

Saint Jerome

Doctor of the Sacred Page

A source-first historical biography

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1 The Greatest Doctor and the Hardest Temper

When the Catholic Church tells its members why they must read the Bible, it speaks in the words of Jerome. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, quoting the Second Vatican Council, “forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful... to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ, by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures,” and seals the exhortation with his sentence: “Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ” (CCC 133, citing *Dei Verbum* 25 and Jerome’s prologue to his commentary on Isaiah). When Benedict XV devoted an entire encyclical to him on the fifteenth centenary of his death, he opened by naming him the one whom the Church “acclaims and reveres as her ‘Greatest Doctor,’ divinely given her for the understanding of the Bible” (*Spiritus Paraclitus*, 15 September 1920). No other Father owns a comparable title, and no other Father earned his by so material a labor: the revision and translation that posterity called the Vulgate, the Latin Bible of the Western Church for over a thousand years.

The same tradition remembers a man almost impossible to live with. His surviving correspondence is the most vivid personal archive of Christian antiquity, and much of it is war: against Helvidius, against Jovinian, against Vigilantius, against John of Jerusalem, against the Pelagians, and—most painfully—against Rufinus, the friend of his youth. A sympathetic visitor to Bethlehem reported, within Jerome’s lifetime, that “the heretics hate him, because he never desists from attacking them; the clerics hate him, because he assails their life and crimes” (Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogue* 1.9). Later ages softened what they could not deny, and then decorated him: with a cardinal’s hat he never wore, an office that did not exist in his century, and a lion he almost certainly never met.

This biography asks three questions. First, what can actually be established about the life—born at an unlocatable town in a year the sources cannot agree on, documented almost entirely by his own purposeful pen—once his self-presentation, his enemies’ counter-statements, and the later legends are kept distinct? Second, what exactly did Jerome do to the Latin Bible: what he revised, what he translated, what he refused to translate, and what the composite book later called “the Vulgate” does and does not owe him? Third, how did one man become both the Church’s model of scriptural devotion and its standing example of sanctity without gentleness—and what has official reception, from the medieval doctorate to three popes of the last hundred years, actually claimed about him?

The method is that of the whole series: earliest controlled evidence first. Jerome’s letters, prefaces, and polemics are contemporary witness of the first rank, but they are advocacy and self-fashioning, never a diary; his enemies’ statements are contemporary and hostile; the biographical notices of the fifth century are received tradition; the lion, the cardinalate, and the translated relics are late legend and iconography, treated in their own place as reception rather than event. Disagreements—above all the two competing birth years and the status of the famous dream—are preserved, not resolved. The terminal appendix states the conventions, chronology, and limits that govern every page.

2 Stridon, Rome, and a Disputed Birth

2.1 A town that vanished

Jerome wrote one paragraph of formal autobiography, and it begins with a place that no longer existed. Closing his catalogue of Christian authors in 392/393 with himself, he wrote: “I, Jerome, son of Eusebius, of the city of Strido, which is on the border of Dalmatia and Pannonia and was overthrown by the Goths, up to the present year, that is, the fourteenth of the Emperor Theodosius, have written the following” (*On Illustrious Men* 135). That is nearly everything secure about his origins: a father named Eusebius, a Christian and moderately propertied provincial family, and a home town on the Dalmatian–Pannonian border, destroyed in the Gothic troubles of his own lifetime. The site of Stridon has never been identified; claims made for various modern locations in Croatia and Slovenia are conjecture, and this study locates the town no more precisely than Jerome did. Of his mother not even a name survives; a younger brother, Paulinian, a sister, and an aunt named Castorina appear incidentally in the letters.

2.2 The two birth years

No ancient source states Jerome’s birth year directly, and the two reconstructions in use differ by a decade and a half. An early tradition rests on the chronicle of Prosper of Aquitaine, whose notices place the birth in 331 and the death in 420 at an age of about ninety-one—“some authorities, following Prosper’s chronicle, give 330 or 331

as the date of his birth,” as the old Britannica already summarized—and the standard modern English biography (J. N. D. Kelly, 1975) still framed the life as 331–420. Most recent scholarship instead argues from Jerome’s own recollections—he was still a schoolboy at grammar school when the emperor Julian died in 363, and repeatedly calls himself a mere youth in the 370s—for a birth around 345–347; the NPNF editor Fremantle adopted 345, the 1912 Catholic Encyclopedia “about 340–2,” and Benedict XVI’s 2007 catechesis, like Stefan Rebenich’s 2002 study, uses c. 347. Prosper wrote within living memory but a province away; the schoolboy datum is Jerome’s own but late and rhetorical. This study uses c. 347 with 331 preserved as a serious alternative, and dates dependent events with corresponding caution.

2.3 Student in Rome

Whatever the year, the education was the best the empire sold. Jerome’s parents sent him to Rome, where he studied grammar under Aelius Donatus—the most famous grammarian of the age, whose textbook taught Europe Latin for a millennium—and then rhetoric and the law courts. The formation took: to the end of his life Jerome wrote the most brilliant Latin of any Christian of antiquity, stocked with Cicero, Virgil, Horace, and the comic poets, and the tension between that library and his Bible became, as will be seen, the most famous inner drama of his life. By his own later account he was no innocent: he recalls the sins of his student years with formulaic but insistent shame, and remembers Sundays spent with Christian friends visiting the tombs of the martyrs in the catacombs. In Rome, too, he was baptized—as an adult, in or about 366, on the received chronology—a fact he later invoked with pride when writing to a Roman pope: the faith he had received was the faith of Rome. Benedict XV’s encyclical summarizes the tradition exactly as Jerome told it: brought up a Catholic from infancy, baptized in Rome, and thereafter given wholly to the Scriptures (*Spiritus Paraclitus* 2).

After Rome came travel: to Trier, the imperial capital on the Moselle, where he first copied theological books and where the monastic ideal then spreading from the East seems first to have touched him; then to Aquileia at the head of the Adriatic, where he joined a circle of ascetic clergy and made the friendships—above all with Rufinus of Aquileia—whose later ruin would scar both men. The chronology of these years is loose, reconstructed from scattered reminiscences in the letters; around 372/373 the circle broke up in some quarrel Jerome never explains, and he turned east.

