, but on the We-(I)-Thou principle'.

¹⁰ This Samoan understanding of Earth as mother allows Earth to be considered as a feminine figure. Thus, for the rest of this study, Earth will be referred to using third person singular feminine pronouns. And it is a feminine noun in Hebrew so it makes sense to refer to Earth using a feminine pronoun.

discharged at birth and buried in the ground, highlighting the Samoan belief that the land is the womb of life.¹¹ In addition, these two notions of the land represent the Samoan worldview that the land is both the source of all life forms. Humankind therefore belongs and depends on the Earth for life and sustenance.

This view of Earth as provider of life and sustenance is depicted in Samoan traditions through the use of several analogies including Earth as *mātua* (mother/parent) or Earth as *tausimea* (caretaker/host). For example, Earth as *tausimea* reiterates Earth's role as a caretaker who maintains the created order, or as a host who is responsible for the *tausiga* (provision of nourishment and dwellings) for guests. The role of a *tausimea* can both be light and burdensome at times, depending on the needs and desires of the guests. Evidently, the Samoan worldview of Earth as a *tausimea* reveals Earth to be a dependable host and a trustworthy caretaker looking after humanity's needs.

Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi, the current Samoan head of state, also highlights this Samoan world view of Earth in his book, *Talanoaga na loma ma Ga'opo'a*.¹² Here, Tui Atua makes a comparative presentation of Christianity and ancient Samoan religion. Through this study, he claims that ancient Samoan religion acknowledged that humanity, the cosmos and the environment are equal. This is evidenced in the fact that ancient Samoans worshipped the sun, moon, stars, and selected plants and animals as gods. According to Tui Atua, ancient Samoans did not see themselves as superior to the other elements of the Universe, but rather as an inter-related and interdependent component in the order of creation.¹³ In another study, Tui Atua elaborates on this view further by suggesting that the search for peace in Samoan indigenous religion is the search for four key harmonies that hold the

¹¹ Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga*, 181. Also see, Tui-Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi, "In Search of Harmony: Peace in the Samoan Indigenous Religion," in *Su'esu'e Manogi-In Search of Fragrance: Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi and the Samoan Indigenous Reference* (eds. Suaalii-Sauni, T., I. Tuagalu, T. N. Kirifi-Alai, and N. Fuamatu; Apia: The Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa, 2008), 107

¹² Tui-Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi, *Talanoaga na loma ma Ga'opo'a* (Apia: Pacific Printers and Publisher Ltd, 2000), 15-24.

¹³ Ibid.

balance of life.¹⁴ These four harmonies are between humanity and the cosmos, between humanity and the environment, harmony with one's fellow humans, and with one's self. The first two of Tui Atua's harmonies focuses on the relationship between Earth and humanity. First is the harmony between humanity and the cosmos which involves an obligation by humankind to respect its relationship with cosmological elements that Samoans perceived as gods. The second is the harmony between humanity and the environment that involves an acknowledgement by humanity that its relationship with Earth is one of equivalence and reciprocity.¹⁵

According to Tui Atua the need for humanity to keep harmonious relationship with other aspects of the created order is due to their genealogical linkages.¹⁶ These linkages are apparent in the Samoan story of creation where humankind seemingly descended from the marriage union between *Lagi* (Sky), a female god, and *Papa* (Rock), a male god, thereby indicating a genealogical connection and interconnectedness between humanity, the gods and the elements of creation.¹⁷ Tui Atua also emphasises the providential aspect of Earth in keeping up her relationship with humanity. In illustrating this relationship, he recalls the yearly appearance and fishing of the small fish known as the *ātule* (mackerel) in the village of Asau¹⁸. When the *tautai* (head fisherman) sees the signs that the *ātule* is about to appear, he fasts, seeking the counsel of the gods. Once the school of fish appears the fisherman breaks his fast and paddles out to sea to greet the fish with a chiefly *laūga* (oration). The fish, heeding the *tautai*'s appeal, follows his canoe and moves into the nets set close to shore by the villagers. For Tui Atua, this event marks a moment of harmony between the gods, humanity and Earth. In hindsight, humanity's relationship with Earth that Tui Atua describes not

¹⁴ Tui Atua, "In Search of Harmony," 106-109

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.,

¹⁷ Ibid., 104-114.

¹⁸ Asau is a village on the western side of the island of Savaii.

only asserts the necessity for humanity to maintain balance in its relationship with Earth but also reiterates Earth's role as a *tausimea* providing sustenance for the needs of her inhabitants.

Tui Atua also mentions other functions of Earth depicted in Samoan ancient traditions that related Earth's role as *tausimea*. These responsibilities aimed at making humanity's stay on Earth pleasurable. He states that:

[f]ishing, planting, sailing were determined by the timely appearances of the moon and stars. The calculation of months and years were assessed by the timely appearances of the moon. The timely interaction of sunlight and shadow determined the hours of the day.

These timed appearances by sun, moon and stars...provided balance to life on [E]arth.¹⁹

Apparently, Earth as a responsible *tausimea* needs to regulate and inform the lives of the people to maintain peace and prosperity. The functions of the sun, moon and stars described here point to that direction. They control humanity's activities through the indication of time, days, months and seasons to plant and fish.

In summary, the Samoan egalitarian view of the world presents Earth as an equal partner in her relationship with humanity. In these relationships Earth functions as a *tausimea* providing for the needs of her inhabitants while in turn, humanity is expected to be responsible dwellers. This view, from an ecological perspective, expresses an ideal approach towards the environment with regards to the ecological crisis,²⁰ in the sense that such a view encourages humanity to care for and be sympathetic towards Earth, promotes interconnectedness between humanity and Earth, endorses responsible custodianship where humanity functions as partners rather than rulers over Earth, and raise awareness of the value of Earth for human survival.

¹⁹ Tui Atua, "In Search of Harmony," 106.

²⁰ Compare and contrast with the six eco-justice principles of the Earth Bible Team in Norman C. Habel et al. "Guiding Ecojustice Principles," in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, The Earth Bible, vol.1, ed. Norman C. Habel (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 39-52. Also see discussion of the six eco-justice principles in p. 23.

3.2 A Samoan Hierarchical Worldview of Earth

In this section, I will present an alternative Samoan view of the world. I will argue that, in addition to the worldview that sees Earth and humanity in a reciprocal and equal relationship, there is also a hierarchical view of the created order evident in Samoan traditions; the evidence presented by Tofaeono and Tui Atua also support this supposition. Within this hierarchy, Earth is superior over humanity. In other words, Earth was perceived by early Samoans as lesser than the gods but greater than humanity. This elevation of Earth can be seen by considering Earth's relationship and interactions with the gods and the fact that Samoans sees Earth as an entity with divine powers.

Although Tofaeono does not directly endorse this view, he nonetheless alludes to it in his assertion that pre-Christian Samoans believed in the presence of the gods in the elements of creation. The gods often identified themselves with Earth or her components such as trees, stones, days, tides, lighting and so forth. Their presence in natural objects was perceived as a way of granting Earth power and divine features which needed to be revered and respected.²¹ This interaction was manifested in Samoan ancient religion where elements of nature were worshipped because they were considered as physical embodiments of the gods. For instance, some people worshipped the moon as the incarnated form of the god *Tagaloa 'alagi* while for others, he was understood to be present in a hallowed stone. These objects were believed to be sacred and worshipped by the people during times of war, planting, fishing and harvesting to assure them of success in these expeditions. Another example of the interaction between the gods and elements of Earth is apparent in the worship of the god *Ī'ulautalo* (tip of the taro leaf). This god was worshipped by some Samoan villages for his healing powers. People with ailments and sicknesses offered prayers to *Ī'ulautalo*. In honour of this god, people were forbidden to consume the ends of taro leaves.²² These examples not only reveal the belief among pre-Christian Samoans that Earth possessed superior powers to

²¹ Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga*, 180.

²² This practice is still evident today in food preparation among most Samoans. However, it is done today without any spiritual significance.

humanity but they also highlight Earth's role as a *tausimea* - providing nourishments, medicine and healing, and guidance for human activities such as war, planting and fishing.

Tui Atua also implicitly makes allusions to the superiority of Earth over humanity; even though he claims that the relationship between Earth and humanity is that of equivalence, the supporting evidence he uses suggests the opposite.²³ For example, his consideration of the elements of Earth as the ancestors of humanity alludes to Earth's dominance. For Tui Atua, the gods *Lagi* (Sky) the women, and *Papa* (Rock) the male, sired the first humans.²⁴ Tui Atua's claim reveals Earth to be superior to humanity not only because her elements were considered as gods but also as parents of humans. In Samoan traditions, parents are embraced with high regard. The structure of a Samoan family is hierarchical. The father is the patriarch of the family, next to him is the mother then the children from oldest to youngest. This family structure is maintained by *fa'aaloalo* (respect).²⁵ *Fa'aaloalo* is paid to people with higher status. In the Samoan immediate family, *fa'aaloalo* is given to the parents by the children - serving, obeying and doing what is pleasing to them. Therefore, from this perspective, seeing elements of Earth as parents to humanity reveals Earth's supremacy over humans in the hierarchy of creation.

Tofaeono also alludes to the superiority of Earth over humanity in Samoan ancient beliefs. This is evident in his interpretations of Samoan creation myths. For Tofaeono, Samoan creation myths reveal that the creation of humans was secondary to that of Earth. In Samoan creation myths, humans were considered to be latecomers in the order of creation, second to the creation of Earth and her elements. Moreover, these myths make no mention of humans being directly created by the creator god *Tagaloa'alagi*. Rather, humans were the outcome of interactions between elements of

²³ Tui Atua, "In Search of Harmony," 106-107.

²⁴ Ibid., 107.

²⁵ See, Paulo Koria, "Moving toward a Pacific Theology," *PJT* II, no. 22 (1999): 5; and Frank Smith, "The Johannine Jesus," 59-62. For example, Smith asserts that *fa'aaloalo* is observed vertically and is paid to those with higher rank in Samoan society.

Earth or were the creation of other creatures.²⁶ For examples, the creation of humans through the interactions of the elements of Earth is evident in one of Samoa's creation accounts where the couple *Lagi* and *Papa* sired the first humans.²⁷ On the other hand, the creation of humans through the creative actions of other creatures is manifested in another Samoan creation myth where the *Tulī* (plover) fashioned maggots - that appeared from a dead vine - into humans.²⁸ Again the order of creation and the creator god's non-involvement in the creation of humanity depicts humanity's creation as inferior to that of Earth and her components. In this light, Earth is therefore above humanity in the creation hierarchy.

Furthermore, the creation of humanity in Samoan creation stories also points to another feature of the relationship between Earth and the gods. In the creation process, Earth acted upon the will of the gods as an agent who assisted in the creation activities. For example, in the Manu'a²⁹ version of creation known as *Tala o le Foafoaga* (The Story of Creation) *Tagaloa'alagi* (the creator) instructed and employed elements of Earth to carry out creative activities. The elements that participated in the creation activities include the following groupings: the *papa* (rock) that *Tagaloa'alagi* instructed to be divided to form other rock types; the couple *Īlu* (immensity) and *Mamao* (space) who sire *Pō* (night), *Āo* (daytime), *Lā* (sun), and *Lagi* (sky); *Pō* and *Āo* who brought forth *Lagi Ūli* (dark sky) and *Lagi Mā* (clear sky); and *Fatu* (stone) and *'Ele'ele* (soil) who produced the first humans.³⁰ The employment of these elements of Earth by *Tagaloa'alagi* to carry out the divine creative plan qualifies Earth as *Tagaloa'alagi*'s creative agent.

The relationship between the Creator and Earth within these early Samoan creation myths is that of an interaction between a *faumea* (maker) and *soāfaumea* (assistant maker). The Samoan term *soa*

²⁶ Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga*, 179-180.

²⁷ Tui Atua, "In Search of Harmony," 107.

²⁸ Ibid., 180.

²⁹ Manu'a is the eastern most island of the Samoan archipelago now part of the American Samoa Territory.

³⁰ Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 4.

designates ‘a companion’, ‘a second’, ‘a partner’, or ‘a wife’.³¹ However, *soa* can also be used to make reference to an assistant, a representative or a lesser other. These nuances can be applied to Earth as a *soāfaumea* in the Samoan context of creation. Pre-Christian Samoans never considered Earth as a co-equal of the creator gods but only an agent who assists and represents the divine in the creative activities. Hence, Earth as a *soāfaumea* denotes Earth’s role as *Tagaloa’alagi*’s assistant in creation.

Furthermore, Samoans also saw Earth as an entity with superior powers that could either benefit or cause destruction for the people. This worldview is apparent in the portraits and beliefs attached to natural features that the Samoans once considered as gods. One example is the belief in the god *Mafuī’e* (earthquake). *Mafuī’e* was a destructive god who resided in the interior of Earth. *Mafuī’e* spent most of the time sleeping but when *Mafuī’e* suddenly awakened or turned over, the whole Earth shook. On some occasions, when *Mafuī’e*’s sleep was disturbed by anyone, the god would wake up furious, causing fire, smoke and ashes to shoot out from the Earth (in volcanoes) and resulting in devastation to the people.³² This story not only depicts the pre-Christian Samoan belief in Earth’s superior powers but also identifies Earth’s capacity to cause destruction to the lives of the people.

Another example of the hierarchical view of Earth is the Early Samoan belief in the *vaosā* (sacred forest) of the *Tuifiti* (king of Fiji), which lies at the outskirt of the village of Fagamalo in the northwest of the island of Savaii. Up to the present day some Samoans especially the people of Fagamalo still hold this belief and abide by the taboos of the *vaosā*. The forest was made sacred by the *Tuifiti* who visited Samoa in ancient times. During this visit, the *Tuifiti* used the forest as a meeting place, where he encountered the spirits who accompanied him to Samoa. As a result, the forest came alive and the *Tuifiti* forbade anyone from entering the forest, cutting a tree or using the

³¹ George Pratt, *Samoan Language*, 266. Also see, G. B. Milner, *Samoan Dictionary: Samoan-English, English-Samoan* (Auckland: Pasifika Press, 1993), 212; R. W. Allardice, *Dictionary of Modern Samoan*, 66-67.

³² Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: Aiga*, 179.

land for cultivation, so that the forest might be preserved. For that reason, the *vaosā* still exists to the present day because it is believed that anyone who breaks the *Tuifiti*'s rules will suffer illnesses or even death.³³ This account not only highlights the potentiality of Earth to cause havoc to people's lives but also suggests that Samoan beliefs in the powers of Earth and her elements are still extant and relevant today.

In summation, early Samoan hierarchical views of the world elevated Earth above humanity. Pre-Christian Samoans acknowledged Earth to be a superior entity that interacted with the gods as agents to carry out divine instructions and activities; some of these beliefs are still present today. In the context of creation, such a role reveals Earth to be the gods' *soāfaumea* (assistant maker) assisting them in the creative process. In addition, the idolization of Earth as a higher being is the result of the Early Samoan worldview that Earth possessed divine-like powers with the capacity to provide them guidance and to destroy life.

3.3 *Gafataulima* as a Samoan Ecological Hermeneutic

The *gafataulima* hermeneutic as an ecological approach incorporates the Samoan worldviews of the world mentioned above. That is, this hermeneutic is based on the Samoan view that the Earth is a living and relational entity with *faiā* (relationships) and *matāfaioi* (functions) to fulfil in order to sustain her relationships with the gods and humanity.

The *gafataulima* ecological approach incorporates the worldview that Earth's *faiā* with humanity can be understood in egalitarian and hierarchical terms. It is egalitarian in the sense that Earth and humanity are interdependent where the welfare of one is dependent on the other. In this relationship, Earth is expected to play the role of a *tausimea* (caretaker) providing her human

³³ Faatonu L. Vaelua, ed. *Samoa ne'i galo: Talatu'u ma Tala o le Vavau a Samoa: A Compilation of Oral Traditions and Legends of Samoa*, vol. 1 (Apia: Ministry for Youth Sports and Cultural Affairs, 1998), 57-64. According to Vaelua, there are current evidence that reveal the supernatural powers of the sacred forest and the people of Fagamalo are still making traditional offerings of food to the forest to appease the forest when someone disobeyed the taboos of the forest. For example, they recall an event at a festive gathering at the hospital in Fagamalo where a member of the Samoan Parliament ridiculed the *Tuifiti* and the *vaosā*- he became ill and lost his life instantaneously.

inhabitants with sustenance and living spaces and regulating the activities of her occupants to guarantee them fruitful lives. In the hierarchical understanding of Earth's relationship with humanity, Earth is envisioned as divine, with the potential to offer the people guidance in their daily activities and occasionally cause havoc if her powers are not fully respected.

The *gafataulima* ecological hermeneutic also incorporates the Samoan worldview that there is an established *faiā* between Earth and the gods. In this relationship, Earth is expected to fulfil the responsibilities of being the physical embodiment of the gods and a *soāfaumea*, assisting the gods in fulfilling the divine will within the creative process. This understanding of Earth is apparent in the Samoan hierarchical worldview of the world presented above. Here, Earth is considered superior to her human counterparts interacting and serving the gods.

The *gafataulima* ecological approach is also based on the Samoan understanding of Earth as an entity with resources and capabilities that can be used to accomplish her responsibilities in the created order. According to Samoan traditional worldviews, Earth's potentiality includes both positive and negative abilities that could benefit or cause chaos to humanity and creation as a whole.

Thus to summarise so far, the bases for the *gafataulima* ecological hermeneutic are the Samoan worldviews of Earth, first, as an interrelated entity - interacting with the gods and humanity; second, as an entity with relational functions and responsibilities of as a *soāfaumea* (assistant to maker) and *tausimea* (host/caretaker), and finally, as an entity with resources and capabilities to perform her duties. These Samoan views of Earth set the stage for the application of the three analyses of the *gafataulima* approach. First, the *gafa* analysis surveys Earth's relationships with the gods and humans and identifies if Earth plays a role comparable to that of a *tausimea* or a *soāfaumea*. Secondly, the *tau* analysis estimates the cost for Earth to satisfactorily accomplish these duties in terms of resources and abilities. Lastly, the *lima* analysis identifies Earth's capabilities to determine if she can fulfil her duties in order to sustain her relationships. The outcome of these

three analyses will offer a clear portrait of the nature and quality (degree of excellence) of Earth. Formulating the quality of Earth will provide an answer from a *gafataulima* perspective to the focus question of this study: was Earth created ‘good’ and even ‘very good’?

4. APPROACHING THE TEXT

In approaching Gen. 1:1-2:4a, my *gafataulima* ecological hermeneutic will be melded with the Samoan *tala-mamanu* (narrative-grammatical) reading methodology. My choice of this methodology is based on the fact that Gen. 1:1-2:4a resembles a Samoan *tala* (story). First, Gen. 1:1-2:4a is a *tala* with *fa’a’autū* (characters), *fa’amatala* (a narrator) and other features typical of Samoan *tala*. And second, the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala* is composed using Hebrew terms that may be considered akin to Samoan *mamanu* (patterns/motifs).³⁴ Like Samoan *mamanu*, Hebrew terms carry numerous connotations that can offer multiple nuances of meaning. The following sections detail the Samoan understanding of text and the intricacies of the chosen interpretive tool.

4.1 Samoan Concept of Text

In comparison to the literary traditions of Western societies, Samoa’s written literary tradition is still in its infancy. Since written texts are foreign to Samoan custom, there is no direct word for ‘text’ as a written manuscript. The common terms used when referring to written texts are *tala* (story) and *tusi* (to write). The term *tala* is often used to refer to the content of any written document regardless of its genre. This is reflected in the Samoan perception of the biblical texts as *tala* - there is no distinction made between texts of different genres. In this sense, the Bible is a book of *tala*. This usage of the term is reflected in the Samoan phrase *o le tala oi le matā’upu muamua a Mataio* (the text or story in the first chapter of Matthew). However, the term *tala* also

³⁴ *Mamanu* means ‘pattern’, ‘motif’, ‘image’ or ‘design’. However, I see different *mamanu* as vocabulary, words or letters with meanings and significances. These *mamanu* are used to relate the story engraved on *siapo* and *tatau*.

means ‘story’, ‘narration’ or ‘news’ as well as signifying the verbs ‘to tell’ or ‘to spread’.³⁵ Thus, in his Samoan dictionary, Milner identifies different categories of *tala* depending on their genres, including news reports, stories, accounts, statements, tales and legends, plays, novels, gossip, history and reputation.³⁶ Clearly, Milner regards *tala* as an inclusive term that incorporates any form of story, be it written or orally transmitted.

Furthermore, *tala* refers to stories related orally throughout the generations, preserved through customs and religions, performed through rituals, dances and songs, engraved and written on Samoan artefacts such as *siapo* (tapa cloths), posts of *fale* (Samoan houses), ‘ava (kava) bowls, our bodies in the form of *tatau* (tattoos), and most important of all, lived through our lives. This observation implies that Samoans see a *tala* in everything, and everything is *tala*. In other words, everything is a text whether orally transmitted, written, engraved, performed, told or retold and lived or experienced.

On the other hand, the term *tusi* means ‘to point out’, ‘write’ or ‘mark’ and it is typically used to describe the actions of marking a *siapo* (tapa cloth) and to point out directions.³⁷ However, the emergence of a Samoan literary tradition due to Western influence added other meanings to the term *tusi*. This influence is apparent in Milner’s dictionary of the Samoan language. The purpose for Milner’s dictionary was to produce a work relevant for the contemporary Samoan context at the time. The work therefore clearly identified a progression (or westernisation) in the meaning of the word *tusi*. In addition to the meanings identified above, Milner recognised other meanings attached to the term, including the verb ‘to write’ and the nouns ‘letter’ as a written communication, ‘book’

³⁵ Pratt, *Samoan Language*, 295-296. Pratt also identified other meanings of the term *tala* such as ‘side of the Samoan *fale* (house)’, ‘cock of a chicken’, ‘thorn’, ‘let loose’ and ‘to untie’.

³⁶ G. B. Milner, *Samoan Dictionary* (Auckland: Pasifika Press, 1966), 232. Milner’s dictionary of the Samoan language was published in 1966 more than 70 years after Pratt. The purpose for Milner’s dictionary was to produce a work relevant for the contemporary Samoan context at the time.

³⁷ Pratt, *Samoan Language*, 330.

as a compilation of written documents, and ‘ledgers’ - written accounts of a company or any other form of written documents.³⁸

The meanings identified by Milner clearly depict an evolution of the term *tusi* - it is now associated with Western concepts of texts. This is often the case when referring to texts of the Bible. For instance, when referring to the biblical text of Isaiah chapter one, this would be translated as, ‘*O le tusi a Isaia matā’upu muamua*’. Yet, this usage of *tusi* does not really identify with the traditional understanding of Samoan textuality. Samoan definitions of *tusi* as text do not confine it to written texts alone, but also includes oral, performed and lived texts.

This does not mean that Samoans do not have written texts. Pratt’s definition hints at *siapo* as one example of a Samoan written text and I would argue that another example is the Samoan *tatau* or *pe’a* (tattoo). These two Samoan customs are considered by many as Samoan art forms but I suggest they are written texts inscribed using special Samoan *mamanu* on cloths made from the *ū’a* plant³⁹ (as in *siapo* texts) and on the skin of young men and women (as in *tatau* texts) with traditional dyes. The most significant aspects of these forms of written texts are that they narrate a *tala* and convey meanings for Samoans.

Siapo is a Samoan cloth made from the *ū’a* plant. It is used for clothing, burial shrouds and covers, and ceremonial garments to list but a few. These bark clothes are dyed with *mamanu* to produce texts or *tala*. The *mamanu* were usually drawn from Samoan religion, environments, customs, and everyday life. Each of these *mamanu* can be likened to words in that they carry and communicate meanings and significances. Similarly, the Samoan *tatau* or *pe’a* (male tattoo) can also be looked at as text. Albert Wendt supports this view and claims that ‘the *tatau* and the *malu* (female tattoo) are not just beautiful decoration(s): they are scripts/texts/testimonies to do with relationships, order,

³⁸ Milner, *Samoan Dictionary*, 290.

³⁹ *ū’a* plant : paper mulberry plant used in *siapo* (tapa) making.

and form'.⁴⁰ In this sense, the *tatau* therefore can be seen as text written on human skin (using *mamanu*) relating the *tala* of the Samoan people. As text, the *tatau* is also written in the *mamanu* language or vocabulary with *mamanu* similar to those of the *siapo* text. Hence, like the *siapo*, the *mamanu* of the *tatau* text are also drawn from Samoan religion, the environment and everyday life which carry meanings and special significance. In this sense, the *siapo* and *tatau* texts relate the *tala* of our relationships with the gods, everyday experiences including our relationships with each other and our view and relationship with the environment. For example, a list of some of the common *mamanu* used in both *siapo* and *tatau* together with their interpretations is provided below. The list includes:⁴¹

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. <i>Fa'aā'upega</i> (net) | 2. <i>Fa'alaumei</i> (turtle) |
| 3. <i>Fa'asigago</i> (pandanus bloom) | 4. <i>Fa'alaupaōgo</i> (pandanus leaf) |
| 5. <i>Fa'a'aveāu</i> (star fish) | 6. <i>Fa'atūmoa</i> (banana pod) |
| 7. <i>Fa'amasina</i> (moon) | 8. <i>Fa'a'anufe</i> (worm) |
| 9. <i>Fa'aātualoa</i> (centipede) | 10. <i>Fa'atusilīli'i</i> (wavy lines) |

As mentioned before, these *mamanu* carry meanings and tell a *tala*. For example, the *fa'aā'upega* resembles a net. It is a clear reference to the activities of fishing and pigeon hunting. It relates the *tala* of the reliance of the people on the land and sea for nourishment and the providence of the earth and the gods for the people. *Fa'atusilīli'i* (straight and wavy lines) reflect the sea (the wavy lines) and the midrib of the coconut leaf (the straight lines). Again these elements depict the *tala* of human reliance on the land and sea for food and shelter. The other *mamanu* such as the *fa'aātualoa*

⁴⁰ Albert Wendt, "Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body," *Span* 42-43 (April-October 1996): 21.

⁴¹ 'Siapo: Art of Samoa,' *Siapo.com*, accessed November 13, 2014, <http://www.siapo.com/aboutsiapo.html>. Also see Kramer, *The Samoa Islands*, vol. 2 (1901), 346-361. Here Kramer describes the process of *siapo* making and also included some *mamanu* used in *siapo* texts.

(centipede) and *fa'amasina* (moon) reveal the *tala* of the religious beliefs and worship life of Pre-Christian Samoans. The images depicted in these *mamanu* according to Samoan religious beliefs are the incarnations of various national, district, village and family gods.⁴²

In addition, the above *mamanu* are also used in combinations known as the *soāmamanu* (*mamanu* expressions) to tell a *tala* (to produce texts). For instance, if the *mamanu* of the *fa'alaumei* (turtle) and *fa'asigago* (pandanus bloom) are depicted in a frame of a *siapo* then, that frame relays the *tala* of the works of the *laumei* (turtle) god in providing for the needs of the people. Another combination of *mamanu* could, for example, include the *fa'atusilili'i* (wavy lines) and the *fa'a'anufe* (worm) in a *tatau* frame. This depicts the *tala* of *Tagaloa'alagi* as the creator god creating Earth and humanity. Creation of Earth is represented by the *fa'atusilili'i*, the wavy lines representing the primordial conditions. The creation of humanity is represented by the *fa'a'anufe* (worm) *mamanu*. This *mamanu* depicts the Samoan tradition that the first humans were fashioned by the god *Tulī* (plover) from the worm. Together this *mamanu* depiction tells the *tala* of creation in Samoan traditions. What this reveals is that the *siapo* and *tatau* (texts) are subject to interpretation and the interpreter must be familiar with the *mamanu* language or vocabulary and the *mamanu* arrangements (sentence structure) to identify the meanings of the *tala* (text). This observation of the *siapo* and *tatau* texts clearly highlights some Samoan insights on written texts. It shows that for Samoans, written texts depict and tell *tala* written in a language and vocabulary (*mamanu*) that carries meanings and significances that make sense to the reader.

This section therefore highlights a Samoan understanding of text. First, everything that relates meaning can be a potential text. In this sense, Samoan customs, artefacts, traditions, stories and life experiences can be seen as texts because they contain *tala* and relate meanings for some Samoans. Second, Samoans also have a concept of written text. The two examples mentioned here are the

⁴² *Tulī* (plover) is the incarnation of *Tagaloa'alagi* who fashioned humans; *Gogo* (noddy bird) represents the war god *Safulusā* (sacred feather); *Ātūaloa* (centipede) is the long god, the god of healing; *Masina* (moon) also represents the deity *Tagaloa'alagi* is the supreme god; *Laumei* (turtle) represents the family god *Apelesa* who is the guardian of the *Apelesa* family.

siapo and *tatau* texts. These Samoan texts relate *tala* and are written in a language (*mamānu* language) that relates meaning to the reader. This emphasises the importance of being competent in the language of texts and familiar with the meanings of different words (*mamānu*) in order to identify and understand the meaning of written texts. In addition, written texts contain carefully-ordered *mamānu* to yield meanings and relay *tala*. For this thesis, I will also look at a written biblical text as *mamānu* texts relaying *tala*. In my attempt to understand the meanings of this text, I will treat it as a *tala* and its language and vocabulary as *mamānu*. In other word, this Samoan understanding of texts sets the stage for a *tala-mamānu* reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a.

4.2 *Tala Reading*⁴³

As mentioned above, the term *tala* as a noun can mean ‘story’ or ‘narrative.’ As a verb *tala* can mean ‘to tell’ or ‘to spread’. These nuances of *tala* reveal the scope and application of this way of reading. This method sees any biblical text as a *tala* regardless of its genre, because Samoan *tala* are multi-dimensional, involving the interweaving of different genres to tell stories.⁴⁴ In a typical Samoan *tala*, a reader can find elements of poetry (e.g. a song, a poem, oratory or proverb), prophecies and predictions, commands and laws, visions, dreams and laments.⁴⁵ These elements of

⁴³ *Tala* reading, although based on a Samoan understanding of stories/narratives, shares the suppositions and premises of narrative criticism. See the works of Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Jan P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975), *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Leiderdorp: Deo Publishing, 1999); Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narratives*, Bible and Literature 9 (Sheffield: Almond 1983); Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); David Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, 80-106; Hugh C. White, *Narration and Discourse in the Book of Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); John A. Beck, *God as Storyteller: Seeking Meaning in Biblical Narrative* (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2008).

⁴⁴ For examples, see, the two Samoan creation stories: The *Tala i le Fofofoaga* (a story) and *Solo o le Va'a* (a poem). Despite the difference in genres, I see these two stories as one literary unit because their contents reveal several similarities such as characterisation, motif and similar storylines. The *Tala i le Fofofoaga* provides an extended version, while the *Solo o le Va'a* provides a summary that can be prefixed to act as an introduction or, appended as a conclusion to the *Tala i le Fofofoaga*. In this manner, the two *tala* are unified into one *tala* with multiple genres.

⁴⁵ See, Richard Moyle, *Fāgogo: Fables from Samoa in Samoan and English* (Auckland: Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Auckland, 2009). Most of the *tala* in this collection exhibit numerous genres in their contents. For example, the *tala* ‘*Saētānē* and *Saēfāfinē*’ (pp. 50-55) has elements of poetry, prayer, songs, lament and dialogues intertwined within its content. Also see the Samoan short story; “O le Univesite Aoao o Samoa,” in Matavai Tautunu Aumua, *O le Vala'au mai le Tu'ugamau* (Apia: Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa, 2007), 33-37, which displays the moulding together of poetry, songs, orations, and discourses.

Samoan *tala* brings the *tala* to life and shapes Samoan understandings of the *fa'amatala* (narrator), *tulaga* (point of view), *talanoaga* (discourse), *fa'ata'atiāga* (structure), *fa'agāsologa* (plot), *fa'a'autū* (characters) and *fausaga* (style).⁴⁶ For example, a shift in genre influences the *fa'ata'atiāga*, adds movement to the *fa'agāsologa*, and make possible switches in the *fausaga* of the *tala*.

4.2.1 *Fa'amatala*

The Samoan term *fa'amatala* as a noun means, 'teller of a story' or 'explainer of a story' and as a verb, it means 'to open'. These meanings denote the dual task of a *fa'amatala* in relaying a story. That is, a *fa'amatala* not only tells but also explains a story by opening it up to reveal its meaning(s). This can be achieved through the use of various *tala* techniques in the *ānotala* (content), such as *tulaga* (point of view), *talanoaga* (dialogues), *fa'ata'atiāga* (structure), *fa'agāsologa* (plot), *fa'a'autū* (characters) and *fausaga* (style). In Samoan *tala*, there is a tendency for the *fa'amatala* to be boundless in their delivery, bringing stories to life through skills, voice variations, rhetorics, expressions and actions. The boundlessness of the *fa'amatala* equips them with the freedom and fluidity to hop from genre to genre, from perspective to perspective, from point of view to point of view or from past to present in order to capture the audience's attention and imagination or as an aid to emphasise a point.⁴⁷ In this sense, an interpreter doing a *gafataulima* reading should take a closer look at the *fa'amatala* following how they hop around the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala* to reveal the text's meanings.

⁴⁶ Most Samoan written *tala* accessible today are influenced by Western ideas. However, traces of Samoan *tala* elements are evident in some *tala* especially myths and legends that have been transmitted orally over the years.

⁴⁷ See 'Tala (Legend) of *Lufasaitu*,' in Vaelua, *Samoa ne'i galo*, 67-70. In the retelling of this Samoan *tala*, the *fa'amatala* steps from the third person bird's eye view perspective to the first person perspective, relaying the story from *Tagaloa'alagi*'s perspective. Not only that, but there is also evidence of the *fa'amatala* transcending time through adding futuristic commentaries to the *tala*.

