

# LIGHT TO THE NATIONS

*The Development of  
Christian Civilization*

Part One

**3rd PROOFS**

*“I will give you as a light to the nations,  
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”*

*—Isaiah: 49:6*

# LIGHT TO THE NATIONS

## *The Development of Christian Civilization*

Part One

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## Dedication to Professor Rollin A. Lasseter

By 1969, when Yale University conferred a Ph.D. in English on him, Rollin Lasseter had already achieved an array of honors. Before graduating Summa Cum Laude and being awarded a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship to graduate school at Yale, he led his Vanderbilt team for three contests on national television's popular "College Bowl." In addition, he was editor of *The Vagabond*, Vanderbilt's literary magazine, published a volume of poetry, *Flags and Other Poems*, and received several academic and literary awards. At the University of Kentucky, his first academic position, he was named "Teacher of the Year" three times and was invited to direct the Honors Program. A few years later, he joined the English faculty at North Carolina State University, where he was given tenure. During that time at Raleigh, Dr. Lasseter and his wife, Ruth, became parents to their six children, all of whom have followed their father's example and entered the teaching profession.

In the 1970s and 80s, academic institutions everywhere in America abandoned the good of Christianity and its heritage of Western Civilization, but Dr. Lasseter embraced the Faith and defended the tradition more firmly. Following the example of his teachers and mentors, Donald Davidson and Cleanth Brooks, who were champions of the Western literary tradition, Dr. Lasseter looked to the future, even while defending the past. It was with hope that in the following decades he dedicated himself to learning, teaching, and writing. His articles on Catholic education have been published in *Catholic Faith* magazine and *This Rock*, and his poetry has been printed in several journals. He has, in addition, designed a K-12 curriculum for private Catholic schools, served on the faculty of the University of Dallas for several years prior to his retirement, and shaped the Catholic Schools Textbook Project as director, editor and main writer. Now in his 68th year, he has battled cancer for the past decade and has given over the task of completion of the series to his younger colleagues. Despite his retirement, he continues to lecture extensively on education and to give workshops on composition and poetry for teachers. A new volume of his poetry, *The Cast of Valor*, published in April 2008, is available from St. Augustine Press.

Dr. Helen Lasseter, his youngest daughter, recently praised her father in these words: "He has always been influential and encouraging to his colleagues, as well as being a great teacher. If he had looked only to his personal advancement

when he was a young professor, instead of balancing his career and his care of our family, he might be really famous today; but, had he done so, he would not have been our daddy.”

For my part, Dr. Lasseter has been the mind behind our Catholic School Textbook Project. I could never have made it to page one had it not been for his tireless dedication and expansive knowledge and experience. All of us who have worked so hard and long to offer these textbooks to Catholic schoolchildren would like to thank and honor Dr. Lasseter, a true teacher’s teacher, by dedicating this volume to him. God bless you Dr. Lasseter, and thank you for bringing Catholic culture to the classroom and into our minds and hearts.

—Michael J. Van Hecke, M. Ed.  
President

[Thank you to Mrs. Ruth Lasseter and family for providing the above information, and for your own hand in countless hours of support, reading and contributing to your father’s work.]



# Table of Contents

From the General Editor	viii
Introduction: History's Beginnings	1
<b>Chapter 1</b> A Light to the Nations	17
<b>Chapter 2</b> Emperors and Madmen	47
<b>Chapter 3</b> The Blood of Martyrs	69
<b>Chapter 4</b> The Christian Empire	89
<b>Chapter 5</b> Germanic Kingdoms in the West	115
<b>Chapter 6</b> Founders of Christendom—A.D. 500–700	139
<b>Chapter 7</b> The Rise of Islam—A.D. 624–800	167
<b>Chapter 8</b> The Defense and the Building of Christendom	193
<b>Chapter 9</b> The Achievements of Feudalism: A.D. 800–1000	219
<b>Chapter 10</b> The Medieval Reformation	243
<b>Chapter 11</b> The New Nations: Spain, England, and France	267
<b>Chapter 12</b> The Crusades	295
<b>Chapter 13</b> The Great Century	327
<b>Chapter 14</b> Decline and Decay of the Middle Ages	359
<b>Chapter 15</b> Two Centuries of Conflict	381
<b>Chapter 16</b> The Renaissance	413
<b>Chapter 17</b> Revolt and Reformation	443
<b>Chapter 18</b> Catholic Renewal and the Thirty Years' War	483
<b>Chapter 19</b> Age of Revolution	521

# From the General Editor

**H**istory is a treasure chest of riches. In its stories are the most exciting, the saddest and the happiest moments of human life. All the great souls and heroes of the world are to be met in the pages of a good history book.

A Christian interpretation of History is the story of God's love for mankind. As a long and complex story, it can tell of tragedies as well as comedies, of famines as well as feasts, of exiles and homecomings, defeats and victories. There is among the many stories of history some story to entertain or to edify everyone. But over all, the story of history is the tale of God's acts in time and space, the story of rebellious mankind, and the Mercy of God for human folly. History is a story, a story of hope.

However, events in our own time tend to leave most people in fear of the future, despite the watchword of our culture, which remains: "Progress! Be always Optimistic!" Current secular ideologies have given "history" a god-like power, that makes sometimes wild proclamations: "Someday, History will look back and say . . ."; or "History will show the wisdom of . . ."; or "History will prove he was right . . ."; or "History will leave this 'whatever' behind in the dust of the

ages." This ideological sense of the name "History" is more than a little idolatrous in its foolish optimism. Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI has written in several places about "optimism" as but a shallow mockery of Hope.

The evidence of the stories that come down to us from the ancient world and the medieval era do not promise all good endings. Humanity makes costly mistakes. Great men and women pay for those mistakes with their lives. Great empires collapse. Utopias are not realistic, nor realized.

The Hope that the Christian Faith offers is more than an optimistically happy ending. The end of history will be the return of Our Lord in Glory and the end of time. Providence does not mean every time a happy ending—only a blessed one. It is God's abiding care and love, in History and in individual lives. It is the vision of the perfection in Christ to which all people are called, not just what society and cultures—however great—have been.

May you, the readers of this book, young and old, find in its tales the traces of that Providence that keeps all of us safe in his Everlasting Arms.

—Rollin A. Lasseter, Ph.D.  
General Editor, CSTP

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# Index

## A

- Abbasids, 187–189  
Abbey of Cîteaux, 246–247  
Abbey of Cluny, 245–246  
Abbey of Monte Cassino, 155, 157, 164, 350  
Abbey of Montserrat, 491  
Abbey of St. Denis, 285–286  
Abd-ar-Rahman (Caliph), 201, 210  
Abd-ar-Rahman (Emir), 201, 202  
abdicate, 371  
absolve, 364  
Abu Abd Allah Muhammad Al-Nasir, 310–312  
Abu Bakr, 177–178, 191  
abuses, 488  
academia. *See* liberal arts; schools  
Acre, 303  
Act of Settlement, 539  
Act of Supremacy, 480  
Act of Uniformity, 473  
Acts, 32, 33, 37, 46, 244  
A.D. *See* *Anno Domini*  
Adalbert of Prague, 255  
Adam, 1, 12, 102, 417, 424  
Adeodatus, 101  
adjourn, 486  
Adolphus, Gustavus, 517  
Adrian I, 209  
Adriatic Sea, 103, 306  
*Advantage of Death*, 200  
Aegean Sea, 404  
*Aeneid, The*, 49, 50  
Africa, 57, 63, 90, 98, 100, 108–109, 115, 124–126, 126, 143, 181, 204, 222, 235, 271, 320  
Africanus, Apuleius, 348  
Agincourt, 393–395  
Agricultural Revolutions, 231  
agriculture, 2, 7, 15, 230–231. *See also* feudalism  
Agrippina, 54  
Al-Andalus, 203–204, 215, 309–312  
Alaric, 104, 105, 111, 121, 135  
Albert of Brandenburg, 445–446  
Albert the Great, 351, 352  
Albertus Magnus. *See* Albert the Great  
Albigensians, 289, 313, 314, 317, 324, 340, 417  
Albinus, 151  
Alcuin, 216  
Alexander, 90  
Alexander III, 262  
Alexander the Great, 3  
Alexander V, 370  
Alexandria, 77, 90, 94, 181  
Alfonso II, 267  
Alfonso III, 292  
Alfonso IX, 334–335, 340  
Alfonso VI, 269–271, 292  
Alfonso VIII, 310, 325–326  
Ali, 183–184, 191  
Alighieri, Dante, 361–362, 378  
“All Creatures of Our God and King”, 358  
Allah, 172, 190  
allay, 536  
*Almagest*, 60  
Al-Mansour, 325–326  
Almohads, 317  
Almoravids, 271  
Al-Qadir, 269–271  
Al-Saffah, 187–188  
Amalasantha, 133, 143–144  
Amalings, 131–133  
Amalric, 133  
Ambrose, 98–99, 111  
Ambrose of Milan, 200  
America, 438, 540–542  
Amorium, 193  
Amr, 181  
Anabaptists, 455, 488  
Anatolia, 193  
Andrew, 35  
Andrew II, 318  
Angel of the Annunciation, 1  
Angles, 131, 160  
Anglican, 488  
Anglican church, 524–525. *See also* Protestant Reformation  
Anne Boleyn, 467–469, 477, 480  
Anne Stuart, 538–539, 554  
*Anno Domini*, 2  
annulment, 467, 479  
Anselm, 275–276  
Antioch, 88, 96, 181, 299, 301  
antipope, 260, 264, 369  
Antoninus, 59, 66  
Antwerp, 513  
Apocalypse, 72  
Apostle of Germany, 200  
*Apostle Saint Paul, The*, 37  
apostles, 13, 25–26, 28, 34–35, 43, 44  
*Appeal to the German Nobility, An*, 450  
apprenticeships, 237  
aqueduct, 144, 186  
Aquinas, Thomas. *See* Thomas Aquinas  
Aquino, 350  
Aquitania, 105, 222, 393  
Arabia, 170–172, 204  
Aragon, 309–312, 432

