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**Stevenson, Kalinda Rose**

***The Vision of Transformation: The Territorial Rhetoric of Ezekiel 40-48***

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This is a lightly revised version of a Ph.D. dissertation at the Graduate Theological Union, under the supervision of Marvin Chaney and others. Well written and argued, it advances the claim that these nine chapters in Ezekiel are 'territorial rhetoric,' not a building plan for a temple. The "territoriality" of Ezekiel is an attempt to assert Yahweh's claim as the only king of Israel and to prevent any recurrence of boundary violations which had led to social chaos and the devastation and scattering of the community by exile. The text of Ezekiel she cites is a revised form of the Revised Standard Version (RSV), which she adjusts back to the Masoretic Text wherever the RSV had emended the text (except for two cases), and which she has also changed to give more consistent or clearer renditions of technical terms. She calls the person speaking in the first person in the biblical text the narrator (rather than Ezekiel or the prophet) and names the person who put these chapters in their final form the rhetor.

The three concentric spaces described in Ezekiel 40-48 are the house of Yahweh the portion, and the land of Israel. The priests have maximum access to the territory of Yahweh's house, the Levites have lesser access, and the laity have least access to the house. Stevenson argues that Ezek 44:10-14 is not legal rhetoric, punishing the Levites for their own past actions, but political rhetoric, concerned about the future well-being of society. Citing form-critical considerations and reinterpreting the antecedents of some of the possessive pronouns, she also argues, against Wellhausen and a wide scholarly consensus, that the Levites are not demoted in these verses to nonpriestly status. This

proposal is intriguing, if not fully convincing, but worthy of further consideration by students of Ezekiel and of the history of biblical priesthood.

Access to the land, the portion, and the house is determined by social role. The eleven tribes have access to the land by ownership, but they have restricted access to the house of Yahweh. The Levitical tribe has access to the house of Yahweh, but restricted access to the land. The *Nasi* receives a portion of land as a grant from Yahweh, but his role is very different from the role the Davidic kings had as power holders of the land and the temple. The climactic ending of Ezekiel is the new city (not deemed to be secondary) which replaces the human monarchy with the kingship of Yahweh and which restores Israel to a premonarchic social structure. Ezekiel's idea of a temple *without* an earthly king is a radical innovation in the social structure.

Stevenson departs sharply from Gese, Zimmerli, and others, who see these chapters as having a confusing structure, with many layers of redaction. Rather, she detects a coherent organization of these chapters that flows from the concept of territoriality and the structure of the *akitu* festival. Four principles guided the rhetor in arranging these materials: territoriality (definition of area, communication of boundaries, and control of access [building on the theories of Robert David Sack]); concentric arrangement of the three areas of the house of Yahweh, the portion, and the land; material gathered according to social role in relation to space; and the nature of the vision as the return and enthronement of Yahweh as the King of Israel. The vision of transformation in these chapters is the work of a visionary who creates a vision of a future society as response to current reality, based on a spatial view of holiness. This vision includes a renewal of kingship, a territorial claim to the three places of house, portion, and land, a cleansing of the House and healing of the land, and instructions for the maintenance of Yahweh's territory for the well-being of the society and the cosmos. The relevance of this vision today lies not in the specific answers, but in the type of questions raised by the rhetor.

This is a splendid dissertation that works out in detail Stevenson's conclusion that Ezekiel 40-48 is *territorial rhetoric*. While this genre identification is a new contribution and helpful, many previous students have also seen these chapters as theological/ideological rather than as blueprints for a new temple. Her focus on the final form of this text leaves several questions with this reviewer. Should we really do synchronic study with no attention to textual criticism and literary-critical judgments about secondary materials? How do synchronic and diachronic studies of these chapters complement each other? Or do they?