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Review of Stephen Grosby, Biblical Ideas of Nationality: Ancient and Modern

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discusses. In spite of its flaws, there is a wealth of information in this book, and it would be a useful textbook for graduate courses, supplemented by other material.

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This work represents a compilation of materials previously published as articles in journals or chapters of books. The unifying notion of this collection is the idea that nationalism, as it is often understood by some contemporary social and political theorists, is an ancient ("primordial") concept that can be documented in a survey of biblical concepts. The entire matter, of course, hinges on the definition of "nationalism." For Grosby, there seems little doubt about the usefulness of the concept. In the introduction, G. cites previous attempts to study nationalism in the context of the ancient Near East, and specifically of ancient Israel, as evidence that the concept needs little defense: "The point of departure for these studies was that it was not a priori illegitimate to apply the category of nationality and the bounded territory and extensive kinship structure that the category implies to various societies of antiquity" (p. 3). Nonetheless, it is the contention of this reviewer that this is precisely the point at issue. Contemporary social theory, including the "post-nationalists" among political and cultural theorists, would surely take issue with many of G.'s assumptions. Indeed, G. does not appear to be in dialogue with many of the contemporary debates surrounding the issues of "race," "ethnicity," and "nationalism."

The ten chapters of his book are entitled as follows: (1) "Religion and Nationality in Antiquity: The Worship of Yahweh and Ancient Israel" (pp. 13-51); (2) "Kinship, Territory, and the Nation in the Historiography of Ancient Israel" (pp. 52-68); (3) "Socio-logical Implications of the Distinction between 'Locality' and Extended 'Territory'" (pp. 69-91); (4) "The Chosen People of Ancient Israel and the Occident: Why Does Nationality Exist and Survive?" (pp. 92-119); (5) "Borders, Territory, and Nationality in the Ancient Near East and Armenia" (pp. 120-49); (6) "Aram Kulloh and the Worship of Hadad: A Nation of Aram?" (pp. 150-65); (7) "The Category of the Primordial in the Study of Early Christianity and Second Temple Judaism" (pp. 166-90); (8) "Territoriality" (pp. 191-212); (9) "The Nation of the United States and the Vision of Ancient Israel" (pp. 213-33); and (10) "Nationality and Religion" (pp. 235-56).

This survey of topics gives an overview of where this work is headed. I have some specific comments on the first chapter. First, G.'s dialogue with contemporary biblical scholarship is somewhat limited—for example, there is very little about the arguments of Philip R. Davies, Niels Peter Lemche, Thomas L. Thompson, and others about the historicity of early biblical materials. G.'s historiographical assumptions tend to be aligned with the conservative and somewhat traditional mid-twentieth-century schemes of biblical chronology and source analysis that have increasingly come under fire in recent years. Note, for example, G.'s argument (which he defends by reference primarily to earlier authorities such as Julius Wellhausen, W. Robertson Smith, S. R. Driver, Max Weber, Gerhard von Rad, and Helmer Ringgren—with Ernst W. Nicholson [1986] as his latest
authority) that "the emergence of ancient Israel as a nation was facilitated by the mono­
latrous development... of the worship of Yahweh, in particular the specific expression of
that development: the theology of the covenant" (p. 25). This is a hotly contested issue
today, involving questions about the rise of tribal Israel, the nature of the early and late
monarchies, and especially the conceptions of monotheism and interreligious mixing (see,
e.g., Mark S. Smith, The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background
and the Ugaritic Texts [New York: Oxford University Press, 2001]).

An even more interesting assumption is clarified later in the first chapter: "The
existence of the nation, whether ancient Israel or the modern nation-state, is predicated
upon the existence of a collective consciousness constituted by a belief that there exists a
territory which belongs to only one people, and that there is a people which belongs to only
one territory" (p. 27). This sounds like nineteenth-century European romanticism rather
than contemporary social theory; and I would argue that such grandiose assumptions
seriously limit the usefulness of G.’s analysis and, furthermore, unavoidably raise ques­
tions about whether political agendas are at work in what is intended to be straightforward
hstiographic analysis. What is more, to cite the work of Albrecht Alt, Martin Noth, and
Wellhausen in the context of discussions of biblical nationalism calls for an analysis of
their Germanic social presuppositions concerning nation and people. It is precisely this
kind of cultural analysis of scholarly debates that is necessary, although only recently
begun.

Finally, I question the usefulness in modern analysis of notions such as "primordi­
ality" as a reliable working concept for ideas such as culture and nation, whether in
contemporary social theory or in ancient history. Despite my serious reservations about
G.’s project, Biblical Ideas of Nationality represents a significant series of arguments, and
its publication is to be welcomed by those continuing to work in the vexed area of national,
ethnic, or cultural consciousness expressed in ancient sources.

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CHARLES D. HARVEY, Finding Morality in the Diaspora? Moral Ambiguity and
Transformed Morality in the Books of Esther (BZAW 328; Berlin/New York: de

This revised version of Harvey’s thesis submitted to the University of Edinburgh in
2000 is a literary-critical analysis of the MT, the Old Greek (OG, though H. names it the
LXX), and the Alpha Text (AT) of Esther. H. examines the whole of each document and
emphasizes plot and characterization in the narrative, particularly the ways that these
contribute to the portrayal of morality in each version.

After a brief introductory chapter that includes a survey of the state of research on
the origin and relationships between the texts, H. analyzes each of the versions. In compar­
ison to recent research on the versions of Esther by scholars such as Kristin de Troyer,
Karen Jobes, and Michael Fox, the primary contribution of H.’s approach is his dedication
to a literary-critical analysis of the narratives independent of text-critical questions. In each
chapter, H. examines the portrait of the characters in the narrative: Vashti, Esther, Morde­
cai, Haman, the Jews, and the king. He also deals with the way in which the battle of Adar
is portrayed. Because of his focus on narrative, H. does not discuss whether particular