- Arbiter Elegantiae*, 54  
 Arcadius, 96, 103–104, 104  
 Arch of Titus, 56  
 archaeology, 3  
 architecture, 7, 328–330  
 Arians, 90–92, 94, 99, 103–104, 106, 108–109, 111, 112, 121, 132, 199, 200  
 aristocracy, 55  
 Aristotelianism, 348, 356  
 arithmetic, 150, 332  
 Arius. *See* Arians  
 armada, 477  
 Armenia, 10, 11, 58  
 armistice, 526  
 Arsuf, 304  
 art, 7, 327–330, 421–422  
 Arthur (King), 279, 411–412  
 Arthur Tudor, 466  
 Articles of Union, 553  
 ascension, 30–32, 35  
*Ascension of Christ*, 32  
 ascetic, 75  
 Asia Minor, 10, 11, 36, 38, 41, 52, 62, 69, 90, 97, 139, 141, 146, 169, 193, 295, 296, 301  
 Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, 194  
 Assyria, 58  
 astronomy, 150, 332, 519–520  
 Asturias, 216, 267  
 Athalaric, 143–144  
 Athanagild, 121  
 Athanasius, 94–95, 111  
 Athaulf, 121  
 atheist, 71  
 Athenagoras, 76  
 Athens, 76  
 Attila the Hun, 107–108, 111, 130  
 Augsburg, 248  
 Augustine of Canterbury, 158–159, 161, 165  
 Augustine of Hippo, 98, 100–103, 106, 111, 208, 247, 349  
 Augustus, 3, 47–51, 65, 83  
 Aurillac, 254–255, 265–266  
 austerity, 299  
 Austrasia, 199, 201, 206, 222  
*Authorized Version*, 440  
 autocracy, 418, 440  
 Avars, 132  
*Ave Maria*, 331  
 Avignon, 364, 368  
 Avitus, 128
- B**  
 Babylon, 57  
 Babylonia, 10  
 Bactria, 10  
 Baghdad, 188–189  
 Balkan Peninsula, 62, 96, 103–104, 296  
 Baltic Sea, 59, 116, 429  
 Baptism, 23, 92, 487  
*Baptism of Christ, The*, 23  
*Baptism of Saint Prince Vladimir, The*, 383, 384  
 Barabbas, 29  
 Barbarossa. *See* Frederick I  
 Barcelona, 491  
 Barebone, Praisegod, 531  
 “Barebone’s Parliament”, 531  
 Barocci, Federigo, 339  
 Barrada River, 179  
 Bartholemew, 35  
 Basil, 97  
 basilicas, 89  
 Basques, 210  
 Bassano, Leandro, 33  
 bastion, 404  
 Battle of Blenheim, 547–548  
 Battle of Bosworth Field, 403  
 Battle of Breitenfeld, 508–511  
 Battle of Crécy, 393, 409  
 Battle of Denain, 546–549  
*Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa*, 311  
*Battle of Lepanto*, 496  
 Battle of Lepanto, 496–498, 517  
 Battle of Lützen, 517  
 Battle of the Boyne, 538  
 Battle of Tours, 201–202  
 Battle of Worcester, 528–529  
 Battle of Yarmouk, 179, 191  
 Batu, 343–344, 388  
 Bavaria, 212, 248–249, 506  
 b.c. *See* Before Christ  
 Bec, 274  
 Becket, Thomas, 277–281, 292  
 Bede the Venerable, 205–206, 216  
 Bedouin, 171, 204  
*Before Christ*, 2  
 Begarelli, Antonio, 349  
 Belgium, 513, 545  
 Belisarius, 143–146, 164  
 Bellini, Giovanni, 31, 340  
 Benavente, 345  
 Benedict of Nursia, 152–155, 164, 165, 334  
 Benedict VII, 253  
 Benedict XI, 364  
 Benedict XIII, 371  
 Benedict XV, 398  
 benefice, 244, 264  
 Berbers, 204  
 Berengaria, 334–335  
 Bernard of Clairvaux, 252, 286, 287–288, 293, 301, 313  
 Bethlehem, 20, 100  
 Bible. *See* Holy Bible  
 Bingen, 252  
 bishops, 243–244, 487  
*Bishops’ Bible*, 440  
 Bithynia, 38  
 Black Death, 377  
 Black Sea, 59, 63, 103, 139, 383  
 Blessed Virgin. *See* Mary  
 Blood of Christ, 28, 335, 449, 457, 487  
 “Bloody Mary”, 471–472  
 Boadicea (Queen), 54  
 bodies, 73  
 Body of Christ, 28, 335, 449, 457, 487  
 Boethius, 150–151, 164  
 Bohemia, 249, 370, 373, 504, 505–506  
 Boleyn, Anne, 467–469, 477, 480  
 Bologna, 342  
 Bonaventure, 349–350, 356  
 Boniface, 200, 216, 217–218

- Boniface VIII, 359–363, 375, 377, 378  
*Book of Common Prayer*, 471, 473, 525–526  
 Book of Kells, 150  
 books, 333  
 Borromeo, Charles, 490  
 Bosphorus straits, 63  
 Bossuet, Jacques-Bénigne, 542–549, 554  
 Botticelli, Sandro, 13, 20  
 Bourbons, 499, 500–501  
 Britain, 11, 54, 58, 63, 97, 147–150, 204–206, 219, 273–284, 402, 538–542. *See also* England; Ireland; Scotland; Wales  
 “the Bruce”, 283  
 Bruneschelli, Filippo, 421–422  
 Bruno, 247  
 bubonic plague, 377  
 Bucer, Martin, 456  
 Buda, 460  
 bull, 360, 377  
 “Bull Against Martin Luther and Followers,” 450  
 bureaucrat, 49  
 Burgundians, 131, 132  
 Byzantine, 145  
 Byzantine Empire, 140–142, 145, 164, 168–170, 193, 253, 254, 295, 381, 405–406, 428. *See also* Russia
- C**
- Cádiz, 347  
 Caesar. *See* Julius Caesar  
 Caesarea, 97  
 Cairo, 171, 182  
 Calais, 393  
 Calatrava Castle, 310  
 Caligula, 51, 52–53  
 caliph, 191. *See also specific caliphs*  
 Caliph Ali. *See* Ali  
 Caliph Omar. *See* Omar ibn al-Khattab  
 Caliph Othman. *See* Othman  
 calligraphy, 174  
 Callistus III, 398  
 Calvin, John, 456–457, 471, 475, 480, 498, 523, 525  
 Calvinism. *See* Calvin, John  
 Cana, 23  
 Canisius, Peter, 495, 518  
 cannons, 392  
 canon, 99, 247  
 canon lawyer, 260  
 Canterbury, 276, 280  
*Canterbury Tales*, *The*, 369  
 “Canticle of the Sun,” 357  
 Capets, 284  
 Capistrano, John, 426, 441  
 Cappadocia, 38  
 Carcassonne, 316  
 Carloman, 206  
 carnal, 523  
 Carolingian, 129, 135, 207  
*Carolus Magnus*. *See* Charlemagne  
 Carthage, 101, 108–109, 111, 143, 185, 186  
 Carthusian Order, 247  
 Casimir, 318  
 Castagno, Andrea del, 416  
 Castel Sant’ Angelo, 58, 59, 260  
 Castile, 309–312, 344, 432  
 Castle Church, 452  
 castle design, 225  
 catechism, 495, 516  
 catechumen, 89  
 Cathar, 324. *See also* Albigensians  
*Cathari*, 312  
 Cathedral of Hagia Sophia, 140–141, 146, 308, 424–425  
 Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, 325–326  
 Cathedral of Seville, 347  
 Cathedral of St. Basil the Blessed, 386  
 Cathedral of St. Denis, 285–286  
 Cathedral of St. Peter, 330  
 Cathedral School of Reims, 247  
*Catherine de Medici*, 498  
 Catherine de Medici, 498–499  
 Catherine of Aragon, 466, 468, 472, 479, 480  
 Catherine of Braganza, 534–535  
 Catherine of Siena, 368, 370  
 Catholic epistles, 38  
 Catholic League, 499–500, 505–506, 509  
 Catholicism  
   Arians and, 122–124  
   Germany and, 126–129  
   reform of, 463–465  
   renewal of, 483–514  
 Caucasus Mountains, 47  
 cavalier, 528  
 Cavaliers, 528  
 Cavellier, René-Robert, 545  
 celibate, 97  
 Celtic tribes, 54. *See also* Gaelic Christians  
 cenobites, 97  
 census, 19  
 Ceolfrith, 205  
 Cephas. *See* Simon Peter  
 Chalcedon, 169  
 chamber pots, 556  
 chancellor, 128  
 Charlemagne, 207–214, 216, 222–223, 248, 318  
 Charles (son of Charlemagne), 214  
 Charles I, 457, 523–531, 553, 554  
 Charles II, 532–536, 553, 554  
 Charles IV, 376  
 Charles IX, 499  
 Charles Martel, 129, 199–202, 216  
 Charles the Fat, 223  
 Charles the Great. *See* Charlemagne  
 Charles the Hammer. *See* Charles Martel  
 Charles V, 393, 457–465, 463, 464–465, 468, 472, 480, 484–485, 498  
 Charles VI, 395  
 Charles VII, 395, 397, 398–399  
 Charles von Hapsburg, 547  
 Chartres, 500  
 Chartres Cathedral, 161  
 Chartreuse, 247  
 château, 544

