



**Bowman, Robert Jr. and J. Ed Komoszewski**

*Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ*

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

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## **Introduction**

I would like to thank J. Ed Komoszewski for allowing me to view *Putting Jesus in His Place* (PJIHP) before its September release. I have purposely refrained from reviewing the book until its release so as not to spoil the ‘plot’ so to speak and dissuade anyone from purchasing a copy for themselves. There are five main sections in this book and I will be reviewing each section separately and concluding with some closing comments on the book overall.

Let me begin by saying that PJIHP is a must read for any student of Christology, scholar and layman alike. Whether or not you hold a high, low or no Christology this is a work that needs to be in the personal library of everyone who engaged in the study of New Testament Christology. This is not to say that the book is without deficiency, but then again, what book is? Bowman and Komoszewski certainly have a way of making scholarly material both interesting and relevant to laymen. The language in PJIHP is not overly technical nor is it intimidating and confusing.

The book begins in the introduction “Knowing Jesus as God” with the simple fact that Jesus is:

“...the central figure of the world’s largest religion (Christianity) and viewed as a major prophet in the world’s second largest religion (Islam). Most people, in fact, regard Jesus as one of the greatest human beings who ever lived.” (17)

There is hardly a person alive (aside from a few hyper-skeptical agnostic/atheists) who would dispute such a statement. There certainly hasn't been anyone to have as much of an impact on the world and in world history as Jesus. But they ask the question: "Why are there so many conflicting interpretations of Jesus?" (17) Their answer: "...if Jesus was uniquely God incarnate, then he is also uniquely the way to God." (19) It is this reality that causes people to create a Jesus in their own image and likeness rather than accepting what the New Testament (NT) has to say concerning him.

From the onset the authors make no secret of their faith and the importance of the topic they're discussing for the Christian faith. They tell us:

If we are to experience a healthy relationship with God, we need to be intimately acquainted with the biblical teaching about the divine identity of Jesus. This involves more than merely knowing about, and agreeing with, the doctrine of the deity of Christ, though that is certainly essential. It must become more to us than a line we say in a creed. We need to know what it means to say that Jesus is God and why it matters. We need to see Jesus as God. We need to think about Jesus and relate to him in the full light of the truth of his identity. We need to appreciate the significance of his divine identity for our relationships with God and others.  
(20)

All I can say is AMEN! An intellectual knowledge of who Christ is isn't sufficient in and of itself – but rather this knowledge must be manifested in a living relationship with God our savior. Having clearly stated their faith the authors go on to lay their foundation saying:

In this book, then, we will be examining what the New Testament writings say about Jesus' identity as God. In doing so, we will take certain things for granted. First, we will assume that Christians should base their beliefs about Jesus on the teachings of the New Testament. For the most part, we will assume that the passages on which we are commenting are true. Only in some key instances will we seek to establish their historical accuracy. Also, we will generally not debate the inspiration of the New Testament authors' explanations of who Jesus is and what his words and deeds mean. We ourselves affirm that the New Testament is historically accurate and its teachings divinely inspired. Even if some readers do not share our convictions about the New Testament's accuracy and inspiration...  
(21)

This information is key as it shows the base for their study is a belief in the accuracy of the NT and the focus of the study is what the NT authors said about Jesus. This is a study in NT

Christology, not a study in the “Historical Jesus.” Critics have a tendency to want to separate the “Jesus of History” from the “Christ of Faith” but the authors certainly view them as one and the same Lord. Their intention “...is to provide a comprehensive case from the New Testament for the deity of Jesus Christ.” (21) Their means of establishing this is the acronym H.A.N.D.S. which stands for:

**Honors:** Jesus shares the *honors* due to God.

**Attributes:** Jesus shares the *attributes* of God.

**Names:** Jesus shares the *names* of God.

**Deeds:** Jesus shares in the *deeds* that God does.

**Seat:** Jesus shares the *seat* of God’s throne. (23)

They ensure us that “[t]his acronym is not a gimmick. It is a tested and proven device for enabling people of different backgrounds to remember and explain the biblical evidence for identifying Jesus as God.” (23) The rest of this review will examine the veracity of this claim.

## **Honors**

In this first section of the book (chapters 1-5) the authors set out to show that Jesus shares the honors due to God and in doing so they build upon the foundation of some Christological heavy hitters such as Larry Hurtado, Martin Hengel, and Richard Bauckham. First on the agenda is showing the amazingly early devotion to Jesus by Christians in the first century.

