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Review of The Last Christology of the West: Adoptionism in Spain and Gaul, AD 785-820, by J.C. Cavadini

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presence in these two cities at times when their bishops endured persecution impressed upon him the image of what a bishop must be—one who suffers for his flock and for the rights of his church. This made both the historical and hagiographical Wilfrid a distinctly non-Northumbrian bishop and caused so many of his contemporaries to misjudge him. Indeed, not only did his contemporaries misjudge him but so has history. Foley contends that modern scholars, following their much venerated Bede, have bought into the view that the northern, eremitic Cuthbert truly exemplifies Northumbrian sanctity while the Romanized, episcopal Wilfrid could not. This is an excellent point, and one which Anglo-Saxonists must take seriously.

The highly focused nature of this book as well as its price will limit its appeal, but specialists will find it helpful.

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The Last Christology of the West: Adoptionism in Spain and Gaul, 785–820. By JOHN C. CAVADINI. The Middle Ages Series. Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993. xii + 235 pp. \$36.95.

Students of the history of Christian doctrine know that sometime in the early Middle Ages some deservedly obscure Spanish theologians revived Nestorianism as a minor heresy called adoptionism and were refuted by Alcuin. At best, adoptionism merits a footnote while scholars turn to more important matters.

Cavadini demonstrates that this too common view emerged from deficient scholarship. For generations scholars relied not upon investigations of the relevant texts but rather upon the opinion of Alcuin (a Romanized Englishman and a Carolingian and thus a mainstream thinker) that the Spanish theologians Elipandus of Toledo and Felix of Urgel were immature intellectuals who possibly did not even realize the Nestorian content of their teaching. He argues that a serious encounter with the texts reveals that the Spaniards were creative theologians who worked within a Western context. Unfortunately for them, their critics, who knew little of the Spanish environment, chose to recontextualize their works into an Eastern framework, that is, to assume that the only Christology was that of Ephesus and Chalcedon and thus to condemn the Spaniards as Nestorians.

Cavadini argues that Elipandus, living in Muslim territory, tried to keep alive the traditions of Spanish Christianity and its North African roots. His adoptionism grew from this and not, as many scholars have maintained, from his desire to accommodate his Muslim overlords by playing down the trinitarian nature of Christian belief. Cavadini demonstrates that Elipandus vigorously stood by his Christianity to the Muslims and that his adoptionism

grew out of his refutation of the rather strange trinitarian teachings of an obscure figure named Megetius.

In the classic (Alcuinian) sense, adoptionism meant that Jesus was a good man whom God adopted as his human Son, distinct from the divine Word—thus the charge of Nestorianism. But nowhere in Elipandus's writings "is anyone ever said to adopt anyone or anything" (p. 32). In a telling exercise in historiography, Cavadini starts with the supposition that Elipandus was a creative theologian whose writings offer a subtlety missed by his critics; this new approach yields important results.

Elipandus used the word *adoptivus* in an exegesis of Philippians 2:6–7: "the Son of God himself, who by emptying himself, takes up adoption" (p. 33). Beatus of Liebana first entered the ranks against Elipandus, but Cavadini contends that their two Christologies were quite similar and were worked out in a Spanish context. Only when Pope Hadrian, who did not know matters first-hand, pronounced against Elipandus did Alcuin and other Carolingians join the fray in an impressive display of orthodoxy. Fortunately for Elipandus, he lived in Muslim territory, and the Carolingian wrath fell upon Felix of Urgel, who suffered condemnation and exile in Frankland.

Although Cavadini wants to rehabilitate adoptionism and portray it as a serious, Western Christology, he does not hesitate to praise the contributions of Beatus and Alcuin to the debate. Furthermore, he demonstrates that even Westerners who knew little of the Eastern theologies still linked Christology to soteriology (p. 66).

My one reservation about this fine book is the author's acceptance of the adoptionists' emphasis on Philippians. While he makes a good case for their theology having a Pauline base, he does not criticize them for thus limiting their view and not taking into account other Pauline and New Testament passages which would challenge this view. Alcuin may have been wrong to accuse them of Nestorianism, but he did realize that they had ignored a great deal of other possibilities.

Congratulations are due the author on a well-researched, original, and valuable study.

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Vie chrétienne et culture dans l'Espagne du VIIe au Xe siècles. By Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz. Collected Studies Series CS377. Aldershot, U.K.: Variorum, 1992. x + 292 pp. \$87.50.

This volume is a collection of thirteen studies originally published between 1960 and 1981 by one of the most distinguished historians of the medieval