

On literary theorists' approach to Genesis 1: Part 1

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An increasing number of Christian scholars and lay people are utilising a more sophisticated program to dehistoricize Genesis 1. Normally indicative of the liberal end of the theological spectrum, conservatives are also coming to rely on a literary theory approach supported by a postmodern epistemology. This recent trend either downplays or even eliminates the importance of content and permits structure or form to carry the traditional role of determining a text's meaning. This paper examines the theory's philosophical foundations and the history that laid the ground for its reception.

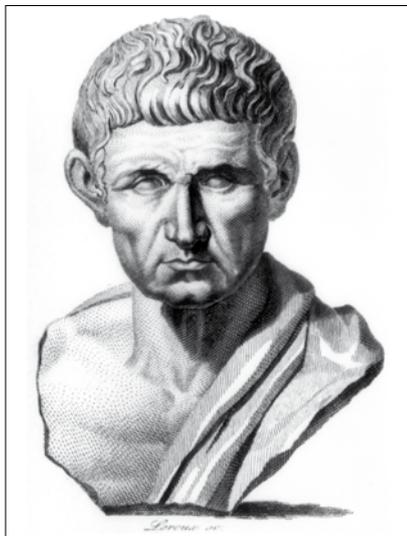
What is literary theory?

Any literary work, whether an oral presentation such as a sermon or lecture, or a written composition like a job application, a technical treatise, a piece of historiography or a book of fiction, possesses organizational structure. Communication of the information held by the text, its content, and which is intended to be conveyed from author or speaker to reader or listener, is intimately tied to literary form or structure. John Breck goes as far as to say, 'Form expresses content, therefore content determines form [and thus t]he author of a literary work ... chooses the particular structure that best expresses the meaning he or she wants to communicate.'¹

The philosophy that focuses upon the 'nature and function of literary texts' is termed *literary theory*.² Historian Keith Windschuttle claims, 'Rather than explaining what individual works mean, literary theory attempts to analyse the figures and conventions that enable works to have the forms and meanings they do.'³

Despite the clarity of this definition, literary theory has been found to be an extremely difficult and complex body of

thought and writing to comprehensively specify, because it has quite broad application to very disparate academic disciplines. Its interdisciplinary use is recognised within art, film, gender and social studies, philosophy and politics. Nonetheless, as Jonathan Culler insists, 'The main effect of [literary] theory is the disputing of "common sense".'⁴



Aristotle was among the first to analyze texts in terms of literary theory.

According to Culler this means that literary theorists reject the following:

- the conception that the meaning of an utterance or text is what the speaker 'had in mind'
- the idea that writing is an expression whose truth lies elsewhere in an experience or a state of affairs which it expresses
- the notion that reality is what is 'present' at a given moment⁵

All these counter-intuitive aspects are expressed, either directly or implicitly, by a majority, if not all, of contemporary interpreters of Genesis 1 who have situated themselves outside its literal meaning as established by the historico-grammatical approach to the text. In other words, the narrative sections of this section of Scripture are no longer 'strongly realistic' so that '[t]he words and sentences meant what they said, and [thus] accurately described real events and real truths that were rightly put only in those terms and no others.'⁶

The noted Hebraist Adele Berlin averred, 'We are now in the aesthetic, or literary age. The most avant-garde books on the Bible are studies of narrative or poetry, or applications of literary theory to the biblical text.'⁷ Questions of historicity are, for the most part, irrelevant; what are paramount are deliberations upon aesthetics. Conforming to what has been termed the classical approach to aesthetics, this category of biblical criticism obtains the meaning of a passage from 'the interrelation of its parts, the formal character of its composition, and the universal application of the ideas it expresses ... which the text generates by its shape and composition'.⁸

The more things change, the more they (kind of) don't!

Literary theory is not novel. The Greeks, through their analytical work on poetry and rhetoric,⁹ and 18th and 19th century discussion on aesthetics and hermeneutics,¹⁰ demonstrate earlier awareness of the enterprise. However, contemporary interest in literary theory is, in many respects, quite distinct from its predecessors as it is frequently mingled with, or characterised by a fundamental dependency upon, a postmodernist epistemology.¹¹

Postmodernist epistemologies, as Arthur Marwick noted, are an ‘inescapable ... component of the intellectual world of today’.¹² Philosophically they reject a correspondence theory of truth. This epistemological theory states that a proposition claiming a fact or truth about the world is true if and only if what it is propositionally claiming about reality does indeed actually correspond to reality. According to postmodernism, reality is a social construct and reality *qua* reality cannot make any objective claims independent from its observers.