3 Antioch, the Dream, and the Desert of Chalcis

3.1 The tribunal in the fever

Jerome traveled east through Asia Minor to Antioch, the great city of Syria, in 373/374, and there fell gravely ill. What happened next he told ten years later, in the most famous passage he ever wrote, warning the Roman virgin Eustochium against fine literature. He had renounced home, family, and dainties for the kingdom of heaven, “and when I was on my way to Jerusalem to wage my warfare, I still could not bring myself to forego the library which I had formed for myself at Rome with great care and toil. And so, miserable man that I was, I would fast only that I might afterwards read Cicero.” The prophets, when he tried them, “seemed rude and repellent.” Then, in mid-Lent, a wasting fever; preparations for his funeral; and suddenly, “I was caught up in the spirit and dragged before the judgment seat of the Judge.” Asked his condition, “I replied: I am a Christian. But He who presided said: You lie. You are a follower of Cicero and not of Christ. For ‘where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.’” Ordered scourged, tortured worse by conscience, he heard the bystanders beg mercy for his youth; and “I made oath and called upon His name, saying: Lord, if ever again I possess worldly books, or if ever again I read such, I have denied You.” He returned to the upper world with eyes drenched in tears and—he insists—bruises on his shoulders: “that this was no sleep nor idle dream. . . I call to witness the tribunal before which I lay”; and thenceforth he read the books of God with greater zeal than he had ever given the books of men (*Letter* 22.30).

The dream rests on a single witness: Jerome himself, narrating in 384 an experience of c. 374 as a set piece in an exhortation against secular reading. Its afterlife is part of its evidence. When Rufinus later charged him with perjury—“tell me whether there is a single page of it in which he does not again declare himself a Ciceronian, or in which he does not speak of ‘our Tully,’ ‘our Flaccus,’ ‘our Maro’” (Rufinus, *Apology* 2.7)—Jerome answered by demoting his own vision: “I said that I would thenceforward read no secular books: it was a promise for the

future, not the abolition of my memory of the past,” and dreams, he added, citing the prophets, are not to be made into crimes (*Against Rufinus* 1.30–31). In *Letter* 70 he mounted a positive defense of pagan learning as the captive woman of Deuteronomy, made “a matron of the true Israel.” This study therefore reports the dream as Jerome’s own account of a real crisis, whose binding force its teller first asserted and later minimized; both statements are his, and neither is independently controlled.

3.2 “O desert bright with the flowers of Christ”

From Antioch Jerome withdrew, about 375, to the desert of Chalcis, the scrubland southeast of the city where Syrian hermits clustered. His letters from and about these years supplied Latin asceticism with its founding rhetoric. To his friend Heliodorus, who had turned back, he wrote the recruiting sergeant’s classic: “Should your little nephew hang on your neck, pay no regard to him; should your mother . . . show you the breasts at which she nursed you, heed her not; should your father prostrate himself on the threshold, trample him under foot and go your way. With dry eyes fly to the standard of the cross. In such cases cruelty is the only true affection . . . O desert, bright with the flowers of Christ! O solitude whence come the stones of which, in the Apocalypse, the city of the great king is built!” (*Letter* 14.2–10). To Eustochium he later confessed the other side: “How often, when I was living in the desert, in the vast solitude which gives to hermits a savage dwelling-place, parched by a burning sun, how often did I fancy myself among the pleasures of Rome!”—the fasts, the sackcloth, the imagined dancing girls (*Letter* 22.7).

The desert was also a school. It was there, to tame that imagination, that he began Hebrew, under a convert from Judaism—a labor he described to the monk Rusticus decades later: “I began to learn my letters anew and to study to pronounce words both harsh and guttural . . . What labour I spent upon this task, what difficulties I went through, how often I despaired, how often I gave over and then in my eagerness to learn commenced again, can be attested both by myself . . . and by those who then lived with me. And I thank the Lord that from this seed of learning sown in bitterness I now cull sweet fruits” (*Letter* 125.12). No Christian scholar of the West had done such a thing before, and everything distinctive in his later work grew from it.

The romantic solitude should not be overdrawn. Jerome’s own desert letters show him with books, copyists, and a stream of correspondence; modern scholarship (so Rebenich, as summarized in the review literature) places him on or near a friend’s estate at Maronia, some thirty miles from Antioch, “in the company of copyists and supported by wealthy friends.” The asceticism was real; the isolation was a literary construction.

The experiment ended badly. The desert monks of Syria were embroiled in the Antiochene schism and in the Eastern dispute over speaking of God as three *hypostases*, and they pressed the young Latin for his formula. Jerome appealed over their heads to Rome, in two letters to Pope Damasus that are among the earliest surviving private appeals to the Roman see: “As I follow no leader save Christ, so I communicate with none but your blessedness, that is with the chair of Peter. For this, I know, is the rock on which the church is built!” The Easterners, he complained, “are trying to extort from me, a Roman Christian, their unheard-of formula of three hypostases” (*Letter* 15.1–3). Whether Damasus ever answered is unrecorded. Worn out by the suspicion and party spirit of his neighbors, he abandoned Chalcis after perhaps two or three years and returned to Antioch.

4 A Reluctant Priest and a Borrowed Teacher

4.1 Ordination on his own terms

At Antioch Jerome attached himself to bishop Paulinus, leader of the small Nicene party recognized by Rome in the city’s three-way schism. Paulinus ordained him presbyter, about 378/379, and Jerome accepted on a condition he was still boasting of twenty years later. Arguing with the bishop of Jerusalem about another disputed ordination, he recalled what “I, a poor wretch of a man, told Bishop Paulinus of blessed memory. Did I ask to be ordained by you? I said. If in bestowing the rank of presbyter you do not strip us of the monastic state, you can bestow or withhold ordination as you think best. But if your intention in giving the name presbyter was to take from me that for which I forsook the world, I must still claim to be what I always was; you have suffered no loss by ordaining me” (*To Pammachius Against John of Jerusalem* 41). He was a priest who, so far as the record shows, never celebrated at

a public altar or held a pastoral charge: the ordination ratified the monk and the scholar, and he meant to keep it that way.

4.2 Constantinople and Gregory Nazianzen

About 380 Jerome went to Constantinople, where Gregory Nazianzen, the great Cappadocian theologian and orator, was briefly bishop of the Nicene community in the run-up to the council of 381. The debt he acknowledged is stated in his catalogue with unusual warmth: “Gregory, bishop of Nazianzen, a most eloquent man, and my instructor in the Scriptures” (*On Illustrious Men* 117). From Gregory and his circle Jerome received what the West could not then give: Greek theological culture at its highest, and above all Origen—not Origen the suspect metaphysician of later quarrels, but Origen the exegete, master of the biblical text and its senses. The Constantinople years produced Jerome’s first characteristic works: a Latin translation and continuation of Eusebius’s *Chronicle*, carrying universal history down to 378, and Latin versions of Origen’s homilies on Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The translator of the Bible served his apprenticeship translating its greatest ancient interpreter—a debt that, in the Origenist wars two decades later, would be remembered against him.

