

Stuart Squires, *The Pelagian Controversy: An Introduction to the Enemies of Grace and the Conspiracy of Lost Souls*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019. Pp. 366. \$42.00.

In this book, Stuart Squires (Associate Professor at the University of St. Thomas in Houston) offers an introduction to the Pelagian controversy, discussing its key participants, their respective theological positions, the historical course of the controversy, as well as its enduring legacy. With a broad audience in view (readers with a general familiarity with Church history, students, and scholars in the field [xxii]), Squires approaches the topic at hand by dividing his overview into two parts. In the first, he tackles the controversy's history; in the second, he turns to its theological aspects.

The first part of the study has ten chapters. In Chapter 1, Squires discusses three separate contexts that help explain the controversy's eruption in the early fifth century: the political, ascetic, and theological contexts. Within the first of these subsections, Squires offers a summary of the changing relationship between the secular imperial authorities and Christianity, arguing that by the end of the fourth century, imperial leaders increasingly saw themselves as charged with intervening in disputes among Christians—a fact that manifests itself in the imperial efforts against the Pelagians in 418 and beyond. Squires then turns to discuss the rise of asceticism, situating the Pelagians as part of the broader ascetic movement. Finally, Squires addresses the importance of the theological debates surrounding Origen at the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth centuries and notes that the debates stemming from Origen's concerns over God's justice and goodness and human free will reappear in the Pelagian controversy.

After this initial contextual chapter, Squires turns to a series of biographical portraits: Pelagius (Chapter 2), Caelestius (Chapter 3), the "holy priest" Rufinus (Chapter 4), Augustine (Chapter 5), Jerome (Chapter 6), and Orosius (Chapter 7). In these chapters, Squires offers what details are available on the life and activity of these various individuals. As might be expected, some chapters are substantially longer than others (especially that on Augustine). Squires makes relatively frequent reference in these chapters to various scholarly opinions on these individuals. These references help to indicate the contours of the scholarly landscape and the varying perspectives that have been offered.

Having introduced most of the main actors in the controversy, Squires then offers in Chapter 8 an overview of the course of the first phase of the controversy itself (411–418). This is a lengthy and detailed chapter that attempts to trace the various efforts of Augustine, Jerome, and others as the controversy spread from

Africa to Palestine to Rome. Squires's discussion of Jerome's anti-Pelagian activity is especially helpful, as Jerome often only makes brief cameo appearances in summaries of the controversy. Those who have studied the controversy may take issue with some details of Squires's presentation: for example, Squires, it seems to me, undervalues on pp. 123–25 the extent to which Orosius's mission to the East was related to the spread of Pelagianism, something that *s.* 348A reveals to us. But overall Squires has done well here with a sometimes bewildering mass of primary and secondary literature.

With Chapters 9 and 10, Squires turns back to his biographical portraits, turning first to Julian of Eclanum (as well as his literary interactions with Augustine from 418–430) and then to John Cassian. The inclusion of a chapter on Cassian here (and later in Part 2) is appreciated.

Having tackled the history and biographies of the key players in the controversy, Squires then in the second part of his book examines the various (and often conflicting) theological positions promoted by the controversy's participants: Pelagius (Chapter 11), Caelestius and the *Liber de Fide* (Chapter 12), Augustine from 411 to 418 (Chapter 13), Jerome (Chapter 14), Orosius (Chapter 15), Julian (Chapter 16), Augustine from 418 to 430 (Chapter 17), and Cassian (Chapter 18). Squires generally divides these chapters into discrete topical sections, treating the individual author's views on issues such as original sin, free will, grace, predestination, sinlessness, baptism, etc. With Chapters 16 and 17, Squires focuses on the distinctive issues at stake in Augustine's controversy with Julian: e.g., sex, marriage, concupiscence, and Manichaeism. Given the amount of ground Squires has to cover in these chapters, the discussions of individual themes (many of which individually could be—and have already been, in some cases—the foci of entire monographs) are necessarily abbreviated and boiled down to the essentials. Of particular interest is Chapter 14, in which Squires argues that Jerome sought to distance himself from Augustine's theology on several points. I found myself unconvinced by aspects of this argument—for example, Squires's view (227–28) that Jerome used language drawn from Romans 5:14 (*in similitudinem*) as a way to differentiate himself from Augustine's description of the transmission of Adam's sin via propagation (*propagatio*). Augustine himself discussed Romans 5:14 in a few important texts that Jerome had access to (*pecc. mer.* 1.11.13 and *ep.* 157.3.19) and Jerome had already used language from Romans 5:14 in *Aduersus Iouinianum* 2.2—a text which Augustine quoted in *pecc. mer.* 3.7.13. As a result, it is not clear to me that Jerome's preference for such Scriptural language is necessarily evidence for a rejection of (or unease with) Augustine's view. Overall, though, the chapter devoted to Jerome is an important one, offering as it does a solid survey of Jerome's views that are