Postmodernism eschews dichotomous thinking in which one member of a paired opposite is favoured over the other. For example, ‘rational’ has no more claim to authority than ‘irrational’, ‘true’ cannot privilege ‘false’.¹³ As well, though differing in the details, all the various postmodernist schools have a common concern involving the nature of language and how it is applied to a text as a whole. Not only does one’s language distort reality, it actually may create reality.

Furthermore, and most importantly, textual meaning will arise from the community of readers, thus tending to override authorial privilege. Paul Ricoeur claims, ‘The text’s career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author [and w]hat the text means now matters more than what the author meant when he wrote it.’¹⁴ Stanley Fish’s solipsistic ‘reader-response’ hermeneutic locates the power of meaning within the reader, and not the text, and it is he or she who gets ‘their own way’. Meaning thus becomes relative rather than timeless and absolute. In responding to the text, the most important question is to ask what the text does to the reader rather than seeking meaning through its logical and semantic content.¹⁵ Similarly, another critic more dogmatically claims that, ‘we arrive at the “author’s meaning” precisely when we decide we have arrived there: we *make* the author’s meaning!’¹⁶

Once such attitudes are assumed all logical and ontological difference that normally separates reader and author disappear, the text can mean anything or nothing at all and our opinions become the words of the author. As one commentator astutely perceived, ‘Reader-orientated theory legitimizes the relativity of different readings and thus threatens to unnerve conventional understandings of biblical authority.’¹⁷

It can be thus quickly discerned that the acceptance of literary theory undergirded by a postmodernist framework rejects literal biblical exegesis and orthodox Christian theology. When such an epistemology is implemented ‘neither the Biblical texts nor theological reflection upon them have a coherent or finally determinable meaning [and] they do not clearly or truly refer to objects beyond themselves.’¹⁸ As a consequence the world as narrated in the Bible becomes analogous to that projected by poetry and fiction.

In his history of epistemological claims for truth, philosopher Francis Schaeffer suggested that watershed ideas were often taken up by the Church well after they had taken root in society: ‘Theology has been through the same

process as philosophy, though several decades later.’¹⁹ It comes as no surprise then, that the Church has eventually, and so passionately, co-opted literary theory and its silent cousin, postmodernism, and given them full family member privilege.

A brief history of literary theory’s take on Genesis 1

Western scholarship, though not always aware of it, began a project to reconfigure meaning of the biblical text through something other than the brute semantic information conveyed by the author’s words themselves, the communicators of objective historical events. During the seventeenth century meaning began to be divorced from historical reference. Up to this time, ‘historical judgement had been no more than a function of the literal (or sometimes figurative) sense of a narrative passage; [after this] the sense of such a passage came to depend on the estimate of its historical claims, character, and origin.’²⁰ From having the text’s meaning equated solely with the literal understanding of the words, and they in turn referring to actual historical events, the author’s intention began to be conceived of as an independent factor determining meaning. Soon after, however, intention waned as an important hermeneutical consideration: ‘The influence of an author’s culture over his mind and outlook came to play a larger role than his conscious intention in the historian’s determination of the meaning of his words.’²¹

This far from homogeneous movement away from orthodoxy gathered its proponents and drew meaning and historicity further from the literal reading of the text. Summarising the complexity of this movement, Frei comments:

‘All commentators are agreed that biblical hermeneutics underwent a sea change in the early nineteenth century. The transformation

was, of course, the result of the romantic and idealist revolution that was sweeping philosophy and historical study as well as the literary arts and criticism. It was to be expected that the interpretation of biblical texts, like that of others, would be affected by the drastic new turn in the estimate of the



Herder was the first to argue for an aesthetic symmetry of days in Genesis 1, the first 3 mirroring the last 3.

