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Question 65 - Who were Origen and Jerome?

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101 MOST ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

65. Who were Origen and Jerome?

A. Origen – (c. 185-c. 254), Christian writer and teacher, born of Christian parents in Alexandria, educated there. His father, Leonidas, was martyred in the persecution of Septimus Severus in 202. Origen had wished to go to prison and suffer for his faith with his father, but his mother restrained him. Property that was left by Leonidas was confiscated, family had to struggle with poverty. Origen immediately assumed their support by teaching Greek philology and literature and by copying manuscripts. One literary contribution was *Hexapla*, a Bible in six columns, which Westcott says “was the greatest textual enterprise of ancient times.” Lived a life of piety, humility, virtue, and holiness, such as was attained by few of the fathers.

(*Who Was Who In Church History*. Elgin Moyer. Keats Publishing. New Canaan, Conn. 1974. p. 315)

B. Jerome – (c. 340-420), Biblical scholar, born of Christian parents in Stridon, Dalmatia, early education in the local school, at age twelve went to Rome for eight years of study, becoming proficient in Latin, Greek, and pagan authors. At nineteen became a Christian and was baptized by the pope. Put his whole being into his new life, resolving to devote himself wholly, in rigid abstinence, to the service of the Lord. Wishing to imitate the devotion and martyr spirit of the fathers, and to experience some of the rigors and sacrifices they underwent, chose to spend two or three years in the rude barbarism of Gaul. Spent several years in semi-asceticism in Aquilea near Rome. Longing for a still deeper experience of God, made a long lonesome journey through the Orient to Antioch. In a severe illness, while there had a vision of Christ, who reproached him for his devotion to the Greek and Latin classics. Turning from them gave himself with new zeal to the study of the Christian Scriptures. Retired to a limestone cave in the desert of Chalcis southwest of Antioch, and employed a Jewish rabbi to assist him in learning Hebrew. Not receiving the peace he sought in hermit life, seeing so much quarreling among the monks, decided to leave the cave, and enter more active life. Remaining at Antioch awhile, ordained a presbyter, though he was not required to fill the function of the office. Went to Constantinople to sit under the teaching of Gregory Nazianzen. In 382 Pope Damasus called Jerome to Rome to become papal secretary.

When the pope decided to have a new translation of the Scriptures made from the original Hebrew and Greek, he commissioned Jerome to the task. Work of translating began in Rome and completed years later in his monastery in Bethlehem. By the eighth century Jerome’s translation of Old and New

Testaments and the Apocrypha, known as the Latin Vulgate, became the officially recognized and authorized version of the Bible for the Catholic Church, replacing all other Latin translations. Jerome spent last thirty-five years of his life (386-420) in his Bethlehem monastery meditating, studying, writing, translating, and supervising his monks.

(*Who Was Who In Church History*. Elgin Moyer. Keats Publishing. New Canaan, Conn. 1974. p. 217)

The term *vulgate* comes from the Latin word that means “common.” Thus, until the King James Version in 1611, the Latin Vulgate became the recognized Bible for nearly 1,200 years. In 1228 the Vulgate was divided into chapters by Stephen Langton, archbishop of Canterbury. It was divided into verses by Robert Stephens in 1551, and these verses were numbered by Montanus around A.D. 1571. The Vulgate was also the first Bible to be printed by John Gutenberg in 1455. One of these printed copies now resides in the U. S. Library of Congress and is valued at \$350,000.