too often ignored in treatments of the controversy. Indeed, this comment could be repeated for many of the chapters offered here. Although Squires necessarily must sacrifice depth in order to treat so many different participants, what he gains in breadth will be appreciated by readers.

The final chapter of Squires's book, his conclusion, offers an engaging summary of the enduring debates over the issues at the heart of the Pelagian controversy from the 420s up to the 2010s. Squires begins with an overview of the so-called semi-pelagian controversy, including discussion of Prosper of Aquitaine. He then moves to an overview of the events leading up to the Second Council of Orange (529), discussing the contributions of Faustus of Riez and Fulgentius of Ruspe. After that, he turns to the ninth-century debates between Gottschalk and Hincmar (and others associated with them), to the Protestant Reformation (with a particular focus on the Augsburg Confession), to the Council of Trent, and to the Jansenist controversy. Finally, Squires treats Pope Francis's recent use of the term "neo-Pelagianism" and attempts to decipher the pope's meaning (and the term's relation to historical Pelagianism). Squires concludes his book with an extensive bibliography that will be of great interest for any hoping to delve deeper in the Pelagian controversy.

Overall, Squires's book offers a fine and thought-provoking introduction to the Pelagian controversy. A few critiques might be offered. First, I wonder if Squires's book would have benefited from a narrower intended audience. As noted above, he writes for general theologically-literate readers, students, and scholars in the field. One can see this diverse audience in view throughout the book. For example, certain aspects of the book (e.g., the extensive background on the lives of Augustine and Jerome or the relatively brief treatments of the main participants' theological positions) seem designed for readers being introduced to these figures and to the controversy for the first time. Other aspects (e.g., Squires's frequent references to various scholarly opinions, especially in Chapter 8) seem more appropriate for graduate students or even scholars in the field. The book's desire to serve both audiences at the same time runs the risk of overwhelming students with information while not necessarily "advancing the conversation" for scholars. For a scholarly audience, it would have been useful to hear Squires discuss in a more direct way, for example, whether and to what extent Pelagius and/or Caelestius held what their opponents accused them of holding (a recurring question among scholars of the Pelagian controversy).

A second critique might be leveled at some of Squires's decisions over what figures merited their own chapters. While, as I noted above, I appreciated the discussion of John Cassian, I found myself wondering why Prosper of Aquitaine was not given a chapter of his own as well. Perhaps the material on the "semi-pelagian"

controversy from the conclusion should have been given its own chapter and expanded a bit. Another topic that could have been given a chapter is the role and position(s) of the Roman pontiffs involved in the controversy (especially Innocent and Zosimus). To what extent did they agree with or differ from Augustine and his allies' theology? Of course, the book is already quite lengthy (just under 300 pages, with a rather large page size), so I completely understand the need to limit the scope of the work. Perhaps some elements of Part 1 could have been shortened (especially Chapter 1's consideration of the contexts of the controversy, as well as elements of Augustine's biography) to allow a bit more discussion of these topics and figures and/or a deeper analysis of the theological views of the participants.

All of that said, Squires's task in this book was no easy one, given the complexities of the history of the controversy, the nuanced theological views espoused by its various participants, and the extensive body of secondary literature devoted to the topic. In that sense, Squires should be commended for offering a well-written and engaging introduction to the controversy—one that I think will be appreciated most by upper-level undergraduates, but also by more advanced students and scholars seeking to gain a foothold in some of the debates and literature related to the controversy. The Pelagian controversy was one of the most important theological disputes of early Christianity. Squires's book will no doubt help to keep the thorny debates of this fifth-century controversy relevant for students today.

*Andrew C. Chronister*  
*Kenrick-Glennon Seminary*