human spirit's place in the spiritual universe.²²

The German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), remonstrating against the harsh rationalism of the Enlightenment, stated that the ‘history of the creation [account] is entirely a sensuous representation arranged by days’ work and numbers; in seven pictures of the separate portions of the created universe; and placed with reference to their parallel or corresponding relations’.²³ It is primarily as a consequence of these words that Herder’s name has been put forward as the first to see ‘in the Old Testament an almost illimitable wealth of artistic stimulation.’²⁴ Frei notes that Herder ‘was indeed uninterested in the factuality or nonfactuality of the accounts in Genesis, dwelling instead on their peculiar aesthetic character The narrative is neither logically (or essentially) identical with the subject matter depicted, nor does it render directly accessible the temporal sequence talked about.’²⁵ Blocher agrees and writes that it was ‘Herder [who] recognized the powerful symmetry between the two triads of days.’²⁶

Gunkel, running with this idea, first rejected many historical events of the Old Testament, and then sought to persuade that their value lay in an appreciation of their aesthetic qualities. Furthermore, in an apparent echo of Plato’s declaration that Beauty was a semaphore for the existence of the World of Ideas, Gunkel proposed that ‘this aesthetic side of the narratives’ acted as a scaffold to, ‘above all, the imperishable power of the Moral Idea.’²⁷



Gunkel, in a Plato-like fashion, expressed disdain for Genesis 1 being historical, believing that its beauty pointed to a higher, moral idea.

Henri Blocher notes that the literary approach to Genesis 1 is found in men such as Lagrange²⁸, Noordtjiz²⁹, Ridderbos³⁰, Ramm³¹, Kline³², Payne³³ and Thompson.³⁴ Blocher himself denies the historicity of Genesis 1 and argues that it is

overridden by an ‘artistic interpretation . . . suggest[ing] that other thoughts overshadowed in [the author’s] mind any concern for chronology.’³⁵ In listing the salient features of the various literary interpretations concerning Genesis 1, Blocher notes that they take

‘. . . the form of the week attributed to the work of creation to be an artistic arrangement, a modest example of anthropomorphism that is not to be taken literally. The author’s intention is not to supply us with a chronology of origins He wishes to bring

out certain themes The text is composed . . . so that we may understand how the creation is related to God and what is its significance for mankind It recognizes ordinary days but takes them in the context of one figurative whole.’³⁶

This new approach, more attentive to aesthetics, overturns conventional wisdom and makes an author’s meaning dependent upon or reduced to the structure or form of a narrative rather than deriving it through the particulars of its content. As Bar-Efrat remarked, ‘[The literary method’s] aim is to bring to light [the biblical narratives’] artistic and rhetorical characteristics, their inner organisation, their stylistic and structural features.’³⁷

History’s violent death

One observer has proposed that ‘No one has ever provoked an objection by claiming history is a form of literature In the academic environment of today, however, this argument is frequently extended into the far more provocative proposition that history is *nothing more* than a form of literature.’³⁸ Taken to the extreme, postmodern historians say,

‘. . . that a historical narrative in both its form and content is not a re-construction of the “past itself” but is a con-struct that refers to the fictive discourse of other historians . . . postmodern historians . . . [conclude] that the actual practice of historians is indistinguishable from the practice of writing fictional narratives “History”, therefore, has essentially the same epistemological standing as does “fiction”.’³⁹

Such a monumental change has outgrown the confines of the academy and migrated to the Church where it is presently presupposed in much of its current polemic on origins. What had been hitherto understood to be history has now been reduced to literature, and thus, like literature,

‘. . . is not committed, in any ordinary, straightforward fashion, to the truth of the events which it reports or the ideas which it propounds . . . for literary works do not pretend to describe or assert, and hence are not true, not false.’⁴⁰

Thanks to literary theory, the Bible’s historiographic material is no longer able to speak truthfully and meaningfully about the past. This enervation of historical content leaves style and form as the only concern for understanding the text.

