

practitioners seeking to relate Pauline theology to contemporary concerns. Therefore, regardless of their academic or church status, any Christian can derive benefit from this work.

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Anderson, Gary A. *That I May Dwell among Them: Incarnation and Atonement in the Tabernacle Narrative*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023. Pp. xvi + 254. Hardcover \$27.05.

Gary A. Anderson, Professor of OT Theology at the University of Notre Dame, is one of the most renowned voices in contemporary biblical scholarship, especially when it comes to questions of atonement, incarnation, and cultic theology. In his latest work, *That I May Dwell among Them*, Anderson aims to reinterpret the biblical and theological foundations of the OT tabernacle model as a system that is not merely priestly functional, but profoundly incarnational. With this, Anderson positions himself against a long tradition of historical-critical interpretations that view the priestly law as a late, demythologized cult text (e.g., Julius Wellhausen). Instead, he shows that the priesthood of Israel reveals not only a cultic order, but also theological depths concerning incarnation and reconciliation (the contrast does not include the dating of Torah). This work is aimed at both exegetes and systematic theologians who are interested in a spiritually condensed reading of the Torah.

Central to Anderson's work is the assertion that the biblical cultic texts do not need to be externally overlaid with theological categories, but that these are already implicitly contained within them. The tabernacle, according to Anderson, is not merely a place of ritual purity, but a bearer of theological meaning: God makes Himself "dwelling" in a sanctuary built by humans—a theme that is profoundly incarnational for Anderson. In doing so, he bridges the gap between OT cultic theology and the Christological claim about the incarnation. Methodologically, Anderson works with a mixture of synchronic text analysis, typological interpretation, and patristic reception history. His confident access to the early Jewish as well as Christian interpretations is striking; he understands them not as later developments, but as theologically productive continuations of the Torah.

Anderson structures the book with a theological introduction (ch. 1), where he discusses the significance of the tabernacle narrative in the Christian Bible and God's desire to "dwell" in a space created by human hands (Exod 25:8). This is followed by two main parts. The first part focuses on the priestly narrative, comprising five chapters (chs. 2–6). The second part deals with the priestly narrative in its larger canonical setting, with four supporting chapters (chs. 7–10).

In the first part, Anderson argues, particularly in Chapter 2, that the construction of the tabernacle not only emphasizes the motif of God's indwelling and altar service, but in particular reveals the tabernacle as a "new Garden of Eden," which he substantiates through creation-theological parallel between Gen 1–2 and Exod 25–40 (pp. 23, 28–32, 48). In Chapter 3, he further asserts that God's presence is experienced through the sacred objects of the tabernacle, manifesting itself in a special way in the innermost area—in the Ark of the Covenant, to which only the high priest had access. However, this presence does not remain hidden from the people, as it is conveyed through a detailed literary depiction (pp. 58–59, 75). In Chapter 4, he stresses that the sacrificial service should be understood as an expression of gratitude to the divine presence, instead of seeing it primarily as a means of atonement (pp. 89–100). In this manner, Anderson diverges from the atonement theory and aligns more with the likes of, e.g., Jonathan Klawans. But in so doing, he unwittingly risks God to the level of ancient deities, who were thought to require offerings from humans. In Chapters 5 and 6, Anderson discusses the theophany in Lev 9, which involves the four sons of Aaron. Even here, he links creation to the tabernacle, arguing that the sacralization of the Sabbath in creation resonates with the holiness of the tabernacle and people ministering in it. In fact, he even claims that the creation reach its climax at Sinai when the tabernacle was set up (pp. 102–5, 115–16). I find this idea as overstressing the relationship between the two, as the tabernacle, in a way, is a restoration of the divine presence among men, which was lost because of sin, but not the goal of creation. On the nature of the sacrificial breach by Aaron's son, Anderson acknowledges its ambiguity, but affirms that the punishment brought against Nadab and Abihu is a demonstration of God's holiness, reflected in the sacred space (pp. 130–34, 139–40).

In the second part, in chapter 7, Anderson deals with the literary placement of the Golden Calf episode (Exod 32–34) within the larger architectural units of the tabernacle in Exodus (chs. 25–31; 35–40). While he acknowledges that this pericope comes from a non-priestly source and was probably inserted editorially, he nevertheless follows in the footsteps of Brevard Childs,