4.2.2 *Tulaga*

The Samoan term *tulaga* can mean ‘stand’, ‘status’, ‘condition’ or ‘location’. In the context of Samoan *tala* it refers to the point of view used by the *fa’amatala* to tell the *tala*. As mentioned above, the *fa’amatala* in Samoan *tala* hops from one point of view to another. The *fa’amatala* tells the story from an omniscient point of view thus, the *fa’amatala* can jump from perspective to perspective, character to character, or past to present and vice versa. The *fa’amatala* also uses the second person in Samoan *tala*. The second person narrations allow the *fa’amatala* to address the audience directly. Alternatively, telling the *tala* from the first person means the *fa’amatala* either tells the story from the point of view of a particular character or he or she is involved in the story.⁴⁸ When using the first person the *fa’amatala* also has the freedom to jump from character to character thus telling the story from the perspective of the characters. The *gafataulima* reading also incorporates the idea of *tulaga* transitions within the *tala*. An interpreter using the *gafataulima* hermeneutic must identify and locate the shifts in the point of view(s) and voices used by the *fa’amatala* to relay the *tala*. These shifts in perspective produce information that can help to construct the *tala*’s meaning. For instance, the *fa’amatala*’s shift to first person to tell the story from a particular character’s point of view can convey information concerning that particular character by revealing how he or she perceives other characters or developments within the *tala*. Through this hopping, the *fa’amatala* can sometime contradicts him/herself. In Samoan *tala* reading, the existence of contradictions in a narrative does not necessarily jeopardise the *fa’amatala*’s omniscient status. This is due mainly to the way contradictions are perceived in Samoan *tala*. Contradictions in Samoan *tala* are seen as a narrative device that the *fa’amatala* can employ to introduce a new or a different perspective(s) into the narrative. As mentioned above a *fa’amatala* hops from perspective to perspective in relaying the *tala*. So, for the *tala* critic the

⁴⁸ This feature of Samoan *tala* is evident in Tautunu, “O le Univesite Aoao o Samoa,” (2007), 33-37. This *tala* is relayed in most parts using the first person singular. However, there are occasions where the second and third person plural is used.

presence of contradictions in a *tala* will allow him/her to detect the *fa'amatala*'s movements (shifting perspective) in the telling of the narrative. Moreover, the shift in perspective maintains the omniscient status of the *fa'amatala* by revealing the *fa'amatala*'s capacity to know the developments within the narrative from numerous angles.

Furthermore, what distinguishes Samoan *tala* reading from traditional narrative criticism in biblical studies is the emphasis Samoan *tala* reading puts on the narrator or *fa'amatala*. Traditional narrative critics seem to see the narrator as laconic – working behind the scenes only to emerge or intrude the narration through the use of break frames to provide commentary on the narrative.⁴⁹ In this sense, traditional narrative critics see a quality and artistic narrator as one who is less likely to intrude the narration and remains in the shadows. However, for the narrator to remain in the background cannot be achieved in Samoan narratology because Samoan stories were never meant to be written down; instead they were meant to be visually and orally presented in front of an audience. In this regards, the *fa'amatala* therefore, is seen in front of the story using visual aids (such as facial expressions), audial aids (such as voice variations), actions and props to bring the story into life. So, for Samoans, narrative art lies not only in the weaving (as emphasised by traditional narrative critics) but also in the telling of the story.

4.2.3 Talanoaga

The telling of Samoan *tala* also involves *talanoaga* (discourses). *Talanoaga* refer to speeches, either by the characters or the *fa'amatala*. These *talanoaga* not only develop the *tala* but also reveal meanings the *fa'amatala* wishes to transmit to the audience. A *fa'amatala*'s *talanoaga* can be seen on occasions where the *fa'amatala* directly addresses the audience revealing their thoughts or perspectives on an issue arising within the *tala*. In doing so, the *fa'amatala* can furnish their

⁴⁹ Jerome T. Walsh, *Style & Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (Collegeville, Minneapolis: Liturgical, 2001), 125. Walsh asserts that “sometimes the narrator will, so to speak, step out of the flow of the narrative to address the reader directly; the technical term for this is ‘breaking frame,’ and it changes the narrator’s voice from that of a storyteller to that of a commentator on the story.” Also see, Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 184.

discourses with the rhetoric of emotion. For example, to show emotions of sadness or yearning the *fa'amatala* sometimes cry while feelings of joy are expressed by their laughter and singing.⁵⁰ The *gafataulima* reading also takes this understanding of the *fa'amatala* and *talanoaga* into account. A *gafataulima* critic should treat discourses within biblical *tala* as modes in which the *fa'amatala* uses rhetoric to convey particular meanings and emotions to the audience.

4.2.4 *Fa'ata'atiāga*

The Samoan term *fa'ata'atiāga* means 'setting' or 'positioning out'. In the context of Samoan *tala* it refers to the structure of the *tala*. A typical Samoan *tala* consists of three *vaega* (sections). First, is the *fa'atomu'aga* which is similar to an introduction. The term *fa'atomu'aga* literally means 'made to come first' and in Samoan *tala*, it refers to the first section where the *fa'amatala* provides the audience with the *ulutala* (heading of the story) and a *fa'ata'imuāga* (what is first laid out). In the *ulutala*, an overview of the plot is usually given in a brief summary clause while the *fa'ata'imuāga* is typically the introductory scene used by the *fa'amatala* to set the stage (background) of the *tala* that follows. It is also in the *fa'atomu'aga vaega* that the *fa'amatala* introduces the main characters of the *tala* using both the *ulutala* and the *fa'ata'imuāga*. The second *vaega* is the *ānotala* (literally, flesh of the story) or the body of the *tala*. This is the elaborated section or the plot of the *tala*. In long *tala*, the *ānotala vaega* can be further subdivided into *vaevaēga* (sub-sections). The last section is the *fa'atōmūliga* of the *tala*. *Fa'atōmūliga* literally means 'made to come last.' It refers to the conclusion or closing section of a *tala*.⁵¹ The

⁵⁰ Tootoo Aleki, *O 'Ati, ma lona Faamanuiaga* (Apia: Le Lamepa Press, 1997). Throughout this Samoan novel the author heavily uses dialogues and monologues (*talanoaga*) to convey meanings. Also see, Tui-Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi, "More on Meaning, Nuance and Metaphor," in *Su'esu'e Manogi-In Search of Fragrance: Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi and the Samoan Indigenous Reference* (eds. Suaalii-Sauni, T., I. Tuagalu, T. N. Kirifi-Alai, and N. Fuamatu; Apia: The Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa, 2008), 73-74. Tui Atua explains how her aunty chanted a *tala*. Chanting a *tala* means impersonating voices of characters and expressing the mood of the *tala* through facial and vocal expressions.

⁵¹ This *tala* structure is apparent in the Samoan legend "*O le Mago o Foa*" relayed by Lauafia Tu'ese and Liumaunu Faatonu who are narrators and orators of the village of Foālalo in the western side of the island of Savaii. Recorded in Vaelua, *Samoa ne'i galo*, 36-42. In this Samoan story, the *fa'atomu'aga* of the *tala* provides background information useful to the understanding of the *tala*. That is, it provides a description of the *Mago* (a huge sea creature), setting, characters, and a brief summary of the subsequent *tala*.

gafataulima critic will also take the *fa'ata'atiāga* of the *tala* into account when reading biblical texts. They need to decipher biblical *tala* to reveal their *fa'ata'atiāga*, for, laying out the *fa'ata'atiāga* of the *tala* is central in understanding the *tala*.

However, despite this identifiable structure in Samoan *tala*, sometimes the *fa'amatala* does not cohere to such a structural make-up. *Fa'amatala* also has the tendency to hop back and forth from *vaega* to *vaega*. This creates inconsistencies in the *fa'ata'atiāga* of some *tala*. Thus, some Samoan *tala* may display overlaps in structure. In this case, the *gafataulima* interpreter closely dissects biblical *tala* looking for inconsistencies and overlaps in their *fa'ata'atiāga*. These structural inconsistencies and overlaps can be a tool used by the *fa'amatala* to emphasise meanings within the *tala*. For example, the creation of humanity in Gen. 1: 26-28 can be looked at as an example of a peculiarity in the *fa'ata'atiāga* of the creation *tala* of Gen. 1:1-2:4a. This development shifts the *fa'ata'atiāga* of the *tala* from the creation of Earth to humanity. This shift elevated the creation of humanity thus possibly portraying humanity as superior, or in some sense different, to the rest of creation.

4.2.5 *Fa'agāsologa*

The Samoan term *fa'agāsologa* refers to 'the way things are passed on'. In the Samoan *tala* context, it refers to the plot or the way the *tala* is developed. Similar to plot, the *fa'agāsologa* refers to the sequence of events and what causes the events to occur. In Samoan *tala*, the *fa'agāsologa* may also exhibit peculiarities as the result of the *fa'amatala* hopping back and forth from one event to another. As indicated above, Samoan *tala* are meant to be told orally and therefore the *fa'agāsologa* of the *tala* relies on the memory of the *fa'amatala* when it is transmitted. In the transmission process the *fa'amatala* may miss or deliberately skip a development and thus when issues arise in the sequence of events, the *fa'amatala* may have to go back to fill in the missing links in order for the *tala* to make sense.

The *gafataulima* critic will pay attention to the *fa'agāsologa* of a *tala* and will search for any peculiarity or omission. These features can provide clues to how the *tala* should be understood. For instance, a critic must be alert when a *fa'amatala* goes back to fill in a missing scene because such a practice could produce data that can help understand what has already been told. For example, the *fa'agāsologa* of Gen. 1:1-2:4a reveals an inconsistency, with the creation of light sources recounted in vv. 14-19, when light was already created in vv. 3-5. This nonuniformity according to the *fa'agāsologa* of Samoan *tala* is an example of the *fa'amatala* going back to fill in the missing links and provide additional information to understand the creation of light in vv. 3-5.

4.2.6 *Fa'a'autū*

The Samoan term *fa'a'autū* refers to the characters of a *tala*. In Samoan *tala*, everything (both living and non-living things) is animated and the *fa'amatala* can also step from one character to another, telling the story from their respective perspectives. In this case, every character can play a central role in the *tala* depending on the way the *fa'amatala* chooses to tell it. This is one of the ways a *fa'amatala* reveals the personal qualities of the *fa'a'autū* in Samoan *tala*. Other ways are comparable to typical modes of characterization found in other forms of literature, and examined in narrative criticism, including *talanoaga* (both characters' speeches and the *fa'amatala*'s evaluative discourses), *fa'atinoga* (characters' actions), and *fa'atusatusāga* (comparisons with other characters).⁵² The *gafataulima* reader will also make a close examination of *fa'a'autū* to enrich the reading of biblical texts considering that the *gafataulima* hermeneutic primarily focuses on characters' functions and abilities. The *gafataulima* reader will be attentive to characters' discourses, actions, appearances and the *fa'amatala*'s speeches to identify the functions and abilities of the subject of investigation.

⁵² See, Mafua Sealiitu Andrew Su'a, "Si 'avi'ivi'i loto tele," in *Nanamu o le Tu'ipapai: O Tala Fatu ma Solo Fa'a-Samoa/ Samoan Poems and Short-Stories* (Apia: National University of Samoa, 2012), 30-35. In this short *tala*, Su'a innovatively uses character speeches in the telling of *tala*. In this *tala*, animals and birds were animated conversing with human characters to form the plot of the *tala*.

4.2.7 *Fausaga*

The Samoan term *fausaga* as a verb means ‘to fasten’. However, as a noun, it means ‘style’, referring to the way of doing something. In the Samoan context, *tala fausaga* is a general term referring to the various stylistic features employed by the *fa’amatala* to relay the *tala* and its meaning(s). In orally-transmitted *tala*, stylistic features include *fa’aleōga* (sounds), *manatu* (occurring and reoccurring themes), *fa’a’ūpuga* (phrasing and word plays), *fesili* (questions), *pā* (inclusion), *fa’afa’atusa* (metaphors and similies), *fa’ailogā* (signs), *fuāinūmera* (numerals) and *gagana* (language: formal, informal, poetic, oratorical). In addition, Samoan written *tala* exhibit additional stylistic features such as *mamanu* (words/motifs/images/patterns) and *soāmamanu* (*mamanu* expressions). The *gafataulima* critic will look critically at the different *fausaga* elements of a biblical text. They scrutinize the text to see how the *fa’amatala* has employed various *fausaga* devices in the telling of the *tala* in order to convey meanings. So, identifying these *fausaga* devices is vital to the interpretation and understanding of the *tala* because they can reveal data that will assist in the formulation of a subject’s functions and capabilities.

The above explanation of the Samoan *tala* features and devices, highlight elements that a *tala* critic will focus on to make meaning and understand biblical texts. Most of the *tala* features identified above correspond to the devices evident in Hebrew narratives, thus allowing the interpretation of Hebrew narratives using a Samoan *tala* reading to take place. However, since I will be dealing with written narratives in this study, the Samoan *tala* reading will therefore be complemented by Samoan *mamanu* criticism.

4.3 *Mamanu* Reading

Mamanu reading is a form of reading; I designed from the Samoan understanding mentioned above of *siapo* and *tatau* as written texts. It derives from the attempt to interpret the *mamanu* of a *siapo* or *tatau* because of the consideration that they relay a story. In this sense, *mamanu* reading is a Samoan form of literary analysis that focuses on the *mamanu* (motifs/expressions/patterns/images)

depicted within Samoan *siapo* and *tatau* texts. This reading perceives *mamanu* as words of a special language that communicate meanings. Therefore, in order to understand the *mamanu* texts the interpreter must understand the semantic meanings of the *mamanu* inscribed within these texts. This definition of *mamanu* reading discloses that it shares the assumptions and principles of grammatical criticism. John Hayes and Carl R. Holladay claim that ‘grammatical criticism analyses a text through its language...is concerned not only with how individual words function as carriers of meaning but how those words are arranged in phrases and sentences to form meaningful sense units’.⁵³ However, for the purpose of this study I wish to maintain the use of Samoan terms and textual features to designate this approach to the text. This is due mainly to the fact that the inspiration for charting this method came from the Samoan understanding of text.

In the process of interpretation, the interpreter must identify key *mamanu* and *soāmamanu* (patterns/expressions) and search Samoan oral traditions and customs for their possible meanings. In this sense, Samoan oral traditions and customs are valuable reference tools employed to investigate and interpret the *mamanu* and *soāmamanu*. However, not all possible meanings are applicable to a particular text or *tala*. *Mamanu* may change meanings over time and one inscriber’s use of a *mamanu* might be different from another’s use of the same *mamanu*. Therefore, the interpreter must carefully consider the *tala* (literary context) and the proposed hermeneutic to determine the meanings that are relevant. Understanding the *mamanu* will aid the interpreter in understanding the text or *tala* as a whole.

In applying *mamanu* reading to written texts including biblical texts, the critic will identify key *mamanu* (words) and *soāmamanu* (expressions) vital to the interpretation and understanding of texts; they will also identify the possible meanings of these *mamanu* and *soāmamanu* and

⁵³ John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginners Handbook* (Louisville/London: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 72. Also see, Joseph G. Prior, *The Historical Method in Catholic Exegesis*, vol. 50 (Rome: Gregorian Biblical Bookshop, 2001), 28-30; Graham Ogden, “Biblical Studies and Bible Translation,” in *Bible Translation: Frames of Reference*, ed. Timothy Witt (London/New York: Routledge, 2002), 153-156; Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, 19-20.

determine the meanings relevant to the literary context. In this sense, the *mamanu* critic approaches biblical language and vocabulary (Hebrew and Greek) as *mamanu* that carry meanings essential for the interpretation of biblical texts. The *gafataulima* hermeneutic will also involve me using this approach in my reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a. It will enable me to identify key Hebrew *mamanu* and *soāmamanu* vital to understanding the quality of Earth portrayed in the text. This analysis will complement the *tala* reading in the sense that it will isolate *mamanu* and *soāmamanu* that are essential for understanding the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala*.

In contrast, traditional grammatical criticism emphasise the search for the original meaning of a text and encourages the interpreter to understand the semantic meanings of words and isolate possible meanings that are applicable to the literary and historical context of a text. On the other hand, *mamanu* reading emphasise the meaning in front of the text. The interpreter's task in *mamanu* reading therefore involves understanding the semantic meaning of words and isolate meanings that are applicable to both the literary context (as indicated above) and his/her context as a reader. Therefore, in this work not only I will endeavour to search for the semantic meanings of the selected Hebrew terms but I will also bring in my Samoan context to determine the applicable meanings for my *gafataulima* reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a.

5. THE GAFATAULIMA HERMENEUTIC AND TALA-MAMANU READING

As outlined above, the *tala-mamanu* literary approach provides tools for reading biblical texts through the three lenses of the *gafataulima* hermeneutic. The ultimate aim is to determine, through the process of literary interpretation, the quality of a subject in relation to fulfilling a function. The three lenses of the *gafataulima* hermeneutic are *gafa*, *tau* and *lima*. In the following three chapters, I will analyse the text of Gen. 1:1-2:4a through these three hermeneutical lenses, using the tools of the *tala-mamanu* reading approach to guide my analysis.

First, through the *gafa* hermeneutical lens, I will focus on determining the *faiā* (relations) and *matāfaioi* (functions) of Earth depicted in the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala*. Through this lens, I will ask the

following questions of the text to determine Earth's *faiā*: What are Earth's *faiā* depicted in the creation *tala* of Gen. 1:1-2:4a? How can I describe Earth's *faiā* with other characters in the *tala*? Who is dominant or submissive in these *faiā*? Are there key *mamanu* and *soāmamanu* that portray Earth's *faiā*? The *gafa* lens is also concerned with identifying the subject's *matāfaioi*. Thus, through this lens, I will ask the text the following questions: What are Earth's *matāfaioi* revealed in the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala*? What are *tala* features that describe Earth's *matāfaioi*? How are these *matāfaioi* described? Are there particular *mamanu* and *soāmamanu* in the *tala* that depict Earth's *matāfaioi*?

The second hermeneutical lens is the *tau* lens. The *tau* lens determines the *tau* (costs) in terms of *mafai* (abilities) for Earth to fulfil her functions adequately. It focuses on the *matāfaioi* and *mafai* required to achieve them. Through this lens I will raise the following questions of the text: what are the *mafai* required by Earth to fulfil her *matāfaioi*? Are there features of the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala* that reveals these *mafai*? Are there particular *mamanu* and *soāmamanu* used to depict the essential *mafai*? Are there elements of the *tala* that disclose the expectations on Earth to fulfil her *matāfaioi*? Are there *mamanu* or *soāmamanu* that identify the costs for Earth to fulfil her *matāfaioi*?

The last hermeneutical lens is the *lima* lens. It is used to critically examine the *mafai* possessed by Earth, which could fulfil the requirements outlined in the *tau* survey. That is, it focuses on Earth and the *mafai* she possesses. Through this lens I will ask the following questions of the text: What *mafai* does Earth possess in the *tala*? Are there *tala* devices that reveal Earth's *mafai*? Are there *mamanu* or *soāmamanu* that reveal Earth's *mafai*? Does Earth retain the *mafai* (identified in the *tau* analysis) needed to satisfactorily accomplish her duties (identified in the *gafa* analysis) in creation? If so then Earth can *gafataulima* the *tau* of her duties but if not then Earth *lē gafataulima* the *tau* of her functions.

Evidently, the three hermeneutical lenses of the *gafataulima* hermeneutic reveal three separate but related readings of the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala*. These three distinct evaluations will shape the division of

the three chapters that follow. The next chapter presents a *gafa* reading to identify the *matāfaioi* (functions) of Earth in creation; followed by a *tau* evaluation to determine the cost (needed abilities) Earth requires to fulfil her *matāfaioi*; concluding with a *lima* analysis to reveal if Earth possesses the required *mafai* to fulfil her *matāfaioi*. The outcome of these three readings will provide a clear picture of Earth's quality and functionality. In other words, they will offer an answer from the *gafataulima* perspective, to the question: Was Earth created 'good' and even 'very good'?

6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have highlighted the viability of my *gafataulima* hermeneutic for the purpose of reading biblical texts. In the process I have identified the three distinct but related categories of the *gafataulima* hermeneutics namely; *gafa*, *tau* and *lima* analyses. In addition, I have also transformed the *gafataulima* hermeneutic into a Samoan ecological hermeneutic to reappraise the quality of Earth in Gen. 1:1-2:4a. This is based on the Samoan egalitarian and hierarchical view of the created order. That is, the *gafataulima* ecological hermeneutic is based on the Samoan understanding of Earth as a relational and functional entity with divine and worldly capabilities. To approach the selected text, I have opted to use a *tala-mamanu* reading formulated from the Samoan concept of text. Hence, in subsequent chapters, I will read Gen. 1:1-2:4a using a *tala-mamanu* reading methodology through the critical lens of the *gafataulima* ecological hermeneutic.

PART II: GAFATAULIMA READING OF GEN 1:1-2:4a

CHAPTER FOUR

Gafa Reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter and the following ones present a *gafataulima* reading of the creation story in Gen. 1:1-2:4a with the aim of determining if Earth is as good as it is repeatedly claimed in the *tala* (story). In this chapter, I will present a *gafa* reading of Genesis 1:1-2:4a. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the *gafa* reading is one of the three distinct but related analyses involved in the *gafataulima* hermeneutical perspective, the other two being the *tau* and the *lima* readings. The *gafa* reading attempts to establish the *faiā* (relationships) between the characters in the text in question and determines the *matāfaioi* (responsibilities and functions) that go together with these *faiā*. In other words, the aim of the *gafa* reading in this thesis will be to determine the relational functions and responsibilities of the characters mentioned within the narrative of Gen. 1:1-2:4a. Since Earth is the subject of investigation for this study, focus will therefore be directed in particular towards determining the *faiā* and *matāfaioi* of Earth. Methodologically, the *gafataulima* reading invites us to read biblical texts as *tala* and to identify and interpret the numerous *mamanu* and *soāmamanu* (motifs, imagery and words) within the *tala*. In this case, I will closely analyse Gen. 1:1-2:4a by identifying and critiquing the features and *mamanu* artistries present in the story that depict the *faiā* between Earth and other characters as well as the *matāfaioi* attached to these *faiā*.

2. Gafa Reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a: Earth's *Faiā* and *Matāfaioi*

The *gafa* reading is based on the Samoan belief that Earth is a relational and functional entity. The Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala* of creation from the *gafa* perspective can be described as a *tala* of *faiā* (relationships) and *matāfaioi* (responsibilities and functions). The *fa'amatala* (narrator) not only

portrays God's relations with the created order but also reveals inter-relationships between the elements of creation.¹ Earth's *faiā* come with *matāfaioi*.² Therefore, studying Earth's *faiā* and *matāfaioi* using the *gafa* hermeneutical lens could offer a new portrayal of Earth's relationships with God and the rest of God's creatures, including humans.

2.1 *Vaega*/Section 1: *Fa'atomu'aga*/Introduction (Gen. 1:1-2)

Gen. 1:1-2, in accordance with Samoan *tala* criticism, offers a *fa'atomu'aga* (introduction) to the *tala*; which can be divided into two *vaevaēga* (sub-sections). First, we have the *ulutala* (heading) in v. 1 followed by the *fa'ata'imuāga* (introductory scene) in v. 2.

2.1.1 The *Ulutala*/Title: A *Tala* of *Faiā* and *Matāfaioi* (v. 1)

According to Samoan *tala* constructions, the first *vaevaēga* in v. 1 can be regarded as the *ulutala* of the Gen. 1:1-2:4a narrative. This *ulutala* reveals several insights that may be useful for understanding the creation story.³ In the *ulutala*, the narrator not only introduces the *fa'a'autū* (characters) but also provides an *aotelega* (summary) of the subsequent story.

¹ Viewing Gen. 1:1-2:4a as a story of relationships is not new to the study of the Old Testament. For example, see, Terrence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 16. He alludes to this view of Gen. 1:1-2:4a in his observation about the nature of God: 'Israel's God is a relational God who has created a world in which interrelatedness is basic to the world of reality'.

² The view that Earth is a functional entity is also supported by John H. Walton. He claims that Gen. 1:1-2:4a is function oriented, thus creation is a function-giving activity that deals with the creation of function rather than matter. See Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*, 139. Also *idem*, *Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate*, 38-40. However, what differentiates my *gafa* reading from Walton's contention is that my *gafa* reading determines the functions of Earth through a literary analysis of the text in light of my Samoan perspective where as Walton determines his view through a comparative study of Gen. 1:1-2:4a and Ancient Near Eastern cosmological understandings. See, discussion on Walton's book in Chapter One, section 3.2.

³ James Barr summarises three ways scholars over the years read Gen. 1:1. First this verse is understood to refer to a prior creation act before the creation of light. Secondly, it is regarded as a temporal clause dependent on Gen. 1:2 thus rendering it as, 'in the beginning when God created the heavens and earth...' And thirdly, Gen. 1:1 is treated as a summary of the subsequent creation activities revealed in the rest of the *tala*. The third interpretation here is comparable to my reading of Gen. 1:1 as an *ulutala* of the *tala*. James Barr, "Was Everything that God Made Really Good? 55-65.

a. Fa'a'autū/Characters of the Tala

Viewing v.1 through the *gafa* hermeneutical lens reveals that the *fa'amatala* in the *ulutala* of Gen. 1:1-2:4a introduces the three main *fa'a'autū* (characters) of the *tala*: God - אֱלֹהִים (^ʔ*lōhîm*), Sky שָׁמַיִם (*Šāmayim*) and Earth - אֶרֶץ (^ʔ*Ereš*).

The first *fa'a'autū* (character) in the *tala* is introduced through the use of the *mamanu* אֱלֹהִים (^ʔ*lōhîm*), the generic name used for God within this creation account. This name is a plural form of אֵל (^ʔ*ēl* - god) and can also be translated as 'gods'. The use of the plural noun here may lead readers to query if the divine being in this *tala* is intended to be understood as a plural or singular entity.⁴ In resolving this issue, biblical commentators typically suggest that the term should be understood as having a singular sense. Wenham, for instance, argues that 'it is simply the ordinary term for God: plural in form but singular in meaning'.⁵ Wenham reads this plural noun as a plural of majesty, noting that in v.1 (as in the majority of biblical Hebrew texts where this form is used), the noun אֱלֹהִים always appears as the subject of third masculine singular verbs, therefore suggesting the divine name is singular in meaning.⁶ And while, in v. 26, אֱלֹהִים issues a command using a first person plural verb form, this does not necessarily compromise the singular nature of the deity within this narrative.⁷

However, reading v.1 through the lens of my *gafa* hermeneutic suggests this may be a deliberate action on the part of the *fa'amatala* to present the plurality of the deity in the *tala*. It reveals that the narrator wants the audience to see the divine as an infinite and immeasurable being, both singular and plural at the same time, a deity that is free and boundless. This boundlessness allows God to

⁴ For example, see, Mark G. Brett, *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity* (London: Routledge, 2000), 24.

⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 14.

⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 14. Also see, James G. Murphy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Book of Genesis with a New Translation* (Eugene: WIPF & Stock Publisher, 1998), 25-27; Brett, *Genesis*, 24-25.

⁷ Brett, *Genesis*, 24.

establish *faiā* with any being, whether divine or worldly. Revealing this nature of the deity here in the *ulutala* provides the audience with a preview of the kind of God that the *tala* will exhibit.

Furthermore, the *fa'amatala*'s usage of the general name for God from a *tala* critic's perspective is suggestive of the *fa'amatala*'s intention of universalizing the Gen. 1:1-2:4a creation account.⁸ Such a usage of the divine name also resonates with our Samoan usage of the divine name Tagaloalagi in our creation stories. Tagaloalagi or Tagaloa is the supreme god in Samoan traditional religion who is also a general god worshipped by other Polynesian societies such as the Tahitians, the Maoris and the Hawaiians for example.⁹ The usage of the name Tagaloa universalizes our creation stories making them relevant and inclusive to a wider audience across Polynesian societies.

The second and third *fa'a'autū* (characters) are introduced together by the *fa'amatala* through the *soāmamanu* (expression) אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ (*'ēt hašāmayim wāet ha'areš*) - 'the Sky and the Earth'. Waltke and Fredricks suggest the expression is a merism referring to the all the 'organized universe'.¹⁰ Similarly, viewing this *soāmamanu* from a *gafa* hermeneutic reveals the expression as all-encompassing referring to the cosmos as a whole. This suggests that the two *fa'a'autū*, Sky and Earth, are inseparable. That is, one cannot exist without the other and together they make up a complete unit. The joining together of Sky and Earth from a *gafa* perspective not only highlights their potentiality for establishing *faiā* with God but also the existence of a relationship between the

⁸ See, Brett, Procreation and the Politics of Identity, 25-26. Here Brett suggests that the use of the generic name *Elohim* for the deity in Gen. 1:1-2:4a adds an element of inclusivism to the story. Also see, Konrad Schmid, "Judean Identity and Ecumenicity: The Political Theology of the Priestly Document," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context*, ed., Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 7-9. Schmid asserts that the names of God are the main element in differentiating the three concentric models of P's political theology: the circle of the world; Abrahamic circle; and the Israelite circle. In this threefold model the generic name for God is affixed to the circle of the world suggesting a dispensation of inclusiveness. Also see, Makesi Neemia, "The Hebrew Bible and Postcolonial Samoan Hermeneutics," in *Colonial Contexts and Post Colonial Theologies: Storyweaving in the Asia Pacific*, Mark G. Brett and Jione Havea (New York: Palgrave, 2014), 67-79. Neemia in his article applies P's inclusive theology to resolve land rights in the Samoan context.

⁹ The Tahitians refer to this god as Ta'aroa (creator), the Maoris speak of this god as Tangaroa (great god of the sea) while the Hawaiians called this god Kanaloa (god of the underworld).

¹⁰ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 59. Also see, Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 15.

two. In this *faiā*, one is dependent on the other for its continual existence and therefore the two are always together as an entity.

b. Aotelega/Summary of the *Tala*

As well as introducing the main characters of the story, the *fa'amatala* in v. 1 also gives an *aotelega* (summary) of the *tala* where the storyline is given in a nutshell using the Hebrew *mamanu* בָּרָא (*bārā'*) traditionally rendered as 'to create'. The *mamanu* thus reveals Gen. 1:1-2:4a as a *tala* of creation.¹¹ In the *ulutala*, בָּרָא has אֵלֹהִים as its subject and 'Sky and Earth' (אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ) as its object.¹² This not only reveals God to be the active and the dominant *fa'a'autū* in the *tala* but also leaves in no doubt that the '*a'ano* (body) of the story is the creation of Sky and Earth by God. Thus, from the *gafa* perspective the *ulutala* in Gen. 1:1 makes clear the *faiā* between the three characters, rendering Gen. 1:1-2:4a a *tala* of *faiā* that came into existence when God created Sky and Earth.

In addition, the *gafa* reading of the *ulutala* also sees the *tala* of Gen. 1:1-2:4a as a story of *matāfaioi*. This is evident in the consideration that the *mamanu* בָּרָא also alludes to the allocation of *matāfaioi*. This is apparent in Isa. 54:16, where God created (בָּרָא) the blacksmith specifically for the function of forging weapons of war and the destroyer for the purpose of bringing forth destruction. In these situations, the blacksmith and the destroyer whom God created were given responsibilities in fulfilling the divine plan. Isa. 45:8 also hints at this usage of the *mamanu*.¹³ Here, God the creator explicitly assigns functions for the created elements to perform: the Heavens shall

¹¹ Lexicology of the Hebrew verb בָּרָא (*bārā'*) reveals that all 45 usages of the verb in the Qal in the Old Testament have God as subject. This suggests the term to be pointing only to divine activities designating God as creator. The term is used in the senses of creating, continuing creating, re-creating and the transformation of nature.

¹² The untranslatable Hebrew object marker אֶת indicates the merism 'the heaven and the earth' as object of the term בָּרָא.

¹³ The usage of the term בָּרָא in Isa. 45:8 is overshadowed by the usage of the term in the preceding verse - Isa. 45:7. In Isa. 45:7 בָּרָא describes God's creation of the 'darkness' and 'evil'. These usages of בָּרָא contradict the Genesis creation account where darkness and evil are not products of God's creative activities.

rain down saving justice and Earth shall blossom salvation. Reading this usages of בָּרָא into the *ulutala* of Gen. 1:1-2:4a reveals the subsequent *tala* may deal with the allocation of functions.

In summary, the *ulutala* of Gen. 1:1-2:4a summarises the ‘a’ano of the whole *tala* as an account of creation that includes the creation of the *faiā* between God and Sky and Earth. Using the *mamanu* בָּרָא the *fa’amatala* identifies the relationships between God and Sky and Earth as that of the creator and the created. In this *faiā* Sky and Earth are dependent on God for their existence. In addition, the *ulutala* also reveals the relation between Sky and Earth. They are the two distinct but inseparable parts of the universe. Finally, the *ulutala* also sets up Gen. 1:1-2:4a as a *tala* of *matāfaioi* depicting God’s allocation of responsibilities to Sky and Earth.

2.1.2 *Fa’ata’imuāga/Introductory Scene: Earth’s Pre-Creation Faiā and Matāfaioi* (v. 2)

In this *vaevaēga* (sub-section), the *fa’amatala* (narrator) in v. 2 provides us with the *fa’ata’imuāga* (introductory scene) of the *tala*. In this brief scene, the *fa’amatala* gives us a backdrop to view the subsequent account. Here, the focus shifts to Earth, and the narrator seems to be ignoring Sky in favor of describing Earth’s condition prior to God’s creative activities. However, the description of the *faiā* between Sky and Earth given in the *ulutala* suggests that Sky is not completely ignored here, but may be represented in this *va’aiga* (scene) by Earth her co-equal. In other words, Sky and Earth are conjoint in this scene and the *fa’amatala* appears to refer to both of them using the term Earth.