5 Rome under Damasus: The Scholar, the Ladies, and the Storm

5.1 Secretary and reviser

In 382 Jerome returned to Rome in the entourage of Paulinus for a council, and Damasus kept him. For three years he served the aged pope as secretary and consultant on Scripture, and it was Damasus who commissioned the work that outlived them both: a revision of the chaotic Old Latin Gospels against the Greek. Jerome’s dedicatory preface states both the problem and the peril with complete clarity: “You urge me to revise the old Latin version, and, as it were, to sit in judgment on the copies of the Scriptures which are now scattered throughout the whole world. . . . Is there a man, learned or unlearned, who will not. . . . call me a forger and a profane person for having the audacity to add anything to the ancient books, or to make any changes or corrections therein?” His consolations were two: “the command is given by you who are the supreme bishop,” and the manifest corruption of the copies—“there are almost as many forms of texts as there are copies” (Preface to the Four Gospels, to Damasus, 383/384). The revised Gospels, executed conservatively, were the first installment of what would one day be called the Vulgate; they were also, as the preface predicted, immediately resented.

5.2 The Aventine circle

The most remarkable feature of Jerome’s Roman years was his audience: a circle of aristocratic Christian women who had taken up ascetic life, gathered around the widow Marcella in her palace on the Aventine. Jerome’s memorial of Marcella, written a generation later, claims that “no highborn lady at Rome had made profession of the monastic life” before her, and describes a woman who put her questions to him “not to hear the answer but to raise difficulties”—and who, after his departure, became the arbiter to whom Rome had recourse “to settle” disputes about the meaning of Scripture (*Letter* 127.4–8). Around Marcella stood the widow Paula and her daughters, among them Blaesilla, whose death after severe fasting raised a storm against the ascetics, and Eustochium, to whom Jerome addressed *Letter* 22 on virginity—the letter of the dream, of “I praise wedlock, I praise marriage, but it is because they give me virgins” (*Letter* 22.20), and of satirical portraits of worldly clergy that Rome did not forgive. For these women Jerome was tutor in Hebrew and Greek, exegete on demand, and spiritual director; for him they were patrons, students, and in Paula’s case the partner of all his later work. The combination—a caustic monk, rich widows, and inheritance-conscious families—was combustible.

5.3 Helvidius and the perpetual virginity

To these years also belongs Jerome’s first dogmatic polemic. A Roman layman, Helvidius, had argued from the Gospels’ mentions of the “brethren” of the Lord that Mary, after bearing Jesus, had lived in ordinary wedlock with Joseph and borne him children. Jerome’s reply, *On the Perpetual Virginity of Blessed Mary Against Helvidius* (383), set the exegetical pattern the Latin church retained: “In Holy Scripture there are four kinds of brethren—by nature,

race, kindred, love”; the Lord’s brethren are kinsmen, the sons of another Mary, and nothing in the text records or implies any child of the Virgin. He closed characteristically, honoring the estate he ranked second: “virginity itself is the fruit of marriage” (*Against Helvidius* 16–21). The treatise made his reputation as a controversialist; its successor against Jovinian, a decade later, would show what the method cost when the target was less clear-cut.

5.4 The proceedings of 385

Damasus died in December 384, and Jerome’s position collapsed with him. What exactly happened in the following months is known almost entirely from Jerome’s furious farewell letter to Asella, written from Ostia in August 385 as he waited to sail. “Before I became acquainted with the family of the saintly Paula, all Rome resounded with my praises. Almost every one concurred in judging me worthy of the episcopate,” he writes; now “I am said to be an infamous turncoat, a slippery knave, one who lies and deceives others by Satanic arts.” His relations with Paula and Marcella had been made matter of scandal: “Of all the ladies in Rome, the only ones that caused scandal were Paula and Melanium, who, despising their wealth and deserting their children, uplifted the cross of the Lord as a standard of religion.” He ends: “I write this in haste, dear Lady Asella, as I go on board, overwhelmed with grief and tears” (*Letter* 45.2–6).

The nature of the 385 proceedings is genuinely obscure. Letter 45 shows that charges were circulated, that Jerome felt himself judged and condemned by Roman clerical opinion, and that his departure was, at the least, strongly advised. Whether any formal ecclesiastical process was held, what its charges were, and whether it issued any sentence, no surviving source states; modern accounts of a “trial” before the Roman clergy are reconstructions from this one partisan letter. This study asserts the storm, the scandal, and the enforced character of the departure, and nothing more precise.

Jerome sailed for the East in August 385. Paula and Eustochium followed by another ship. He never saw Rome again.

6 Bethlehem: The Monasteries by the Cave

6.1 Foundation

After a pilgrimage through Palestine and a winter among the monks of Egypt, Jerome and Paula settled at Bethlehem in 386. Paula’s fortune built the institutions; Jerome’s account of them, in the great memorial letter he wrote at her death in 404, is the founding document of Latin monasticism in the Holy Land. “Besides establishing a monastery for men, the charge of which she left to men, she divided into three companies and monasteries the numerous virgins whom she had gathered out of different provinces,” with a common rule of psalmody, Scripture, and work; and she built a hospice for pilgrims on the Bethlehem road, so that travelers might find “the welcome which Mary and Joseph had missed” (*Letter* 108.14, 108.19–20). Paula herself learned Hebrew, and learned it, on Jerome’s telling, better than her teacher: while he had acquired it “with much toil and effort,” she “succeeded so well that she could chant the psalms in Hebrew and could speak the language without a trace of the pronunciation peculiar to Latin” (*Letter* 108.26). When she died, bishops carried her bier and she was buried “close to the cave of the Lord” (*Letter* 108.29–34)—where Jerome himself, and Eustochium after him, would also be laid.

