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"Review of *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* "

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Samuel, not just the interrogatives. (Although, with this request, I guess that I am asking him to write an entire commentary on the Books of Samuel.) In conclusion, those who are interested in the literary or narrative analysis of biblical texts will find this to be a very fascinating work.

Robert Gnuse, Loyola University, New Orleans, LA 70118

RICHARD M. DAVIDSON, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007). Pp. xxix + 844. \$29.95.

Davidson derives the title of this comprehensive synthesis of OT teachings on sexuality from the phrase “flame of Yahweh” in Cant 8:6. He argues that this phrase captures the OT’s positive assessment of sexuality as a reality that Yhwh created to manifest the love between a man and a woman in marriage, which is a type of the love expressed by Yhwh. In this very lengthy monograph, D. aims to describe and defend the final form of the OT text as presenting a coherent teaching on sexuality conducive to spiritual growth. He refrains from saying that genital sexual expression is essential to spiritual growth by affirming that those who are single by choice or divine calling are not at a disadvantage in receiving divine grace. He is emphatic, however, that the erotic experience of a married couple is a powerful means for sharing in the life and power of Yhwh.

Davidson develops his version of an OT theology of sexuality through a synchronic exegesis of the biblical text. In his presentation, he engages with critical scholars insofar as their arguments contribute to what he judges to be a clarification of the final form of the biblical text. He harvests insights from critics who use redaction-critical methods when their findings support the authority of the final, canonical form of the text. If their findings remove that authority from the final form to an earlier, reconstructed layer of the text, D. steps aside from their arguments by claiming that their approach lies outside the scope of his study. D.’s reverence for the final form of the biblical text is evident throughout this study and reflects his commitment to the exegetical method of an evangelical scholar. The fruits of his efforts, however, can be of value to the redaction critic. Because the scope of his project extends over the entire OT, his synthesis offers a larger context within which to interpret a particular passage and may produce insights and nuances that redaction critics might not gain from their tendency to deconstruct the final form when tensions, contradictions, or aporias cloud the meaning of a particular passage. For the most part, D. tries to explicate the text as it stands by marshaling straightforward linguistic or literary arguments in favor of the final form. His commitment to make sense of the final form, however, seems labored and counterproductive in some cases. For example, he endorses an interpretation of the puzzling passage of Gen 6:1-4 as one in which the “sons of God” are offspring of Seth who transgress by marrying the “daughters of men” as offspring of Cain. Cross-cultural parallels proposed by diachronic critics who refrain from declaring a single, definitive interpretation of this puzzling episode are, in my opinion, more respectful of the message of the final form of the text.

Davidson arranges his fourteen chapters into three sections: (1) Sexuality in Eden: The Divine Design (Genesis 1-3); (2) Sexuality outside the Garden: Old Testament

Development (Torah, Prophets, Writings); (3) Return to Eden. D. cites recent literary and redaction-critical studies that argue that Genesis 1–3 form a prologue to the entire OT and therefore set up parameters for the interpretation of the canonical OT. D. interprets Genesis 1–3 as establishing that legitimate sexual expression occurs between a man and a woman within a monogamous marriage. Because Genesis 1–3 describes the order of creation and how disorder was introduced to it, D. understands these texts to be decreeing that this pattern of monogamous sexual expression between the first man and woman is absolute: that is, it is normative for all cultures and all times. With regard to the laws of Leviticus 18–20, D. distinguishes ritual from ethical commandments with the claim that ritual commandments are in force within a particular cultural system but ethical commandments are trans-cultural and transchronological. D. not only refrains from methods that will deconstruct the final form of the text but also tries to dispel ambiguity from the message of the final form. In trying to uphold the monogamous ideal of Genesis 2 in subsequent narratives, he is reduced to special pleading in his claim that cumulative data in the Jacob stories seem to indicate that Jacob no longer regarded Leah, Zilpah, and Bilhah as his wives and that he returned to Rachel as his only wife according to his original intention (p. 188).

In line with his goal of examining every OT passage dealing with human sexuality, D. has taken a stance on a wide range of issues, including abortion, homosexuality, divorce, premarital sex, incest, polygamy, adultery, and interfaith marriages. In extensive footnotes, he examines the viewpoints of scholars with whom he disagrees and agrees. From scholars whose methods and ideologies diverge from his own, D. repeatedly harvests points with which he can agree. Hence, this extensively researched study (a bibliography of 142 pages) should prove valuable to a wide range of OT scholars, even though his primary audience seems to be the conservative, evangelical community.

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GEORG FISCHER, *Jeremia: Der Stand der theologischen Diskussion* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007). Pp. 191. €59.90.

Fischer's report on the state of research on Jeremiah continues the work of its predecessor, Siegfried Herrmann's *Jeremia: Der Prophet und das Buch* (Erträge der Forschung 271; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftlich Buchgesellschaft, 1990). In F.'s contribution, he contends that scholarship on Jeremiah at the turn of the century has taken its own decisive turn in the climate produced by the "confluence of entirely different methodical approaches, namely of the broad tradition of historical-critical investigation with new, primarily literary and thematic approaches, as well as the results of relevant hard sciences (archaeology, iconography, etc.);" (p. 7). Following an introduction in which he evaluates recently published tools and an oddly placed third chapter in which he surveys other recent summaries, collected works, and the like, F. devotes chaps. 2 and 4–8 to six dominant questions. In a brief final chapter, he draws conclusions and points to fruitful avenues of research.

The long-recognized puzzle of the text of Jeremiah in its two principal versions continues to occupy scholars. F. argues that the initial scholarly response to the Jeremiah mate-

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