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Louis J. Voskuil

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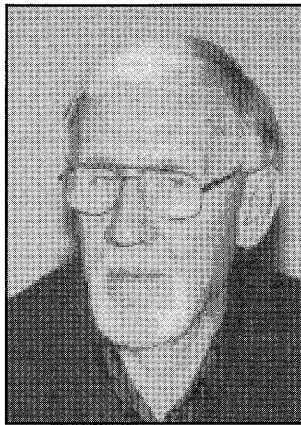
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Western Civilization or World History: A True Dilemma?



by Louis J. Voskuil

In the past two decades or so, there has been a vigorous debate within the historical profession about the nature of the contemporary world and what kind of history should be taught in required courses in light of that world. Partly at issue is whether the traditional Western Civilization course should be maintained as the best course to be required of secondary or college level students or whether it should be replaced by studies in World History. Among the questions raised in the discussion is the particular shape these courses should take. Even for those who argue for the continuing relevance of the Western Civilization course, its content and

Dr. Louis J. Voskuil is Professor of History at Covenant College at Lookout Mountain, GA.

structure in light of twentieth century developments is an open question. For those who support the teaching of World History, the troubling issue of the appropriate model has occasioned vigorous debate, with no consensus yet being reached.

Foundational to historiography is, of course, the presence of worldview commitments. It is easy to assume, because of its established tradition and general acceptance, that the structure of Western Civilization is well established; it's in the arena of World History where the struggle for a useful paradigm takes place. However, from their inception, value-laden social concerns shaped the historiography of Western Civilization courses and still do. And now, as the struggle goes on for an understanding of world history, the same sort of epistemological and socio political concerns also shape that discussion, and these concerns are further complicated by the rise of multiculturalism and postmodern perspectives. This paper does not address multiculturalism or postmodernism or any other political issue directly, but discusses the historiographical issues raised in the professional discussions from whatever source they come. The perspective embraced here is that of Reformed Christianity as I understand how it relates to the issues raised by the discussions in the historical profession.

The framework within which my discussion takes place is primarily contemporary history; with the level of interdependence that has taken place since the era of industrialism and western imperialism, the question of a successful model for a World History course and the relationship of

western civilization and world history become particularly acute. Furthermore, because of the role the West has played in the globalization process, the opportunity for a successful integration of the two approaches is greater. This paper begins by looking at some of the discussions that have occurred in the historical profession in the last few decades in order to identify issues that I believe need to be considered in determining the relationship of western civilization and world history. It then discusses and evaluates positions taken in relation to those issues, and it finally outlines the basic considerations for a possible course in contemporary history which attempts to keep both western civilization and world history concerns in focus.

The Challenge of World History

In 1963, a seminal event occurred in the field of historical studies—the publication of William McNeill's *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community*. Said Kevin Reilly, President of the World History Association in 1986, "No one would have any difficulty in explaining the rise of world history as a movement and as a field of study. It is due to William McNeill."¹ McNeill believed he had a cause, a battle to fight. He argued that the compulsory courses in United States History and in Western Civilization, which had a privileged position in school and college curricula, no longer interested either the students or the instructors. He did not mince his words; the problem lay in the historical profession itself, in its overspecialization and esoteric interests. McNeill wanted the profession to teach matters of general importance to all students, something that they ought to know. "If all we have to say to the young is what individual scholars and idiosyncratic teachers care to put into their course, then history as a key element in everyone's education does not exist."² For McNeill, that kind of course had to be World History. Any part of the globe might become of critical importance at any moment for public life, and ordinary citizens had to have informed opinions. Such a broad, global perspective was critical for the twentieth century, and it required a high level of synthesis, a task that would pull his-

torians out of their overspecialization. Thirteen years after the publication of *The Rise of the West*, the profession had still not responded favorably. McNeill could not understand why historians could be so blind to what was for him both an obvious need and a matter of self-interest:

I am surprised that so few have done anything to try to meet the need. I find the apathy truly amazing; suicidal; absurd. Maybe I should be less surprised than I am at the folly of the historical profession: after all, historians are human and the past bears ample testimony to humanity's capacity for folly.³

McNeill had put his money where his mouth was. But why was he so bent out of shape? What had happened in the teaching of history? Apart from the issue of whether a truly global perspective needed to be taught, was not Western Civilization a respected and valued part of countless curricula in both colleges and high schools across the country? Was it as esoteric and irrelevant as he said? A brief and selective look at history courses at the secondary level helps to put McNeill's argument and book in perspective.⁴ The high school level is particularly relevant because there the place of required education in history for all citizens comes to the most precise focus and defines the issues most acutely for both educators and the historical profession.