6.2 The workshop

For thirty-four years the cell by the Nativity cave was the most productive scriptorium in Christendom. From it came the Hebrew-based Old Testament, book by book with combative prefaces; commentaries on the prophets, on Matthew, on the Pauline epistles; the *Book of Hebrew Names*, the gazetteer of Palestine, the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*; translations of Origen and Didymus; lives of the hermits Paul, Malchus, and Hilarion; polemics as occasion demanded; and the endless letters. His own inventory, made in 392/393 in *On Illustrious Men* 135, closes with the exhausted line: “how many Letters I have written to Paula and Eustochium I do not know, for I write daily.” In the same notice he could already write: “I translated the New Testament from the Greek, and the Old Testament from the Hebrew”—a statement whose precise scope must be weighed later in this study.

The one outside portrait of the workshop confirms the letters. Postumianus, a Gallic visitor whose report Sulpicius Severus published in his *Dialogues* (c. 404), stayed at Bethlehem: “I stayed with Hieronymus six months.” Jerome is “a man learned not only in Latin and Greek, but also Hebrew, to such a degree that no one dare venture to compare himself with him in all knowledge”; and his regime: “He is always occupied in reading, always at his books with his whole heart: he takes no rest day or night; he is perpetually either reading or writing something.” The same witness records the cost: “The heretics hate him, because he never desists from attacking them; the clerics hate him, because he assails their life and crimes. But plainly all the good admire and love him” (Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogue* 1.8–9).

Nearly everything known of Bethlehem’s daily life comes from Jerome’s own letters and prefaces, which are advocacy for the ascetic enterprise, and from Paula’s memorial, which is eulogy. The scale of the communities, their economy, the slaves and copyists, and the hospice’s operation are attested only in that interested testimony. Postumianus’s independent six-month report is praise recorded by a fellow ascetic publicist. The picture is consistent, but it is a picture its subjects painted.

7 The Hebrew Verity: Making the Latin Bible

7.1 From the Seventy to the Hebrew

The Bethlehem decades transformed Jerome’s biblical program. In Rome he had revised the Gospels against the Greek; in Palestine he first revised Old Testament books against Origen’s Hexaplaric Septuagint—the “Gallican” Psalter, made from that source, is the lasting monument of this stage—and then, about 390, took the step that defined him: translating the Old Testament directly from what he called the *Hebraica veritas*, the Hebrew verity, with the help of Jewish teachers. Between about 390 and 405/406 the whole Hebrew canon was done: Samuel and Kings first, then Psalms from the Hebrew, Job, the Prophets, and onward to the Pentateuch and the remaining books, each shipped with a preface answering critics in advance.

The preface to Samuel and Kings—the “helmeted preface,” as he armed it—doubled as a manifesto on the canon. The Hebrews, he explains, count twenty-two books, “as, then, there are twenty-two elementary characters by means of which we write in Hebrew all we say”; this preface “may serve as a ‘helmeted’ introduction to all the books which we turn from Hebrew into Latin,” so that “what is not found in our list must be placed amongst the Apocryphal writings. Wisdom, therefore, which generally bears the name of Solomon, and the book of Jesus, the Son of Sirach, and Judith, and Tobias, and the Shepherd are not in the canon” (Preface to Samuel and Kings). The Church did not follow him here—the deuterocanonical books remained in her Bible, and the Council of Trent would later define their status—but his sharp distinction echoed through every later canon debate. His practice was softer than his principle: pressed by bishops, he turned Tobit into Latin in “the work of one day,” dictating from an interpreter’s Aramaic, and Judith in a single sitting, noting that “the Nicene Council is considered to have counted this book among the number of sacred Scriptures” (Prefaces to Tobit and Judith). Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, and Maccabees he declined to touch.

7.2 What “the Vulgate” is and is not

“Jerome translated the Vulgate” needs three corrections, all grounded in his own prefaces and the standard textual scholarship. First, in the New Testament his prefaced, documented work is the revision of the four Gospels; whether he ever revised the rest of the New Testament is disputed (his own catalogue claims “the New Testament from the Greek,” but no prefaces exist, and critical opinion has long been divided—the 1915 International Standard Bible Encyclopedia already weighed “whether Jerome revised the whole New Testament or only the Gospels”), and much modern scholarship assigns the remaining books’ revision to unknown hands. Second, the Psalter that the Vulgate carried through history is not his Hebrew version: “His Psalter from the Hebrew never ousted the Gallican which still holds its place in the Vulgate” (ISBE). Third, the received Vulgate is a composite: Jerome’s Hebrew-based Old Testament and revised Gospels, his hasty Tobit and Judith, and “the unrevised Old Latin (Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, 1 and 2 Maccabees and Baruch)” (ISBE). The name “Vulgate” itself, and the book’s status as the Latin church’s common Bible, are later developments; Trent’s decree and every subsequent official edition concern that composite, not a single man’s autograph.

7.3 The gourd at Oea: Augustine's challenge

The Hebrew program had distinguished critics, and the greatest was Augustine of Hippo. Their correspondence—begun awkwardly when early letters miscarried and Jerome heard that a book against him was circulating—turned, by 403, to the principle of the thing. Augustine “would much rather” Jerome translated from the Septuagint, fearing that a Hebrew-based text would split the Church’s two lungs: “it will be a grievous thing that, in the reading of Scripture, differences must arise between the Latin Churches and the Greek Churches.” And he had a parable from life: at Oea in Tripolitania a bishop had read Jerome’s Jonah, and at the plant over Jonah’s head—Jerome’s *hedera*, ivy, where the old version had gourd—“arose such a tumult in the congregation, especially among the Greeks, correcting what had been read, and denouncing the translation as false,” that the bishop consulted the local Jews and restored the old reading rather than lose his people (Augustine, *Letter* 71.4–5). Jerome’s reply defended the philology—the Hebrew word names a shrub with large leaves, “ciceion,” which he had rendered by the nearest familiar plant—and returned the volley with aged dignity: “I beseech you to have some consideration for a soldier who is now old and has long retired from active service, and not to force him to take the field”; and, earlier in the exchange, “do not, because you are young, challenge a veteran in the field of Scripture. . . The tired ox treads with a firmer step” (*Letters* 112.22, 102.2). Augustine, for his part, laid down in this correspondence a rule the Church never forgot, that only Scripture’s own authors command unconditional assent: “of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error” (Augustine, *Letter* 82.3). The two doctors ended in peace and collaboration against the Pelagians; the Church eventually kept both verdicts, reading Jerome’s Hebrew-based text while continuing to honor the Septuagint the apostles had used.