In chapter 1 entitled “All Glory, Laud, and Honor” the authors comment on the first commandment (no gods before Yahweh; see Ex. 20:2-3; Deut. 5:6-7) and then tell us:

It was in this context of exclusive religious devotion to one God, the Lord, that the early Jewish followers of Jesus were expressing the same sort of devotion to Jesus. They worshiped him, sang hymns to him, prayed to him, and revered him in a way that believers in Judaism insisted was reserved for the Lord God alone. To make matters worse, the Christians agreed that such honors were rightly given only to God—and then proceeded to give them to Jesus anyway! (30)

This paragraph explains the thrust of the entire section. The authors go on to demonstrate each of the points mentioned above. For example in chapter 2 entitled “The Worship of the Carpenter” they treat the subject of worshiping Jesus very fairly saying:

Consider, for example, the various accounts in the Gospel of Matthew of people “worshiping” or bowing down before Jesus. In some passages the act of bowing

down (*proskuneō*) does not, in the immediate context, express any inkling on the part of the one bowing down that Jesus was a divine person. On one occasion, a leper bowed down before Jesus and asked for healing (8:2). On another occasion, a synagogue official bowed before Jesus and asked him to heal his daughter (9:18). When the mother of James and John bowed before Jesus before asking him a favor (20:20), she was certainly not revering him as deity. In these and other situations, human beings bowed before Jesus according to the common custom of showing extreme humility and respect toward someone whose assistance they wanted. (38)

No accusations can be made of stacking the deck in their favor or reading Jesus' deity into every passage that they come across with statements like this. The authors rightly recognize that there are times when individuals (and here specifically Jesus) can be bowed before and revered yet not worshiped. But not to worry, they don't conclude their examination with only those passages in which Jesus is not worshiped, in fact immediately afterward they ask the question, "Should we conclude, then, that Matthew's reports of various persons bowing before Jesus imply nothing more than that he was a respected teacher?" and answer it by saying, "Actually, no. Such a conclusion misses the "big picture" of the larger context of the Gospel as a whole." (38)

They go on to argue (very persuasively in my mind) that:

After it is made clear in Matthew that Jesus regarded God as the only proper object of worship (*proskuneō*), it is striking that Jesus appears so frequently in the same Gospel to be the object of worship (2:2, 11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9, 17)—even if in the immediate situation the act is sometimes only a token of humble respect. (8-39)

The chapter continues to build the case for Jesus being worshiped by the disciples, angels, and finally everyone (see Phil. 2:10-11; Rev. 5:13-14).

In building the case for prayer to Jesus in chapter 3 entitled, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" they take a straightforward approach and simply point out those places in the NT where prayer is directly offered to Jesus. They argue that "Lord" in Acts 1:24-25 is in reference to Jesus as opposed to the Father and build a solid case for this interpretation based on three things:

First, like the other New Testament writers, Luke most frequently used "Lord" (*kurios*) to refer to Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Second, Peter had just referred to "the Lord Jesus" (Acts 1:21) prior to the group's addressing the "Lord" in prayer. Third, Jesus personally chose the men who served as his apostles, including Paul and any others chosen after Jesus' resurrection. The verb Luke uses in Acts 1:24 for "have chosen"

(*exelexō*) is the same verb that appears in another form earlier in the chapter in reference to Jesus having “chosen” his apostles (*exelexato*, 1:2). (48)

In chapter 4 “Sing to the Lord” they build upon a foundation laid in the Hebrew Scriptures of people singing to Yahweh and show how the earliest believers sang to Christ in the same manner. Using Ephesians 5:18-20 as a starting off point we are told:

Paul not only tells Christians to sing songs to the Lord Jesus, but he also urges them to sing to the Lord in their “hearts.” In other words, song and music in honor of Jesus are to be such a part of our lives that we find ourselves humming such hymns to ourselves or hearing them in our minds as we go about our daily routines.

For Jews steeped in the faith of the Old Testament, to “sing to the Lord” meant to sing to Yahweh, the Lord God (Exod. 15:21; Judg. 5:3; 1 Chron. 16:23; Pss. 7:17; 9:11; 92:1; 95:1; 96:2; 104:33; Isa. 42:10). Yet, in context, Paul is speaking of singing to the Lord Jesus. Verse 20 refers to him as “our Lord Jesus Christ,” and the whole passage follows a Trinitarian pattern: “be filled with the Spirit . . . singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts . . . giving thanks to God the Father” (vv. 18–20). Paul again calls Jesus “the Lord” in verse 22. So Ephesians 5 testifies to the fact that, less than thirty years after Jesus’ death and resurrection, singing to Christ—as “the Lord”—was an expected, uncontroversial part of the Christian life. (55-56)

A very useful discussion on the Carmen Christi (Phil. 2:5-11) follows as well as some references to the earliest Christian hymn book — the Psalms.

