



At the Origins of Christian Worship: The Context and Character of Earliest Christian Devotion

By Larry W. Hurtado

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This volume makes a valuable contribution to the debate about the origins and development of Christianity. Larry Hurtado argues that understanding the nature of Christianity in the first century requires taking full account of the first Christians' devotional practices because worship was the context in which christological titles and other expressions of faith were given their specific meaning--a fact that has largely been ignored.

Hurtado focuses on two distinguishing characteristics of earliest Christian worship: its exclusivity (rejecting the worship of other deities) and its "binitarian" shape (the veneration of Christ alongside God the Father). Setting early Christianity within the religious environment of the Roman era, Hurtado describes the features of Christianity that attracted followers and led them to renounce other religions. He then turns his attention to a more detailed discussion of the place of Christ in the monotheistic worship of the earliest Christians, showing that Christ figured in their public and corporate devotional life at a surprisingly early stage. The book concludes with some reflections for Christian worship today based on the historical features of early Christian devotional practices.

Clear, illuminating, and relevant to the modern church, this volume will be of interest to scholars, pastors, students, and general readers seeking insight into the origins of Christian faith and practice.

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Editorial Review

Review

Theology (UK)

"A concise and useful introduction to the subject of roots of Christian worship."

Worship Leader

"This book proves to be pointed and helpful in coming to a greater understanding and appreciation of the origins of Christian worship. I recommend it especially to those wanting to better understand worship's roots."

Toronto Journal of Theology

"In a manner that is both innovative and challenging, Hurtado seeks to locate early Christian theology within the context of early Christian worship (rather than the other way around), comparing Christian practices described in the New Testament with alternative religious expressions from the contemporary Mediterranean world. . . As a rich introduction to Christian worship in its social context, Hurtado's praxis-oriented approach bears much fruit, including its ability to suggest so many promising avenues for further research and debate."

Anglican Theological Review

"This brief, scholarly, and readable book considers -- as its subtitle accurately puts it -- the context and character of early Christian devotion. Larry Hurtado, a leading scholar of evangelical background, seeks to describe the setting in which the earliest Christian worship arose and certain of its features, and then to reflect on issues for contemporary Christian worship."

About the Author

Larry W. Hurtado is professor emeritus of New Testament language, literature, and theology at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland.

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