

view" of the task of interpretation rather than understanding meaning from the perspective of parochial concerns and thinking. There is here, however, an inherent danger that one could have such a global, multicultural hermeneutic that the uniqueness of the Christian message could be compromised or undermined. The degree to which Erickson's proposal for an evangelical hermeneutic avoids this pitfall will determine to a large extent how valid his alternative is.

Erickson reminds evangelicals, in a note of caution, that one need not be a trained professional to understand the Bible. He argues that the revelation of God's Word and its intended message appeals to all people at all times because it is itself truth. His stress on the fact that Scripture can be fully understood only by the illumination of the Holy Spirit is combined, however, with a recognition of the need for scientific methods of interpretation, which helps him avoid a purely subjective interpretation of the text.

In sum, Erickson's proposal that hermeneutics in the post-modern world needs to be fully global and multicultural is something that should help evangelicals to take seriously the task of conveying the meaning of the Scriptures to today's mindset. In this, he has fulfilled his intended purpose of helping each one to become more able and accurate interpreters of the incomparable word (114). It is in this process of thinking about guidelines for a post-modern evangelical hermeneutic that Erickson makes his greatest contribution to the ongoing discussion of what the text of Scripture says and means to contemporary society.

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Hamilton, Victor P. *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18-50*, NICOT. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995. xx + 774 pp. \$40.00.

Wenham, Gordon. *Genesis 16-50*, WBC 2. Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1994. xxxviii + 517 pp. \$29.00.

These two volumes complete the two most recent and comprehensive evangelical commentaries on the book of Genesis. The simple fact that both commentaries required two volumes to cover the book of Genesis indicates the mass of scholarship which has grown around the first book of the Bible.

Consequently, both commentaries have extensive bibliographies and continuously reference other commentary series and studies on the various passages in Genesis. As with other volumes in the Word commentaries, each section of Wenham's commentary is headed by its own bibliography which supplements the main bibliography. Hamilton's main bibliography is located in the first volume of his commentary (*The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*). Wenham's clearly has the more extensive bibliography, though only a portion of it is referenced in the text. Both commentaries make extensive use of rabbinic exegesis throughout the text.

These are both evangelical commentaries, written within communities highly sensitive to the claims of systematic theology and canonical authority. Because of the pressure of systematics on canonical text, evangelical commentaries such as these raise understandable doubts about the ability of the commentators to deal with delicate theological issues raised by the text. Two passages were selected to explore the commentators' ability to deal with such questions: the issue of human sacrifice in the sacrifice of Isaac (ch. 22) and the convergence of sexual issues in the story of Tamar (ch. 38).

In chapter 22 Abraham is instructed by God to perform a human sacrifice of his "only" son. At no point in the narrative is there a polemic against human sacrifice, and indeed this would detract from the story. Yet it is common in evangelical commentaries to seek to prove such a polemic in Genesis 22.

Hamilton faces the issue squarely. He states that in two passages (Gen 22 and Ezek 20) "is God the stimulus behind child sacrifice," and suggests that this story is evidence for a pervasive acceptance of human sacrifice (105). Wenham likewise faces the issue, and though he discusses whether this chapter explains why human sacrifice is no longer possible, he concludes that such reasoning is speculative (105). Instead Wenham mentions a different issue of importance to the Israelite: Isaac was to be the ancestor of all Israel, thus his death would be the sensitive issue, whatever the cause. In addition Wenham correlates Genesis 22 with the sacrifice for the firstborn. On the issue of human sacrifice in chapter 22 both commentaries do well in facing the troubling issues of the text. It is curious that neither commentary comments on the term "only son" in 22:2, though both note that Ishmael had been sent away.

The delicate issue in the Tamar story is incest. The man who finally fathers Tamar's children is her father-in-law. This is clear in the fact that she had to trick Judah into impregnating her, and in the fact that Judah had the authority to command her execution when he found out she was pregnant, indicating that he retained patriarchal authority over her even though she was living with her own father. Hamilton goes so far as to deny that Judah was *pater familias* to Tamar (449-450), though he briefly acknowledges the possibility of incest as a factor (451). Wenham does in fact recognize the incest in this case, pointing out that the patriarchal period had different standards from those in the Mosaic code and concluding that this incest was "at least partially justified" (370).

Incest is not the only issue of sexual ethics in chapter 38. It is notable that the accusation of adultery is successfully answered by proving incest. Neither commentary noted this close nexus in which incest disproves or at least absolves adultery. Chapter 38 also deals with the fact that Judah unwittingly fulfills the levirate obligation, and this point is implied but never directly stated in either commentary.

Both commentaries note the difference between the common prostitute (38:15) and the sacred prostitute (38:21-22). Both commentaries argue that Hirah called Tamar a sacred prostitute because common prostitutes were despised and temple prostitutes presumably had a higher status (Wenham 368; Hamilton 447), though only Wenham informs the reader that prostitution was a legal activity. Hamilton leaves that point assumed. Although both commentaries touch on

most of the sexual issues of chapter 38, there is a certain reticence to deal fully with the delicate issues at stake in this chapter.

Incidentally, both commentaries wrestle admirably with the difficult issue of why chapter 38 was inserted here in the Joseph story. Hamilton argues primarily from necessity; where else would this chapter fit into the narrative? Wenham, however, provides an extended argument for the integral placement of this chapter in the plot development of the Joseph story.

Both Hamilton's and Wenham's commentaries are significant additions to the research tools of the biblical scholar. Even so the reader is advised to continue asking hard questions sometimes glossed over by the commentators.

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Keel, O. *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel. Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit - Einleitung*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, Series Archaeologica 10. Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; and Göttingen: V & R, 1995. 366 pp. \$120.00.

O. Keel defines a stamp-seal amulet as any miniature object which could be easily worn around the neck, the wrist, or the finger (7). Thus in planning the publication of an extensive *Corpus* of the stamp-seal amulets from Palestine, he and his team of collaborators at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland have undertaken a mammoth project which—when completed—will provide relevant raw data to the scholar interested in the archaeology, the history, the iconography, and the religion of Israel/Palestine in a convenient format. Although the list of disciplines this project will affect is already long and diverse, there will be other areas impacted as well.

The present book is the introductory volume of the five volume series (8) and presents the rationale of the project (7-12), the chronological frame of reference (13-15), the photographic aspects of the future publications (16-17), the discussion of the different rubrics of the catalogue (19-154), the basics of the method of describing the stamp-seal amulets according to different motif classes (155-246), the criteria for the dating of the artifacts and the evaluation of the archaeological contexts (247-265), a more synthetic discussion of the function of stamp-seal amulets (266-277), two appendices concerning the different forms and their main periods of usage (279-290), a very extensive bibliography (291-360), and a subject index (361-366).

Keel's stated goal is to balance the perspective of the whole with the interpretation of the particular detail (1). He envisions making contributions in three key areas of research (7-12). First, he aims to further the interpretation of the Egyptian stamp seals in their historical and archaeological context, especially regarding the utilization of material from unidentified archaeological contexts. Second, he seeks to contribute to the knowledge of the archaeology of Palestine by including the scientific description of the primary material (in this case the stamp seals). Keel reckons that there are ca. 8700 stamp seals (8500 from Palestine and ca. 200 from Jordan), which have come to light in legal and