In the last chapter of the section, “The Ultimate Reverence Package” the authors make a very compelling argument for Jesus being more than a mere “spokesman for God” who is the “primary object of faith” (62). They point to the manner in which Jesus directed the disciples to place their faith in HIM, focusing their attention on Jesus in the same way that Jews were expected to focus theirs on Yahweh. They cover a few topics from the fear of the Lord to service to Christ in this chapter, but the discussion on the Lord’s Supper is in my opinion the high point of the chapter. I’ll leave it to the curious reader to purchase the book and find out why I feel this way.

## **Attributes**

In the second section (chapters 6-10) the authors make their case for the deity of Christ based upon his divine attributes. Rather than the usual bullet pointed list or attribute chart that we find on every internet apologist's web site, Komoszewski and Bowman present us with in depth analyses of the attributes which point to the deity of the Son.

In the first chapter of the section "Beyond Resemblance" we are told:

Honoring Jesus in these ways would be odd—and blasphemous—if he were merely a man. No matter how great a human being he might have been, no matter how wise or kind or influential we consider him to have been, it would be wrong to honor Jesus as God if he were fundamentally and in essence no more than a man. (73)

This in my opinion is the crux of Christology and the thought that eventually led to an articulated doctrine of the Trinity. How is it that Christ was honored the way he was alongside God unless he was somehow equal to God? How could Jesus be included in the divine identity and monotheism be maintained? As we find out more about the attributes of Christ these questions begin to receive their answers.

They begin by giving a helpful and necessary definition of communicable and incommunicable attributes saying:

Communicable attributes are those attributes that God shares in some way with creatures (particularly human beings), such as love, holiness, and faithfulness. Incommunicable attributes are those attributes that God does not and cannot share with creatures, such as being all-knowing, all-powerful, and eternal. To say that Jesus is exactly, perfectly like God is to say that he possesses both the communicable and the incommunicable attributes of God. (74)

Nowadays hardly anyone denies the communicable attributes that Jesus possessed but it is all too common to deny his possessing the incommunicable attributes of God (see groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, so-called Biblical Unitarians, etc.). The authors focus on key passages in this chapter such as Colossians 1:13, 15a; 2:9; John 14:7-10a; Hebrews 1:3). Students of Christology should be familiar with the Christological interpretations of these texts but the authors present them in a manner that is accessible to even the uninformed. One constant theme that runs throughout this work is the reader friendly language and the concise explanations of otherwise difficult concepts.

In chapter 7 "Jesus Existed Before He Was Born!" we see a defense of Jesus' preexistence. They begin with an observation that certain scholars see Jesus' likeness to the Father in terms of his

perfect humanity as opposed to his deity. After commenting on how Jesus' preexistence is bound up with his possessing the divine nature and attributes they pose a question: "Was Jesus a man through whom God was revealing himself, or was he God revealing himself as a man?" (82)

Interacting with top scholars such as James D.G. Dunn and Karl-Josef Kuschel, the authors set forth a positive case for the preexistence of the Son and do so using key Pauline texts such as Philippians 2:5-11; Galatians 4:4-6; and Romans 8:3. They also present a defense of preexistence from Jesus' "I have come" sayings in the Synoptic Gospels in agreement with much of what Simon Gathercole has argued in his monograph, *The Preexistent Son*. When it is all said and done they then turn to the Johannine texts that even scholars like Dunn and Kuschel admit show a doctrine of preexistence. I found this section enjoyable.

In chapter 8 "Jesus Has Always Been There" we see a series of arguments for the eternal preexistence of the Son. This chapter is geared towards those who will grant preexistence but not an eternal preexistence (e.g. Jehovah's Witnesses). They build a progressive case first showing that the Son existed throughout the days of the Old Testament. They give a very terse treatment to 1Corinthians 10:4 which they conclude saying:

Moreover, what Paul says here about Christ is what the Old Testament said about the Lord God: that the Israelites had put him to the test (Num. 14:22; 21:5-6; Pss. 78:18-20; 95:9). Once again, the New Testament affirms not only Christ's preexistence but also his divine preexistence. (95)

They give a more extended treatment to John 8:58 focusing on key issues of grammar as they relate to the ultimate reaction of the Jews. Their conclusion is something that has long been noted by Trinitarians and those who hold a high Christology but is seemingly denied by those who do not. They tell us:

The reaction of Jesus' critics to his statement—attempting to stone him (John 8:59)—confirms that they thought he was making a divine claim. Had Jesus stated only that he had been alive longer than Abraham, they might have regarded such a claim as crazy (as they apparently did with regard to his earlier comments, vv. 48-57), but not as an offense meriting stoning. Of the offenses for which Jews practiced stoning, the only one that seems to fit the context here is blasphemy. Claiming to be older than Abraham might have been judged crazy, but it would not have been judged as blasphemy. Speaking as if one were Abraham's eternal God, on the other hand, would be quickly deemed blasphemous by Jesus' critics, who of course did not recognize his divine claims as valid. (97)

Helpful discussions of John's interpretation of Isaiah 6 as a reference to Jesus as well as John's prologue, and the first chapter of Hebrews follow — all of which are very concise and make the section worth a gander.

