

BOOK REVIEWS

The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions, by Mark J. Boda. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017. xv + 220 pp. \$23.00.

Mark Boda is professor of Old Testament at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario. The nucleus of this book originated in a series of lectures Boda gave at Acadia Divinity College in 2013. He aims to introduce readers to the core of OT theology by engaging Scripture intertextually and canonically (xiv, 7). His approach revolves around three rhythms or creeds that he sees as fundamental to the inner structure of OT theology. These creeds develop God's person and character from distinct angles: the exodus redemption narrative, the divine character formulation ("Yahweh, Yahweh, the compassionate and gracious God" [Exod 34:6–7]), and the covenantal relationship formula ("I will also walk among you and be your God and you shall be my people" [Lev 26:12]). After correlating these creeds Boda integrates them with the prominent OT theme of creation before linking them canonically to the NT and by application to the Christian life.

Following the preface, the book divides into nine chapters. Boda begins with a brief history of OT theology. He highlights predecessors who most influence his own work, including Geerhardus Vos, Gerhard von Rad, and Brevard Childs. From these and others Boda blends his unique diachronic, redemptive-historical, intertextual, and canonical approach. The next three chapters comprise the heart of the book. The first rhythm Boda observes is narrative, and here he concentrates on God's redemptive acts in history. The influence of Vos and of von Rad is clearest in this chapter, as Boda implements the latter's tradition criticism to highlight the "short historical creeds" that condense OT theology into concise stories about divine redemption. Several key elements populate these distilled narrative creeds—ancestors, exodus, wilderness, conquest, land, and exile—and these creeds materialize at critical junctures in the history of ancient Israel.

The second rhythm that Boda observes is divine character. The classic OT formulation of God's character appears in Exodus 34:6–7, and Boda demonstrates how this formulation is integrated intertextually throughout the OT. By verbal aspect (nonperfective/nonpreterite verbs) and a rich collection of theologically-charged character terms, these integrated texts emphasize who God is (ontologically) and what he does (functionally) rather than what he *did* historically. Boda analyzes a series of significant character terms, including *hesed* and *'emet* to discern their contribution to disclosing divine character. The third rhythm for Boda involves God's covenant relationship with his people. Leviticus 26:12

functions as an exemplar text, summarizing that God intends to abide with Israel, take her as his people, and become her God as part of a newly-formed relationship of reciprocity and kinship (comporting with the common father/son, husband/wife covenant language). Elements of this relational formula appear more than three dozen times in the OT, and Boda unpacks how the major OT covenants interface with these relational formulas to provide texture to God's personal commitment to Israel.

Chapter 5, the shortest of the book, surveys two OT passages that integrate these three rhythms in one section (Exod 5:22–6:8; Neh 9). Chapter 6 correlates these three creeds with the prominent OT theme of creation. Here Boda reaches back, in von Radian fashion, from redemption to creation to highlight God's sovereign formation of the cosmos as the opening of redemptive history. A major task for Boda in this chapter is to incorporate wisdom literature and the prophetic corpus. The rather ill-fitting way this chapter follows the previous ones, hints at a weakness I develop below. In chapter 7 Boda applies his rubric to the NT. He argues for the presence of the three rhythms in the NT, springing from God's historical action, character, and relational identity within and through Christ and the church. In the final chapter he applies these three rhythms to the Christian life, making a case for the enduring significance of these rhythms within evangelicalism. He posits an ongoing need for evangelicals to regain the power of story, to reverse the decline of virtue, and to cultivate robust communal relationships. The postscript is a sermon he preached at the conclusion of the lecture series calling for a response from the listeners. Boda tacks on an appendix in which he outlines his methodological approach to biblical theology. For readers unfamiliar with current discussions, this chapter may prove the most helpful of the book. Boda provides his definition of biblical theology, a fuller history of the discipline, a discussion of the tension between the OT's unity and diversity, and hermeneutical strategies for formulating a cohesive biblical theology.

In conclusion, the book has several strengths and weaknesses. As to its strengths, the book is concise and accessible for general readers interested in OT theology; technical jargon is kept to a minimum. Second, Boda offers several insights that promise to advance discussions in the church and academy. These include a call for renewed focus on narrative recital in the formulation of creeds. Boda points to this lacuna in most Protestant and Catholic creeds written since the Middle Ages (note by contrast the role of narrative in the Apostles' Creed). He offers also a nuanced understanding of covenant that stresses its essence as binding *non-kinship units*. He argues that families have no need of a covenant since the members are already related; this understanding has implications for some alleged covenants such as the covenant of redemption. Boda also provides a sophisticated discussion of his methodology for biblical theology. His treatment of the relationship between the testaments is particularly helpful. Third, Boda provides a unique approach to OT theology by his purposeful use of intertextuality. Readers of Boda's

recent Zechariah commentary will know that he has a wide-ranging grasp of the literature in this field. Here Boda has supplied several matrices that outline key literary connections and underscore the cohesiveness of the OT canon.

Finally, a few weaknesses merit mention. First, Boda omits large sections of the OT in his formulation, including much of biblical poetry and wisdom literature as well as the prophetic corpus. This omission fails to give shape to the varied contours of OT theology by giving a fair hearing to discontinuities in progressive revelation. Second, his debt to von Rad and tradition criticism limits the consistency of his work by inadvertently creating tensions with his efforts toward canonical cohesion elsewhere (to my mind a weakness also in the work of Childs). Third, his emphasis on redemptive history leads him to neglect other vital OT themes such as doxology, suffering/exile, divine wrath and justice, promise/fulfillment, and kingdom. Along these lines, he shares von Rad's misstep of subsuming creation to redemption. Fourth, his three-rhythm approach has inherent limitations. While it is more complex than proposing a single *mitte*, it sidelines creation as almost ancillary (incorporated mainly, it seems, so that wisdom has a peg) and foists an interpretive paradigm on significant passages such as Exodus 34:6–7 where Boda's designation of character text causes ontological features of God's nature to overshadow God's actions. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, I found the book insightful and enjoyable. I commend it to readers who desire a greater understanding of how the OT fits together and a greater appreciation for how it displays the glories of God's redemptive work, character, and relationship with his people.

Kyle C. Dunham

Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application, by Roy E. Gane. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017. xvi + 448 pp. \$32.99.

The New Testament believer's relationship to the Mosaic Law remains one of the most challenging theological and hermeneutical issues. Roy Gane, professor of Hebrew Bible and ANE languages at Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, proposes a new paradigm for approaching this complex question. He is uniquely credentialed to explore the topic, having studied under the tuition of leading Jewish Torah scholar, Jacob Milgrom, and having published widely on the Levitical cult. Gane's stated purpose is to guide Christians, especially those who teach, in grasping how "OT laws reveal wise and enduring values and principles, even when certain laws do not directly apply to us today" (xiv). Familiarity with the OT Law is desirable because the Law's prescriptions are grounded in divine love, hold continuity with NT revelation, and remain profitable for the sanctification of the Christian (ibid.).