Earth’s pre-creation condition is explained explicitly through the use of a series of *mamanu* (motifs, imagery, words). First, is the *mamanu* תֹהוּ (*tōhū*) meaning ‘formless’, ‘confusion’, ‘unreality’ or ‘emptiness’¹⁴ and the *mamanu* בֹהוּ (*bōhū*) translatable as ‘void’ or ‘emptiness’.¹⁵ These two

¹⁴ Francis Brown, et. al. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic: Coded with the Numbering System from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Peabody: Hendrickson Pub, 1996), 1062. Also see, Laird R. Harris, and Archer L. Gleason & Bruce K. Waltke, *TWOT*, originally published by Moody Press of Chicago (Illinois, Electronic Version by BibleWorks, 1998).

¹⁵ *BDB*, 96.

mamanu can be seen as a paronomasia and a hendiadys. Not only do they share a semantic relationship, but they also yield similar sounds and together they portray a chaotic situation in v.2 that is difficult to comprehend. Scholars had made attempts to visualize the portrait of Earth depicted by the two *mamanu*. For example, Wenham sees Earth described by the two *mamanu* as in a state of ‘total chaos’,¹⁶ like a desert wilderness where someone could get lost and vanish.¹⁷ The desert imagery also resonates in David T. Tsumura’s rendition of תָּהוּ וָבִהוּ. For Tsumura, the imagery refers to an empty place or a desert – an unproductive and uninhabitable area.¹⁸

A consideration of the above nuances of the two *mamanu* through the *gafa* hermeneutical lens can also add to the meaning of the expression. First, is תָּהוּ which carries the sense of ‘confusion’; it reveals Earth to be disoriented and unaware of its existence and purpose in God’s creation, thus unable to establish a *faiā* with God or any other being. This usage of the *mamanu* is evident elsewhere in the Old Testament to depict those who were disconnected from their *faiā* with God by following worthless idols.¹⁹ Therefore, Earth prior to creation is psychologically unfit to be engaged in *faiā* with God or other elements of creation. Additionally, תָּהוּ can also mean ‘unreality’, revealing Earth at this stage to be lacking in substance in its pre-creation existence due mainly to the absence of a *faiā* with the creator God.²⁰

Second, the *mamanu* בִּהוּ translated above as ‘emptiness’ or ‘void’ is also used in Isa. 34:11 and Jer. 4:23 together with תָּהוּ to describe Edom and Israel respectively lying in ruins. From a *gafa*

¹⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 14. Also see; Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary, eds. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia: The JPS, 1989), 6.

¹⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 14. Also see, Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 76. He translates the *soāmamanu* as a ‘desert waste’.

¹⁸ David T. Tsumura, “The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Definition,” *JSOT* Sup 83 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 43. Also see, Van Wolde, *Stories of the Beginning: Genesis 1-11 and Other Creation Stories*, trans. John Bowden (Ridgefield: Morehouse Publishing, 1997), 20. Van Wolde describes the ‘not-yet’ productive and uninhabited Earth. See also, Habel, *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth*, 29. Here Habel depicts the situation as ‘an absence of form and fertility’.

¹⁹ For example, see, 1 Sam. 12:21; Isa. 29:21; 45:19; 59:4.

²⁰ For example, see, Isa. 40:17-23.

perspective, this image reveals a non-functional state where both nations are unable to carry out their responsibilities. In the context of v. 2, the *fa'amatala* uses בָּהוּ to depict Earth as a non-functional entity who is unable to perform and fulfill any *matāfaioi*. So, the *soāmamanu* הָהוּ נִבְהוּ expresses the pre-creation state of Earth as an entity without *faiā* and unable to perform any *matāfaioi*.

Moreover, the *fa'amatala* adds to the dramatic description of pre-creation Earth through the use of the *mamanu* חָשֶׁךְ (*hōšek*) meaning 'darkness' or 'obscurity'. This *mananu* can have dual meanings. On the one hand, it may represent metaphorically what is anti-God.²¹ This negative usage is apparent through a consideration of the biblical dualism between good and evil in terms of light and darkness.²² On the other hand, the *mamanu* can be positive when its function in God's theophanic appearances is considered. For instance, Deut. 5:23 describes a scene where God speaks out of the darkness. This yields the impression that the divine can also be identified with the darkness.²³ This duality of חָשֶׁךְ from a *gafa* perspective brings two layers of meaning to the word. Although the darkness hints at an unfavourable situation for Earth to have *faiā*, it also offers the potential that God's presence in the darkness gives hope that Earth can establish *faiā*.

Subsequently, the *mamanu* תְּהוֹם (*tēhôm*) also adds another aspect to the *fa'amatala*'s description of Earth's pre-creation condition. This *mamanu* in its literal sense expresses 'deep', 'sea' or 'abyss'.²⁴ It is used in v. 2 to depict a situation where Earth is surrounded, submerged and covered by water.²⁵

²¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 16.

²² This usage of חָשֶׁךְ was adopted by Westermann who sees it representing something 'sinister'. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 104. Also see, Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 60.

²³ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 16.

²⁴ *BDB*, 1062; *TWOT*.

²⁵ According to historical critics, the *mamanu* תְּהוֹם also echoes the Babylonian myth *Enuma Elish* on the grounds that there are semantic and phonological resemblances between תְּהוֹם and the proper name of the goddess *Tiamat*. This view was proposed by Hermann Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12*, trans. William K. Whitney Jr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns Publishing Co., 2006), 78-80. Also see, R. J. Clifford and J. J. Collins, eds., "Creation in the Biblical Traditions," *CBQ*, Monograph Series 24 (1992): 32- 33; R. J. Clifford, "Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible," *CBQ*, Monograph Series

This description of Earth's watery condition is enhanced by the *mamānu* מַיִם (*mayim*) meaning 'waters'.²⁶ Thus, Ellen Van Wolde vividly describes the situation revealed in v. 2 as Earth covered by waters extending to all sides.²⁷

Furthermore, the fact that the *mamānu* תְּהוֹם is presented with no definite article suggests תְּהוֹם is personified here with a face as indicated by the *soāmamānu* עַל-פָּנֵי (*ʿal-pnê*) meaning 'upon/under the faces of'. Hence, תְּהוֹם can be seen as another *fa'a'utū* (character) who only appears at this stage of the *tala*. The plural 'faces' indicated by פָּנֵי hints at the plurality and multifacetedness of תְּהוֹם. Also, the description that the faces of תְּהוֹם are covered by the darkness obscures both the *fa'amatala*'s and our vision thus adding to the mystery surrounding תְּהוֹם. Catherine Keller gives a feminine personality to תְּהוֹם, equating her to the goddess Tiamat in the Babylonian creation myth, the *Enuma Elish*.²⁸ Viewing v. 2 in light of the Babylonian creation myth raises the issue about the role of תְּהוֹם in this *va'aiga* (scene). This role can be apparent if we visualize תְּהוֹם in light of Habel's description of this *va'aiga* as Earth's pre-birthing situation. In this context, תְּהוֹם can be seen as a mother who carried Earth in her womb, thus depicting a parent-child *faiā* between תְּהוֹם and Earth.²⁹

This reading of the pre-created conditions from a *gafa* perspective adds hope to the grimness of the pre-creation condition offered by the *mamānu* תְּהוֹם, בְּהוֹ, חֹשֶׁךְ. Earth who is far from being a relational and functional entity unable to establish *faiā* and perform *matāfaioi* is about to become one when

26 (1994). These scholars also uphold that this description of the pre-created condition in Gen. 1:2 sympathizes with the *Chaoskampf* tradition that sees the creation process as a battle between the creator god and the forces of chaos. So in this sense God's creative activities are equated with a battle and rescue operation where God conquers the forces of chaos including תְּהוֹם to free Earth from suppression.

²⁶ BDB, 565.

²⁷ Van Wolde, *Stories of the Beginning*, 20.

²⁸ Catherine Keller, *The Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 122. See discussion of the *Enuma Elish* in p.16 footnote 34.

²⁹ This *faiā* is also alluded to in Gen. 2:4a with the use of the *mamānu* תוֹלְדוֹת (*toledot*) meaning 'generations' or 'descendants'.

creation begins.³⁰ The *fa'amatala* adds to this depiction through the use of the *soāmamanu* פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם meaning 'and the spirit/wind/breath of God hovered upon the face of the waters'. This adds movement, life, and potential to the scene.³¹

Important to understanding this *soāmamanu* are the meanings of רוּחַ (*rûah*) and רָחַף (*rāḥap*). Firstly, רוּחַ carries the nuances 'wind', 'breath' or 'spirit'.³² The rendition of the *mamanu* רוּחַ as 'breath' from a *gafa* perspective suggests the potential for *faiā* prior to the creation activities. This semantic sense of רוּחַ according to John Wright is 'life'. He suggests the meaning 'breath' applies anthropomorphically to God and thus portrays God's creation activities as life-giving, animating a lifeless wilderness.³³ This reading not only brings life into the pre-creation condition of Earth but also, from a *gafa* perspective, enhances the potentiality of Earth to establish *faiā*. Reading the this nuance of רוּחַ through the lens of my *gafa* hermeneutic thus reveals Earth's potential for *faiā*. This potentiality is made possible by God when the dormant Earth is brought into life.³⁴

The potentiality of Earth to establish *faiā* is also evident in the usage of the *mamanu* רָחַף. In the Piel form, the *mamanu* is translatable as 'to hover'.³⁵ Ernest Klein adds the meanings 'flutter' and 'fly' to the *mamanu* and describes the action of the רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים in the pre-created world as a bird flying

³⁰ See, John H. Walton, "Creation in Genesis 1:1-2:3 and the Ancient Near East: Order out of Disorder after Chaotikampf," *CTJ*, 43. (2008): 58.

³¹ Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishing, 1996), 135-136.

³² *BDB*, 924.

³³ John Wright, "Spirit and the Wilderness: The Interplay of Two Motifs within the Old Testament as a Background to Mark 1:2-13," in *Perspectives on Language and Text: Essays and Poems in Honor of Francis I. Andersen's Sixtieth Birthday July 28, 1985*, eds. Edgar W. Conrad and Edward G. Newing (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 282-283.

³⁴ Since all three nuances are valid from a *gafa* perspective this thesis therefore will use the transliterated form of *ruach* to translate רוּחַ.

³⁵ *BDB*, 934; *TWOT*.

over the uncreated Earth.³⁶ This depiction echoes Norman Habel's suggestion that the *mamanu* describes the mother eagle nurturing and protecting her chicks before they leave the nest, as in Deut. 32:11.³⁷ In this light *אלהים רות* hovering over the face of the waters is seen as a mother nurturing her young before they are mature enough to leave her care. This rendition of the *mamanu* from a *gafa* perspective again suggests Earth's inability to establish *faiā* and perform *matāfaioi*. Yet, it also portrays hope for Earth through a parent-child *faiā* between God and Earth that will eventuate when God begins creating Earth.

2.2 *Vaega 2: Earth's Faiā and Matāfaioi: God and the Creatures (Gen. 1:3-31)*

The second *vaega* (section) of the Gen. 1:1-2:4a creation *tala* (story) is the 'a'ano (body) of the narrative in vv. 3-31. The 'a'ano of the *tala* has two *vaevaēga* (sub-sections). The first *vaevaēga* is from vv. 3-19 focusing on the *faiā* (relationship) between God and Earth. In this *faiā* Earth is very much passive while God develops Earth's potentials into a state where Earth is able to participate in *faiā* and perform *matāfaioi* in order to sustain them. The second *vaevaēga* is from vv. 20-31 focussing on Earth's *faiā* with God's other creatures. These *faiā* also come with *matāfaioi* for Earth to fulfill in order to sustain them.

2.2.1 Earth's Faiā with God (vv. 3-19)

This *vaevaēga* of the 'a'ano of the Gen. 1:1-2:4a creation *tala* begins with the creation of light and culminates with Earth participating and performing *matāfaioi* in creation. It reveals Earth's progression from an unproductive state where Earth is unable to participate in *faiā* and without any *matāfaioi* to a state where Earth partakes in *faiā* and is given related *matāfaioi*. The *fa'amatala* accentuates Earth's progression by describing the creator-created *faiā* between God and Earth by revealing this *faiā* as an intimate *faiā* initiated and closely overlooked by God the creator.

³⁶ Ernest Klein, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English* (Jerusalem: The University of Haifa, 1987), 614.

³⁷ Habel, *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth*, 29-30. Also see Roberto Ouro, "The Earth of Genesis 1:2: Abiotic or Chaotic?" *AUSS*, 38 (Spring 2000): 64-65.

a. Creation of Light: Earth's *Faiā* with God Begins (vv. 3-5)

The first creation by God in the development of Earth is the creation of light. This marks the first direct contact between God and Earth. The *fa'amatala* presents creation as an initiative of God through the use of God's speeches. God's speeches are indicated throughout the *tala* by the *mamalu* אָמַר (*'amar*) meaning 'to say', 'to say to oneself', 'to command' and 'to promise'.³⁸ God's speech is presented through the use of the *mamalu* יְהִי (*yehi*) which is the jussive form of the *mamalu* הָיָה (*hāyāh*) meaning 'fall out', 'come to pass', 'be', or 'become'.³⁹ Therefore, יְהִי could be translated as 'let there be', 'may there be' or 'let be'. The jussive is the volitive mood of the second or third person and it functions in the Hebrew language to indicate a mild command, a wish, words of encouragement, a prayer or words of advice.⁴⁰ Considering these temperaments of the jussive from a *gafa* perspective, reveals aspects of God's nature in dealing with creation. On the one hand, jussive speeches as commands depicts God acting as an authoritative figure in the creation process whose commands must be strictly follow by the addressee. On the other hand, considering other temperaments of the jussive reveal God as a sympathetic being who instructs, encourages, and guides Earth in the creative process. These two natures of the divine from a *gafa* perspective reflect the characteristics of a typical Samoan *faumea* (maker/builder) who can both be authoritative and sympathetic towards the *soāfaumea* (assistant maker) during the creative activities.

Furthermore, the light created here is identified in vv. 3-5 by the use of the *mamalu* אוֹר (*'or*) meaning 'light'.⁴¹ Apparently light in these *va'aiga* do not refer to sunlight, moonlight or starlight since these particular light sources are yet to be created. So what is this light referring to then? We

³⁸ BDB, 55; Jerome A. Lund, 'אָמַר', *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. Van Gemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1: 443-449; Siegfried Wagner, 'אָמַר', *TDOT*, eds. G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren and H. Fabry (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 1: 328-345.

³⁹ BDB, 224; TWOT.

⁴⁰ Arthur Walker-Jones, *Hebrew for Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 152.

⁴¹ BDB, 21.

can answer this by exploring the multiple usages of אור. The *mamanu* is often used as a metaphor in the Old Testament for life, salvation, judgment and the presence of God.⁴²

In the context of this *va'aiga* the first, second and fourth meanings (life, salvation, and God's presence) seem applicable to the *tala*. The *mamanu* אור as life echoes that God, in creating light, brings Earth into life. Moreover, translating אור as salvation alludes to the idea that in creating light, God redeems Earth from bondage, presupposing that Earth was in bondage to the darkness before the creation of light. Finally, interpreting the *mamanu* as an indication of God's presence simply affirms God's presence and participation during creation. A reiteration of God's presence is fitting for the initial *va'aiga* of the creation process and serves as a backdrop to view the divine transformation from the *ruach* of God to the creator God. Van Wolde clearly describes this transformation when she claims that 'the moment God begins to speak, God ceases to be *ruach elohim* and becomes *Elohim*, the creator God'.⁴³ Integrating the three nuances of אור reveals the creation of light as a major phase in the evolving of Earth. It is a divine act of life-giving salvation to redeem Earth from a lifeless existence and from the bondage of darkness.

This depiction of the light from a *gafa* perspective illuminates two important insights in the God-Earth *faiā*. First, it reveals that God is the savior and the life source of Earth. Therefore, Earth's existence as a living entity is dependent on God the creator. Second, it reveals that Earth's development into an entity with *faiā* and *matāfaioi* is a design and initiative of the creator God. This is apparent by visualizing that, without light, Earth could not function as it was in a lifeless and non-life-sustaining pre-created situation when it was veiled by darkness.

⁴² Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 18. Also see, Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 61; M. Sæbø, "אור," *TLOT*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1997), 1: 63-1267. For examples of Light; as salvation see Exod. 14:24, Kgs. 19:35 and Isa. 37:26; as judgment see Zeph. 3:5, Psalms. 37:6, Hos. 6:5; as Life see Psalms. 56:14, Isa. 58:8; and depicting God's presence see Psalms. 104:2.

⁴³ Van Wolde, *Stories of the Beginning*, 21.

Moreover, after creating the light and declaring it good God separated it from the already existing darkness through the use of the creative act *בָּדַל* (*bādal*), which means ‘to separate’ or ‘to divide’.⁴⁴ This *mamanu* represents God’s first act of putting Earth in order.⁴⁵ The *mamanu* indicates that the light and darkness are intended to be kept separate, having their own space and time. This separation allows them to perform their functions as indicators of the day (light) and night (darkness). These functions are further defined in the naming process in v. 5 where God reiterates the purposes of the light and darkness in creation. Walton agrees with this view asserting that the naming of the light ‘day’ highlights functionality over ontology.⁴⁶ This view coheres well with a *gafa* reading of the light’s creation in vv. 3-5. From a *gafa* perspective, God created the life-giving light then defined its *faiā* with the darkness through the act of separation and afterwards defined the *matāfaioi* of the two entities through the naming process - that is, the light to become day and darkness to become night. Together, they constitute the two components of a single day as a unit of time.

In addition, the naming process also restates the God-Earth *faiā* as that of the creator and the created. God naming the components of Earth can be looked at as the creator claiming ownership of the created⁴⁷ or the pre-existing elements as in the case of the darkness. From a *gafa* perspective God’s claim on the darkness makes the pre-existing darkness part of creation. The darkness that imprisoned Earth in the primordial times is now becoming an essential component of Earth with an assigned *matāfaioi* of identifying the night.

⁴⁴ BDB, 95; TWOT.

⁴⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 18. He sees the act of separation as one of the central ideas in the narrative.

⁴⁶ Walton, *Genesis 1 As Ancient Cosmology*, 152-153.

⁴⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 19; Sarna, *Genesis*, 7-8; Westerman, *Genesis 1-11*, 114-115. These scholars see, the act of naming in creation as the way God affirms sovereignty over the created.

b. Creation of Firmament and Its *Matāfaioi* (vv. 6-8)

The next act of creation to take place is that of the expanse. The expanse is identified in Gen. 1:1-2:4a by the use of the *mamanu* רָקִיעַ (*rāqīʿa*) meaning ‘expanse’ or ‘extended surface’.⁴⁸ The *tala* does not explicitly reveal the components and nature of this expanse. Yet, elsewhere in the Old Testament, its various descriptions offer us a few possibilities. In the Hebrew traditions the expanse is analogically describe as a shiny mirror, a tent or a layer of ice crystal.⁴⁹ These depictions present the firmament as a solid base canopying over Earth. And thus, the firmament in Gen. 1:1-2:4a is described according to its function in God’s creation - to separate the waters present in the pre-created world creating space in between. The Hebrew idea of the רָקִיעַ corresponds to the Samoan understanding of the dome. That is, Hebrews and Samoans perceived the dome canopying over Earth functioning as a canopy providing space for Earth and her components to emerge. In contrast Samoans perceived the dome as a multi-layered entity for the gods to reside rather than a single layer firmament in Hebrew early traditions.⁵⁰

The purpose of the firmament as a separator of water is depicted through the repetitive use of the *mamanu* בָּרַל (to separate/divide) in vv. 6-7. In v. 6, God directs the expanse to בָּרַל the waters. It is therefore part of God’s speech to describe the intended function (*matāfaioi*) of the firmament. In this usage of the *mamanu* the firmament is seen as an agent (*soāfaumea*) ordered by God to perform the function of dividing the waters. On the other hand, in v. 7, God performs the division of the waters by using the newly made firmament. In this sense, the firmament is seen as a tool

⁴⁸ BDB, 956.

⁴⁹ See, Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 62. They identify the nuances ‘mirror’ and ‘canopy’ in view of Job. 37:18 and Isa. 42:22 respectively. Also see Sarna, *Genesis*, 8. Sarna identifies the firmament as a ‘gigantic sheet of metal’ or layer of ‘congealed ice’ with reference to Ezk. 1:22.

⁵⁰ See, Chapter Three, Section 3.1. Also see, Walton, *Genesis1 and Ancient Cosmology*, 88-89. For Walton, due to influences from Ancient Near Eastern cosmic geography understanding the ancient Israelites perceived the cosmos as a three tiered cosmos comprising of Heaven, Earth and the netherworld. The heavens is the abode of the gods located above the the waters above the firmament. Earth is beneath the firmament with the moon, sun and stars hanging in the air between the land and the firmament while the netherworld refers to the under world. From this description, it is apparent that Earth is seen as an inclusive term to include all the entities existing in between the firmament and the under world.

used by God to divide the waters.⁵¹ The firmament can therefore be regarded as both an agent and tool employed by God to divide and distinguish the waters above from the waters below.

In accordance with the *gafa* perspective, this interpretation of the creation of the firmament highlights the firmament's *faiā* and *matāfaioi* in God's creation. It reveals God inviting the created firmament to partake not only as an assistant but as an apparatus in the divine creation, thus resembling the roles of a *soāfaumea* (assistant maker). Similar to God's naming the light and darkness, God also put a claim on the firmament by naming it שָׁמַיִם ('Sky').

c. Separation of Waters and Dry Land and their *Matāfaioi* (vv. 9-10)

The next *va'aiga* is the separation of the dry land and the waters. Similar to the second and third *va'aiga*, this one also commences with a creation speech by God, but unlike the last two *va'aiga* there is no new creation here. This is noted by Wenham, who understands the activities of this third day of creation as the reorganization of already existing materials.⁵² The first half of the command is directed to the waters below the Sky, ordering them to gather into one place. The *mamanu* used here to describe the modification of the waters is קָנָה (*qāwāh*) which means 'be collected' in the Niphal stem. The fact that the *mamanu* is in the jussive state suggests that the creation speech is directed towards the water requesting its participation in the creation process.

The second half of God's creative speech is directed to the יַב־שָׂדֶה (*yabāšāh*) 'dry land', which God orders to appear from its locality beneath the waters. The *mamanu* that describes the appearance of the dry land is the Niphal stem of הִרָא meaning 'be seen' or 'to appear'. Considering these meanings, we can suggest that the creative speech invites the dry land to show itself so that it is visible in creation. In addition, the nature of the emerging land can be seen through a closer look at

⁵¹ The *mamanu* occurs in v.6 in the Hiphil participle translatable as 'cause to divide', while it occurs in v. 7 in the Hiphil imperfect meaning 'cause to divide'. In Hebrew grammar the Hiphil stem expresses 'causative action'. Hence, it is used in this *vaevaēga* to identify the firmament in v. 6 and God in v. 7 as the cause of the division. This rendition suggests the division of the waters as a collaborative action between God and the firmament.

⁵² Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 62.

the *mamanu* מַמָּנִי (*yabāšāh*). This term is employed elsewhere in the Old Testament to describe God's miracles, as in the case of the Flood, the Crossing of the Sea of Reeds and the Jordan River narratives.⁵³ In these cases, the dry land is considered to be a miracle for the salvation of the people. Reading this nuance into Gen. 1:1-2:4a suggests the appearance of the dry land is a miraculous event for the betterment (or even salvation) of the rest of creation. This reading resonates with the *gafa* perspective in that it reveals the *faiā* and *matāfaioi* of Earth to God and creation. First, it depicts Earth to be an essential part of creation that other components of creation are dependent upon. And secondly, this reading hints at Earth's *matāfaioi* of supporting other members of creation. Earth's *matāfaioi* here can be seen as Earth's contribution to and participation as a *soāfaumea* (assistant) in God's purpose and plan in creation.

Furthermore, God's relationship with the dry land and the waters is cemented by God naming the dry land Earth and the waters Seas. The waters and the dry land which existed prior to creation are claimed by God through the process of naming. Obviously there is no need for a divine deed in the creation of the waters and the dry land because they were there to start with. Using the *gafa* hermeneutic, we can thus suggest that the absence of God's creative action highlights the waters' and the dry land's participation in the creation process. That is, God instructs and advises while the two elements of Earth obey and fulfill the required creation *matāfaioi*. Again Earth's *matāfaioi* as a *soāfaumea* is highlighted in this *va'aiga*. The fulfillment of Earth's *matāfaioi* in this *va'aiga* is evaluated by God as 'good' in v. 10. Therefore, suggesting that Earth is functionally viable to perform her responsibilities in creation.

⁵³ The Flood Narrative can be found in Gen. 6-9. In Gen. 8:7 and 14, מַמָּנִי is used to depict the subsiding of the waters. In Jos. 4:23 מַמָּנִי is used to describe God's drying up of the Jordan River and the Sea of Reeds to allow Israel's crossings.

d. Creation of Vegetation: Earth's *Matāfaioi* (vv. 11-13)

The *matāfaioi* of Earth as God's *soāfaumea* is also highlighted in the following *va'aiga* of Gen.1:11-13. The creation of vegetation begins with a jussive verb representing God's ordering of Earth to bring forth vegetation. In God's speech, Earth's task of producing vegetation is described through the use of the *mamanu* מַצֵּי (dāšā) meaning 'to sprout', 'to shoot' or 'grow green'.⁵⁴ Earth's response to God's command is described through the use of the *mamanu* מָצָא (yāš'ā) meaning 'to go' or 'to come out'.⁵⁵ This *mamanu* is often used elsewhere in the Old Testament to depict the emancipating of captives and slaves⁵⁶ or to indicate the source of origin for an entity.⁵⁷ Reading these depictions of the *mamanu* מָצָא into the Genesis 1:9-13 *va'aiga* yields several perceptions that enhance an understanding of this *va'aiga* from a *gafa* perspective. First, considering the usage of the *mamanu* to describe a release from bondage portrays the bringing forth of vegetation by Earth as a releasing of pre-existing vegetation trapped or stored within Earth prior to the creation activities. Secondly, reading מָצָא as an indication of an entity's source of origin reiterates that Earth is the source and origin of vegetation.

This reading of the two *mamanu* reiterates the *matāfaioi* of Earth as a *soāfaumea* assisting God in creation. In this *va'aiga*, Earth is specifically given the *matāfaioi* to create vegetation in accordance to God's specifications. In this light, the creator-created *faiā* between God and Earth is transforming into a *faumea-soāfaumea* (maker-assistant) *faiā*. The *soāfaumea matāfaioi* of Earth is also echoed through the absence of a divine deed in the creation process. Unlike the creation of

⁵⁴ BDB, 205; TWOT.

⁵⁵ BDB, 422.

⁵⁶ This usage of מַצֵּי is evident in the Exodus accounts to describe the bringing out of the people of God from Egypt (Exod. 3:10 ff; 14:11). The *mamanu* is also used to describe the emancipating of Hebrew slaves (Exod. 21:2), the reverting of property ownership to their original owners in the Jubilee year and the return from captivity in exile to foreign nations (Ezek. 34:13).

⁵⁷ The usage of מָצָא to refer to the source of origin is seen in Gen. 24:50 and Lev. 9:24. In Gen. 24:50, the term is used by Laban to explain the origin of his decision to let Rebekah go and become Isaac's wife. And, it is used in Lev. 9:50 to reveal the source of the fire that consumed the burnt offering on the altar.

light and the firmament, where God was actively involved in separating and making, the divine deed that accompanies God's speech is missing in this *va'aiga*. This reveals God's physical involvement in the creation of vegetation to be minimal while the bulk of the creation process is allocated to Earth.⁵⁸

Another aspect missing in this *va'aiga* is the naming process done by God (as in the cases of the light, darkness, waters and dry land) to claim authority over that which God has created. This omission highlights the way that Earth herself is attributed with the creation of vegetation. This, however, does not mean that God did not play a part in this particular act of creation. Rather, the bringing forth of vegetation is a divine initiative and plan revealed through God's speeches. That is, God ordered and Earth produced. The creation of vegetation by Earth was carried out exactly to God's plan; Earth produces plant species (plants yielding seeds and trees bearing fruits with seeds in them) that matches the plants and trees God instructed her to produce. In addition, God also participated in the creation of vegetation by playing the role of an overseer who evaluates the creation activities and outcomes. This is disclosed through the evaluation formula 'And God saw that it was good' (v. 12) where God as evaluator issues an approval of the creation of vegetation. This again sheds light on the God-Earth *faiā*. It reveals Earth as God's *soāfaumea* in carrying out the divine plan for creation. It also discloses the collaboration between God and Earth in the creation process. In this sense, even though God's physical participation is minimal; God's contribution in masterminding and overseeing creation is comprehensive.

e. Creation of the Two Great Lights and Stars and their *Matāfaioi* (vv. 14-19)

Following the creation of vegetation is the creation of the two great lights and the stars. This creation activity can also be seen as further development of Earth by God.⁵⁹ This creation scene

⁵⁸ Compared to the separation of the dry land and the waters in the previous *va'aiga* where God commands and leaves the two to carry out the creation act of separating themselves.

⁵⁹ See, Samoan worldview of Earth in Chapter Three, Section 3.1. Here, a description of the Samoan traditional view that sees Earth and the Heavens as an inseparable unit is given.

also begins with a divine creation speech in vv. 14-15; this speech is an extensive version of those found in vv. 3, 6, 9 and 11. In this speech, God, with the use of the jussive יִהְיֶה, ordered the existence of lights. The lights in this *va'aiga* are different from the light in v. 3. This is clear by considering that the *mamanu* used in the creation speech in v. 14 is מָאוֹר (*mā'ôr*) meaning 'luminary', 'light bearer', 'light' or 'lamp' instead of אֹר (light) used in v. 3. The nuances of מָאוֹר suggests that this *mamanu* has more to do with the *sources* of light rather than light as radiance. The light sources the *tala* refers to here include the two great lights (presumably the sun and the moon) and the stars.⁶⁰

By surveying the *vaevaēga* (sub-section) of the *tala* (Gen. 1:3-19) in which this *va'aiga* belongs, it is apparent that the references to light in the second *va'aiga* (vv. 3-5) and in this *va'aiga* (vv. 14-19) provide a *pā* (*inclusion*) that envelopes this *vaevaēga*. In other words, the creation of light bracketed the creation of the expanse, the separation of seas and land and the bringing forth of vegetation. This suggests the *fa'amatala*'s intention of highlighting and emphasizing the *faiā* and *matāfaioi* of light within the creation process. The presence of a *pā* points to the existence of a chiasmus. The following chiastic pattern can be deciphered from this *vaevaēga* of the *tala*:

⁶⁰ However, there is no direct reference to the sun and moon in the *tala* even the naming formula is absent from this *va'aiga*. Some scholars see this absence as a polemic against Ancient Near Eastern religions that worshipped the sun and moon as deities. Wenham, for example, supports this view and sees the absence as a deliberate act on the part of the *fa'amatala* to avoid links with Ancient Near Eastern religion. This connection is clear when considering the phonological resemblances between the Hebrew names שֶׁמֶשׁ (*šemeš*) and יָרֵחַ (*yārēah*) meaning 'sun' and 'moon' respectively and *Shamash* the Babylonian sun god and *Yarikh* the Canaanite moon god. See, Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 21. Also see Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 127-128. However, in Deut. 4:19 the sun and moon are seen as gods, allowing that other 'peoples' may worship them. Deuteronomy is not strictly monotheist and does not include polemics against Babylonian 'paganism' suggested here. In this sense, Deuteronomy insists on monolatry only within Israel. On the other hand, Schmid describes P's monotheism as 'inclusive monotheism'. For P there is no need to object the worship of other gods because these gods are partial manifestation of the Israelite god Yahweh. In this sense, the worship of the sun and moon suggested in Gen. 1: 14-15 may not be problematic for P since they can be seen as partial manifestation of the divine or as entities functioning to reveal some aspects of the divine. See, Thomas Römer, "The Exodus Narrative According to the Priestly Document," in *The Strata of the Priestly Writings: Contemporary Debate and Future Directions*, eds. Sarah Shectman and Joel S. Baden (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2009), 157.

a. 'Let there be light...'

b. 'Let there be an expanse...'

c. 'Let the water ...be gathered into one place....'

c.' 'Let the dry land appear...'

b.' 'Let the land bring forth vegetation...'

a.' 'Let there be lights...'

This chiastic model with the exception of a-a' is not based on similarities in words or phrases.

However, the corresponding elements in this chiasmus are the *faiā* between the elements created in each clause. In this case, the chiastic structure reveals the interrelatedness of Earth's members.

Starting from the two centers, c and c' corresponds to the fact that the gathering of the waters into one locality created the space for the appearance of the dry land. This suggests that the fulfillment of the creative activity in c' is dependent on the creative activity in c. Similarly, the creation activities in b and b' depict a *faiā* between the created entities in the two clauses. The creation of the expanse in b creates the space necessary for the vegetation in b' to grow. In other words, the space created through God's creation of the expanse is one of the prerequisites for the fulfillment of the creation of vegetation.

The corresponding creation activities in c-c' and b-b' are bracketed by the creation of light in a-a' clauses. This highlights the *faiā* between the light and the elements created in other clauses. It alludes to the importance of light in God's creation process. First, the light is essential in the creation of the firmament in clause b in the sense that light enlightens the expanse and the expanse in return provides the space for God to place the luminaries created in a.' Second, light is also crucial in the creation of the seas and dry land in a and a' respectively, clarifying the distinction between these two entities. Habel puts this well when he states that light enables the once unseen

Earth to be seen.⁶¹ And lastly, light is also essential in the creation and existence of vegetation created in b'. This is not stated explicitly in the text, but the fact that light already existed prior to the creation of vegetation hints at its contribution in creating the ideal environment for vegetation to come forth from the ground. In this context, the creation of the luminaries in a' make sense. It can be seen as the means by which God maintains the light's *faiā* with the already created components of Earth.

