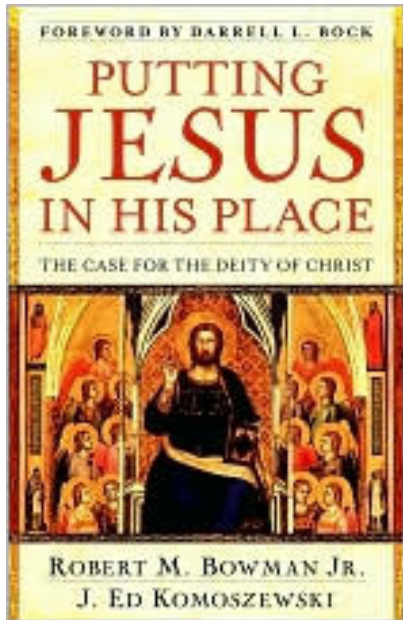


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Bowman, Robert M., Jr., and J. Ed Komoszewski

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

Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007. Pp. 392. Paper. \$18.99.
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This book is not easy to evaluate for a publication such as *RBL*, in large part because it so mixes genres that it stands a bit outside the orb of *RBL*'s normal interests. On the one hand, it is a competent survey of the biblical (and mostly New Testament) passages that testify to or are at least consistent with the full deity of Jesus Christ. Even some of those who confessionally support the affirmation that Jesus is God are likely to be surprised by the quantity of material that can be adduced. Controversial passages are helpfully discussed at an introductory level. The book includes about seventy pages of endnotes reflecting careful, responsible reading of English-language secondary sources. Small wonder, then, that this book pulls in approving "blurbs" from Craig Evans, Richard Bauckham, I. Howard Marshall, Larry Hurtado, Craig Blomberg, and other luminaries.

On the other hand, the book is written in a racy style that is a reflection of the authors' interests in popular apologetics. Stylistically it is quite unlike, say, the even-handed evaluative stance of Simon J. Gathercole's *The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (2006), although it sometimes leans on it and learns from it. The five substantive parts of the book are organized around the acronym HANDS: (1) Jesus shares the honors due to God; (2) Jesus shares the atttributes of God; (3) Jesus shares the names of God; (4) Jesus shares in the deeds that God does; and (5) Jesus shares the

seat of God's throne. At the end of the book the biblical texts used in these five sections are helpfully congregated into a chart. Other charts surface from time to time; for example, on page 35 the authors provide a chart of doxologies to God and to the Lamb in the Apocalypse, while on page 44 another chart contrasts how the exalted Christ is worshiped in Rev 1:12–20 with the way that an attempt to “worship” an angel is turned aside in Rev 19–22. At every point the book is clearly written: we are not in doubt about what the authors want to say. Chapter and division titles are sometimes sober and pedestrian (“Immanuel: God with Us”; “He Is Lord”) and sometimes rather cutesy (“The Best Seat in the House” [referring to the fact that Jesus shares the seat of God's throne]; “Jesus Is It from A to Z”).

Perhaps it would be useful to give the flavor of a couple of representative chapters. In the section “Jesus Shares the Names of God,” chapter 11 begins by surveying names assigned to Jesus, reflects a little on the flexible boundaries between names and titles, and argues that some of the names and titles assigned to Jesus prove that he is God “*because of their contexts*” (128, emphasis original). For example, an ordinary human being might be referred to as “savior” or “lord” or “rock,” but these are assigned to Jesus in contexts that pick up Old Testament connections with God. Even the name “Jesus” reminds us that Yahweh saves—and according to John's Gospel Jesus revealed to his followers the name of his Father (17:6, 11–12, 26), while Jesus himself has been exalted “above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come” (Eph 1:21), for God has exalted him and given him the name that is above every name (Phil 2:9–11). Miracles are done in Jesus' name; people are baptized “into” Jesus' name; salvation is provided in Jesus' name; the early believers were prepared to die for the name.

The next chapter (ch. 12) focuses on “Immanuel.” The authors devote several pages to Isa 7:14. They hold that “perhaps a child named Immanuel born in Isaiah's time was a precursor to the future child” (136), for there are pieces of evidence in the text that the ultimate child was more than an ordinary human being. After all, Isaiah told Ahaz to ask for a sign “deep as Sheol or high as heaven” (7:11), that is, a miraculous sign of God's purpose to preserve the David royal line. “The implication is that the birth was to be truly miraculous (cf. Isa. 38:7–8)” (136). Bowman and Komoszewski assert that Isa 7:14 is also linked with the prophecy of Isa 9:6–7: for all that he springs from the line of David, he is also the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace, the increase of whose kingdom and peace there will be no end. And what shall we make of the fact that Isa 40:3 anticipates the coming of Yahweh himself, with someone crying out, “Prepare the way of the LORD”—words that the Synoptic Gospels insist describe the preparatory ministry of John the Baptist as he prepared the way for Jesus? Bowman and Komoszewski survey how John's Gospel depicts Jesus as God (esp. in 1:1, 18; 20:28) and then pick up a few other passages in the New Testament, notably Acts 20:28; 9:5; Heb 1:8;

Tit 2:13; 2 Pet 1:1—with a summary treatment of the Granville Sharp rule (influenced by the forthcoming magisterial study by Daniel B. Wallace).

So what shall we make of this book? It is not so much cast in terms of weighing alternative arguments (although some of this takes place in the endnotes) as in making a case. On the material in the Gospels, Bowman and Komoszewski spend little time interacting with others over questions of authenticity. This choice little affects the exegesis of the texts, that is, discerning what the texts say—but of course for some readers it will affect the credibility of the assumption that teaching placed on Jesus' lips is authentic. Yet on many fronts, the treatment of texts, although relatively simple, is not naive. When they treat Heb 1:8, for instance, Bowman and Komoszewski are fully aware that the referent of the one addressed as "God" in Ps 45 is not literally God: the language is hyperbolic. But they argue that, although the context of Ps 45 drives them to that conclusion, the context of the quotation from Ps 45 in Heb 1 drives them to the conclusion that the referent in *this* context *is* God. I think that is correct, even though the discussion of the point in this book does not take the time and space to wrestle with the challenging hermeneutical judgments required to justify this stance to a more critical audience.

This is a book I would gladly give to young Christians who need to see how basic Christian doctrines are grounded in Scripture. I would be equally delighted to give it to uninformed believers who are troubled by Jehovah's Witnesses or perhaps to an undergraduate who is confronting for the first time in his or her young life the strong form of skepticism popularized by, say The Jesus Seminar. Like all books but one, however, it is not for everyone.