- Chaucer, Geoffrey, 369, 378  
 Chi Rho, 82, 83  
 Chiari, Bartolomeo, 25  
 Childerich III, 206  
 chimneys, 233  
 China, 9  
 chivalry, 227, 277–284  
*Christ Preaching*, 25  
 Christendom  
   defense and building of, 193–214  
   defined, 115  
   founders of, 139–162  
   rebirth of, 248–255  
 Christian Church, 13  
 Christian Empire, 85, 89–109  
 Christian martyrs. *See* martyrs  
 Christmas, 339  
 Church of S. Savior, 424  
 Church of the Holy Sepulcher, 89, 169  
 Church of the Holy Sepulchre, 295, 298  
 Church of the Holy Wisdom, 140–141, 146  
 Churchill, John, 547  
 Cistercian monastery, 353  
 Cîteaux, 246–247, 287–288, 340  
 cities, 2, 234–236. *See also specific cities*  
 civilization, 4–8, 15  
   defined, 8  
   early, 8–13  
   Jesus' gifts to, 42  
 Clairvaux, 252, 287–288  
 clan, 148, 164  
 Claudius, 51, 53  
 Claudius Ptolemy, 60  
 Clement, 77  
 Clement V, 364–365, 378  
 Clement VII, 370, 461, 468–469, 484  
*Clement VII & Francis I*, 461  
 cloistered, 154  
 Clovis, 126, 127–128, 136  
 Cluniac reform, 254, 257, 264  
 Cluny, 245–246  
 code, 142  
 codex, 142  
 Codex Calixtinus, 267  
 Codex Justinianus, 143, 164  
*Coeur de Lion*. *See* Richard I (“Lion-Heart”)  
 College of Cardinals, 256–257  
 Cologne, 247, 351  
 Colossians, 38  
 Columbus, Christopher, 326, 433, 436–438, 441  
*comes*. *See* count  
 Commandments, 12  
 Commodus, 60  
 common lands, 230  
 communion. *See* Eucharist  
 Company of Jesus, 492–494, 517  
 Compiègne, 397  
 conciliar theory, 371, 377  
 Concordat of Worms, 260–261  
 concubine, 175  
 Confirmation, 487  
 Conrad III, 301  
*Consolation of Philosophy*, 151  
 Constance, 262  
 Constans, 93, 94  
 Constantine, 81–85, 85, 87, 89, 90, 92–93, 113–114, 169  
 Constantine II, 93, 94  
 Constantine V, 197  
 Constantine VI, 197  
 Constantine XI Palaiologos, 424, 430  
 Constantinople, 85, 90, 95, 104, 131, 142, 145, 146, 156, 168, 179, 181, 188, 194–195, 221, 295, 306–307, 308, 381, 422–428, 440  
 Constantius, 63, 81  
 Constantius II, 93, 94  
 consubstantial, 92, 112  
 Controversy over the Exclusion Act, 535  
 convent, 338  
 convoke, 483  
 Copernicus, Nicholas, 519–520  
 Corbis, 243, 544  
 Cordoba, 203–204, 325–326, 345–346  
 Corinthians, 12, 33, 38, 39  
 corrosive, 417  
 Corsica, 125  
 Cossacks, 387  
 Council of Constance, 370–372, 372, 373, 377, 378  
 Council of Constantinople, 95  
 Council of Florence, 440  
 Council of Nicaea, 93, 111  
 Council of Toledo, 123–124, 135  
 Council of Trent, 480, 483–488, 490, 517  
 count, 212, 216  
 Counter-Reformation, 488–490, 516  
 courage, 137  
 Cova Dominica, 198  
 Covadonga, 198  
 covenant, 10  
 Covenanter flag, 526  
 Covenanters, 525–531, 553  
 craftsmanship, 237–238  
 Cranmer, Thomas, 468, 469, 470, 472, 480  
 crèche, 339  
 Crécy, 393  
 creed, 92  
 Crete, 38  
 Cromwell, Oliver, 529, 531–533, 554  
 Cromwell, Thomas, 469  
 crosiers, 243  
 Cross, 89. *See also* crucifixion  
 Crotona, 253  
 Crown of Recceswinth, 122  
 crucifixion, 29–30  
 crusade, 323  
 Crusades, 286, 289, 295–322.  
   *See also* Islam  
*crux*, 297  
 Ctesiphon, 60  
 cuirass, 226  
*Cur Deus Homo*, 276  
 curia, 444  
 currency, 79  
 Cyprus, 38  
 Cyprus, 10, 57, 320, 496



**D**

da Gama, Vasco, 435–436  
 da Modena, Tommaso, 352  
 Da Vinci, Leonardo, 421–422  
 Dacia, 11, 57, 95  
 Dalmatia, 143, 306  
 Damascus, 100, 170–172, 179, 184, 185, 302  
 Danes, 220. *See also* Vikings  
 Dante Alighieri, 361–362, 378  
 Danube River, 57, 58, 59, 78, 84, 95, 104, 107, 248, 460  
 Dark Ages, 115, 329  
 Dauphin, 393  
 David, 2  
*David*, 422  
 d’Azevado, Diego, 340  
*De Civitate Dei*, 106  
 de Coligny (Admiral), 499  
 de Guzman, Dominic, 313, 340–342, 356  
 de Lusignan, Guy, 320  
 de Montfort, Simon, 282  
 de Nogaret, Guillaume, 361  
 de Troyes, Chrétien, 279, 284  
 de Zurbaran, Francisco, 336  
 deacons, 36  
 “Death of Arthur, The,” 411–412  
 Decius, 78  
*Deeds of Otto*, 252  
 “Defender of the Faith,” 466  
 defenestration, 505  
 demigod, 118  
 Denmark, 210  
 depose, 94  
 Despenaperros, 312  
 Deuteronomy, 26  
 di Bondone, Giotto, 413  
 di Tito, Santi, 498  
*Dialogues, The*, 162  
 Diaz, Rodrigo, 272  
 diet, 253  
 Diet of Augsburg, 462  
 Diet of Tribur, 258  
 Diet of Worms, 450–452, 479

Diocletian, 62–64, 65, 66, 80, 87, 90, 113  
 disciples. *See* apostles  
 disputations, 333  
 dissolution, 469  
*Divine Comedy*, 361–362, 379  
 Divine right of kings, 521–523, 553  
*djinn*s, 171  
*Domini canes*, 340–342  
 Dominic, 313, 340–342, 356  
 Dominicans, 340–342, 356  
 Dominic’s Order of Preachers, 340–342  
 Domitian, 56, 71  
 Don Juan, 496–497, 518  
 Don Pelayo, 216, 267  
 Donatists, 90, 102, 112  
 Donskoi, Dmitri, 389, 410  
 Doré, Gustave, 297, 298  
*Douai-Reims Bible*, 440  
 dour, 523  
 dowry, 466  
 Drogheda, 533  
 Druids, 148  
 du Guesclin, Bertrand, 393  
 duchy, 209  
 Dürer, Albrecht, 70  
 Durham Cathedral, 531

**E**

Easter, 30  
 Eastern Europe, 141  
 Eastern Orthodox Church, 350, 423.  
*See also* Byzantine Empire;  
 Russian Orthodox Church  
 East-Goths, 95  
*Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, 205  
 ecumenical, 90  
 ecumenical councils, 90, 112  
 Edessa, 61, 299, 301  
 Edgehill, 528  
 edict, 79  
 Edict of Milan, 83–84, 86  
 Edict of Nantes, 500–501, 517  
 Edict of Restitution, 507–508  
 Edict of Toleration, 79–80, 82  
 Edict of Worms, 451–452, 462  
 Edward I, 282–284, 293, 360  
 Edward II, 283–284  
 Edward III, 366–367, 390–391, 400, 410  
 Edward IV, 403, 481  
 Edward V, 403  
 Edward VI, 471  
 Egypt, 9, 10, 11, 56, 57, 62, 139, 146, 181, 182, 305, 319  
 Egyptian civilization, 2  
 El Cid Campeador, 272, 292  
 Eleanor of Aquitaine, 277–278, 279, 281, 292  
 Elizabeth (Tudor), 403  
 Elizabeth I, 473–477, 480, 521  
*emirs*, 178, 191  
 emperor, 48, 65  
 Emperor of the Romans, 216. *See also* Charlemagne  
*Emperor Theodosius and Saint Ambrose, The*, 98  
 England, 8, 148, 219, 236, 273–284, 366–367, 389–399, 399–403, 465–477, 545. *See also* Britain  
*Entry of Joan of Arc into Orleans*, 395  
 Ephesians, 38  
 episcopal, 523  
 epistles, 38, 39  
 Erasmus, Desiderius, 448  
*Erec and Enide*, 279  
 Erpingham, Thomas, 395  
 established church, 474–475  
 eternal life, 13  
 Ethelbert of Kent, 159  
*Etymologies*, 124  
 Eucharist, 28, 33, 43, 335–336, 356, 449, 457, 487  
 Eugenius IV, 423–424  
 Euphrates River, 8, 9, 58  
 Eusebius, 94  
 Eustochium, 100  
 Eve, 1, 424