This *faiā* is made apparent in the *matāfaioi* given to the luminaries in the vv. 14-19 *va'aiga*. The luminaries are assigned the *matāfaioi* of 'separating between the day and night', 'for signs, seasons, days and years', 'giving light to the Earth', and 'ruling the day and night'. The first three *matāfaioi* are the collective *matāfaioi* of all the luminaries while the last one is assigned specifically to the two great lights created by God. These *matāfaioi* are mentioned in this *va'aiga* through the use of different *soāmamanu* (expressions). The first *matāfaioi* is expressed through the use of the *soāmamanu* לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה (*l'habēdîl bēn hāyôm uben halāyēlāh*) meaning 'to separate between the day and (between) the night' in v. 14 (repeated in v. 18). This *matāfaioi* is identical with the divine creative action in v. 4, suggesting that the luminaries were given a *matāfaioi* that God had already performed. This therefore suggests that the luminaries were created by God to *sustain* the division between day and night. In this sense, they are God's *soāfaumea* to maintain the divine creation. On the other hand, giving this *matāfaioi* to the luminaries reveals a collaborative *faiā* between God and the components of Earth. This *faiā* is mentioned above as that between the *faumea* (creator) and the *soāfaumea* (assistant) where God the creator (*faumea*) invites participation from the created elements (*soāfaumea*) in the creative process.

The second *matāfaioi* assigned to the luminaries is expressed through the use of the *soāmamanu* לְאוֹת וּלְמוֹעֲדִים וּלְיָמִים וּשְׁנִים (*l'otot ûlemô'adim ûlayamim w'esanim*) meaning 'for signs and for fixed times and for days and years'. Unlike the previous *matāfaioi* this one depicts the creation of

⁶¹ Habel, *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth*, 30.

something new. The first *mamanu* in the expression derives from the *mamanu* אִזָּה (^ʔ*ôṭ*) translated as ‘signs’ and also carries the meanings ‘tokens’, ‘symbols’, ‘pledges’ or ‘memorials’.⁶² This *matāfaioi* therefore requires the luminaries to be indicators that distinguish fixed times, days and years or as memorials to observe each set time and season.⁶³ In contrast, some scholars read the *mamanu* אִזָּה in conjunction with the *mamanu* מִזְמָרִים (*mô^ʿā^adîm*), which means ‘fixed times.’ Sarna, for example, sees the pair as a hendiadys expressing the idea of ‘set times’ referring to the days and years as units of fixed times.⁶⁴ In this sense the luminaries are therefore given the *matāfaioi* of determining and setting fixed days and years. This adds another element to the *matāfaioi* of a *soāfaumea* given to Earth. Earth and its heavenly luminaries as a *soāfaumea* not only sustain and maintain God’s creation but also assist God in the creative process - in this case, in the creation of days and years and fixed times.

The next *matāfaioi* for the luminaries in this *va’aiga* is indicated by the *soāmamanu* לְהָאִיר עַל-הָאָרֶץ (*l^hā^ʔir al-hā^ʔāreṣ*) meaning ‘let them be for lights upon the Earth’. This *mamanu* expression is repeated in the Gen. 1:14-19 *va’aiga*, first as a divine speech in v. 15 and again in v. 17 where it comes into fruition. Central to this expression is the *mamanu* אִזָּר (^ʔ*or*) which occurs in both v. 15 and v. 17 in its verbal state rather than its noun form as in v. 3. In these verses the *mamanu* appears in its Hiphil stem to mean ‘give light’, ‘light up’, ‘cause to shine’ or ‘lighten’.⁶⁵ A consideration of these nuances of the *mamanu* sheds more light on this *matāfaioi* of the luminaries: to shine in order to provide the Earth with light. The final *matāfaioi* mentioned in this *va’aiga* for the luminaries is expressed through the use of the *mamanu* מְשָׁלָה (*mem^ešālāh*) meaning ‘rule’,

⁶² BDB, 23; TWOT.

⁶³ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 130-131. He claims that the *mamanu* means ‘distinguishable mark’.

⁶⁴ Sarna, *Genesis*, 9.

⁶⁵ BDB, 261; M. Sæbø, ‘אִזָּר’, in *TLOT*, vol 2. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, eds. Mark E. Biddle, trans. (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 63-67.

‘dominion’ or ‘realm’⁶⁶ depicting the luminaries’ rule over the day and night. This *matāfaioi* is specific for the two great lights God created. The greater of the two is for the rule of the day and the lesser for the rule of the night. This suggests that the two great lights should perform the *matāfaioi* of regulating the day and night.

Moreover, from a *gafa* perspective, the *matāfaioi* given to the two great lights and the stars reveals a *faiā* between God and that which God has created (*faumea-soāfaumea faiā*). It reveals God working in partnership with His creations in the creative process. Again, this adds to the portrait of the Earth as a *soāfaumea* (assistant) working in partnership with God to fulfill the divine purpose in creation. The attribution of *matāfaioi* already performed by God to the elements of Earth suggests the sharing of *matāfaioi* between God and the *soāfaumea*. In other words, Earth is invited to take up the *matāfaioi* of co-ruling and co-maintaining creation with God.

2.2.2 Earth’s *Faiā* with the Creatures (Gen. 1:20-31)

Generally speaking this *vaevaēga* of the ‘a’ano of the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala* describes God creating the living creatures that are to populate Earth. In the process, Earth’s *faiā* with God develops further. The Earth is no longer the subject of God’s creative activities but assists (*soāfaumea*) in the creation of the creatures. As God’s *soāfaumea*, the Earth is also obligated to fulfill *matāfaioi* in the creation process. In addition, God also establishes *faiā* between Earth and the newly-created creatures. These *faiā* also have *matāfaioi* attached to them for Earth to fulfill.

a. *Faiā* between Earth and Aquatic and Flying Creatures (vv. 20-23)

The first *va’aiga* of this *vaevaēga* describes the creation of aquatic and flying creatures. The *va’aiga* begins with the usual creative speech pointing the readers to God’s creative words. Here, God creates creatures which are identified by the use of the *mamanu* נֶפֶשׁ (*nepeš*) meaning ‘life’,

⁶⁶ BDB, 607; TWOT.

‘soul’, ‘living being’, ‘desire’, ‘emotion’, ‘passion’ or ‘appetite’.⁶⁷ The term נָפֶשׁ refers to that which breathes, typically denoting animate life or living creatures.⁶⁸ Considering the other nuances of the *mamanu* sheds more light on the nature of the aquatic creatures. That is, they are living creatures with souls, emotions, desires and appetites.⁶⁹

In addition, the *mamanu* נָפֶשׁ in v. 20 is placed in apposition with the *mamanu* חַיָּה (*hayāh*) meaning ‘living thing’ or ‘animal’. This *soāmamanu* puts emphasis on the aquatic creatures’ state of existence as living beings. The fact that these creatures were spoken into existence by God suggests that it is the divine word that creates life. This divine word of God in the creation of aquatic creatures opens with the *mamanu* expression יִשְׂרְצוּ הַמַּיִם שָׂרָץ (*yis’er’esu hamayim šereš*) translatable as ‘Let the waters swarm with swarming things.’ These words clearly reveal the divine intention for the creation of aquatic creatures. As apparent in the use of the *mamanu* שָׂרָץ (*šāraš*) meaning ‘to swarm’ or ‘to teem’.⁷⁰ This *mamanu* yields the expression of abundance and movement reminiscent of a mass migration of creatures. This therefore reveals that God intends the waters to be filled in abundance with itinerant creatures. This nature of the creatures can also be seen in the usage of the related noun שָׂרָץ (*šereš*) denoting ‘swarming things’.⁷² In the Old Testament, the noun שָׂרָץ is often used to refer to small creatures like insects, smaller

⁶⁷ BDB, 659; TWOT.

⁶⁸ See Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 23-24; John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Genesis*, vol. 1 (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2003), 79.

⁶⁹ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 62. They, on the other hand, put emphasis on the nuances ‘desire’ and ‘appetite’, suggesting that these desires and appetites refer to sexual drives and cravings for food.

⁷⁰ BDB, 1056.

⁷¹ The combination of a verb with its cognate noun is labelled by Currid as a ‘polyptoton’ and it is use for the sense of emphasis. See, Currid, *A Study Commentary on Genesis*, 79-80.

⁷² BDB, 1056; TWOT.

quadrupeds and reptiles.⁷³ In this sense שָׂרָץ may therefore be a category including all the small aquatic creatures excluding the ‘monstrous sea creatures’ created by God in v. 21.

Furthermore, there seems to be multiple witnesses in the activities associated with the creation of aquatic creatures. This is evidenced by surveying the different translations of v. 20 in different English versions of the Bible. For example, the King James and the Revised Standard Versions depict v. 20a as God’s command, ordering the waters to bring forth aquatic creatures.⁷⁴ In contrast, the New Living Translation and the New American Standard Bible translate v. 20a as a command directed at the aquatic creatures to swarm the waters.⁷⁵ Apparently, the first understanding of v. 20a is influenced by the Septuagint that uses the *mamano* ἐξαγαγέτω meaning ‘lead out’ or ‘bring out’, giving the translation ‘Let the waters lead out/bring out living creatures’. Translated thus, this *mamano* depicts a command from God to the waters to produce and bring forth the aquatic creatures. In this depiction, the waters are involved in the creation process.⁷⁶

On the other hand, the second translation of v. 20a seems to follow the Hebrew in the Masoretic Text, which uses the *mamano* שָׂרָץ mentioned above, thus, producing the translation, ‘Let the waters swarm with living creatures’. In the Hebrew text, the waters do not produce living creatures and the creation of the aquatic creatures is solely attributed to God the creator. Westermann follows the Hebrew text and suggests the Septuagint has a tendency to harmonize and systematize discrepancies within Old Testament texts. In this case, it deliberately harmonizes v. 11, v. 20a and

⁷³ For example, see, Lev. 11:29.

⁷⁴ KJV: ‘And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven’. RSV: ‘And God said, Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens’.

⁷⁵ NLT: ‘Then God said, Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind.’ NASB: ‘Then God said, Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens’.

⁷⁶ Habel, *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth*, 34. Habel sympathizes with this view claiming that waters played a similar role to the dry land in the creation process; like the dry land, they also bear the capacity to bring forth living creatures.

v. 24a and thus, disregards the differentiation between the three creation processes that the *fa'amatala* of Genesis is trying to portray.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, a *gafa* reading of v. 20a identifies with both renditions of this verse. First, it sees the Greek reading of v. 20a as revelation of an invitation from God to summon the waters to partake as a *soāfaumea* in the creative act of bringing forth the aquatic creatures. From a *gafa* perspective, this highlights Earth's involvement in the creation process and her *matāfaioi* as a *soāfaumea*. The second view based on the Hebrew text also makes sense from a *gafa* perspective in that it discloses the waters as the domain for the living creatures created by God in this *va'aiga*. So, in this case, God did not invite the waters to participate in the creation process but rather used them as a *tausimea* (host) to provide a habitation for all the aquatic creatures, thereby revealing Earth's *matāfaioi* as a *tausimea* to these new creatures.

Moreover, the other category of sea creatures are expressed in the *tala* by the use of the *mamanu* תַּנִּין (*tanîn*) meaning 'serpent' 'monster' or 'sea dragon'.⁷⁸ These creatures are directly created by God in v. 21 and the use of תַּנִּין to signify them suggests these creatures are serpent- or dragon-like monstrous beings. Biblical scholars often overlook these meanings of תַּנִּין. For example, Hamilton rejects the untamable nature of these creatures and describes them as extremely large, water related mammals and reptiles.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, elsewhere in the Old Testament תַּנִּין is always associated with monstrous powerful beasts (e.g. Job. 7:12; Isa. 27:1, 51:9, Psa. 74:13). In these passages the תַּנִּין is seen as a powerful creature that only God can defeat. Reading this interpretation of the תַּנִּין into Gen. 1:1-2:4a reveals that God also

⁷⁷ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 136-137. For Westermann, it is P's intention to present each creation scenario differently. The attempt by the Greek to harmonise the discrepancies in v.11 and v. 20 undermines this. However, he accepts the harmonisation of v. 11 with v. 24, in the sense that, the bringing forth of land animals and plants by Earth conforms to the image of 'mother Earth'. Also see, Sarna's view in 136.

⁷⁸ BDB, 1072.

⁷⁹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 129. Some major English translations of the Bible also avert the inimical natures of תַּנִּין. For instance, the NKJV translate it as 'sea creatures', KJV render it as 'whales', and NIV denote it as 'creatures of the sea'.

incorporated detrimental elements into creation. From a *gafa* perspective, the existence of untamable creatures in creation can be challenging for Earth's role as a *tausimea*, not only because these creatures may be hard to control but also because they pose a threat to the lives of other beings under Earth's care.⁸⁰

Coinciding with the creation of the aquatic creatures is the creation of flying creatures which follows a similar creative pattern. This process is related in the *va'aiga* through the use of the *mamanu* עוף (*ʿōp*) meaning 'flying creature', 'fowl' or 'insects' in v. 20 and כנף (*kānāp*) meaning 'wing' or 'extremity' in v. 21. Combining the two *mamanu* suggests that the *va'aiga* refers to all the winged creatures with the ability to fly. The flying creatures are here described through their features (creatures with wings) and their motions (creatures that can fly). Wenham suggests that this flying motion as a swarming type of movement indicated by the use of the Polel form עופף (*ʿōpēp*) of the *mamanu* עוף.⁸¹ As indicated above, this swarming movement suggests abundance since it tends to refer to the large scale movement of creatures. This reiterates God's intention in v. 20 for the flying creatures to fill the space between the dry land and the skies.

The space for the flying creatures is clearly defined in v. 20 through the use of the *soāmamanu* על־הָאָרֶץ (ʿal-hā'āreṣ ʿal-penê reqêaʿ hasāmāim), which literally means 'upon the Earth over the face of the expanse of the sky'. The first section of this *mamanu* expression על־הָאָרֶץ indicates the lower limits of the flying creatures' domain while the upper limits are defined by the *mamanu* expression עַל־פְּנֵי רְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם which most scholars suggest means 'across the expanse of the sky'. Sarna, for example, adopts this translation and claims it depicts the viewpoint of an

⁸⁰ See, Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 54-55. Levenson presents an alternative view on the existence of sea monsters in creation. For him, '[a]ll hint of opposition to God on the part of these animals has vanished'. This is because all the negativity surrounding these monsters was explicitly removed by the author of Gen. 1:1-2:4a by revealing these creatures as not primordial but created and rule by God. They are now just another species of aquatic creatures. This reading is the result of Levenson's intertextual reading of Gen. 1:21 with Psa. 104 that demythologised the sea monsters. However, a different depiction might occur through a consideration of other Old Testament passages (e.g. Psa. 74:14; Amos 9:3 and Job. 3:8) that portrays these sea monsters as hostile and rebellious to God.

⁸¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 24.

observer looking upwards from Earth.⁸² In other words, the flying creatures occupy the space between Earth and Sky.

Identifying the living space of the flying creatures from a *gafa* perspective hints at both Earth's *faiā* and *matāfaioi* in relation to the flying creatures. First, God's intention of creating the flying creatures to fill the space between Earth and Sky alludes to a host-creature *faiā* where Earth is the *tausimea* to the flying creatures. As a *tausimea*, the Earth provides the flying creatures with the living quarters within which they can thrive. In return, the flying creatures must be abundant in number so that they can inhabit and 'fill' this vast space. God's purpose for both the aquatic and flying creatures to be abundant in number can be seen in the blessing that concluded this *va'aiga*. This is the first time the act of blessing is announced in the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala*. In this blessing, God expresses the desire for the aquatic and flying creatures to be productive and grow in number in order for them to fill their domains. God's blessing is expressed in v. 22 through the *soāmamanu* פָּרֹו וְרָבֹו (*perū ūrebū*) meaning 'be fruitful and be many'. This *soāmamanu* is in the imperative state, revealing it as the bestowing of a *matāfaioi* that the creatures concerned must fulfill. In this sense, as inhabitants of the Earth, the aquatic and flying creatures must accomplish the *matāfaioi* of reproducing and multiplying in number.

In sum, the creation of the aquatic and flying creatures by God in this *va'aiga* reveals another element of the Earth-God *faiā*. That is, Earth's *matāfaioi* as God's *soāfaumea* is now extended to the *matāfaioi* of a *tausimea*. In maintaining her *faiā* with God the creator, Earth is required to fulfill her responsibilities as both a *soāfaumea* and a *tausimea*. At the same time, by performing these duties Earth establishes *faiā* with God's creatures. These *faiā* can be defined in two ways: first, as a *faiā* between *soāfaumea* and creature, where Earth is the *soāfaumea* participating in the creation of the creatures, and second, as a *faiā* between the *tausimea* and the creatures, where the *tausimea* is expected to act as host to the creatures, providing living quarters, provisions and security.

⁸² Sarna, *Genesis*, 10.

b. Earth and Land Creatures *Faiā* (vv. 24-25)

This brief *va'aiga* explains the creation of land creatures on the sixth day of God's creation. Similar to the previous creation scenes, this also begins with an announcement by the *fa'amatala* followed closely by God's creation speech. In this speech, God clearly once again invites Earth's participation in the creative process. This is evident in the use of the *mamanu* מָנָנִי (*yāṣā'*) meaning 'to go' or 'come out' which, in the Hiphil stem, means 'to bring out' or 'cause to come out'. Clearly, in the divine directive, the subject of מָנָנִי is Earth, thus revealing Earth to be the producer of living creatures. In other words, through the divine speech, God is assigning the *matāfaioi* of a *soāfaumea* to Earth. The creation speech is followed by God's creative action expressed by the use of the Hebrew term עָשָׂה (*'āsāh*) meaning 'to make' or 'to do'. The two *mamanu* מָנָנִי and עָשָׂה are homonyms, which may hint at the relatedness of God's and Earth's actions working in collaboration in the creation of the living creatures. Recognizing Earth's role in the creation of the land creatures qualifies Earth as one of the land creatures' creator. This depiction from a *gafa* perspective defines the *faiā* between Earth and the creatures as that of a creator and the created. Not only that but it reiterates Earth's *matāfaioi* as a *soāfaumea* in creation.

Another feature of the *tala* that indicates collaboration between Earth and God in the creative process can be seen in the outputs of their creation activities in this *va'aiga*. In v. 24, Earth was commissioned to produce נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה (*nepeš hayāh*) or the 'living creatures'. This can be seen as a category that includes the בְּהֵמָה (*b^hēmāh*) meaning 'beasts' or 'cattle', the רֶמֶשׂ (*remes*) 'creeping things' and the חַיֵּי הָאָרֶץ (*hay^eto ereš*) 'living things of the land'. The first *mamanu* is generally accepted to represent all large animals that can be tamed and domesticated by man. The second *mamanu* is also a collective term that represents all small creatures that move along the ground. The third *soāmamanu* represents the final category made up of creatures that cannot be classified within the other two categories. In this sense it might therefore include animals that are untamable

and impossible to domesticate.⁸³ So these three categories might be a merism of sorts, catching *all* kinds of creatures which are the output of Earth's and the creator God's collaborative efforts. This *va'aiga* therefore brings the *matāfaioi* of Earth as a *soāfaumea* to the fore.⁸⁴

Moreover, from a *gafa* perspective, the Gen. 1:24-25 *va'aiga* also hints at Earth's *matāfaioi* as a *tausimea* (host) to the living creatures. This is explicit by considering the literal nuance of the *soāmamanu* תְּחִי-אֲרֵץ, which occurs both in vv. 24 and 25 (with a slightly different formulation). In using this *soāmamanu*, the *fa'amatala* is stressing that these creatures identify with Earth. Earth is therefore not just the source of the living creatures but also their home and habitat. Viewing Earth as the source of survival and home for these creatures highlights Earth's responsibility as *tausimea*, providing and hosting the created living creatures. Sarna alludes to this point by claiming that Gen. 1:24 depicts the notion of 'mother Earth.'⁸⁵ Seeing the Earth as a mother hints at Earth's *matāfaioi* of providing and caring for her inhabitants. These aspects also define the *matāfaioi* of the *tausimea*, that is, one who as a host provides and cares for her dependents.

Seeing Earth as a producer of land creatures from a *gafa* perspective not only highlights Earth's *matāfaioi* as a *soāfaumea* but also alludes to Earth as a mother or a parent yielding animals as her offsprings. The view of Earth as a mother is apparent with further consideration of other meanings attached to the *mamanu* יָצָא. The *mamanu* can also refer to the birthing of progeny, as in Gen. 15:4; 17:6; and 25:25ff, for example.⁸⁶ So, reading this connotation into this *va'aiga* implies that Earth is a parent producing land creatures as her offspring. This depiction exemplifies Earth's roles as both a *soāfaumea* in producing the creatures and as a *tausimea* caring, nurturing and supporting the

⁸³ For example, some major translations such as the NRSV, KJV, and NJB translates תְּחִי-אֲרֵץ as 'wild animals of the Earth'. This rendition of the *mamanu* is widely accepted by biblical scholars. For examples, see, Habel, *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth*, 34; Sarna, *Genesis*, 11; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 25-26; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 64.

⁸⁴ Habel, *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth*, 34. Habel coheres with my depiction here, claiming that the collaboration between God and the Earth in the creation process is explicitly presented in this *va'aiga*.

⁸⁵ Sarna, *Genesis*, 11.

⁸⁶ Ernst Jenni, "יָצָא," *TLOT*, vol. 2, E. Jenni and Claus Westermann, eds., Mark E. Biddle, trans. (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publisher, 1997), 591-596.

creatures. In addition, seeing Earth as a parent to the creatures also suggests a unique *faiā* between Earth and the creatures; they share an essence with Earth as parent - just as a child is the ‘flesh and blood’ of a parent.

c. Earth and Humanity *Faiā* (vv. 26-28)

This *va’aiga* reveals the creation of humanity and begins with the usual divine creation speech. Yet, God’s discourse in this *va’aiga* moves strikingly from third person singular jussive forms to first person plural cohortatives. This variation in the creation command is evident through the use of the *mamanu* נַעֲשֶׂה (*na’aśeh*) translatable as ‘let us make’. The shift in God’s speech from the third person singular to the first person plural creates the impression that the creation of humanity is set apart from the creation of other creatures and Earth. In other words, we are witnessing here the creation of a hierarchy in God’s creatures with humanity at the apex.

Another factor that indicates the elevation of humanity to the apex of creation can be seen in the divine intention of creating humanity in accordance with the divine image זֶלֶם (*śelem*) and likeness דְמוּת (*dēmût*). Relating to the cohortative נַעֲשֶׂה the pair זֶלֶם and דְמוּת both have first common plural pronominal suffixes נוּ (*nû*) meaning ‘our’, rendering the translation ‘in our image, according to our likeness’. This creates the impression that the image and likeness mentioned here are not just God’s but a collective image and likeness that incorporates the images and likenesses of those that God addresses.

So, who is the ‘us’ that God is referring to here? Scholars have come up with several suggestions, including the proposal that God is addressing heavenly angels. This view presupposes the existence of a heavenly court with angels carrying out the will of the divine.⁸⁷ An alternative reading is that the plural cohortative form here is an example of the plural of majesty, where the plural verbal

⁸⁷ See, von Rad, *Genesis*, 57; Dean S. McBride, “Divine Protocol: Genesis 1: 1-2: 3 as Prologue to the Pentateuch,” *God Who Creates: Essays in honor of W. Sibley Towner*, ed. William P. Brown and Dean S. McBride (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 16.

form and pronominal suffixes are used self-referentially by God.⁸⁸ Another suggestion proposed by biblical scholars is that God is addressing the Spirit present in v. 2. The basis for this view is the belief in the Spirit as a person of the godhead. Finally, some scholars have proffered that God is addressing Wisdom who, according to Prov. 8:22-36, claims to have been by God's side during the creative event.⁸⁹

Reading the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala* from a *gafa* perspective, however, offers us another possible reading of these plural forms: what if Earth were the possible addressee of God's speech? In support of this view is the consideration that up to this point of the *tala*, Earth has been partaking in the creative activities as God's *soāfaumea*. She has been the only entity assisting the deity in creation activities thus far. Another supporting evidence for this reading is the fact that God directly addresses Earth through speeches prior to the creation of humanity to reveal the divine intention for creation. For example, this is apparent in vv.11 and 24 where God speaks directly to Earth to bring forth vegetation and land creatures respectively. These interactions between God and Earth suggest Earth may be the referent of the first common plural in God's speech.

Yet, despite the closeness of this God-Earth relationship in creation, and despite humanity's creation in both God's and Earth's 'image' and 'likeness', humanity's elevation to the apex of creation is further amplified through God's mandate for humanity to have dominion (רָדָה - *rādā*)⁹⁰ over the aquatic, air and land creatures and to subdue (כָּבַשׁ - *kābaš*) Earth. Apparently something must have happened between God and Earth during this creative process that necessitated Earth being ruled and subdued. According to Wenham, the *mamanu* מָמָנוּ does not mean rampant exploitation or subjugation of the people on the part of the king but rather refers to the promotion

⁸⁸ See, Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 145.

⁸⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 27-28; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 64. Also included in Wenham's list is the projection that the first person plural form reflects Trinitarian thoughts, which Christians read typologically and claim as reference to Christ's presence in the beginning, as one of the persons of the triune God.

⁹⁰ *BDB*, 921.

of peace and prosperity since this is expected from Ancient Near Eastern kings.⁹¹ Unfortunately, the *mamanu* is also used to denote both hostile (e.g. Ezek. 29:19, 34:4; Lev. 26:17) and peaceful (e.g. Isa. 41:3; Lev. 25:43, 46 and 53) rule. This suggests that the type of rule depicted by מַמָּנוּ is dependent on the subject; whether the subject uses the authority to exploit or to rule with graciousness. Therefore, the fate of creation including Earth is put in the hands of humanity and there is potential for either benevolent or exploitative rule.

Such a depiction from a *gafa* viewpoint reveals humanity's *faiā* with non-human creatures and Earth is similar to a ruler-subject *faiā* where humanity is given the *matāfaioi* to rule the non-human creatures and Earth while they need to show loyalty to their ruler in return. Humanity's *matāfaioi* in this *faiā* thus impacts its *faiā* with Earth, in the sense that humanity's rule over the non-human creatures means sharing the *matāfaioi* of *tausimea* with Earth who also carries the same *matāfaioi*. How humanity carry out its rule of the non-human creatures could benefit or put stress on Earth's *matāfaioi* as a *tausimea*. In addition, the authority given to humanity also endorses humanity's dominance in the Earth-humanity *faiā*, making humanity the chief *tausimea* with Earth as its assistant (or *soātausimea*).

On the other hand, the *mamanu* מַמָּנוּ also carries pejorative connotations that can add onto the negative image of the Earth-humanity *faiā* by portraying humans as oppressors of Earth. This *mamanu* echoes conquests, rape and subjugation in the context of war where the victorious sides surmount the defeating sides and their properties (e.g. Num. 32:22 and 29; 1Chr. 22:18), rape their women (Est. 7:8),⁹² and subjugate them in slavery (e.g. 2 Chr. 28:10; Neh. 5:5). Applying these meanings to the Gen. 1:26-28 *va'aiga* yields a harsh reality of humanity's potential dealings with Earth. These connotations of מַמָּנוּ from a *gafa* standpoint reveal a hostile and unhealthy *faiā*

⁹¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 33. Also see, James Barr, "Man and Nature-The Ecological Controversy and the Old Testament," *BJRL*, 55 (1972): 21-23. Barr agrees with Wenham and see the usage of the *mamanu* to mirror the rule of a 'shepherd king'.

⁹² *BDB*, 461.

between Earth and humanity, a *faiā* of abuses and exploitations. In addition, the *mamanu* מַמָּנוּ is also used in the context of claiming land, as in Josh. 18:1, where the *mamanu* is used to depict Israel's claim to the Promised Land, their inheritance from God, through force. In view of this, God's mandate for humanity to subdue Earth could depict an instruction for humanity to claim Earth through forceful undertakings. This depiction yields a negative view of the Earth-humanity *faiā*. Reading this depiction through the lens of my *gafa* hermeneutics reveals Earth as something humanity has to possess through conquest.

Despite this negativity, there is also some potential for a positive *faiā* between Earth and humanity, if we consider that the *mamanu* מַמָּנוּ also carries affirmative connotations. First, it can mean 'to tread down'⁹³ as in Mich. 7:19, referring to God treading down or eradicating the sinful nature of the people. Reading this connotation into the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala* suggests that humanity in this *va'aiga* is given the *matāfaioi* to tread down or eradicate Earth's defects. That is, in treading down Earth, humanity is granted the divine right to cleanse and liberate Earth if the need arises. In this sense, humanity is therefore mandated by God to work for the benefit of Earth.

Furthermore, the *faiā* between Earth and humanity is portrayed in this *va'aiga* through the use of several *mamanu*. First, we can see a series of *mamanu* in v. 28 that explicitly reveal God's intention for humanity to propagate and populate Earth. These *mamanu* include פָּרָה (*parah*) meaning 'bear fruits' or 'be fruitful',⁹⁴ רַבָּה (*raba*) meaning 'to be many', or 'to be great',⁹⁵ and מָלֵא (*male*) meaning 'to be full' or 'fill'.⁹⁶ These three *mamanu* make up the expression in v. 28 - 'be fruitful and multiply and fill Earth'. Together they depict God summoning humans to populate Earth. This divine command paints a portrait of the Earth-human *faiā* as a *faiā* between the host (Earth) and

⁹³ BDB, 461; TWOT.

⁹⁴ BDB, 826; TWOT.

⁹⁵ BDB, 916.

⁹⁶ BDB, 569; TWOT.

dwellers (humans). From the *gafa* perspective, the Earth's role as host and *tausimea* renders her responsible for providing humanity with dwelling places. This portrait reveals the dependence of humans on Earth to fulfill their needs; without Earth, humanity will be homeless and unable to flourish.

In summary, the portrait of the Earth-humanity *faiā* given in this *va'aiga* of the Genesis 1:1-2:4a *tala* seems to be two-dimensional; that is, both negative and positive. On the one hand, the Earth-humanity *faiā* from a *gafa* perspective assumes an unfair and exploitative *faiā* where humanity is superior over Earth. On the other hand, the Earth-human *faiā* also reveals a reciprocal *faiā* where the two are dependent on each other and share the common *matāfaioi* of *tausimea* in God's creation.

d. Feeding the Humans and the Creatures (vv. 29-31)

This *va'aiga* concludes the events of the sixth day of creation, and depicts the giving of vegetation by God to humans, flying creatures and land creatures for food. There is correspondence between this *va'aiga* and the creation of plants by Earth in the fifth *va'aiga* of vv. 11-13. That is, the plants that Earth brought forth are here given by God to the human and non-human creatures for their nourishment. God's action of giving is expressed by the use of the *mamanu* מָנָן (*natān*) meaning 'to give' 'put' or 'set'. The *mamanu* is used in this *va'aiga* in its Qal perfect state suggesting that God's action has already been fulfilled. According to Westermann, the *mamanu* expresses a fixed arrangement or allotment⁹⁷ depicting the idea that the food for the humans and the creatures has already been prepared and made available for them. As noted by Habel, God does not directly acknowledge Earth as the source of vegetation but makes reference to the existence of vegetation upon the face of Earth.⁹⁸ This depiction from a *gafa* perspective reveals insights into Earth's *faiā* with the humans and with flying and land creatures. On the one hand, it reiterates the *tausimea*

⁹⁷ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 162.

⁹⁸ Habel, *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth*, 40.

(host)-*āumau* (dweller) *faiā* between Earth and the creatures. On the other hand, it points to the Earth's *matāfaioi* as a *tausimea* providing for the needs of her dwellers. In addition, this also alludes to the Earth's *soāfaumea faiā* with God, in the sense that the assigning of vegetation produced by Earth for the creatures' food paints the picture of Earth serving and working to achieve God's creation objectives.

The diet of the creatures suggests vegetarianism, yet there are slight variations in the description of the plants given to humans and those given to the creatures. The diet of the humans consists of seeds yielding plants and trees with seeds in their fruits while flying and land creatures were given just the green plants for food. According to Habel, the variation in food might suggest special treatment for the humans on the part of God by allotting them the most valuable plant species for food.⁹⁹ However, there is no clear evidence in the *tala* to support such a claim, especially given that there is nothing to indicate the nutritional value of the different plant species. Nonetheless, from a *gafa* perspective, this variation means that the Earth's *matāfaioi* as a *tausimea* becomes multifaceted. These dietary differences mean that Earth must be able to identify and attend to the special nutritional needs of her different dwellers in order for them to flourish and survive.

In summary, from a *gafa* perspective, this *va'aiga* further defines the *matāfaioi* of Earth as a *tausimea*. It reveals, Earth's role of providing the dwelling population of humans and creatures with their different nutritional needs. Thus, it depicts the reliance of the humans, the flying creatures and land creatures on the Earth's abilities as a *tausimea* for their survival and wellbeing.

2.3 Vaega 3: Fa'atōmūlīga: Conclusion of the Creation Tala (Gen. 2:1-4a)

Gen. 2:1-4a presents us with the *fa'atōmūlīga* (what comes last) of the *tala*. This section provides the audience with the conclusion of the *tala*. The *fa'atōmūlīga* can be further sub-divided into two *vaevaēga* (sub-sections). The first *vaevaēga* (Gen. 2:1-3) contains the closing *va'aiga* (scene) that

⁹⁹ Ibid., 41.

indicates the completion of God's creation. The second *vaevaēga* (Gen, 2:4a) comprises the *fa'amatala*'s (narrator) closing remark summarizing the plot of the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala*.

2.3.1 Creation Completed (Gen. 2:1-3)

This *vaevaēga* of the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala* signals the completion of creation. This development is first depicted in the *va'aiga* by the absence of the usual creation pattern evidenced in the previous days of creation. The standard announcement-creation command formula found at the beginning of the previous creation days is notably missing from the seventh day indicating that there will be no new creation intended for the day. Instead, the *va'aiga* commences with a brief summary that the rest of creation had been finished.

