



History of Civilization in the Fifth Century, Volume 1

Frederic Ozanam

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Pyrrhus Press specializes in bringing books long out of date back to life, allowing today's readers access to yesterday's treasures. This is a concise but comprehensive history of the Middle Ages, analyzing Europe during the 5th century, the same one that saw the ultimate demise of the Roman Empire. From the preface: "I purpose to write the literary history of the Middle Age, from the fifth to the end of the thirteenth century, the time of Dante, before whom I pause as the worthiest representative of that great epoch. But in the history of literature my principal study will be the civilization of which it is the flower, and in that civilization I shall glance especially at the handiwork of Christianity. The whole idea, therefore, of my book will be to show how Christianity availed to evoke from the ruins of Rome, and the hordes encamped thereupon, a new society which was capable of holding truth, doing good, and finding the true idea of beauty. We know how Gibbon, the historian, visited Rome in his youth, and how one day, as, full of its associations, he was wandering over the Capitol, he beheld a long procession of Franciscans issuing from the doors of the Ara Coeli Basilica, and brushing with their sandals the pavement which had been traversed by so many triumphs. It was then that, indignation giving him inspiration, he formed the plan of avenging the antiquity which had been outraged by Christian barbarism, and conceived the idea of a history of the decline of the Roman Empire. And I have also seen the monks of Ara Coeli crowding the old pavement of the Capitoline Jove. I rejoiced therein as in a victory of love over force, and resolved to describe the history of progress in that epoch where the English philosopher only saw decay, the history of civilization in the period of barbarism, the history of thought as it escaped from the shipwreck of the empire of letters and traversed at length those stormy waves of invasion, as the Hebrews passed the Red Sea, and under a similar guidance, *forti tegente brachio*. I know of no fact which is more supernatural, or more plainly proves the divinity of Christianity, than that of its having saved the human intellect."

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