

## THE LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE GENESIS CREATION STORY

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Exegetical research on Gen 1 has been characterized since the eighteenth century essentially by a diachronic concern. Thus the Documentary hypothesis and the so-called *Tatbericht-Wortbericht* theory have been the two main starting points of any relevant scholarly study of this text. Recently, under the influence of contemporary literary studies, attention has been drawn to the validity of the synchronic approach, and more and more scholars have thus become aware of the importance of the literary structure of this text. The structure's dissociation from the thematic distribution of motifs has resulted in a tension which has been explained in terms of different sources, but this explanation has not permitted an adequate control. Thus, most scholars assume the existence of a literary structure, but all disagree about its contours.

The purpose of the present study is to discover the "literary structure of the Genesis creation story" as it was intended by the biblical author. The relevance of this inquiry is that it not only works with the literary data of the text as a whole and in its present form, but also aims to reach the intentional level of the text. The literary structure responds to both of the foregoing requirements and leads thereby to the hermeneutic employed. Although my approach is independent, it has been inspired by recent methodologies introduced especially in stylistics and in structuralism.

My first step has been concerned with providing a control: The literary structure of Gen 1:1-2:4a (C) must be in agreement with the thematic content and must also be attested in a text of the same nature which will thereby become the control-text (C'). Since Gen 2:4b-25 is also concerned with creation and has been "edited" in connection with C, it appeared that it could serve as the control-text. The analysis of the connection has revealed a striking parallelism between C and C' which manifested itself in the literary structure and in the agreement of the thematic content. Furthermore, this conclusion has been strengthened by the fact that the literary structure of C and its connection to C' have been perceived in various degrees in biblical as well as in extra-biblical texts referring to creation.

The second step has been concerned with drawing the implications of these conclusions on the level of the literary composition. The deep connection between C and C' has led me (1) to question the validity of the

Documentary hypothesis; (2) to observe a "lateral" process of writing instead of a "concentric" one as argued by the *Tatbericht-Wortbericht* and structural approaches, and to infer the unity of the text; and (3) to notice three literary genres into which the text has been voluntarily "dressed," namely, genealogy, prose, and recitation.

The third step has been concerned with reflecting theological perspectives in terms of three relevant questions in today's debate on creation, i.e., Revelation, Reality, Existence. Thus, in continual dialogue with the most representative theologies on creation, I have drawn theological implications in an attempt to frame an interpretation within three categories of thought: (1) The literary situation of C has shown us that its author thought of the material he recorded as a revelation from above, pointing to both its "necessity" and its "possibility" aspects. (2) The literary genres suggest that the author intended to tell about the event but not to provide its mechanism. (3) The author did not content himself "to inform," but he also was concerned to transmit his "message" on an existential level. The historical event of creation was required to become history in existence. The Sabbath is the expression of this faith and, carrying both categories of Revelation and Reality in connection with Existence, it invites thereby a particular dialectic regarding the two "events" of Creation and Redemption.