- evil, 103  
 excommunication, 450  
 Exodus of Israel, 2  
 Extreme Unction, 487
- F**
- fairs, 238  
 Faith, 103, 487  
 farming. *See* agriculture  
 fasting, 176  
 Father. *See* God the Father  
 Feast of the Dormition of the Virgin, 194  
 Felicity, 72  
 feod, 223–224  
 Ferdinand II, 504–505, 511, 518  
 Ferdinand III, 345–347, 356, 512–514  
 Ferdinand of Aragon, 432, 440, 441  
*Fernando and Isabella*, 432  
 Ferris, Jean Leon Jerome, 431  
 feudalism, 219–238, 240, 289–290, 321, 387–388  
 fiat, 1  
 fief, 223–224, 240  
 Fifth Lateran Council, 443–445  
 First Agricultural Revolution, 231  
 First Jewish War, 55  
 Fisher, John, 469  
 Five Pillars of Islam, 176, 191  
 flagship, 436  
 Flanders, 236  
 Flatters, 102  
 Flavius Vespasian, 55, 55–56  
 Fleury, André-Hercule de, 549–550  
 Flicke, Gerlach, 470  
 Florence, 235, 419  
 Florentina, 122  
 forfeiture, 391  
 forgery, 360  
 forgiveness of sins, 35  
 Fossanova, 353  
*Four Leaders of the First Crusade*, 297  
 Fourth Lateran Council, 335–336  
 France, 220, 222, 223, 236, 246–247, 279, 284–290, 364, 370, 375–376, 389–399, 390, 483–488, 498–502, 542–551.  
*See also* Gaul  
 Franche Comté, 545  
 Francis I, 461, 463, 484, 498  
 Francis of Assisi, 336, 337–340, 349, 356, 357–358  
*francisca*, 126  
 Franciscans, 337–340, 349, 356  
 Franconia, 249  
 Franks, 95, 124, 126–127, 131, 199, 201, 206, 210–211  
 fratricidal, 403  
*Fratres Minores*, 337–340  
 Frederick I, 261–262, 375  
 Frederick II, 319, 334–335, 351, 375  
 Frederick III, 448, 452  
 French Revolution, 536–551, 553  
 fresco, 420  
 friar, 356  
 Friars Minor, 337–340  
 Fribourg, 455  
 Frisians, 199, 200, 220  
 Fulgentius, 122
- G**
- Gaelic Christians, 147–150, 159–161  
 Gaius. *See* Caligula  
 Gaius Julius Caesar. *See* Julius Caesar  
 Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus. *See* Augustus  
 Galata Bridge, 193  
 Galatians, 38  
 Galba, 55  
 Galerius, 80, 81, 82, 87, 113  
 Galicia, 267  
 Galilee, 22, 23  
 galley, 497  
 Gallican, 486  
 Gallienus, 61–62  
 Gamaliel, 36  
 Gandersheim, 252  
 Garonne River, 220  
 garrison, 125  
 Gaul, 11, 52, 63, 72, 82, 96, 108, 120–121, 124. *See also* France  
 Geffels, Frans, 462  
 Genesis, 4  
*Geneva Bible*, 440  
 Genghis Khan, 342–344, 343, 381, 386  
 Genoa, 235  
 Genesic, 108–109, 111, 125, 125–126  
 geocentric theory, 519  
 Geoffrey (son of Henry II), 278  
 Geoffrey Plantagenet, 277  
*Geographical Outline*, 60  
 geometry, 150, 332  
 George I, 539, 554  
 George II, 540–542  
 Gerbert of Aurillac, 254–255, 265–266  
 Germany, 95, 103–106, 108, 115–133, 168, 200, 248–262, 263, 301, 334–335, 351, 545. *See also* Luther, Martin  
 Gibraltar, 186  
 gilded, 384  
 Giovanni, 349  
 “Glorious Revolution,” 536–551, 553  
 Gnosticism, 73, 76, 86  
 God the Father, 12–13, 90, 91–93, 103  
 Godfrey of Bouillon, 324  
 gods, 12, 56, 71, 78, 119–120  
 “Golden Age,” 85  
 “Golden Horde,” 386–389  
 Golden Horn, 195, 215  
 Golden Legend, 491  
 “Good Queen Bess,” 473–477  
 Gospels, 17, 157  
 Gothic architecture, 329, 355, 415  
 Goths, 59, 62, 95–96, 103, 107  
 Gozzoli, Benozzo, 21  
 grace, 1  
 Grace, 449, 487  
 Grail. *See* Holy Grail  
 grammar, 150, 332  
 Granada, 326, 433–438, 440  
 “Grand Delinquent,” 530  
 Gratian, 95, 96, 124  
 Great Britain. *See* Britain  
 Great Century, 327–354

- Great Mosque at Cordoba, 203–204  
 Great Mosque of Damascus, 185  
 Great Schism, 368–375, 377  
 Greece, 10, 11, 115, 139, 141, 146, 307  
 Greek Empire, 10  
 Greek fire, 195  
 Gregory II, 200  
 Gregory IX, 319  
 Gregory the Great, 155–162, 164, 165, 167  
 Gregory VII, 257–259, 264  
 Gregory XII, 371  
 Gregory XIII, 490  
 Guadalquivir River, 347  
 Guadiana River, 312  
*Guanahani*, 438  
 guilds, 237–238, 240  
 Gustavus II Adolphus, 508–510, 518, 529  
 Gutenberg, Johannes, 431, 440
- H**
- Hadrian, 58–59, 66  
 hair shirt, 359  
*hajj*, 176  
 Hanovers, 539, 554  
 Habsburg Empire, 459, 503, 547  
 Harold, 273  
 Hasan, 184  
 hauberk, 226  
 Hebrews, 38  
*Hegira*, 173, 191  
*Hejra*, 173  
 Helena, 90, 169  
 heliocentric theory, 519–520  
 Helios, 56  
 helmet, 226  
 Henrietta Marie, 523–524  
 Henry de Bourbon. *See* Henry IV (France)  
 Henry de Guise, 499  
 Henry I (England), 276  
 Henry II (England), 276–278, 292  
 Henry II (France), 485  
 Henry II (Germany), 255  
 Henry III (England), 282, 288–289  
 Henry III (France), 499  
 Henry III (Germany), 257  
 Henry IV (England), 367, 394, 400  
 Henry IV (France), 499, 500–501, 517, 518  
 Henry IV (Germany), 257–260, 264  
 Henry V (England), 367, 394–395  
 Henry V (Germany), 261  
 Henry VI (England), 400–403, 410  
 Henry VI (Germany), 262, 351  
 Henry VII (England), 403, 466  
 Henry VIII (England), 467–471, 479, 480, 481, 488  
 Heraclius, 170, 191  
 Hereford, Henry, 394  
 heresiarch, 94  
 heresy, 73–76, 86, 324, 366–367, 470–471  
 Hermenegild, 122  
 Hermes, 12  
 hermitage, 96, 97  
 hermits, 96, 97  
 Herod Antipas, 22, 24, 29  
 Herod Archelaus, 22  
 Herod the Great, 18–19, 21, 24, 44  
 Herodias, 24  
 Hieromax River, 179  
 High Church, 524–525, 553  
 Hildebrand. *See* Gregory VII  
 Hildegard of Bingen, 252  
 Hildesheim, 254  
 Hillel, 36  
 Hippo, 98, 100–101, 208, 247  
 Hispania, 63, 96, 105, 106, 120, 132  
 history, 3, 15  
 Hohenstaufen line, 375  
 Holland, 545  
 Holy Bible, 431, 440, 474  
 Holy Grail, 279  
 Holy Isle of Lindisfarne, 205, 219  
 Holy Land, 323. *See also* Crusades; *specific cities and countries*  
 Holy Office, 489, 516  
 Holy Orders, 487  
 Holy Roman Empire. *See* Roman Empire
- Holy Spirit, 75, 103. *See also* Trinity  
 Holy Trinity-St. Sergius monastery, 429  
*homoousios*, 92  
 Honorius, 96, 103, 104, 105  
 Honorius III, 318–319, 341  
 Horace, 50  
 horse collars, 232–233  
 Hospitallers, 299–301, 324, 458  
 Hounds of the Lord, 340–342  
 House of Commons, 399, 409, 539  
 House of Lords, 399, 409, 539  
 Hrolf, 241  
 Hroswitha of Gandersheim, 252  
 Huddleston, John, 531–533, 536  
 Hugh, 517  
 Hugh (Capet), 247, 284  
 Huguenots, 498–502, 517  
 Humanism, 414–418, 440  
 Hundred Years' War, 389–399, 409  
 Hungary, 251, 370  
 Huns, 106–108, 111, 112, 132, 145–146  
 Hunyadi, John, 424  
 Hus, John, 373, 378
- I**
- Iberian Peninsula, 120–124, 210, 309.  
*See also* Spain  
 iconic painting, 141  
 iconoclasm, 196, 215  
 Ignatius, 88  
 Ignatius of Loyola, 491–494, 517  
*imam*, 178  
 impeach, 400  
 Imperial Diet of Augsburg, 462  
 impregnable, 423  
*in carne*, 15  
*In Defense of the Seven Sacraments*, 466  
 incarnation, 1, 15, 35  
 Index of Forbidden Books, 489, 516  
*Index of the Royal Privileges*, 345  
 India, 8, 9, 434–436  
 indict, 400  
 Indies, 436–438

