Auxentius of Milan: From orthodoxy to heresy.

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Abstract

Auxentius of Milan, the predecessor of Ambrose, is still frequently seen through the eyes of Hilary of Poitiers and Athanasius of Alexandria, as a leading member of a minority faction which used the power of the Council of Rimini (359) to impose an unpopular subordinationist doctrine on the west. Much about this picture may be disputed, however. Serious doubts can and have been raised regarding Auxentius’ prominence and indeed presence at Rimini, and...
regarding the closeness of his association with the Illyrian bishops Valens of Mursa and Ursacius of Singidinum.

Similarly, the one statement that survives from Auxentius is misleadingly framed by Hilary as part of his polemic Contra Auxentium. If we set aside unwarranted speculations, by Hilary and by modern scholars, regarding the private beliefs of Auxentius, we are left with a bishop who publicly adhered to the Rimini – not as a challenge to the prevailing orthodoxy in the west but precisely in compromise which Rimini represented was rejected by Athanasius and Hilary and as the prevailing orthodoxy not only by Auxentius but also by those who judged Hilary – including the emperor Valentinian I. That this position would later be overthrown fundamentalism should not lead us to condemn Auxentius as dishonest, malign, or Christian congregation. We should recognise instead that it was only after his death officially redefined as surreptitious heresy.

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