



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

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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