

AUTONOMOUS NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION OF ADDITIONAL EDUCATION "URAL-  
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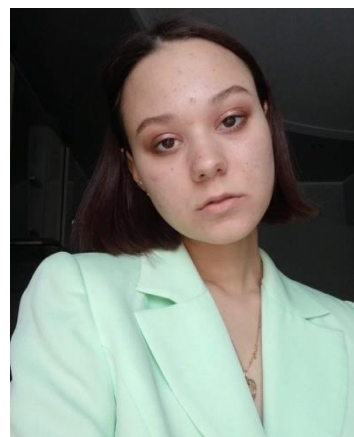
Group essay contest

**“Unity in Diversity: Russia and the English-Speaking World.  
Time for Equal Opportunities”**

Research work (essay)

**“The Baptism of Russia and England: the role of Vladimir the Great and St.  
Augustin of Canterbury”**

Participants:



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**Theses:**

1. Religion became an eternal part of our life about a thousand years ago.
2. The 988 became a decisive year in the history of Russia because it was the year when Grand Duke Vladimir brought the sacred religion to the lands of our state.
3. The 596 became a decisive year in the history of England. Augustine was sent by Gregory the Great to England to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity.
4. The important changes that took place in Russia with the help of Vladimir.
5. Significant modifications happened to England as well.
6. Consequently, the role of these personalities cannot be underestimated.

**“All religions are founded on the fear of the many and the cleverness of the few.”**

— **Stendhal**

Religion became an eternal part of our life about a thousand years ago. It is interesting to know what religion had to overcome to become a part of it.

Despite the fact that in the modern world most of the States are secular, each of them has its roots in religion. Russia and England are no exception. The religions of these countries are two sides of Christianity: Orthodox and Catholic (before the 16th century). In spite of the significant differences between these two branches, the adoption of Christianity in the middle ages was a turning point in the departure from paganism. This turning point marked the birth of a new society, a new faith without sacrifice and cruelty, with a Christian morality, a monogamous family and an awareness of the value of human life. From our point of view, in our contemporary world when different forces are trying to speculate religious feelings of nations, people do not have moral rights to forget about those who were the



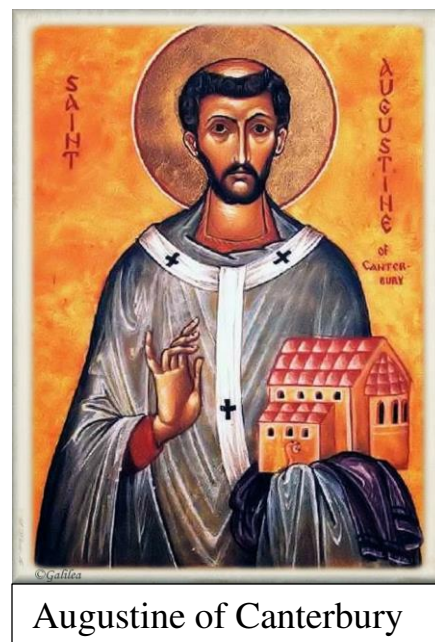
Saint Vladimir of Kiev

founders of religion in their state. The founders of the Christianity in Russia and Great Britain were Prince Vladimir the Great "The Red sun" and Augustine of Canterbury. Both these historical figures had to cope with lots of difficulties to strengthen this religion. However, historians argue about the significance of their role in the history of Christianity.

The 988 became a decisive year in the history of Russia because it was the year when Grand Duke Vladimir brought the sacred religion to the lands of our state. In order to understand the importance of this event we should bear in mind that before Vladimir's reforms Russia was pagan. The basis of the pagan religion was the worship of a pantheon of gods, each of which was

responsible for its own sphere in the life of the ancient Russian men. Sacrifice, including human sacrifice, was also a common feature of paganism. Consequently, cruelty and chaos reigned in ancient Russian society. Moreover, the pagan faith of Ancient Russia became extremely unprofitable in foreign policy. When the most part of European countries had already become Christian, it was no longer profitable to remain pagan. These reasons made Prince Vladimir to take a decision about the baptism of Russia.

