

**ST. AMBROSE. "ON THE
MYSTERIES"
AND THE TREATISE,
"ON THE SACRAMENTS"**

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St. Ambrose. "On the mysteries" and the treatise, "On the sacraments" by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

**ST. AMBROSE. "ON THE
MYSTERIES"
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"ON THE SACRAMENTS"**

TRANSLATIONS OF CHRISTIAN
LITERATURE. SERIES III
LITURGICAL TEXTS

ST. AMBROSE,
"ON THE MYSTERIES"
AND THE TREATISE
ON THE SACRAMENTS
BY AN UNKNOWN AUTHOR

TRANSLATED BY
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EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION & NOTES
By J. H. SRAWLEY, D.D.

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE translation of the two treatises contained in the present volume was undertaken by the Rev. T. Thompson at the request of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and was in preparation at the time of his death in the spring of 1917. Mr. Thompson had for some years contemplated the preparation of an edition of the original text of the treatise *On the Sacraments*, and had dealt with some of the liturgical problems involved in both treatises in his valuable little book *On the Offices of Baptism and Confirmation*, in the *Cambridge Handbooks of Liturgical Study*. To that book the present editor has made constant reference in preparing the Introduction and Notes.

The manuscript of the translation left by Mr. Thompson was complete as far as Book vi, ch. 2, §9 of the work *On the Sacraments*. The remaining sections have been translated by Mr. F. H. Colson, late Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, who has also assisted in the revision of the whole translation and contributed suggestions towards the interpretation of various passages. Some notes on the treatise *On the Mysteries*, which appear to have been intended for publication, have been incorporated and bear the initial [T]. Use has also been made of the materials collected by Mr. Thompson for notes on the second of the treatises here translated. To

Mr. W. C. Bishop I am indebted for some helpful suggestions, and for allowing me to consult him on some points connected with the system of lessons at Milan. To Dr. H. J. White, of King's College, London, I owe a similar debt of gratitude for information with regard to the text of the Biblical quotations in the treatises. The Index has been prepared by Mrs. Thompson.

The task of preparing this little volume for the Press has been welcomed by the present editor as enabling him to offer a small tribute of affection and esteem for one whose friendship recalls, amid other happy memories, a common association in those liturgical and patristic studies with which the present volume is concerned.

J. H. S.

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INTRODUCTION

I. ON CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTION

THE two treatises contained in the present volume, apart from their importance to the student of Christian worship and doctrines, possess this further source of interest, that they illustrate the care of the ancient Church for the adequate instruction of those who were admitted to Christian baptism. Each of them consists of addresses given in Easter week to those who had been baptized on Easter Eve. But they presuppose a longer course of instruction which had been carried on throughout Lent, and to this previous instruction Ambrose refers in the opening words of the treatise *On the Mysteries*. The origin of this system of instruction goes back to the early days of the Church, and the word "catechumen" applied to one who had attached himself to the Church and was undergoing such instruction has its origin in the New Testament.¹ As the Church grew in numbers and influence, and its converts were in most cases adults, increasing importance was attached to this side of its activity. The famous school of Alexandria, of which Pantaenus, Clement, and Origen were the most notable heads, represents that activity in its most splendid and striking form. Under their leadership it attracted the more thoughtful and intelligent classes

¹ The word *καταγγεῖν* ("to instruct") is found in Lk. i. 4; Acts xviii. 25; 1 Cor. xiv. 19; Gal. vi. 6. From it are derived the words *catechism*, *catechise*.