- indulgence, 443, 445, 479  
 Indus River, 9  
 Ingeborg, 334–335  
 Innocent III, 305–307, 310, 313,  
 314–315, 317–318, 324,  
 333–336, 338, 356, 366  
 Inquisition, 324  
*Institutes of the Christian Religion*,  
 456, 480  
 interdict, 334  
 inventions, 231–232  
 investiture, 244, 256–260, 264  
 investment, 227  
 Iran. *See* Persia  
 Ireland, 147–150, 533. *See also* Britain  
 Irenaeus, 86  
 Irene, 197  
 “Ironsides,” 529  
 Isabel of Castile, 432, 440, 441  
 Isauria, 194  
 Isidore, 135  
 Isis, 56  
 Islam, 167–189, 191, 197–199, 222,  
 268–272, 286, 333, 345–347,  
 381, 403–407, 433–438,  
 461–462. *See also* Crusades  
 Israel, 2, 3  
 Istanbul. *See* Constantinople  
 Italy, 11, 40, 132, 142, 143, 144–145,  
 152, 220, 222, 236, 253, 262,  
 274, 485  
 Ivan III, 428, 430–432, 440, 441
- J**  
 Jacobites, 538  
 James, 35, 38, 267, 292  
 James I, 521–523  
 James II, 536–538, 554  
 James the Less, 35  
 James V, 475  
 James VI, 521–523  
 Jamestown, 540  
 Jane Seymour, 471  
 Janissaries, 406  
 Jarrow, 205  
 Jerome, 98, 111, 157, 161  
 Jerusalem, 19, 27, 32–36, 39, 56, 76,  
 181, 295, 298, 299, 301,  
 317–318. *See also* Crusades  
*Jerusalem Bible*, 46  
 Jesuits, 492–494, 517  
 Jesus Christ  
 birth of, 17, 19–20, 44  
 civilization and, 42  
 crucifixion of, 29–30  
 death of, 3  
 hidden life of, 21–22  
 Incarnation of, 1  
 infancy of, 21–22  
 ministry of, 22–32  
 passion of, 27–30  
 public life of, 22–32  
 relation to God and, 90, 91–93  
 renewal through, 12  
 resurrection and ascension of,  
 30–32, 35, 44  
 resurrection of, 3  
 sacrifice of self, 13  
 Trinity and, 103. *See also* Trinity  
*Jihad*, 173–174, 191  
 Jiménez, Francisco, 448  
 Joan of Arc, 395–398, 410  
*Johannes Gutenberg*, 431  
 John, 17, 29, 30, 35, 38, 42, 71–72  
 John (King), 244, 267, 335, 522  
 John (Lackland), 281–282, 289, 292  
 John Capistrano, 426  
 John II, 391–393  
 John of Brienne, 319  
 John of Gaunt, 366–367  
 John the Baptist, 23, 24, 44  
*John the Baptist Rebukes Herod*, 24  
 John VIII Palaiologos, 423  
 John XI, 251  
 John XII, 251  
 John XIII, 251, 255  
 John XXIII, 370–371  
 Jordan, 179  
 Joseph, 20, 22, 44  
 Joseph of Arimathea, 30  
 journeymen, 237  
 Judaism, 204  
 Judas Iscariot, 34, 35  
 Jude, 35, 38  
 Judea, 18–19, 22, 52  
 Judgment. *See* Last Judgment  
 Judith, 223  
 Julian family, 47  
 Julian the Apostate, 94  
 Julius Caesar, 3, 47, 49, 65, 205  
 Julius II, 443–444  
 Julius III, 485–486  
 Justin Martyr, 75, 76, 87  
 Justinian, 139–146, 164  
 Justinian Code, 143, 164
- K**  
 Kaaba, 171, 175, 190  
 Kalikovo Pole, 389, 410  
 Karlstadt, 455  
 Katherine, 97  
 Kekova Island, 404  
 Ken, Thomas, 534–535  
 Kent, 204  
 Khalid, 179  
 khanate, 428  
 Khara Khorum, 343–344  
 Kharijites, 184  
 Khazars, 185  
 Kherson, 383  
 Khwarazmians, 319  
 Kiev, 221, 383–384  
 king, 135, 291  
*King James Bible*, 440  
 “Knight of the Cart,” 279  
 “Knight of the Lion,” 279  
 knighthood, 226–227, 240,  
 299–301  
 Knights of St. John, 300–301,  
 324  
 Kniva, 59  
 Koran, 173, 174, 191  
 Kosovo, 407, 410, 424  
 Krak des Chevaliers, 300  
 Krakow Cathedral, 519–520  
 Kremlin, 430  
 Kublai Khan, 344  
 Kunigunde, 255

**L**

- La Mancha, 268, 310  
*La Pucelle*, 395–398  
 Lactantius, 80  
 Lake Galilee, 34  
 Lake Priapus, 388  
*Lamentation, The*, 413  
 Lancasters, 394, 400–403, 522  
*Lancelot*, 279  
 Lanfranc, 274  
 Langton, Stephen, 335  
 Languedoc, 314, 315–316, 340–341  
 Las Navas de Tolosa, 310–312  
 Last Judgment, 102  
 Last Supper, 28, 33, 279  
*Last Supper* fresco, 421–422  
*Last Supper, The*, 33  
 Lateran Councils, 335–336, 443–445  
 Latin Vulgate, 487  
 Laud, William, 525–526, 527–528  
 lay, 146  
 lay investiture, 244, 264  
 Lazar, 406–407  
*Le Morte D'Arthur*, 411–412  
 Lech River, 248, 510  
 lectures, 333  
 legate, 257  
 legion, 49, 65  
 Lent, 197  
 Leo I, 106–108, 111, 125  
 Leo III, 212  
 Leo III the Isaurian, 193–197, 216  
 Leo IV, 197  
 Leo V, 197  
 Leo VIII, 251  
 Leo X, 444–445, 448, 467, 480  
 León, 309–312, 340, 345  
 Leopold, 547  
 Leovigild, 122, 135  
 Letts, 234  
 Leviticus, 26  
 levy, 524  
 liberal arts, 150, 332  
 Licinius, 84  
 liege, 224–225, 240  
 light, Jesus Christ as, 1  
 Lindisfarne. *See* Holy Isle of Lindisfarne  
 “Lion-Heart”. *See* Richard I (“Lion-Heart”)  
 liturgy of the Mass, 157, 161, 487–488  
 logic, 150  
*Logos*, 75  
 Loire River, 121, 127, 132  
 Lollards, 367, 377  
 Lombard warrior, 157  
 Lombardy, 222  
 “Long Peace”, 79  
 longbows, 392–393  
 Longfellow, William Wadsworth, 379  
 “Longshanks”, 282–284  
 Lothair, 222, 223  
 Lotharingia, 249  
 Louis (son of Louis the Pious), 223  
 Louis IX, 289–290, 293, 319–321, 375  
 Louis the Pious, 212, 214, 222–223, 241  
 Louis VI, 285  
 Louis VII, 285–286, 301  
 Louis X, 376  
 Louis XI, 399, 410  
 Louis XIII, 500–501, 512, 524  
 Louis XIV, 542–549, 553, 554, 555–556  
*Louis XIV on Horseback*, 542–549  
 Louis XV, 549–551, 554  
 Louisiana Territory, 545, 553  
 love, 26  
 Low Church, 525, 553  
 Lucca, 235  
 Lucerne, 455  
 lucrative, 523  
 Luke, 17, 26, 29, 34  
 Luther, Martin, 447–454, 464, 480. *See also* Protestant Reformation  
 Lyons, 72  
**M**  
 Macedonia, 10, 11, 38, 63  
 Machiavelli, Niccolò, 417, 418  
*Madonna*, 422  
 Magna Carta, 282, 292, 315, 335, 522, 533  
 magnate, 253  
 “Magnificat,” 34  
 Magyars, 222, 248, 251  
 Mahomet II, 425–428, 440  
 Main River, 126  
 Mainz, 254  
 Malory, Thomas, 411–412  
 Malta, 39  
 “Man of Blood”, 530  
 Manicheanism, 101, 112  
 manors, 228–230, 240  
 maps  
     13th-Century Europe, 361  
     16th Century England, 447  
     Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, 160  
     Arabia, 171  
     Battle of Tours, 201  
     Bohemia, 507  
     Britain, 402  
     Charlemagne’s empire, 208  
     China, 9  
     Christopher Columbus’s route, 437  
     Crusades, 299, 305  
     Eastern Roman Empire, 139  
     Egypt, 9, 319  
     England, 527  
     France, 285, 390, 499  
     Germanic kingdom, 131  
     Germanic movements, 117  
     Hapsburg Empire, 459, 503  
     human migration patterns, 6  
     India, 9  
     Islam, 180  
     Italy, 152, 485  
     journey of St. Paul, 38  
     Languedoc, 314  
     medieval Spain, 269  
     Mediterranean Sea, 194, 316  
     Mesopotamia, 9  
     Mongol Empire, 343  
     North America, 541  
     Ostrogoth Italy, 143  
     Ottoman Empire, 405, 427, 497

