



# Ad Infinitum: A Biography of Latin

*Nicholas Ostler*

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## Ad Infinitum: A Biography of Latin Nicholas Ostler

"An absorbing, scholarly account of the history of the Latin language, from its origins in antiquity to its afterlife in our own time...*Ad Infinitum* treats its readers with the dignity of Roman citizens." *The Wall Street Journal*

The Latin language has been the one constant in the cultural history of the West for more than two millennia. It has defined the way in which we express our thoughts, our faith, and our knowledge of how the world functions, its use echoing on in the law codes of half the world, in the terminologies of modern science, and, until forty years ago, in the liturgy of the Catholic Church. In his erudite and entertaining "biography," Nicholas Ostler shows how and why Latin survived and thrived even as its creators and other languages failed. Originally the dialect of Rome and its surrounds, Latin supplanted its neighbors to become, by conquest and settlement, the language of all Italy, and then of Western Europe and North Africa. After the empire collapsed, spoken Latin re-emerged as a host of new languages, from Portuguese and Spanish in the west to Romanian in the east, while a knowledge of Latin lived on as the common code of European thought, and inspired the founders of Europe's New World in the Americas. E pluribus unum. Illuminating the extravaganza of its past, Nicholas Ostler makes clear that, in a thousand echoes, Latin lives on, ad infinitum.

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