In chapter 9 "Jesus: The Right Stuff" arguments that propose Jesus is a created being are addressed in detail. This chapter focuses mainly on those arguments made frequently by Jehovah's Witnesses. First is a treatment of Colossians 1:15 and the reference to Jesus being the 'firstborn of all creation (104-106).' Secondly the authors deal with the notion that Jesus was 'created Wisdom' (106-109). You should be able to give the JWs a run for their money the next time they come-a-knocking after reading this section. The chapter closes with a few comments regarding Christ's immutability (109-111) and his loving nature/character (111-112).

Closing the Attributes section out is chapter 10 "He's Got What It Takes." This chapter deals with those attributes that most immediately associate with God, i.e. omnipotence (113-115), omnipresence (115-118), omniscience (118-122), and incomprehensibility (122-123). A very useful chart labeled "The Paradoxical Person" finishes off the chapter showing how God possessed certain attributes that Jesus appears to both possess and not possess. The authors explain the paradox this way:

Think about it this way: suppose the infinite Creator of the universe assumed finite, human nature, grew from infancy to adulthood, and shared in our normal human experiences of working and playing, waking and sleeping, eating and drinking, learning and growing. Would we expect to understand how he could experience our humanity to the full and still be God? Of course not. We would expect paradoxes or mysteries, all down the line, with respect to his attributes. And that is exactly what we find (see the accompanying table). On the other hand, if Jesus were merely a great human being or even an angel who somehow became a human being, we would not expect him to have been a fundamentally incomprehensible individual. Precisely because Jesus is both God and man, he is the preeminent, paradoxical person. (123)

## **Names**

In the third section (chapters 11-14) of the book the authors argue for Jesus' deity based on the various names attributed to him in the New Testament. They immediately point out in "Name One" that '*unless stated otherwise, [they] use the word name to refer to both proper names (like Jesus) and titles (like Savior).*' (127)



After listing several titles in the NT they note that it isn't entirely incorrect to make a distinction between proper names and titles, but point out that there are times when titles function as proper names. They then go on to clear up any possible confusion in saying:

We are *not* saying that if the Bible uses a particular name for God, then anyone else given that name in the Bible must also be God. The Hebrew and Greek words for *god* and *lord*, as well as for *savior*, *shepherd*, *rock*, and the like, all apply in certain contexts to beings who are neither divine nor objects of religious devotion. Like virtually all words, these words have different meanings in different contexts. (128)

This is indicative of the authors' treatment of every subject throughout the book — they aren't looking for an easy way out by rattling off a bunch of proof texts, instead they are willing to concede points that otherwise might seem to undermine their position. But this is not the case here as they argue for a cumulative effect saying:

One can find a few texts here and there in the Bible that refer to some men over here as "saviors," or to a man over there as a "rock," but one cannot find texts referring the same mere human being as god, lord, savior, shepherd, rock, first and last, and king of kings and lord of lords! The application of all these designations to the one person, Jesus Christ, often with two or more in the same immediate context, is highly significant. (128-129)

In chapter 12 entitled "Immanuel: God With Us," Komozsewski and Bowman examine the NT passages that call Jesus 'God' with a level of terseness that one wishes all Christological works presented. They begin with a brief examination of Isaiah 7:14, of course noting the semantic issues concerning the use of the Hebrew '*almah*' which many argue does not mean 'virgin.' While ultimately I'm persuaded by Michael L. Brown's argument in *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus* that "there is no single word in Biblical Hebrew that always and only means 'virgin'..." (Vol. 3, p. 21), I think the authors are quite right to note here that "the word *almah* never refers to a married woman, and usually it is clear or implied that the woman is unmarried and a virgin." (136)

They go on to examine the 'book ends' of John's prologue (esp. 1:1 & 1:18) and the end of his Gospel (20:28) noting a parallel between the glory of God dwelling in the tabernacle/temple and the Word tabernacling among us saying:

John says that the Word that made his dwelling among us has the "glory as of the only Son from the Father" (v. 14 ESV). This statement is a way of saying that the

