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Robert E. Winn, *Eusebius of Emesa: Church and Theology in the Mid-Fourth Century*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011. Pp. xii, 277. ISBN 9780813218762. \$69.95.

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Eusebius of Emesa (ca. 300-359) was one of many bishops in the fourth century who in his works and sermons reflected on the ecclesiastical identity of Christian communities in the Later Roman Empire, in a period when Christian leadership discussed both the position of Christianity within Roman society at large as well as the correct theological direction for the faithful. Especially, the latter was cause for passionate and in some cases aggressive debate on church dogma. Although he was well-known for his sermons and commentaries in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, Eusebius has remained an under-exposed figure in modern scholarship. It was not until the middle of the twentieth century when Eligius M. Buytaert published 29 sermons of Eusebius (extant in late antique Latin) and Nerses Akinian eight sermons (extant in classical Armenian), that Eusebius become more readily available again, followed more recently by editions and studies by Françoise Petit and R. Bas ter Haar Romeny. With his book, Robert Winn now has set out to offer his readers an examination of Eusebius' life and works (especially those in Armenian) both within their historical and theological context.

Winn connects the life and position of Eusebius within the early church with the context of the locations where he lived throughout his life. For instance, Eusebius' later emphasis on the importance of asceticism – an important aspect in Syrian Christianity – seems to have had its roots in his growing up in Edessa. Eusebius also spent a considerable amount of time in Antioch, where he developed a good relationship with the Antiochene church, which remained noted even long after Eusebius' death, even though Eusebius fled ordination in Antioch at some point. Nevertheless, Winn calls Antioch Eusebius' true ecclesiastical home. A third important location is found in Emesa in Phoenicia where Eusebius was appointed bishop, but where he found strong opposition to his presence and ideas (he was even accused of devotion of astrology) which caused him to flee to nearby Laodicea where his friend George was bishop.

In his second chapter, Winn presents a clear discussion of the ways in which Eusebius employed his rhetorical and exegetical skills in his sermons for the purpose of clarifying to his audience the importance of understanding and carrying out the church's identity. To Eusebius, the correct ecclesiastical identity was one of the key themes throughout his career and work. His oratorical techniques, his encomia for the apostles and the way in which he employed biblical exegesis were all put into service for this identity.

Eusebius did not so much focus on converting those outside of the church, but rather on an audience that consisted of those within the church communities where he preached. He was clearly frustrated about discussions among Christian leadership, such as the debate about the relationship between the Father and Son, as he believed that the ways in which such discussions were held threatened to weaken the church, even when these were internal debates.

Apart from a chapter on the historical and physical context of Eusebius' life in Edessa, Antioch and Emesa and a chapter on Eusebius' rhetorical and exegetical strategies, Winn has organized the core of his book (chapters three, four, five and six) around four recurring themes in Eusebius' sermons: (1) the natural world and human nature, (2) the nature of God, (3) the divinity and humanity of Christ, and (4) asceticism and the church. These themes are closely connected and together present the heart of Eusebius' beliefs.

Winn shows how Eusebius put himself in the traditions of Origen and his own teacher Eusebius of Caesarea when he explained to his listeners how a hierarchy of power in the natural world could be observed. The concept of incorporeality as superior to corporeality played an important role in positioning humans and God within one natural world. Furthermore, Jesus's role as creator who was directly involved in his own creation presented a second important element in the way in which Eusebius described the functioning of the natural world.

The fourth chapter in which Winn discusses Eusebius' ideas on the nature of God, shows an important strength of Winn's work in that he also addresses the sermons that are only extant in classical Armenian, whereas previous studies have mostly focused only on the extant Latin sermons. For an analysis of Eusebius' ideas about the Trinity, Winn has drawn heavily on the sermon 'De fide, habita Hierosolymnis' (Winn has added a useful appendix on this particular sermon at the end of his book). Eusebius stood in many respects on the theological traditions of Eusebius of Caesarea and of Origen, but while these men were drawing on analogies from nature to explain the relationship between the Father and Son, Eusebius warned against a method which placed him outside of prevailing ideas among his contemporaries. Similarly, in the discussion about the relation between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Eusebius was comfortable accepting the divine nature of the Holy Spirit (p. 164), again contrary to many of his contemporaries in the fourth century who often stayed away from defining the Holy Spirit precisely.

Winn rightly stresses the fact that Eusebius should not be associated with one particular ecclesiastical faction, because he himself did not attempt to position himself within one faction. In similar fashion, as Winn points out in chapter 5, Eusebius' ideas on the humanity and divinity of Christ should be evaluated in the light of the Church councils of Ephesus (A.D. 431) and Chalcedon (A.D. 451) where an attempt was made to bring these discussions to an end. Such a reverse projection would lead to analysis which would position Eusebius into the discussion in a way that would not do justice to his ideas. Winn's discussion of Eusebius' 'De cruce passionis', a brief sermon extant in Armenian is useful for an understanding of the way in which Eusebius saw his Christology (which can be considered a *logos-sarx* Christology) and in which he opposed Paul of Samosata who explained Christ merely as a man with a human soul.

Winn's final chapter on martyrs and virgins offers a glimpse of Eusebius' commitment to the angelic life as guide for ecclesiastical identity, for which he received strong opposition. To Eusebius, the power of the cross of Christ, sexual renunciation and bodily self-control that was part of an angelic life both for men and women, represented elements that not only helped his congregation to understand its ecclesiastical identity, but also to differentiate between Jews, pagans, and heretics. Eusebius' emphasis on clarifying the church's religious identity to his fellow Christians, whereby he often made use of the contrast with 'heretics', Jews and pagans can be seen as a leading thread throughout his works.

Even though Eusebius belongs to a group of less well-known authors, he deserves our attention, as Winn has demonstrated that Eusebius was a bishop who was one of many local Christian leaders who not only found himself in the middle of many discussions on church dogma, but who also voiced his opinion about these matters. Anyone interested in the history of the Christian churches of the fourth century, in the historical context, in developments within early theological thinking, or in the role of Christian leadership should take note of Winn's work.