The original World History course was taught in Boston English High School in 1821; it gradually spread to other schools. Called "General History," its major theme was the "true religion" of Christianity; its content was the development of European Civilization, the culture which came to maturity along with Christianity. Secularization came to change the themes later to race and progress; the focus on Europe remained. This virtual identification of Europe with the world would later give rise to the negative charge of Eurocentrism. At various points during the nineteenth century, revisions were made; material was added, some of which concerned other parts of the world, but it remained supplemental to the basic course in western history. Pedagogically, the course was based on recitation drills and the textbook method; its content was oriented toward political and ecclesiastical events, emphasizing dates and names. By the end of the century, it was coming under severe attack; critics were describ-

ing it as a course “in disorder: overstuffed, meaningless, and plain boring.”⁵ In cooperation with the American Historical Association, opponents succeeded in getting the course out of the school curriculum in favor of four separate, more specialized courses.

This change was not, however, the end of the story. World War I brought new demands—a World History was needed which would prepare the nation’s citizens for their new international responsibilities. The movement for change, however, found itself divided between two positions born in the war experience. The first was the idea of “world history as the story of democracy,” a story of the human past as “American history pushed back through time.”⁶ Democracy replaced the themes of religion and race. It gave a new lease to Eurocentrism. The other position came out of the crisis of confidence in western experience born in the heat and violence of the war. It called for World History as a basis for “a world community of understanding and belief.”⁷ Here was the beginning of the reaction against Eurocentrism. But the division between the two positions could not be reconciled, and the curriculum remained as it was, divided into four specialized courses.

Other developments, however, were beginning to affect the curriculum in the secondary schools. The social sciences entered the picture; NEA educators wanted instruction in democratic citizenship. In 1921, the National Council of Social Studies was founded as the professional association of social studies teachers. From their concerns came the return of the earlier course in World History, still identified with western civilization. It came to be a one year, tenth grade course in “which could be compressed all that was worthwhile which had formerly been taught in ancient, medieval and modern, and English history,” and it carried the concerns of social studies teachers—world geography, race contacts, governmental and economic problems.⁸ Though called World History, it was, once again, essentially western civilization. The course gradually became enormously successful in winning a place in the curriculum. By 1961 the elective course in World History reached 69% of all tenth graders, a million and a half students.⁹ But in all other ways

the course was considered a failure. Students and teachers criticized the course as aimless, boundless, stale; it was the course that everyone hated. International developments after World War I notably the Cold War (Sputnik in particular) and the turmoil of the sixties which called for relevance and critical thinking in American education—seemed to require an overhaul in education on many fronts. This turmoil was the atmosphere which set the stage for the reception of McNeill’s *The Rise of the West*.

But what about McNeill’s book? Did it meet the needs he saw? How could he encompass the world

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in one volume? What model did he find to unify such a disparate subject? Did he escape Eurocentrism? Beginning with ancient Mesopotamia, he divided the history of the world into chronological epochs in which cultural interaction and diffusion were the defining themes of World History. His book is the story of how the world’s major civilizations at the different epochs of time came into existence and influenced other peoples with whom they came into contact. His approach was a civilizational analysis, not what later advocates would call world-systems theory. The book embodied a curious irony (noticed by critics), for it ends with the rise of the West, as the title suggests, and seems to fall prey to the same Eurocentrism which World History is supposed to escape. He acknowledged the fact that his “vision of the world’s past can be dismissed as being no more than a rationalization of American hegemony, retrojecting the situation of post-World War II decades upon the whole of the world’s past by claiming that analogous patterns of cultural dominance and diffusion had existed always.”¹⁰ He defended himself, however, arguing that the temporary world role played by the United States just happened to fit the paradigm he used for world history as a whole.¹¹

In his reflections on *The Rise of the West*, McNeill commented on the fundamental problem of

a valid paradigm at the global level. He admitted that the book was flawed because his definition of civilization was left fuzzy, and he questioned whether the interaction of discernibly separate civilizations was what really defined world history. What was needed, he admitted, was a scheme which recognized that

diverse civilizations begin to impinge on one another more and more often and in increasingly urgent ways, since under these circumstances the autonomy and independence of the separate civilizations begin to shrink, and a new cosmopolitan entity—what Wallerstein calls a world system—may start to take over as the key factor in further historical development.¹²