Son is just like his Father when it comes to glory (a “chip off the old block,” some people still say). (139)

They also address the various other references to Jesus as God in the NT, notable Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5; Hebrews 1:8; Titus 2:13; and 2Peter 1:1. Reference is made to textual issues as well as possible alternate translations. In my opinion each passage is dealt with fairly and honestly and what I really appreciated about this chapter was the note they ended on in saying:

Recognizing this is not merely an academic exercise; it is a summons to grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ and to begin living in such a way as to glorify him forever. (156)

In the following chapter “He Is Lord” the title Lord (Gk. *kyrios*) is examined in great detail. Perhaps the highlight of this chapter for me was being pointed to something that I had never noticed in all of my reading on the NT. The authors point out that:

Early in his ministry, Jesus warned that even those who said to him “Lord, Lord” (*kurie, kurie*) and claimed to do miracles in his name were condemned if they disobeyed him (Matt. 7:21-22; Luke 6:46; see also Matt. 25:11). This doubled form of address occurs repeatedly in the Septuagint in place of the Hebrew “Lord YHWH” (Deut. 3:24; 9:26; 1 Kings 8:53; Ps. 69:6; Ezek. 20:49; Amos 7:2, 5) or “YHWH Lord” (Pss. 109:21; 140:7; 141:8), but never in reference to anyone but YHWH. (160)

Of course attention is paid to Jesus being confessed as Lord for salvation, Christian prayer to Jesus as Lord, and in answering an objection against Jesus being given the name that is above all names, they offer an interpretation of Philippians 2:9-11 that is popular (yet one I ultimately disagree with) – saying that, “Thus, when Paul says, “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,” he is saying that the name *Jesus* now stands as the highest, most honored name in all creation.” (167) The problem as I see it with this interpretation is that it only actually accounts for the *person* that is most honored and stands above all, not for the *name* that does such. Jesus as a name is quite common and in and of itself doesn’t stand above any other name; it must be attached to Jesus of Nazareth, the eternal Son of God for this assertion to stand. But the name YHWH is unique, denoting God’s otherness in his transcendent eternity. It is the name YHWH that is given to the Son in his exaltation.

In the final chapter of this section, “Jesus Is It From A to Z” five more names are examined. These include Bridegroom/Husband, King of Kings and Lord of lords, Savior, I Am, and finally Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End, First and Last. Each of these names are paralleled with

their uses in the Hebrew Scriptures (and LXX) and the way in which they refer to YHWH. Serious students of Christology will not be astonished with this chapter by learning something new, but they will no doubt be pleased with the thorough review that it offers. Especially pleasant was the oft overlooked Bridegroom/Husband section which began the chapter (171-173).

Like all the others, this section ends on a high note with the authors rightly stating that “[w]hen Christians affirm that Jesus is God, they are simply being faithful to the explicit teaching of the Bible.” (181) Amen and Amen.

## **Deeds**

In this, the fourth section of the book (chapters 15-18), Bowman and Komoszewski make the case for the deity of Christ based on the deeds that he performs. In a succinct four chapters they touch on just about every relevant deed that one could think of and even a couple that might slip one’s mind.

Chapter 15 “Meet Your Maker” brilliantly summarizes the OT doctrine of one God/Creator and then shows how the NT affirms that Jesus created in union with God the Father. They begin by showing how Yahweh was worthy of worship due to his being the creator of all that was created, citing passages such as Psalm 95:5-7 and Nehemiah 9:6. This segues nicely into their presentation of the major NT passages that explicitly depict Jesus as creator, i.e., 1Corinthians 8:6; Hebrews 1:2; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16. They say:

Assuming these statements cohere with the Jewish doctrine that YHWH, the Lord God, is the sole Creator and Maker of all things, the clear implication is that Jesus Christ, the Son, is himself the Lord God. (188)

They go on to challenge an argument which asserts that Jesus somehow played a inferior role in creation due to all things being created ‘through’ (Gk. *dia*) him while they came ‘from’ (Gk. *ek*) the Father (see 1Cor. 8:6). It is supposed that the Father acts here as a Zeus-like figure while Jesus plays the role of a demiurge. They believe that this interpretation of 1Corinthians 8:6 is incorrect and argue that Bauckham’s view of Paul rearrangement of the Shema should be understood in this verse. They say:

Bauckham’s analysis demonstrates that Paul is not distinguishing two deities, the supreme deity and a lesser one. Rather, he is distinguishing within the identity of the one Lord God of Judaism two persons, the Father and Jesus Christ. (189)

This is a point that I have long noticed in my reading of 1Corinthians 8:6. It would seem unthinkable for Paul to attribute the language of Lord to Christ in this passage in the way that he has unless he perceived Jesus as being somehow part and parcel of God. They continue in dismantling this argument by noting that the same preposition used of Jesus is used elsewhere of the Father in regard to creation (see Rom. 11:36). A couple of useful tables appear on pp. 191-192 to help visualize the argument as is standard throughout this work.