This trend is indicated through the use of the *mamanu* מָלַח (*kālāh*) meaning 'be completed', 'at an end', 'finished', 'accomplished' or 'spent'.¹⁰⁰ The *mamanu* is used in Gen. 2:1 to reveal the state of Sky and Earth and all their hosts and in Gen. 2:2 to make reference to God's work.¹⁰¹ Another *mamanu* that suggests the completion of Earth is שָׁבַת (*shabat*) meaning 'cease', 'desist', or 'rest',¹⁰² This *mamanu* is used twice in this *va'aiga*, first in v. 2 and again in v. 3 to describe God's (lack of) activities on the seventh day. The first two semantic nuances of the *mamanu* depict God abstaining from the creation activities, thus implying that there is no more work to be done. This in turn suggests that Sky and Earth have been completed. On the other hand, the nuance 'to rest' may imply that creation needs energy and effort, and that God at this stage is experiencing fatigue and requires rest to regain strength. This depiction is sound from a *gafa* perspective in the sense that God here is experiencing fatigue because of the divine involvement in the creative activities. God

¹⁰⁰ BDB, 477.

¹⁰¹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 141-142.

¹⁰² BDB, 991.

was directly with the creation process ordering, creating, dividing, making, naming and blessing the creatures and the created.¹⁰³

In addition שָׁבַת is often linked by scholars and Bible readers to the notion of the Sabbath. Habel, for instance, identified three linkages between these two concepts. The first link is evidence in the Hebrew practice of keeping the Sabbath holy by abstaining from doing any work. As God rests on the Sabbath¹⁰⁴ so too ought the Israelites; anyone who violates this law will perish, as depicted in Exod. 20: 8-11 and Num. 15: 32-36. The second link associates שָׁבַת with the liberation of the Israelite from the bondage in Egypt. By resting on this day, the Israelites celebrate their redemption and identity as God's people.¹⁰⁵ The third link can be seen in the Leviticus sabbatical law in Lev. 25-26. The purpose of this law is to prevent the people from overworking the land, thus allowing the land's rejuvenation and refertilisation.¹⁰⁶ According to Habel, this concept of a Sabbatical year for the land is reflected in Gen. 1:1-2:4a since the Hebrew term for land used in the grafting of the Leviticus law is analogous to the term אֶרֶץ used for Earth in the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala*. The 'rest' on the seventh day in this *va'aiga* therefore could be an indication of a time set aside by God for the rejuvenation of Earth.¹⁰⁷ As a creation partner who was heavily involved with the creation activities Earth needs to rest too in order to replenish her strength for her continuing role as a *tausimea* to the creatures. Earth's role as host providing humans and other land creatures with habitation and nourishment will never cease as long as humans and land creatures exist. In this case, the notion of rest - to rejuvenate and replenish before beginning work again - might be relevant, in the sense that Earth's *matāfaioi* could deplete and exhaust her energy and resources. In this scenario, a day of rest

¹⁰³ This view is often rejected by scholars. For example see Sarna, *Genesis*, 15 and 354.

¹⁰⁴ The Decalogue is given in the Pentateuch in two versions. See, Exod. 20: 2-17 and Deut. 5: 6-18.

¹⁰⁵ See, Deut. 5:12-15

¹⁰⁶ Habel, *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth*, 42-43.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 43.

could therefore be seen as a necessity for Earth to rejuvenate in order to perform the *tausimea*'s *matāfaioi* effectively.

2.3.2 *Fa'aī'uga/Ending: (Gen. 2:4a)*

The *fa'amatala* in this *vaevaēga* closes the *tala* by recapping the *ulutala* of the *tala* in v. 1. This makes the two verses (v. 1 and v. 2:4a) as *pā* (borders) for the whole *tala*. In v. 2:4a, the *fa'amatala* again provides us with a brief summary of the '*a'ano* of the *tala*. It reveals the *tala* not only as a *tala* of the creation of the heaven and Earth, but also as a *tala* that exhibits the *faiā* between God and Earth and Earth and other created creatures. The *faiā* between God and creation are revealed through the use of the *mamanu* מָנָה meaning 'to create'. Unlike the *ulutala*, there is no direct reference to God here but the usage of the *mamanu* מָנָה alludes to God in the sense that God is the only subject of this particular *mamanu*. The use of the *mamanu* מָנָה in the *fa'aī'uga* also sums up all the preceding creative events depicted in the '*a'ano* of the *tala*.

Moreover, this *vaevaēga* confirms the centrality of *faiā* in this *tala* through the use of the *mamanu* מוֹלְדוֹת (*toledot*) meaning 'generations'.¹⁰⁸ This is the first mention of this *mamanu* in the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala*. The *mamanu* is often used to make reference to human genealogies and is metaphorically used here to present the sequences of events in God's creation.¹⁰⁹ From a *gafa* perspective the mention of genealogies means *faiā*. In Samoan tradition, *gafa* (genealogies) are where records of *faiā* are preserved. They include *faiā* with other humans, the gods and the environment. Therefore, genealogies are considered sacred knowledge and are protected by family custodians. Genealogy positions the individual within their family, their village, and within the traditional Samoan context. According to this Samoan perspective, the mention of מוֹלְדוֹת in this *vaevaēga* suggests several nuances of meaning. First, it creates the impression that the preceding *tala* is sacred knowledge and

¹⁰⁸ BDB, 1064.

¹⁰⁹ For example, see, Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 83 and Sarna, *Genesis*, 16-17. Textual examples can be found in Gen. 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; Num. 3:1; and Ruth. 4:18.

therefore should be treated with awe. Second, it suggests that the previous *tala* presents a record of *faiā* between God and the created order and between the created elements themselves.

3. CONCLUSION

This reading of the Gen. 1:1-2:4a creation *tala* using my Samoan *gafa* hermeneutic yields insights concerning Earth's *faiā* with God and other creatures plus Earth's *matāfaioi* in the upkeep of her *faiā*. First, Earth's *faiā* with God from a *gafa* perspective reflects a *faumea* - *soāfaumea faiā*. In this *faiā* God, the *faumea*, invites Earth's participation and assistance in the creative process and dedicates the *matāfaioi* of the *soāfaumea* to Earth to fulfill. God in this *faiā* displays characteristics typical of a *faumea* who can be both authoritative and sympathetic in relaying directives and instructions to the *faumea*. This is apparent in the nature of God's creative speeches and the actions that accompany them. On the other hand, Earth's *matāfaioi* as *soāfaumea* is depicted in her creative and maintenance roles. Earth's creative roles include the creation of vegetation, aquatic, flying and land creatures. In the meantime, her maintenance roles include the up-keeping of the distinction between light and darkness, spaces between waters, day and night, seasons and festivals and days and years. In these creation activities Earth willingly assists God to the point where Earth works with minimal help from the *faumea*.

In addition, reading Gen. 1:1-2:4a using my *gafa* hermeneutic also reveals Earth's *faiā* with both human and non-human creatures and the *matāfaioi* needed in order for Earth to sustain these *faiā*. First, the *gafa* reading vividly describes Earth's *faiā* with the non-human creatures (the aquatic, land and flying creatures). These *faiā* from a *gafa* perspective is first described as that of the creator and the created and second, is that of the host and the dwellers. In the first *faiā*, Earth is expected to perform the *matāfaioi* of a *soāfaumea*, assisting and witnessing God's creative events. In the second *faiā*, Earth is obligated to fulfill the *matāfaioi* of a *tausimea* (host), providing the *āumau* (dwellers) with habitations and nourishment.

Second, the *fa'amatala*'s description of the Earth-Human *faiā* is surrounded by controversies. This is because of the negative and positive potential evident in God's mandate for humanity to rule and subdue Earth and other creatures in creation. On the negative side, this *faiā* can turn into a relationship where Earth is subjugated and exploited by humans for their own benefit. On the positive side, humans can use their divinely-given right to benefit Earth. Nevertheless, Earth in this *faiā* is also given the *matāfaioi* of a *tausimea* serving humanity by providing them with habitation and nourishment.

Earth's *matāfaioi* identified here through the *gafa* reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala* raise questions that the proceeding chapters will attempt to answer. Does Earth have the *mafai* (abilities) to fulfill the *matāfaioi* identified in this initial *gafa* reading? Can Earth *gafataulima* her *matāfaioi* as a *soāfaumea* and a *tausimea*? The *tau* and *lima* hermeneutical lenses will aid us in finding answers to these questions, which in turn will help us to determine if the repeated pronouncement of Earth as 'good' by God in vv. 4, 10, 12, 18 and 31 is a viable observation or not.

CHAPTER FIVE

TAU ANALYSIS OF GEN. 1:1-2:4a

1. INTRODUCTION

The *gafa* analysis in the preceding chapter identifies and defines the Earth's *faiā* (relations) and *matāfaioi* (functions). Firstly, Earth's *faiā* with the creator God is described as a *faiā* between the *faumea* (maker) and the *soāfaumea* (assistant/agent). In this *faiā*, God invites Earth to participate in the creation activities thus imposing on Earth the *matāfaioi* of a *soāfaumea*. Secondly, Earth's *faiā* with humanity and the non-human creatures are described as akin to those between the *tausimea* (host) and the *āumau* (dwellers/occupants). As a *tausimea*, Earth is assigned the *matāfaioi* of hosting the *āumau*; providing them with dwelling places and nourishment.

A *tau* hermeneutic presupposes that Earth's *matāfaioi* have specific *tau* (required costs) in terms of *mafai* (abilities). Hence, a *tau* reading will establish the *tau* for Earth to perform and accomplish her *matāfaioi* in relation to her *mafai*. As defined in Chapter Three (section 3), *mafai* includes *mafai feso'ota'i* (social abilities), *mafai fa'atino* (physical abilities) and *mafai fa'alemafaufau* (mental abilities). In light of these categories, the *tau* reading focuses on the depictions of both *matāfaioi* in Gen. 1:1-2:4a - *soāfaumea* and *tausimea* - to determine their *mafai* requirements. To explore this, I will re-read the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala* to identify *tala* (narrative) features and *mamanu* (words/motifs/expressions) that could yield an understanding of the various types of *mafai* required for Earth to fulfil the identified *matāfaioi*.

2. TAU READING OF GEN. 1:1-2:4a: TAU OF EARTH'S MATĀFAIOI

To determine the *tau* of Earth's *matāfaioi* as a *soāfaumea* and a *tausimea*, we must consider these specific *matāfaioi* and their objectives as they are depicted within the Gen. 1:1-2:4a creation *tala*. Viewing the *tala* from a *tau* perspective reveals that Earth's roles as a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea* are intertwined in the '*a'ano* (plot) of Gen. 1:1-2:4a, thus, yielding a *tala* (narrative) structure of two

overlapping *vaevaēga* (sub-sections): Gen. 1:6-26 describes Earth's role as a *soāfaumea* while Gen. 1:14-31 portrays Earth's function as a *tausimea*. As I have mentioned in Chapter Three (section 4), the structures of Samoan *tala* sometimes overlap. They do not follow conventional narrative arrangements, and looking at Gen. 1:1-2:4a from a *tau* perspective reveals the *tala* to be arranged in such a manner, thus producing a narrative structure (or *fa'ata'atiāga*) as follow:

Narrative Structure (*Fa'ata'atiāga*) of Gen. 1:1-2:4a from a *Tau* Perspective

Vaega 1: Fa'atomu'aga/Introduction (vv. 1-2)

Vaega 2: 'A'ano/Body: Tau of Earth's Matāfaioi (vv. 3-31)

Vaevaēga 1: Tau: Creation of Light by God (vv. 3-5)

Vaevaēga 2: Tau for the Firmament to Separate the Waters (vv. 6-8)

Vaevaēga 3: Tau of Gathering the Waters and the Emergence of Dry Land (vv. 9-10)

Vaevaēga 4: Tau of Producing Vegetation (vv. 11-13)

Vaevaēga 5: Tau: Soāfaumea in Creating the Bodies of Light (vv. 14-19)

Vaevaēga 6: Tau: Soāfaumea and Tausimea to Aquatic and Flying Creatures (vv. 20-22)

Vaevaēga 7: Tau: Soāfaumea and Tausimea to Land Creatures (vv. 23-25)

Vaevaēga 8: Tau: Soāfaumea and Tausimea to Humanity (vv. 26-28)

Vaevaēga 9: Added Tau: Tausimea to humanity, land and flying Creatures (vv. 29-30)

Vaega 3: Fa'atōmūliga/Ending (vv. 31-2:4a)

The above narrative structure discloses that Earth's *matāfaioi* of a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea* are intertwined starting from the fifth to the seventh *vaevaēga* (sub-section). This implies that Earth in these sub-sections is simultaneously performing the roles of a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea*. The following analysis of the Gen. 1:1-2:4a will follow the above narrative structure in the attempt to

establish the *tau* for Earth (in terms of abilities) to fulfil her roles as a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea* in creation.

2.1 *Vaega 1: Fa'atomu'aga/Introduction (vv. 1-2)*

In the previous chapter, the *gafa* analysis reveals the *fa'atomu'aga* of the Gen. 1:1-2:4a creation *tala* to contain two *vaevaēga* (sub-sections). First, is the *ulutala* (title) that provides the *aotelega* (summary) and introduces the *fa'a'autū* (characters) of the *tala*. Second, is the *fa'ata'imuāga* (introductory scene) that provides the background information to read the rest of the *tala*. Through the consideration of these *tala* features, the *gafa* reading concludes that the *fa'atomu'aga* highlights Earth's potentiality for *faiā* and *matāfaioi* in the creation process. From a *tau* perspective, the *gafa* reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a raises questions, considering that Earth is meant to perform *matāfaioi*. These questions include: what is required from Earth to fulfil her *matāfaioi* in creation? Does the subsequent *tala* identify the required abilities for Earth to perform her duties successfully? What is the *tau* of Earth's intended *matāfaioi* in terms of *mafai*? Is there evidence in the *tala* to aid the calculation of the cost (*tau*) for Earth to satisfactorily fulfil her roles in creation? These questions disclose the impact of the *fa'atomu'aga* for the *tau* reader. That is, it raises questions that would guide the reading of the *tala* that follows.

Moreover, viewing the description given in the *fa'ata'imuāga* (v. 2) of Earth's pre-created condition through the lens of the *tau* hermeneutic reveals the enormity of the creative task. Earth's pre-created condition is revealed in the *tala* through the *mamanu* תהו (*tōhū*) meaning 'formless', 'confusion', 'unreality' or 'emptiness';¹ בְּהוּ (*bōhū*) translatable as 'void' or 'emptiness';² חֹשֶׁךְ (*hōšek*) denoting 'darkness' or 'obscurity'; and תְּהוֹם meaning 'deep', 'sea' or 'abyss'.³ In the *gafa* analysis, the four *mamanu* reveal Earth's primordial existence to be in a chaotic state unable to

¹ BDB, 1062.

² Ibid., 96.

³ Ibid., 1062.

establish any *faiā* or perform any *matāfaioi*. Meanwhile, viewing the chaotic portrait of Earth from a *tau* perspective depicts the need for tremendous efforts to accomplish such a large scale transformation of Earth into a productive and orderly entity. This implies that the *tau* of such an undertaking in terms of *mafai* is immeasurable and Earth's *matāfaioi* as a *soāfaumea* (to assist God in creation) requires Earth to possess an array of *mafai*.

2.1 *Vaega 2: 'A 'ano/Body: Tau of Earth's Matāfaioi (vv. 3-31)*

Evident in the *fa'ata'atiāga* (narrative structure) of the *tala* above this *vaega* is sub-divided into nine *vaevaēga* according to the specific creation activities. From a *tau* perspective these creative tasks require different sets of *mafai* to achieve them. Therefore, these creative scenes will be explored to identify Earth's role as a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea* to estimate the required *mafai* needed by Earth to fulfill them.

2.2.1 *Tau: Creation of Light by God (vv. 3-5)*

As indicated in the *gafa* reading above, the creation of light in this *vaevaēga* was the first act of creation by the divine. In this creative task, God is the sole actor and Earth's participation is minimal. That is, she was not given any specific *matāfaioi* to perform. However, looking at this creation scene from a *tau* perspective directs my attention to the divine act of creating through speeches. The creative divine speech is indicated in the *tala* by the *fa'amatala* using the verb *אָמַר* (*ʾāmar*) meaning 'to utter', 'to say', 'to say to oneself', 'to command' and 'to promise'.⁴ This *mamanu* appears in this section in v. 3 with God as the subject. The *mamanu* is commonly used in the Old Testament as speech markers to indicate direct speeches.⁵ Similarly, it is used in v. 3 to

⁴ BDB (1996), 55; Jerome A. Lund, "אָמַר," *NIDOTTE*, ed. Willem A. Van Gemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1: 443-449; and Siegfried Wagner, "אָמַר," *TDO T*, vol. 1, eds. G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren and H. Fabry (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 328-345; H. H. Schmid, "אָמַר to say," *TLOT*, vol. 1, eds. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody: Hendrickson Publisher Inc., 1997), 159-162.

⁵ *אָמַר* is the most popular verb in the Old Testament and it designates verbal communications with God and people as its most common subjects. However, there are also occasions where *אָמַר* denotes communication by animals (e.g. Gen. 3:1, Num. 22:28 and 30) and trees (e.g. Judg. 9:8ff). See Schmid, "אָמַר to say," 160.

indicate God's creative directive. The *mamanu* אָמַן is usually followed by the *mamanu* יָהִי (*yehî*) translatable as 'let there be...' 'let be...' or 'may it be...'.⁶ This *mamanu* indicates what some scholars refer to as the 'divine *fiat*' using the Latin translation of the *mamanu* הָיָה (*hāyāh*) the root of יָהִי.⁷ The term refers to God's creative speech which is in the jussive mood in v. 3, thus expressing that God's speeches could be considered as a mild command, words of encouragement, an advice, a prayer or a request for permission.⁸

As mentioned in the *gafa* analysis these rendition of the divine speech reveals God as both an authoritative (considering the command sense of the jussive) and sympathetic (with regards to other senses of the jussive) being. As Clare Amos remind us, 'We too know God through his (or her) words, words...tell us something about the real core of a person'⁹ Reading the jussive as a command in the context of creation reveals God as an authoritative being creating through command speeches. A command obliges one to obey and follow instructions according to the direction given. Therefore, the divine command speeches reveal God interacting and communicating with Earth in an authoritative manner demanding a correct response. Traditional interpretations of the Gen. 1:1-2:4a follows the command sense of God's speeches. Most biblical scholars see the divine words revealing a majestic and powerful God who brought the world into existence through authoritative commands. For example, Waltke and Fredricks recognize this understanding of God's speeches and see it as a form of polemic against forces of nature considered as deities in Ancient Near Eastern religions. Through divine speeches, the Gen. 1:1-2:4a creation *tala* reveals that foreign deities are not only created but also subject to God's commandments.¹⁰ In

⁶ Here in Genesis 1:20, there is no unique jussive form for the Qal Imperfect 3rd person masculine singular, plural, verb שָׂרַץ meaning 'to swim' or 'to teem'; it is jussive only in meaning.

⁷ For example, see, Wenham, *Genesis*, 7; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17*, 119.

⁸ Walker-Jones, *Hebrew for Biblical Interpretation*, 152; Jan Joosten, *The Verbal System of Biblical Hebrew: A New Synthesis Elaborated on the Basis of Classical Prose* (Jerusalem: Simor Publishing, 2012), 17, 333-340.

⁹ Clare Amos, *The Book of Genesis*, Epworth Commentary (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2004), 7.

¹⁰ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 60.

this sense, the God of Israel is the supreme God who created and ordered the elements of nature (considered divine by some Ancient Near Eastern religions) into existence. Reading this nuance of the jussive into Gen. 1:1-2:4a proposes that Earth as a *soāfaumea* seems to have less freedom in the creative process but must follow God's command accordingly and strictly to the letter. From the *tau* perspective, Earth must therefore acquire the necessary abilities from the *mafaifeso 'ota 'i* (social abilities), *mafaifa'alemafaufau* (mental capacity), and *mafaifa'atino* (physical capabilities) categories to obey and follow God's command in order for creation to progress and to fulfill her *matāfaioi* as a *soāfaumea*. Social abilities (such as communicative capability) are required to allow fruitful communications between Earth and God. Mental capacity (ability to rationalize) permits Earth to understand the divine instructions. While physical capabilities allow Earth to carry out the creative activities.

On the other hand, considering God's speeches as words of exhortation rather than commands yields a different tone and meaning to the *tala* and reveals another side of the divine character; that is, seeing God's speeches as words of encouragement or as advice to Earth depicts a sympathetic God who is lenient and motivational towards Earth in the creation process, thus giving Earth space and freedom to act as she wishes. Fretheim alludes to this nature of the divine speeches, by suggesting that God's control of the creation process revealed through the creation speeches is 'not unilateral but mediated'.¹¹ The divine speeches depict God acting cooperatively with Earth, to bring about creation, rather than God imposing the divine will on Earth to carry out the divine commands. It is as though God is not acting as an authoritarian figure in the creation process; rather, acting as an adviser by coaching Earth the *soāfaumea* through the creation activities.

To respond to God's guidance, Earth must also possess the necessary *mafaifa* such as receptiveness and open-mindedness to react appropriately to the divine requests. Seeing God's creative speeches in this light means God creates through encouraging and advising Earth in fulfilling her *matāfaioi*.

¹¹ Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 38.

Earth seems to be at the forefront of the creative process while God takes a secondary role as adviser mentoring Earth in performing her *matāfaioi*. In addition, interpreting the jussive as exhortation suggests a degree of freedom for Earth to respond to God's urging in a way she considers appropriate. That is, Earth has the freedom to do as she wishes; to perform or not to perform God's wishes. Seeing this from a *tau* perspective reveals the need for Earth to possess intellectual skills (*mafai fa'alemafaufau*) to make her own decisions based on God's guidance and interactive skills (*mafai feso'ota'i*) to relate what she wishes to God, even if this is against the divine will.

In summation, both nuances of the jussive mood (authoritative and sympathetic) could be present in the context of Gen. 1:1-2:4a, thus revealing God as *faumea* who could be both authoritative and sympathetic in approaching the *soāfaumea*. Viewing these natures of God through the lens of my *tau* hermeneutic reveals that Earth, as God's would-be *soāfaumea*, will assist and deal with a *faumea* who can be complaisant and stern in the creative activities. On the one hand, a complaisant *faumea* can tolerate and accept whatever Earth has to offer in response to the creative directives. On the other hand, a stern *faumea* can be intolerant and inflexible, expecting Earth to carry out strictly what is instructed and produce exactly what is in the divine mind. From a *tau* perspective this implies that Earth needs to possess *mafai feso'ota'i* (communicative and interactive abilities) and *mafai fa'alemafaufau* (mental capacity) to fulfill God's will. Although God did not directly address Earth in the creation of light in this *vaevaēga*, the consideration of speeches as a creation mode suggests that Earth, as God's planned *soāfaumea*, ought to obtain *mafai feso'ota'i* to receive God's will, *mafai fa'alemafaufau* to comprehend God's will and *mafai fa'atino* to perform God's will, which is revealed through God's speeches.

2.2.2 *Tau* for the Firmament to Separate the Waters (vv. 6-8)

Following the creation of light is the creation of the firmament. This component of Earth is identified in Gen. 1:1-2:4a through the *mamanu* מָנָה (*rāqī'a*) meaning 'expanse', 'firmament' or

‘extended surface’.¹² Similar to the creation of light, God also begins by ordering the firmament to appear through the use of the similar creative discourse. This divine creative speech from a *tau* perspective further reiterates the need for Earth to obtain *mafai feso’ota’i* to receive God’s instructions and *mafai fa’alemafaufau* to understand and decide on the appropriate actions that needs to be taken.¹³

Moreover, in the *gafa* reading the firmament was employed by God as a *soāfaumea* to perform the *matāfaioi* of separating the waters above from the waters below. The *matāfaioi* of separation is depicted in this *vaevaēga* by the repetitive use of the *mamanu* בָּרַל (to divide or to separate) in v. 6 and v. 7. The *mamanu* בָּרַל in these occurrences occurs in the Hiphil participle and Hiphil imperfect respectively. In Hebrew, the Hiphil can be used to express progression or a continuous condition or action.¹⁴ This suggests that the division of the waters that God demanded the firmament to instigate would be an unremitting condition. Thus, the firmament is not only directed to produce but also to constantly maintain the separation of the waters. This consideration from a *tau* perspective suggests that the firmament must have the *mafai fa’atino* to cause the separation and endure the continuity required. In other words, the firmament needs the physicality and the durability to sustain the division between the waters and meet the *tau* of her duty as a *soāfaumea*.

In addition, a deeper look at the *mamanu* בָּרַל reveals the type of action required on the part of the firmament as a *soāfaumea*. In the Old Testament, בָּרַל is used on some occasions to denote the physical action of dividing an object into pieces. This usage is evident in Lev. 1:17 and 5:8 where the *mamanu* is used to render the priestly deed of halving fowls for burnt offerings. This suggests that בָּרַל depicts physical actions. Reading this consideration into Gen. 1:6-8 portrays the separation of the waters as a physical undertaking that involves physical strength to carry out. In Exod. 26:23,

¹² BDB, 956.

¹³ See, Samoan traditional worldview of Heaven and Earth in Chapter Three, Section 3.

¹⁴ Christo H. J. van der Merwe, J. A. Naudé and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Reference Grammar* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 86-87; Walker-Jones, *Hebrew for Biblical Interpretation*, 127-129 and 179.

the *mamanu* בָּדַל designates the purpose of a divider, an object used to mark a division or boundary between two sides. Within this text, the *mamanu* designate the purpose of the veil in the Tabernacle, to act as a partition to set apart the holy of holies. This usage of בָּדַל alludes to the material existence of an object that functions as a divider and a boundary marker that is visible. Considering this nuance of the *mamanu* with regards to Gen. 1:6-8 suggests the firmament to have a physical existence that divides the waters. The task of dividing the waters would, we imagine, have required tremendous physical force and energy and the failure to instigate the division could lead to the un-creation of the sky and a return to the chaotic primeval situation. In this sense, the firmament should be solid and robust to maintain the separation. This view of the firmament is depicted in Hebrew cosmological traditions, which viewed the firmament as a firm bowl dividing Earth from the upper waters with floodgates to release rain, snow and hail.¹⁵ Reading these two usages of בָּדַל through the lens of my *tau* hermeneutics reveals the need for Earth to possess physical capabilities (*mafai fa'atino*) to fulfill her role as a *soāfaumea* in the creation of the expanse and the separation of the waters.

Furthermore, the *mamanu* בָּדַל also refers to the mental deed of drawing distinction between things or people. This usage of the *mamanu* is evident in Lev. 10:10; 11:47; 20:25; and Ezek. 22:26 to reference the inability of the people to draw a distinction between what is evil and what is holy. In these cases, בָּדַל is used to denote the mental capacity of the people to know what is right and wrong in the eyes of God. In addition, the *mamanu* is also used on some occasions to depict the intellectual undertaking of classifying and distinguishing people and things.¹⁶ For example, in Deut. 10:8 the *mamanu* is used to depict the distinguishing of the tribe of Levi to bear the mark of the covenant and minister unto the Lord. Another example is in Neh. 13:3, where the *mamanu* בָּדַל

¹⁵ Jonathan T. Penington, *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 41-42; Edward J. Wright, *The Early History of Heaven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 52. Also see, Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis* (2001), 62. Waltke identifies the nuances 'mirror' and 'canopy' in view of Job 37:18 and Isaiah 42:22 respectively. Also see, Sarna, *Genesis*, 8, who identifies the firmament as a 'gigantic sheet of metal' or a layer of 'congealed ice' with reference to Ezek. 1:22.

¹⁶ This employment of בָּדַל can be seen Lev. 20:24; Num. 16:9; Deut. 10:8; 1Chron. 12:8; 23:13; 25:1; 2Chron. 25:10; Ezra. 6:21; 8:24; 9:1; 10:8, 16; Neh. 9:2; 10:28; 13:3; Isa. 56:3; and 59:2.

refers to the intellectual deed of differentiating between pure Israelites and those of ‘mixed blood’. These two examples clearly reveal that כָּדַל also refers to the intellectual act of differentiating and distinguishing people according to their function in society or based on their pedigrees. Reading this nuance of the *mamanu* into Gen. 1:6-8 suggests that the task of the firmament also involves the intellectual activities of classifying and distinguishing between things. This depiction from a *tau* perspective discloses the need for Earth (of which the firmament is an intrinsic part) to obtain the required intelligence (*mafai fa’alemafaufau*) to satisfactorily participate as a *soāfaumea*.

In sum, the above analysis of the activities surrounding the creation of the firmament in vv. 6-8 reveals the *tau* for Earth to participate productively in the creation of the firmament and the separation of the waters. According to this *tau* reading, Earth needs to acquire various *mafai* under the categories of *mafai feso’ota’i*, *mafai fa’atino* and *mafai fa’alemafaufau*. *Mafai feso’ota’i* is required for Earth to receive God’s verbal creative instructions. Earth also needs to possess *mafai fa’atino* for her to carry out the required work in separating the waters. Also, *mafai fa’alemafaufau* is essential in this creation activity to enable Earth to comprehend the divine creation instructions.

2.2.3 *Tau* of Gathering the Waters and the Emergence of the Dry Land (vv. 9-10)

The next *vaevaēga* is the separation of the dry land and the waters. The *gafa* analysis in the previous chapter reveals Earth’s participation as a *soāfaumea* in the separation of the dry land and the waters which pre-existed before God’s creative activities. In this creative event God instructs and made known the divine creative plan while Earth fulfills it.¹⁷ Similar to the two previous *vaevaēga*, this one also begins with a divine speech that reveals God’s creation intention. But unlike the previous divine speeches, the addressees of God’s speech in this *vaevaēga* are explicitly stated in v.9. That is, the first half of the divine discourse is directed towards the waters below the Sky while God addresses the dry land in the second half. This reading from a *tau* perspective further exemplifies the need for Earth (or her components) to acquire communicative (*mafai*

¹⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 62.

feso'ota'i) and intellectual abilities (*mafai fa'alemafaufau*) to hear and understand God's creative instructions.

Moreover, the required *mafai fa'atino* for Earth to fulfill the gathering of the waters and the making of the dry land to appear can be seen by exploring the *mamanu* קָנָה (*qāwāh*) meaning 'to collect' or 'to gather' and רָאָה (*rā'āh*) meaning 'to see' or 'to appear'¹⁸ in Gen. 1:9. First, קָנָה appears in v. 9 in the third masculine plural Niphal Imperfect and is usually translated as a passive form to mean 'be gathered' or 'be collected'.¹⁹ In this translation the doer or agent of the action of gathering is implicit and the waters (subject) receive the action and remain inactive. However, the Niphal stem can also be translated reflexively.²⁰ Translating the *mamanu* in v. 9 reflexively depicts something like: 'gathered itself or themselves'. Here the waters are not only the subjects but the objects of the *mamanu* and therefore the doer of the creative activity. This rendition from a *tau* perspective reveals that the waters would require *mafai fa'atino* such as the *mafai* to move from locality to locality in order to fulfill God's creative command. In other words, part of the *tau* for the waters to fulfill God's creative directives is the physical strength to mobilize. In addition, viewing such mobilization of water from my *tau* hermeneutical lens depicts it as a movement of epic proportions, rather than a serene creation event. This movement of a cosmic body of water from one locality to another requires massive physical force to complete it, thus suggesting the need for Earth to possess such physical capacity to meet the *tau* of her *matāfaioi* as a *soāfaumea*.

Similarly, the *mamanu* רָאָה also appears in the third person feminine singular Niphal imperfect form, therefore it could be rendered as either passive or reflexive 'be seen' or 'to appear'. The passive tense suggests the dry land as the subject of the action is passive without any direct

¹⁸ BDB, 906; D. Vetter, "רָאָה (*rā'āh*) to see," *TLOT*, vol. 3, eds. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody: Hendrickson Publisher Inc., 1997), 1176-1183.

¹⁹ For example, see, major translations such as: KJV, NJB, and NRSV. Also see, BDB, 875-876.

²⁰ P. A. Siebesma, *The Function of the Nip'al in Biblical Hebrew: In Relationship to other Passive-Reflexive Verbal Stems and to the Pu'al and Hoph'al in Paticular*, *Studia Semitica Neerlandica* (Assen/Maastricht: Van Corcum & Comp, 1991), 31-37. Also see, Bruce K. Waltke and Michael R. O'Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 382-383 and 389.

involvement in the fulfillment of the creative instruction.²¹ On the other hand, translating the *mamanu* reflexively offers a translation of, ‘let the dry land reveal/show herself’. Clearly, this rendition depicts the dry land to be the doer of the action, responsible for fulfilling God’s creative command. This rendition from a *tau* perspective suggests the need for the dry land to possess the necessary *mafai fa’atino* to appear from underneath the waters. The *fa’amatala* (narrator) does not vividly describe the *mafai* employed by the dry land to make herself visible. But we can imagine that for the land to emerge from beneath the water that was entombing her required tremendous force and physical *mafai*. Again, from a *tau* perspective, this depiction of the dry land emerging from underneath the waters also exemplifies the need for Earth to possess physical force in order to accomplish her duties in the creation process.

Furthermore, another indicator of the cost of Earth’s *matafaioi* in this creation scene is revealed through the *soāmamanu* כִּי־טוֹב meaning ‘it was good’ in v. 10. The use of טוֹב here reveals God’s mind and expectation for creation.²² That is, the divine anticipates the elements of Earth to properly and satisfactorily perform their functions in creation. From a *tau* perspective the *soāmamanu* therefore indicates a high standard for Earth to meet that requires her to possess an range of *mafai*.

In sum, the gathering of the water and the emergence of the dry land depicted in this *vaevaēga also* has a *tau* (cost) in terms of *mafai* for Earth to accomplish them. God’s creation speeches and the creative actions required in separating the waters and the dry land suggests that Earth needs to obtain abilities in the *mafai feso’ota’i*, *mafai fa’alemafaufau* and *mafai fa’atino* categories for her to satisfactorily perform her duties in the gathering of the waters and making the dry land appear. *Mafai feso’otai* is required to accommodate communication between the deity and the elements of Earth. *Mafai fa’alemafaufau* allows the elements of Earth to comprehend and understand God’s creative instructions. Meanwhile, *mafai fa’atino* is required for Earth to carry out the creative work.

