

HEROISM AND GENIUS

How Catholic Priests Built Western Civilization

“Every chancellery in Europe, every court in Europe, was ruled by these learned, trained and accomplished men—the priesthood of that great and dominant body.”

President Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom*

In the teeth of stubborn facts historians have handed in their verdict : from the genius of Christianity and the cultures of the Jews, Greeks, Romans, Arabs and Germanic peoples, the Catholic Church built a new and original civilization, embodying within its structures the Christian vision of God and man, time and eternity.

Its construction and maintenance, amid attrition and cultural earthquakes, is a saga spread over sixteen hundred years. Catholic priests certainly do not hold a monopoly on either the struggles or achievements involved. However, in the embryonic stage of Western Civilization from AD 300 to 1000, because they numbered so many men of heroism and genius in their ranks, and due to their triple mission within the Church to teach, sanctify and govern, they became the *pioneers and irreplaceable builders of a new culture and socio-political order*.

Heroism and Genius presents some of these formidable men of the Dark Ages and, to a lesser degree, of the medieval period, sketching their decisive role in the building of some of the landmark social, artistic and economic institutions that mark Western Civilization as both original and originating in the Catholic matrix : Fathers of the Western socio-political ethos, Chivalry and Free-Market Economics; leaders of nations, statesmen, and defiers of tyrants ; music composers, pioneers of universal education, and architects of some of the world’s loveliest buildings ; and, enigmatically, the clandestine revolutionaries behind the flowering of the culture of romantic love that became the classic model for relations between men and women in the West.

This is a popular history of the role of the Catholic priesthood in laying the foundations for the ethos of our own Western Civilization, along with a sketch of various institutions characteristic of that civilization that first budded in that time period.