He later testified to his movement toward world-system theory in an article he wrote for *History and Theory* in 1995:

The idea of a Eurasian (eventually African and then global) ecumenical whole, embracing all the peoples, civilized and uncivilized, who were interacting with one another, dawned very slowly. Only ... [later] did I realize, with Wallerstein and Dunn, that a proper world history ought to focus primarily upon changes in the ecumenical world system, and then proceed to fit developments within separate civilizations, and within smaller entities like states and nations, into the pattern of that fluctuating whole.¹³

In struggling to understand the nature of human interaction in the ecumenical world system, McNeill saw two levels of encounters brought about by the development of modern communication and transportation devices. The first level is the biological and ecological expressed in the competition of peoples for their share in the earth's matter and energy.¹⁴ The second is the cultural level in which contacts between bearers of one culture promote change in their contacts with other cultures. On this second level, he argued, cross-cultural contacts promoted change, but the changes were "initiated to defend local peculiarities rather than to accept an alien and often threatening novelty."¹⁵ At this level, people find meaning and purpose and will defend their uniqueness. He did not expect cultural contact to result in global uniformity. An accurate World History will keep in focus and balance both commonality and pluralism:

Cultural pluralism and differentiation is a dominating feature of human history; yet beneath and

behind that pluralism there is also an important commonality. That commonality found expression in the rise of a world system that transcended political and cultural boundaries because human beings desired to have the results of the operation of that system.¹⁶ Yet this sort of interchange and interdependence remains entirely compatible with cultural diversity and at least so far, also with political pluralism and rivalry. All three belong in a proper history of the world—somehow.¹⁷

The need for reconciliation between primary communities and emerging globalism is important not only for an historical paradigm but also, he felt, for the future of humanity: "how to choose between the alternative collective identities, and how to reconcile conflicting obligations that different identities impose is the perennial moral problem of all human society."¹⁸ How and where to find the paradigm that will reconcile the two levels of commonality and difference into a grand whole is a daunting task, but McNeill remained optimistic and challenging: "anything less is plainly inadequate to the complexities of the human condition as we now understand it. Nor does it strike me as impossible."¹⁹

In spite of McNeill's publishing success and his influence on a younger generation of historians within the World History Association, his work has come in for its share of criticism. McNeill had based his history on the process of cultural diffusion, but it is one of the most difficult and debated issues in the field of World History.²⁰ Furthermore, critics alleged, he framed that theme in a materialist understanding as "the human struggle for control over the environment, the natural world—and other humans"; that, too, is a contested position.²¹ Geoffrey Barraclough argued, for example,

No doubt, all human groups everywhere are motivated from the start by the need to cope with the material facts of life, but this is a tenuous basis for assuming that their historical development is, or can plausibly be reconstructed as, a single unitary process. As Troeltsch pointed out many years ago, it is one thing to speak of points of contact between different civilizations and different cultural groups, and quite another to suppose that their histories are linked by a real causal connexion which makes them subordinate parts a single historical process.²²

There is also the charge of Eurocentrism against McNeill to which I alluded above. His admission and reply is not very convincing. The title itself raises the issue.

I have used the publication of *The Rise of the West*, McNeill's own reflections on it, and the critical reaction, to raise some of the issues concerning the development of a valid model for World History. My discussion is not a specific critique of the book. To his credit, McNeill, has kept debating, rethinking, speaking, and writing on the topic of world history.²³ He is a provocative, profound, inspired, and committed historian. The World History Association is extremely indebted to him. For the purposes of this paper, several important issues emerge from my discussion of McNeill. He argued cogently that American citizens should be educated in an understanding of world history; that world history is not an enlarged western civilization; that it is an ecumenical whole, a world-system; and that the model must include the continuing existence of cultural pluralities. I shall return to these arguments later.

