

able scepticism. Finally, Garrett is unable to identify any literary form of the 2nd millennium BC which resembles his 'Gospel of Abraham'; rather he is forced to adopt a designation which first appears almost 2,000 years after the time of Abraham.

Secondly, reservations must be expressed about the way in which Garrett manipulates the Genesis material. For example, he proposes that the three wife/sister incidents once constituted an independent 'ancestor epic'. To substantiate this claim he presupposes that the original epic was broken up with only some parts being incorporated into Genesis. Similarly, the narratives involving Hagar are classified as 'ancestor epic' despite the fact that this material consists of only two elements and not three. To account for this discrepancy Garrett suggests that 'the early narrators simply told it as a binary structure on the basis of the information they had' (p. 143). While one cannot dismiss completely these explanations regarding the wife/sister and Hagar pericopes, one senses that at these points Garrett is guilty of making the evidence fit the theory rather than making the theory fit the evidence.

Thirdly, Garrett is much too optimistic in believing that he can recover with reasonable certainty the sources underlying the book of Genesis; nowhere does he acknowledge adequately the difficulties of recovering the sources underlying an ancient text. If we are to learn anything from the present demise of the Documentary Hypothesis, it is that we lack the knowledge to reconstruct the process by which the present text of Genesis took shape. Those familiar with the complexities of the relationship between the Synoptic Gospels will appreciate how difficult it is to determine the process by which Matthew or Mark or Luke developed. If problems arise where there are three documents to compare, how much more difficult must the task be when one is dealing with a single text.

In the third part of his study Garrett deals firstly with the origin of Genesis 1 and its relationship to chapters 2–11. He concludes that 1:1–2:3 was revealed directly to Moses who subsequently used it as the prologue to the book of Genesis which he produced using the sources outlined above. Next he explores the idea that the sources underlying Genesis were preserved by the Levites 'who were regarded as clerics by the people prior to the exodus' (p. 232). Finally, based on the observation that 'a theme of alienation pervades the entire text of Genesis' (p. 233) he defends the idea of Mosaic authorship by arguing that the most likely setting for the composition of the book was the exodus period.

Garrett's conclusions will appeal strongly to those who believe that the Pentateuchal material

derives from Moses. Unfortunately, his approach is methodologically unsound because he fails to give sufficient attention to the text of Genesis as it now stands. Garrett depends too much on structures derived from other ancient near eastern documents. As a result he manipulates various parts of the text of Genesis in order to make them conform to a particular structure (e.g. his treatment of the Abraham cycle, 11:27–25:11). While Garrett has clearly attempted to approach the source analysis of Genesis afresh, his proposals should be treated with the greatest caution.

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### ***God, Language, and Scripture: Reading the Bible in the Light of General Linguistics***

Moisés Silva

Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation, vol. 4. Leicester, UK.: Apollos, and Grand Rapids: Academie Books (Zondervan) 1990, x + 160 pp., £7.95, ISBN 0 85111 504 7

#### **SUMMARY**

*The book is a study of language in relation to biblical doctrine. It contains an introduction to linguistics and a discussion of the development of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. The most substantial part of the book describes the biblical languages at the level of sounds, words, sentences, paragraphs and larger units. The writing is clear, vigorous and learned.*

#### **RÉSUMÉ**

*M. Silva propose, en fait, une 'introduction à la linguistique générale appliquée à la Bible, avec des prolégomènes théologiques'. Son ouvrage étudie aussi l'évolution de l'hébreu, de l'araméen, et du grec. La partie principale décrit les langues bibliques du point de vue des sons, des mots, des phrases, des paragraphes et des unités linguistiques supérieures. Cet ouvrage admirable est écrit avec science, vigueur et clarté.*

#### **ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

*Dieses Buch untersucht Sprache in Bezug auf biblische Lehre. Es enthält eine Einführung in die Linguistik und bespricht die Entwicklung der hebräischen, aramäischen und griechischen Sprachen. Der Hauptteil des Buches beschreibt die Sprachen der Bibel auf der Ebene von Lauten, Worten, Sätzen,*



*Absätzen und größeren Einheiten. Der Stil des Autors ist klar, überzeugend und wissenschaftlich.*

The subtitle of this admirable book might have been more precise, if more cumbersome, if it had read: 'An introduction to general linguistics as applied to the Bible, with a theological prolegomenon'.