A case examined

In a 2004 address to ISCAST⁴¹ held at The University Of New South Wales, Sydney, historian Reverend Dr John Dickson presented a paper titled, ‘The Genesis of Everything: The thought-world of the Bible’s account of creation’.⁴² In outlining the direction his paper was to take, Dickson inculpated both creationists and scientific materialists for having misunderstood the nature and purpose of Genesis 1:

‘They form their conclusions about the biblical account of creation in almost total isolation from the conclusions of the majority of contemporary biblical historians Both fundamentalists and materialists interpret Genesis 1 as if the original author were offering an historical prose designed to narrate the mechanics of creation.’⁴³

Dickson additionally argued that Christian attitude toward Genesis 1 is neatly packaged into two parcels. Despite an apparent similarity of names, he nevertheless contrasted a *literalistic* approach, the traditional 6 day view, with a *literal* model, one which has become emblematic of Christian literary theorists’ attitude concerning Genesis 1. The criticism directed against the former is for taking ‘the words of a text at face value, interpreting them without sufficient attention to literary genre and historical context’, whereas the latter, ‘based on the literary style and historical setting of a text, [asks] what was the author’s intended message.’⁴⁴

What Dickson has purposed as the latter’s goal is not completely devoid of merit, though obviously with some caveats in place. Among certain critical scholars there is suggestion to its value. John Barton, for example, has argued that ‘historical’ literary criticism seeks out, *inter alia*, ‘possible information about the literary conventions of the author’s day; and to want to . . . find out what [the author] thought he was doing in writing such a work.’⁴⁵ Yet, as will soon be made plain, Dickson anachronistically determines the author’s message from the passage’s literary devices as understood from *contemporary* expectations rather than the apposite ancient ones. In doing this he mistakenly applies part of Barton’s other category, ‘non-historical’ literary criticism, in which ‘all suggestions about the text’s meaning are to be justified in terms of features within the text as read by a modern reader; [so that] questions of the author’s intention . . . are irrelevant.’⁴⁵

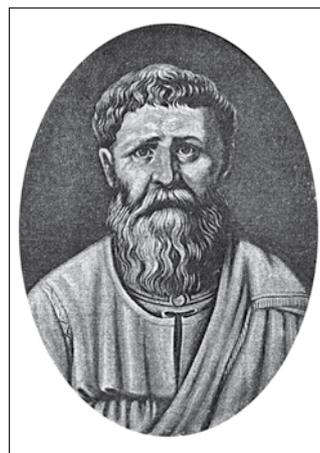
Notwithstanding their rejection of a straightforward exegesis of Genesis, many advocates of the literary approach continue to align themselves theologically to mainstream

conservative Christianity. As a consequence, their concomitant support for a postmodern epistemic is seldom explored, even more rarely advertised. Rather, they first disingenuously argue that ‘the antecedents of a non-literalistic approach to Genesis 1 lie in the very distant past.’⁴⁶ It is for this reason that Philo, Clement, Origen and Augustine serve as the entry port for the literary theorists’ world.⁴⁷

Asserting a proposition merely on perceived patristic blessing is poor rhetorical technique and is quickly recognised for what it really is: *argumentum ad verecundiam* or ‘an appeal to authority’.⁴⁸ The ensuing apologetic, however, is singularly noteworthy in its reversal of normal hermeneutic procedure. Marked out by an almost complete eschewal of the semantic content and a slavish devotion to form or structure, critics list literary devices that Genesis 1 putatively contains, and then conclude that it cannot be taken as straightforward history:

‘Genesis 1, on the other hand, is not an historical report. Nor is it even written in prose. The original Hebrew of the passage is marked by *intricate structure, rhythm, parallelism, chiasmus, repetition*, and the lavish use of *number symbolism*. These are features we never observe together in the parts of Scripture we normally recognise as historical prose.’⁴⁹

The invalidation of this proposition is to provide examples of Scriptural passages that are universally accepted as historical records, yet contain literary devices, the same devices biblical literary theorists uphold as being the delineator of non-historical genre. Therefore, even if Genesis 1 does contain a multitude of literary devices it would in no way denote the passage as non-historical, non-prose. Such an undermining ‘rule of thumb’ should of course not be limited to Scripture: the existence of literary devices in ancient secular historical writing would irreparably collapse the case that Christian literary theorists advocate.



Modern literary theorists, in order to give their ideas some academic credibility, insist that Philo, Clement, Origen and Augustine were in fact the first biblical literary theorists.

The second part of this paper will address in detail these literary devices and examine the theorists' argument that the incorporation of them necessarily renders a work ahistorical, non-prose.