- Palestine, 18, 319  
 Roman Empire, 11, 48, 84  
 Russia, 385  
 Scotland, 527  
 Spain, 346, 433  
 Switzerland, 454  
 Vasco da Gama's route to  
     India, 435  
     Viking routes, 221  
 Marc Antony, 47  
 Marcellus II, 485–486  
 march, 222  
 Marcionism, 73, 75, 86  
 Marco Polo, 344  
 Marcus Aurelius, 59–60, 66, 72  
 Marcus Lepidus, 47  
*Mare Nostrum*, 11  
 Margaret of Anjou, 401  
 Maria Theresa, 546–549  
 Marie de Champagne, 279  
 maritime, 235  
 Mark, 17, 26–27  
 markets, 238  
 Marriage, 487  
 Marston Moor, 529  
*Martellus*. *See* Charles Martel  
 Martha, 35  
 Martin Luther. *See* Luther, Martin  
 Martin of Tours, 161  
 Martin V, 372–373  
*Martyrdom of the Ten Thousand*, 70  
 martyrs, 43, 69–85, 86  
     Saint Ignatius, 88  
     Saint Paul, 3, 40–41  
     Saint Peter, 3, 40–41  
     Saint Stephen, 36  
     St. Justin Martyr, 75  
 Marus, 154  
 Mary, 1, 20, 22, 29, 34, 44, 228, 331  
 Mary (mother of James), 30, 34  
 Mary, Queen of Scots, 474–475, 523  
 Mary Beatrice d'Este, 534–535  
 Mary II, 536–538, 554  
 Mary Magdalene, 29, 30, 35  
 Mary of Bethany, 34–35  
 Mary Tudor, 471–472, 480  
 Masaccio, 35  
 Masalama, 193–196  
*Mass of Saint Gregory, The*, 158  
 Massachusetts, 540  
 Massacre at Drogheda, 533  
 Massacre of Verden, 211  
 Matilda, 277  
 Matthew, 17, 21, 26, 26–27, 30, 32,  
     34, 35  
 Matthias von Hapsburg, 504  
 Mauretania, 11  
 maxim, 416  
 Maximian, 62, 81  
 Maximilian, 506  
 Maximinus Daia, 81, 82, 83  
 Mazarin, Jules, 542, 554  
 Mecca, 170–172, 173, 188  
 Media, 10  
 Medici, Giovanni de. *See* Leo X  
 Medici, Lorenzo di, 419, 440  
 Medici, 419, 440, 444  
 Medieval Reformation, 243–262  
 Medieval times. *See* Middle Ages  
 Medina, 172–173, 188  
 Mediterranean, 11, 52, 57, 121,  
     194, 316  
*Meeting of Attila the Hun and Pope  
     Leo I, The*, 107  
 megaliths, 8  
 mendicant, 338  
 Menno, Simons, 455–456  
 Mennonites, 455–456  
 menorah, 125  
 mercenary, 92  
 Merica, 204  
 Merovech, 127, 135  
 Merovings, 127–129, 135,  
     206, 384  
 Mesopotamia, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11,  
     58, 60, 61, 62, 84, 139,  
     168, 181, 188  
 Messiah, 26, 27, 43  
*Metamorphoses, The*, 50  
 metropolitan, 389  
 Michaelangelo di Buonarroti, 417,  
     422, 440  
 Middle Ages, 228–230, 230–238,  
     327–354, 359–376, 413–414.  
     *See also* feudalism  
 Mignard, Pierre, 542–549  
 migration patterns, 6  
 Milan, 85, 99, 104, 235, 262  
 militia, 526  
 Milton, John, 102  
 minnesingers, 279  
 Miramamolín, 310–312  
 Mirandola, Gianfrancesco Pico della,  
     445  
*Missale Romanium*, 157  
*missi dominici*, 212  
 Mississippi River, 545  
 Missorium of Theodosius, 96  
 Mithras, 56  
 Mohács, 460  
*Mona Lisa*, 421–422  
 monarch, 291  
 monasteries, 97, 121–122, 153–155,  
     205–206, 244–247, 469–470  
 Monasticism, 97  
 Mongolia, 106–108, 342–344, 381,  
     386–387, 409. *See also* Russia  
 Monica, 101  
 monk, 97  
 “Monomakh”, 385  
 monotheist, 172  
 Montanists, 75, 86  
 Monte Cassino, 155, 157, 164, 350  
 Moors, 197, 433. *See also* Crusades;  
     Islam  
 More, Thomas, 448, 469  
 Moro, Antonio, 471–472  
*Moros*, 197  
 mosaic, 164  
 Moscow, 388–389, 428–432, 440  
 Moses, 12  
 Mount of Olives, 32  
 Mount Sinai, 97  
 Mount Vesuvius, 56  
*Mozarabes*, 204  
 Mu'awaiya, 184  
 Muhammad, 172–177, 191  
*mullahs*, 178

Murad I, 407, 423  
 Muscovite, 428. *See also* Moscow  
 Muscovy. *See* Moscow  
 music, 150, 328, 332  
 Muslims. *See* Islam  
*Mystic Nativity*, 13, 20  
 Mytens, Daniel, 522

## N

Nain, 25  
 Nantes, 220  
 Naples, 105  
 nationalism, 409  
 nation-state, 283, 292  
 Nativity, 339  
 Navarre, 210, 309–312, 370  
 Nazareth, 22  
 Neolithic, 4, 5  
 nepotism, 364  
 Nero, 41, 51–52, 53–54, 65  
 Netherlands, 511–513, 545.  
     *See* Frisians  
 Neustria, 199, 222  
 Nevski, Alexander, 388, 410  
 New Scipio, 170  
 New Stone Age, 2, 4, 5, 231  
 New Testament, 18, 73, 99  
 New World. *See* America  
 Nicaea, 90, 93, 197, 301  
 Nicene Creed, 93, 111, 112  
 Nicholas, 257, 259  
 Nicholas V, 420, 424, 440  
 Nicomedia, 63, 94  
 Nika Revolt, 140  
 Nile River, 8, 9, 319, 320  
*Niña*, 436  
 Ninety-five Theses, 446, 479  
 Niš, 62  
 Norbertines, 247  
 Normandy, 274–275, 284, 394  
 Norse gods, 119–120  
 North Africa, 57, 63, 90, 98, 100,  
     108–109, 115, 124–126, 126,  
     143, 181, 222, 235, 271, 320  
 North America, 541  
 Northmen. *See* Vikings

Northumbria, 204–205  
 Notre Dame Cathedral, 330  
*Nova Roma*, 85, 145  
 Novgorod, 383, 387–388, 429–430  
 Numidia, 11  
 Nuremberg, 460–462

## O

Oath of Supremacy, 473  
 Obeida, 179  
 Octavia, 54  
 Octavian. *See* Augustus  
 Odilo of Cluny, 245  
 Odin, 119  
 Odoacer, 130, 131–132  
 Ogodei Khan, 343–344  
 Old Stone Age, 5–6, 7  
 Old Testament, 12, 18, 73, 75  
 Olga, 383  
 Omar ibn al-Khattab, 178, 180,  
     181–182, 191  
*On the Revolution of the Heavenly  
 Spheres*, 520  
 open-field system, 230–231  
*Optimus*, 57  
 orders  
     Holy, 487  
     monastic, 246–247  
 Orestes, 130  
 Origen, 41, 77, 87  
*Origin of the Abbey of Gandersheim*,  
     252  
 Original Sin, 102, 449, 487  
 Orkhan, 405–406, 409, 410  
 Orleans, 395  
 orthodox, 92, 112  
 Orthodox, 194, 215  
 Osmā, 340  
 Osman, 405  
 Ostrogoths, 95, 129–133, 131, 143  
 Oswy, 161  
 Othman, 182–183, 191, 425  
 Otho, 55  
 Otto I, 248–253, 258, 264  
 Otto II, 253, 264  
 Otto III, 254, 255, 264, 334–335

Ottoman Empire, 404–407, 409, 427,  
     459, 494–498  
 Our Lady. *See* Mary  
 Outremer, 299, 317–321  
 Ovid, 50  
 Oxford University, 366–367

## P

pacific, 213  
 padded horse collars, 232–233  
 paganism, 12, 56, 71, 75, 77, 78, 79,  
     94, 106, 119–120, 148, 171,  
     199, 200, 218, 234  
 Palatine hill, 54  
 Palazzo Farnese, 423  
 Paleolithic, 5–6, 7  
 paleontology, 3  
 Palestine, 18, 146, 179, 181, 319, 320  
*Pange Lingua*, 354  
 pantheon, 119  
 papistical, 454  
 Paraclete, 75  
*Paradise Lost*, 102  
 paragon, 305  
 parchment, 340  
 Parentucelli, Tommaso. *See*  
     Nicholas V  
 Paris, 127, 223  
*Parlement de Paris*, 292  
 Parliament, 292, 399, 409, 539  
 Parthia, 10, 60, 220  
*Parzifal*, 279  
 Paschal II, 260  
 passion, 27–30  
 Passover, 27, 43  
*Pastoral Rule*, 162  
 Patrick, 147–150, 164  
 patronize, 189  
 Paul, 3, 33, 36–41, 42, 44, 52, 89  
 Paul III, 483, 493, 517  
 Paula, 100  
 Pavia, 274  
*Pax Romana*, 49  
 Peace of Alais, 502, 517  
 Peace of Augsburg, 464–465  
 Peace of Madrid, 460



