

THE CREATION OF LIGHT:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SAMOAN
AND HEBREW NARRATIVES

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by

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Abstract

This paper is guided by my experience as an Electrician. I endeavor to delve into the study of the origin of light in the Hebrew Creation Story. In Genesis, God commences his creation with light, which precedes the creation of the sun, moon, and stars on the fourth day. According to modern scientific view, the sun is the source of every light, but the light created on the first day could not have been sunlight or the light of the moon or stars, since these heavenly bodies were not created until the fourth day. This uncertainty prompts the central question of this entire research, *Is light in Genesis 1: 3 a special light?*

As I am of Samoan heritage, this thesis is a comparative study between the Hebrew and the Samoan creation stories, with regards to the origin of light. Through this comparison, this research attempts to explore the similarities and differences between the Samoan and the Biblical creation stories. This research also wrestles with the ambiguity of light depicted in the literary context of Genesis 1 in comparison to the Samoan creation of light.

DECLARATION

I **Faafai Atonio**, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis, which is **11,700** words in length, excluding the footnotes and bibliography, has been written by me, that it is the result of work carried out by me, and that it has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, in any previous written work for an academic award at this or any other academic institution.

I also declare that this thesis has not used any material, heard or read, without academically appropriate acknowledgement of the source.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

DEDICATION

I dedicate this Thesis research, to my dearest family, both my parents, my wife's parents; also to our Spiritual parents Reverend (Retired) *Mafi Faamoe & Lepetimalo Faamoe*; I thank you whole heartedly for your endless prayers, love and support for myself and my family, over the entire four years of our time in Malua.

Thank you also to all of our immediate and extended families, both in Samoa and abroad, for your continuous outpour of love and support.

To my beloved late Nana, *Faimanifo Atonio*, you instilled in me the most valuable life lesson- to always place God first and foremost in life. You always reminded me that through God alone, anything is achievable in life. I carry you in my heart always. I miss you mom.

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List of Abbreviations

EFKS	-	Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa
MT	-	Masoretic Text
LXX	-	Septuagint
JBL	-	Journal of Biblical Literature
AJSL	-	American Journal of Semitic Languages

Chapter 1

Introductory Chapter

My family in Savaii are well known on the island for running the only Electrical Construction company from 2003 to 2011 and so naturally, I grew up watching my uncle and his men work hard to maintain the company's success.

Eventually my observance turned into curiosity and then to passion as the years went by. When I turned 18, I asked my uncle if I could join the family business to help gain some experience, and I was advised that I would need to complete a course at an institution called Polytech to gain more insight on the technical aspects of this career as well as some of the safety precautions one must be aware of to avoid dangerous hazards. In the duration of this course, we re-learnt some basic physics principles, one of them being the principles and properties of light. My main concern was about the source of light. But what does light mean?

By scientific definition, light is an “electromagnetic radiation, exhibiting qualities of both waves and particles, traveling 186,282 miles per second from a light source, such as the sun or a lightbulb.”¹ This means that light travels far quicker than heat as well as sound. My interest draws upon this bare fact that light is the fastest speed ever in the universe. Generally speaking, light is a property that most living things use to perceive and communicate with each other and the environment. It also initiates different life-sustaining processes such as photosynthesis and determines weather patterns. It assists us in seeing, yet we cannot see it in of itself. An un-seen agent, quietly assisting us in our day to day tasks, much like God. In this research paper, I will

¹ Tremper Longman III (ed), *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 2013), 1060.

discuss the origin of light in the Bible before and after it was created by God on the fourth day and the implications it has had and still has on our lives today.

In Genesis, God begins his creation with light, which precedes the creation of the sun, moon, and stars and throughout the Old Testament is an unqualified good (Gen 1:3-5, 15–18; Exod 10:23; 13:21). The comfort of light is more difficult to appreciate in a world that runs on electricity. My search wrestles on the ambiguity of light depicted in the literary context of Genesis 1 in relation to the Samoan creation of light.

1.1 Research Problem

As a theological student, I believe that every Bible reader has noticed the logical difficulty in the description of the creation of light as well as the separation of light from darkness on the first day of creation in Gen 1:3-5. God says on the first day, “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3). But the light created on the first day could not have been sunlight or the light of the moon or stars, since these heavenly bodies were not created until the fourth day.² According to verses 16-19, on the fourth day, God made the luminaries and set them in the firmament to give light on the earth and to separate the light from the darkness. So is light in vs 3 a special light?³

This is the central question of this whole research. Scholars continue to debate about the central meaning of light in Gen 1:3.⁴ However, this work is not an illumination of what actually happened in the past in ancient Israel and its surrounds.

² See also Arthur Wulf, “Anthropogenic Climate Change Un-creates God’s Creation in Genesis 1,” *Samoa Journal of Theology* 1, no. 1 (June 2022): 1-10 (6). Here, Wulf clearly states that “light here does not refer to sunlight, moonlight or starlight...”

³ From a scientific point of view, we do not know whether there was a time when there was nothing. The contemporary “big-bang theory” of the universe’s origin, which speaks of a moment roughly 15 billion years ago when the present universe began, is quite compatible with thinking of creation as historical origination. See Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (New York: Warner Books, 1980), 105-06.

⁴ I refer here to the many ancient translations of Gen 1:3 as mentioned in the exegetical chapter 3 of this thesis.

This study is an attempt to comprehend a problematic literary order in Genesis about light by comparing it to my Samoan creation story of light. The scope of this paper will not encompass all texts regarding the issue of light but will focus particularly on light mentioned in Genesis 1.

1.2 Importance of this Study

Given the prevalence of light motif in the Old Testament, it is surprising that there are so few studies on the subject. However, most works on the theme of creation provide a helpful background to elucidate important literary and theological aspects of the origin of light.⁵ The purpose of this thesis is to provide an insight into the creation of light from creation stories of Samoa as well as from the Hebrew creation story. Through this comparative study, this thesis also attempts to explore similarities and differences between the Samoan creation stories and the Biblical creation story as recorded in the book of Genesis 1.

Given the significance of the Bible in the Samoan context nowadays, this comparison of two different contexts is based on Charles Taylor's argument that "we cannot understand another society until we have understood ourselves better as well."⁶ This view has long been explored by Leonardo Boff stating that we cannot "define divine mystery unless we understand our own particularities already part of such

⁵ Among many, see Mark G. Brett, *Genesis: Procreation and the politics of Identity* (London: Routledge, 2000); David M. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1961); David M. Carr, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: Sacred Texts and Imperial Contexts of the Hebrew Bible* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

⁶ Charles Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 129. Also cited by Vaitusi Nofoaiga, "Tautuaileva: A Samoan Hermeneutic to explore Egalitarianism in the Bible," *The Journal of Samoan Studies* Vol 10 (2020): 60-69.

mystery, in order to reveal a new face especially known and loved by us.”⁷ For me, I cannot fully understand Genesis’ context unless I understand my own Samoan context.

