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"Review of *Catholic Principles for Interpreting Scripture: A Study of the Pontifical Biblical Commission's The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*"

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SS I-III), but largely because of the skill and hard work he poured into this volume. Few could have equaled this accomplishment, and for it those in the archaeological community, as well as those who use archaeological data in writing history or specialized studies of artifacts, are deeply grateful.

The volume merits only minor criticism. Plans (see fig. 6) are sometimes nearly impossible to read because of print size and scarcely distinguishable print atop shadings. Larger plans and section drawings are needed. A result of the insufficient publication of ceramic evidence in the past is that T. sometimes pushes the scant evidence of the ceramics perhaps a little too far. One must acknowledge that the entire corpus of published ceramics for all of the loci of eighth-century Samaria number fewer than the published sherds from a single locus in modern excavation. Furthermore, when collecting these ceramics, excavators failed to distinguish between preparation fills for construction, the architecture (e.g., floor) itself, and the occupation debris accumulated on a floor. Accordingly, T.—restricted to the drawings of these sherds only—was forced to squeeze every drop of information from each sherd, in order to determine even relatively secure dating for the layers in which they were found. In some cases, only two or three sherds from critical loci had been originally published, an insufficient sampling; and because a majority of the sherds came from preconstruction fills or postdestruction layers, security in establishing dates of construction, phase of use, or destruction was ephemeral. The dates he suggests (as *terminus ante/ad quem*) must be emphasized as the *earliest possible dates* for construction of a floor or deposition of fill. Occasionally, T. wants the ceramic evidence to establish date of construction (based on *terminus ad quem*) more closely than logic permits: “Even though the majority of these fragments [Pottery Period 4, 8 bowl fragments] came from fill deposits, it remains crucial to establish as precise a chronological range for the vessels as possible in order to arrive at a viable *terminus ante quem* for the filling activity and, by extension, a likely date for the end of the functional life of rooms in which the fills were found” (p. 69).

Tappy may be absolutely correct in the dates suggested, but users of his closely argued typology must be aware that these conclusions are not yet so firmly established. As T. states, only with additional excavation will this question of dating be settled.

Besides its great service to the study of the Israelite Iron Age, *The Archaeology of Israelite Samaria*, vol. 2, also provides a model for future reporting. Were it not that Kenyon’s notes and methods were better than the decisions made in publication, this valuable reconstruction (*The Archaeology of Israelite Samaria*, vol. 2) would have been forever lost. As a *primary goal*, excavation teams must provide sufficient data for future re-excavation of their work by future scholars such as T., whose work confirms the great benefit of extensive reporting and of publishing all the data of an excavation.

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PETER S. WILLIAMSON, *Catholic Principles for Interpreting Scripture: A Study of the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (Subsidia biblica 22; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2001). Pp. xxii + 400. Paper \$28, €25.28.

In this doctoral dissertation for the Gregorian University, Williamson has extracted from the 1993 document *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (IBC), composed by the Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC) and endorsed by Pope John Paul II, twenty

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principles for the guidance of the Catholic exegete (see W.'s article in this issue, *CBQ* 65 [2003] 327-49). W. claims that these twenty principles are "complete: i.e., that there are no other principles of the same weight or level of importance to be found in the document" (p. 6). W. hopes that these principles will serve as criteria for the evaluation of the work of Catholic exegetes. W. notes that even though many of these principles are also upheld by Jewish and Protestant exegetes, he labels these twenty principles "Catholic" because of their place in the life and faith of the church as articulated in *IBC*. The accuracy and value of W.'s formulation of these principles is affirmed in a preface to the work by Albert Vanhoye, S.J., the secretary of the PBC at the time of the composition of *IBC*.

Williamson begins each of his twenty chapters with the statement of one Catholic principle of biblical interpretation, and then he supplements each statement with sections labeled "Explanation" and "Discussion." The title of each chapter serves as a label for each principle. Included among these titles are "The Word of God in Human Language," "Catholic Exegesis and Science," "Catholic Exegesis and History," and "A Hermeneutic of Faith." W. typically articulates each principle in two or more short paragraphs that address a particular problem of interpretation.

