

## **Latin as the language of science**

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Throughout the Middle Ages Latin was the language of culture in the whole Western world, as a direct heritage from the Roman times. It was the language of the Church and also the language of the universities and their sciences from the twelfth century onwards. A change began to occur in the sixteenth century, when, in the Protestant countries, the Bible – or parts of it – were translated into vulgar languages, but also medical books and animal and herb books were published in the “new” languages. Of the great innovators of natural sciences, Galilei and Redi, published their most important books in Italian, Francis Bacon and Robert Hooke in English, Descartes and Réaumur in French, but most often these treatises were also translated into Latin. The position of Latin remained strong in Germany and Scandinavia; thus in the middle of the eighteenth century, in Sweden (and Finland as a part of the Kingdom), dissertations written in Swedish and dealing with practical and economic matters were allowed in universities, but still as late as the early nineteenth century Mathias Calonius, professor of law, gave his lectures to his audiences in Turku in Latin. In the fields of medicine and natural history Latin has, to some extent, retained its position up to our time.