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THE POLITICS OF HERESY IN AMBROSE OF MILAN

Community and Consensus in Late Antique Christianity

Ambrose of Milan is famous above all for his struggle with, and triumph over, 'Arian' heresy. Yet, almost all of the evidence comes from Ambrose's own writings, and from pious historians of the next generation who represented him as a champion of orthodoxy. This detailed study argues instead that an 'Arian' opposition in Milan was largely conjured up by Ambrose himself, lumping together critics and outsiders in order to secure and justify his own authority. Along with new interpretations of Ambrose's election as bishop, his controversies over the faith, and his clashes with the imperial court, this book provides a new understanding of the nature and significance of heretical communities in late antiquity. In place of rival congregations inflexibly committed to doctrinal beliefs, it envisages a world of more fluid allegiances in which heresy – but also consensus – could be a matter of deploying the right rhetorical frame.

MICHAEL STUART WILLIAMS is Lecturer in Roman History in the Maynooth University Department of Ancient Classics. He has published widely on the history and culture of late-antique Christianity and is the author of *Authorised Lives in Early Christian Biography: Between Eusebius and Augustine* (Cambridge University Press, 2008). He has edited two volumes of scholarly essays under the title *Unclassical Traditions* and is the co-editor of *Peace and Reconciliation in the Classical World* (Routledge, 2017).

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Dr Johnson proceeded: 'Sir, there is a great cry about infidelity; but there are, in reality, very few infidels. I have heard a person, originally a Quaker, but now, I am afraid, a Deist, say, that he did not believe there were, in all England, above two hundred infidels'.¹

¹ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D* (1791).

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Abbreviations

Ancient authors and texts are abbreviated according to the conventions applied in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd edn. rev., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); further Christian authors and texts are abbreviated where possible according to *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999). Note additional and adapted abbreviations as follows:

CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</i> ; Turnhout: Brepols, 1953
CJ	<i>Codex Justinianus</i> , ed. P. Krüger in <i>Corpus Iuris Civilis</i> , vol. 2; Berlin: Weidmann, 1892
Const. Sirm.	<i>Constitutiones Sirmondianae</i> , see <i>Codex Theodosianus</i> (CTh)
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> ; Vienna: Tempsky, 1865
CTh	<i>Codex Theodosianus</i> , ed. Th. Mommsen, with P. Meyer, <i>Theodosiani libri XVI, cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis</i> ; Berlin: Weidmann, 1904
EAA	<i>Collection des Études augustiniennes, Série Antiquité</i> ; Turnhout: Brepols, 1954
FC	<i>Fontes Christiani</i> . Freiburg: Herder/Turnhout: Brepols, 1990.
GCS	<i>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte</i> ; Leipzig/Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1897
ODCC	<i>Oxford Dictionary of the Catholic Church</i> , ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, 3rd edn.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005
PCBE II	<i>Prosopographie chrétienne du bas-empire, II: Prosopographie de l'Italie chrétienne (313–604)</i> , ed. C. Pietri and L. Pietri, 2 vols.; Rome: École française de Rome, 1999–2000
PG	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne; Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1857–66

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PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne; Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1844–1964
PLRE I	<i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, I: AD 260–395</i> , ed. A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale and J. Morris; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971
PLS	<i>Patrologiae Latinae Supplementum</i> , ed. A. Hamman; Paris: Éditions Garnier, 1958–74
SC	<i>Sources chrétiennes</i> ; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1942