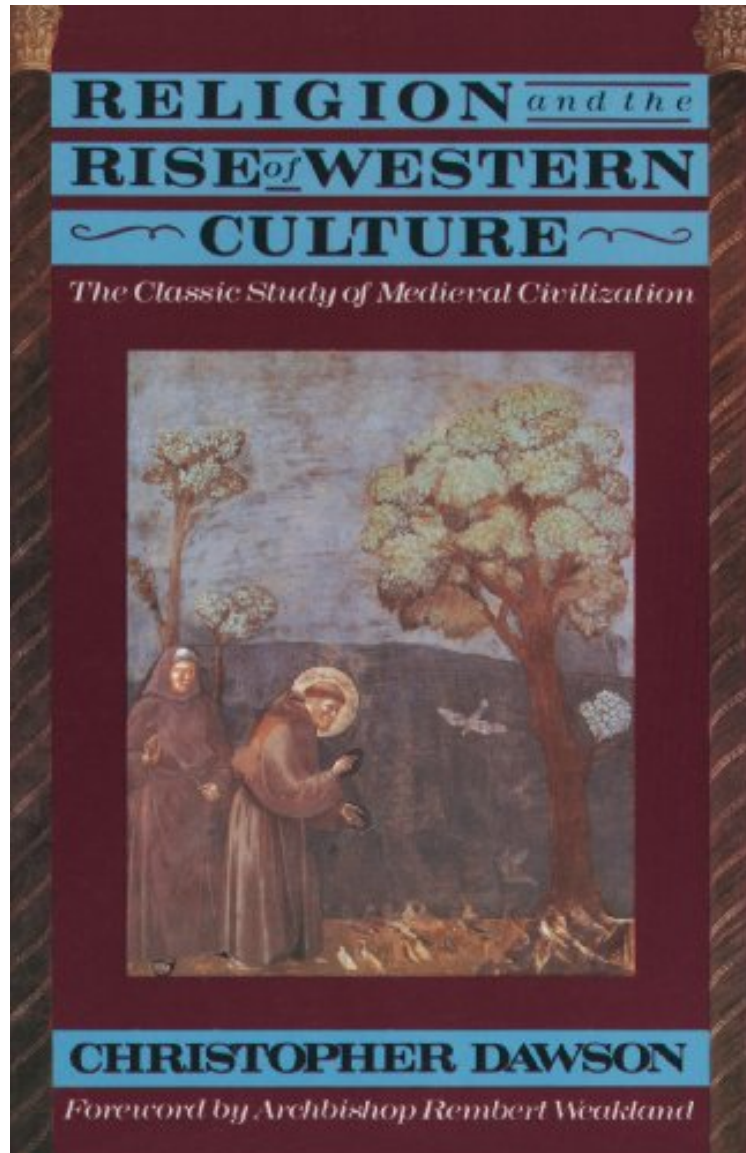


[Download] Religion and the Rise of Western Culture: The Classic Study of Medieval Civilization

Religion and the Rise of Western Culture: The Classic Study of Medieval Civilization

