

**HISTORY OF CIVILIZATION  
IN EUROPE, FROM THE FALL  
OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE TO  
THE FRENCH REVOLUTION**

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History of civilization in Europe, from the fall of the Roman empire to the French revolution by  
M. Guizot

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**M. GUIZOT**

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# HISTORY OF CIVILIZATION

BY

## EUROPE,

FROM

THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE TO THE  
FRENCH REVOLUTION.

BY M. GUIZOT.

PRIME MINISTER OF FRANCE, AUTHOR OF "A HISTORY OF FRANCE," ETC.

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GENERAL  
HISTORY OF CIVILIZATION  
IN MODERN EUROPE.

FROM THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE TO THE FRENCH  
REVOLUTION.

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LECTURE I.

CIVILIZATION IN GENERAL.

BEING called upon to give a course of lectures, and having considered what subject would be most agreeable and convenient to fill up the short space allowed us from now to the close of the year, it has occurred to me that a general sketch of the History of Modern Europe, considered more especially with regard to the progress of civilization—that a general survey of the history of European civilization, of its origin, its progress, its end, its character, would be the most profitable subject upon which I could engage your attention.

I say European civilization, because there is evidently so striking a uniformity (*unité*) in the civilization of the different states of Europe, as fully to warrant this appellation. Civilization has flowed to them all from sources so much alike—it is so connected in them all, notwithstanding the great differences of time, of place, and circumstances, by the same principles, and it so tends in them all to bring about the same results, that no one will doubt the fact of there being a civilization essentially European.

At the same time it must be observed that this civilization cannot be found in—its history cannot be collected from, the history of any single state of Europe. However similar in its general appearance throughout the whole, its variety is not less remarkable, nor has it ever yet developed itself

completely in any particular country. Its characteristic features are widely spread, and we shall be obliged to seek, as occasion may require, in England, in France, in Germany, in Spain, for the elements of its history.

The situation in which we are placed, as Frenchmen, affords us a great advantage for entering upon the study of European civilization; for, without intending to flatter the country to which I am bound by so many ties, I cannot but regard France as the centre, as the focus, of the civilization of Europe. It would be going too far to say that she has always been, upon every occasion, in advance of other nations. Italy, at various epochs, has outstripped her in the arts; England, as regards political institutions, is by far before her; and, perhaps, at certain moments, we may find other nations of Europe superior to her in various particulars; but it must still be allowed, that whenever France has set forward in the career of civilization, she has sprung forth with new vigor, and has soon come up with, or passed by, all her rivals.

Not only is this the case, but those ideas, those institutions which promote civilization, but whose birth must be referred to other countries, have, before they could become general, or produce fruit—before they could be transplanted to other lands, or benefit the common stock of European civilization, been obliged to undergo in France a new preparation: it is from France, as from a second country more rich and fertile, that they have started forth to make the conquest of Europe. There is not a single great idea, not a single great principle of civilization, which, in order to become universally spread, has not first passed through France.

There is, indeed, in the genius of the French, something of a sociableness, of a sympathy—something which spreads itself with more facility and energy, than in the genius of any other people: it may be in the language, or the particular turn of mind of the French nation; it may be in their manners, or that their ideas, being more popular, present themselves more clearly to the masses, penetrate among them with greater ease; but, in a word, clearness, sociability, sympathy, are the particular characteristics of France, of its civilization; and these qualities render it eminently qualified to march at the head of European civilization.

In studying, then, the history of this great fact, it is neither an arbitrary choice, nor convention, that leads us to make France the central point from which we shall study it;