²¹ For example, see, major translations such as KJV, NJB, and NRSV.

²² See, Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 18; Westerman, *Genesis 1-11*, 113.

2.2.4 *Tau* of Producing Vegetation (vv. 11-13)

The *gafa* reading of this *vaevaēga* above interprets the creation of vegetation as a *matāfaioi* specifically given to Earth by God, thus highlighting Earth's role as a *soāfaumea* in creation. In comparison with other creative scenes, God's physical involvement in the creation of vegetation is nominal. God only provided the creation plan on how to produce vegetation and what kind of plants to produce while the bulk of the creation activity is given to Earth to carry out. This is hinted at by the absence of the usual action report in this scene that is expected to follow God's speech (as in vv. 4, 7, 16, 21, 25 and 27) From a *tau* perspective this implies that Earth needs to acquire an array of *mafai* to satisfactorily fulfill the divine plan for creation.

Similar to the previous creation activities, this creation scene also begins with God's jussive speech. In the divine speech Earth is explicitly stated as the addressee. From a *tau* perspective this again echoes the necessity for Earth to attain *mafai feso'ota'i* in order to make productive her communications with the divine. In this creation scene, there is a degree of sophistication and complexity in God's creative speech in the production of vegetation. Westermann notes this, describing the creation of plants as 'very diversified'.²³ This complexity can be seen through a consideration of the prolonged description of plants given by God in v. 11 through the use of the *soāmamanu* עֵשֶׂב מִזְרִיעַ זֶרַע עֵץ פְּרִי עֹשֶׂה פְּרִי לְמִינֹו אֲשֶׁר זֶרַע-בו which can be translated as 'herbs yielding seed [and] fruit trees producing fruits according to its kind whose seed [is] in it'. Apparently, God's divine instruction here is complex and the addressee needs to acquire *mafai feso'ota'i* and *mafai fa'alemafau* to understand the divine intention for the creation of vegetation. The complexity of God speech lies in the notion that God intends vegetation to be classified into different types as indicated by the *mamanu* לְמִינֹו (*l'mînô*) meaning 'according to his kind'. These various types includes עֵשֶׂב - 'herbs' (*eseb*) - and עֵץ (*est*) meaning 'trees'; both of these plant types have the ability to produce their own seeds. According to Westermann, the classification of vegetation into

²³ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 124. See also, Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 20.

groups reveals an intellectual exercise that is depicted by the common usage of the *mamanu* מִין (*mîn*) meaning ‘kind’ in the context of knowledge.²⁴ This means that for Earth to make the distinction between the different types of vegetation in accordance to God’s creation command, she would have to possess the knowledge and mental capacity to do so. This rendition from a *tau* perspective therefore clearly suggests that Earth would need to acquire *mafai fa’alemafaufau* in order to cope with the *matāfaioi* of a *soāfaumea*. From a *tau* perspective, the complex nature of God’s creative command means that the *tau* of Earth’s *matāfaioi* as a *soāfaumea* demands a high level of communicative (*mafai feso’ota’i*) and intellectual (*mafai fa’alemafaufau*) capabilities.

In addition, to accomplish God’s creative directives, Earth needs to obtain *mafai fa’atino*. This requirement is evident through a consideration of the *mamanu* used to describe the actions instructed by the divine. The first *mamanu* is נָשָׂא (*dāšā*) meaning ‘to sprout’, ‘to shoot’ or ‘to grow green’.²⁵ This *mamanu* is rarely used in the Old Testament, occurring elsewhere only in Joel. 2:22, where it describes the divine action of sprouting green pasture. In Gen. 1:11, this *mamanu* appears in the Hiphil jussive with Earth as its subject. In this light, God requests Earth to cause vegetation to sprout in fulfillment of the divine creation plan. Interpreting God’s creation instruction to Earth from a *tau* perspective suggests the need for Earth to obtain *mafai fa’atino* to fulfill God’s request. In other words, the cost or *tau* for Earth in creating plants is to have *mafai fa’atino*. Moreover, the task for Earth here is also a vast undertaking. This is alluded to through the usage in v. 12 of the *soāmamanu* לְמִינֵהוּ (*l’mînēhū*) translatable as ‘according to their kinds’. This plural expression yields the impression of a large variety of plant species that need to be produced. Viewing this depiction through the lens of my *tau* hermeneutic reveals the need for Earth to be physically able and in possession of tremendous physical strength to accomplish the *matāfaioi* of producing a broad range of vegetation.

²⁴ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 126.

²⁵ BDB, 205.

In summation, the *tau* analysis of Earth's *matāfaioi* as a *soāfaumea* in producing vegetation manifests the requirements for Earth in terms of *mafai* to satisfactorily fulfill the divine plan. The *tau* (cost) for Earth to be a successful *soāfaumea* in the creation of vegetation includes *mafai* under the three categories *mafai feso 'ota 'i*, *mafai fa 'alemafaufau*, and *mafai fa 'atino*. *Mafai feso 'ota 'i* includes communicative abilities that allow Earth to receive God's speech, *Mafai fa 'alemafaufau* enables Earth to comprehend and understand the divine directives, while *mafai fa 'atino* permits Earth to lead out vegetation as God instructed. Similar, to the previous scene the divine expectation is also revealed here through the use of the *soāmamanu* כִּי-טִיב which again suggests a high cost for Earth to fulfill her *matafaioi*.

2.2.5 *Tau* of Creating the Bodies of Light (vv. 14-19)

The next creation activity that we read about in Genesis 1 is the creation of the bodies of light. In the *gafa* reading, the *matāfaioi* given to the two great lights and the stars reveals a *faiā* between God and that which God has created (*faumea-soāfaumea faiā*), thus revealing Earth as a *soāfaumea* (assistant) working in partnership with God to fulfill the divine purpose in creation. This is apparent through the attribution of *matāfaioi* already performed by God to the elements of Earth. In other words, Earth is given the *matāfaioi* of co-ruling and co-maintaining creation with God. Looking at Earth's responsibilities as a *soāfaumea* in this section from a *tau* perspective discloses the necessity for Earth to obtain the appropriate *mafai* for her to participate productively in the creative tasks.

As evident in the previous creation activities this creation scene also begins with a divine discourse. As usual God also speaks here in the jussive mode. From a *tau* perspective, this also highlights the *mafai feso 'ota 'i* and *mafai fa 'alemafaufau* requirements for Earth to fulfill her role as a *soāfaumea* in the creation activities. The need for these sets of *mafai* is also evident considering the complex nature of God's creative speeches in vv.14-15 when God calls for the creation of the luminaries. The complexity is apparent in the description of their *matāfaioi*:

לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה וְהָיוּ לְאֹתוֹת וּלְמוֹעֲדִים וּלְיָמִים וְשָׁנִים וְהָיוּ לְמַאֲרֹת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר עַל-הָאָרֶץ

to separate between the day and [between] the night and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to light upon the land.

This complex description contains three different clauses revealing to Earth the functions of the luminaries. The three functional clauses are: to separate between the day and night; for signs, seasons, days and years; and to shine upon the land. Each clause relates a different but interconnected duty for the luminaries to perform. However, to decipher and understand such composite explanation, special interactive and communicative abilities are required. The recipient in this scenario must therefore have listening and hearing (*mafai feso 'ota 'i*) and comprehension (*mafai fa'alemafaufau*) capabilities in order to interact and react accordingly to God's wishes.

In addition, the creation activities of vv. 14-19 also echo the need for Earth to possess abilities in the *mafai fa'atino* to productively participate in the creative process. The use of the Hiphil infinitive construct form of the *mamanu* הַבְדִּיל (*hab^edil*), meaning 'to divide', in vv. 14 and 18 clearly expresses the purpose and function of the luminaries as dividers of the day from the night and separators of the light and darkness. This function clearly echoes what God had already done in v. 4. This implies that the luminaries' function here is to maintain what God had already made. It is not clear from the text how the luminaries can make and sustain such a distinction. However, the creation of the two great lights in vv. 16-18, the greater one to rule the day and smaller one to rule the night, hints at an alternating effect between the two. This consideration from a *tau* perspective means that the luminaries are expected to have the *mafai fa'atino* to light up the sky but also to alternate in order to sustain the division between the day and night. Not only that but they are expected to maintain such a cycle because their failure could result in turmoil. For example, if the lights did not perform their task of illumination at the right time, there would be no light and darkness would cover the world, while the distinction between days and nights would not exist.

Such conditions reflect the primordial situation before God started creating the world (Gen. 1:2). This reading fits well with use of the *mamanu* מַמָּנֻ (mem^ešālāh), meaning ‘rule’, ‘dominion’ or ‘realm’, to describe the *matāfaioi* of the two great lights. This *mamanu* denotes rule in general or the might of man (e.g. 2 Chr. 32.9), a political rule or realm (e.g. Is. 22:21 & Mic. 4:8) and divine rule (e.g. Ps. 145:13).²⁶ Obviously, the usage of the *mamanu* with reference to the might of man as in 2 Chr. 32.9 alludes to physical strength. Reading this understanding into Gen. 1:16-18 suggests the need for the two great lights to possess physical force to fulfill the task of ruling the night and day assigned to them. Such strength is a necessity in order for these two elements of Earth to retain authority over the night and day.

In summation, the *tau* analysis of Earth’s role as a *soāfaumea* in the creation of the luminaries and in maintaining the distinctions between the day and night, and the seasons, months and years manifests the *mafai* requirements that Earth needs to attain in order for her to be a productive participant in the creation process. This includes abilities under the categories of *mafai feso’ota’i*, *mafai fa’alemafaufau* and *mafai fa’atino*. *Mafai feso’ota’i* includes communicative abilities that allow Earth to receive God’s verbal creative instructions, *Mafai fa’alemafaufau* enables Earth to comprehend and understand God’s complex creation directives, while *mafai fa’atino* permits Earth to accomplish what God’s instructs to be created. This *va’aiga* also closes with the divine evaluation כִּי-רַב a reminder that the cost for Earth to fulfill her *matafaioi* is high.

2.2.6 *Tau* of *Soāfaumea* and *Tausimea* to Aquatic and Flying Creatures (vv. 20-22)

The next *vaevaēga* relates the creation of aquatic and flying creatures. In the *gafa* reading, this section marks the beginning of the creation of living creatures indicated by the *mamanu* נֶפֶשׁ (*nepeš*) meaning ‘life’, ‘soul’, ‘living being’, ‘desire’, ‘emotion’, ‘passion’ or ‘appetite’.²⁷ The *gafa*

²⁶ BDB, 606; J. A. Soggin, “מַמָּנֻ (*mšl*) ‘to rule,” *TLOT*, vol. 2, eds. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody: Hendrickson Publisher Inc., 1997), 689-690.

²⁷ BDB, 659; *TWOT*.

analysis also highlights Earth's involvement in the creation process and her *matāfaioi* as a *soāfaumea* in the creation of aquatic (excluding the תנין [serpent, monster or sea dragon] that were created solely by God) and flying creatures. In addition, the *gafa* analysis reveals the extension of Earth's *matāfaioi* to include a *tausimea* (host/caretaker) role. In this new role Earth is expected to act as host to the creatures, providing them with living quarters, provisions and security. From a *tau* perspective, in order for Earth to fulfill these roles as a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea*, she needs to acquire the appropriate *mafai* or capabilities.

Similar to the preceding creation activities, this one also begins with God's creative speeches in v. 20, revealing the divine intention for creating aquatic and flying creatures. As indicated in the *gafa* analysis above, the Hebrew text (Masoretic Text) of Gen. 1:1-2:4a does not explicitly state the addressee of God's speech. However, this was made clear in the Greek text (Septuagint) which suggests God is directly addressing the waters to participate in the creation of aquatic creatures. From a *tau* perspective, this suggests the need for the waters (a component of Earth) to possess communicative and interactive capacities (*mafai feso'ota'i*) as well as intellectual capacity (*mafai fa'alemafaufau*) to foster fruitful communications with the Creator in the fulfillment of her roles as a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea*. In the case of the creation of flying creatures, the recipient is also not apparent in the *tala*. God could be speaking to either Earth or the flying creatures, or both at the same time. From a *tau* viewpoint no matter how we look at this scene, the fact that God is creating through speech reveals the need for Earth to acquire *mafai feso'ota'i* and *mafai fa'alemafaufau* to receive God's speech and decode whom the divine is addressing.

Moreover, the actions required in the creation of aquatic creatures are also implicit in the Hebrew text. Though as noted in the *gafa* reading, the Greek text used the *mamanu* ἐξαγαγέτω meaning 'lead out' or 'bring out'. This action reflects the required action from Earth in the creation of land creatures mentioned below. Such action is expressed by the use of the *mamanu* יָאֲסֹאֲ (yāsāʾ) meaning 'to go' or 'come out' which means 'to bring out' or 'cause to come out' in the Hiphil stem. The

mamanu can also refer to the birthing of offspring, as in Gen. 15:4; 17:6; and 25:25ff.²⁸ Reading this meaning into this creation scene suggests the waters as the producer or parent of aquatic creatures. Viewing this depiction through the lens of the *tau* hermeneutic disclose the need for the waters (a component of Earth) to attain physical abilities (*mafai fa'atino*) to produce aquatic creatures. This task is an enormous undertaking, evident when we consider the *quantity* of creatures that God instructed the waters to produce. This is indicated in the *tala* by the use of the *mamanu* פָּרָץ (*šāraṣ*) meaning 'swam', 'teem' or 'multiply'. Reading these three meanings of פָּרָץ into the *tala* suggests God is demanding the waters of Earth to produce a large number of creatures. Therefore, from a *tau* perspective, this reveals the necessity for the waters to acquire tremendous physical strength in order to fulfill the *matāfai* of becoming God's *soāfaumea* in the creation of aquatic creatures.

Meanwhile, the *mafai fa'atino* requirement for Earth's role as a *tausimea* is also evident in this *vaevaēga*. As depicted in the *gafa* analysis, a *tausimea* Earth is obligated to provide the aquatic creatures and flying creatures with living quarters. From a *tau* perspective this task is an immense responsibility for Earth, as evident through the use of several *mamanu* and *soāmamanu* in God's blessing of the creatures in v. 22. This can be seen in the employment of the *soāmamanu* פָּרָץ וְרָבָה (*p^rû ûr^bû*) translatable as 'be fruitful and be many'.²⁹ These words are directed towards both the aquatic and flying creatures. The *soāmamanu* reveals the divine intention for the creatures - to increase in numbers. From a *tau* perspective, the increase in population for the two categories of creatures implies that Earth as a *tausimea* must have the physical size and condition (*mafai fa'atino*) to cater for the needs and the expected increase of her inhabitants.

In the second half of v. 22, God's addresses the individual categories of creatures. First, God speaks to the aquatic creatures and instructs them to fill the waters. Here, the divine intention is

²⁸ Ernst Jenni, "פָּרָץ," 591-596.

²⁹ This *soāmamanu* can be treated as a *fuāinūmera* (numeral) according to Samoan *tala* understanding. It reveals an infinite number thus implying a population explosion.

expressed through the use of the *mamanu* מָלֵא (*māleʿ*) meaning ‘to be full’ or ‘fill’.³⁰ The Hebrew term מָלֵא may refer to spatial fullness as evident in Exod. 10:6, which denotes the filling of Egyptian houses by locusts, in 2 Kgs. 4:6, which refers to the filling of jars with oil, and in Joel 4:13, which references the filling of the winepress with juice. Reading this nuance of the term into Gen. 1:22 suggests that God intends for the aquatic creatures to populate every space available in the sea. From a *tau* perspective, this entails overcrowding conditions in the waters that will put pressure on Earth to provide living spaces for the sea creatures. The creation of the great sea monsters in v. 20 also puts additional pressures on Earth in terms of her need to provide dwellings for all the creatures living in her waters. As indicated in the *gafa* reading, these large creatures are huge in sizes and traditionally considered ferocious in nature. This may suggest that they will compete with the swarming creatures for living spaces, thus increasing the demand for Earth to provide habitation and maintain sustaining dwellings for *all* God’s creations.

Lastly, God addresses the flying creatures and instructed them to multiply in numbers. This divine instruction is expressed through the use of the *mamanu* רָבָה (*rābāh*) meaning ‘become many’, ‘be numerous’ or ‘be great’.³¹ This increase in numbers from a *tau* perspective also requires Earth to physically cater for her *āumau* (inhabitants) by providing them with living quarters. The *mamanu* רָבָה also alludes to this view as it is used elsewhere in the Old Testament to denote an increase in size. For example, in 1 Chron. 4:10, it depicts the expansion of Israel’s borders and territory. This increase in population size therefore alludes to the need for Earth to expand physically to cater for her inhabitants.

The above analysis of the creation of aquatic creatures and flying fowls from a *tau* perspective reveals the need for Earth to possess abilities in the *mafai feso’ota’i*, *mafai fa’alemafau* and *mafai fa’atino* categories to fulfill her duties. First, in her *matāfaioi* (duties) as a *soāfaumea*, Earth

³⁰ BDB, 569.

³¹ Ibid., 915.

needs these abilities to partake successfully in receiving and understanding God's intent relayed through God's speeches and also to carry out the physical work demanded of her by the deity. Moreover, in Earth's *matāfaioi* as *tausimea*, she is required to attain interactive and comprehension capacities to communicate and understand her inhabitants and the physical capabilities to provide living domains for a large number of sea creatures and flying fowls.

2.2.7 *Tau of Soāfaumea and Tausimea to Land Creatures (vv. 23-25)*

The next *vaevaēga* describes the creation of the land creatures. The *gafa* analysis of this creation scene reveals Earth playing the roles of a *soāfaumea* in assisting God in the creation activities and a *tausimea* hosting and caring for the land creatures. Earth's *matāfaioi* as a *soāfaumea* alludes to Earth as a mother or a parent producing land creatures as her offspring. This depiction also exemplifies Earth's role as a *tausimea*, caring, nurturing and supporting the land creatures. Viewing this portrayal of Earth from a *tau* perspective manifests the need for Earth to attain certain *mafai* to fulfill her roles as a *soāfaumea* in producing land creatures and as a *tausimea* who hosts and cares for them.

As usual, God in this creation scene also begins with a jussive speech instructing Earth to participate in the creative activities. Such description from a *tau* perspective also highlights the need for Earth to attain communicative and intellectual *mafai* to comprehend and respond appropriately to the divine directives. These abilities are essential in this creative scene considering the complex nature of God's creation demand. The complexity can be seen in the variety of land animal species God demands Earth to produce. Similar to God's creation command in the creation of vegetation, the classification of land animals is instructed by God through the repetitive usage of the *soāmamanu* לְמִינָהּ (*l'mināh*) meaning 'according to its kind'. The *mamanu* is used five times in vv. 24-25 (referring to types of land creatures).³² The persistent use of this *soāmamanu* to

³² The *mamanu* מין is often use to make specification and distinctions. Other examples include Gen. 6:20 (referring to land creatures), 7:14 (with reference to both land and flying creatures), Lev. 11: 14-19, 22 and 29 (to specify flying and

distinguish and specify land creatures makes clear that Earth's activities here in the creation of animals should be understood in the context of knowledge.³³ Therefore, Earth should be seen engaging in an intellectual exercise, classifying and specifying the land animals into different groups. The different specifications for grouping the land creatures are identified in vv. 24-25 as the *בְּהֵמָה* (*b^hēmāh*) meaning 'beasts' or 'cattle', the *רֶמֶשׂ* (*remeś*) 'creeping things' and the *חַיֵּי-הָאָרֶץ* (*hay^eto ereś*) 'living things of the land'. In order to classify animals into these groups Earth must acquire the intellect to differentiate and group the animals according to the divinely-given specifications. This rendition of Earth's creative activities in the creation of land animals from the *tau* perspective clearly hints at the need for Earth to retain *mafai fa'alemafaufau* in order to fulfil her *matāfaioi* as a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea* in God's creation activities.

Furthermore, this *vaevaēga* also alludes to the necessity for Earth to obtain abilities from the *mafai fa'atino* category to successfully participate in the creation of land animals. This is alluded to by the use of the *mamanu* *מָנָה* (*yāṣā'*) which, in the Hiphil stem, means 'to lead out', 'to bring out', 'cause to come out' and 'to give birth'. The same *mamanu* is also used in the creation of vegetation. Reading these nuances into the creation of land animals renders Earth needing the same set of *mafai fa'atino* or physical abilities as those used in the creation of plants in order to make a significant contribution as a *soāfaumea* in the creation process. In addition, the creation of land animals, like that of the vegetation, is also a wide-ranging task. Again the *fa'amatala* specifies this through the repetitive use of *לְמִינֵהוּ* (*l^eminēhū*) in vv. 24-25. This *mamanu* yields that Earth in collaboration with God produced all the various animal types that God specified in the creation command. The absence of a divine blessing for the animals 'to be fruitful and multiply' also reveals the enormity of the creation task for Earth. That is, unlike the creation of sea creature and birds (where the blessing encourage the creatures' participation), Earth here is given the bulk of the

creeping creatures), Deut. 14:13-15 and 18 (denoting classification of unclean flying and creeping creatures) and Ezek. 47:10 (referring to aquatic creatures).

³³ Also see, Westermann, *Genesis 1-11* (1984), 126.

creative task of producing the creatures herself. These considerations from a *tau* perspective also reveal the task of producing land creatures as enormous, requiring significant physical input from the part of Earth the *soāfaumea*.

There are also a few hints in this *vaevaēga* that suggest the need for Earth to possess capabilities in the *mafai fa'atino* category to perform her duties as a *tausimea* to the land animals. First, is the *soāmamanu* מַחְיֵי-אֶרֶץ translatable as 'creatures of the land' in vv. 24 and 25. The *gafa* reading discloses that this *soāmamanu* portrays Earth as the source of life and home to these creatures. These tasks (of creator and host) require physical strength to carry out. For example, providing domains for these creatures require Earth to maintain the distinction inaugurated in the separation of the waters and the dry land in vv. 9-10, a task that involves great physical force to accomplish. Maintaining this distinction will ensure the availability of dry land for land creatures to inhabit. Moreover, the creation of land animals increases the population of land dwellers (adding on to the flying creatures already created). From a *tau* perspective this increase in inhabitants means an increase in demand for Earth to make available living quarters for the creatures to occupy.

All in all, from a *tau* perspective, the required *mafai* for Earth to accomplish her *matāfaioi* as *soāfaumea* and *tausimea* in the creation of land creatures includes communicative abilities (*mafai feso'ota'i*) to foster communications with God, comprehension capacity (*mafai fa'alemafaufau*) to understand God's creative intents and performative abilities (*mafai fa'atino*) to carry out the divine wishes of producing and caring for the land animals.

2.2.8 Tau of Soāfaumea and Tausimea to Humanity (vv. 26-28)

Following the creation of land creatures, the next *vaevaēga* relates the creation of humanity. The *gafa* reading of this creation scene reveals Earth as God's *soāfaumea* partaking in creative activities. In addition, the *gafa* analysis also discloses Earth's role as *tausimea* responsible for providing humanity with dwelling places. In this light, we recognize that, without Earth, humanity will be homeless and unable to flourish. Looking at both these *matāfaioi* from a *tau* perspective

manifests the need for Earth to possess various *mafai* if she is to perform her roles in creation satisfactorily.

At the creation of humanity, God, as before, begins with a creative speech (v. 26). This speech is presented in the cohortative mood using the *mamanu* נַעֲשֶׂה (*naʿaseh*) translatable as ‘let us make’. As I indicated in the *gafa* reading of this verse, the cohortative mood in the Hebrew language expresses the speaker’s will to engage in the action denoted by the verb and, in the plural form, can issue an invitation to the addressee to participate in this action (‘Let us...’). This verbal form does not have the force and the urgency demanded by the jussive and imperative moods. This suggests that Earth whom my *gafa* reading identified as God’s addressee is given a degree of freedom to respond to God’s invitation in the creation of humanity. God’s cohortative-speech here might explain Earth’s *non*-participation (v. 27) in the creative process by exercising her free will to protest and refuse God’s will. From a *tau* perspective, this consideration identifies the demand for Earth (as a *soāfaumea*) to obtain *mafai feso’ota’i* (communicative capacity) and *mafai fa’alemafaufau* (intellectual capabilities) to receive and comprehend God’s change in tone and intention for creation.

From a *tau* perspective, Earth’s non-participation in the activities surrounding the creation of humanity suggests that the *mafai* requirement for Earth in the creation of humanity does not contain abilities from the *mafai fa’atino* category. Earth’s non-participation is evident in v. 27 where God acted alone creating humanity in the divine image. The *mamanu* used here to describe the creation of humanity is בָּרָא (*bārāʾ*) meaning ‘to create’. As mentioned in the *gafa* reading the *mamanu* is used in the Old Testament exclusively with God as its subject.³⁴ From the *tau* perspective this suggests God acting alone without Earth’s assistance in the creation of humans. In addition, there is also a change in the use of the *mamanu* יָצַק meaning ‘image’ that suggests God is performing unassisted (without a *soāfaumea*) in the creation of humans. In v. 26, the *mamanu* is used with the

³⁴ See, footnote 9 of Chapter 4. See also, Sarna, *Genesis*, 5.

first person plural pronominal suffix meaning ‘our image’ while it is used with the third person masculine singular suffix in v. 27, giving a translation of ‘his image’. This shift again reveals God acting alone when carrying out the physical work required in the creation of humans. Hence, from a *tau* perspective Earth’s non-participation suggests that there is no need for her to expend *mafai* in the creation of humanity.

Earth’s role as *tausimea* to humanity does however require her to have other abilities from the categories of *mafai feso’ota’i*, *mafai fa’alemafaufau* and *mafai fa’atino*. From a *tau* perspective, to be a successful *tausimea* Earth needs to have the social capabilities to communicate and interact with the *āumau* or her human inhabitants. The *gafa* reading reveals the two natures of the Earth-humanity relation depicted in vv. 27-28. First, is a *faiā* where humanity is superior ruling over Earth. Here, Earth is the subject of human subjugation and exploitation. This *faia* is alluded to with the use of the *mamanu* מַמָּנוּ in v. 27 which denotes rape, subjugation and conquest. This depiction from a *tau* perspective suggests the need for Earth to attain *mafai fa’atino* to endure human subjugation, *mafai feso’ota’i* to communicate her objections to human doings and *mafai fa’alemafaufau* to figure out ways to resist human domination.

Lastly, the *gafa* reading also reveals the Earth-human *faiā* as a reciprocal *faiā*, where the two are dependent on each other and share the common *matāfaioi* of *tausimea* in God’s creation. This relationship is alluded to in the divine blessing to ‘be fruitful and multiply and fill the Earth’ humanity receives in v. 28. The blessing depicts God calling humanity to dwell upon the Earth. The *gafa* reading renders this as an indication of Earth’s responsibility for providing humanity with dwelling places. Looking at this responsibility through the lens of the *tau* hermeneutic reveals the need for Earth to acquire the physical magnitude and strength to provide a fruitful and multiplying humanity with habitation. God’s intention for humanity to multiply increases the difficulty for Earth to cater for and provide sufficient dwelling for the humans. From a *tau* perspective this alludes to the need for Earth to obtain *mafai fa’atino* to accommodate her human inhabitants.

In summation, the *tau* of Earth's *matāfaioi* as a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea* to humanity demands Earth to possess an array of abilities from the three categories, *mafai feso'ota'i*, *mafai fa'alemafaufau* and *mafai fa'atino*. Earth's roles as a *soāfaumea* in this creative scene are minimal requiring only communicative abilities to listen to God. Her duty as a *tausimea* to humanity requires social and intellectual capabilities to deal with the complex nature of her relationship with humans and enormous physical capacity to provide the projected increase in human population with necessary habitation.

2.2.9 Added *Tau* of *Tausimea* to Humanity, Land and Flying Creatures (vv. 29-30)

This *vaevaēga* describes another aspect of Earth's *matāfaioi* as *tausimea* to human and non-human creatures. The *gafa* reading identifies this scene of the creation story as an extra responsibility added to Earth's role as a *tausimea*. Viewing this creation activity through the lens of my *tau* hermeneutic suggests Earth's additional role as an added cost to the already mounting economy of Earth's responsibilities as *tausimea*. That is, it also requires special *mafai* on Earth's part to accomplish these responsibilities.

This *vaevaēga* also begins with a divine discourse. In v. 29, God's speech is directed towards the humans, informing them of their diet, while in v. 30, God's speech addresses the land animals and the flying birds, giving them instructions on what to consume as food. Apparently, God does not address Earth directly here. However, the fact that God's speech reveals Earth's involvement in providing human and non-human creatures with their nourishments suggests that Earth must also have knowledge to understand the divine speech and intention. In this sense, Earth must therefore obtain the communicative and intellectual capabilities to receive and comprehend God's discourse.

Furthermore, Earth's *matāfaioi* of providing her inhabitants with food also requires her to acquire *mafai fa'atino* (performative abilities). This can be seen if we consider that the contents of the assigned diet are vegetarian, sourced from the plants that Earth has produced. Humanity's diet is

expressed in v. 29 through the use of the *mamanu* expressions אֶת-כָּל-עֵשֶׂב זֶרַע וְזֶרַע (‘et-kal-‘eṣēb zorea³⁵ zera³⁶) which literally means ‘all herbs yielding seeds’ and וְאֶת-כָּל-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ פֶּרִי-עֵץ זֶרַע וְזֶרַע (w^eēt-kāl-hā³⁷est ‘aṣēr-bû ph^eri-‘est zorea³⁸ zera³⁹) meaning ‘and all trees that has fruit which yield seeds’.

These *mamanu* expressions reveal that the diet of humanity is a vegetarian diet consisting only of herbs and fruit. Meanwhile, the diets of the land animals and flying creatures are described in v. 30 through the use of the *mamanu* expression אֶת-כָּל-יֵרֵק עֵשֶׂב (‘et-kal-yērēq ‘eṣēb) which can be translated as ‘all green herbs’. Similar to humans, the land animals and flying creatures are also given a vegetarian diet. However, the diet of the land and flying creatures is restricted to green herbs. From a *tau* perspective this means Earth has to acquire the necessary *mafai fa’atino* to provide her *āumau* with their specific nutritional needs. That is, Earth has to have the physical abilities to keep on growing and producing plants to ensure an unlimited supply of food for her inhabitants.

In addition, the projected increase in population for the three categories of inhabitants mentioned above will ultimately lead to an increase in demand and quantity of plants, herbs and fruit tress that Earth needs to produce to cater for her (growing number of) inhabitants’ nutritional needs. From a *tau* perspective, this suggests an increase in physical input needed from Earth to satisfactorily fulfill her role as provider of food for her dwellers. The repetitive usage of the *mamanu* כָּל (*kol*) meaning ‘all’, ‘every’, ‘whole’ or ‘total’ in vv. 29 (two times) and 30 (four times) suggests the enormity of the quantity of food Earth needs to produce. This repetitive usage of the *mamanu* had an intensifying effect on this scene and magnifies Earth’s task of providing food for her inhabitants, thereby revealing that the *tau* for Earth in terms of *mafai fa’atino* to fulfill the feeding of her inhabitants is enormous.³⁵

³⁵ Helmer Ringgren, “The Omitting of kol in Hebrew Parallelism,” VT 32, no. Fasc. 1 (1982): 99-100. Ringgren, suggests that the repetitive use of *kol* in Hebrew parallelism involves an intensification.

In summation, the feeding of the humans and non-human creatures from a *tau* perspective adds further costs in terms of *mafai* for Earth to satisfactorily accomplish her *matāfaioi* as a *tausimea*. That is, Earth not only needs to acquire *mafai feso'ota'i* and *mafai fa'alemafaufau* to comprehend God's directives and specification of the creatures' diets but she is also required to possess enormous physical capacity (*mafai fa'atino*) to produce large quantities of food sources for the expanding population of humans, land animals and flying fowls.

2.3 *Vaega 3: Fa'atōmūliga/Ending (vv. 31-2:4a)*

From a *tau* perspective this *vaega* (section) provides the closing of the *tala*. The *tala* ends by giving two significant aspects for the *tau* reading. First, it yields the standard for Earth to uphold in the fulfilment of her *matāfaioi*. Second, it reveals how exhausting and demanding Earth's roles in creation could be. Together, these two elements make known what it takes for Earth to meet the required *tau* (cost) of her roles as a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea*.

2.3.1 Required Standard for Earth in Performing Her *Matāfaioi* (v. 31)

In v. 31, the *fa'amatala* signals the completion of the creative process by giving God's overall evaluation of the state of creation. God's evaluation is presented in v. 31 through the use of the *soāmamanu* מְאֹד טוֹב (*m^eod tōb*) meaning 'very/exceedingly good'. This evaluation is the culmination of God's repetitive evaluation of the creative elements and creatures evident in vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21 and 25. As discussed in Chapter One, some scholars regard this *soāmamanu* as indicating the 'perfection' of creation, thus disclosing God's high expectations of creation.³⁶ In other words, God intends creation to meet a very high standard of 'goodness', that is, a high level of competency in fulfilling her *matafaioi* in creation. From a *tau* perspective, this divine expectation suggests that the cost for Earth to fulfill her functions satisfactorily is very high.

³⁶ For examples; Von Rad, Genesis, 48; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, 166. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 18; and Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 31-43.

2.3.2 Impacts of the *Matāfaioi* on Earth (Gen. 2:1-4a)

This final *vaevaēga* highlights the divine rest through the use of the *mamanu* שָׁבַת (*shabat*) meaning ‘cease’, ‘desist’, or ‘rest’.³⁷ The *gafa* reading in Chapter Four discloses that the *mamanu* שָׁבַת is used here to indicate that God, after all the creation activities, is experiencing fatigue. That is, the creation activities have taken their toll on God, forcing the deity to take a much deserved rest. As God rests on the Sabbath so too ought the rest of creation, not least of all Earth. As a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea* who was heavily involved with the creation activities Earth needs to rest as well in order to replenish her strength for her continuing role as a *tausimea* to the creatures. This reading from a *tau* perspective exposes the impact of the creation activities on Earth, suggesting that, for Earth to satisfactorily accomplish her duties in creation she needs to possess tremendous vitality and strength. In other words, Earth needs to acquire an array of *mafai* from the *mafai feso’ota’i*, *mafai fa’alemafaufau* and *mafai fa’atino* categories.