Christopher Dawson

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Christopher Dawson : Religion and the Rise of Western Culture: The Classic Study of Medieval Civilization
before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Religion and the Rise
of Western Culture: The Classic Study of Medieval Civilization:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Religion is the key of history, said Acton, and today Actons saying has acquired a wider meaning than he realized."By Clay GarnerIt would be a strange fatality if the great revolution by which Western man has subdued nature to his purposes should end in the loss of his own spiritual freedom, but this might well happen if an increasing technical control of the state over the life and thought of its members should coincide with a qualitative decline in the standards of our culture.Loss of freedom might happen. This was spoken in 1950. What would Dawson say now?An ideology in the modern sense of the word is very different from a faith, although it is intended to fulfill the same sociological functions. It is the work of man, an instrument by which the conscious political will attempts to mould the social tradition to its purpose. But faith looks beyond the world of man and his works; it introduces man to a higher and more universal range of reality than the finite and temporal world to which the state and the economic order belong.Ideology very different from faith - so true!And thereby it introduces into human life an element of spiritual freedom which may have a creative and transforming influence on mans social culture and historical destiny as well as on his inner personal experience. If therefore we study a culture as a whole, we shall find there is an intimate relation between its religious faith and its social achievement. Even a religion which is explicitly other-worldly and appears to deny all the values and standards of human society may, nevertheless, exert a dynamic influence on culture and provide the driving forces in movements of social change.Religion provides the driving force. Why? Religion is the key of history, said Lord Acton, and to-day, when we realize the tremendous influence of the unconscious on human behaviour and the power of religion to bind and loose these hidden forces, Actons saying has acquired a wider meaning than he realized. (110)Why examine the change from barbarians to Christendom now?But our generation has been forced to realize how fragile and unsubstantial are the barriers that separate civilization from the forces of destruction. We have learnt that barbarism is not a picturesque myth or a half-forgotten memory of a long-passed stage of history, but an ugly underlying reality which may erupt with shattering force whenever the moral authority of a civilization loses its control. (259)I. Introduction: The Significance of the Western DevelopmentII. The Religious Origins of Western Culture: The Church and the BarbariansIII. The Monks of the West and the Formation of the Western TraditionIV. The Barbarians and the Christian KingdomV. The Second Dark Age and the Conversion of the NorthVI. The Byzantine Tradition and the Conversion of Eastern EuropeVII. The Reform of the Church in the Eleventh Century and the Medieval PapacyVIII. The Feudal World: Chivalry and the Courtly CultureIX. The Medieval City: Commune and GildX. The Medieval City: School and UniversityXI. The Religious Crisis of Medieval Culture: The Thirteenth CenturyXII. Conclusion: Medieval Religion and Popular CultureAppendix: Notes on Famous Medieval ArtWhen St. Paul, in obedience to the warning of a dream, set sail from Troy in A.D. 49 and came to Philippi in Macedonia he did more to change the course of history than the great battle that had decided the fate of the Roman Empire on the same spot nearly a century earlier, for he brought to Europe the seed of a new life which was ultimately destined to create a new world.Who knew? No one but Paul - he knew!All this took place underneath the surface of history, so that it was unrecognized by the leaders of contemporary culture, like Gallio the brother of Seneca, who actually saw it taking place beneath their eyes. But it is impossible to read the contemporary account of these journeys and the letters that St. Paul wrote to the first Christian communities of Europe and Asia Minor without realizing that a new principle had been introduced into the static civilization of the Roman world that contained infinite possibilities of change. As the mob at Salonika protested: these men have turned the world upside down, proclaiming another king than Caesar Jesus. And so indeed they did, and this act of creative revolution marks the beginning of a new era in world history, and, above all, in the history of the West. (310)Dawson explains the outworking of this religious change in the barbarian Europe. Vikings, Saxons, Avars, etc., along with Latins, Greeks, Arabs, Popes, Emperors, Philosophers, Universities, Franciscans, Dominicans, etc.,etc., all are here! Smooth, clear, pleasing text. In fact, sounds like a good lecture, probably because it was. This was the Gifford lectures for 1948/49.This presents as intellectual history, with a simple, coherent manner. Easy to follow and pleasant to travel.Last paragraph - If there is any truth in what I have been saying in these two courses of lectures, such moments of vital fusion between a living religion and a living culture are the creative events in history, in comparison with which all the external achievements in the political and economic orders are transitory and insignificant.31 of 32 people found the following review helpful. Who Taught Western Man to Read, Think, and to LearnBy James E. EgoIf Christopher Dawson (1889-1970) had this book published in 1950, and the book is not dated. Dawson's research, knowledge, and wisdom made this book "a timeless classic" which no bona fide Medieval historian can ignore. The panoramic view Dawson presented gives readers a profound understanding of the history, ideas, and concepts of Western Civilization.Dawson started this book with a good assessment of Europe during the collapse of the Roman Empire. He devoted the first chapter to terrible economic, social, and political conditions that befell Europeans from c. 500-750 A.D. Yet, the Catholic Church tenaciously held on to what was of left of Western Civilization. Dawson vividly described the importance of the Irish Celtic monks and the Benedictine monks in both preserving learning and spread their learning via their missionary zeal. It was the Benedictines, started by St. Benedict (480-544), who, upon meeting their Irish Celtic counterparts taught the Irish practicality and gave Irish monasticism a more sensible and less rigorous rule (The Benedictine Rule). Dawson did not fail to notice the influence of the Benedictines when one of their own was selected Pope-Pope Gregory I 590-604)who is credited for not only learning and Catholic leadership.