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- Windschuttle, K., *The Killing of History: How a Discipline is Being Murdered by Literary Critics and Social Theorists*, Macleay Press, Sydney, p. 232, 1994.
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- Culler, ref. 4, p. 4.
- Frei, H.W., *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, p. 1, 1974. Although Frei cannot be regarded as someone upholding the facticity of Genesis 1, his observations and criticisms are still germane. This would apply to many of the writers quoted and in no way undermines the argument put forward in this paper.
- Berlin, A., Narrative poetics in the Bible, *Prooftexts* 6:273, 1986 as cited in Schwartz, R.M. (Ed.), *The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, p. 13, 1990.
- Barton, J., Reading the Bible as literature: two questions for biblical critics, *Journal of Literature & Theology* 1(2):135–136, Sep. 1987.
- See e.g. Longinus' *On the Sublime* and Aristotle's *Poetics*.
- See e.g. *An Extraordinary Woman: Selected Writings of Germaine de Staël*, Folkenflik, V.(Trans.), Columbia University Press, NY, 1987, in particular see 'Essays on Fictions', pp. 60–78 and 'On Literature Considered in its Relationship to Social Institutions', pp. 172–208. For a comprehensive analysis of these centuries see Frei, ref. 6. For a brief overview of the history of literary scholarship and its modern rise, see Koch, K., *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: The Form-Critical Method*, Adam & Charles Black, London, pp. 13–15, 1969.
- This brief discussion of postmodernism isn't claiming that all these aspects must necessarily be present when Genesis 1 is discussed by literary theorists, but there is a clear connection. An insightful and manageable discussion on the complexities of postmodernism is found in Moreland, J.P. and Craig, W.L., *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, IL pp. 144–152 and passim, 2003. Strictly speaking many of the literary critics owe a debt to structuralism. This is a theory which is primarily concerned with the description of a text's structures and assumes that these structures are the relationship between the particulars. By ignoring the particulars, this theory does not provide a basis for determining the meaning for these unveiled structures. Despite this dependency on structuralism, it is from a postmodern epistemology that critics produce meaning. For a brief, non-exhaustive and non-exhausting outline of structuralism see Culler, ref. 4, pp. 123–125. For a more detailed look at structuralism and other theories, see Adams, H.(Ed), *Critical Theory Since Plato*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, Orlando, FL, 1992.
- Marwick, A., Two Approaches to Historical Study: The metaphysical (including 'postmodernism') and the historical, *Journal of Contemporary History* 30(1):5, 1995.
- A sense of the absurdist can be understood from literary theorist Northrop Frye's belief that the Bible is a work of 'metaphorical literalism' in which the creation narrative is 'literal and true, [while] the true literal meaning is imaginative and poetic.' as cited in Cording, R., The 'something more' in the Bible, *Semeia* 89:155, 2002.
- Ricoeur, P., *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Texas Christian University Press, Fort Worth, TX, p. 30, 1976 as cited in Ferretter, ref. 2, p. 121.
- Although many evangelicals who have used literary theory to interpret Genesis (e.g. Kline, Blocher, Collins, Waltke, Sailhamer, Matthews and Mark Ross) would ostensibly reject reader-response theories, by saying 6 days can't mean 6 days they are in reality setting the meaning of the text from and for themselves. Ignoring content—and this is what they are doing—means that there is (virtually) no other information available. This only leaves their projected ideas onto the form as the source of meaning.
For an extremely amusing account of Fish's philosophy see Jones, E.M., Stanley and Jane's Excellent Adventure: Or, Why Politically Correct Professors Hate Western Civilization; in: Jones, E.M., *Degenerate Moderns: Modernity as Rationalized Sexual Misbehaviour*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA, pp. 79–86, 1993.
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- Schaeffer, F., *The God Who is There*, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, UK, p. 52, 1990.
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- Frei, ref. 6, pp. 188–189.
- Blocher, H., *In the Beginning: The opening chapters of Genesis*, Preston, D.G. (Trans.), Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, UK, p. 51, 1984.
- Gunkel, ref. 24, p. 21. Although Gunkel, as Longman mentions, 'in the eyes of some ... is the archenemy of a literary approach', he nevertheless 'advanced a literary approach to the study of Scripture by focusing attention on the all-important issue of identifying the genre of a text in the process of interpretation.' (Longman III, T., *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 16, 1987.) For a summary of Gunkel's argument in which he contrasted Genesis 1 against 'true' historical accounts, see Kaiser, W.C. Jr., The Literary Form of Genesis 1–11; in: Payne J.B. (Ed.), *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, Word Books, Waco, TX, pp. 50–51, 1970. Gunkel was instrumental in the establishment of Form Criticism. While it is not this paper's aim to detail any specifics, it needs to be mentioned that, as far as I'm aware, all proponents of the literary approach to Genesis also evince clear influence from Form Criticism. This is warranted by their proposal that Genesis 1 shares some common ground with the myths and sagas of the surrounding cultures' literary compositions, albeit one whose aim was opposed to the physical and social reality of the pagan worldview. For example, John Dickson holds that Genesis 1, far from being the proactive record of the cosmos' beginning, was a reactive polemic: 'Genesis uses stylistic elements of its pagan equivalents in order very cleverly to debunk the view of the world expressed in those traditions. The parallels constitute ... a parody.' Dickson, ref. 42, p. 7.

