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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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Moreover, America's self-proclaimed exceptionalism can serve to lead it down perilous paths (94-104). Here Mathewes reminds us that wise imperial powers will know how to relinquish hegemonic status, and counsels us to neither idolize nor demonize contemporary American power as such (106-7). It too will pass. Christians ought to be civilly engaged, but not always in ways approved of by the regnant polity (184)—to such polities we owe something, but not our all (191). Any support for American hegemony ought to be conditional and nuanced only (112), even as we recognize that America continues to be at odds with itself (200-1). For Mathewes our calling is to affirm human dignity, confront undeniably complex situations tentatively, and affirm the faith in a pluralist milieu (214-17).

Concomitantly, love is stressed out in an ultra-competitive culture in which an "overreaching capitalism" is characterized by the "encroachment of the market on all aspects of human life" (119,115)—yet another totalizing tendency in our midst. Even the abortion question is framed as if it were a matter of (market) choice (133). The result of all this is a hollowing-out of society generally (134). And how is love to be expressed when "just war" is being waged? Arguably, one of the most magnificent yet cautionary passages in the book is the one headed "The Mournful Warrior," in response to the question: "How can slaying an aggressor be an act of charity?" (168-78). Here is food for thought for all who should be exercised by U.S. policy in Afghanistan, Iraq, and beyond.

Mathewes's style is both conversational and elliptical. His book is not a "quick read," but it definitely merits close attention. Certainly, those who study history from a Christian standpoint will concur that "we must never allow the terrible pressures of today to make us forget that today is not all there is" (248). There is wisdom in this book, and the exhortation applies: *tolle lege.*


**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 Ga-
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.

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Reviewed by Stephen Varvis, Fresno Pacific University

Despite its reference to the Middle Ages as the “Dark Ages,” I liked this book. It breaks down the stereotypes of the anti-reason, anti-science, barbaric Middle Ages. Brown’s is a popular history. It reads well; it has a thesis and focus (see the subtitle) and doesn’t lead us into thickets of unfamiliar names and dates. Unfortunately she creates a new error, or at least reinforces an old one, which requires a cautionary note.

The bibliography is strong especially for a popular history. Brown includes the current, major work on Gerbert of Aurillac (ca. 945—1003), interviewed the more preeminent scholars working on him, and did solid contextual work to place Gerbert’s story and achievements firmly in the tenth century. Among examples of this work are her explanations that medieval people did not think of the world as flat (128-30), that they did not believe the world would end in the year 1000 (1-3, 224), of the connections and political antipathies between Western Christendom and Orthodox Constantinople (chapter IX), of Ottonian attempts to revive the Empire, and of the cultural ideals represented by saints (11—13). Brown also treats some topics that professional historians might not, but which add color and texture to the story: how parchment is made, the process of writing, the monk’s day, how networks of scholars communicated in search of knowledge and books. The reader will sense that she is writing both to instruct and to capture our imagination. Popular history can show those of us who teach how to communicate complicated historical arguments and how to grab imaginations.

A particular strength is Brown’s reticence to claim that we know the whole story. Several times she speculates, stating clearly that she is doing so and that we do not really know how something happened, or who wrote a treatise, or where it came from. One example of this historical modesty is her treatment of Gerbert’s studies in Spain, not directly with Muslim scholars, but in Christian, northern Spain, near Barcelona. Throughout chapter three we hear of the northern Spanish churches, their leaders and scholars, growing library collections, and the probable origins of scientific works...