In the discussions that followed the publication of *The Rise of the West*, historians have explored a number of alternative ways to bring order and understanding to world history. Some have argued for the continuing relevance of a more restricted civilizational paradigm. In a 1993 article in *Foreign Affairs*, Samuel Huntington finds relevance in such a scheme. His argument generated broad reaction from many different directions in the subsequent issue; he further argued and developed his analysis in book form, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remolding of World Order*. Huntington's thesis was elaborated for the purpose of understanding the shape of future conflict in world affairs, but his analysis does advance a paradigm for contemporary world relationships. He argues the following:

It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations.²⁴

He believes that the most meaningful way to group countries now is no longer politics or economics but culture and civilization. For Huntington, the terms culture and civilization are essentially identical; the difference is primarily one of scope:

A civilization is a cultural entity. Villages, regions, ethnic groups, nationalities, religious groups, all have distinct cultures at different levels of cultural heterogeneity. The culture of a village in southern Italy may be different from that of a village in northern Italy, but both will share in a common Italian culture that distinguishes them from German villages. European communities, in turn, will share cultural features that distinguish

What paradigm will reconcile commonality and difference into a grand whole?

them from Arab or Chinese communities. Arabs, Chinese, and Westerners, however, are not part of any broader cultural entity. They constitute civilizations. A civilization is thus the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species. It is defined both by common objective elements, such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions, and by the subjective self-identification of people.²⁵

Huntington argued that the differences between civilizations are real and basic, interaction between them is increasing as local identities are giving way to modernization, the power of the West is enhancing the growth of civilization consciousness which in turn results in a new indigenization, the differences between cultures are not easily mutable, and economic regionalism is increasing, a factor which both increases civilizational awareness and which may only succeed when it is based on a common civilization.²⁶

In sketching the present configuration of relationship and power, Huntington sees it primarily as the West versus the rest. The West, he says, is using international institutions and its economic and military power to protect its interests.²⁷ But more is going on; at another, more basic level, values and beliefs clash:

At a superficial level much of Western culture has indeed permeated the rest of the world. At a

more basic level, however, Western concepts differ fundamentally from those prevalent in other civilizations. Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist or Orthodox cultures. Western efforts to propagate such ideas produce instead a reaction against "human rights imperialism" and a reaffirmation of indigenous values, as can be seen in the support for religious fundamentalism by the younger generation in non-Western cultures.²⁸

Huntington sees three forms of response to the West on the part of the other major civilizations: retreat and isolation, joining the West and accepting its values and institutions, and finally, preserving but modernizing indigenous culture.²⁹ Such, in essence, are the major lines of his argument, as I understand it. At the end of his article he discusses the implications of his picture for Western global policy and action but that is beyond the purpose of this discussion.

His critics are many and vocal.³⁰ Most seem to want to qualify his picture in one way or another. His civilizations are too isolated, too pure; he shows insufficient awareness of the dissenting, contrary forces within cultures and not enough appreciation of the internal influences of one culture on another. It is not only that the conflict is the West against the rest, but he portrays the West as best. It is, furthermore, too much about power. And so the debate about paradigm goes on. Huntington has a telling response: find me a better one. He argues, "A paradigm is disproved only by the creation of an alternative paradigm that accounts for more crucial facts in equally simple or simpler terms."³¹ He rejects both the notion that states control civilizations for they increasingly identify their interests in terms of civilizations and the notion that a universal civilization will come in the near future.³² For him, "What ultimately counts for people is not political ideology or economic interest. Faith and family, blood and belief, are what people identify with and what they will fight and die for."³³

Continuing Support for Western Civilization

Our look at McNeill and Huntington and their

critics has put before us some of the major issues that face us in considering the case for World History. But what about Western Civilization; must we really abandon it? Is there an inherent tension between it and World History? How important is the support for its maintenance? Probably the most important argument for continuing its place in the curriculum is the argument for self-identity. J.H. Hexter argues the following pointedly:

that is where we came from . . . We all come from there because it is from there that we have taken our religions, our family structure, our economic ideas, our literary, artistic, and architectural forms, our modes of moral judgment, our sciences, our laws and our language. Most of the things we do or the ways we do them, we do as we do because it is the way people living in the territory of western civilization decided to or came to do them between the beginning of our era and 1800 or after. For better or worse western civilization is our civilization; we belong to it and it to us.³⁴

He concludes rather simply and eloquently: "we are what we are, will be what we will be, because of what we have been. About that we need to know, or we will not be at home even with ourselves."³⁵

Another consideration and argument for the teaching of western civilization is its world shaping role, especially in the last century and a half. So if we want to understand our present world, we better understand the West. This argument is not so much Eurocentrism as reality. Neusner argues the point in this way:

People nowadays rightly want to find a place in the academic study of civilization for cultures indigenous to every region and land. To do so, however, we need to frame a global program of thought and reflection. And, if we are not merely to rehearse the facts about this culture or that one, we shall require modes of comparison. That is not a recipe for relativism; it is an invitation to analyze and compare and contrast cultures, all of them honored and each of them placed in relationship with the others. The basis for comparison lies in the shared and universal concerns represented by philosophy, economics, and politics.

