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a simple conflict in 2:15–18 to a major juridical conflict in 5:1–47; 9:16. “The decisive factor which makes possible this progression,” according to Asiedu-Peprah, “is the Sabbath motif (5:9b)” and “is therefore crucial for the correct understanding of the narrative in Jn 5:1–47” (p. 42).

John 5 formally introduces the legal bilateral juridical conflict between Jesus and “the Jews” over the Sabbath. Then it defines the role of “the Jews” at Jesus’ antagonists. Finally, it sets the conflict in motion with a deadly intent (p. 48), which continues in 9:1–10:21 but with no resolution over their legal differences of opinion. The importance of the Sabbath motif in the Fourth Gospel, according to Asiedu-Peprah, is that it serves to heighten the emerging conflict within a specific legal and institutional framework of a two-party Sabbath juridical conflict. The unresolved conflict evident in 10:22–42 escalates into the formal forensic tri-lateral trial of Jesus before Pilate (18:28–19:16).

The heart and soul of the book are in chapters 3 and 4, since they provide an exegetical reading first for John 5 and then John 9:1–10:22. Asiedu-Peprah demonstrates that in their form and content these two narratives correspond to the OT by-lateral juridical controversy. This controversy unfolds in the following stages: the event leading to controversy (5:1–9b), the accusation (5:9c–16), the additional accusations and intended sanction (5:18), and the response of the accused (5:17, 19–47). With the Sabbath controversy yet to be concluded, there is the resumption of the juridical controversy (9:1–10:21) and then the conclusion of the controversy (10:19–21).

Chapter 5 explains how and why the juridical controversy in John 5 and 9:1–10:21 persuades, shapes, and deepens the reader’s Christological understanding of Jesus. According to Asiedu-Peprah, a “string rhetoric of persuasion,” is aimed at the reader to accept the Christological statements presented previously about Jesus in 1:1–18 and to convince the reader to make a faith commitment in Jesus. For instance, Jesus invokes three witnesses (John the Baptist, his own works, and Scripture: 5:31–40) to support his claim, whereas “the Jews” are less than successful with their witnesses (9:17–27). In the end, the witnesses of “the Jews” serve to distance the reader from their negative views, and then the text provides the reader with views from other characters that support Jesus’ identity and his soteriological significance. Asiedu-Peprah uncovers similar rhetorical techniques associated with the juridical controversy that are employed to move the reader “to accept the Christological credo of the narrative and so come to faith in Jesus” (p. 211).

Chapter 6 presents the Christian community as one of many Jewish voices which sought to make themselves heard in the post-70 period and to bring some order to Judaism after the temple’s destruction. “There is no denying the fact,” says Asiedu-Peprah, “that the tradition reflected in the Sabbath conflict narratives go back to the historical ministry of Jesus himself. . . . What the Fourth Gospel does is to take this tradition and give it the narrative shape of a juridical controversy in order to utilize the latter’s strong rhetoric of persuasion to convince the opponents of the Johannine Christians of their christological claims” (p. 227).

Asiedu-Peprah’s meticulous presentation displays a sound interaction with the text. His defense of a two-party juridical controversy from a narrative-critical perspective, within the framework of *reader-response criticism*, is quite convincing. The new light he sheds on the meaning of the Sabbath conflicts in John 5:1–47 and 9:1–10:21 is a welcome contribution to Johannine scholarship.

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Johannine Sabbath Conflicts as Juridical Controversy. By Martin Asiedu-Peprah. WUNT 132. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001, 280 pp., \$63.00.

This book examines the two Johannine Sabbath conflict narratives in John 5:1–47 and 9:1–10:21 from a narrative-critical perspective and concludes that they are best understood not as a trial, but as a two-party juridical controversy as found in the OT. Intrigued by the Johannine Sabbath conflicts since his student days at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, Asiedu-Peprah later pursued this topic in his doctoral studies at the Australian Catholic University. His doctoral dissertation forms the basis for this present publication.

Asiedu-Peprah proves his thesis quite convincingly in six tightly-knit chapters. Chapter 1 presents the case for the “trial scenes” or the “lateral trial” position (involving an accused, an accuser, and a judge) of previous Johannine scholarship (A. E. Harvey, M. W. G. Stibbe). Even though lawsuit narratives have a literary and historical antecedent in the OT (Isa 1:2–3, Jer 2:2–37, Hos 2:4–25, Mic 6:1–8), the case for a lateral trial in John 5 and 9:1–10:21, according to Asiedu-Peprah, has inherent difficulties and inconsistencies. P. Bovati’s recent interpretations of the OT *rib*-pattern, which argue for a two-party juridical controversy (involving an accusation, responses, and conclusion of the controversy), according to Asiedu-Peprah, fit the two Johannine Sabbath conflicts in John 5 and 9:1–10:21 better than the lateral trial.

Chapter 2 demonstrates how the two Sabbath conflicts relate to John’s narrative. First, the *confrontational theme* in 2:18–20 occurs after initially verifying the *theme of faith* as the only appropriate human response to the words and deeds of Jesus (e.g. marriage at Cana: 2:1–11; prophetic temple act: 2:14–17; Nicodemus: 3:1–21; Samaritan woman: 4:1–42; official’s son healed: 4:46–54). The confrontation motif progresses from