28. '... we must take into account the customs of the age. It is quite certain that in the days which preceded our era the custom of adopting a literary mask was so common a form of fiction that it ceased to be a fiction at all, and no one was deceived by it There are certain forms of literary composition in which no absolute statement is made as to the reality of the facts related ... the works of the Book of Genesis [are] placed in a framework of six days.' Lagrange, M.J., *Historical Criticism and the Old Testament*, Myers, E.(Trans.), Catholic Truth Society, London, pp. 95, 103, 147, 1905.
29. 'The writer ... uses the terms "days" and "nights" as a framework. Such a division of time is a projection not given to show us the account of creation in its natural historical course.' Noordtzi, A., *God's Word and the Testimony of the Ages*, Kampen, p. 80, 1924, as cited in Young, E.J., *The days of Genesis*, *Westminster Theological Journal* 25: 2–5, 1962–63.
30. 'This eightfold work [of the creation week the inspired author] places in a framework [and t]he manner in which the works of creation have been distributed over 6 days is not arbitrary.' Ridderbos, N.H., *Is There a Conflict between Genesis 1 and Natural Science?* Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 45, 1957. Note the actual epistemological presupposition of the Ridderbos' argument from the following: 'On any other view [apart from the framework hypothesis] there arise grave difficulties with respect to natural science' (p. 46).
31. '... the Genesis account is not strictly chronological, but part topical and part logical ... the six days are pictorial-revelatory days.' Ramm, B., *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, The Paternoster Press, London, p. 151, 1955.
32. 'Therefore, when we find that God's upper level activity of issuing creative fiat from his heavenly throne is pictured as transpiring in a week of earthly days, we readily recognize that, in keeping with the pervasive contextual pattern, this is a literary figure.' Kline, M.G., *Space and time in the Genesis cosmogony*, *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 48, 1996; <www.asa3.org/ASA/topics/Bible-Science/PSCF3-96Kline.html>, 28 Aug. 2006.
33. '... mere narrative framework.' Payne, D.F., 'Genesis One Reconsidered', p. 17; <www.biblicalstudies.org.uk>, May 2006.
34. 'Genesis 1 is a simple literary scheme written in exalted semi-poetic language, though not strictly poetry, but displaying a certain parallelism both in literary arrangement and in content.' Thompson, J.A., *Genesis 1–3: Science? History? Theology?*, 1966 Tyndale Lecture given in Melbourne, *ISCAST Online Journal* 0:13, Pre-2005; <www.iscast.org.au>, May 2006.
35. Blocher, ref. 26, p. 51.
36. Blocher, ref. 26, p. 50. Blocher says he is focused on the author's intention and although at first blush this would contradict reader-response ideas, his is in reality reader-response by stealth. Regardless of his comments about author's intention, he ignores content and instead concentrates on form. However, form doesn't stand by itself, and in practice is entirely dependent upon a reader's interpretation.
37. Bar-Efrat, S., *Some observations on the analysis of structure in biblical narrative*, *Vetus Testamentum* 30:155, Apr. 1980.
38. Windschuttle, ref. 3, p. 227.
39. Burnett, F.W., *Historiography*; in: Adam, A.K.M. (Ed.), *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation*, Chalice Press, St. Louis, GA, p. 110, 2000.
40. Burrow, J.A., *Medieval Writers and their Work: Middle English Literature and its Background 1100–1500*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 13, 1982 as cited in Barton, J., *Reading the Bible as literature: two questions for biblical critics*, *Journal of Literature & Theology* 1(2):135–153; p. 149, 1987. An example of this ambivalence is seen from comments such as, 'Did God create "light" on Day 1 of creation? Well, he might have But this is not the point of Genesis 1:3. The highly "literary" presentation style of our passage makes it unlikely, in my opinion, that the author intended us to link any of his statements with a particular physical event in time.' (Dickson, ref. 42, p. 5.)