8 The Controversialist: Jovinian, Origen, Rufinus, Vigilantius

8.1 Against Jovinian, and past him

In 393 friends in Rome sent Jerome the tracts of Jovinian, a monk who argued that “virgins, widows, and married women, who have been once passed through the laver of Christ, if they are on a par in other respects, are of equal merit,” that the baptized cannot be overthrown by the devil, that fasting is no better than thankful eating, and that there is one reward for all who keep their baptismal vow (*Against Jovinianus* 1.3). Jovinian had already been condemned at Rome and Milan; Jerome’s two-book reply defended the traditional hierarchy of virginity, widowhood, and marriage. He protested his orthodoxy against the obvious retort—“we do not follow the views of Marcion and Manichæus, and disparage marriage. . . We know that in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earthenware” (*Against Jovinianus* 1.3)—but his rhetoric ran far ahead of his doctrine, piling up pagan and medical disparagements of wedlock so extreme that his Roman friends tried to withdraw the book from circulation. The episode fixed the pattern of Jerome’s polemics: the position defensible, the execution indefensible, and the defense of the execution (*Letters* 48–50) more truculent than the original. A dedicated treatment of the tradition that grew from this quarrel belongs to reception; what belongs to the life is that Rome’s ascetic party itself winced.

8.2 The Origenist rupture

The gravest controversy reached Bethlehem from outside. In the 390s Epiphanius of Salamis carried through Palestine his campaign against the errors of Origen—the subordinationist readings, the pre-existent souls, the speculative restoration of all things—and demanded condemnations. Jerome, who had translated Origen’s homilies and praised him without stint, signed on; John of Jerusalem refused; Rufinus, Jerome’s oldest friend, now leading a monastery on the Mount of Olives, stood with John. The quarrel between the two monasteries—complete with an intercepted letter, a disputed ordination of Jerome’s brother, and years of ecclesiastical cold war—was patched up in 397, and then detonated beyond repair. Rufinus, back in Italy, translated Origen’s *On First Principles*, smoothing its suspect passages, and in his preface politely cited Jerome as the precedent for translating and praising Origen. Jerome took the compliment as denunciation, produced a literal counter-translation, and the two exchanged the *Apologies* that remain among the saddest documents of patristic literature.

Jerome’s formula for his career-long debt to Origen was already fixed in the letter he sent Rome in 400: “I have praised the commentator but not the theologian, the man of intellect but not the believer, the philosopher but not the apostle”; the condemned doctrine he summarized in the same letter’s mock-list—after the restitution of all things

“it will be the same for Gabriel as for the devil, for Paul as for Caiaphas, for virgins as for prostitutes” (*Letter* 84.2, 84.7). Rufinus’s rejoinder aimed lower and hit harder: the perjured dream (see above), and the schoolmaster of Bethlehem who “took the office of a teacher in grammar, and explained ‘his own’ Maro and the comedians and lyrical and historical writers to young boys” in the monastery of the man who had sworn off Cicero (Rufinus, *Apology* 2.8). Anastasius of Rome censured the translated Origen; Rufinus retired from the fight; Jerome did not, pursuing his old friend in print even after Rufinus died in Sicily in 411—a pursuit of the dead that even his admirers have declined to defend.

Both *Apologies* survive, and neither is a neutral record: each man selects, quotes out of context, and reargues twenty years of friendship as prosecution. This study uses the exchange only for what each side asserts about itself and concedes about the other—Jerome’s dream defense, Rufinus’s Bethlehem schoolroom report (unrebutted on the fact), and the documented sequence of translations and censures. The rights and wrongs of the larger Origenist question are treated in this series’ Origen biography from Origen’s own evidentiary horizon.

8.3 Against Vigilantius

The last of the personal polemics, dashed off—so its own text claims—in a single night in 406, answered Vigilantius, a presbyter of Gaul who had once visited Bethlehem and now attacked the cult of the martyrs: the honors paid to relics, the vigils at their basilicas, the candles, the alms sent to Jerusalem, the exaltation of celibacy. Jerome’s opening pun announced the register: “Vigilantius, or, more correctly, Dormitantius, has arisen, animated by an unclean spirit” (*Against Vigilantius* 1)—the “Wakeful” one rechristened “Sleepy.” Beneath the abuse stood a serious distinction that later theology retained: Christians do not worship the martyrs but honor them so as to adore the God whose martyrs they are; the honors are signs of joy, not sacrifices to the dead. The tract is one page of the long argument that ended, centuries later, in the Church’s settled doctrine of the veneration of saints; it is also, sentence for sentence, as unfair a piece of invective as Jerome ever wrote.

9 The Pelagian War, the Burned Monasteries, and the End

9.1 Last battle

Jerome’s final controversy joined him, at last, to the mainstream of Latin theology. Pelagius, the British ascetic teacher whose followers held that human nature can fulfill God’s commands without inner grace and that a man may be without sin if he will, had come east after the sack of Rome and settled in Palestine, where John of Jerusalem received him kindly. Jerome engaged in his own key. His letter to Ctesiphon (415) traced the new doctrine to the philosophers’ dream of passionlessness—quoting with relish “one of our own writers,” Tertullian: “the philosophers are the patriarchs of the heretics”—and pressed the Pauline texts: if even the apostle does the evil he would not, “what becomes of the assertion that a man may be without sin if he will?” (*Letter* 133.1–2). The *Dialogue Against the Pelagians* (415), his last major work of controversy, argued the same case with unusual restraint, in the form of a conversation between an orthodox and a Pelagian spokesman. At the synod of Diospolis in December 415 Pelagius satisfied his Eastern judges; Jerome called it a miserable synod; Africa and Rome eventually condemned the doctrine, with Augustine now leading and the old man of Bethlehem cheering from his cell.

9.2 The attack of 416

Then the war came to his door. In 416 armed men fell on the monasteries of Bethlehem. The most sober near-contemporary account is Augustine’s, published within a year or two: “Certain followers of Pelagius are said to have most cruelly beaten and maltreated the servants and handmaidens of the Lord who lived under the care of the holy presbyter Jerome, slain his deacon, and burnt his monastic houses; while he himself, by God’s mercy, narrowly escaped the violent attacks of these impious assailants in the shelter of a well-defended fortress” (*On the Proceedings of Pelagius* 66). Augustine—note the “are said”—declined to name the perpetrators and left their punishment to the local bishops. Pope Innocent I did intervene, in letters preserved in Jerome’s own collection: he wrote to Jerome that he had “hastened to put forth the authority of the apostolic see to repress the plague in all its manifestations,” but that “as your letters name no individuals and bring no specific charges, there is no one at present against whom

we can proceed”—if Jerome would lay a clear accusation, judges would be appointed (*Letter* 136); a companion letter rebuked John of Jerusalem for the outrage suffered in his diocese. Jerome’s own surviving notice is a single grim sentence to a correspondent the next year: “As for our house, so far as fleshly wealth is concerned, it has been completely destroyed by the onslaughts of the heretics; but by the mercy of Christ it is still filled with spiritual riches. To live on bread is better than to lose the faith” (*Letter* 139).