Since the West has defined those concerns... there is no understanding the world without grasping the relationship of the West, and its unique achievements in science, economics, politics, and philosophy, with the non-Western world.³⁶

Neusner here lays down the gauntlet for the world historians. Do you want to understand the present world? You cannot begin without bumping squarely into the West. The contemporary world got its start from the central role of Europe and America. This claim does not mean that the West is best, but that an understanding of the contemporary world only follows an understanding of the West.

If we do stay with Western Civilization, several problems emerge. What about the charge of Eurocentrism? It is true that Western Civilization courses have in the past invariably been taught from a perspective that elevated and valued western experience above that of other peoples, most notably in the treatment of the themes of democracy, race, and Christianity. Other cultures have been included to get our story started, such as the ancient Near East, or included when they impinged on our experience. There is also the question of perspective. Is the traditional one valid? One critic argued that the usual genealogy for western history has been as follows: "Greece begat Rome, Rome begat Christian Europe, Christian Europe begat the Renaissance, the Renaissance the Enlightenment, the Enlightenment political democracy and the industrial revolution."³⁷ I must admit that this was the genealogy with which I taught the sequence of Western Civilization. It needs, however, to be rethought. In what ways did its original purpose in the curriculum misconstrue its structure? How should a Reformed Christian perspective refashion its story?

So what is the state of affairs in the profession today? Chaos is, perhaps, too strong a word. Consensus? Only if one means there is consensus on the fact that there is no consensus. We don't know how to conceptualize world history or how to place the West in the context of the world. In commenting on the future of World History, Ross Dunn characterizes the major ideological emphases of two conspicuous points of view. One "celebrates the social and cultural power of the West as the driveshaft of progress; the other side emphasizes the inequalities in the balance of civilizational power and the consequences for social and economic justice."³⁸ The first stresses the need to spread the great legacy of values, institutions and ideas derived from the nations of Europe, the

other the need for tolerance and a broad appreciation for all human cultural achievements. One is Eurocentric, the other driven by multiculturalism and often by postmodern sensitivities. Each is profoundly value laden and political. As to the search for a valid paradigm, Geyer and Bright rightly point out that "we contemporaries of the late twentieth century experience the world long before we know how to think it."³⁹ They offer the following challenge and direction for the future work of the world historian:

The practice of world history. . . does not refuse or jettison the findings of world-systems theories or of a comparative history of civilizations, inas

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much as they survive a rigorous critique and shed their respective nostalgias for autonomous regions and essentialist civilizations. But the practice of world history in a global age does reconfigure the field in which these paradigms are deployed. It proceeds from the recognition that the trajectory of this world cannot be extrapolated from anyone's particular past, because globality is without precedent in any one specific society, religion, or civilization. . . . In recognizing that global development in the twentieth century has broken through all historiographic conventions, historians must attempt to find a representation of the world as the field of human contestation in which the histories of the world are mixed together, but societies and peoples are not thereby transformed into one, or even made more alike.⁴⁰

So how does one sort through these issues and debates? The arguments on both sides of the World History-Western Civilization debate carry weight. Perhaps more importantly, the positions taken appear to rest more on value-laden perspectives and assumptions than on detached inquiry. Why is it that when one places the West at the central point of investigating the twentieth century, invariably the Eurocentric charge emerges? What assumptions lie behind that charge when it seems so obvious that this is the shape of the world? In

the current paradigms for World History, the connecting ligaments of peoples seem to be primarily trade, communications, technology, and ecology; are these the foundational elements of human society, and if they are not, is there really such a thing as World History at all? How does one come to define the most foundational elements? It seems apparent that the criteria that set the direction in historical synthesis are rooted in worldview perspectives about the nature of humans and human society and the meaning of history. Historical inquiry follows those commitments. Geyer and Bright were on target above in calling for a history without politics, but that is not the same as history without perspective. We need now to retrace our footsteps to the historiographical issues raised above, asking where our own worldview commitments lead us.