Chapter 16 “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands” moves from Christ as Creator of the universe to Sustainer of the universe. They start off by noting the change in verb tenses between the aorist *ektisthē* (‘were created’) and the perfect *ektistai* (‘have been created’) in Colossians 1:16, saying that “Verse 16, then, indicates that creation stands in an ongoing relation of dependence on the Son for its existence.” (196) A few other passages are examined all proving the same point. Not only did Christ create, but the creation remains because of him.

The authors then move on to discussing miracles and draw from Werner Kahl’s work in the area. They make great use of his distinctions of three kinds of miracles workers. They summarize them saying:

A person who has inherent healing power he calls a “bearer of numinous power” (BNP). He uses the term “petitioner of numinous power” (PNP) for those who ask God to perform the miracle. Between these two extremes is the category of “mediator of numinous power” (MNP), which applies to persons who mediate the numinous power of a BNP in order to produce a miracle.<sup>13</sup> Being a MNP or PNP clearly is not evidence of deity, whereas being a BNP could be evidence of deity.

They spend a few paragraphs with Eric Eve’s dissertation *The Jewish Context of Jesus’ Miracles*, where Biblical prophets such as Moses and Elijah are discussed as well as “rabbinical accounts of ‘charismatic holy men’ such as Honi the Circle-Drawer and Hanina ben Dosa” (199) concluding that Moses was an MNP, Elijah was a PNP, and at best, the other two were PNP’s. Jesus however was in a class all his own being a BNP. They base this on Jesus rarely praying before performing miracles which shows that he is not a PNP, and his not performing miracles in the name of his Father, which shows that he is not an MNP.

The chapter closes by taking into consideration Jesus’ command over nature. They look at his telling the disciples where to lower their nets to catch a great amount of fish. Jesus’ multiplying the loaves and fish is also seen as having authority over the natural. Perhaps the most convincing and the one with the greatest parallels in the Hebrew Scriptures is Jesus’ walking on water and commanding the wind and waves to be still. The parallels they point out in this section are well worth taking the time to examine.

In chapter 17 “The Way, the Truth, and the Life” they examine Jesus’ bold claim in John 14:6. They say that it would have been unthinkable for a pious Jew to make such a claim, unless of course it were true. Mary Baker Eddy’s *Science and Health with key to the Scriptures* and *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* are both pointed out as rephrasing this statement so as to weaken its effect, but as they so aptly point out, “He is not merely ‘the way-shower’; he is the way.” (208) The Synoptics and Acts are then run through to show that this sentiment is not unique to John’s Gospel but can be found throughout the NT, in fact I’d argue that this is a pillar upon which the NT narrative rests.

A discussion ensues about Jesus’ role as rabbi and prophet in the NT and while he certainly did function as these things, he has to be classified in a category all his own. As the authors note:

In crucial ways, though, Jesus did not speak like a rabbi or a prophet. A rabbi was a teacher or expositor of the Torah, or Law, the foundational books of the Old Testament (Genesis through Deuteronomy). Furthermore, the rabbis interpreted the Torah within the stream of oral tradition and rabbinical reflection on Scripture that had been going on for centuries—at least since the time of Ezra. [...] Jesus never spoke this way. In the Sermon on the Mount, he deliberately contrasts his approach with that of “the scribes and Pharisees” (Matt. 5:20), drawing the contrast in this way: “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times... But I say to you” (vv. 21–22). (214)

Jesus had a revolutionary way of reinterpreting the law and speaking with an authority unlike any rabbi that the world had ever known. They also note the manner in which Jesus never spoke as the prophets of old did saying, “thus says the Lord.” They say:

Instead, as we have just noted, Jesus typically introduced his comments by saying, “I say to you” (about 145 times).<sup>14</sup> While it is possible for mere humans to use those words in various contexts without implying any exalted claims for themselves, the way Jesus uses them (in deliberate contrast to the most highly respected religious authorities of Jewish tradition) does imply such claims. (215)

We have numerous examples throughout the Gospels where the manner in which Jesus spoke was perceived as blasphemous, and had Jesus been anything less than deity, then those charges of blasphemy would have been justified.

