



Saint Augustine in His Study

Botticelli

St. Augustine Converts to Christianity

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St. Augustine's devout mother, Monica, was concerned about his wild life as a student and young professor. She prayed for him tirelessly. Augustine investigated different philosophies and religions before his dramatic conversion in 386. In 387 he was baptized by St. Ambrose. He became a monk, then a priest and finally bishop of Hippo in North Africa.

Augustine preached and wrote extensively. *Confessions* is his spiritual autobiography. *City of God* is his greatest work. In it he stated there are two communities—one human and one of God and that they will coexist in tension until the end of the world. The Bible calls these two groups of people the wheat and tares. Matthew 13 explains that it is often hard to know the wheat from the tares. Consequently, Augustine opposed the Donatists, a separatist group of Christians who demanded a pure church. Augustine also disagreed with Pelagius, a British monk. Pelagius taught that man is not born sinful. He believed babies are innocent until they grow up learning from bad examples. Consistent with Scripture, Augustine taught that every man is conceived and born sinful, and it is only by the grace of God that man can be saved. Augustine's life and writings have had a monumental impact on Christianity. Many regard him as the greatest theologian since the Apostolic Age.

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Viking longboat on a raiding expedition

Barbarian Invasion and Vikings

Barbarian Invasion and Vikings

c. 400–1000

The “Middle Ages” generally coincide with the period of influence of the “Barbarians and Vikings.” The Roman Empire and many other cultures were invaded and, in many instances, conquered by many groups of fair-haired, fair-skinned warriors known as “Barbarians.” These men were aggressive warriors who scavenged any land they conquered. The Germanic Barbarians entered Roman Gaul in 406; the Vandals arrived in Spain in 409 and conquered North Africa in 429; the Visigoths took Rome in 410; and the Saxons invaded England in 450. The famous barbarian, Attila the Hun, was finally stopped in Gaul in 451.

The Vikings ravaged the European coast from 800–1000 and reached America around 1000. These robbers were Scandinavians who traveled by sea in search of new lands to farm and plunder.

The influence of the barbarians and Vikings ended in 1453 when Mohammed II conquered Constantinople. The “Middle Ages” and the influence of these pillaging fighters was ended.

R E S O U R C E S

Famous Men of the Middle Ages,
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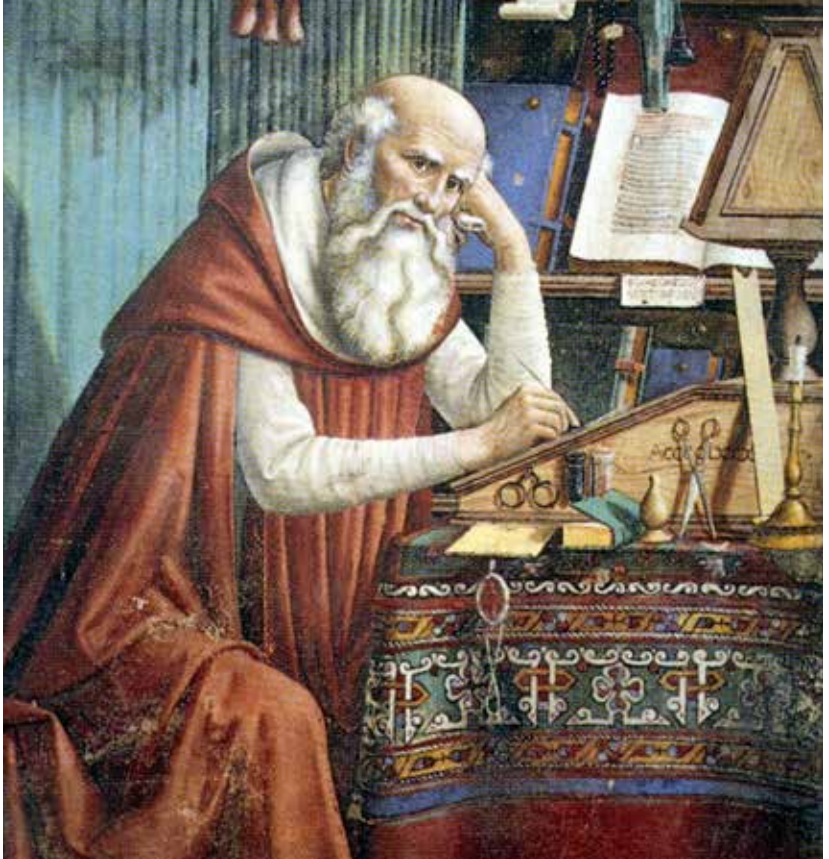
Kingfisher Hist. Encyc., pgs. 82, 83, 130, 131

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Saint Jerome
Fresco, 1480

Domenico Ghirlandaio

St. Jerome Completes the Vulgate

St. Jerome Completes the Vulgate 405

The Old Testament was translated from Hebrew into Greek about 200 B.C. for the Jews in Egypt and elsewhere. This Old Testament translation, the Septuagint, included some books of uncertain origin, sometimes known as the Apocrypha (Greek for hidden). It was called the Septuagint, (“70” in Greek) since supposedly there were 70 translators. Christ and the apostles spoke Aramaic. The New Testament has come down to us in Greek, the common language of Alexander’s time. Scripture tells us the inscription on the cross was in Latin, Greek, and Aramaic.

Originally, the Christians in Rome were Greek-speaking immigrants. Eventually, a Latin version of the Bible was written by Athanasius to make God’s Word readable by the common man as Latin had become the language of the people. Athanasius’ Latin translation was not very accurate so St. Jerome translated a more precise Latin version of the Bible. St. Jerome was a monk who lived in a cave near Bethlehem and a scholar who had mastered Hebrew.

The Apocrypha was included in the new translation although Athanasius had not included the Apocrypha as part of God’s Word less than 50 years earlier. St. Jerome’s Latin translation is known as the Vulgate (common, ordinary language). French, Spanish, and Italian were languages that were derived from Latin many years later. Latin remained a common language through most of Europe for many years.

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Leo the Great

The Council of Chalcedon

The Council of Chalcedon

451

Although the Council of Nicea had officially resolved that Christ was God, the questions remained as to whether He was also truly man and whether it was possible for Christ to be both God and man in one person. Heretics such as Arius, Apollinarius, and Eutyches had been spreading false teaching concerning the person of Christ.

Pope Leo I (also known as Leo the Great) wrote a treatise condemning Eutyches for his heresy. Leo's writing sparked a series of events which led up to the council at Chalcedon. Approximately 600 bishops convened in the Council of Chalcedon in 451 to search the Scriptures and determine what they said regarding the humanity of Christ.

In a statement known as the Chalcedon Definition, the council affirmed 1) the full deity (being God) of Christ consistent with the Nicene Creed, 2) the full humanity (being man) of Christ, 3) that Christ is one person (not two), and 4) that the deity and humanity of Christ are not blurred.

Although the Chalcedon Definition was an attempt to unify the empire by clearing up the false teaching, the Definition actually caused division in the church. Large areas of the Eastern Church, such as the Coptic churches in Egypt and Ethiopia, did not accept this position. Attempts to resolve the disagreement led to future councils which failed to settle the matter. The conflict finally ended because the dissenting churches were in areas that came under Muslim control.

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