

the relationship between dogs and humans. Despite the fact that Webb devotes an entire chapter to try to avoid this criticism, he fails to take seriously the fact that dogs do not always act with grace toward humans. Sometimes dogs lash out at humans in violence without provocation. When put into the right situation, dogs can be more loyal to the pack than to humankind.

Despite some of these minor criticisms, I strongly recommend Webb's book to anyone who cares about the theological and ethical issues surrounding the human-animal relationship and to those interested in environmental studies in general.

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Witherington, Ben, III. *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. 944 pp. Paper, \$50.00.

Ben Witherington, III, presents us with a massive commentary on what he perceives as one of the most puzzling, yet interesting, books of the NT. He suggests that this second volume of Luke raises as many questions as it answers. For this reason, he attempts "to bring to bear some of the fresh light that has been shed on this complex work by recent studies by scholars of ancient history, rhetoric, the classics, social developments, and other related matters, as well as dealing with various of the traditional exegetical matters" (2).

Although his purpose statement is broad and wide-ranging, the bulk of his presentation is narrowly focused. At every opportunity, Witherington attempts to demonstrate that Luke's work resembles Greek historiography in form and method, as well as in its general arrangement. It also has striking similarity to Hellenized-Jewish historiography in its overall apologetic aims and content. For Witherington, Acts is a "monographic, historical work" (18). Luke is a "serious, religious historian" (51). The purpose of Acts, therefore, is "to inform about the history of the movement, to enable Theophilus to take some pride in its course and leading figures" (379).

Witherington makes a strong case for Luke as a historian. But contrary to Witherington, I do not believe that history is what drives Luke. Luke is not primarily doing historical reflection; rather, theological considerations are the moving forces.

Again, this is not to deny historicity. For example, we may agree that the speeches in Acts have "considerable historical substance" (120) (though many will argue that the case has not been proven beyond reasonable doubt). Yet, the issues that are raised in this debate are much more easily solved if we view Luke as doing more theological redaction in a historical context.

The same is true in many other areas. I am convinced, for example, that reading Acts primarily as a theological document explains more adequately the difference between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the Letters (see "Closer Look," 430-438). Luke's redaction is based on his theological focus. He is not historically driven. He uses history selectively to make his theological point.

One of my greatest concerns is that Witherington spends more time and space demonstrating that Luke was writing as a Hellenistic historian than he spends on rhetorical analysis. Since the work is subtitled "A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary,"

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