They close this chapter out by showing how Jesus is the giver of life through his resurrection and the sending of the Spirit. The Spirit is not merely the Spirit of God, or the Spirit of the Father, but he is the Spirit of Christ as well. The Son in conjunction sends the Spirit to the earth to inhabit his body. They say:

Everything that we look to God to do for our spiritual, eternal benefit, the New Testament in one way or another tells us to look to Jesus to do. That makes him truly our Lord and our God. (221)

The final chapter in this section, “Here Comes the Judge” focuses on Jesus’ “eschatological deeds.” (223) Of course our attention is turned to the return of Christ to the earth. They explain why we can be assured that Christ will return when they say that “the very nature of his resurrection implies what the New Testament plainly affirms: Jesus is coming back to the earth. In the Old Testament, the hope of final peace and justice in the world is the coming of the Lord (YHWH).” (224)

Before moving into the judgment theme that the NT picks up from the OT and applies to Christ, a few words are spent showing how if Christ was not raised then no one would be. This is Paul’s clear message in 1Corinthians 15 and this is our hope, they say that in a sense this is the beginning of an eschatological resurrection that we are all awaiting. But they make mention of one oft-debated deed, that is Jesus’ raising himself to life. They say:

Jesus’ role here is not a passive one of merely being the first person raised from the dead to immortal life. It is true that the New Testament credits God the Father with raising Jesus (see especially Gal. 1:1). But it also teaches that Jesus raised himself from the dead! When challenged to produce a sign validating his claimed authority, Jesus replied, “Destroy this temple, and in three days *I* will raise it up” (John 2:19, emphasis added). Although his hearers thought Jesus was referring to the man-made building in Jerusalem, John explains, “But he was speaking of the temple of his body” (v. 21). He then comments, “When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken” (v. 22 ESV). John could not be more explicit: what Jesus meant was that after he was killed, he would “raise up” his own body from the dead. (227)

There are times when even those who affirm the deity of Christ will ignore this statement, opting rather to accept that the Father raised Jesus and that’s it. I think that Jesus’ statement is not only an evidence of his deity, but also an expression of the perichoretic union of the three persons of the Trinity. While each may have a principle function, they are all active in everything that God does.

They end this chapter by picking up on the judgment themes in the Hebrew Scriptures as I mentioned above, concluding that Jesus is judge. They say that the “New Testament affirmations of Jesus as the eschatological Judge not only assign him that role but often do so (once again) in

language that appears to be deliberately echoing Old Testament affirmations about the Lord God.” (229)

This section was extremely well done as it continued the momentum of the book that I have enjoyed throughout. It would be hard to imagine anyone denying the deity of Christ after reading such a thorough treatment of his deeds. Readers will do well to familiarize themselves with the points made in this chapter and commit them to memory for those encounters with your Jehovah’s Witness or Unitarian friends.

## **Seat**

In the fifth and final section of the book (chapters 19-21) Komoszewski and Bowman make their case for the deity of Christ based on his seat, i.e., his position at the right hand of the Father and his sharing the throne of God. This is by far the shortest section of the book, but it is a section that addresses an oft neglected topic, so what we do have is more than what we’re used to getting.

In chapter 19 “Jesus Takes the Stand” the authors note that some might feel that Jesus sharing God’s throne is the same as Jesus having one of God’s honors attributed to him, which of course was what the entire first section of the book was dedicated to addressing. They respond to this by saying, “We think it’s better, however, to say that Jesus properly receives those honors precisely *because* he shares God’s throne.” (236)

They draw heavily from the work of Darrell L. Bock in *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism: The Charge against Jesus in Mark 14:53-65* in this chapter and the next (“God’s Right-Hand Man”) arguing that Jesus was charged with blasphemy for appropriating two messianic texts (Ps. 110:1; Dan. 7:13) for himself. In claiming that he’d return on the clouds of heaven he was drawing from imagery usually associated with God, and by claiming to be seated at the right hand of God he was claiming supreme authority over his accusers. They take the time to outline the different ways in which blasphemy may be interpreted but in Jesus’ case they conclude that “Jesus’ critics think he has committed blasphemy by claiming prerogatives belonging only to God.” (241)

In Chapter 20 “God’s Right-Hand Man” they note the scholarly trend that asserts the NT view of Jesus arose from an “existing Jewish tradition concerning one or more exalted, ‘intermediate’ figures between human beings and God.” (250) They take a brief look at two examples of exalted human figures, namely Moses and Enoch, ultimately concluding that “[t]here was no Jewish tradition of worshipping Moses . . . [and] . . . [n]othing in Enoch suggests that the Son of Man is actually divine.” (251-252) In agreement with Timo Eskola they say:

