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Review of Bailey's "Christianity's Quiet Success: The Eusebius Gallicanus Sermon Collection and the Power of the Church in Late Antique Gaul"

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Lisa Kaaren Bailey, *Christianity's Quiet Success: The Eusebius Gallicanus Sermon Collection and the Power of the Church in Late Antique Gaul*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010. Pp. x + 278. \$34.00.

Reviewed by Caitlin Corning, George Fox University

Lisa Kaaren Bailey has written an excellent book examining the Eusebius Gallicanus sermon collection and what it reveals about the complexity of pastoral care in late antique Gaul. Comprised of seventy-six sermons from the mid- to late-fifth century, the Eusebius Gallicanus collection was compiled in the sixth century and was used and copied until the thirteenth. The 447 surviving manuscripts that contain at least a portion of this collection attest to its popularity in medieval Europe. While significant controversy surrounds the dating and authorship of the sermons in this collection, Bailey argues that historians still can use these to “tell us much about what pastoral strategies were seen to ‘work’ in late antique Gaul, and also show us how some quite simple texts could have had an extraordinarily broad impact” (3).

The first part of the book provides a foundation. After an introduction to the overall framework of the study, Bailey includes a short overview “of late antique Gal-

lic sermons, their functions, their audiences, and the environments in which they were written, heard, and read” (16). This chapter could serve as an excellent guide to upper-division undergraduates of the many issues involved in working with late antique and early medieval sermons. Bailey reminds her readers that most bishops and priests would not have had the political power or rhetorical abilities of Augustine of Hippo or Caesarius of Arles; therefore, sermon collections became a key resource (25).

Chapter two focuses on the Eusebius Gallicanus collection and the debates over the authorship and dating of the collection. She argues that these approaches to the collection are ill-suited for this type of source and that it is not necessary to answer these questions before using the sermon collection as a critical primary source for understanding pastoral care in this period. The priests, bishops, and abbots who used the Eusebius Gallicanus collection did so “not because they were the work of a famous individual, but because they were useful” (37). Thus, Bailey argues, historians should bypass the unanswerable question of authorship and focus instead on what these sermons reveal about the concerns of the Gallic Church.

The next section of the book has three chapters concerning what Bailey sees as main pastoral concerns of this period. Chapter three discusses the ways in which the authors of these sermons encouraged a sense of community among their congregations. She identifies numerous strategies, including a focus on local saints’ cults. The sermons present a relatively egalitarian model of community and highlight those sins that would have threatened the unity of the congregation. Bailey emphasizes that the Eusebian sermons focus more on consensus and mutual obligation than the more well-known sermons of Caesarius of Arles and cautions historians from seeing Caesarius’s “enforcement approach to the moral welfare of the community” as the norm for Gallic churches (57).

Chapter four examines the ways in which the authors of the Eusebius sermons attempted to ensure that their congregations understood the basics of the Christian faith. Bailey identifies a number of varying approaches used for different topics, especially those that were especially troubling (why the good suffer) or difficult to believe (the virgin birth and incarnation).

The last chapter in this section discusses the complexity of approaches dealing with sin. The sermons demonstrate that both public and private penance were used alongside one another. Thus, the evidence from these sermons reinforces current theories that public penance was used for sins that were especially egregious and threatened the unity of the congregation, while private penance was assigned for more minor sins.

Bailey then shifts focus to discuss the ten or so sermons composed for a monastic rather than lay audience. In these she finds many of the same themes as those already examined and convincingly argues that ascetic and pastoral approaches to Christianity in late antique Gaul were not diametrically opposed and that “both monastic and lay communities were treated by the Eusebian preachers as forms of Christian community which faced the same problems and could be approached with the same pastoral strategies” (109–10).

There is a short epilogue discussing the manuscript transmission of the sermon collection. The bibliography is extensive and includes much of the current literature

on this period. It provides an excellent start for scholars hoping to delve more deeply into the topics raised in this study.

Christianity's Quiet Success should be accessible to upper-division undergraduate students with some knowledge of the period. For scholars this book is an invaluable introduction to this little-studied sermon collection as well as an excellent summary of current scholarly opinion on penance, models of authority and power, the semi-Pelagian controversy (or lack thereof), and the diversity of the late antique church in Gaul. Bailey has crafted a well-written, understandable, and very interesting study providing a new approach to an important document. This work is highly recommended for all those who study or teach about the late antique and early medieval church.