In sum, viewing the *fa’atōmūliga* (ending) *vaega* of the *tala* through the lens of my *tau* hermeneutic reveals the expected standard Earth needs to achieve (to be ‘very good’) and the impact of such an undertaking on her. These two aspects manifest the enormity of *tau* for Earth to be a good, or even ‘very good’ *soāfaumea* and *tausimea* in God’s creation.

3. CONCLUSION

The current *tau* analysis has outlined the *tau* (costs) for Earth in terms of *mafai* to accomplish her *matāfaioi* as a *soāfaumea* and a *tausimea* in the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala*. My discussion above highlights that the cost for Earth to meet her *matāfaioi* is enormous, taking into account the numerous *mafai* expected and required from Earth. This cost will therefore be used as a measure to determine if Earth was indeed created good as the divine in Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala* claims her to be. That is, if Earth possesses the various *mafai* to meet such costs then we can assert that Earth can *gafataulima* her

³⁷ BDB, 991.

matāfaioi as a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea*. We can then go onto claim that there is truth in the portrait of Earth as being created good in Gen. 1:1-2:4a. On the contrary, if Earth does not possess the required *mafai* then Earth simply cannot *gafataulima* being a *soāfaumea* and a *tausimea* and for that reason we can claim that Earth was not created as good as claimed by the *fa'amatala* in the *tala*. Therefore, the next question is, does Earth possess the required *mafai* to fulfill her vocation as a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea*? This question will be answered in the *lima* analysis in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

LIMA ANALYSIS OF EARTH IN GEN. 1:1-2:4a

1. INTRODUCTION

The *gafa* reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a in Chapter Four identifies Earth's dual *matāfaioi* (functions) in creation which include the roles of a *soāfaumea* (assistant to the Creator) and *tausimea* (host/caretaker of the creatures). Meanwhile, the *tau* reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a in Chapter Five approximates the *tau* (cost) of Earth's *matāfaioi* to acquire and maintain different sets of *mafai* (capabilities). This chapter is a *lima* analysis of Earth using its portrait in Gen 1:1-2:4a. It is the third and final reading of my *gafataulima* tripartite hermeneutical approach. The *lima* reading has two objectives. First, it will provide a clear depiction of the various *mafai* possessed by Earth.¹ And second, it will compare this description of Earth's *mafai* to those *mafai* provided in the *tau* reading to determine if Earth could *gafataulima* (fulfil) her roles as *soāfaumea* and *faumea* identified in the *gafa* reading. If Earth possesses the *mafai* to fulfil these *matāfaioi* then we can conclude that Earth was created 'good' or even 'very good'. In this regard, this chapter will be divided into two parts. In the first part I will analyse the *tala* (story) attempting to identify Earth's capabilities. Second, I will perform a critical assessment to measure if Earth acquires the necessary abilities to fulfil her functions in creation.

2. A LIMA READING OF GEN. 1:1-2:4a: EARTH'S MAFAI

As mentioned above, the *lima* hermeneutical lens is based on the Samoan worldview that sees Earth as a resourceful entity full of positive (*malosi'aga*) and negative (*vaivaiga*) *mafai*. Viewing the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala* through this lens of my *gafataulima* hermeneutic brings to the fore another

¹ As indicated in Chapter Three (section 2), *mafai* includes the subject's *malosi'aga* (strengths) and *vaivaiga* (weaknesses). *Malosi'aga* refers to strengths which are characteristics or assets in the subjects' possession that aids their fulfilment of a task or function. *Vaivaiga* are the subjects' weaknesses which include their negative qualities and characteristics that could hinder the fulfilment of certain tasks and functions.

dimension to the *tala* of creation. It reveals Gen. 1:1-2:4a to be a *tala* that is concerned with the development and exhibition of Earth's capabilities. In the story, God harnesses Earth's abilities to serve the divine purpose to be a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea* in creation. The account also discloses a progression of Earth's *mafa'i*. That is, it begins with Earth depicted as an entity with *mafa'i* concealed and underdeveloped and ends with Earth portrayed as a functional entity with abilities well developed by God the creator. This section will therefore closely follow Earth's progress in the narrative from her primordial existence to maturity, to compile a list of her abilities.

2.1 *Fa'atomu'aga*/Introduction: Earth's *Mafa'i* in the Pre-Created State (vv. 1-2)

In the *fa'atomu'aga* (introduction) of the *tala* in vv. 1-2, the *fa'amatala* not only relays that the story is about the developments of Earth's abilities but also describes Earth's aptitudes in her pre-created existence. The *ulutala* of the narrative in v. 1 reveals that the subsequent account deals with the enhancement of Earth's *mafa'i* by God the creator. The notion of *mafa'i* is encoded in v. 1 through the use of the *mamanu* בָּרָא (*bārā'*) meaning 'to create'. As noted in the *gafa* and *tau* readings,² the *mamanu* in the Old Testament takes only God as subject. W. H. Schmidt asserts that the objects of בָּרָא include Sky and Earth, people in general, the people of Israel and wonders and novelties (such as a 'new thing' created in Jer. 31:22).³ This list suggests that the *mamanu* refers to the creation of both physical and immaterial elements.

The usage of the *mamanu* בָּרָא to make reference to intangible rudiments is evident in Psa. 51:12 where the object of בָּרָא is a 'clean heart' indicated through the use of the *soāmamanu* לֵב טָהוֹר (*lēb tāhūr*); this can also be translated as 'pure will', 'pure mind' or 'clean inner man'. These renditions of the *soāmamanu* denote an immaterial capacity that the utterer is longing for. Through the lens of my *lima* hermeneutic a לֵב טָהוֹר includes traits that can be classified under the three categories in the *tau* analysis in the previous chapter. The three categories of *mafa'i* include; *mafa'i feso'ota'i*

² See, Chapter Four (section 2.1.1) and Chapter Five (section 2.2.8).

³ W. H. Schmidt, 'ברָא *br'* to create,' *TLOT*, vol. 1, eds. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 1997), 255. See also, *BDB*, 135.

(social capabilities), *mafai fa'alemafaufau* (mental capacity) and *mafai fa'atino* (physical abilities). That is, a 'clean will' can be looked at as a physical capability when referring to the will to do things; a 'clean mind' can be categorized as a mental ability, given that the mind is the storehouse of one's intellect; while a 'clean heart' can be classified as an interactive aptitude considering that clean hearts allow social interactions between parties. In this sense, the *mamanu* מָמָנוּ therefore make reference to the creation of any category of *mafai* - social, physical or mental. Reading this consideration of מָמָנוּ into the Gen. 1:1-2:4a account hints that the *tala* that follows is a story dealing with the creation of *all* Earth's *mafai* by God the creator, including her social, physical and mental *mafai*.

Furthermore, the introduction of the *tala* also provides us with the *fa'ata'imuāga* of the *tala* in v. 2. As mentioned in the *gafa* analysis⁴ this is an introductory scene which sets the stage for the rest of the *tala* by revealing the condition of Earth prior to God's creation activity. This condition is described using the *soāmamanu* סוֹאָמָמָנוּ (tōhū wābōhū w^hōšek 'al-p^{enê} t^hôm), relating that Earth 'was empty and without form and darkness was upon the face of the deep'. This *soāmamanu*, read from a *lima* perspective, reveals Earth as an unstable entity whose *mafai* are restricted because of her disorganized and dysfunctional state. This is evident in the multiple meanings of the *mamanu* מָמָנוּ which includes; 'chaos', 'empty', 'vain' and 'confusion'.⁵ Evidently, the *mamanu* is used by the *fa'amatala* to denote either physical and mental chaos or disorder. On the one hand, reference to physical chaos can be found in Isa. 24:10; 45:18 (referring to a city lying in ruins), Deut. 32:10 (denoting barren land), and Job 6:18 (indicating emptiness). On the other hand, usages of מָמָנוּ to designate immaterial disarray is apparent in texts such as 1 Sam. 12:21 (denoting moral, spiritual and psychological confusion), Isa. 29:21 (unjust judgment), 41:29 (futile efforts) and 44:9 (the state of being doomed). These renditions of the מָמָנוּ from a *lima* perspective

⁴ Chapter Four, section 2.1.2

⁵ *BDB*, 96.

reveal the state of Earth's capabilities prior to God's creative activities. That is, Earth's pre-creation *mafai* are in a disoriented and unproductive state and needs to be developed in order for her to be functional.

The other terms in this *soāmamanu* in v. 2 all work together to enhance the chaotic pre-created portrait of Earth, as shown in the *gafa* reading in Chapter Four. These *mamanu*, read from a *lima* perspective, also add to the image of Earth's inadequate capabilities. Another example is the *mamanu* בָּהוּ meaning 'empty' or 'chaos'. As mentioned in Chapter Four, בָּהוּ is combined with אֶרֶץ to form a paronomasia that produces an intense effect on the scene, intensifying it and presenting a depiction of Earth as an infertile, unproductive and uninhabited place.⁶ This image of Earth from a *lima* perspective again yields an extreme image of Earth's undeveloped abilities.

Another element revealing Earth's undeveloped *mafai* is evident in the usage of the *mamanu* חֹשֶׁךְ (*hōšek*) meaning 'darkness' or 'obscurity'. As mentioned in the *gafa* reading, the darkness held Earth hostage in the primordial period; such a depiction from a *lima* perspective is suggestive of Earth's *mafai* being suppressed and contained by the darkness. Therefore, at this stage Earth is unable to perform and meet the *tau* of her *matāfaioi*. This rendition of Earth's pre-created *mafai* is further supported by the considering that the *mamanu* חֹשֶׁךְ is also used metaphorically to mean 'blindness' (e.g. Job. 12:25, 22:11; Isa. 29:18), or 'hiddenness' (being invisible because of the darkness; e.g. Psalms 18:11; 139:11-12). Observing these layers of meaning through the lens of my *lima* hermeneutic offers a depiction of Earth whose abilities are initially contained and limited. Given this description of Earth's *mafai* in the primordial period, there is a need for them to be enhanced in order for her to be functional and meet the *tau* of her *matāfaioi* as a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea*.

⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 14; Sarna, *Genesis*, 6; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 76; Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis*, 43; Van Wolde, *Stories of the Beginning*, 20; Habel, *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth*, 29.

2.2 'A'ano/Body: Enhancing and Exhibiting Earth's *Mafai* (Gen. 1:3-2:1-3)

From a *lima* perspective, the 'a'ano (body) of the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala* is devoted to describing the enhancement and exhibition of Earth's *mafai* by the creator God. The initial step towards this undertaking is the creation of light in Gen. 1:3-5 and ends with God advising Earth on the necessity to rest in Gen. 2:1-4a. The following paragraphs will highlight these developments and list Earth's abilities as they are created and exhibited. I will also critically assess if Earth meets the *mafai* requirements for each creative tasks identified in the *tau* reading.

2.2.1 Creation of Light: Stimulating Earth's *Mafai* (vv. 3-5)

The first and major phase in the establishment of Earth's *mafai* is the creation of light (אֹר *'ōr*)⁷ in the vv. 3-5 *va'aiga* (scene). As mentioned above the sequence of events in the *tala* suggests that light here does not refer to cosmic light sources.⁸ So, what is this light referring to in this scene? I offered several possibilities in Chapter Four revealing the creation of light as a divine act of salvation to redeem the Earth from a chaotic existence and from the bondage of darkness in order for Earth to establish *faiā* and *matāfaioi* in God's creation. Yet, viewing this development from a *lima* perspective discloses that, in this creation act, God is stimulating and channeling Earth's *mafai* towards participation in the creative process. In the process, God first of all creates and introduces light into the world. The creation of light can be seen as a crucial step in the development of Earth's capabilities.

This view is supported by a number of nuances carry by the *mamanu* אֹר. First, is the figurative use of אֹר as 'life'. For example, this usage of the term can be found in Job. 3:16, 33:30 and Psa. 56:13. In Job. 3:16, to see light refers to 'being born' while Job. 33:30 and Psa. 56:13 use the term poetically to describe the state of 'being alive'. Most scholars agree with this rendition of the

⁷ BDB, 21.

⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 18. Also see, Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 61.

mamanu. John J. Scullion, for example, reiterates this view by emphasizing the value of light for the existence of all life.⁹ Reading this nuance into the vv. 3-5 scene of the creation *tala* discloses the creation of light as the moment God brings Earth into life. Such a reading from a *lima* perspective suggests that the creation of light can also be seen as the instant God stimulates and brings Earth's positive *mafai* or *malosiaga* (positive capabilities) into order.

Second, אור can be used metaphorically to denote 'wisdom'. This usage is evident in Eccl. 8:1 where light is equated to wisdom, and Prov. 6:23 where teachings are seen as light to illuminate the way to life. A consideration of this meaning of the *mamanu* in the reading of vv. 3-5 depicts the creation of light as the bestowal of wisdom onto Earth by God the creator. Viewing this rendition through the lens of my *lima* hermeneutic reveals the application of wisdom as the enhancement of Earth's *mafai* for her to be functional in the creative process. In addition, the conferral of wisdom and teachings onto Earth can be regarded as an act where God provokes Earth's multiple abilities. These include *mafai feso 'ota'i* (social capabilities), where wisdom informs interactions and communications, *mafai fa'alemafaufau* (mental capacity), with wisdom providing knowledge and intellect, and *mafai fa'atino* (physical abilities), given that wisdom provides teachings and instructions on how to perform responsibilities. Clare Amos alludes to this claim suggesting that light on the first day of creation is metaphorically used to denote the 'sense of consciousness' granted by God to the universe which was later employed in creation activities.¹⁰ This 'sense of consciousness', when understood from the *lima* viewpoint, corresponds to Earth's identified *mafai* that allows her to participate in the divine plan for creation.

Afterwards, God declared the light good. The divine approval is indicated by the *mamanu* טוב (*tôb*) meaning 'good'¹¹ in v. 4. This *mamanu* had a wide semantic range including every English

⁹ John J. Scullion, *Genesis: A Commentary for Students, Teachers, and Preachers* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 18-19.

¹⁰ Clare Amos, *The Book of Genesis* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2004), 7.

¹¹ H. J. Stoebe, "טוב *tôb* good," 487.

adjectives related to the term ‘good’.¹² The term according to Gordon J. Wenham and Claus Westermann reveals God’s approval and acceptance of the created elements thus revealing the divine mind and insight regarding them.¹³ Westermann goes further, suggesting that in declaring creation good, God is affirming that the created elements are functional and suitable for the divine purpose in creation.¹⁴ From a *lima* perspective, reading Westermann’s claim into the creation of light scene yields the notion that, for God, Earth is now equipped with the necessary *mafai* to perform her *matāfaioi* or responsibilities in creation.

After creating the light, God then separates light from darkness. The process of separation is indicated by the *mamanu* בָּדַל (*bādal*) meaning ‘to divide’ or ‘to separate’. The idea of separation is prominent in this *vaevaēga* (Gen. 1:3-13) to reveal God’s creation activity in arranging and developing the components of Earth, thereby allowing her to be productive. Waltke and Fredricks describe the divine action in vv. 3-5 as ‘the separation of what does not belong together’.¹⁵ It is the eradication of the pre-created elements that once hinders Earth in order to make Earth efficient in performing her responsibilities. In addition, the separation between the light and darkness can be seen as an act of salvation, in the sense that, in initiating the separation, God is freeing Earth from the bondage of darkness that imprisoned her in the pre-created condition. God is thus giving Earth the freedom to participate and perform her functions in the creative activities. From a *lima* perspective the separation of light from the darkness implies the removal of *vaivaīga* that hindered and suppressed Earth’s abilities to participate in the creative activities.

Unfortunately, God did not fully eradicate the darkness but instead claims the darkness as part of the created order. This is done through the process of naming, where God not only name light but

¹² *BDB*, 547. The semantic range of מַטֵּב includes; agreeable, pleasant, satisfying, favorable, useful, purposeful, right, beneficial, ample, pretty, fragrant, beneficial, joyous, true, etc.

¹³ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 18; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 113.

¹⁴ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 114.

¹⁵ Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 61.

also gives darkness a name (v. 5). That is, the light was called Day and the darkness was given the name Night. Such an act not only states God's claim on the darkness but also cements the distinction between the light and darkness,¹⁶ thus, reiterating the notion that the two do not belong together. From a *lima* perspective, this distinction is vital for Earth to be a productive participant in the creative activities, by giving Earth the temporal space to perform her functions. Strikingly, the *fa'amatala* (narrator) omits a divine evaluation of the darkness/Night, compared to Day/light which is declared 'good' in v. 4. This clearly indicates God's preference for the light over the darkness. The omission of God's evaluation of darkness/Night as 'good' in this scene implies that the darkness may contain features that do not meet God's approval. Viewing this rendition of v. 4 through my *lima* hermeneutic indicates a possible weakness or *vaivaiga* (negative ability) for Earth that could hinder the fulfillment of her functions.

This analysis, carried out using a *lima* hermeneutic, sees the creation of light as the initial step in creation. It marks the instance God brings Earth into life and grants her multiple *mafai* to perform her *matāfai* in the divine plan for creation. In addition, the creation of light can also be seen as the removal of obstacles that suppressed Earth's *mafai* and hindered her from performing her *matāfai* as a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea* in God's creation. Unfortunately, God did not completely eradicate the darkness that could become a possible weakness for Earth in accomplishing her functions. In this light, Earth therefore can be viewed as a dualistic entity with both *malosi'aga* (strengths) and *vaivaiga* (weaknesses).

2.2.2 Exhibiting Earth's *Mafai* (vv. 6-25)

Following the *fa'amatala*'s report that describes the stimulation of Earth's *mafai* by God, there is an account of the exhibition and further enhancement of Earth's capabilities in vv. 6-25. This includes a series of creation activities including the creation of the firmament in vv. 6-8, the separation of the waters and dry land in vv. 9-10, the creation of vegetation in vv. 11-13, the

¹⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 19. Wenham asserts that in the context of Gen. 1:1-2:4a the act of naming corresponds to the act of separation.

creation of the luminaries in vv. 14-19 and the creation of non-human creatures in vv. 20-28. In the *gafa* reading in Chapter Four I looked at this scene to determine Earth's *faiā* (relationships) and *matāfaioi* (responsibilities). In the *tau* reading in Chapter Five the same scenes were investigated to evaluate the required *mafai* for Earth to fulfill her roles. However, here I will investigate the different creation scenes from a *lima* perspective to identify Earth's *mafai* and determine how well Earth was able to assist in the creative activities.

a. Creation of the Firmament (vv. 6-8)

The first creation activity is the creation of the firmament in vv. 6-8. In the *gafa* reading, this creation scene discloses Earth's role as a *soāfaumea* in the creative activities. The *tau* reading of this scene reveals the need for Earth to acquire abilities in the *mafai feso'ota'i*, *mafai fa'atino*, and *mafai fa'alemafaufau* categories. From a *lima* perspective, this scene manifests the *mafai* that Earth possesses. Earth's *mafai feso'ota'i* are displayed in this scene through her response to God's creative speech. Although Earth remains mute throughout the *tala* the *fa'amatala* relays Earth's reply to God's command in v. 7 through the use of the *soāmamanu* וַיְהִי־כֵן (*way^hi-ken*) translatable as 'and it was so'. This Hebrew idiom identifies agreement in answer to a command.¹⁷ Bringing this nuance of the idiom to v. 7 suggests Earth's ability to respond to God's creation directives.¹⁸ From a *lima* perspective this outcome testifies to the quality of Earth's interactive and communicative capabilities. The fact that what has been produced matches the divine intention means Earth is able to receive and carry out God's instructions accordingly. This displays Earth's *mafai feso'ota'i* such as communicative skills (listening and hearing) and *mafai fa'alemafaufau*, such as skills to comprehend and carry out the divine plan.

¹⁷ BDB, 487.

¹⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 18; and Sarna, *Genesis*, 7.

However, Earth's response to God's creative instructions in the creation of the firmament is not as prompt as in other creation events.¹⁹ There is a delay here, with the response coming after God's intervention. That is, in v. 7 the *soāmamanu* נִהְיֶיכֶן appears after God created the firmament, whereas in other creative activities the *soāmamanu* appears directly after God's speech suggesting a swift response from Earth. This is evident in the creation of light (v. 3), the separation of the waters and the dry land (v. 9), and the creation of vegetation (v. 11), the luminaries (vv. 16-15), and land animals (v. 24). Donald E. Gowan resolves this inconsistency by asserting that the *soāmamanu* נִהְיֶיכֶן is used here as a summary of God's word and deed instead of a description of Earth's reply to the divine instruction, as in other creation scenes. However, viewing this development through the lens of my *lima* hermeneutic reveals Earth's delayed reaction may be a sign of her *vaivaiga* or her inability to do something. It shows Earth's reluctance to participate in and carry out God's instructions. It was only after God's intervening deed in creating the firmament that the divine wish was brought to fruition. Hence the *soāmamanu* נִהְיֶיכֶן not only exhibits Earth's *mafai feso 'ota 'i* but the delay in this scene alludes to Earth's weaknesses as she shows a reluctance to respond to the divine directives. In other words, this reluctance suggests Earth's ability to disobey God's instruction.

Despite Earth's reluctance to follow the divine invitation to co-create, this scene in vv. 6-8 also manifests Earth's positive *mafai fa'atino* (physical capabilities), as we can discern when we consider the accomplishment of the separation between the waters, as God instructed (v. 7)). The Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala* does not explicitly reveal the components and nature of the firmament. Yet, as mentioned in the *tau* reading, the term is analogically described as a shiny mirror, a tent or a layer of ice crystal. These depictions of the firmament from a *lima* perspective are suggestive of the durability and strength of Earth to carry out the separation between the waters. In addition, Earth's *mafai fa'atino* are also exhibit here through the repetitive use of the *mamanu* בָּרַל (to separate/divide) in vv. 6-7. As revealed in the *gafa* reading בָּרַל denotes the setting apart of people,

¹⁹ Compare Earth's response in vv. 9 and 11.

land, sacrificial animals to make them holy.²⁰ However, this scene also refers to the separation of a physical element like waters. This undertaking, when considered from a *lima* perspective, discloses Earth's physical capabilities in the sense that to divide between the waters (to offset a prior existence) requires massive physical strength. So, the fact that the *fa'amatala* testifies to the completion of such a task by Earth demonstrates Earth's possession of *mafa'i fa'atino* to accomplish the creative activities.

Observing the creation of the firmament from a *lima* perspective suggests that the scene also reveals Earth's possession of *mafa'i fa'alemafaufau*. Again, this is evident through the use of the *soāmamanu* וַיְהִי־כֵן (and it was so) which also denotes one's agreement to an instruction. This gives the impression that Earth has the capacity to understand God's creative instructions. This understanding is converted to action when she assists God in fulfilling the divine creative intention. This depiction therefore hints at Earth's mental capacity, allowing her to reach a logical response to the divine directions.

Looking at this creative scene through the lens of my *lima* hermeneutic highlights the *mafa'i* (capabilities) that Earth possesses. On the one hand, the analysis shows that Earth retains positive *mafa'i* in the *mafa'i feso'ota'i*, *mafa'i fa'alemafaufau* and *mafa'i fa'atino* categories. These capabilities allow her to meet the costs (*tau*) of fulfilling her responsibilities (*gafa*) in the creation of the firmament. On the other hand, Earth also possesses *vaivaiga* such as her tendency to disobey that could hinder her performance and respond to God's instructions. This prompts God to intervene and create the firmament alone.

²⁰ *BDB*, 95. For example, separation of Israel from other nations (Ezr. 6:21; Neh. 9:2; 10:28; and Lev. 20:24), setting apart of people for God's services (Aaron in 1Chr. 23:13; the Levites in Num. 16:9; and Deut. 10:8) and sacrificial animals (1 Chr. 12:8; and Ezr. 9:1).

b. Separation of the Waters and Dry Land (vv. 9-10)

The next creation scene depicts the gathering of the waters and emerging of the dry land - two central elements constituting Earth. In the *gafa* reading, the separation of the waters and the dry land was viewed as a collaborative creation between God and Earth. Here, God gave the orders and initiated the creative activities while Earth played the role of *soāfaumea* in fulfilling the divine intention. The subsequent *tau* reading reveals the *mafai* requirement for Earth to partake successfully in the creative tasks. This includes abilities in the *mafai feso'ota'i*, *mafai fa'alemafaufau* and *mafai fa'atino* categories. Looking at this *va'aiga* (scene) from a *lima* perspective reveals the separation of the waters and the dry land as an exhibition of Earth's numerous *mafai*. First, the divine verbal instruction reveals Earth to be in possession of *mafai feso'ota'i*. As indicated in the *gafa* and *tau* readings God's verbal directive is indicated through the use of the *mamanu* אָמַר (*ʾāmar*) and the jussive יְהִי (*yēhî*).²¹ According to Fretheim, God creating through speech implies that creation is a deliberate act envisioned by God inviting Earth's participation.²² Viewing Earth's participation and response in vv. 9-10 through the *lima* hermeneutical lens reveals Earth is capable of listening and interacting with God the creator. In addition, Earth's prompt response is dissimilar to that in the previous scene in vv. 6-8. The *fa'amatala* expresses this through the placement of the *soāmamanu* יְהִי-כֵן immediately after the divine instruction in v. 9. This implies that the complete fulfillment of God's divine speech by Earth was punctually attended and achieved. This again points to the quality of Earth's *mafai feso'ota'i* to quickly comprehend and carry out God's will.

Furthermore, using the *lima* hermeneutical lens, this scene also displays Earth's *mafai fa'atino*. Notably, there is no divine action in this scene suggesting Earth to be the sole actor in the creation process. Evidently, the mobilization of the waters and the emergence of the dry land reveal Earth's

²¹ The *mamanu* אָמַר (*ʾāmar*) 'to utter', 'to say', 'to say to oneself', 'to command' and 'to promise' while the jussive יְהִי (*yēhî*) is translatable as 'let there be...', 'let be...' or 'may it be...'.

²² Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 38.

physical capabilities. As described in the *gafa* reading Earth had a watery existence that extends to all sides prior to creation.²³ In this scenario, the dry land is imperceptible, submerged and covered by water. Hence, the fact that God was pleased with Earth's work bear witness to the quality of Earth's *mafa'i fa'atino*.

Earth's physical capacity is described in this *va'aiga* through the usage of the Niphal forms of the *mamanu* קָנָה (*qāwāh*) meaning 'be collected' or 'be gathered' and רָאָה (*rā'āh*) that can be translated as 'to appear' or reflexively as 'made oneself seen'. The former *mamanu* is also used in Jer. 3:17 and Isa. 60: 9 to denote mass movement of the populace and vessels respectively. In the case of Gen. 1:9, it points to the mass mobilization of the waters into one locality thus highlighting the waters' practical ability to mobilize. The latter *mamanu* also alludes to the ability to mobilize. For example, the notion of movement is evident in 1 Kgs 18:1-2 where the *mamanu* was used to denote Elijah's appearance before King Ahab.²⁴ In the *gafa* reading these two *mamanu* reveal Earth participation in creation as a *soāfaumea*. Meanwhile, the *tau* reading sees the two *mamanu* as indications of the required *mafa'i fa'atino* for Earth to fulfill God's creation demands. Yet, reading the rendition of the terms above into v. 9 denotes Earth to be an entity with the *mafa'i fa'atino* of mobilization. Support for this analysis is evident in the usage of the *soāmamanu* וַיִּהְיֶיךָ v. 9. As mentioned in the previous section the *soāmamanu* signals the fulfillment of the divine directives for creation. From a *lima* perspective, this implies that Earth has completed the physical deeds that God instructed her to carry out which is possible only if she obtains the necessary *mafa'i*. In other words, Earth has the necessary capabilities to fulfill her creation responsibilities in the separation of the waters and the dry land.

Moreover, the absence of divine intervention in the creative activities also testifies to Earth's capabilities. God's non-participation, when read from a *lima* perspective, implies that Earth is

²³ See Van Wolde, *Stories of the Beginning*, 20. She agrees with this depiction describing Earth's situation revealed in Gen. 1:2 as the 'Earth covered by waters extending to all sides'. Also see, Chapter Four (section 2.1.2).

²⁴ D. Vetter, "רָאָה *r'h* to see," *TLOT*, vol. 3, eds. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody: Hendrickson Publisher Inc., 1997), 1178.

capable of carrying out the creative activities surrounding the separation of the waters and the dry land on her own. This suggests that Earth possess the required *ma'ai fa'atino* to accomplish her role as a *soāfaumea*. In addition, the magnitude of the task at hand also hints at Earth's physical strength. That is, it would take tremendous force to gather the vast body of water that is Earth's pre-creation mantle into one locality and cause the dry land sitting underneath to surface. This operation means major transformation, refashioning Earth's pre-created form to reconstruct her in line with God's creation plan. According to the *fa'amatala* Earth fulfills this massive task with ease. This is depicted in Earth's prompt reply indicated by the *soāmamanu* וְיָהִי כֵן as mentioned above. The swiftness of Earth's response also portrays her as a being with immense physical *ma'ai*.

Moreover, looking at this creation scene from a *lima* perspective reveals evidence pointing to Earth's *ma'ai fa'alemafaufau* (mental capacity). The absence of detailed descriptions in the divine creative instruction and God's non-participation hints at the application of Earth's intellectual abilities in the creative process. God's creative speech (v. 9) is depicted by the *fa'amatala* through the use of the *soāmamanu*; וְיָקוּוּ הַמַּיִם מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶל־מָקוֹם אֶחָד וְתֵרָאָה הַיַּבֶּשָׁה (*yiqāwū hamayim mitahat hašmayim 'el-māqôm 'ehād w'tērā'eh hayabāsāh*), which can be translated as 'let the waters under the sky be gathered into one place and let the dry land appear'. This prolonged divine instruction can be divided into two clauses - one directed to the waters and the other to the dry land. However, there are no specific direction regarding the location for waters to gather or how much of the dry land needs to be made visible. This lack of specifications yields the possibility that it is left up to Earth to make these decisions herself about her own appearance and constitution and thus to showcase her intellectual capabilities and self-awareness in carrying out the divine will. The *fa'amatala*'s assertion that God perceives the outcome as good affirms Earth did make the right decision and had the wisdom to determine how to fulfill this creative task correctly.

In summary, this creation scene from a *lima* perspective showcases the *ma'ai* in Earth's possession. It reveals that Earth has social, intellectual and physical capabilities to perform her function as a

soāfaumea in the separation of the waters and the dry land. Looking at the outcome of the creation activities from a *lima* perspective discloses that Earth is capable of accomplishing her *matāfaioi* in creation. In relation to the costs outlined in the *tau* reading, a *lima* perspective reveals that Earth has the *mafai* to meet her ability requirements to fulfill her roles in creation.

c. Creation of Vegetation (vv. 11-13)

From a *lima* perspective, this *va'aiga* also exhibits Earth's multiple *mafai*. Similar to the previous scene, Earth's *mafai feso'ota'i* here are displays through the divine creative discourses. In this scene God's speech is explicitly directed towards Earth instructing her to produce vegetation. Earth responds promptly as in the previous creation activity, revealing her capacity to take heed, receive and hear God's verbal instructions. Again the *soāmamanu* יִהְיֶיכֶן that immediately follows the divine directives is employed by the *fa'amatala* to express Earth's capacity to attend promptly to God's creation directives. The promptness of Earth's reply suggests her proficiency in receiving and comprehending God's speech.

In addition, this scene also discloses Earth's *mafai fa'atino*. Capabilities under this category of *mafai* are made visible by the narrator in the report of the creation process in v. 12. Here the *fa'amatala* describes how Earth goes about producing vegetation through the use of the Hiphil imperfect form of the *mamanu* מָצַח (yāṣāḥ) which can be translated as 'to bring out' or 'to lead out'. This *mamanu* has multiple usages with an array of nuances in the Old Testament. As indicated in the *gafa* reading in Chapter Four, the term can refer to the birthing of progeny, the liberation from slavery and the movement of animals and people. The Hiphil stem indicates causative action and is used here to point to Earth as the cause of vegetation springing forth. This development from a *lima* point of view is suggestive of Earth's possession of performative capabilities to attend her duties as a *soāfaumea*. However, Earth's action in v. 12 does not fully match the action in the divine instruction. That is, God's instruction in v. 11 used the Hiphil imperfect of the *mamanu* מָצַח (dāṣāḥ) meaning 'to cause' or 'to sprout' instead of the *mamanu* מָצַח. The *mamanu* מָצַח refers

specifically to the sprouting of vegetation, both here and in Joel 2:22 while אָרֶב denotes different actions as indicated above. This depicts that Earth's is inconsistent with the action demanded by God or simply that the *fa'amatala* has chosen two different *mamanu* from the same semantic field. The former view is fitting here since the two *mamanu* envisage two slightly dissimilar activities. That is, אָרֶב envisions Earth germinating vegetation growth while אָרֶב perceives Earth leading out vegetation that was presumably trapped in her. Looking at the inconsistency between God's command and Earth's response from a *lima* perspective implies several points; either Earth does not have the performative *mafai* required to strictly adhere to God's creation instruction, or Earth is showcasing the range of her physical capabilities. At the same time, the inconsistency also reveals aspects of Earth's *mafai fa'alemafaufau*. It suggests that Earth here is showing off the originality of her thought forms, thus, revealing her capacity to think on her own and discover other ways to fulfill the intended outcome of the creation process contrary to the ways intended in the divine design. It reveals Earth has the capacity for freedom and autonomy in her self-maintenance and creation. However, this may also be looked at as a sing of Earth's *vaivaiga*. She is doing her own thing, not following the Deity's strict instructions.

