Adam M. Schor, *Theodoret's People: Social Networks and Religious Conflict in Late Roman Syria*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011. xv + 342 pp. $49.95 cloth.

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Using social network theory, Adam Schor argues in this book that the Christological dispute of the first half of the fifth century (culminating in the condemnation of Nestorius at the Council of Ephesus in 431 CE, and of Eutyches at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE) "was not just a mismatch of doctrines. Nor was it just a contest for authority. It was a crucial episode in the formation of partisan religious community" (15). Schor offers an in-depth analysis of the influential fifth-century bishop Theodoret and the clerical community of early fifth-century Syria. His careful use of church leaders' letters as well as records from church councils provides him with information that has rarely been so thoroughly interwoven into the historical narrative about the events surrounding these significant Christological controversies.

Schor explains that he applies social network theory because it "offers a framework for combining social concepts (such as patronage) with cultural concepts (such as performance)" (9). He summarizes, "Theodoret's coalition can be seen as a socio-doctrinal network, a shifting cluster of mostly clerics bound by friendship and theological agreement. Theodoret's broader social relations can be seen as a patronage network, which included many doctrinal allies and linked them to clients, protectors, and friends. Each of these networks fostered certain attitudes and cultural practices. Together, I argue, they created a resonance between theology and social interaction, which encouraged religious certainty and conflict" (3). Schor concludes that fifth-century Antioch represents a "modular scale-free network," and that such "usually survive the random loss of members" but can be "dismantled if a majority of hubs are removed" (11), which is how he explains the eventual collapse of the network around Theodoret (130). Schor acknowledges some of the limitations of applying social network theory to historical research, recognizing that such models produce hypotheses that ideally will then "be confirmed in other ways" (11). While the vocabulary of "nodes," "hubs," and "density of links" is at times cumbersome, and the numerous network charts do not always seem to enhance the written narrative sufficiently, the

analysis nevertheless offers scholars a productive and interesting new way of understanding these otherwise familiar events.

Schor breaks the book into two parts. Part I focuses on the network around the metropolis of Antioch and "looks at how Theodoret related to fellow clerics and other active disputants" (13). The book begins by arguing that "certain clerics exchanged a key set of phrases and gestures that we can treat as idioms of an Antiochene network" (20). Although necessarily a lengthy investigation of vocabulary choices, this material is innovative, and provides important nuances to academic analyses of this Christological controversy, and awareness of the subtle connotations that this vocabulary carried when heard by its ideal audience. Some of the conclusions in this chapter are tenuous (for example, the study of primarily Syrian texts leads to the conclusion that the social cues expressed are distinctively Syrian). Nevertheless, the payoff for having laid the groundwork for the Antiochene network becomes more immediate when Schor turns after the first three chapters "to follow the network through its 'Nestorian' crisis and resulting transformation" (80). The Nestorian controversy, Schor argues, for the first time "forced the Antiochenes to see their divergence from the rest of the Nicene clergy" (86), which in turn transformed the network and opened the door for Theodoret to take a leadership position as a mediator. Although the subsequent collapse of this network in the "Eutychean" controversy that followed is well known to scholars, Schor's social network analysis usefully nuances the familiar narrative, giving voice to the interconnectedness of social and political alliances and doctrinal allegiances.

Part II of Schor's book "examines the way Theodoret and his clerical associates participated in the patronage networks of late Roman society" (134). Schor focuses on "the mediating role that Theodoret and his colleagues sought vis-à-vis other elites" (134), particularly Theodoret's "efforts to find openings, tap networks, and join the exchange of favors and loyalties" (155). Through written correspondence, Schor argues, Theodoret "performed the commonality that he was seeking" (163). Ultimately, "Theodoret's performance of patronage was inseparable from his performances of Antiochene leadership" and his influence "rose or fell based on his ability to trade favors" (179). One of the more intriguing benefits of Schor's use of social network theory, however, comes in

the influence that Schor argues Theodoret's social relationships may have had on his Christological vocabulary and doctrine. Connecting "his understanding of Christ to human behavioral ideals" (181), Theodoret presented "Christ's existence as a mediator between humanity and divinity" (187). Schor posits (188-9) that Theodoret's own experience as a mediator with different identities for different relationships influenced his understanding of the Son as "one subject, a mediator with two identities," and the requirement of "two unconfounded natures" in order for the Son to "mediate effectively" (187). Schor suggests, however, that the regional locatedness of Theodoret's theological vocabulary did not necessarily resonate with other Christian leaders who did not share his network's common cultural cues, and Theodoret soon found himself on the defensive against charges of unorthodox teachings. The social networks that Schor traces "made doctrine part of a larger socio-cultural dynamic" (205).

While readers might occasionally wish for a more forceful thesis to provide momentum, Schor pulls together an impressive amount of material in order to provide a thorough narrative of these critical fifth-century controversies. Theodoret is a rich topic for new scholarship, and this book makes wise use of the fifth-century bishop's impressive epistolary corpus. Schor's book is also a welcome and nuanced project on Roman Syria that works with (instead of being daunted by) the region's complex linguistic diversity. It is a pleasure to read a serious engagement with these controversies that treats them neither as entirely theologically nor as purely politically driven. Schor's book proposes "another explanation for wider doctrinal partisanship: the interconnections between doctrine and social relations" (199), treating "theology as a key factor in social relations" (9). This book is a valuable contribution to scholarship that will be widely read across all disciplines that study the late Roman world and the development of early Christianity.