Along the same line of argument, Afereti Uili contends about the authority rested in our Samoan oral traditions along with the Scripture’s tradition. Uili states that we “Samoans come to understand scripture as something similar to our own body of oral traditions.”⁸ Uili goes on to say the Holy Scriptures are accorded authority by their communities, and that should hold true also for the body of Samoan ancient traditions of the Samoan community. “If it is divine inspiration and if one argues in the Judeo-Christian tradition that this God is all over all the earth and its peoples then who is to say that God did not reveal Godself pre-Christian Samoans thru their indigenous religious-cultural traditions and knowledge?”⁹

Building on the above, the Samoan story of creation of light is part of the Samoan indigenous references, knowledge and traditions. Hence, the Samoan creation of light is one of these traditions which are part of the lived cultural experience of Samoans today.

1.3 Methodology

I will adopt a canonical methodology that focuses on the received Hebrew text (MT)¹⁰ without denying the diachronic complexities of composition (discussed in source and redactional studies) and variation among the ancient manuscripts (text criticism).¹¹ This

⁷ Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ the liberator: A Critical Christology for our time* (London: SPCK Press, 1978), 32.

⁸ Afereti Uili, “Scripturalize Indigenous References: An Invitation from Samoa,” in *Postcolonialism and Religions: Theologies from the Pacific*, ed. Jione Havea, (USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021): 119-137.

⁹ Uili, “Scripturalize Indigenous References,” 137.

¹⁰ MT stands for Masoretic Text, which is the textual tradition preserved in manuscripts copied by the Masoretes or Jewish scholars who developed the system of vowel points and accent marks in the Hebrew Bible.

¹¹ For full detail about the diachronic and the synchronic complexities, see Brett, *Genesis: 18-23*; Steven L. McKenzie, Stephen R. Haynes, eds. *An Introduction to each to biblical criticism and their meaning application* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), 152.

is supported by John Hayes as he states, “the canonical approach is synchronic and thus text-reader oriented. In this regard, canonical reading of texts has many parallels to redaction criticism and structural interpretations. The text to be exegete is the final form, namely, the form of the text that achieved canonical status. The reader is understood specifically as a reader standing within the believing community for whom the text is canonical.”¹²

The pioneering exponent of the canonical approach was Brevard Childs. Child’s canonical approach emphasizes the final form of the text. It seeks to treat the text in its own right and understand the nature of the theological shape of the text. Although it does not undermine the result of historical criticism, its concern is not to reconstruct a history of how the Hebrew text developed but to study these religious texts in relation to the historical community of ancient Israel in which they were used. Childs’ emphasis on the final form of the text is built on the argument that the final form alone bears witness to the full history of God’s revelation to his people. Childs has made a significant contribution in this regard but since the significance of his work continues to be debated, some other versions of canonical interpretation will also be considered where necessary.¹³

The book of Genesis comes to us with lots of complexities arising from the compositional history of the book. Many efforts have been made over the last centuries to determine when, where, how, and by whom Genesis was written. The old critical theory suggests that Genesis is a product of different literary works composed at

¹² John Hayes, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner’s Handbook* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), 142. Also see Paula Gooder, *Searching for Meaning: An introduction to Interpreting the New Testament* (USA: John Knox Press, 2009), 63; Steven L. McKenzie, Stephen R. Haynes, eds. *An Introduction to each to biblical criticism and their meaning application* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), 152.

¹³ Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (London: SCM, 1979).

different periods of Israel's history.¹⁴ Accordingly, during the reign of Solomon, an account of Israel's history was composed by a writer known as the Yahwist ('J'). After the division of the kingdom, the northern kingdom produced a work of its own history under the influence of a writer known as Elohist. When the northern kingdom fell into the hands of the Assyrians, the work of Elohist was brought to Jerusalem and merged with the work of the Yahwist (JE) in the seventh century. In the sixth century, the new work, JE was then combined with the Priestly account of Israel's history by a post-exilic editor to give the present form of the book. The narrative comprises mostly of JE but it is P that gives the framework which extends from 1:1 to 50:12-13 of Genesis.

This theory enjoyed a scholarly consensus for many years, but more recently a growing number of scholars have challenged it as recent developments are made in the field. No common consensus is found on the priority of a source over the other, the interdependence of the sources, the traditions that the sources share, or the precise extent of the sources. The old dates of the Yahwist and Elohist were questioned, and even the existence of J and E have come to be doubted, especially in Europe. Likewise, the Priestly code and its dating have been disputed, as have the additions to P.¹⁵

Brevard Childs argues that it is essential that the present shape of the book of Genesis is not understood simply as "a juxtaposition of independent literary strands which previously had had nothing to do with one another."¹⁶ He contends that the book had gone through a complex process of growth and change in which different literary traditions mutually influenced each other in a dynamic interaction with the community of faith.

¹⁴ See David N. Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

¹⁵ For full discussion, see Christophe Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch: A Study in the Composition of the Book of Leviticus* (FAT II/25; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

¹⁶ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 148.

Yet each text is assigned a different role within the new context of the book of Genesis. Literary and historical arguments are endless and do have a place in the critical study of the texts, but Childs argues that in their canonical context, texts are put in a new setting in which theology surpasses that of the historical context. It is undeniable that a text begins in a particular historical setting and it goes through a process in which different literary traditions influence its final form. However, such historical facts and literary compositions are given less importance as the canonical editors put the material together in its canonical setting. Despite the historical and literary complexities of Genesis, or any other book, they function as a unified whole within their canonical setting. It is in this approach that I wanted to read Gen 1:3-5. That is reading Gen 1:3-5 as part of P story via the literary complexities. This approach will also be mindful of historical facts in regards to the ancient cosmology and the context of the whole creation in Genesis.

1.4 Literature Review

1.4.1 Genesis

The creation of light in Genesis has many interpretations from different scholars. Warren Wiersbe for instance states that “day one as recorded in verses 3 to 5. God commanded the light to shine and then separated the light from the darkness. But how could there be light when the light-bearers aren’t mentioned until the fourth day”.¹⁷ Warren goes on to say that we aren’t told that this light came from any of the luminaries God created, it probably came from God Himself who is light and wears light as a garment. From the very first day of creation, God established the principle of

¹⁷ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Bible Commentary: The complete Old Testament* (United State of America: David C. Cook, 2003), 48.

separation. For example, after the creation of light, God separates the light from the darkness (Gen. 1:4) and the day from the night (v. 14). In fact, the causative verb “separate” (לָדָח *hiphil* form) is very consistent since the creation of light in the Priestly version.¹⁸

Thomas L. Constable argues that the light in Gen 1:3 might not have been sunlight. Constable thinks that perhaps God created the sun on the first day, but it became visible on the fourth day.¹⁹ This means that God created the sun, moon, and stars on the first day and assigned them their specific functions on the fourth day. Constable goes on to say that this is more like a principal theme of the whole Bible. God is the One who brings light out of darkness. Darkness was not a creation, like light, but rather the absence of light.