Responsibility for the attack is attested only as attribution: Augustine’s “certain followers of Pelagius are said,” Innocent’s unnamed “plague,” Jerome’s “the heretics.” No perpetrator was ever named in a surviving source, no proceeding is recorded, and Pelagius himself was never charged with ordering it. The event—beatings, a deacon killed, buildings burned, Jerome besieged in a tower—is multiply attested; the responsibility remains an accusation, and this study reports it as such.

9.3 Deaths

The last years were a roll of losses. Paula had died in 404; Marcella, beaten by the Goths in the sack of Rome—she “showed no fear” and pleaded for her companion Principia—died of the aftermath in 410/411, mourned in the letter that contains Jerome’s epitaph on the city itself: “The City which had taken the whole world was itself taken” (*Letter* 127.12–14). Eustochium, shaken by the destruction of 416, died in 418/419. Jerome survived them all, still dictating—his commentary on Jeremiah stopped partway—and died at Bethlehem on 30 September of 419 or 420: the year 420 rests on the chronicle notice of Prosper of Aquitaine, the day on the Church’s immemorial commemoration, and official biographies (so Benedict XVI’s catechesis) give 419/420 without deciding. He was buried near Paula and Eustochium, beside the cave of the Nativity. What later ages did with his remains, his image, and his story belongs to the tradition history examined next.

10 Reception: Doctor, Cardinal, Lion

10.1 From presbyter to Doctor of the Church

Jerome’s sanctity was received early and has never been questioned in the Latin church: his feast stands on 30 September, and his authority as interpreter of Scripture became proverbial within a century of his death. The formal doctorate came in the Middle Ages: a decree of Boniface VIII (1298) ordered the feasts of the four great Western teachers—Gregory the Great, Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome—“to be kept as doubles in the whole Church,” the act from which the title “Doctor of the Church” descends (so the decretal *Gloriosus* in the *Liber Sextus*). The Council of Trent, defining the canon and ordering a corrected edition, made his composite Bible the Latin church’s official text—a status Benedict XVI’s catechesis still summarizes—and the modern papacy has returned to him three times at length: Benedict XV’s encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus* (1920), for the fifteenth centenary of his death, proposing “her ‘Greatest Doctor’” as the model of biblical study and devotion; Benedict XVI’s two general audiences of 7 and 14 November 2007, presenting the life (born c. 347, died 419/420) and drawing from it the rule that reading Scripture is conversation with God; and Francis’s apostolic letter *Scripturae Sacrae affectus* (30 September 2020), for the sixteenth centenary, which retells the dream, celebrates the “living and tender love” for the written word of God, and reads Jerome’s iconography—the penitent of the desert and the scholar in the study—as the two faces of one vocation. The Catechism’s one direct Jerome quotation (CCC 133) makes his sentence on scriptural ignorance the Church’s own exhortation.

Official reception is bounded by its objects. The doctorate honors eminent doctrine and sanctity; the Tridentine decree concerned the authenticity of a Bible, not the perfection of a translator; the papal documents commend Jerome’s love of Scripture and nowhere canonize his polemical manners. None of these acts asserts the lion, the cardinalate, the relic tradition, or either birth year as historical fact.

10.2 The lion

The lion that pads through a thousand paintings entered the story late. No ancient source knows it: not Jerome’s own works, not his catalogue notice, not Postumianus’s eyewitness report, not the fifth-century chronicles (a bounded

negative result of this study's searches; see the appendix). The full-blown tale appears in the medieval lives and classically in the *Golden Legend* (thirteenth century): toward evening a lion "came halting suddenly in to the monastery"; the brethren fled, Jerome greeted it as a guest, found "the plant of the foot of the lion was sore hurt and pricked with a thorn," healed it, and set the tame beast to guard the monastery's donkey; merchants stole the donkey; the lion, suspected of eating it, did the donkey's work in penance until it triumphantly herded back the thieves' camel caravan (*Golden Legend*, Life of S. Jerome). The same story-pattern—thorn, healing, grateful lion serving a monastery—is told of the fifth-century abbot Gerasimus of the Jordan in early Byzantine monastic literature, and the standard modern explanation, argued in Eugene Rice's study of Jerome's iconography and repeated in museum scholarship, is a transfer by confusion of names (Gerasimus / Geronimus). The judgment of Jerome's own NPNF editor may stand for the historical status: the desert descriptions "no doubt gave rise to the tradition that he was always attended by a lion. . . With such traditions a historical work must not be burdened" (Fremantle, 1893). As reception, however, the lion is eloquent: it gave art a single image for the tamed ferocity that the documents show untamed.

10.3 The cardinal's hat

The *Golden Legend* also reports that at twenty-nine Jerome "was ordained cardinal priest in the church of Rome," and painters from the fourteenth century onward robed him accordingly—the Thyssen catalogue's *Saint Jerome as a Cardinal* (1498) shows the full scarlet, with the lion at his knee. The office is an anachronism: the cardinalate as a rank did not exist in the fourth century, and the legend is a back-projection of Jerome's real service as secretary and adviser to Pope Damasus, magnified by centuries in which the pope's chief counselors were cardinals. The red hat in the pictures is reception, not costume history; it testifies to what later Rome felt it owed him, not to anything he wore.

10.4 Relics and images

Jerome was buried at Bethlehem; a later tradition, unverifiable now, holds that his remains were translated to the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, where an altar of St. Jerome stands. The NPNF prolegomena reports it in the proper mood: his remains "are said to have been transferred. . . to the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore at Rome, and miracles to have been wrought at his tomb" (Fremantle, 1893). No current authentication of relics is asserted by this study, and none is required by the cult, which honors the saint, not a verified skeleton. The iconography meanwhile split along the line Francis's letter observes: Dürer's scholar at his desk, skull and lion in attendance; Leonardo's gaunt penitent with the stone; Caravaggio's old man writing against time. Between them the painters preserved, better than the legends, the two things the documents actually show: the desert and the desk.

