J. O’Keefe’s growing contribution to Cyrillian studies can be seen in his essay, ‘Incorruption, Anti-Origenism, and Incarnation: Eschatology in the Thought of Cyril of Alexandria’. O’Keefe states the fundamental character of Cyril’s theology of hope in this way: ‘the ultimate destiny of the person is to share in God’s life by moving from our present corruptible state to a future incorruptible state’ (p. 189). The author’s contention is that Cyril’s vehement defense of his christological construct is due in large part to his belief that salvation is ultimately incorruption and freedom is decay. Such redemption is possible only through the saving incarnation of the Word of God.

Perhaps the most needed essay is J. McGuckin’s ‘Cyril of Alexandria: Bishop and Pastor’. In a fashion typical of McGuckin, the author traces Cyril’s work as pastor during the anthropomorphite controversy, in which the bishop sought to protect his large church from heresy. Cyril’s ‘pastoral strategy’ was intended to place him in the role of mediator between ‘hierarchy, monastics, and ordinary Christian people’ (p. 236). McGuckin contends that this strategy enabled Cyril to excel Theophilus in his ability to guide the church of Alexandria through the turbulent fifth century.

N. Russell concludes the volume with a survey of the ‘Enduring Influence of Cyril of Alexandria’. He reminds the reader of the normative status of Cyril’s Christology, beginning with the Cyrillian character of Chalcedon. Post-Chalcedonian christological controversies, which resulted in schism, are being addressed through ongoing dialogues among the affected parties. Russell summarizes the parties engaged in dialogue.

Weinandy and Keating have done a service to the discipline through this collection. While heavily Roman Catholic in both tone and content, the volume is a veritable treasure trove of Cyril’s theology. Each article is a contribution to the very important re-reading of Cyril of Alexandria.

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Larry W. Hurtado, Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. xxii + 746. $55.00.

Twenty-five years ago, Professor Hurtado spoke out against the influence of Wilhelm Bousset’s influence in the study of NT Christology (see ‘New Testament Christology: A Critique of Bousset’s influence’, Theological Studies 40 [1979] 306–17). Over the past two decades, he has published a series of articles and a monograph (see One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988]) that developed his ideas and prepared for this serious and substantial contribution to the place
of Jesus in earliest Christianity. The word devotion in the subtitle is important, for Hurtado considers more than ideas: he takes into account all of the experiences and interpretations of Jesus expressed in the extant literature. Such an account is demanded, he says, because of three remarkable facts: devotion to Jesus arose immediately, had an unparalleled intensity, and was articulated within the context of Jewish monotheism.

Comparison to Bousset is natural, and invited by Hurtado himself, who begins his work with an appreciation for the contributions of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule, and an embrace of the same basic project of providing a historical account that is also developmental – minus the history of religions school’s theological tendencies. Instead of Bousset’s overly simple schema in which development moves in a simple geographical/cultural progression, Hurtado (Ch. 1) proposes a more complex picture of interaction between four ‘forces and factors’: the framework of Jewish monotheism, the impact of the ministry of Jesus, religious experiences among Jesus’ followers after his death, and the ‘religious environment’ (specifically Greco-Roman religion).

All such investigations demand a difficult decision concerning the selection and sequence of sources. In this and other matters, Hurtado’s choices are moderate and reasonable. He begins with ‘Early Pauline Christianity’, for obvious reasons: Paul's letters are our earliest datable sources, they exemplify the interplay of factors Hurtado identifies as critical, and they allow movement both backward and forward (Ch. 2). Although the treatment of Paul’s undisputed letters is synthetic, it manages to combine attention to the religious practices evident in Pauline communities as well as the convictions concerning Jesus expressed by Paul’s letters. I wish, however, that Hurtado could have done even more with the experiential character of Paul’s language concerning power and the Holy Spirit, for such language occurs in close connection to convictions concerning Jesus.

The move backward – to devotion to Jesus before Paul – is a difficult one, since it always demands some form of source criticism. Hurtado takes up first the evidence for ‘Judean Jewish Christianity’ (Ch. 3) derived from Paul’s letters and the Acts of the Apostles, finding, as he does throughout the NT material, deep consistency of experience and conviction even within diversity of expression. He then takes up the knotty problem of ‘Q and Early Devotion to Jesus’ (Ch. 4), typically splitting the critical issues: on one side, he aligns himself with scholars confident of our ability to define Q as a composition prior to the synoptic Gospels; on the other side, he finds in Q a devotion to Jesus utterly compatible with that found in the other earliest sources – which helps account for its appropriation by Matthew and Luke.
These opening chapters are the most important as a response to Bousset. Here we do not find an explanation of development based on cultural and ideological differences (Palestinian church/ Hellenists/ Paul) moving as though in a single direction through time, but a more complex and therefore more historically plausible construction of an early Christian koinōnia that produced a variety of literary expressions out of diverse circumstances but that was also linked by shared experiences and convictions. The fundamental — and correct — move is to eliminate the ‘Hellenists’ of Acts as the bearers of the critical transition from ‘Jewish’ to ‘Greek’ contexts. Hurtado has made use of the best historical research concerning the Hellenization of Palestine as well as the best criticisms of the overuse of the Hellenists as a historical phenomenon (see especially Craig Hill) in order to construct this more interactive and complex model.

The next three chapters are devoted to ‘Jesus Books’, first the synoptic Gospels (Ch. 5), then John (Ch. 6), then the wide variety of ‘Other Early Jesus Books’, ranging from Secret Mark to the Coptic Gospel of Thomas (Ch. 7). Hurtado must here face the typical challenges presented by substantial literary narratives whose specific circumstances of composition elude the historian, and it is in these chapters that his desire to assess every critical hypothesis fairly threatens to enlarge his discussions to the point that a clear line of argument becomes difficult to sustain.