John Calvin gives a detail explanation of his argument against the creation of light. For Calvin, the phrase “Let there be light,” it means the world was to be adorned with such excellent beauty, and should be first created; and this also was the commencement of the distinction, (among the creatures).”²⁰ It did not, however, happen from inconsideration or by accident, that the light preceded the sun and the moon. The sun and moon supply us with light. Therefore the Lord, by the very order of the creation, bears witness that he holds in his hand the light, which he is able to impart to us without the sun and moon. Further, it is certain from the context that the light was so created as to be interchanged with darkness. But it may be asked, whether light and darkness succeeded each other in turn through the whole circuit of the world; or whether

¹⁸ For instances, see Gen 1:4 (separation of light from day); 1:6 (separation of the waters from the waters); 1:7 (separation of the waters below from the waters above); 1:14 (separation of the day from the night; 1:18 (separate the light from the darkness); all in *hiphil* forms.

¹⁹ Thomas L. Constable, *Note on Genesis* (London: Sonic Light, 2016), 63.

²⁰ John Calvin, *Commentaries on Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1978), 54.

the darkness occupied one half of the circle, while light shone in the other. These three elements appeared as he supposes, in the first light of the world, in the cloud, and in the pillar of fire.

Lester L. Grabbe provides a modern scientific point of view. He strongly argues that Genesis 1:3–5 does not make sense. There is light but no light source. Light is separated from darkness, even though we know that darkness is simply the absence of light. There is not yet any sun, moon, or stars. Where did “evening” come from? Where did morning come from? And where is the rest of the universe in all this? In Genesis 1:14–19, God commands “lights” to appear in the firmament. These lights are “to separate light from the darkness.” The lights are never named as “sun” and “moon” here, although the terms are frequently used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Why? The answer seems to be that the sun and moon were both gods among the surrounding peoples. So in Genesis, they are merely created lights and not gods in their own right.²¹

Finally, on the fourth day, we have the heavenly bodies necessary for a proper evening and morning, night and day. But where are these heavenly bodies? Modern readers assume that Genesis is describing the sun around which the earth circulates and the moon that rotates around the earth. Walton and Matthew revive the ANE belief and their views against the source of light. Walton states, “The people of the ancient world did not believe that all light came from the sun. There was no knowledge that the moon simply reflected the light of the sun. Moreover, there is no hint in the text that “day-light” was caused by sunlight. The sun, moon, and stars were all seen as bearers of light,

²¹ Lester L. Grabbe, *Faith and Fossils: The Bible, Creation, and Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 39.

but daylight was present even when the sun was behind a cloud or eclipsed. It made its appearance before the sun rose, and remained after the sunset.”²²

1.4.2 Samoa

Samoans have always treasured the creation stories passed down from generation to generation; in order to gauge further in to this study, it is critical to seek a deeper understanding of the Samoan creation story documented by Samoan and European Historians. Malama Meleisea for instance gives a “short history of Samoa.”²³ John Fraser also recorded a few accounts of Samoan history that contains the origin of light.

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George Turner’s view on the origin of Samoa, is one of the key sources that directed this study to find the genealogy of *light*. According to Turner, the origin of light in Samoa, has a connection to the mystery of the origin of the Samoan god *Tagaloa*.²⁵ This point has been extended by Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi, who views Tagaloa as the Progenitor (*usugafa*), not the Creator (*fautagata*) as in Genesis.²⁶ With this understanding, living and nonliving things that appear on earth, including the light and human beings, were the result of Tagaloa’s reproduction activity. Tagaloa in this regard, is both woman and man. The Samoan creation story will be fully explained in chapter 2 down below.

²² John. Walton, Victor. Mathew (eds.), *The IVP Bible Background: COMMENTARY on the Old Testament* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1961), 23.

²³ Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 37.

²⁴ George Pratt, Dr John Fraser, *Some Folk Songs and Myths from Samoa: A Tala* (Wellington: Tomb’s Limited, 1981), 122.

²⁵ George Turner, *Samoa a hundred years ago and long before* (Teddington: The Echo Library, 2006), 6.

²⁶ Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi, *Suesue Manogi: Genealogy of Samoa* (Le Papaigalagala: National University Of Samoa, 2009), 42-44.

1.5 Summary

The Samoan literature, is predominantly Samoan in terms of ideas and indigenous beliefs. It shows that the story of the creation of light stems from the Samoan genealogy, while the thought of Biblical scholars reflects the greatness of God's creation, as described in the book of Genesis 1. If the intention of the god of Samoa was to make light to illuminate the darkness that covered the Sea, then without darkness there could be no light. This means the light comes from darkness.

1.6 Chapter Outline

This study is divided into four chapters. Chapter one will focus on the introduction, including the research problems, aim, purpose, methodology, and literature review. Chapter two explores an analysis of Samoan creation stories, from different views of Samoan and European Scholars. Chapter three, is an exegetical work on the chosen text (Gen 1:3-5). Finally, chapter four will focus on the conclusion and theological significance of the this study, as a contribution to the old testament scholarship and the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (EFKS) context.

Chapter 2

Analysis of Creation Stories of Samoa

2.1 Introduction

It is said that Samoa has different versions of one story, *E tala lasi Samoa*. This can be seen in the findings recorded in the Samoa's myths and legends, orally passed down from generation to generation and also recorded in historical accounts. There are different views on the creation story of Samoa, especially in terms of the origin of the light. With respect to Samoa's myths and legends, one view confirmed, is the traditional belief about the sun, and its link with the skin complexion of the Samoan people. Samoan myths believe, when the sun is angry, the sun's rays increase in heat, causing the skin complexion of the Samoan people to darken in brown and black skin colour tones.¹ The detailed discussion about Samoan creation stories, involves an array of eclectic versions, which is beyond the reach of this paper. My attempt in this chapter however, will be focusing particularly on the origin of light from the Samoan mythology.

2.2 Samoan Mythology

In Samoan mythology, Samoa has many gods. But the main god of Samoa is Tagaloa. Tagaloa is the supreme deity, who is the chief of all gods and the beginning and source of all life. It is believed, Tagaloa had lived in the expanse, until he finally stopped and grew up a rock for him to stand on. Tagaloa commanded the rock to split up, and it became many kinds of rock- lying, creeping, clay, and other types of rock. He

¹ 'Samoa, Lest we Forget' (Samoa Nei Galo): A Compilation of Oral Traditions and Legends of Samoa," *The Ministry for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Samoa* Vol 4 (2002), 141-142.

then spoke to the multi-faceted rock, struck it with his right hand, and the earth and sea came forth. Tagaloa spoke further to the rock, creating freshwater, sky (the first heavens), and Tui-te'e-lagi;. Then male Ilu meaning "Immensity," and female Mamao, meaning "Space," also came forth from Tagaloa's voice.² The following discussion elaborates more on the cogent argument about the originality of light in the Samoan stories.