10.5 The modern audit

Modern scholarship has kept the achievement and cut away the varnish. The standard biography (J. N. D. Kelly, 1975) and the current critical study (Stefan Rebenich, 2002) present a Jerome who was a relentless self-publicist as well as a genuine prodigy: the desert sojourn was shorter, better supplied, and better connected than his rhetoric implies; his Hebrew, though real and unprecedented, "may well have been exaggerated" in his own telling and "seems to have relied partly on the hired assistance of Jewish scholars" (so Rebenich, as quoted in the review literature); and the Vulgate, as the previous section detailed, is a composite in which his share, though decisive, is smaller than the legend of the solitary translator. None of this scholarship doubts the scale of the work; its effect has been to restore the collaborators—Paula, Eustochium, Marcella, the Jewish teachers, the copyists—whom the lone figure in the paintings had crowded out.

11 Conclusion: The Labor of the Word

Reduce the life to what the evidence best supports, and it remains astonishing. A provincial boy from a town so obscure it cannot be found was given the best rhetorical education in the world and spent it, after one terrifying fever-dream, on a book written in languages Rome did not teach. He learned Hebrew from Jewish teachers when no Christian scholar of the West had thought it necessary; he revised the Gospels for a pope who died before the

resentment landed; he was driven from Rome by a scandal whose file is lost; and in a cell above the cave of the Nativity, funded by one heroic widow and surrounded by women who chanted psalms in Hebrew, he translated the Old Testament from “the Hebrew verity” against the advice of nearly everyone, including Augustine. The composite Bible that history built around that labor governed the Western church’s reading, praying, and lawmaking for more than a millennium. When the Catholic Church calls him her greatest doctor of the Scriptures, the claim is not larger than the fact.

The evidence supports the shadow with equal firmness. Jerome wounded nearly everyone he engaged: the married, in a book his own friends suppressed; a dead friend, in a polemic continued past the grave; opponents high and low with a violence of tongue that his admirers, ancient and modern, have had to report because it fills the documents. He was capable of tenderness—the letters on Blaesilla, Paula, and Marcella prove it—and incapable, on the record, of losing an argument gracefully. The Church’s reception has been correspondingly precise: it canonized the man, adopted the Bible, quoted the love of Scripture, and quietly declined to imitate the temper. The legends made the same correction in images: the lion at his feet is ferocity tamed, which is what memory wished for him rather than what the letters show.

The disagreements this study has preserved—331 or 347; what the dream bound; what happened in Rome in 385; who burned the monasteries; how much of the received Vulgate is his—are not defects in the portrait but its texture: a life documented almost entirely by its subject will be exactly as certain, and as partial, as its subject’s pen. On one point that pen never wavered, and on that point the Church has followed him without reserve. The sentence stands in the Catechism as it stood in the prologue to Isaiah: ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ. It is the epitaph he wrote, unknowingly, for himself: everything else in his story—the dream, the desert, the quarrels, the lion—is what a man looks like from outside; inside, there was the Book, and by his own account the Book was Christ.

A Scope, Chronology, and Evidence

A.1 Identity, names, and range

Subject: Jerome of Stridon (Eusebius Hieronymus; the additional name Sophronius appears in parts of the transmission and is not asserted here), presbyter, monk, biblical translator, Father and Doctor of the Church. Whole-life range used in this study: born c. 347 at Stridon on the Dalmatian–Pannonian border (site unidentified; competing birth year 331 preserved throughout), died at Bethlehem 30 September 419/420. Principal places: Stridon, Rome, Trier, Aquileia, Antioch, the desert of Chalcis, Constantinople, and from 386 Bethlehem. No civil record, inscription, or contemporary archive attests any of it; the documentary base is literary and overwhelmingly Jerome’s own.

A.2 Reader, question, and thesis boundary

Written for a serious general reader, student, or researcher who wants one coherent, evidence-controlled life. The governing questions are stated in the opening section. The organizing synthesis—that the Church’s greatest biblical doctor and the tradition’s hardest temper are one man, whose achievement and whose wounds come from the same pen—is historical, not ecclesiastical. This study does not adjudicate the birth-year dispute, the dream’s supernatural status, the canonical character of the 385 Roman proceedings or the 416 attack, the merits of the parties in the Origenist and Pelagian controversies, the current location or authenticity of relics, or any doctrinal question the sources contest; it claims no theological, canonical, or rights review and no ecclesiastical approval.

A.3 Corpus and citation conventions

Jerome’s letters and treatises are cited by conventional titles with the numbering of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers translation, series 2, vol. 6 (New York, 1893; Fremantle, Lewis, and Martley), whose wording is used for quotations of the letters, the prefaces to the Gospels and to Samuel and Kings, *Against Helvidius*, *Against Jovinianus*, *Against Vigilantius*, and *Against John of Jerusalem*; *On Illustrious Men* and the two *Apologies* (Jerome’s and Rufinus’s) follow NPNF series 2, vol. 3; the Augustine–Jerome correspondence is cited with dual numbering where needed (Jerome’s *Letter* 112 = Augustine’s *Letter* 75) in the NPNF series 1, vol. 1 translation; Sulpicius Severus and Augustine’s anti-Pelagian treatise follow their NPNF volumes; the prologues to Tobit and Judith follow the

public-domain translations at tertullian.org. Quotations were checked against the online transcriptions identified in the References on 2026-07-24. Works are dated only where the text or a stated basis permits; no complete relative chronology of the letters is asserted.

A.4 Evidence classes

Class	Meaning
A	Jerome's own letters, prefaces, catalogue, and polemics: contemporary, but advocacy and self-fashioning; each claim limited by genre, audience, and occasion.
N	Contemporary external witness: Augustine's side of the correspondence and his <i>On the Proceedings of Pelagius</i> ; Rufinus's <i>Apology</i> (hostile); Innocent I's letters; Sulpicius Severus's Postumianus report.
E	Early received tradition: Prosper of Aquitaine's chronicle notices; the fifth-century transmission and early use of his works.
L	Later tradition: the medieval vitae, the <i>Golden Legend</i> (lion, cardinalate, and related stories), the relic-translation tradition, iconography.
M	Official ecclesial reception, limited to each act's actual object: Boniface VIII's 1298 decretal; Trent on the Vulgate; <i>Spiritus Paraclitus</i> (1920); CCC 133; Benedict XVI's 2007 audiences; <i>Scripturae Sacrae affectus</i> (2020).
K	Named modern critical reconstruction (Kelly, Rebenich, Rice, the ISBE survey, and reviewers), used to its stated premises and, where marked, at reported level only.
S	Source-grounded project synthesis, never attributed to a source.

