

George A. Bevan, *The New Judas: The Case of Nestorius in Ecclesiastical Politics, 428-451 CE*, Late Antique History and Religion 13 (Leuven: Peeters, 2016). Pp. XII + 374; €87.

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The broad historical narrative of the tumultuous career of Nestorius, from the eruption of the *theotokos* controversy to the Council of Ephesus and ultimately his retirement in exile, is generally well known among historians of late ancient Christianity. Particularly for the history of Syriac Christianity, the dispute that arose between Nestorius and Cyril of Alexandria opened a fault line that divided Christian communities, and the aftershocks of those events are evident still today in the ecclesiastical makeup of global Christianity. Despite the fact that the significant events of the mid-fifth century have been subjected to rigorous historical examination in scholarly literature, the primary historical sources of these events are so numerous and complex that it can often be difficult to strike a balance between granular detail of specific events and grand, sweeping narratives of orthodoxy and heresy, ecclesiastical power struggles, and the dynamics of imperial Christian court politics.

The present volume by George Bevan is an impressive achievement of harmony in this regard: it is a rigorously researched historical account that, when necessary, recounts the unfolding of day-by-day events, but it also never fails to situate the historical minutiae within the relevant broader frameworks. The true strength of Bevan's approach is his use of a very complex body of primary literature, much of which he describes in the first chapter of the book. Bevan's command of this literature allows him to offer insights into the history of the Nestorian controversy that have often been overlooked in previous scholarship. The subtitle of the work ("The Case of Nestorius in Ecclesiastical Politics, 428-451 CE") provides an accurate description of both the temporal confines and the approach of this study: the singular focus of Bevan's historical narrative is the intersection of ecclesiastical affairs and imperial politics in the narrowly defined time range. This book is not a

theological introduction to the issues of the Christological controversy; it certainly deals with theological issues, but this is first and foremost a historical reconstruction of the ecclesio-political machinations of Nestorius, Cyril, Theodosius II, and everyone immediately connected to them.

The first chapter, as mentioned briefly above, introduces the reader to the complex web of historical sources that pertain to Nestorius. The second chapter provides a brief overview of what is known about Nestorius prior to his election to the bishopric of Constantinople. In the third chapter, Bevan's focus sharpens on the early period of Nestorius' career and the initial uproar regarding the *theotokos* controversy. There are two particular historical claims that Bevan asserts in this chapter that are worth noting: first, Bevan argues that it was likely not Nestorius' own preaching that produced the controversial anti-*theotokos* position, but rather that of two of his associates (Anastasius and Dorotheus). Second, and more significant in the recent history of scholarship on this episode, Bevan downplays the role of Pulcheria in the condemnation of Nestorius' position and, furthermore, argues against her overall significance in the early stages of the controversy. The fourth chapter is a thorough (indeed at times tedious) historical reconstruction of the events of the summer of 431, including a day-by-day recounting of the Council of Ephesus. Here, one of Bevan's primary contributions is a reconsideration of the timeline for the Nestorian and Cyrilline camps reporting to the Emperor Theodosius. Namely, Bevan argues that despite the delayed arrival of Nestorius' supporters, their use of the official imperial network would have allowed them to report their condemnation of Cyril to Theodosius before Cyril's earlier condemnation of Nestorius could arrive at court.

The next three chapters deal with the aftermath of Ephesus and the events that precipitated the Council of Chalcedon. Chapter Five covers in great detail the immediate aftermath of Ephesus, focusing on the years 432-433, the politics surrounding Cyril's "Twelve Anathemas" and their reception in the East, and the reunion "peace treaty" negotiated between

Cyril and John of Antioch. Bevan's primary argument in this chapter is that John of Antioch outmaneuvered Cyril politically in their negotiations, though John himself could not unite all of the opponents to Cyril's anathemas. The following chapter (Chapter Six) turns to oft-neglected years immediately following the peace of 433, focusing on the time period of the bishopric of Proclus in Constantinople and Nestorius' continued efforts to negotiate from his exiled "retirement." Chapter Seven covers the final decade leading up to the Council of Chalcedon (440-450) and focuses almost exclusively on the ecclesio-political developments that would ensure, once and for all, Nestorius' exile and defamation, culminating with the death of Theodosius II and the ascension of Marcian. Following this, Bevan concludes the work with an epilogue that briefly overviews the long-term aftermath of the Nestorian controversy.

The book concludes with two appendices and a bibliography. The first appendix is a detailed discussion of Cyril's *Homily IV*, the dating and authenticity of which are disputed. The second appendix is a detailed breakdown of the contents of the complex work attributed to Nestorius known as the *Liber Heraclidis*. Unfortunately, the book does not include an index of any kind. At the very least, an index of named individuals would be incredibly useful and make the volume more accessible for researchers.

Overall, this volume is an impressive work of scholarship. Bevan's use of a wide array of primary source materials is exemplary, and the focus on Nestorius as the center of a web of complex ecclesial and imperial threads helps provide clarity and a sense of direction through a difficult historical landscape.