- Peace of Utrecht, 548  
Peace of Westphalia, 513–514, 517  
Peasants' Crusade, 296  
Pelagianism, 112  
Pelagius, 102, 198–199  
Penance, 487  
Pentecost, 32–36, 45  
Pepin, 129  
Pepin (son of Charlemagne), 214  
Pepin (son of Louis the Pious),  
222–223, 223  
Pepin the Short, 129, 136,  
206–207, 216  
*Perceval*, 279  
perjury, 317  
Perpetua, 72  
Persia, 56, 61–62, 101, 168–170, 181  
Persis, 10  
Perugino, Pietro Vannucci, 23  
Peter, 3, 26–27, 30, 34, 35, 38, 40–41,  
44, 45, 71, 76, 89, 244  
Peter Canisius, 495  
Peter II of Aragon, 310  
Peter of Aragon, 315  
Peter of Castelnau, 314–315  
Peter the Hermit, 296  
Petrarch, Francesco, 416, 440  
Petronius, 54  
Pharisees, 19, 30, 36  
Philemon, 38  
Philip, 24, 35  
Philip II, 472, 477, 488, 496, 512  
Philip II “Augustus,” 288–289, 293,  
302, 334–335  
Philip IV, 505–506, 512–513  
Philip IV “the Fair,” 283, 359–366,  
375, 376  
Philip of Anjou, 547–549, 554  
Philip V, 376  
Philip VI, 389–390  
Philippians, 38  
philosophy, 12  
Phoenicia, 38  
Piacenza, 235  
*Pietà*, 331  
Pilgrimage of Grace, 470  
pillage, 507  
Pino, Marco, 37  
*Pinta*, 436  
Pisa, 235, 371  
*Pius*, 59  
Pius IV, 486, 517  
Pius V, 473, 480, 517  
Plantagenets, 277–284, 522  
Platonism, 77  
Plessis, Armand-Jean du. *See*  
Richelieu  
Pliny the Elder, 56  
plows, 232  
plunder, 507  
Plymouth, 540  
Poland, 251, 549  
Pole, Margaret, 481  
Pole, Reginald, 481–482  
Polycarp, 69, 70, 76, 86  
polygamy, 175  
polyphony, 328  
Pomerania, 318  
Pompeii, 56  
Ponthiew, 393  
Pontius Pilate, 29–30, 44, 52  
Popes  
Adrian I, 209  
Alexander III, 262  
Alexander V, 370  
Benedict VII, 253  
Benedict XI, 364  
Benedict XIII, 371  
Benedict XV, 398  
Boniface VIII, 359–363, 375,  
377, 378  
Callistus III, 398  
Clement V, 364–365, 378  
Clement VII, 370, 461, 468–469,  
484  
Damasus, 100  
defense of the West and, 106–109  
Eugenius IV, 423–424  
Gregory II, 200  
Gregory IX, 319  
Gregory the Great, 155–162, 164,  
165, 167  
Gregory VII, 257–259  
Gregory XII, 371  
Gregory XIII, 490  
Honorius III, 318–319, 341  
Innocent III, 305–307, 310, 313,  
314–315, 317–318, 324,  
333–336, 338, 356, 366  
John XI, 251  
John XII, 251  
John XIII, 251, 255  
John XXIII, 370–371  
Julius II, 443–444  
Julius III, 485–486  
Leo I, 106–108, 111, 125  
Leo III, 212  
Leo VIII, 251  
Leo X, 444–445, 448, 467, 480  
Marcellus II, 485–486  
Martin V, 372–373  
Nicholas, 257, 259  
Nicholas V, 420, 424, 440  
Paschal II, 260  
Paul III, 483, 493, 517  
Pius IV, 486, 517  
Pius V, 473, 480, 517  
Sixtus IV, 350  
Sylvester, 90  
Sylvester II, 254–255  
Urban II, 247, 256, 295–296, 324  
Urban VI, 368–370  
Poppaea Sabina, 54  
Porritani, Gilberti, 348  
Portugal, 309–312, 434–436  
power, 162, 164  
Praemonstratensians, 247  
Praetorians, 55  
Prague, 255, 504–505  
prayer, 176  
predestination, 457  
prehistory, 4  
prelate, 282  
Presbyterianism, 475. *See also*  
Calvin, John  
priests, 487  
Prignano, Bartholomew, 368–369  
primatial, 149



- Prince, The*, 417  
 prince elector, 448  
 Prince of Wales, 283  
 principate, 47–51, 65  
 printing press, 431  
 prior, 245  
*Procession of the Magi, The*, 21  
 promontory, 225  
 promulgate, Italy, 485  
 prophets, 12  
 Protectorate, 531–533, 553  
 Protestant, 479  
 Protestant Reformation, 443–477  
 Provençal, 279  
 Providence, 151  
 Provincia, 105  
 Prussians, 234  
 Ptolemy, 519  
 Publius Aelius Hadrianus.  
     *See* Hadrian  
 Puritans, 523, 553  
 Pym, John, 526  
 Pyrenees mountains, 105, 199,  
     203, 210
- Q**  
*quadrivium*, 332  
*Quran*, 173, 174, 191
- R**  
 Radonezh, 429  
 Raphael di Santi, 107, 415, 422, 440,  
     443, 444  
 Ravenna, 104, 129, 130, 142  
*Ravnoapostol*, 383  
 Raymond of Toulouse, 314–315  
 recant, 373  
 Reccared, 123, 135  
*Reconquista*, 198–199  
 Reformation  
     Medieval, 243–262  
     Protestant, 443–477  
 regalia, 131  
 regent, 133  
 regicide, 521, 532–538, 553  
 Reims, 127, 247, 255, 287  
 Reims Cathedral, 328  
*Religion Crushing Heresy*, 74  
 Remi, 128  
 Remigius, 128  
 Renaissance, 415–438, 440  
 responsum, 348–349  
 Restoration, 533–536  
 resurrection, 3, 30–32, 35  
*Resurrection of Christ*, 31  
 Revelation, 72  
 rhetoric, 76, 150, 332  
 Rhine River, 52, 62, 63, 108, 124, 126,  
     127, 199, 201, 545  
 Rhodes, 38, 57, 320  
 Rhône River, 72  
 Ricci, Sebastiano, 32  
 Richard (Plantagenet), 278  
 Richard I (“Lion-Heart”), 281–282,  
     289, 302–304, 305, 324  
 Richard II, 393–394, 400  
 Richard III, 402–403  
 Richard IV, 402  
 Richard of York, 401–403  
 Richelieu, Armand-Jean de, 501–504,  
     509–512, 518. *See* Plessis  
 rings, 243  
 Rio Duero Castillo, 269  
 River Elbe, 234  
 Robert, 276  
 Robert I, 283  
 Robert of Locksley, 294  
 Robin Hood, 294  
 Rock of Gibraltar, 186  
 Roman Empire, 11, 13, 47, 72, 84,  
     115–116, 139, 263, 364,  
     375–376, 457–465  
     Antonines and, 57–60  
     Augustus and, 47–51  
     Diocletian and, 62–64  
     fifty years of fifty emperors and,  
     61–62  
     Flavians and, 55–56  
     Julians and, 51–55  
 Roman gods, 119  
 Roman Republic, 3. *See also* Julius  
     Caesar  
 Roman Rite, 157  
 romance, 277–284, 279  
 Romanesque architecture, 329, 355  
 Romans, 38  
 Rome, 12, 22, 29, 35, 39, 41, 63–64,  
     78, 85, 88, 105–106, 111, 152,  
     181, 212, 222, 307, 308, 420,  
     460–462, 479. *See also* Roman  
     Empire; Roman Republic  
 Romulus Augustulus, 130, 136  
 Roncesvalles, 210  
 Rouen, 127  
 Rubens, Peter Paul, 98  
 rue, 527  
 Ruhr River, 200  
*Rule of St. Augustine*, 247  
*Rule of St. Benedict*, 153–155, 157,  
     161, 164, 205  
 “Rump, The,” 530  
 Rump Parliament, 530, 531  
 Rurik, 221, 241, 382  
 Rus. *See* Russia  
 Russia, 141, 221, 307, 381–389, 409,  
     440  
 Russian Orthodox Church, 388,  
     428–432. *See also* Byzantine  
     Empire; Eastern Orthodox  
     Church
- S**  
 Sacchi, Andrea, 156  
 sacramental, 449  
 Sacraments, 336, 487. *See also*  
     Eucharist  
 Sacred Tradition, 449, 486  
*Sadducees*, 19  
*Saint Augustine and the Child*, 101  
*Saint Dominic*, 340  
*Saint Francis of Assisi*, 336  
*Saint Francis Receiving the*  
     *Stigmata*, 339  
 Saint Patrick’s Cathedral, 149  
 Saint Petersburg, 388  
 Saints. *See specific names*  
 Saladin, 302–304, 305, 324  
*salat*, 176