2.3 The Origin of Light in the Samoan Stories

Immensity and Space (Ilu and Mamao) came together to produce Po (Night) and Ao (Day), and Le-Lagi, (the second heavens). Le-Lagi gave birth seven times, creating heavens three through nine, and Tui-te'e-lagi propped them up as people by Ilu and Mamao. The creator Tagaloa, imputed night and day to produce the eye-of-the-sky, which was the sun. The creation of the ninth heavens, ended the productivity of Ilu and Mamao. Tagaloa then sanctioned his messenger Tangaloa to act as ambassador of the heavens. He ordered for Tangaloa to inquire of Night and Day how many children they had been appointed. Night and Day responded, that their appointed children were, Lagi-uli (black sky) and Lagi-ma (clear sky), and all of the nameless stars. Tangaloa then asked if there were any more children of Night and Day, and they answered that they had four children that were as of yet appointed: Manu'a, Samoa, the Sun, and the Moon.³ Thus, the sun is the son of Po and Ao, according to Meleisea's records of the Samoan story.

This study also values George Turner's version of this genealogy of light in the Samoan creation story. According to Turner, the genealogy of light was first of all

² Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 37-38.

³ Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 24-38.

nothing (*leai*).⁴ Then all of a sudden sprung Nanamu (fragrance), followed by Efuefu (dust), Iloa (perceivable), Maua (obtainable), Eleele (earth), and Papatu (high rocks). The high rocks married to earth rocks, then produced the earth. The earth married High winds and brought Solid clouds. Solid clouds married Flying clouds and brought five off-springs: (1) Confused winds, (2) Quiet winds, (3) Boisterous winds, (4) Land beating winds and (5) Dew of life. Dew of life married Clouds clinging, which brought Clouds flying to the heavens. Clouds flying married Clear heavens and brought six off-springs: (1) Shadow, (2) Twilight, (3) Daylight, (4) Noonday (5) Afternoon, and (6) Sunset. Hence, the sun is the son of Cloud flying and Clear heaven from Turner's records.

Different from Meleisea and Turner, the so-called "*the Solo le Va*" is one of the Samoan folk songs written by Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagaloa. This history goes back to the origin of Samoa from the beginning. Fanaafi retells the creation story of Samoa, in a form of song to make it easy to memorize and remember by the later generations. She arranges this song by stanzas. In that way, it becomes the shortest form of history, where the author seems to put "Worship" at the beginning of the Samoan creation history, which is birthed from the creation of light.⁵

Rollers flooding, rollers dashing,
The sweep of waters and the extension of waves,
Surging high, but breaking not; -
Waves reclining; waves dispersing;
Waves agreeable; waves that cross not;
Waves frightsome; waves leaping over;
Waves breaking; waves warring;
Waves roaring; waves upheaving;

⁴ Turner, *Samoa a hundred years ago*, 6.

⁵ Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagaloa, "Tapuai: Samoan worship" (B.A. honours thesis, University of Otago, 2003), 104-106.

The peopled waves; waves from east to west.
Whose companion is the wandering current.

'O Tagaloa, who sittest at the helm (of affairs),
Tagaloa's (bird, the Tuli) desires to rest;
Tuli from the ocean must rest in the heavens;
These waves below affright my breast.
Where is the land which first upsprang?
Great Manu'a first uprose.
Beats on (Manu'a) rock his well-loved waves;

On it the Moon's desired light looks down;
The Sun, like statue, changeless found,

Aiono's musical composition, is her contribution to the creation story of Samoa, emphasizing Tagaloa as sovereign and transcendent. This is depicted by the use of the word *va* or space, hence such a song is about space. Aiono goes on to express her knowledge and understanding of many different cosmogonic accounts of Samoa.

George Pratt and John Fraser, also have some interesting insights about how ancient Samoan people have understood the origin of light. Pratt and Fraser have written this history under the heading "A *Tala*."⁶ However, this *Tala* is quite similar to the story written by Meleisea mentioned above. In Pratt and Fraser's "*Tala*" (story), the god Tagaloa dwelled in the expanse in the beginning. It goes onto say, Tagaloa made all things, and he alone was there, before any sky or any country. Tagaloa only went to and from in the expanse. There was also no sea, and no earth. But at the place where Tagaloa stood, there grew up a rock. This being the foundation of Tagaloa being named Tagaloa-fa'a-tutupu-nu'u. Tagaloa spoke to the Rock and Tui-te'e-lagi was brought

⁶ Pratt and Fraser, *Some Folk Songs and Myths from Samoa*, 122.

forth; then came forth Ilu (Immensity) and Mamao (Space - woman); then came Niua; Then Immensity and Space brought forth offspring; they brought forth Po and Ao (Night and Day). This couple was ordained by Tagaloa to produce the “Eye of Sky”, which was the Sun. In the opinion of this study, Pratt and Fraser’s version on the origin of the light, is similar to Meleisea’s historical accounts.

One of the Samoan historians, named Fuimaono Fereti, explains the creation of light using the Samoan language. Fereti states,

“O Ilu ma Mamao o se ulugalii. Na saunoa atu iai Tagaloa faatutupunuu ina ia o ae i luga ae peitai na o ae i laua e nao vanimonimo ae leai se mea e gata mai ai le vaai. Ona fanau lea e Ilu ma mamao o Ao ma Po, ona fanaua lea e Ao ma Po o le la fanau muamua o Lagiuli ma Lagima faatasi ai ma fetu uma o le lagi ua le mafai ona taua o latou igoa ae iai le talitonuga e tofu lava le fetu ma lona igoa.”⁷

To the extension of this Samoan part, Fuimaono describes that Tagaloa ordered the Day and Night to give birth to the eye of the Sky or the Sun, but that commandment had not yet been fulfilled by Day and Night. Tagaloa then asked Tagaloa Asi nuu or Tagaloa Savali to help deliver the message again to Day and Night. Finally Day and Night received the instruction and then fulfilled it. Tagaloa Asi nuu asked the couple Day and Night again, and they replied that there were still four boys, La, Masina, Samoa and Manua. These children of Day and Night were waiting for the time to speak up, before realizing their role in the family of creation.

In most of these historical accounts, it seems that there is an underlining reason why Tagaloa kept urging Day and Night to give birth to the eye of Heaven. In my opinion, the reason is, because there was no light of the universe at the beginning. One of the scenes reflected in this history, is that both boys were born together at the same

⁷ Fuimaono Fereti, *O le suaga o le vaatele* (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1998), 8.

time, but they both were waiting for their functions. My notion draws in line with some of the testimonies from the Polynesian traditions, like the Maori tradition.⁸

2.4 Summary

As a Samoan theological student, I believe that the various historical accounts of Samoa's creation story continues to be shared, passed down and treasured by many who value Samoa's traditional myths and legends. It is fair to say that, Samoa's creation story is trying to lay out the framework of its heritage and the knowledge that builds the belief of scholars in this world. One point that is common in many of the accounts of the Samoan creation story, is the biological origin of the sun, which believes that the sun is the grandson of Tagaloa. This aligns with the nature of Tagaloa, as mentioned by Tuiatua being the progenitor, rather than being the creator.