41. The Institute for the Study of Christianity in an Age of Science and Technology (ISCAST) aims to 'promote an understanding of science, technology and the Christian faith which is consistent with the Judaeo-Christian doctrine of Creation, with its emphasis on God as the God of nature.' <www.iscast.org.au/who/>, May 2006. Although ostensibly theologically conservative, and despite the inclusion of the word 'creation' in its manifesto, its members share a dislike for a creationist view on origins, are stridently evolutionary, opposed to a young earth and, as articulated by some of its members, enamoured with the apostatic theories of Teilhard de Chardin. See also <www.creationontheweb.com/iscast>.
42. Dickson, J., 'The Genesis of Everything: The thought-world of the Bible's account of creation', 2004, page numbers as they appear on website. Downloaded from the Centre for Apologetic Scholarship and Education at <www.case.edu.au>, Aug. 2004. CASE runs on a very similar line to ISCAST, eschewing the literal creationist line while actively promoting any other possibility.
43. Dickson, ref. 42, p. 1.
44. Dickson, ref. 42, p. 1.
45. Barton, ref. 40, p. 138.
46. Dickson, ref. 42, p. 2.
47. See for example Blocher, ref. 26, pp. 49–50 and Dickson, ref. 42, pp. 2–3. For a summary of these ancients' use of literary theory see Trigg, J.W., *Allegory*; in: Ferguson, E. (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, Garland Publishing, New York, pp. 23–26, 1990. It is not at all irrelevant that these four men share a far from incidental dependency on Plato.
48. For an elaboration of this rather common debating technique, see e.g. Geisler, L.N. and Brooks, R.M., *Come, Let Us Reason: An Introduction to Logical Thinking*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, pp. 98–99, 1990; Fischer, D.H., *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought*, HarperPerennial, NY, pp. 283–90, 1979.
49. Dickson, ref. 42, p. 4. Dickson seems unaware that Hebrew prose is virtually categorically defined by particular grammatical constructs: 'The particles 'et (the sign of the definite direct object), 'aser (the relative pronoun), and ha- (the definite article) all have been identified as prosaic elements, not common in or suitable to poetry In general, these particulars occur six to eight times more frequently in prose passages than in poetic ones. Statistically the results are even more important, since they establish beyond cavil that the occurrence of these particles is a valid discriminant, and the difference in distribution reflects an intrinsic distinction between prose and poetry.' (Freedman, N.D., *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: An Essay on Biblical Poetry*; in: Tollers, V.L. and Maier, J.R., (Eds.), *The Bible in its Literary Milieu: Contemporary Essays*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 79, 1979.) All these elements are present in Genesis 1. In addition, there is the frequent and systematic use of the *waw*-consecutive as an even stronger marker. Steven Boyd has done a good statistical analysis and comparison of Gen 1. See ch 10 of the RATE group's book *Thousands ... Not billions* edited by Don DeYoung.
- Interestingly, and only as an aside, James Kugel points out that 'There is no word for "poetry" in biblical Hebrew' (Kugel, J.L., *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and its History*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, p. 69, 1981.) and that the prose/poetry division is a misleading and inaccurate polarity. Kugel presents a compelling case for this being the result of a 'Hellenistic imposition'. (pp. 85–86 and *passim*), noting that 'Those who first attributed meter to the Bible were Hellenized Jews, and later, Greek-speaking Christians, whose desire to parallel the excellencies of Greek poetry with their own sacred texts is all too easy to document.' (p. 301.)

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