

The Blessing and the Curse: Trajectories in the Theology of the Old Testament

By Jeff S. Anderson


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The "magical power of the spoken word" is a topic that often comes up in a discussion of biblical blessings and curses. What is the source of social and linguistic power behind these blessings and curses? Many theologians would agree that God can and does bless, but does God also curse? If so, what does that mean to the biblical theology of the Old Testament and the Christian church? Anderson's *The Blessing and the Curse* applies speech act theory as one way to understand the performative function of blessings and curses. The concept of speech acts provides a method of recognizing the potent social power of language to accomplish certain ends, without drawing a hard line of distinction between word-magic and religion. Even though the chief concepts and practices of blessings and curses are deeply rooted in the broad cultural environment of the ancient Near East, tracing specific trajectories of Old Testament blessings and curses as theological themes conveys broad, inescapable implications for the biblical narrative and the Christian church.

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Review

"Jeff Anderson is a wise and even-handed guide into the richness of the Old Testament theological traditions. Using what might seem like contradictory categories of blessing and curse, he leads the reader on a sweeping tour of Old Testament claims about God's relations with humanity. The book is explicitly Christian without being sectarian. It represents the fruits of many years of pastoral and scholarly service to the church."

--Loren Crow, Northwest Christian University

"Within the presently multivalent landscape of Old Testament theology, *The Blessing and the Curse* creates dialogue among descriptive and normative interests, conducting them toward fruitful results. The significance of blessing and curse among the Old Testament's narratives and theological perspectives makes Anderson's focused study on the subject an important read."

--Nathan Maxwell, Palm Beach Atlantic University --Wipf and Stock Publishers

About the Author

Jeff S. Anderson is Professor of Religion at Wayland Baptist University's Anchorage Campus. He is the author of *The Internal Diversification of Second Temple Judaism* (2002) and *The Old Testament: It's Story and History* (2010).

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