The prolegomenon covers biblical perspectives on language in relation to creation, sin, and redemption, focusing on the linguistic implications of the doctrine that humanity is made in God's image. This chapter, though copiously illustrated by biblical references, deals more in principles than in specifics; it does not, for example, raise the question of what appear to modern readers as false etymologies in the Old Testament.

The introduction to linguistics begins with a chapter entitled 'The Scientific Study of Language', which concisely explains synchrony, linguistic structuralism, Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole*, and the primacy of oral over written language. For good measure, the reader is given a whirlwind tour of the various disciplines relevant to the study of language.

Much of this will be new to many students of the biblical languages. They may feel more at home in the following discussion of the development of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, though even here, they will probably learn something, and see what they already know in a fresh perspective.

The most substantial part of the book consists of two chapters devoted to 'Describing the Biblical Languages', successively at the levels of sounds, words, sentences, paragraphs and larger units. Wherever appropriate, form and meaning are discussed separately, and there is a special treatment of ambiguity.

An Epilogue deals with problems of textual transmission and translation, and there is an appendix on 'the Biblical Language in Theological Education'. The author makes extensive use of the work of E. A. Nida and publications of the United Bible Societies; his discussion of dynamic equivalence would perhaps have benefited from being based on the Good News Bible rather than on NIV.

The writing is clear, compressed, and vigorous; and notes and bibliography provide ample food to satisfy the appetite which the book will surely arouse.

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## ***A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture***

**Alister E. McGrath**

Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, xv + 332 pp., £19.95, ISBN 0 631 16398 0

### **SUMMARY**

*The book discusses the influence of Calvin on Geneva, and of Geneva on Calvin and his theology. It has a special interest in Calvin's influence on our culture. It is also concerned to refute the myth that Calvin was 'the dictator of Geneva'.*

### **RÉSUMÉ**

*McGrath explore l'influence qu'a eue Calvin sur Genève, et celle qu'a exercée Genève sur Calvin et sur sa théologie. Il s'intéresse aussi particulièrement à l'influence de Calvin sur notre culture, et réfute le mythe du Calvin 'dictateur de Genève'.*

### **ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

*Dieses Buch untersucht den Einfluß Calvins auf Genf und den Einfluß Genfs auf Calvin und seine Theologie. Ein Schwerpunkt liegt auf dem Einfluß Calvins auf unsere Kultur. Ein weiteres Anliegen ist, den Mythos zu widerlegen, Calvin sei der 'Diktator von Genf' gewesen.*

Alister McGrath is one of the most prolific and most able of contemporary Reformation scholars. Having written extensively, especially on the doctrine of justification and on Luther, he has now turned his attention to John Calvin.

The scope of the work is ambitious. There are five chapters relating to the life of Calvin. These include discussion of the influence of Calvin upon Geneva and, interestingly, the influence of the Genevan environment upon Calvin and the formulation of his theology. There are two chapters on Calvin's thought, focussing on 'the medium' and 'the message', respectively. There are chapters on the spread of Calvinism and on the relation between Calvinism and western culture.

For whom is the book written? It is directed more at the student than the specialist, being a broad overview of the subject. It would be of interest to the history student as well as the theology student, with the focus on Calvin's life and his influence upon western culture. The author is concerned to present Calvin not just as a theologian but as one who has moulded our culture (pp. xi-xii).

One of the author's concerns is to refute some of the myths about Calvin. He points out that