[E]xplaining the belief in a divine Jesus as a natural development within Judaism rests on the faulty assumption that the belief is not true. *It presupposes that Jesus was not, in fact, the exalted figure the New Testament says that he is.* If Jesus really is the divine Son of God incarnate, and if he really did rise from the dead, appear to his disciples, and ascend into heaven, then *the origin of the New Testament teaching about Jesus is Jesus himself.* (253)

In Chapter 21 “Jesus Takes His Seat” Komoszewski and Bowman outline six points of consideration which they feel makes their case that Jesus occupies the same place as God in heaven. They are as follows:

1. Jesus is said to exercise universal rule over “all things” (255)
2. Jesus’ exaltation is described in the same spatial terms reserved for expressing the exalted location of God’s throne. (256)
3. The New Testament states emphatically that Jesus is exalted above all of God’s heavenly court. (256-257)
4. The New Testament reveals that Jesus actually sits on God’s own throne. (257-258)
5. What Jesus does from God’s right hand shows that he functions as God. (258-259)
6. Jesus receives universal worship from his position at God’s right hand. (259-261)

Following these six lines of evidence is a defense of the Son’s equality with God in sharing the throne. They specifically respond to three objections that are sometimes drawn from 1Corinthians 15:24-28. They state these objections this way:

From this one passage alone, three distinct objections have been made to viewing Jesus Christ as equal with God: the Son’s kingdom is temporary, not eternal (vv. 24–25); even now the Son’s authority does not extend over God (v. 27); in the end the Son will be subject to God (v. 28). (262)

They answer the objections by stating that the Son’s handing over of the kingdom doesn’t indicate his no longer ruling contra Luke 1:33, Ephesians 1:21, and Revelation 11:15. They say:

Paul is speaking of a “stage” in the kingdom of God in which God’s Son, Jesus Christ, is in this age focusing on bringing people redemption from sin and salvation from evil powers and death (see also Eph. 1:19–23; Col. 1:13–20). In other words Paul is referring specifically to a spiritual or mediatorial phase of the kingdom of God in which Christ’s position as ruler is most prominent. (262)



The second objection receives little more than a pat on the head and a polite push away because “no one claims that God is currently subject to the Son.” (263) To the third objection they note that the “fact about the relationship between God the Father and the incarnate Son does not diminish the Son’s exalted status over all creation. He is still “Lord of all” (Rom 10:12).” (263) In other words, if the Son is subject to the Father while incarnate, and yet this is not a creaturely subjection, then his subjection in the coming kingdom should not pose the problem that those who deny the Son’s deity think it does.

They address one more objection before closing out and that is the argument that believers are seated with Christ (Eph. 2:6) and will one day share his throne (Rev. 3:21). They note that when read in context these passages simply point to those in Christ “eventually receiv[ing] all the blessings of God’s rich grace . . . [and their] . . . hav[ing] someone sitting on the throne of God who represents them, someone who is ‘on their side,’ and through whom they have immediate, direct, intimate access to God.” (264)

They close by pointing out that while John’s Gospel never addresses the fact of Jesus being seated at the right hand of God, it makes the same point by asserting that Jesus resides in the bosom of the Father. Both are simply means of showing that Jesus is as close to the Father as possible.

The conclusion of the book takes everything that has been discussed and summarizes it in an extremely terse manner. They focus their final efforts on showing that while any one line of evidence is good by itself, when all of them are taken together, they present a case beyond a reasonable doubt. They note their opinion that Bauckham’s work is some of the most innovative in the field but that they think he would have done well to include the attributes of Christ into his presentation and argument for divine identity. They also criticize criteria similar to theirs as outlined by Charles Gieschen in his published dissertation. The problem isn’t his categories, but rather the manner in which he defines them. When defined as things unique to God then the case is made for the deity of the one meeting the criteria, but as Gieschen defines them they can fit angelic figures or exalted men.

I was also pleased to see a brief section in which the HANDS line of evidence was shown in the Nicene Creed, but they were careful to show that this was no post-biblical convention by examining four concluding passages of Scripture (Matt. 28:16-20; John 1:1-18; Heb. 1:1-13; Phil. 2:6-11) that show most (if not all) of the HANDS criteria.

They round the book out with an 8 page appendix that contains all of the tables found throughout the book for easy referencing, 75 pages of end notes, a recommended reading list, and a Scripture index. My major criticism is that end notes were used at all, but even if I were to forgive this egregious editorial sin, I am of the opinion that some of the notes belonged in the main body of text. All in all this is my biggest problem with this wonderful book on New

Testament Christology. This is a book that needs to be in the hands of every Bible Study teacher, every Pastor, every counter-cult Apologist, and every person interested in theological and biblical studies.