

## Book Review

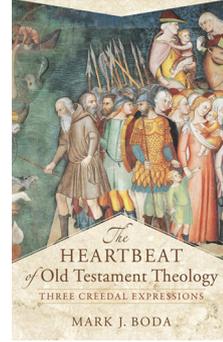
Boda, Mark J.

*The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology:  
Three Creedal Expressions.*

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2017. ISBN 9780801030895.

Reviewed by, Corey D. Wilson,

Lancaster Bible College, Capital Seminary & Graduate School



In Mark Boda's, *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions*, he discusses three creedal expressions found in the Old Testament (OT) which are revisited in the New Testament (NT). He defines them as the narrative expression, the character expression and the relational expression (p. 8). He contends that each expression is at the core of OT theology and is key to understanding it. Boda treats each theological expression as a theological heartbeat and argues how each expression runs parallel throughout scripture.

Before discussing these expressions, Boda briefly shares the history of OT theology. He mentions how Walther Eichrodt, Gerhard von Rad, Brevard Childs and Phyllis Trible were key contributors to the various ways OT theology was studied in biblical scholarship (p. 3). The method Boda uses to examine this topic is an intertextual- canonical approach that centers on the self-revelation of God (p. 7). This method focuses on the arrangement of repeated ideas and concepts found in scripture. Boda uses this approach to examine each creedal expression to show how their cohesiveness is integrated in both the Old and New Testament. In the first creedal expression, the narrative rhythm, he mentions how God is a God of redemption through actions in the past. To show how this

came to be, Boda examined the OT theology of George Ernest Wright. He agrees with Wright's view of OT theology as a declaration of God's redemptive acts (p. 10). Boda asserts that the mighty acts of God are at the heart of OT theology. He believes that revelation is given through these acts.

Boda states that Barth and Rad argue how the narrative rhythm is a reoccurring theme in various parts of scripture such as hymns and prayers located in the Psalms. From here, Boda highlights the different elements that support the narrative expression. He notes how elements of the narrative creed are seen through the election of the patriarchs; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, the Exodus narrative, the conquests of Canaan and its land and Israel's expulsion from the Promised Land (p.15). He references several texts to support how God's acts of redemption are seen in the past. For example, in Deut 6:21-23, he mentions how God's acts of redemption can be witnessed when He delivered Israel from Egypt so that He could then direct them to the Promised Land. Boda does an excellent job stating his case for God's acts of redemption as one of the creedal expressions found in the OT. Boda shows this relevance by zeroing in on the term יצא (bringing out) and בוא (bringing in). This narrative creed demonstrates God's acts of redemption by rescuing Israel and preparing to establish their new position in Canaan as

He gives them the law (p.16). Boda ends by mentioning that the function of the narrative creed is to reveal more about the self-existing God (pp. 23-24).

The second creedal expression that Boda details is the character creed. In this theological expression, he focuses on the nature and the attributes of God. Boda points to the elements of the nonperfective and nonpreterite verbal forms along with the adjectives and the nouns used to describe God and His activity (p.29). One of the examples he gives is found in Ex 34:6-7, where the Character Creed is revealed in the opening verse with the declaration of Yahweh. Boda mentions that Moses' statement echoes his conversation with the Lord during the gold calf incident. This ultimately sets the stage for God to reveal Himself to Moses, thus revealing His attributes to him. Boda continues to explain how this expression is further developed in Ex 33:1-35. From here he highlights the core characteristics of God found in Ex 33. He mentions how God's steadfast love and justice is at the center of the Character Creed. Boda goes into detail about how this word  $\text{רַחֻם}$  (steadfast love) is repeated in an ontological and functional way to describe the character of God (p. 38). He demonstrates the differences between how this word is used in the Hebrew and in the Greek translation. In addition, Boda states how God's steadfast love and truth are seen throughout the OT and provides several references to show its use. The function of this expression is seen in repentance; forgiveness and prayer just to name a few. Boda makes a strong case for the Character Creed in presenting this expression. There is a focus in the OT on the nature and character of God, which can also be seen in the NT.

The third OT creedal expression Boda emphasizes is the Relational Creed. He notes

how Eichrodt advocated for its use in OT theology and how many scholars view this creed as one that fits well into the framework of Biblical Theology (p. 54). Boda states that the elements of this creed center on the statement I am/you are, I will be/you will be, He is/they are (p. 55). He views God in this expression more as a Father figure and that humanity has a bigger role to play within this creed. He touches on the reciprocity of God and His people, their identity, and their responsibilities. Boda indicates that these are the foundational elements of the Relational Creed. He gives an example of this in Gen 12 as God makes a series of promises to Abraham. He also highlights the idea of the new covenant and its role in this expression. Boda mentions that its function is to solidify the relationship between God and His people. In addition to this, Boda comments that this creed's focus is on humanity. However, in reviewing this section, the relational creed is not only about humanity, but also about the God of humanity since every relationship requires the involvement of two willing parties. One recommendation would be that on page 33 at the end of the first paragraph the word "His" should be added between the word "renewing" and "covenant." This addition would add cohesiveness to the last sentence in this paragraph.

Overall, Boda's presentation of *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions* is a beneficial piece of literature for biblical scholars and graduate students. I agree with his assessment of each expression and appreciate his clarity in describing how they occur in both the OT and NT. Each description of the various expressions revealed how much one can gain from understanding the God found in the narrative of scripture, His character and how He relates to His people. Boda's

theological presentation of each expression was well written and accurately demonstrated biblically truths that are seen in scripture from beginning to end. He educates the readership on how the God of the Bible is a God whose acts are demonstrated throughout the history of mankind, whose character is revealed so that all may know Him and that He is a God who relates to His people. Each expression Boda describes in this book will enhance the body of Christ's understanding about the God that saved them, and should propel them to want to know Him more intimately.