The Issues Revisited

First of all, there is the question of Western Civilization. Both Hexter and Neusner, quoted above, have valid arguments in support of studying the West. If western civilization is our heritage, i.e., the heritage of North America and Europe, we need to know that heritage to understand ourselves. As Hexter says so eloquently and simply, "we are what we are, will be what we will be, because of what we have been." The need for self-knowledge is, it seems to me, an irrefutable argument. Cultural amnesia will not lead to a successful future. Christians can take that line of argument further. Cultural self-knowledge is foundational to the issue of Christ and culture. The call to exercise obedient stewardship in creation in the name of Christ requires us to know our culture from several different perspectives. We need to know what "spirits" have shaped and are still shaping the West today in order to understand what obedient service to the Kingdom has to be. Western culture is the place which most of us inhabit, and the call to be obedient disciples is worked out where we live. And not only do we have to understand the spirits of our age and culture, but we also have to know "what time it is," culturally speaking. We need a sense of where we are in the unfolding of culture so we know where and how to expend our energies. We need to know

where structural distortions are in our society, and we need a sense of where on the cultural frontier our work is needed. What are the media and communication technology, for example, doing to our society, to young people, to family life? How should we understand their societal role? What is their cultural meaning? Can we exercise any kind of shaping influence on them? To answer questions such as these, we need to know the foundational beliefs and thinking of our culture. It is simply unthinkable not to require some basic knowledge of western culture of our students.

Another reason for the study of western culture is the fact—which even the most ardent supporters for Global History do not deny—that since about A.D. 1500 the West has risen to global prominence and, with the advent of industrialism and imperialism in the mid-nineteenth century, has been a catalyst in shaping the present global world. Neusner is right when he says that the West has defined the modern universal concerns in science, economics, politics, and philosophy, and thus there is no understanding the world without the West. It seems to me, therefore, that an understanding of culture and the role of the Christian in the world requires an adequate and accurate knowledge of western civilization.

Can we rise above our cultural time and space to teach Western Civilization and still avoid the Eurocentric view that has plagued its place in the curriculum in the past? We should probably ignore that charge as such because it usually rises out of a perspective rooted in a cultural relativism which rejects any kind of cultural judgment except a judgment against the West. Western arrogance is another matter altogether. Christianity transcends all cultures, brings all to judgment, including western civilization. The judgments we make we make out of the application of Kingdom norms to the degree we understand them; furthermore, we ourselves stand under those judgments. Maybe this is one area where the history of the church comes into specific focus. If we really do have a sense of culture as a spiritual response to created reality in space and time and are sensitive to the cultural formation of Christians in other cultures, studying their history may help free us from the ways in which our culture shapes us and help give our own studies a better focus.

What about all the arguments and pleas for World History? It is clear that modern developments in trade, communications, and transportation have created a uniquely interdependent world since about 1850 and even though the West played a central role in creating that world, it is not a one way street. One only has to think about the rapidly growing numbers of Asians and Latin Americans increasingly scattered throughout our cities to realize that life in the United States has become vastly different in only the last twenty years. I do not need to argue this point; it is apparent enough. What is obvious, it seems to me, is that in the contemporary interdependent world the West had such a major role in creating, we cannot understand our own culture without studying the reciprocal role our world has in shaping us. So we cannot escape world history; it is a creature of our own making.

We have to come to terms with the interdependence of our world, but the historical profession's struggles to understand its shape is still in flux. Many still argue that a true Global History and Western Civilization are two different things and each requires a different perspective. On the face of things, it would seem their logic is irrefutable. They argue for a World History that doesn't, in the overall picture, give any more space to western civilization than to any other civilization. But the search for such a paradigm has not yielded agreement. When one looks at the global texts, one of two approaches usually dominates. Truly global texts generally emphasize the economic, communication, transportation, and ecological relationships, namely the material aspects of culture. The other tends to be a study of the major world civilizations in their unique identities with periodic chapters on the links between them. Eliminate the chapters on the interactions and the history is not much different from separate cultural or civilizational studies. If history is the unfolding, holistic, human cultural response to the creation order, it is legitimate to argue that in the present situation there is no such thing as World History. Studies that attempt to be truly global become aspect studies, that is, studies of the economic, communication, or ecological connections between civilizations, or they revert to civilization studies. Cultural-civilizational units have an identity that a global perspective cannot

have. Ross Dunn comments,

As a particular approach to the past, global history begins with the present, that is, with our contemporary condition of relentless planetary integration coupled paradoxically with urgent localized quests for communal identity and security. The great puzzle of globalization is that integrative processes related to communications, migration, ecology, trade, finance, popular culture, transnational organization, and so on are not producing any form of "global civilization." let alone fulfilling the meganarrative of the West as synthesizer of all humankind. Integration, rather, is producing a world of endlessly multiplying