A.5 Chronology

Dates below are claims with stated bases; where the two birth-year traditions diverge, dependent ages differ by about fifteen years throughout.

Date	Event	Basis	Status
331 or c. 347	Birth at Stridon	Prosper's chronicle tradition (E) vs. Jerome's schoolboy-in-363 recollections (A); both preserved	Disputed; unresolved
c. 360s	Education at Rome under Donatus; baptism at Rome c. 366	A (recollections); <i>Spiritus Paraclitus</i> 2 (M, reporting Jerome); Fremantle (K)	Plausible
c. 367–372	Trier; ascetic circle at Aquileia	A (letters read by Fremantle) (K)	Approximate
373/374	Journey east; illness at Antioch	A	Plausible
c. 374/375	The dream of the tribunal	A (<i>Letter</i> 22.30, told 384)	Reported by subject; date approximate
c. 375–377	Desert of Chalcis; Hebrew begun	A (<i>Letters</i> 14–17, 22.7, 125.12); Maronia estate context (K)	Episode secure; dates approximate
c. 378/379	Ordination by Paulinus at Antioch, monastic condition reserved	A (<i>Against John of Jerusalem</i> 41)	Secure event; date approximate
380–382	Constantinople; Gregory Nazianzen; <i>Chronicle</i> ; Origen translations	A (<i>On Illustrious Men</i> 117, 135)	Secure
382–385	Rome with Damasus; Gospel revision (383/384); <i>Against Helvidius</i> ; <i>Letter</i> 22; Aventine circle	A (Gospel preface; letters)	Secure
Dec. 384	Death of Damasus	Received chronology (E/K)	Secure

Date	Event	Basis	Status
Aug. 385	Departure from Rome after scandal and informal condemnation	A (<i>Letter</i> 45)	Event secure; proceedings' formal character unresolved
386	Settlement at Bethlehem; Paula's monasteries and hospice follow	A (<i>Letter</i> 108)	Secure
c. 390–405/406	Old Testament translated from the Hebrew, with prefaces; Tobit and Judith hastily added	A (prefaces); ISBE survey (K)	Secure as program; book dates approximate
392/393	<i>On Illustrious Men</i> , "the fourteenth of the Emperor Theodosius"	A (135)	Secure
393	<i>Against Jovinianus</i> ; Roman friends withhold it	A; NPNF headnote to <i>Letter</i> 48 (K)	Secure
c. 393–402	Origenist controversy; break with Rufinus; <i>Apologies</i> (401–402)	A/N (both <i>Apologies</i> ; <i>Letter</i> 84)	Secure
404	Death of Paula	A (<i>Letter</i> 108)	Secure
406	<i>Against Vigilantius</i>	A	Secure
410–411	Sack of Rome; death of Marcella	A (<i>Letter</i> 127, written c. 412)	Secure
415	<i>Letter</i> 133; <i>Dialogue Against the Pelagians</i> ; synod of Diospolis	A; N (Augustine)	Secure
416	Attack on the Bethlehem monasteries; deacon killed; buildings burned	N (Augustine, <i>Proceedings</i> 66; Innocent, <i>Letters</i> 136–137); A (<i>Letter</i> 139)	Event secure; culprits unproven
418/419	Death of Eustochium	Fremantle's chronology (K)	Approximate
30 Sept. 419/420	Death at Bethlehem; burial near the Nativity cave	Prosper (E, year 420); commemoration day (L/M); Benedict XVI gives 419/420 (M)	Year disputed 419/420; day traditional
Middle Ages	Lion and cardinal legends; relic-translation tradition to Santa Maria Maggiore	<i>Golden Legend</i> (L); Fremantle's report (K)	Legend/tradition; not event
1298	Boniface VIII orders the feasts of the four Latin doctors	Decretal <i>Gloriosus</i> as reported in the 1912 Catholic Encyclopedia (M/K)	Secure
1920–2020	<i>Spiritus Paraclitus</i> ; Benedict XVI's audiences (2007); <i>Scripturae Sacrae affectus</i>	Vatican texts (M)	Secure

A.6 Method, limits, and negative results

Earliest controlled evidence governs; witnesses separated by centuries are never silently merged; where they conflict (birth year, the dream's force, the 385 proceedings, the 416 responsibility, the Vulgate's scope), the conflict is stated and left open. Geographic and linguistic limits: the study reads English translations of Latin and Greek sources; no manuscript, epigraphic, or archaeological research was undertaken; no Latin wording is asserted beyond famous tags identified as such; Prosper's chronicle was not inspected directly and is used as reported in the public-domain reference literature identified in the References. Bounded negative results, from searches conducted 2026-07-24: no lion appears in Jerome's own works, in *On Illustrious Men* 135, in Sulpicius Severus's report, or in any ancient source located; no ancient evidence of a cardinalate or of the office itself in his century was located; no record of a formal Roman sentence in 385, and no named perpetrator of the 416 attack, was located; the site of Stridon remains unidentified. These are bounded, correctable search results, not proofs of absence. Mutable online sources (Vatican website, New Advent, CCEL, tertullian.org, bible-researcher.com, museum catalogues) were used as checked on 2026-07-24.

A.7 Rights and review state

Project prose is original; quotations of ancient authors follow the public-domain NPNF translations (1890s), the public-domain prologue translations at tertullian.org (released to the public domain by their translators), Caxton's

Golden Legend (Temple Classics text), the 1881 and 1911 Britannica and 1912 Catholic Encyclopedia, and the 1915 International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. Vatican texts (encyclical, Catechism, audiences, apostolic letter) are paraphrased or quoted in brief attributed snippets with citation; modern scholarship (Kelly, Rebenich, Rice) is cited at the level of publication facts and reported theses, with reporting ceilings stated in the References. This publication has received internal editorial checking only: no independent specialist, theological, or ecclesiastical review, and no rights opinion, is claimed.

B References

All web sources were accessed and checked on 2026-07-24. Ancient-work citations in the text use conventional titles with the numbering of the translations listed here.

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