

**A Translation, with Introductions and Notes, of  
Ambrosiaster's *Commentary on the Pauline Epistles***

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The aim of this project is to provide the first English translation of the *Commentary on the Pauline Epistles*, written by Ambrosiaster. "Ambrosiaster" (i.e., Pseudo-Ambrose) is the name coined in the sixteenth century to designate the author of the earliest complete commentary on the thirteen letters of Paul that had been widely attributed to the fourth-century Bishop Ambrose of Milan. The same author is now known to have also produced an extensive set of *Questions on the Old and New Testaments*, mistakenly ascribed in the Middle Ages to Augustine of Hippo. This anonymous biblical commentator flourished at Rome during the last decades of the fourth century and was most likely a member of the Roman clergy.

It has long been acknowledged that Ambrosiaster's commentary represents one of the finest products of biblical interpretation prior to the Reformation. The Pauline commentary was read with appreciation by numerous Latin writers, among them Augustine and Pelagius. Moreover, because of its attribution to Ambrose, the work exerted a significant influence during the Middle Ages, especially on the development of canon law (e.g., the *Decretum* of Gratian). Aside from its significance in the history of theology and exegesis, the commentary of Ambrosiaster is an important source of information on the social and religious history of fourth-century Rome. In the course of his discussions, Ambrosiaster commented on various heresies, relations between Christians and Jews, the survival of pagan rites and practices, the role of women in society, and the nature and variety of ecclesiastical offices. He also provided important information on the development of liturgical rites and the origins of clerical celibacy in the Western Church.

Despite the importance of Ambrosiaster's writings, they have been largely neglected by scholars of late antiquity and early Christianity. Only a few monographs on Ambrosiaster have been published within the past one hundred years, and Italian is the only modern language into which portions of the Pauline commentary have been translated. We aim to take a step towards rectifying this deficiency by producing the first English translation of the *Commentary on the Pauline Epistles*, together with an extensive introduction and commentary. Stephen Cooper, Theodore de Bruyn, and David Hunter have agreed to collaborate on the translations, introductions, and annotations, which will be published in a multi-volume edition. De Bruyn will translate the commentary on Romans (volume 1), Hunter and Cooper will translate the commentaries on 1 and 2 Corinthians (volume 2), and Hunter and Cooper will share responsibility for translating the remainder of the Pauline epistles (volume 3). Our three-volume work will appear in the series, *Writings from the Greco-Roman World*, published by the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) and E.J. Brill of Leiden.

The appearance of the biblical commentaries of Ambrosiaster in their first English translation will be a significant event in the study of religion in late antiquity. Ambrosiaster lived and wrote at a time of extraordinary change in the Roman Empire. He witnessed the emergence of the Church of Rome to a position of prominence under Pope Damasus, as well as the suppression of polytheism under Emperor Theodosius. His writings give evidence of various conflicts within Christianity, even as the religion consolidated its hold on late Roman society. The commentaries should be of interest to a large number of scholars of the humanities: historians and classicists, as well as scholars of the Bible and religion. Making these texts available in English, together with a scholarly introduction and commentary, will be an important contribution to the humanities.