Nevertheless, Hurtado struggles valiantly, and succeeds in making some significant observations concerning the variegated literary efforts that fall within the category of ‘gospel’. First, he is correct to find within the canonical gospels certain consistent elements that are either absent or minimal in apocryphal works: they have a realistic narrative, a stress on Jesus’ suffering for others, a communal dimension, and an active (and informed) engagement with the symbolic world of Torah. Second, he is also correct to note that what all gospels share is an appreciation of Jesus that goes much beyond his ‘historical’ work; if anything, the apocryphal gospels tend to stress his divine attributes even more than the canonical Gospels.

The final three chapters move into the second century, which most historians recognize as the period when an explicit Christian self-definition was first required and expressed. Hurtado’s main interest is the conflict between the ‘Radical Diversity’ (Ch. 9) represented by Valentinus and Marcion, and the ‘Proto-Orthodox Devotion’ (Ch. 10) given various literary expressions throughout the second century. He prepares for this explicit contrast by considering as ‘First Century Tributaries’ (Ch. 8) the Letter to the Hebrews and ‘later Pauline Texts’ (Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastorals). This is perhaps his least satisfying chapter, revealing that Hurtado has not thought through every aspect of his agenda with the same thoroughness.
The first problem here is dating. Placing Hebrews, Colossians and Ephesians as ‘tributaries’ to the second century inevitably creates the impression that they are necessarily later in composition than Paul, with whom Hurtado started. But Hebrews can be dated as early as Paul, and questions of Pauline authorship of Colossians and Ephesians still remain for many scholars. Why should such compositions be dealt with after a series of apocryphal gospels, none of which can be dated earlier (at best) than 125? The second problem is that Hurtado leaves out of account as ‘tributaries’ such canonical witnesses as James, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation.

Some of these last compositions Hurtado returns to later, but why should they not be treated in the same chapter as the Pastorals and Hebrews? Why is the placement and treatment of all these compositions so important? Because they challenge the author’s entire posture of ‘working from the ground up’. If James, for example, is read as one of our earliest extant sources for the Jesus movement in Jerusalem – and it can be – how would this affect the characterization of ‘Judean Christianity’? And if Hebrews is read as contemporary to Paul – and there is no compelling reason not to read it that way – why would it not be taken up as evidence for devotion to Jesus in the first generation of believers in the diaspora?

The final discussion of ‘Proto-Orthodox Devotion’ has some of the same sensitivity to multiple religious phenomena that Hurtado displayed in his earlier chapters. Rather than simply review literature, Hurtado here takes up several practices that characterize the Christians who would eventually be known as orthodox (as opposed to heretical): finding Jesus in the OT, collecting the Gospels into a fourfold form, writing visions and revelations, engaging in worship and prayer, facing martyrdom. He also traces the doctrinal developments concerning Jesus that we find in writers from Ignatius through Justin. The book concludes with an epilogue (‘Thereafter’) that summarizes the findings.

The style of scholarship here is much like that one finds in the equally large works of John Meier, James G. D. Dunn, and Raymond E. Brown, all of whom are careful to be ‘critical’, yet always seem to end up with traditional conclusions. Perhaps this is because such conclusions are correct. But once in a while, it would be fascinating to see such careful work lead to a result that was at least a little unsettling. Like those other scholars, Hurtado is unfailingly sedulous in his attention to every scholarly view, and seeks to be even-handed in his treatment of each opinion. The problem with such studied scrupulosity is that subsidiary discussions take up great tracts of space – and reader attention. Despite Hurtado’s sincere desire to be accessible, and despite the simplicity and even casualness of his style, it will take an energetic, well-informed, and persistent reader to work through this massive study, and
it is by no means certain that such a reader will emerge with a very sharp sense of what has been read.

This is, in the end, a book for scholars – why else, really, include such discussions? For scholars nearly as knowledgeable as the author, the treatment of such a wide range of difficult issues is impressive, informative, and often instructive. It deserves high marks for sobriety and sanity, but only middling ones for conveying a vision of what ‘devotion to Jesus’ might really have meant among those who practiced it.

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That Q sometimes gets treated more as a fact than as a widely held hypothesis does nothing to help critical thought. This significant contribution to the synoptic debate by a Q-sceptic is therefore to be welcomed even by those who remain convinced that the existence of Q most plausibly accounts for synoptic relationships. This attack on Q is made from the perspective of the Farrer theory (Luke used Matthew and Mark; Matthew used Mark; no Q), which the author insists should not be called the Farrer–Goulder theory (p. 14). Given the complex web of alliances between diverging groups over the explanation of synoptic data, it is likely that this fresh approach will not only reinvigorate debate, but also find that each of its parts attracts support from an array of constituencies.

The opening chapter sets the scene of Q’s wide reputation both in scholarship and in popular media, of its upgrade from ‘source’ to ‘gospel’, from hypothesis to fact, and of its perception as a ‘discovery’. The author shows that the growing presumption of its existence has been accompanied by striking examples of scholarly ignorance of alternatives to Q, especially of the Farrer hypothesis. The level of confidence in Q is such that ‘one can hardly help noticing that Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz are more willing to discuss doubts about the existence of Jesus than they are doubts about the existence of Q’ (pp. 11–2).

Though at this point we might expect the author to begin to catalogue problems with Q, his second chapter, ‘Setting in Place the Cornerstone: The Priority of Mark’, instead argues for a point on which the Farrer and Q hypotheses agree. Here particularly the Griesbach hypothesis – that Mark used both Matthew and Luke – is under the spotlight. Goodacre argues from references to the fate of Jerusalem and the temple that Matthew and Luke are