The 596 became a decisive year in the history of England. It was in this year that Augustine, as abbot of the monastery of St. Andrew in Rome, was sent by Gregory the Great to England to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. Before the coming of Augustine the Anglo-Saxons were divided into warring pagan kingdoms: Christians of the Northwest and Wales, which were isolated. The first attempt to spread Christianity in England was not successful, but for the second time forty monks led by Augustine managed to start a new religion. Kent was chosen as the place to begin Augustine's mission in England, most likely because of the

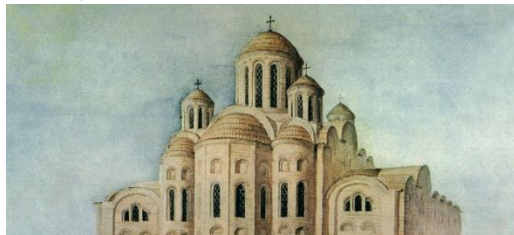


powerful position of its ruler, King Æthelberht and his wife, Queen Bertha, who was already a Christian, despite her marriage to a pagan king. The first step in the mission was the baptism of king Ethelbert I of Kent. After baptizing the king and the courtiers, with the permission of Ethelbert, Augustine set about building the church of Christ and the abbey of St Peter and Paul and Æthelberht also provided protection to the new Christian church. Therefore, Augustine and his missionaries,

working hand in hand with the Kentish King Aethelberht and his Christian queen<sup>1</sup>, were able to strengthen Christianity in the lands of England.

Thus, having done a detailed consideration of Augustine and Vladimir`s influence on the formation of a new religion on the territory of their states we cannot but admit their invaluable, immeasurable contribution to history, which affected every sphere of public life.

So, what are the important changes that took place in Russia with the help of Vladimir? The first thing that ought to be mentioned is politics, we should bear in mind that Vladimir managed not only to unite the lands of Ancient Rus and strengthen his own power, but also to develop foreign policy relations with Byzantium. Due to this achievement interdynastic marriages became widely spread. Furthermore, Vladimir's activities contributed to the unification of the tribes under a single faith. Orthodoxy became the pivot around which a single nation began to



The Church of the Tithes. Reconstruction of Yu. Aseev

form from scattered Slavic tribes. It should be mentioned that after the adoption of Christianity, Ancient Russia received a powerful impetus for the development of literacy and culture, which were taken as a model from Byzantium: a new system of chronology was established (the new year began on March 1), church holidays were introduced, the Roman number system appeared, the names of months (Genvar, Fouvruar) were accepted, the development of Russian writing was begun and the first church, called The Church of the Tithes, was erected. Finally, general morals improved, human sacrifice disappeared, and polygamy was forbidden. The adoption of Christianity in Russia affected the moral

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<sup>1</sup> Mackintosh, Augustine of Canterbury: Leadership, Mission and Legacy [Electronic resource] – URL: <https://ru.scribd.com/read/367617689/Augustine-of-Canterbury-Leadership-Mission-and-Legacy#>

component of its people. The cruel pagan was replaced by a Christian who was called to live according to his conscience and the law of God.

Corresponding modifications happened to England as well. To begin with, the political influence of the new religion that Bede looked back to in Augustine's mission was considerable, especially in the inter-relationships between the various Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.<sup>2</sup> Augustine paved the way for greater political ties and trade by linking the Anglo-Saxons to a system that was essentially Mediterranean-orientated and city-based. Besides, Saint Augustine of Canterbury made an incommensurable contribution to the formation of the English Church. First, he developed specific forms of worship, adapting the experience of other churches to local traditions. Secondly, he established the principle of the distribution of church income in the Catholic Church: it is divided into four parts, of which one is intended for the bishop, the second for the priest, the third goes to help the poor, and the fourth for the maintenance of the church. Talking about culture, Augustine founded a mission school, and soon after his death, Canterbury sent several teachers to support the Christian mission in East England. The King's school claims that it was founded by Augustine and is thus the oldest school in the world.<sup>3</sup>

Summing up all mentioned above, we come to conclusion that baptism in these countries became a turning point in the history of each of the considered states. Baptism destroyed the previous foundations and became the beginning of fundamental changes in the history of Russia and England. It goes without saying that all these changes occurred owing to Vladimir the Great and St. Augustin of Canterbury's wise decisions and political deeds. Consequently, the role of these personalities cannot be underestimated.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Brooks Early History of the Church of Canterbury P. 94—95

## List of literature

1. Mackintosh, Augustine of Canterbury: Leadership, Mission and Legacy [Electronic resource] – URL: <https://ru.scribd.com/read/367617689/Augustine-of-Canterbury-Leadership-Mission-and-Legacy#>
2. Brooks Early History of the Church of Canterbury
3. The Mission of Augustine of Canterbury to the English by Ian Wood [Electronic resource] – URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2864782?seq=1>
4. Григорий Литаврин «Принятие христианства народами Центральной и Юго-Восточной Европы и крещение Руси» [Электронный ресурс] – URL: <http://macedonia.kroraina.com/phr/index.htm>
5. Лекция «Последствия принятия Русью христианства» [Электронный ресурс] – URL: [https://histerl.ru/lectures/kievaskaia\\_rusi/posledstviya-prinyatiya-xristianstva.htm](https://histerl.ru/lectures/kievaskaia_rusi/posledstviya-prinyatiya-xristianstva.htm)