

## Book Reviews

The Expository Times

2014, Vol. 125(8) 403–413

© The Author(s) 2014

Reprints and permissions:

sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/0014524614524140

ext.sagepub.com



### **BERNHARD W. ANDERSON'S CONTOURS OF OT THEOLOGY**

Bernhard W. Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2011. £16.99. pp. ix + 358. ISBN: 978-0-8006-9834-8).

Due to its lasting popularity, Anderson's OT theology re-appears in this paperback edition without any changes to its original release in 1999. As the culmination of an outstanding career, Anderson founds his "experiment in OT theology" (p. 28) on the two pillars which have characterized most of his previous work. The reader will thus encounter much of the synthetic style of Anderson's *Understanding the Old Testament*, as well as his all-embracing desire to read the OT from a perspective of Christian faith. While his OT theology is "addressed primarily to the church" (p. vii), it is no less valuable and informative for those readers who approach it solely for academic purposes.

Anderson's concern to address both academy and Church is well illustrated by the titles of his opening chapters: "1. The OT in the Christian Bible" and "2. The Relative Independence of the OT." The remainder of the introduction offers a brief survey of the discipline of OT theology, focusing in particular on the enduring significance of Eichrodt and von Rad and the more recent approaches by Childs and Brueggemann. The core of his work is organized along the covenants associated with Abraham, Moses, and David. Anderson discusses the corresponding priestly, prophetic, and royal functions of these covenants and offers an astute analysis of the "dialectical contradictions" that characterize each one of them, such as the universal and particular aspects

of the Abrahamic one (pp. 77-78). According to Anderson, it is important not to understand the covenants as purely sequential and thus as independent dispensations, but rather as an interrelated witness of the theological diversity of the OT (pp. 239-249). While it is regrettable that he has not devoted more time to spelling out the overlap and combination of these three covenant theologies, this presentation is nevertheless one of the outstanding aspects of his OT theology. Equally helpful is his handling of the event of exile. For Anderson, it is at this point in Israel's history that all three covenant theologies collapse and give rise to new conceptual and literary manifestations, such as discussions of theodicy and the shift from torah to wisdom and from prophetic to apocalyptic.

Given the coverage, coherence, and clarity of this book, Anderson's theology can be recommended as a synthetic and careful reading of the OT which is aware both of the wider academic discussion and the interest and needs of a Church audience.

SAMUEL HILDEBRANDT

School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh