

one would expect more extensive rhetorical analysis, especially in speeches such as Paul's Athenian discourse (Acts 17). But a mere couple of pages are allotted to such an analysis of this classic. This is not to deny that there are moments when excellent rhetorical analyses occur. One such moment is Paul's speech before Agrippa (Acts 26). But overall, I have cause to wonder if the subtitle "A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary" was an editorial decision and Witherington would have preferred something like "A Defense of Luke as a Historian."

In the same light, I expected more in the "socio-" area. Yes, there is good sociocritical discussion when it occurs (see his discussion on women [334-339]) and sociohistorical description (case in point, travel in the first century [636-641]). But I expected more at times (for example, discussion on the seven-deacons pericope in chapter 6, and Simon Magus in chapter 8).

The work is heavily documented, and for the most part Witherington supports his positions with good footnoting. However, at times he is a bit careless and generalizes unnecessarily. For example, he writes: "Sometimes because of the miracle stories, modern scholars have berated Luke along with other early Christians, for their gullibility, or lack of critical consciousness" (221). Who are the modern scholars? Blanket statements like these seem only intended to taint the opposition without careful source documentation.

There is much that is praiseworthy in this commentary. The helpful "Closer Look" discussions, references, and extensive bibliography (35 pages of sources), and various discussions of opposing positions, make the work a worthwhile addition to the NT scholar's library. However, if one is looking for traditional exegesis that focuses heavily on syntax and grammar, this is not the commentary to seek out. Yet, we must admit that Witherington does give excellent word-studies throughout the volume.

Overall, in spite of my critique of the book, this commentary on Acts is a piece of exciting writing and loaded with great alliteration. While its nine-hundred-plus pages do not make it a convenient document to carry around for in-between reading, scholars, seminary students, pastors, and educated laypersons would do well to have a copy on their library shelves.

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Yang, Yong-Eui. *Jesus and the Sabbath in Matthew's Gospel*. JSNT Supp., 139. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997. 352 pp. Hardcover, \$70.00.

This published version of a dissertation, written under the supervision of R. T. France and G. N. Stanton, provides a comprehensive investigation of the relevant materials about the portrayal of Jesus' relationship to the Sabbath, from not only Matthew, but also OT, Intertestamental, and post-NT sources. Yang's basic thesis, as portrayed in Matthew, is that the Sabbath controversies of Matt 12:1-14 should primarily be understood in terms of Jesus' fulfilling the true Sabbath—the rest of redemption. These controversy stories are thus viewed as a vehicle for Christology, not particularly of Jesus' exposition of Sabbath law. As elsewhere in Matthew (particularly Matt 5:17-48), there are two important

considerations in Jesus' treatment of the law, and in particular, the Sabbath law: continuity, "in the sense that Jesus' redemption fulfills the ultimate goal of the sabbath" (306) and discontinuity. This discontinuity expresses itself ultimately in the abandonment of Sabbath observance, which can be observed in the post-NT period, as represented by the Apostolic Fathers.

Yang considers that the Matthean community is most likely a loose association of several house churches, and that little can be said with confidence about the Sabbath-observance status of this community. However, it is not impossible that some of these house churches might be Sabbath-observant, while others are not. Those who are Sabbath-observant need to be warned of the dangers of legalism, while those who are not need to be warned against antinomianism.

Many of the major, and some of the minor, points of the thesis take a stand that is contrary to the position taken by the majority of scholarship. For example, while there is debate about the concept of afterlife in the later books of the OT, there is near-unanimous agreement that the concept is absent from the Pentateuch. Thus, to consider that the Sabbath has an "eschatological" aspect in Gen 2:1-3 and Exod 20:11 (25, 33) is to use the word "eschatology" in a sense quite different from that which it might have in discussing any NT understanding of the future. It is also quite curious that Ezek 46:1-3, which in Ezekiel is part of an extended vision of a future dramatically different from that experienced by the people of Judah and Israel in exile, is used as an indication of actual sixth-century B.C.E. practice (49)! One also wonders at the frequent use of the word "casuistry" to describe later developments of Sabbath observance. The word usually conveys quite negative connotations, although some attempt is made to define it in a neutral manner (96).

Nor will the central thesis, that Sabbath controversies in Matthew have more to do with Christology than with Jesus' understanding of law, be one that receives universal agreement. Many important studies on Matthew have highlighted the importance placed on the interpretation of law in that Gospel, and emphasized the fact that the Gospel portrays Jesus as providing an understanding of *halakah* that rivals that being developed among the protorabbis. It cannot be denied that Christology is a feature of the Sabbath-controversy stories, but to say that it is the primary issue, and, in fact, is so central as to leave aside any considerations that the texts might have as to how the Sabbath law should be understood, is a position that will be determinedly rejected by many. Furthermore, throughout the whole work, Yang consistently downplays any evidence that might suggest that the Matthean community was Sabbath-observant, despite the fact that he considers both the evangelist and most of the community to be Jewish-Christian (101, 103).

A bibliography and indices are provided and, together with the footnotes, reveal that the study is based on most of the key materials that should have been consulted. While this reviewer will find much to debate with regards to many of the positions taken in the book, scholarship thrives on debate and is well served by an informed presentation of a coherently thought-through investigation of this topic, so important to Matthew studies.