Williamson praises *IBC* for identifying as the goal of Catholic exegesis the explication of the religious message of biblical texts. He notes that *IBC* gives pride of place to the historical-critical method, but he is quick to qualify this by saying that *IBC* regards this method as insufficient to accomplish the goal of discovering and communicating the religious message of a text. This issue of the limitations of the historical-critical method threads its way through W.'s treatment of most of these twenty principles of interpretation. W. finds inadequate for the practice of Catholic exegesis the argument that the historical-critical method *qua* method is neutral to the Catholic faith and that the shortcomings of this method will be overcome simply by acknowledging that the pre-understanding of the exegete is a major factor in whether or not an interpretation is in accord with Catholic faith and tradition. W. notes that *IBC*'s attention to the pre-understanding of the exegete in its discussion of philosophical hermeneutics marks a distinct advance over previous ecclesiastical statements on biblical interpretation. Nevertheless, he claims that *IBC* still does not adequately address the ways that the historical-critical method's model of critical thinking subverts the religious message of the biblical texts. W. argues that exegesis is a theological discipline that cannot limit its efforts to historical and literary examination.

Williamson notes that *IBC* balances its endorsement of the diachronic historical method as indispensable with its support for synchronic approaches that are attentive to the final canonical form of the biblical text. W. examines the different understandings of the expression "the literal sense" from Origen (the surface meaning) to Thomas Aquinas (God's intention) to Pius XII (the human author's intention), and notes *IBC*'s concern that subjective interpretations of texts not be given free rein. W. thinks that even though *IBC* addresses "the spiritual sense" of biblical texts, more concrete measures should be stated to promote the interpretation of Scripture as the Word of God. Catholic exegetes should not regard their task as complete unless they increase access to the Word of God.

Williamson states that "although the *IBC* nowhere treats it explicitly, Catholic exegetes' scientific orientation is based on Catholic belief in the objectivity, discoverability, and unity of truth" (p. 45). W. argues that the plurality of approaches recognized as valid by *IBC* within the historical and literary methods should be integrated into a hermeneutical

model that leads to the discovery of the theological meaning of texts. W. sees the fragmentation of meaning and truth promoted by postmodern interpreters to be out of step with the work of a Catholic exegete.

Williamson's provocative work will succeed in promoting reflection and debate on the Catholic principles that implicitly or explicitly guided the PBC in its composition of *IBC*. This well-organized text is equipped with an index and a glossary of terms for the nonspecialist.

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TIMOTHY M. WILLIS, *The Elders of the City: A Study of the Elders-Laws in Deuteronomy* (SBLMS 55; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001). Pp. xiii + 353. \$45.

In this monograph, Willis expands a portion of his dissertation on elders in ancient Israel, dealing here with Deuteronomy and with five specific laws. Scholars often regard the references to elders in Deuteronomy as anachronistic; the code specified the appointment of "officers" and "judges" (16:18) who would have displaced elders, and Josiah's reform consolidated the judicial and administrative power of the monarchy. Not so, says Willis; local leadership is quite compatible with a judicial bureaucracy.

To support his contention, Willis surveys anthropological studies of African and Near Eastern kinship-based communities as well as parallels with ancient Near Eastern law. Anthropological evidence indicates that both indigenous central governments and colonial rulers seek the cooperation of local "folk" authorities in governing the people. Ancient Near Eastern legal codes tend to be designed for state officials, but trial records indicate judicial roles for elders. Because they represent leading families, elders prize peace among families, negotiating judicial decisions between families to avoid private feuds. Rules of law are guidelines for settlements, not binding statutes.

In the body of his book, Willis expounds laws referring explicitly to elders. In each case, he surveys anthropological and ancient Near Eastern parallels first. When he approaches the text, he first isolates the pre-Deuteronomiac clauses, considering the earliest layer to precede Josiah, and even the latest to antedate the exile.

The law governing homicide and asylum (Deut 19:1-13) contains typically Deuteronomiac phrasing in vv. 1, 2b, 3a, 7a, 13, and post-Deuteronomiac concerns in vv. 8-10a. Thus, the original, pre-Deuteronomiac law is 19:2a, 3a α , 3b-5, 7b, 9b, 10b-12. The elders of the city in which the homicide occurred must decide whether the act was deliberate or accidental and must convince the families of both the victim and the killer. Deuteronomiac motive clauses underscore sacral aspects, viz., purifying the nation of bloodguilt or protecting the innocent.

When a murder goes unsolved, the elders are to perform a ritual to purify the land/people of bloodguilt (Deut 21:1-9). State officials help measure the distance from the corpse to cities in the vicinity, but elders alone perform the ritual. The Deuteronomiac writer accentuates the national import of ceremonial purification.

In the case of parents with a rebellious son (Deut 21:18-21), often considered a case of state, or at least communal, displacement of patriarchal authority, Willis argues that it