Additionally, Earth's response to God's creative directives also reveals the nature of Earth's cognizance. This is apparent when comparing the types of vegetation God instructed Earth to produce in v. 11 and the types that Earth brought forth in v. 12. For instance, in v. 11 God demanded Earth to sprout forth $\text{אָרֶב מִזְרִיעַ עֵשֶׂב דֶּשֶׁא}$ (*deše' 'ēšeb mazerīa' zera'*) translatable as 'seed bearing plants and herbs'. On the contrary, Earth in v. 12 yields $\text{אָרֶב מִזְרִיעַ עֵשֶׂב דֶּשֶׁא לְמִינֵהוּ}$ (*deše' 'ēšeb mazerīa' zera' l'mînēhū*) meaning 'seed-bearing plants and herbs according to their kind'. Obviously, the difference in the divine instruction and Earth's response is indicated by the *mamanu* לְמִינֵהוּ (according to their kind). This suggests that, in producing plants and herbs, Earth went to the extent of classifying and grouping the plants into specific types. Looking at such an operation from a *lima* perspective suggests that this can both be a *malosi'aga* and *vaivaiga*. It can be a *malosi'aga*

if we view it as evidence that suggests Earth is in possession of intelligence with the mental capacity to formulate categorizations and classifications. Yet, it can be a *vaivaīga* if we perceive it as a sign of Earth doing her own thing rather than God's strict instructions.

Thus, from a *lima* perspective, this creation scene reveals Earth dual nature. On the one hand, it manifests Earth's strengths. That is, she is in possession of different *ma'ai* in the *ma'ai feso'ota'i*, *ma'ai fa'alemafaufau* and *ma'ai fa'atino* categories. Similar to the separation of the waters and the dry land, God's participation in the creation of vegetation is also minimal. All God contributed was the initiative and the blue print for the creation of vegetation. In this blueprint, God provided Earth with specification of the types of vegetation that needed to be produced. Other than that, the bulk of the work was given to Earth to complete. In fulfilling the divine intention, Earth finds other ways to accomplish them rather than strictly following God's instruction. This development implies that Earth is showing maturity by revealing other ways to accomplish the creation objectives. On the other hand, the scene also reveals Earth's weakness that is her tendency to act on her own accord rather than following the strict divine creation directives.

d. Creation of the Luminaries (vv. 14-19)

Perceiving the creation of the luminaries in vv. 14-19 from a *lima* hermeneutical vantage point reveals that this *va'aiga* (scene) also exhibits several of Earth's *ma'ai*. However, identifying evidence of Earth's capabilities here is overshadowed by God's controlling of these particular creation activities. At the outset, the typical divine creative discourses open this creative scene by expressing communication between God and Earth. In response, Earth respond as usual; this is indicated by the *fa'amatala* through the usage of the *soāmamanu* וְהָיָה which depicts Earth promptness in satisfying God's instructions. From a *lima* perspective, this rendition articulates Earth's *ma'ai feso'ota'i* in the sense that it hints at Earth's capacity to communicate and interact with God in the creative process.

Furthermore, this scene also exhibits Earth's *ma'ai fa'atino*. This is apparent considering that Earth was able to respond to God's instructions in producing the luminaries or light sources. Such a task is very extensive considering the repetitive usage of the *mamānu* גָּדוֹל (*gadol*) meaning 'great' or 'large' in v. 16. The fact that Earth managed to achieve this creative task discloses the quality of her performative capabilities (*ma'ai fa'atino*). In the second half of this scene, God got involved in the creation process as evident in vv. 16-18. Here *God* made the two great lights, placed them in the firmament and commissioned them to rule the day and night. From a *lima* perspective, this divine intervention has numerous implication. First, it could reveal a lack in Earth's physical capabilities, considering that, in these verses, God had to intervene in the creative activities – a sign that may suggest Earth's failures and limitations in accomplishing the divine intention. That is, God did not assign these tasks to Earth because she was not capable. Second, and in contrast to my last point, the divine intervention could be seen, not as an indicator of Earth's limitations, but rather as a sign of a close partnership between God and Earth working together in the achievement of the creative task. This rendition of the scene discloses both Earth's physical *ma'ai* and *ma'ai feso'ota'i* through working in collaboration with the divine creator.

Furthermore, this scene also manifests the divine bestowal of additional *ma'ai* onto Earth. In this process, God granted Earth the *ma'ai* to rule and to separate the day from the night. The ability to rule is indicated in v. 18 through the use of the *mamānu* מָשַׁל (*māšal*) meaning 'to rule', 'to reign' or 'to have dominion'²⁵ while the ability to separate is denoted by the *mamānu* בָּדַל (*bādal*) meaning 'to divide' or 'to separate'.²⁶ The term מָשַׁל represents rule in general, including the sense of administering (e.g. Gen. 24:2; Psa. 105:21), self-government (e.g. Gen. 4:7; Prov. 16:32 etc.), ruling over members of a household (e.g. Gen. 3:16; 37:8; 24:2, etc.) and political rule designating the rule of a king (e.g. Josh. 12:2; Jer. 22:20; Dan. 11:3-5; Prov. 23:1; Isa. 40:10; Psa. 22:29; 1

²⁵ BDB, 605.

²⁶ Ibid, 95.

Chron. 29:12; and 2 Chron. 20:6; and Mic. 5:1).²⁷ Viewing these categories of מַשָּׁל from a *lima* perspective implies that Earth here is given *mafai feso 'ota'i*, such as the ability to rule, administer, collaborate and interact with others under her rule.

Similarly, the *mamanu* מָדַל also discloses Earth's *mafai*. For example, as stated above in the separation of the waters and the dry land, Earth is in possession of the *mafai fa'atino* to separate tangible materials. Yet, in this *va'aiga* God endowed Earth with the performative capability to separate immaterial entities too, such as the temporal entities of days, years, night and day and seasons. The word 'seasons' is indicated by the *mamanu* מוֹעֲדִים (*mô'adîm*) which also carries the meanings 'fixed times', or 'feasts'.²⁸ So, the appointed times referred to in this category could include both seasons and feasts or festivals. Adopting the multiple meanings of the term exhibits Earth's multi-tasking capacity, suggesting that Earth has the intellectual ability to keep and mark time, seasons and the festival calendar. This suggests that Earth has various *mafai* that enables her to achieve her *matāfaioi* in creation.

e. Creation of the Non-Human Creatures (vv. 20-25)

Looking at the *va'aiga* of Gen. 12: 22-25 through the *lima* hermeneutical lens reveals that the activities surrounding the creation of non-human creatures once again showcases Earth's *mafai*. In the creation of aquatic, flying and land creatures, the *fa'amatala* reveals Earth's *mafai feso 'ota'i*. Again in the creative process God communicates the divine intention through creation speeches. These divine verbal directives in v. 20 and v. 24 are directed to Earth. This is apparent in the divine discourse in v. 24 where Gods directly addresses Earth. Although Earth, as usual, did not respond verbally to the divine directives, her fulfillment of the divine creative plan is indicative of the quality of her interactive and communicative abilities. And again, the *fa'amatala* uses the

²⁷ TWOT; J. A. Soggin, "מַשָּׁל *māšal* to rule," *TLOT*, vol. 2, eds. E. Jenni and C. Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 689.

²⁸ BDB, 417.

soāmamanu וַיְהִי־כֵן ('and it was so') to express Earth's precise response to God's creative demands. In addition, Earth's reply was favorable to God. This suggests that she received and heard God's speech and thus responded accordingly. The customary *soāmamanu* כִּי־טוֹב (it was good) is also used here twice, once v. 21 and again v. 25 to reveal the divine approval of what has been created. The creation activities in this scene therefore demonstrate Earth to be a good listener and communicator whose interactive capacity is revealed through her actions.

Moreover, the *fa'amatala* in this *va'aiga* also describes Earth's ability to work in collaboration with God to achieve the divine design for creation. This is apparent in the sequence of events and God's involvement in the creation process. That is, following the divine speeches, the divine creative actions unfold. God's actions are expressed by the *fa'amatala* using the *mamanu* בָּרָא (to create) and עָשָׂה (to do/make). The latter term here portrays God as a potter working with the divine hands in the creative process thus depicting God as imminent and present in creation. Fretheim agrees, claiming that the use of עָשָׂה here inserts a human analogy into God's creative activities and it parallels the image of the deity as a potter and a builder in Gen. 2-3.²⁹ The divine proximity divulges God coming into contact and working together with Earth to accomplish the creation of the creatures. Similarly, Habel claims that the collaboration between God and the Earth in the creation process is explicitly presented in this *va'aiga*.³⁰ This depiction from a *lima* point of view affirms Earth's social ability to work in partnership with God.

From a *lima* perspective, this scene further showcases Earth's *mafai fa'atino*. Earth's physical capabilities are evident not only in the fulfillment of the tasks at hand but also in the measure of what God demands that she produce. The magnitude of the creative task is recognizable through the employment of *mamanu* expression שָׂרַץ (*šāras*) meaning 'to swarm' or 'to teem'.³¹ The

²⁹ Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 37.

³⁰ Habel, *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth*, 34.

³¹ *BDB*, 1056.

mamanu yields an expression of abundance and movement, thus reflecting a mass migration and gathering of creatures. This therefore reveals that God intends the waters to be filled in abundance with itinerant creatures. The enormity of the task is also evident in the usage of the related noun³² שָׂרָץ (*šeres*) meaning ‘swarming things’ or ‘swarmers’.³³ In the Old Testament the noun שָׂרָץ is often used to make reference to small creatures like small insects, quadrupeds and reptiles that congregate in numbers (see e.g. Lev. 11:29). The two terms together reveal the magnitude and the number of aquatic creatures God instructed Earth to produce and the fact that such creative task was achieved rapidly by Earth as indicated by the *soāmamanu* וַיַּמְאֵן manifests Earth’s performativity. This consideration therefore clearly reveals Earth meeting the *mafai* requirement identified in the *tau* reading for this creative task.

A similar trend is also noticeable in the creation of flying and land creatures. As described in the *gafa* reading, God intended Earth to produce multiple species in large quantities of creatures. Viewing such a depiction through the lens of my *tau* hermeneutic suggests that Earth is required to obtain an array of *mafai* to accomplish the creative instruction. This reiterates God’s intention for the flying creatures to fill the space between Earth and the skies in v. 20. From the *lima* perspective, this development once more shows the potential of Earth’s *mafai fa’atino*. It reveals the extent of Earth’s capacity to act productively within these creative events.

Similarly, the creation of the land creatures also reflects an extensive task for Earth. This is indicated by the repetitive use of the *soāmamanu* לְמִינָהּ (*l’mînāh*) that can be translated as ‘according to her kind’. The *soāmamanu* is repeated four times in the feminine form and used once in the masculine form. The fivefold use of this expression highlights the diversity of animal species Earth is instructed by the creator to bring forth. In the *tau* analysis of Chapter Four, the

³² The combination of a verb with its cognate noun is labelled by Currid as a ‘polyptoton’ and it is used to give a sense of emphasis. This reveals the magnitude of the creation demand that Earth met in the creation of aquatic creatures. See, Currid, *A Study Commentary on Genesis*, 79-80.

³³ *BDB*, 1056.

extensiveness of the task means Earth needs to acquire tremendous physical strength and abilities to accomplish such function. And, the fact that Earth accomplished it promptly in v. 24 (indicated by the placement of the *soāmamanu* נִהְיֶיכֶן immediately after the divine instruction) gives witness to the *mafai fa’atino* in her possession. Looking at Earth’s accomplishment from a *lima* perspective implies that Earth has the necessary *mafai fa’atino* to perform her vocation in the creation of land creatures.

The use of the *mamanu* כֹּל (*kōl*) meaning ‘all’ or ‘every’ also adds on to the depiction of Earth’s physical capabilities. Although, the *mamanu* is used only with reference to crawling land creatures in v. 25, it still portrays the diversity and extent of Earth’s task by yielding the impression that Earth produces all the creeping things that crawl on the face of the land. Once more, this rendition shows Earth’s physical capabilities by portraying Earth ability to fulfill God’s intention for creation.

Furthermore, this *va’aiga* also gives witness to Earth’s *mafai fa’alemafaufau*. That is, Earth’s mental capabilities are revealed by considering the complex nature of God’s creative instructions. This complexity is evident in the specifications of aquatic, air and land creatures God urges Earth to bring forth. The classifications for these creatures are presented in the *gafa* and *tau* readings. In the *gafa* reading, the various classifications describe the complex nature of the creative activities Earth is expected to be involved in, while the *tau* reading viewed the complexities of God’s creation command as an indication that Earth needs to acquire the *mafai feso’ota’i* and *mafai fa’alemafaufau* to accomplish them. From a *lima* perspective this complex categorization not only exhibits the diversity of animals God demands to be created but also reveals Earth’s ability to classify land creatures according to their natures and types. Earth’s ability to engage in such a creative task indicates that she retains cognitive capabilities.

2.2.3 Additional *Mafai* (Gen. 1:26-2:4a)

Apart from the description of Earth's multiple *mafai*, the *tala* of Gen. 1:1-2:4a also depicts the creation of other elements that can aid Earth in meeting the *tau* (cost) of her *matāfaioi*. This includes the creation of a support network in the form of humanity (vv. 26-32) and advice to rest (Gen. 2:1-4a).

a. Creating a Support Network (vv. 26-32)

As mentioned in both the *gafa* and *tau* readings, God resumes the creation of humanity with an invitation for Earth's participation in the creative activities. This is evident through the *fa'amatala*'s use of the first person plural co-hortative נַעֲשֶׂה (*na'aśeh*) translatable as 'Let us make'. However, despite the invitation, Earth remains silent and inactive in the creative process. From a *lima* perspective this development implies several points. First it could be a sign of Earth's freedom and ability to do as she chooses. Earth therefore, has both mental and interactive *mafai* that allow her to make her own decisions. Second, it could reveal Earth's *inability* to assist with the creation activities thus, suggesting Earth's lack in *mafai*.

From a *lima* perspective, the creation of humanity can be beneficial for Earth. Given that humanity is created in the image of God, the possibility exists that they could share the load of Earth's responsibilities. This is evident in the *tala* where God grants both Earth and humanity the responsibility to rule and have dominion over their respected domains. Earth's rule is depicted through the use of *mamanu* מְמַשֵּׁלָה in v. 16 and מְשַׁל in v. 18. On the other hand, humanity's rule is described by means of the *mamanu* רָדָה (*rādāh*) which also means 'to rule' in vv. 26 & 28. These *mamanu* can be synonymous in meanings but רָדָה is used mainly to denote human rule whereas מְמַשֵּׁלָה and מְשַׁל can take a wide range of subjects, designating the rule of humanity, creatures, Earth, the divine and other entities. The bestowal of authority to rule upon both Earth and humanity reveals the co-sharing of responsibilities between them in creation. This is revealed in

the discussion of Earth's *tausimea* responsibility in the *gafa* reading, where the rule of humanity can aid Earth in the fulfillment of her duties as caretaker over the non-human creatures. In this sense, humanity therefore can be seen as a helper for Earth.

Humanity's capacity to assist Earth is also evident in the *mamanu* קָבַשׁ (*kābaš*) meaning 'to subdue' or 'to subjugate'. As claimed in the *gafa* reading, קָבַשׁ mostly refers to the harsh reality of subduing enemies or a hostile party to the subduer but the term also depicts the treading down of defects.

From a *lima* perspective the notion of humanity subjugating Earth raises some questions: why does Earth needs to be subjugated? Is Earth hostile to humanity and the rest of creation? So far my *lima* analysis has highlighted that Earth is an entity with *vaivaiga* indicated by the darkness and her tendency to disobey God. Unfortunately, in the creation process, God did not fully contain or get rid of Earth's negative forces and they surfaced during the creation activities. This is evident in the creation of the firmament and humanity where Earth showed a reluctant to participate in the creative activities. Hence, this portrait of Earth could validate the usage of קָבַשׁ in this scene. That is, God here is granting humanity the authority to mollify and suppress Earth's dark side that could be harmful for God's creation. Thus, in this light, humanity's subjugation is perceived as a way of helping and enhancing Earth's full potential through the suppression of her negative *mafai*.

b. Advice to Rest (vv. Gen. 2:1-4a)

The final scene of the *tala* when read from the *lima* perspective is the divine call for rest. As mentioned in the *gafa* reading, this divine appeal marks both the completion of the creative process and as advice for Earth to rejuvenate her *mafai*, while the *tau* reading understands the call to rest as an indication of how challenging the creative activities are in terms of *mafai*. The call for rest is depicted in the *tala* through the use of the *mamanu* שָׁבַת (*šābat*) meaning 'cease', 'desist', or 'rest' in vv. 2 and 3³⁴ denoting the divine rest. The 'rest' on the seventh day in this *va'aiga* therefore

³⁴ BDB, 991.

could be an indication of a time set aside by God for the renewal and replenishing of Earth's *mafai*.³⁵ From a *lima* perspective, the rest on the seventh day can be perceived as an asset for Earth to allow her *mafai* to be renewed for the continuation of her responsibilities in creation.

Furthermore, God's advice to rest clearly highlights God's support for Earth throughout the creation process, not only through assisting Earth with the creative activities but also through directing and advising her on what to do. God blessed and sanctified this day as evident in the usage of the derivatives of the *mamanu* בָּרַךְ (*bārak*) meaning 'to kneel' or 'to bless' and קָדַשׁ (*qādaš*) meaning 'to make holy', 'to set apart' or 'to consecrate'.³⁶ These *mamanu* together yield the impression of God setting this day apart by ceasing from engaging in any work or physical activity. From a *lima* perspective, this can be viewed as God taking the lead for Earth to follow suit. God's rest can therefore be viewed as advice and assistance offered to Earth for the purpose of replenishing her strength and *mafai* for her roles in the creative process.

2.2.4 Summary

This *lima* analysis of the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala* has revealed an array of *mafai* in Earth's possession, plus additional elements that could assist in meeting the required *mafai* for her to fulfill her roles as a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea*. These *mafai* together make up Earth's *malosi'aga* which includes capabilities from the three categories identified above - *mafai feso'ota'i*, *mafai fa'atino* and *mafai fa'alemafaufau*. *Mafai feso'ota'i* includes Earth's ability to interact, communicate and collaborate with the creator in the creation activities. Earth's *mafai fa'atino* encompasses abilities such as performative capacity, physical strength indicated by several *mamanu* presented in the *tala*. And lastly, *mafai fa'alemafaufau* includes Earth's capabilities of comprehending complex instructions and the ability of categorization. In addition, there are also elements created by God that could

³⁵ Ibid, 43.

³⁶ Ibid., 138, 872.

assist and help Earth in satisfying God's creative demands which includes support networks and advice for Earth to rest.

However, Earth also possesses negative *mafi* or *vaivaiga* that could hinder her in completing and satisfying her assigned responsibilities. This includes her tendency to disobey divine instructions and act on her own accord. These *mafi* could constitute the 'dark side' of Earth which would have hindered the fulfillment of her roles as a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea*. With this overview of Earth's *mafi* in hand, we can now move on to compare and contrast Earth's *mafi* with the *mafi* requirement identified in the *tau* analysis to determine if Earth can *gafataulima* her *matāfaioi* (responsibilities) to reveal if she was created good or not.

3. CAN EARTH GAFATAULIMA HER MATĀFAIOI?

Answering the above question from a *gafataulima* perspective will provide a response to the research question: Was Earth created good? From a *gafataulima* perspective Earth's goodness is measured in terms of capabilities. This section of the *lima* analysis measures if Earth has the capacity to *gafataulima* her *matāfaioi* by meeting the identified costs in terms of abilities. In other words, to measure if Earth is created 'good' or not. To recap, the *tau* analysis has established and categorized the required capabilities needed to satisfactorily fulfill the responsibilities of a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea* in creation. This includes multiple *mafi* in the categories of *mafi feso'ota'i*, *mafi fa'atino* and *mafi fa'alemafaufau*. These multiple capacities are essential for Earth to accomplish her responsibilities identified in the *gafa* analysis as God's assistant (*soāfaumea*) in creation and as a host and caretaker (*tausimea*) to God's creatures. So, does Earth acquire such aptitudes? If so, then we can conclude that Earth can indeed *gafataulima* her roles but if not Earth therefore *lē gafataulima* her *matāfaioi* in creation. In other words, if Earth can *gafataulima* her *matāfaioi* then we can conclude that she was created good but if not then her goodness is questionable.

The *lima* analysis above concludes with a description of Earth's *malosi'aga*. That is, Earth possesses the required *mafai* to adequately carry out God's creative directives. First, Earth acquires capacities in the *mafai feso'ota'i* categories thus allowing fruitful interactions, communications and collaboration to take place between Earth and the divine creator and between Earth and other creatures. Second, Earth also retains capabilities in the *mafai fa'atino* type to meet the requirements permitting her participation in the creation activities when required and in feeding and supporting her inhabitants. And lastly, the *lima* analysis reveals Earth to be in possession of abilities in the *mafai fa'alemafaufau* group making it possible for her to comprehend, reason and innovate ways to implement God's creation instructions and to host God's creatures. On top of these *mafai*, there are additional resources and means that Earth can access to assist her in the fulfillment of her responsibilities. These include the support of God and humanity who have the potential to aid Earth in her *matāfaioi*. The divine aid for Earth is evident throughout the *tala* and culminates with the advice to 'rest' on the day God sets apart for such a purpose. The creation of humanity together with its assigned responsibilities can be viewed as the extension of Earth's support network, in the sense that humanity can assist Earth by sharing the load allocated to her. Taking Earth's *mafai* and the imminent support network under consideration one can propose that Earth has the capacity to *gafataulima* her *matāfaioi* in creation. That is, Gen. 1:1-2:4a yields a portrait of a capable Earth who can meet the *tau* of her responsibilities as a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea*. This reading reaffirms God's positive evaluation of Earth as 'good' that is repeated throughout the *tala*.

However, unaccounted in the divine evaluation are Earth's *vaivaiga* identified in the *lima* analysis of the Gen. 1:1-2:4a *tala*. This includes her tendency to act on her own will disobeying God's instructions that leads to her non-participation in some creative activities and her lack in abilities on some occasions (e.g. as in the creation of the firmament, the two great lights and land animals). A consideration of these *vaivaiga* offers a differing portrait of Earth. They bring to the fore a side of Earth that can potentially obstruct her from fulfilling her responsibilities in creation as God

intended. Adding Earth's *vaivaiga* to the *malosi'aga* reveals Earth to be an entity that was created good but not very good with the potential to fail in her roles as a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea*. And, so perhaps, this is why her support network and rest are needed. The divine and human interventions could assist Earth in managing and containing her *vaivaiga* to allow her to operate productively in creation. Earth may therefore have a continuing dependence on her support networks to avoid failure in fulfilling her roles in participating in and sustaining creation. The advice to rest could also help Earth in dealing with her *vaivaiga*. Rest can rejuvenate her strength to perform her *matāfaioi* adequately.

So, was Earth created good? Answering this question from a Samoan *gafataulima* perspective I propose that Earth *was* created good but only to a certain extent. Yes, Earth can still *gafataulima* her responsibilities but only if her *vaivaiga* are contained and isolated and if she gets the support of God and Humanity and if she is allowed to rest to rejuvenate her strength and *mafai*.

4. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have endeavored to re-read the Gen. 1:1-2:4a creation *tala* from a *lima* perspective. In doing so, I have uncovered Earth's *mafai* portrait which fuses both her positive and negative abilities. On the one hand, Earth's *malosi'aga* which includes *mafai feso'ota'i*, *mafai fa'alemafaufau* and *mafai fa'atino* allow her to meet the *tau* of her *matāfaioi* and participate productively in the creation activities, and perform her roles as a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea*. On the other hand, her *vaivaiga* which includes her abilities to do as she wishes and disobedience towards the divine can work against her in the fulfillment of the divine instructions for creation. These *vaivaiga* identifies the potentiality for failure and stress the need for divine and human interventions to aid Earth in meeting the cost of accomplishing her *matāfaioi* as a *soāfaumea* and *tausimea* in creation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

In Chapter One, I stated the main reason and purpose for this study: to give attention to the divine evaluation of Earth in Gen. 1:1-2:4a. Consideration of this subject is needed because it challenges the ecological reality that I, as a Christian-Samoan, have experienced in my local Samoan context during times of natural disaster. This challenge has arisen because I am a devout Christian raised in a staunch Christian family who perceive the Bible to hold truths concerning the world. I therefore read the Gen. 1:1-2:4a as a creation story that has relevance with regard to the quality and functionality of Earth. That is, I believe that the Gen. 1:1-2:4a claims that Earth was created ‘good’ and even ‘very good’ are factual in relation to my lived reality on Earth. However, witnessing and feeling the effects of natural disasters has challenged this perception and raised questions that this thesis has attempted to answer. In doing so, I reappraised the quality of Earth and critically examined Gen. 1:1-2:4a to see if Earth was really created ‘good’ and even ‘very good’ as claimed by the text.

Bringing my life situation and Samoan Christian context into engagement with the text is made possible by paradigm shifts in literary interpretation. The most recent of these shifts is Reader-oriented criticism which sees the meanings of texts as a product of the engagement between the text and reader. Thus, the role of the reader is given priority in the interpretive process. Emerging within Reader-oriented criticism are scholars from Oceania who read the Bible from various Pacific Island contexts. Included in this group are Samoan scholars whom I wish to situate my reading alongside. First is Salevao, who developed a Samoan ecological hermeneutics to read Hebrews 6:7-8. The other is Frank Smith, who reads the Gospel of John from a Samoan perspective. Both these readers use their social and cultural experience as Samoans to develop approaches to reading biblical texts. My reading is similar to Salevao’s and Smith’s readings in the sense that in developing my *gafataulima* reading, I also search my social and cultural location for devices that could contribute

to my own biblical interpretation and to answer my thesis question: Was Earth created ‘good’ or ‘even very good’ as the narrator of Gen. 1:1-2:4a repeatedly claims her to be?

For this purpose, I devised the Samoan *gafataulima* hermeneutical approach. The Samoan compound term *gafataulima* literally means ‘measuring a fathom using the hand’. It designates a Samoan tripartite hermeneutical approach based on abilities. It measures the quality of a subject in relation to its capacity to achieve a function. This hermeneutical approach takes into account our Samoan cultural worldview of Earth. Its three separate but related approaches are designated using the three little terms intrinsic to the concept *gafataulima*; *gafa*, *tau* and *lima*. The *gafa* approach involves the identification of Earth’s relations and functions. The *tau* approach establishes the cost in terms of abilities for Earth to accomplish the identified tasks. And, the *lima* approach highlights Earth’s capabilities and determines if Earth has acquired the required capacity to *gafataulima* her given responsibilities. Establishing Earth’s capabilities to *gafataulima* her given functions will provide a response from this specific Samoan perspective to the topic question: Was Earth created ‘good’ or ‘even ‘very good’?

Reading Gen. 1:1-2:4a through the lenses of my *gafataulima* hermeneutical approach, my engagement with the biblical text was also facilitated by the utilisation of the Samoan *tala-mamanu* reading. The Samoan *tala-mamanu* reading is a Samoan form of narrative-grammatical criticism. Using this approach, I read the text as a *tala* (narrative) and identified *mamanu* (terms/motifs/idioms) that are relevant to the interpretation of the text and to my re-appraisal of Earth in relation to her functions in creation.

Through the lens of my *gafa* hermeneutic (Chapter Four), I identified Earth as a relational entity with *faiā* with God and the creatures (human and non-human). In this *faiā*, Earth is given the *matāfaioi* (functions/roles/responsibilities) of a *soāfaumea* (creative agent) and a *tausimea* (host/caretaker) in creation. As a *soāfaumea*, Earth participates in the creation activities assisting

God the *faumea* (creator/maker). Meanwhile, as a *tausimea* Earth is responsible for supporting the human and non-human creatures by providing them with habitation and nourishment.

After establishing Earth's *faiā* and *matāfai* through my *gafa* reading of the text, my *tau* reading (Chapter Five) estimated the cost of these roles and responsibilities in terms of *mafi* (abilities) required by Earth to accomplish them satisfactorily, and thus be deserving of her divine evaluation as 'good' and 'very good'. Analysing Gen. 1:1-2:4a through the lens of my *tau* hermeneutic revealed the enormity of the cost for Earth to participate productively in the creation process. The roles of *soāfaumea* and *tausimea* demand Earth to possess an array of *mafi*. These include *mafi feso'ota'i* (social abilities), *mafi fa'atino* (physical capacity) and *mafi fa'alemafaufau* (mental capabilities).

Following the *tau* analysis, I conducted the *lima* reading (Chapter Six). The aim of this analysis is to identify the *mafi* in Earth's possession and assess if they are adequate to meet the estimated cost of fulfilling her *matāfai*, as identified in the *tau* analysis. My *lima* reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a revealed Earth to have multiple *mafi* that include both positive (*malosiaga*) and negative (*vaivaiga*) capabilities. Positive *mafi* includes abilities such as *mafi feso'ota'i*, *mafi fa'atino* and *mafi fa'alemafaufau*. Earth's possession of these *mafi* suggests that she can *gafataulima* the requirements to fulfil her roles in creation. In addition, Earth also has two support networks (God and humanity) as well as the divine mandate to rest; these offer Earth the support and renewed energy for her to successfully accomplish her *matāfai* in creation.

However, my *lima* reading also identified that, since the time of creation, Earth also has negative capacities that could work against the accomplishment of her *matāfai* in creation. These include Earth's tendencies to act on her own accord and her inability (or unwillingness) to follow divine instructions. These tendencies and inability disclose Earth's potentiality for failure to perform her functions in creation. Earth's positive and negative *mafi* together reveal her not only as a capable entity in the performance of her roles but also as a dualistic being with both positive and negative

sides. Earth has the *mafai* to fulfil her functions satisfactorily though she also has the *mafai* to undo some or all this goodness. In this light, I concluded that Earth in Gen. 1:1-2:4a was created good or even very good but also has the capacity to not be good or even very good.

Hence, what does this portrait of Earth mean for me as a Samoan Christian who has lived through natural disasters? First, the portrait of Earth in Gen. 1:1-2:4a revealed through the lens of my *gafataulima* reading challenges my Christian belief of a perfect Earth created by God. As a Christian Samoan, I believe biblical teachings have real life relevance and I understand the declaration in Gen. 1:1-2:4a that Earth is ‘good’ to be a living reality. However, my *gafataulima* reading reframes my understanding of Gen. 1:1-2:4a. It brings to the fore Earth’s *vaivaiga* that I as a Christian often overlooked. Knowledge of Earth’s *vaivaiga* reformulates my theological understanding of God and creation. It makes me realize that while Earth is ‘good’, this goodness includes a capacity for failure that is woven into creation. This makes me aware that natural disasters may be part of Earth’s created reality, as made clear in Gen. 1:1-2:4a.

Second, the revelation that Gen. 1:1-2:4a presents Earth as an entity not entirely good also suggests that Earth as presented in Gen. 1:1-2:4a is comparable to the ecological reality that I have experienced during natural disasters. As mentioned in Chapter One (section two), through natural disasters, Earth has shown that she is a potent force of which we should be cautious. This portrait of Earth is echoed in my *gafataulima* reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a. In this sense, Gen. 1:1-2:4a is therefore not presenting a contradictory portrait of Earth as I once thought. Rather, it presents a representation of Earth that reflects the ecological reality that I experienced on the Islands in times of natural disasters. In other words, Earth’s potential to do harm is intrinsic in Gen. 1:1-2:4a and I have revealed it through my *gafataulima* reading.

Third, despite the above negative depiction of Earth in Gen. 1:1-2:4a the *gafataulima* reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a also highlights Earth’s positive aptitudes. That is, it presents Earth as a capable *soāfaumea* and *tausimea*. This portrayal for the victim of natural disasters implies that no matter

how devastating the impact of natural disasters, we can still depend on Earth for our survival and livelihood. In this sense, Earth therefore needs to be respected not only as a source of life (evident in her role as *soāfaumea*) and our home and provider (evident in her role as a *tausimea*) but also because of her potential to cause mayhem to our lives.

My *gafataulima* reading of Gen. 1:1-2:4a also highlights Earth's dependence on her support network (humanity) and ability to rest to fulfil her functions in creation. Hence, if Earth fails at times to fulfil her duties, perhaps she is not getting the help from humanity or the rest that she requires. In this light, Earth's failure is also humanity's failure. But the question is: How can humanity help Earth fulfil her capabilities and offer her the rest she needs to succeed? This question needs to be explored in future studies.

Reading Gen. 1:1-2:4a through the lens of my *gafataulima* hermeneutic has demonstrated that a Samoan reading of biblical texts generates alternative meanings. Not only that, but it also attests to the viability of my *gafataulima* hermeneutic for the reading of biblical texts. The work however is not an end in itself. There are still avenues that need to be explored given the numerous subjects and contexts to which a *gafataulima* hermeneutic can be applied, based on the central assumption that every living and non-living subject has various functions and *mafai* to accommodate. The *gafataulima* hermeneutical approach can therefore be used to assess the functional abilities (*mafai*) of any given subject in any given context. In this light, *gafataulima* can be considered an interpretive hermeneutic to compliment sociological, cultural, historical, ecological, political, economic, feminism and other perspectives. It can be used in these arenas to appraise and assess certain subject or subjects in relation to their functions and responsibilities. For instance, *gafataulima* hermeneutic can be employed; as a sociological perspective to assess an individual's capacity to perform his or her responsibilities in society; as a cultural perspective to assess an individual or group's capabilities to perform cultural protocols and etiquettes; or as a political perspective to appraise a king's abilities to rule and maintain political stability. This wide range of

uses suggests the potential of *gafataulima* hermeneutical approach to read a wide range of biblical texts for future projects. It is only through continual testing that my *gafataulima* hermeneutic will be fully developed and make a significant contribution to Oceania and Samoan biblical studies.

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