



In Search of Sacred Time: Jacobus de Voragine and The Golden Legend

Jacques Le Goff

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It is impossible to understand the late Middle Ages without grasping the importance of *The Golden Legend*, the most popular medieval collection of saints' lives. Assembled for clerical use in the thirteenth century by Genoese archbishop Jacobus de Voragine, the book became the medieval equivalent of a best seller. By 1500, there were more copies of it in circulation than there were of the Bible itself. Priests drew on *The Golden Legend* for their sermons, the faithful used it for devotion and piety, and artists and writers mined it endlessly in their works. *In Search of Sacred Time* is the first comprehensive history and interpretation of this crucial book. Jacques Le Goff, one of the world's most renowned medievalists, provides a lucid, compelling, and unparalleled account of why and how *The Golden Legend* exerted such a profound influence on medieval life.

In Search of Sacred Time explains how *The Golden Legend*--an encyclopedic work that followed the course of the liturgical calendar and recounted the life of the saint for each feast day--worked its way into the fabric of medieval life. Le Goff describes how this ambitious book was carefully crafted to give sense and shape to the Christian year, underscoring its meaning and drama through the stories of saints, miracles, and martyrdoms. Ultimately, Le Goff argues, *The Golden Legend* influenced how medieval Christians perceived the passage of time, Christianizing time itself and reconciling human and divine temporality.

Authoritative, eloquent, and original, *In Search of Sacred Time* is a major reinterpretation of a book that is central to comprehending the medieval imagination.

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