As an Electrician, I believe that the origin of the light was from the combination of two elements (current and voltage). In terms of how electricity is generated, it stifles the light. In a similar manner, most of the Samoan creation stories confirmed that the light – whether light as “day” or “sun” (eye of the sky) – in Samoa is from *Usuga* (genealogy). The next chapter is the Exegesis of the creation of light in the Hebrew's Creation story as recorded in the book of Genesis.

⁸ Māori mythology says that after the world's creation, the sun moved across the sky so rapidly that night and that day was very short. There was not enough time for people to perform daily tasks or get sufficient sleep. The demigod Māui devised a plan to slow the sun. He and his brothers made several strong ropes and journeyed to where the sun rises from the underworld. They built a low wall to hide behind, and laid out their ropes as nooses. When the sun appeared, the brothers leapt out from their hiding place. They threw the ropes over the sun, and ensnared it.

Chapter 3

Exegetical Work on Genesis 1:3–5

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will employ the canonical approach and see how the final form of the Priestly account in Genesis 1 and its text linguistic serve to guide its interpretation. Within the scope of canonical approach, this exegetical study uses two levels of context. The first is the literary context, that is, how the text fits together within itself and how it fits within the larger body of text of which it is part. The second is the context of the shared world between the author and the audience. The aim of this context is to know how the details of the text should produce a message for the audience. I will take up the question of whether this way of reading gives us a sensible and robust way of talking about God's action, especially in the creation process.

At first glance, Gen 1.3 appears to be a mixed bag of questions than answers from the reader's perspective.¹ Taking into account its present form, I am arguing that this semantic language of ambiguity can be seen to be not entirely haphazard if we adopt a Samoan understanding of light mentioned above, trying to keep the different strands before our eyes as readers and observing how they interact. Let me start with Genesis. God (*Elohim*) says on the first day, "Let there be light" (Gen 1:3). But the light created on the first day could not have been sunlight or the light of the moon or stars, since these heavenly bodies were not created until the fourth day. What is this light? To answer this question, this paper revisits the variety of ancient translations of Gen 1:3 including some Deuterocanonical texts.

¹ D.A. Carson, *The God Who is There: Finding the Place in God's Story* (Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 2010), 15-19.

3.2 Ancient Translations

(1) 4 Ezra 6:40:

Then You commanded that a ray of light be brought forth from your treasuries, so that your works might then be appear.

(2) Josephus, Jewish Antiquities 1:27-28

*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth; but when the earth did not come into sight, but was covered with thick darkness, and a wind moved upon its surface, God commanded that there should be **light**; 28 (1.1.1) and when that was made, he considered the whole mass, and separated the **light** and the darkness; and the name he gave to one was Night, and the other he called Day; and he named the beginning of **light** and the time of rest, the Evening and the Morning;*

(3) 2 Enoch 25:3:

[After summoning light, God says:] And I was in the midst of the light.

And light out of light is carried thus. And the great age came out, and it revealed all the creation which I had thought up to create. And I saw that it was good.

(4) Targum Gen 1:3:

God said: Let there be light to illuminate the world, and at once there was light.

(5) Jubilees 2:2

And [He created] the abysses and darkness – both evening and night – and light – both dawn and daylight – which He prepared in the knowledge of His heart.

From above, most of the translations reveal this light unlike any other, one that illuminated all of creation at once. Another possibility is that the light that was later to

come from heavenly bodies was created, or conceived, on the first day, even though the heavenly bodies themselves were not created until the fourth. This means many ancient writers therefore said that it was a special light that enabled God to see as God created the world. In addition to these ancient versions, early interpreters also transformed the opening chapter of Genesis in several significant respects. These interpreters have argued that the very first thing that God had created was wisdom.² Thus, when God said “Let there be light” God was referring to a special light unknown to human eyes.³

The consistent point however from these translations is that the light is explicitly equated with God. Some translations and retellings of the creation story differed from the traditional Hebrew wording of Gen 1:3 by making it clear that the light created on the first day was God himself. But if God is light, how can God create himself? Thus the central research question of this thesis remains unclear.

The following exegetical work will be focusing on the final wording of the Masoretic Text of Genesis 1:3-5 in comparison to its LXX version. Within the scope of canonical criticism, I am suggesting that the verbal links between MT Gen 1:3-5 and LXX Gen 1:3-5 may lead us to an alternative conclusion about that textual ambiguity.

3.3 Exegetical Work on Genesis 1:3-5

Since the Septuagint is the earliest known written translation of the Hebrew Bible, and Greek was also the predominant language used by the Jewish community in 3rd and

² Here refers to ancient interpreters who often spoke about God’s creation of the world and wisdom existed even before the creation itself. Some of the biblical texts also mention this. E.g., see Sirach 24:9; Jer 10:10, 12; Ps 104:24; Prov 3:19.

³ Philo, *Questions in Genesis* 4:97. This argument that wisdom existed before creation is also reflected in other biblical texts such as Prov 3:19; 8:22-27; Jer 10:10, 12; Ps 104:24 and Sir 24:9; Wisd 9:9; 2 Enoch 30:8.

2nd century B.C.E.,⁴ my first attempt is to discover textual variants between the MT and the LXX versions of Gen 1:3-5.

Masoretic Text (MT)

³ ויאמר אלהים יהי אור ויהי-אור

⁴ וירא אלהים את-האור כי-טוב ויבדל אלהים בין האור ובין החשך

⁵ ויקרא אלהים לאור יום ולחשך קרא לילה ויהי-ערב ויהי-בקר יום אחד

3 God said, let there be light, and there was light

4 God saw that the light was good and God caused to separate between the light and between the darkness.

5 God called to the light day and to the darkness he called night and it was evening and it was morning, the first day.⁵

LXX Text:

3 καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς Γενηθήτω φῶς. καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς.

4 καὶ εἶδεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ὅτι καλόν. καὶ διεχώρισεν ὁ θεὸς ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ φωτὸς καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ σκοτῶντος.

5 καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ἡμέραν καὶ τὸ σκοτῶν ἐκάλεσεν νύκτα. καὶ ἐγένετο ἑσπέρα καὶ ἐγένετο πρωί, ἡμέρα μία.

3 And God said let there be light, and there was light.

4 And God saw the light that it was good, and God divided between the light and the darkness

5 And God called the light day and the darkness he called night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁴ Roger Good, *The Septuagint's Translation of the Hebrew Verbal System in Genesis* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2010), 17-19; Le M. Fields, *Hebrew for the Rest of Us* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2008), 39-40.

⁵ Translations are mine, unless otherwise stated.