- Salome, 30  
salvation, 73  
Salviati, Francesco, 423  
San Damiano, 337  
Sancho VII, 310  
Sanhedrin, 30  
*Santa Maria*, 436  
Santiago, 292, 325–326. *See also*  
    James  
Saracens, 222  
Saragossa, 210  
Sardinia, 125  
Sassanids, 61–62  
satirist, 54  
Saul. *See* Paul  
*sawn*, 176  
Saxons, 131, 159, 160, 199, 208–211,  
    248  
Scherrer, J.J., 395  
Schism of 1054, 308  
schismatic, 90, 112, 470–471  
Schlosskirche, 452  
Schmalkaldic League, 462  
Scholastica, 153  
*School of Athens, The*, 415  
schools, 76–77, 348–354, 355  
Schwyz, 455  
scion, 403  
Scotland, 148, 219, 284, 525–531.  
    *See also* Britain  
scourging, 29  
Scriptures, 19, 43, 75, 80, 99, 100,  
    111, 449, 486. *See also*  
    *specific books*  
scrupulous, 535  
Sea of Galilee, 25, 302  
Sea of Tiberias. *See* Sea of Galilee  
Second Agricultural Revolution, 231  
*Second Assault of Jerusalem: The*  
    *Crusaders Repulsed*, 298  
sect, 51  
secular, 243, 264, 414. *See also*  
    Humanism  
sedition, 196  
see, 149  
self-denial, 75, 101, 102, 112  
Selim II, 496  
Seljuks, 295  
Senate, 65  
Sens, 223  
sensualism, 416  
Sephardic Jews, 204, 268  
Sephardim, 268  
Septimius Severus, 61, 72, 77  
Serbia, 407, 410  
serfdom, 234, 240. *See also* feudalism  
Sergius of Radonezh, 429  
*Servus Servorum Dei*, 164  
seven liberal arts, 150, 332  
Seventh Ecumenical Council, 197  
Severianus, 122–123  
Seville, 347  
Seymour, Jane, 471  
*shehada*, 176  
Shiites, 184, 187–189, 191  
Sicily, 11, 40, 125, 262, 334–335  
*Siege of Vienna*, 462  
Sigismund, 373  
Simon IV de Montfort, 315  
Simon Magus, 244  
Simon Peter. *See* Peter  
Simon the Zealot, 34, 35  
Simon V de Montfort, 315  
simony, 244  
Simony, 257  
simony, 264  
Sistine Chapel, 417  
Sixtus IV, 350  
Slav, 234  
Slavata, Wilhelm, 504–505  
Sleipnir, 119  
Slovakia, 224  
Society of Jesus, 492–494, 517  
Soissons, 127  
*sola fide*, 449, 479  
*sola gratia*, 449  
*sola scriptura*, 449  
Solomon, 3  
Son. *See* Jesus Christ  
*Song of Roland*, 210  
Sophia Palaiologos, 430  
sortie, 397  
South America, 115  
Spain, 11, 55, 90, 95, 96, 197–199,  
    203–204, 210, 215, 220,  
    268–272, 309–312, 345–347,  
    433, 457, 491, 546–549  
Spanish Armada, 477, 480  
“Spider King,” 399  
spiritual power, 162, 164  
St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre,  
    499–500  
St. Bernard’s Abbey of Cîteaux, 340  
*St. Bonaventure*, 349  
St. Denis monastery, 549  
*St. Jerome in His Study*, 100  
St. Mark’s Cathedral, 262, 307  
St. Peter’s Basilica, 41, 213  
St. Stephen’s Crown, 255  
stained glass, 327  
standing army, 536  
Stephen, 36, 37, 255  
steppe, 381  
Stilicho, 103–104, 111  
Stoic philosophy, 60  
Stone Age, 2, 5–6  
Stonehenge, 8  
“Story of the Holy Grail,” 279  
Stuarts, 523–539, 554  
Subedei, 343–344  
Suger, 285–287, 293  
Suleiman, 193, 458–459  
Suleiman’s Mosque, 195  
sultan, 295, 324  
*Summa Theologica*, 352  
Sun King, 542–549  
Sunnis, 184, 191  
*sura*, 173  
Swabia, 249  
Sweden, 221, 508–511, 545.  
    *See also* Vikings  
Switzerland, 454  
Sybil of the Rhine, 252  
Sylvester, 90  
Sylvester II, 254–255, 264  
Symmachus, 150–151  
synod, 161  
Synod of Whitby, 161, 164

Syria, 10, 11, 56, 62, 139, 168, 179,  
181, 185, 204, 300

## T

table-monks, 97  
tactician, 303  
Tagaste, 101  
Tagus River, 269–271, 271  
Tarik, 197, 216  
Tarsus, 36  
Teano, 350  
Templars, 299–301, 323  
temporal power, 162, 164  
Tertullian, 87. *See* Perpetua  
Test Act, 534  
testament, 18, 43  
Tetzel, 445  
Teutonic Knights, 388  
textiles, 235–236  
theocracy, 177  
Theodora, 140, 145, 164, 197, 350  
Theodoric, 131–133, 136, 151  
Theodorus, 179  
Theodosia, 122  
Theodosius, 96, 98, 103, 111  
Theophano, 253, 254  
Theory of Courage, 137  
Theotokos, 196  
thesis, 351  
Thessalonians, 38  
Thessalonica, 63  
Thessaly, 38  
Third Council of Toledo, 123–124  
Third Rome, 440. *See also* Russian  
Orthodox Church  
Thirty Years' War, 503, 517  
Thomas, 32, 35  
Thomas Aquinas, 349–350, 350–354,  
356, 415  
Thor, 120  
Thrace, 38, 139  
Tiberius, 51, 52–53, 65  
Tiepolo, Giovanni Battista, 74  
Tigris River, 8, 9  
Tilly (Count). *See* Tserclaes, Johann  
time, 2–3

Timothy, 38  
Titian, 483  
Titus, 38, 55–56  
Titus Aurelius Antonius. *See*  
Antonius  
Toledo, 96, 123–124, 135, 197,  
269–271, 271, 310  
toleration, 79  
Toleration Act, 538  
Tolkein, J.R.R., 137  
Tolosa, 105  
Tomb of Charlemagne, 318  
Torah, 19  
Tory, 538, 553  
Tours, 201–202  
towns, 234–236  
trade, 235–236  
Tradition, 449, 486  
*traditores*, 90  
Trajan, 57, 66, 88  
transubstantiation, 28, 335–336, 356,  
449  
Treaty of Ryswick, 547  
Treaty of Troyes, 394–395  
tributary, 271, 545  
*Tribute Money, The*, 35  
Tridentine, 489  
Tridentine Rite, 489, 517  
Trier, 63  
Trinity, 76, 94, 103  
Tripoli, 299  
Triumph of Orthodoxy, 197  
*trivium*, 332  
troubadours, 279, 413  
Tserclaes, Johann, 506–507, 509, 518  
Tudor, Arthur, 466  
Tudors, 403, 465–477, 521–522  
Tunis, 320  
Turkey, 296, 404, 494–498. *See also*  
Ottoman Empire  
Turks, 185  
Twelve Apostles. *See* apostles

## U

Uberti, Lucantonio degli, 419  
Ultramontane, 486, 516

Umayyad Mosque, 185  
Umayyads, 184–187, 201, 203  
uniformity, 473, 479  
Universal epistles, 38  
universities, 331–333, 356  
University of Naples, 351  
University of Paris, 349, 456  
University of Wittenberg, 443–477  
unscrupulous, 417  
Unterwalden, 455  
Ural River, 381  
Urban II, 247, 256, 295–296, 324  
Urban VI, 368–370  
Uri, 455  
usurper, 306

## V

Valencia, 123, 272  
Valens, 95  
Valentinian I, 95, 96, 99  
Valentinian III, 129  
Valerian, 61–62  
Valhalla, 119  
van Cleve, Joos, 100  
Van Halen, Francisco, 311  
Vandals, 95, 103–104, 108–109, 111,  
112, 124–126, 131, 143  
vanguard, 193  
Varangian Guard, 221  
Vasari, Giorgio, 461  
Vasili III, 431–432  
Vasnetsov, Viktor, 383, 384  
vassal, 224–225, 240, 243  
Venice, 235, 262, 305  
venue, 484  
Veronese, Paolo, 496  
Versailles, 544, 555–556  
Verus, 60  
Vespasian. *See* Flavius Vespasian  
Vespers, 280  
viaticum, 353  
Vibia Perpetua. *See* Perpetua  
viceroy, 201  
Vienne, 128  
Vikings, 219–222, 240, 248, 382  
Vincennes, 289

Vindabona, 60  
 Virgil, 50  
 Virgin Mary. *See* Mary  
 Virginia, 540  
 Visigoths, 95, 103–104, 105, 111,  
 120–124, 131, 197, 198–199  
 Vitellius, 55  
 Vladimir, 383, 409, 410  
 Vladimir II, 385–386  
 von Eschenbach, Wolfram, 279

## W

Wales, 148, 283. *See also* Britain  
 Wallenstein, Albrecht von, 506, 518  
 War of the Spanish Succession,  
 546–549, 554  
 Wars of Religion, 498–502  
 Wars of the Roses, 400–403, 409, 410  
 Weesop, 530  
 Wends, 234  
 Weser River, 200, 210  
 Western Orthodox Church, 350  
 West-Goths, 95  
 Westphalia, 513–514, 517  
 Whigs, 538, 553

“White Knight of Wallachia,” 424  
 “Why did God become Man?,” 276  
 William (Plantagenet), 278  
 William, Prince of Orange.  
   *See* William III  
 William II “Rufus,” 275–276  
 William III, 536–538, 554  
 William of Holland, 375  
 William of Normandy, 284  
 William the Conqueror, 273–275, 292  
 William X of Aquitaine, 277–284, 279  
 windmills, 234  
 Wittekind, 210, 211  
 Wittenberg, 452  
 Wodin, 119  
 Wolsey (Cardinal), 467–468  
 women, 175, 228, 252  
 Wootton, John, 548  
 Worms, 260–261, 450–452  
 Wormwood. *See* Clairvaux  
 writing, 2, 3  
 Wulfilas, 95  
 Wycliffe, John, 366–367, 373,  
 377, 378

## Y

Yarmouk River, 179, 191  
 Yaroslav, 384–385  
 Year of the Four Emperors, 55  
*Yehoshua*, 21  
 Yellow River, 9  
*Yeshua*, 21  
 York Minster, 330  
 Yorks, 400–403  
 Ysenbrandt, Adrien, 158  
*Yvain*, 279

## Z

Zacharias, 169  
 Zahara, 433  
*zakal*, 176  
 Zamora, 269  
 Zara, 306  
 Zeno, 131–132  
 Zug, 455  
 Zwingli, Ulrich, 454–455, 480  
 Zwinglians, 455