Readers who appreciate classic music should note that Pope Gregory supported the music of Gregorian Chant which was the beginning of Classical Music. Dawson was aware of this and included it in his book. Dawson wrote a good chapter on the Catholic Church's assimilation of the Northern Barbarians. The conversion of Clovis (480-520) was historically important when one considers that Clovis' empire (basically modern France) was open to the Benedictines and the spread of knowledge and learning. The rise of the Franks under Charles Martel (717-742), Pepin (741-768), and especially Charlemagne (768-814) was important to the Western Civilization, the spread of the Catholic Faith, and a renewal of the Catholic Faith. Charlemagne's palace school at Aachen was a center for learned men and drew students and clergy where literacy and texts were developed that enhanced and preserved the learning of the Ancient Greeks and Romans. The Benedictine Alcuin (730-804) and his scholars developed Latin texts and developed a uniform system of script called Bookhand which included upper and lower case letters and punctuation. All of this almost came to an end during the separation of the Carolingian Empire and invasions by the Saracens, Magyars, and especially the Vikings. The Viking raids and then invasions almost destroyed Western Civilization. Their destruction of monasteries was almost a catastrophe. However, as Dawson mentioned if one monastery survived, it drew other monks who renewed the work of learning and lived a disciplined life of Chant, prayer, and teaching/learning. The Viking leaders who led lives of lawlessness and plunder had to have law and order to rule their newly conquered areas, and the literacy of the Catholic leaders and monks helped the Vikings with administration but more importantly civilized them as good Catholics. What was lost with the collapse of the Carolingian Frankish Empire was gained in Germany. Europe and the Catholic Church were saved by Otto II's victory over the Magyars (the Hungarians) in 955 at the Battle of Lechfeld. The German rulers then had the power and recognized authority to nominate Popes and bishops. The Catholic authorities originally accepted this arrangement to mute the influence and power of Italian/Roman nobility. However, this arrangement stopped when Pope Boniface VIII (1073-1085) excommunicated Henry IV (1056-1106) over the Investiture Controversy (who would invest the German bishops—the Pope or German rulers). This GRADUALLY led to the Catholic Church's (the Universal Church) independence from secular rulers. Dawson did not exclude the Byzantine Greek Church and Western Civilization. Dawson argued that the Byzantines were more interested in using their supposed enemies against each other which interfered with missionary work. Yet, some of the German rulers' imperialism also alienated many of the Slavic people some of whom became Catholic such as the Polish and Hungarians. Dawson also explained the religious and political differences between the Latin Catholic West and the Byzantine East. Some of these differences were made worse by the Crusaders taking control of Constantinople in 1204. Dawson saw the earlier Crusades as Catholic and European unity which was ruined by political rivalries. Dawson also gave credit to the gradual urbanization of Medieval Europe. The Medieval guilds developed a sense of religious and civic pride that were acceptable to urban residents. The guildsmen developed a sense of honest business and economic "fair play" that mostly avoided economic and social conflict. Dawson was clear that the guilds also provided charity and help to those who needed it. The guildsmen organized Passion Plays and held the Catholic Church in their midst as a center of both religious liturgy and social influence. The rise of the Medieval cities started to end serfdom and the feudal system. Dawson also connects the Medieval towns with the expansion of learning—the rise of the universities. The older cathedral schools and monastic schools were not developed to handle large numbers of students. The schools at Monte Cassino, Italy and at Bec in France were outstanding institutions, but they could not handle the increased number of students. Dawson contrasted the University of Paris (c. 1200), with its focus on philosophy and theology, with the University of Bologna (c. 1158). The latter university focused on Roman and Canon Law which were connected. The University of Bologna was organized by the students as a secular institution. The University of Paris took pride as a center of Catholic philosophy and theology so much so that law studies were excluded. The students at Paris were at times undisciplined, impetuous, etc. They had little respect for tradition and the past. Yet, they could be serious students especially when Peter Abelard (1079-1142) taught there. He was considered a master of logic and dialectics. Another well known scholar who taught at the University of Paris was St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) whose synthesis of reason and faith is considered a work of genius. Dawson stated that rigid logic, careful debate, and reason not only had application to the study of philosophy and theology, but such emphasis on disciplined reason enhanced the study of science and mathematics. Men wanted to apply careful reason and disciplined learning to nature and the physical world which was assumed created by God who was The Unmoved Mover. Dawson concluded this book with a section on vernacular literature. Dawson examined Langland's (c 1300s) *PIERS THE PLOWMAN*. This piece was written during the terrible Hundred Years War (1346-1453), the Black Death, the Schism in the Catholic Church (1377-1414), etc. These events were disastrous to Europe, the Catholic Faith, and culture. Yet, as Dawson stated from excerpts of vernacular literature, political instability, disease, economic situations, etc. are transitory while the Catholic Faith and Western Culture are permanent as long as Western Civilization survives. This is a thoughtful book for anyone interested in the study of history. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Creation of Christian culture in the heart of Western Man By Marty Harper A sweeping summary of the rise of the church. Dawson has a detailed knowledge of hundreds of key players. He links the conversion of the Kentish and Gaulish kings. This was not the interplay of church and state, but rather the beginning of creation of biblical culture by the missionaries. Or consider the end of the 'geographic' dark ages. Francis travels to the

Caliphate. (Yes, St Francis). Franciscans establish mission in Beijing, attempt international treaty with 'the khan' in central Asia - all this in the 13th century. A great intro from a scholarly and sympathetic perspective.

In this new edition of his classic work, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, Christopher Dawson addresses two of the most pressing subjects of our day: the origin of Europe and the religious roots of Western culture. With the magisterial sweep of Toynbee, to whom he is often compared, Dawson tells here the tale of medieval Christendom. From the brave travels of sixth-century Irish monks to the grand synthesis of Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century, Dawson brilliantly shows how vast spiritual movements arose from tiny origins and changed the face of medieval Europe from one century to the next. The legacy of those years of ferment remains with us in the great cathedrals, Gregorian chant, and the works of Giotto and Dante. Even more, though, for Dawson these centuries charged the soul of the West with a spiritual concern -- a concern that he insists "can never be entirely undone except by the total negation or destruction of Western man himself."