3.4 Textual Variants between MT and LXX Versions of Genesis 1:3–

5

MT Trans.	MT Notes	MT	LXX	LXX Notes	LXX Trans.
³ He (God) said	3ms Qal impf	וַיֹּאמֶר	εἶπεν	3s aorist act	He (God) said
Let there be	3ms juss impf	יְהִי	Γενηθήτω	3s aor pass imp	Let there be
It/there was	3ms qal impf	וַיְהִי-	ἐγένετο	3s aor mid ind	It/there was
⁴ He (God) saw	3ms qal impf	וַיִּרְא	εἶδεν	3s aor act	He (God) saw
He (God) caused to separate	3ms hifil impf	וַיַּבְדֵּל	διεχώρισεν	3s aor act	He divided
⁵ He (God) called	3ms qal imp	וַיִּקְרָא	ἐκάλεσεν	3s aor act	He called
to the light day	Prep + c.nouns	לְאוֹר יוֹם	τὸ φῶς ἡμέραν	art+neut noun + fem noun	the light day
and to darkness	Vav+ prep+ c.n	וּלְחֹשֶׁךְ	τὸ σκότος	art+neu noun	the darkness
He called	3ms qal pf	קָרָא	ἐκάλεσεν	3s aor act	He called
night	Masc noun	לַיְלָה	νύκτα	Fem noun	night

3.5 Analysis

The verb “be” (יְהִי) used in its special narrative form יְהִי occurs with unusual force, while in most places, this verb (“be”) has a lower status in narrating. The author seems to be consistently used the jussive form of that verb יְהִי in verse 3, in other parts of God’s process: “Let there be light let there be a dome (vs 6) ... and let there be lights” (vs 14). The Hebrew form jussive is one of the three volitional conjugations of will and wishes namely “cohortative, jussive and imperative.” The term jussive in particular derives from the Latin verbs meaning “to order.”⁶ So the language of Gen 1:3 is more like an expression of a divine wish for a light. The fiat is exactly parallel in

⁶ Arthur Walker-Jones, *Hebrew for Biblical Interpretation* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 152-53.

force to other commands using *niphal* imperfect such as “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together” and “let the dry land appear” (vs 9). Each divine proposal is answered by the corresponding feature springing into being ויהי כן “and it was so.”⁷

So God’s making of light in verses 3-4 is described in two processes. The first process consists of a divine wish using “letting be” in combination with speaking and is expressed by the verb אמר (to say) and the jussive of היה in direct discourse. The second process consists of “separating” and is expressed by the *hiphil* of the verb בדל (to separate). Reading the creative action in the first creation story (Gen 1:1-2:3), it is evident that Genesis 1 does not employ the verb ברא (create) to express God’s making of the light in verses 3-4, as well as the making of heaven in verses 6-7; the making of the earth in verses 9-10; the making of the plants on earth in verses 11-12; or the making of the lights on heaven’s firmament in verses 14-18. When the process of making something new is described in Genesis 1, it is indicated either by God’s speaking followed by a direct discourse with a jussive verb form or by God’s action expressed by the verb עשה (make). The *hiphil* of the verb בדל (separate) expresses the divine causative action with respect to light and darkness and with respect to various gatherings of waters. I will elaborate this point down below.

As we look at this sequence from the canonical approach, we will ask two questions: Why did ancient Israel tell this story? And why did they tell it this way? The following search aims to provide an alternative illuminating answer to both questions.

⁷ Francis Brown, et al. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2007), 224-228.

3.6 Creation of Light in the language of Genesis 1

Genesis 1 opens with a magnificent account of God's works of creating over the course of six days, with a rest on the seventh day (1:1-2:3). So the first account of creation presents an event that is generally taken to refer to the origin of the material world.

What we have learned from this exegetical work, the whole process of God's creation including the light was done in relation to human beings. This line of argument can be supported by the consistent use of the imperfect forms of all the verbs (created; said; saw; separated; called) where God is always the subject of these action words. The canonical approach reminds us that we cannot read this ancient story literally nor from the modern eyes. The cosmic geography in Genesis 1 paints a picture of cosmos geography which is nothing like our understanding today.⁸ Thus it has some kind of symbolic meaning. This meaning has to be understood when we read this creation as functional rather than for the appearance of matters and how everything relates to human beings. So I will say that Gen 1 is very human centric account.

Locating this understanding into the context of the creation of light, the light in Gen 1:3 is grammatically not the sun. First, the table above clarifies that God called the light "Day" (יום) and the darkness he called "night" (Gen 1:5). If this light was the substance of sun (as modern views suggest), it would have been: "And God called light, "light." Both the MT and the LXX affirm the language that God called the light "day."

⁸ Among many see, Marcus J. Borg, *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time* (USA: HarperOne, 1989), 72-73. B.W. Anderson (ed.), *Creation in the Old Testament* (SPCK: Fortress Press, 1984). In fact, the Genesis creation story has been used by the protagonists in many debates about science and religion. I strongly argue in this paper that the Old Testament was never intended to be a book of science. Such reading would only confuse and distort the essential message of Genesis. See also John Drane, *Introducing the Old Testament* (England: Lynx Communications, 1987), 240-242.

This “day” can be described as a day of light, and the rising sun on fourth day was evidence that the forces of darkness and chaos had been defeated.

Second, the issue of “day” has been debated within the Old Testament scholarship and the Christian church.⁹ But as mentioned above, such literary sophistication of ancient views of Genesis reminds us that the best interpretation is not 24 hours day. It represents an extended period of time or the portion of time when the sun is visible as well as to the whole period of twenty-four hours composed of “evening and morning” (Gen. 1:5). In Day four, into the expanse of the sky God placed the heavenly bodies and assigned them their work: to divide the day and night and to provide “signs” to mark off days, years, and seasons. The light had already appeared on the first day, but now it was concentrated in these heavenly bodies.¹⁰ Against science and modern perspective, this day in Gen 1:5 may be millions of years long and even overlap with one another.¹¹

I want to get back to the previous point about light as textual evidence that the forces of darkness and chaos had been defeated. This point of argument can be maintained by the consistent use of the verb בָּדַל (separate) since after the creation of light in Gen 1:3.¹² For instance, the very same verb form is employed to describe the continuation of this activity performed by the heavenly firmament and the heavenly phenomena, which concerns the separation of the waters and the maintenance of the distinction between day and night, and between the set times, days and years on earth.

⁹ Refer to footnote 5 page 3 for the list of scholars.

¹⁰ James L. Kugel, *The Bible As It Was* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 53-64.

¹¹ Schellenberg, “ ‘And God Separated the Light from the Darkness’ (Gen 1:4) : 23-42.

¹² Schellenberg, “ ‘And God Separated the Light from the Darkness’ (Gen 1:4),” 23-41.

