

23V02 –Dawn to Decadence

Hello my friends. Thanks for joining me today for an @ the PUNLA coffee table.

I would like to share a quick review of a book by historian Jaques Barzun *“From Dawn to Decadence: 500 years of Western Culture, 1500 to the present”* (meaning the year 2000). This book is required reading for a class I’m taking. This is a potential resource that at least some of you might be interested in. So, I am going to share my book review and summaries with you.

Let’s pray. Heavenly Father please guide our discussion today. Help me to stay out of the way, so you can use me. If I say anything wrong, please don’t let them remember my errand words but remember what you want them to hear regardless of my words. We trust you and we know you have promised the wisdom we need to understand your word in the Bible. Help us to let the Holy Spirit lead us and guide us. Bless our time together and I pray all these things in your name Lord Jesus. Amen.

Okay the book is called *“From Dawn to Decadence: 500 years of Western Culture, 1500 to the present”* (meaning the year 2000) written by historian Jaques Barzun. Make no mistake, this is an intense history book. But it is written in an amazing way. You actually feel like Barzun is sitting across the table casually sharing his historical perspective. I have to admit, I really loved much of this book. Now I’m not a reader, so I purchased the audio version along with a printed copy. The book is more than 800 pages and has about 40 hours of audio recording.

The book breaks the last 500 years into approximately 125 year periods. The first is a period from 1500-1660 which takes us from Luther to Newton. Next is a period from 1661-1789 which takes us from Louis XIV to the guillotine. Then a period from 1790-1920 which takes us from Goethe to the New York Armory Show. The last period takes us to the end of the millennium, the year 2000.

Barzun employs the use of actual quotes from the historical figures weaved into the text like outtakes from magazine article. These help to break up the narrative in a way that is quite entertaining. Another technique Barzun uses is what he calls a Cross-Section. A cross-section is intended to give us a snapshot of what someone would view if living in that particular city and time. The cross-sections include Madrid 1540, Venice 1650, London 1715, Weimar 1790, Paris 1930 and Chicago 1895. These are excellent and give you a very interesting perspective from the lives of the people who would have been living in these cities and times. Barzun stresses the culture, political, economic and religious viewpoints, provides a vantage point for the history contained in each section of the book.

To try summarize such a book is futile since it is already quite concise even if it is more than 800 pages in length. I personally enjoyed the sections on the early reformers, Luther, Erasmus, Calvin and the like. The descriptions of the rise of early humanism.

The later rise of the influences of art and literature. These 500 years are littered with war, conquest, colonization and exploitation. Barzun does not hold back on his views of these and culture forces that drove them.

The last sections of this book should challenge all of us, as our culture appears to be demanding that our western Culture be torn apart. I think this book serves as a great reminder of the failures of our past, such that we should learn from them instead of repeating them.

Let's Pray

Father God, thank you for giving us the resources and sources to answer these tough questions. We know you know all things. When we see how things fit perfectly in your plan. Wow. Only with God is this possible Thank you for giving us the Holy Spirit to guide us and help us. Help us to open the Bible and look into history to answer our questions. I pray these things in your name Lord Jesus, Amen

Okay. I love history and as such this book is great to me. *"From Dawn to Decadence: 500 years of Western Culture, 1500 to the present"* is to me a necessary read for anyone who wants to understand the historical reasons we are where we are. I am however very thankful for the audio version, I would have had trouble reading this cover to cover without the aid of the audio version. Thank you, Jesus.

Thank you for joining me @ the PUNLA Coffee Table today, I hope you'll join us again.

If you liked the message, please share the link with a friend. Send me comments, my email should be on the screen.

Until next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God bless.