a canonically synchronous reading that interprets the text in light of the overall context (pp. 143–44, 159–60). In Chapter 8, Anderson then emphasizes the close connection between Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac and the sacrificial cult within the tabernacle, focusing in particular on the nature of the sacrifice. He also pursues this line of thought in Jewish writings, where the daily sacrifice (*tamid*) is understood as a “liturgical mechanism” through which that primordial event (the binding of Isaac in Gen 22) is liturgically re-presented before the people of Israel (p. 83). In Chapter 9, Anderson argues that the Johannine statement of the Word made flesh (John 1:14) should not primarily be understood as an expression of a high Christology as is widely held in research, but rather as a theological development of the OT concept of God’s dwelling in the temple or tabernacle, which now finds its ultimate fulfillment in the person of Jesus as the new temple (p. 192). Although this idea is already apparent in a superficial reading of the prologue, Anderson’s interpretation of the hermeneutical perspective of reading the NT in light of the OT lends it additional plausibility. Finally, Chapter 10 offers an overview of atonement theology, in which Anderson argues that the OT sacrifice, particularly the sacrifice of Isaac, should not primarily be understood as a means of atonement, but as a radical self-emptying before God, which becomes the defining way of reconciling humanity with God (p. 228). It is precisely in Jesus’s self-emptying on the cross, in which He gives His life, that this reconciliation becomes definitively real.

Among Anderson’s outstanding achievements is his ability to combine exegetical precision with theological depth. Particularly impressive is his observation that the description of the tabernacle in Exod 25–31 and 35–40 is not only structurally parallel to the creation of the world in Gen 1–2, but intentionally patterned after it, suggesting that the building of the tabernacle re-enacts and re-presents God’s active presence. This allows him to achieve an original interpretation: the tabernacle becomes the place where God—similar to Eden—dwells among the people. Another strong aspect is Anderson’s determination not to bend the purpose of the sacrificial system of Israel into atonement, which is open to later religious criticism, but to rehabilitate it as a form of communication between God and humanity—expressing gratitude, self-emptying, and full devotion to God. Here, he deliberately positions himself against reducing the cult to merely sociological or political functions.

At the same time, Anderson’s approach raises questions, particularly regarding the theological overlay of the text. His thesis that the tabernacle is a “proto-incarnational” structure is undoubtedly creative, but not always exegetically compelling. The reference to John 1:14 (“And the Word became

flesh and dwelt among us”) is justified typologically, but remains questionable from a historical perspective: Is it legitimate to directly project NT concepts such as incarnation onto the Priestly writing (of course, a question commonly raised by historical-critical scholars)? Another problem lies in Anderson’s tendency to condense the OT textual world Christologically. While this hermeneutics is rooted in the patristic tradition, from a historical-exegetical perspective, the question arises whether this overshadows the intrinsic value of the Hebrew texts. A clearer methodological distinction between canonical and historical exegesis would have been desirable here.

Jacob Milgrom, for example, would probably have welcomed Anderson’s thesis about the theological depth of the sacrificial cult, but would probably have differentiated more sharply between cultic practice and theological implication. Milgrom’s famous interpretation of Leviticus places great emphasis on the internal ethical and ritual logic of the cult without necessarily resorting to Christological typologies. Anderson, on the other hand, primarily refers to the theological symbolism of the sacrifice as a sign of divine proximity, not to the social dimension (e.g., atonement for the community) as emphasized by Milgrom.

In his OT theology, Terence Fretheim strongly emphasizes the theme of divine presence as a dynamic and participatory event—God dwells among His people, but not in a rigid localization. In contrast, Anderson emphasizes the concretely localized, the dwelling of God in a physical space. While Fretheim interprets the Exodus as an example of God’s accompanying presence, Anderson sees the tabernacle as the symbolic place of God’s self-embodiment. This difference is not superficial: it touches on the fundamental question of whether God’s nearness is to be understood more relationally or ontologically.

Walter Brueggemann, ultimately, would probably have objected to Anderson’s typological-Christological narrowing of the tabernacle as a place of incarnation. Brueggemann’s approach is more strongly characterized by prophetic and social criticism. For him, the temple is less a place of stable presence than a vulnerable symbol of divine absence in the court. It is understandable that Anderson gives little space to this tension, but it is also a weakness of his portrayal, i.e., it overlooks a rich tapestry of biblical perspectives.

Anderson’s theological boldness is admirable. He lends new depth to texts that are often considered dry or merely cultish. The connection between incarnation and tabernacle, although exegetically questionable, is literarily appealing and offers new perspectives for reading Exodus, Leviticus, and John. The work offers a rich reservoir of inspiration, especially for theo-

logians who deal with the systematics of atonement, the presence of God, and Christian sacramentality.

Nevertheless, a critical distance is appropriate, meaning that readers should remain aware that Anderson is interpreting the Torah through a distinctly Christian lens. While this hermeneutics is legitimate, it must be identified as such. The historical dimension of the text is therefore partly under-emphasized. The methodological approach to patristic testimonies as equivalent commentary on the Torah also carries interpretative risks.

That I May Dwell among Them is a courageous, scholarly, and, in many moments, fascinating book. Anderson succeeds in infusing old texts with new theological energy and demonstrating their relevance to contemporary discussions about incarnation, atonement, and the nearness of God. Despite some hermeneutical limitations, the work remains a significant contribution in the dialogue between exegesis and theology. Anyone who engages with Anderson's thesis will be stimulated and challenged.

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