Thus the ambiguity in Gen 1:3 about light describes God creating the light by word of mouth and by word of mouth causing the firmament to appear.¹³

Moreover, the verb ברא is not used with reference to God's making of light, the firmament of heaven, the heavenly bodies on the firmament, etc. The verb בדל is used with reference to God's distinction between day and night; separation of waters and so forth. Linguistically speaking, the divine creation of the heaven and the earth as recorded in Genesis 1 includes an act of separation. This linguistic fact motivates my hypothesis that the verb ברא (create) can be rendered by "to separate" rather than "to create" in this particular context. This linguistic hypothesis is based on the fact that the verb ברא designates a process of spatial separation.

From the historical standpoint, this reminds us of the Priestly redactor's purpose in the first creation account. Perhaps the P wants to reinterpret the root ברא (create) in verse 1 and עשה (make) in verse 7 as actions by divine fiat. The P does not discard the statement in verse 7 that God made the firmament, but he inserts before it in verse 6 an explanation that God made the firmament by word of mouth. In a similar manner, verses 14 and 15 interpret 16-18.¹⁴ In a literary structure repeated for each day of creation, the story begins with the creation of light. There are interesting correlations between what God creates on each of the first three days and what God creates on each of the second three days. A domain is created and then populated:

Day one: light	Day four: sun, moon, and stars
Day two: waters and the sky	Day five: sea life and birds
Day three: dry land	Day six: land creatures

¹³ See also J.P. Peters, "The Wind of God," *JBL*, XXX (1911), 44 ff; L. Waterman, "Cosmogonic Affinities in Gen 1:2," *AJSL*, XLIII (1927), 177 ff; J.M.P. Smith, "The Syntax and Meaning of Gen 1:1-3," *AJSL*, XLIV (1928), 108, ff.

¹⁴ The creation of the luminaries may have originally come immediately after the making of the firmament..

From an overview, God controls light, but only through the medium of the heavenly bodies. Now it is true that in some passages God is represented as the one ultimately responsible for the light of day and darkness of night.¹⁵ The parallelism here directly associates the day with the sun and the night with the moon. Now if we compare the word אור (light – singular noun) in Gen 1:3 and מאורות (plural noun) in Gen 1:14, it becomes evident that light and darkness are associated with the luminaries. It is in the light of such parallelism that Gen 1:3-5 must be understood. The sun and moon were created in the fourth day to separate the light from the darkness and day from night. We may now understand how the P version introduces into the creation narrative what appears to us as a logical inconsistency.

3.7 Conclusion

I now see Gen 1:3-5 differently. Reading it through the lens of historical scholarship and with the sensitivity to their meanings as functional luminaries in the sky has enabled me to see it as profoundly true. And because the purpose of Gen 1 is not to provide a factually accurate account of the world's beginnings it is beside the point to argue whether it is accurate or mistake factual account. This tells us it is not God's story of the world's beginnings rather it is ancient. Why did ancient Israel tell this story? And why did they tell it this way? One answer sometimes given is that this story functioned

¹⁵ The emphasis on God as creator of light and darkness as it appears in other parts of the OT, for eg in Isa 45:7 may have come partially as a reaction against Babylonian or Persian dualism. God as the creator of light and darkness is also emphasized in the late interpolated doxology in Amos 4:13-17. The postexilic Ps 139 divorces entirely the luminaries from the divine light which belongs to God. In strong contrast to Job 3:2ff and 38:4-11; Ps 18:10ff the author of Habakkuk 3:5 pictures Yhwh approaching the combat with the waters robed in mystic light. Ps 104:2 appears a similar representation from the late postexilic period. As Trito-Isaiah informs us in ch 60, God will be the source of light, the nations shall walk in his light and kings in the brightness of his rising, and no more shall be the unfailing light. Moreover, this issue of God as the creator of light came into existence during the late exilic and postexilic periods where the investigations and interpretations were all on

God as the creator of light and darkness, which was eventually to resolve itself into the conception that God apart from the sun, was the source of a divine light which would serve as the sole light of the world in the future age.

as primitive science. Ancient Israel did not know how the world came into existence and so she created these stories in order to explain how things came to be.

Chapter 4

A Comparative Analysis of Samoan and Hebrew Stories

4.1 Introduction

What is discovered in this paper from an exegetical above is the fact that the creation of light/world in Genesis should never have become a subject of controversy. Two things should be taken into consideration for satisfactory understanding. Firstly, the creation story in Genesis has been used by the protagonists in many debates relating to science and religion. However this research suggests that the message behind the Genesis creation story was indeed relevant to the world in which ordinary people lived. Hence, the question about the origin of light in Gen 1:3 in comparison to the sun created in day 4 cannot be answered from the modern perspective. Generally speaking, the creation story of Genesis 1 is not recorded to provide facts but to demonstrate God's sovereignty and God's active and loving concern for all creatures including human beings.

In terms of comparative study, my intention is not to impose my understanding of the Samoan creation story into Genesis 1 but to create analogies to differentiate and compare similarities and differences between the two creation stories. This will answer the research question of this thesis that is: what is that light created by God on the first day? My comparison will be divided into the following points:

1. God versus Tagaloa

The central message behind both the Genesis and the Samoan creation stories is about God: God *Elohim* in Genesis and god Tagaloa in Samoa. Based from chapters 2 and 3, both Gods are supreme and super deities. Crucially, both are associated with the origin of the natural world such as the sun, moon, trees, the rocks, etc. The Priestly account of Genesis 1 refers to this God as *Elohim*. This word *Elohim* in Hebrew is

grammatically plural in form but functions as singular. Its plural form often seems to point to other gods whereas its singular form seems to refer to a single local deity, which, in this case, is the God of Israel. With this plural form of *Elohim*, Tagaloa can be also named *Elohim* translated as atua Tagaloa (god Tagaloa). The only difference described above is that the God in Genesis 1 is the Creator and sustainer of the universe.¹ Tagaloa on the other side is described by Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi as the Progenitor god (Ie Atua *usugafa*) not the Creator (e le o se Atua *fautagata*) as in Genesis 1.

So the *Elohim* of Genesis 1 creates the light and the *Elohim* of Samoa (Tagaloa) produces the light. Reading Gen 1:3 from the Samoan creation stories, that light is the grandson of God meaning it originates from God. Contrarily, the light in Gen 1:3 is owned by the God of Genesis for God created and also part of God's good wishes. The difference is that the light in Genesis 1:3 owns by God and the light in the Samoan stories is exemplified as part of Tagaloa's genealogies.

2. The Hebrew Words ברא and בדל vs

Tagaloa as Progenitor

My hypothesis above about the verb ברא ("create") to be rendered as בדל ("to separate") which supports the argument raised in the exegesis in chapter 3. That is, the whole of Genesis 1 is not about stating facts or telling the appearance of matters. Moreover, the Priestly writers never discuss whether this is scientifically correct or not. This would only confuse and distort its essential message. It is ancient and therefore has some kind of symbolic meanings embedded in it. This meaning must be understood when we read this creation as functional and how it relates to human beings. With this understanding,

¹ The divine name *Elohim* appears 20 times in Gen 1-2:3 and perhaps emphasizing the God of Israel as the creator of the heavens and the earth.

the function of this light in Gen 1:3 is to separate between light and darkness and between day and night. So light in Gen 1:3 is equivalent to separation in the language of Genesis 1.

Perhaps this is not straight forward in the biblical story. But describing Tagaloa as the Progenitor rather than the Creator, it speaks more about separation rather than creation. The origin of light in the Samoan stories is through genealogies from Tagaloa. As described in chapter 2, each of genealogies is named in relation to their functions. For instances, names such as Papatu (high rocks); Nanamu (fragrance); Efuefu (dust); Iloa (perceivable); Maua (obtainable); and the like. Even the sun as the son of Po and Ao is called “eye of the sky.” With this Samoan understanding, this paper can arguably say that the light in Gen 1:3 is separation. This process of separation was done by God in relation to their functions.

3. Myth and *Talatuu*

Although this paper did not mention Genesis 1 as part of myth literature, this thesis nevertheless affirms the fact that Genesis 1 is part of myth literature according to many scholars. Likewise, the Samoan creation stories are also part of the Samoan oral tradition called *Talatuu*.² Starting from the biblical story, a myth does not refer to something that is untrue. A myth in the Hebrew Bible can be a story about gods and goddesses and their doings, described as if they were human beings. It is a term used to describe a story which expresses the truth about human life. Again this cannot be adequately be described in terms of science or history.

² Like myth, *Talatuu* is made of two words: tala (story) and tuu (put or transmit). It simply means a story or stories that were verbally transmitted from generation to generation through hundred or even thousand of years till now.

Likewise, *talatuu* can sometimes be referred to as stories that are untrue. The origin of Samoa is widely accepted by historians as a myth that described the creation story of Samoa.

But as strongly argued by Uili above, “the Holy Scriptures are accorded authority by their communities, and that should hold true also for the body of Samoan ancient traditions of the Samoan community.” Treating *Talatuu* as one of those Samoan ancient traditions, we Samoans ought to value its significance. As mentioned everywhere in this thesis, the central point behind both stories is God. The God Elohim used in Genesis 1 is the universal God all over the earth, is the same Godself revealed to pre-Christian Samoans thru the name Tagaloa via the Samoan indigenous religious-cultural traditions and knowledge.

4.2 Summary

This comparative study brought some understanding my presupposition on the textual ambiguity in relation to the light created by God in the first day and the sun in the fourth day. I suppose that my presupposition is more scientific based from the modern understanding of the origin of light. I could never fully understand this ambiguity until I read Genesis 1 from the understanding of my the Samoan creation stories.

Taking the Bible as the significant book in the context of Samoa today, Genesis 1 remains crucial and authoritative. It still speaks to our present context with authority. Having said this, one could argue that our *talatuu* traditions should not render them ineligible from being authoritative as well. The significance of biblical studies in current practice is more contextual rather than biblical. In this point this paper values the contribution of our Samoan creation story as part of our *talatuu* to shed light on this ambiguity in terms of interpretation. In line with this point, Canonical approach of this

passage leads me to an understanding of why the details of creation stories in Genesis are as they are and also makes clear that their truth is not to be understood in literal, factual terms. Rather, their truth is expressed in the nonconceptual language of myth and metaphor. In this regard, no particular reading can exhaust their meanings.

4.3 Theological Significance for the EFKS Ministry

Because much of twenty-first-century culture is convinced that the contemporary scientific thought is fundamentally incompatible with Genesis 1, this research wishes to provide another way of interpretation through its comparative study. There is more ambiguity in the interpretation of Genesis 1 than some EFKS members recognize. Some EFKS members especially Sunday school teachers, lay preachers or youth leaders are convinced that the light in Genesis 1:3 is God himself. Some holds on to the belief that this light is either the sun or its origin remains unknown. This thesis contributes to the knowledge of our EFKS people about this ambiguity in the interpretation by using our own Samoan creation story of light as a way to approach this ambiguity. As this thesis suggests, the Samoan creation story clarifies that the light was produced by our Elohim Tagaloa. Like the Elohim of Genesis 1, this Elohim Tagaloa was also existed before anything else. Both stories elevate the sovereignty of both Elohim.

In terms of making the light, the Elohim of Genesis 1 creates the light whereas the Elohim Tagaloa produces it (usuga). It appears that the biblical creation story is not merely ancient but more sovereign and authoritative than the Samoan story. This is because the Elohim of Genesis 1 creates the light (and everything else), which carries some sense of ownership. God creates and therefore God owns the light. But the light of Elohim Tagaloa is one of his descendants. However the Samoan story has shed some light on the ambiguity of light in Gen 1:3 as the light belongs to God. If it comes from

God then that light has been created for a functional purpose for the benefit of every creatures.

This thesis can also be significantly contributed to the EFKS ministry by teaching those in charge of Bible studies or leaders in the church about the main purpose of Genesis 1 in contrast to the modern scientific views. It is simply not the case that anyone who is a scientist cannot be a Christian, especially in the Samoan context. However it is good to know the main purpose of why Genesis 1 in particular was written. As strongly argued throughout this paper, Genesis 1 was written to counter other ancient creation stories like the Babylonian one: Enuma Elish. Most of these stories depict the sovereignty of their deities through wars and battles. On the contrary, Genesis 1 depicts God Elohim as the God of order who brings order into the disorder. Most of ancient countries have treated the light or the sun sacred and therefore gods to worship and adore. Genesis 1 tells us the opposite. God creates everything including light or sun.

So, the main purpose of Genesis 1 in this case is the revelation of God of Genesis as the Creator who has made everything which changes all the dynamics. This God is not the object whom we evaluate. All in all, this paper wishes to equip our EFKS people with this understanding to answer all the plausible questions that could be raised by our young people within the Church setting.

Glossary

<i>usugafa</i>	-	progenitor
<i>fautagata</i>	-	creator
<i>Ilu and Mamao</i>	-	Immensity and Space
<i>Po</i>	-	Night
<i>Ao</i>	-	Day
<i>Le Lagi</i>	-	the heavens
<i>lagi-uli</i>	-	black-sky
<i>lagi-ma</i>	-	clear-sky
<i>leai</i>	-	nothing
<i>nanamu</i>	-	fragrance
<i>efuefu</i>	-	dust
<i>iloa</i>	-	perceivable
<i>maua</i>	-	obtainable
<i>eleele</i>	-	earth
<i>papatū</i>	-	high rocks
<i>tala</i>	-	story
<i>usuga</i>	-	genealogy
<i>talatuu</i>	-	myth

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Submission of Thesis for Examination Form

Student Name	Faafoi Atonio
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Title of Thesis	The Creation of Light: A Comparative Analysis of Samoan and Hebrew Narratives
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Degree	Bachelor of Theology

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- ☐ I certify that the work is original and has not been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution.
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