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communities, organizations, firms, professions, networks, religions, and ethno-racial groups, each proclaiming its distinctiveness.⁴¹

The goal of cultural analysis for Dunn, a goal with which I agree, is to keep in sight humans as creative cultural agents, "inventing and refashioning the cultural constructs they need to organize knowledge and make sense of the structural changes occurring in the world around them."⁴² It seems to me that this framework keeps history at the cultural level where humans exist and respond to reality and it acknowledges both the reality of global relationships and the reciprocal influence of the global and local. It further helps us to avoid some of the criticisms levied against a civilizational analysis that is too independent and too isolated.

A Tentative Proposal

In the present global age, it seems to me, the history of the West and global interdependence have converged in such a way that a valid history keeping both in dynamic relationship may be developed.⁴³ Based on the considerations I worked through above, such a course or courses should include the following dimensions:

(1) The emergence and development of western civilization, including North America. Its structure and content would have to be rethought in light

of the larger scope involved. I think there is a civilizational unity there much like Huntington defines it.

(2) The structure of global connections in the twentieth century beginning as the expansion of the West produced a close conjunction between peoples.

(3) A study of selected major, non-western cultures before the West had its impact on them and, with the advent of imperialism, the reciprocal influence of the West and the non-West on each other. The West itself is simply not the same as it was before it played a major role in shaping the contemporary world and non-Western civilizations have not become carbon copies of the West in their own modernizations or resistance.

(4) The growing multicultural aspects of all civilizations in today's world. I believe that civilizational units are relatively cohesive entities, but, increasingly, other cultural subgroups are finding space within the larger unit in mutual interaction. This dimension would help create a foundation for the multi-cultural projects that are common to so many college curricula.

All these dimensions may scare the wits out of us teachers, but I don't think tackling them is impossible. Doing so requires rethinking how we teach the Western component; it probably cannot be the traditional Western Civilization course. It will require sampling at the World History level. Different teachers of the course can own certain sectors of the non-western world and their respective class sections may vary in what areas of the world each covers. Some such arrangement would characterize the course for which I would argue. The time is ripe for some creative thinking, planning, and budgeting. There is no consensus in the profession, no heavy tradition to brainwash us. Historians are all busy doing their histories; they all have their agendas. Why not Christians? Let our own worldview shape our analysis of cultures and civilizations. Why not a "historical" testimony to the meaning of our Grand Narrative for all the diverse cultures of our globe? Why not?

END NOTES

1. *World History Bulletin* 4 (1987): 1.
2. "Beyond Western Civilization: Rebuilding the Survey," *The History Teacher* 10 (1977): 513.
3. *Ibid.*, 514.

4. My brief discussion of World History in the schools is based on Gilbert Allardyce, "Toward World History: American Historians and the Coming of the World History Course," *Journal of World History* 1 (Spring 1990): 40-62. Even more than McNeill, Leften S. Stavrianos fought a curricular battle to get a World History which embodied an integrated global perspective and which avoided Eurocentrism into the high schools. For a brief description of his work, see Allardyce 31-34, 43-44. Already in 1959, Stavrianos argued the case for World History at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association; his speech was subsequently published in the *Journal of Modern History* (University of Chicago) 31 (June 1959). He published a high school textbook (*A Global History of Man*) in World History in 1962, the year before McNeill published *The Rise of the West*. Later works include a two volume college level text, *The World to 1500: A Global History* and *The World Since 1500: A Global History* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 5th Ed., 1988) and *The Global Rift* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1981), the latter of which focuses on the third world, seeing it as a system of relationships between controlling metropolitan centers and dependent peripheral regions.
5. *Ibid.*, 47.
6. *Ibid.*, 48.
7. *Ibid.*, 49.
8. *Ibid.*, 51.
9. *Ibid.*, 54.
10. "The Rise of the West After Twenty-five Years," *Journal of World History* 1 (Spring 1990): 2.
11. *Ibid.*, 3.
12. *Ibid.*, 9. Wallerstein argued world-systems theory from a Marxist framework against modernization perspective in his *The Modern World System*, 3 vols. (New York: Academic Press, 1974-1989) and also in *The Capitalist World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). See also the useful short essay, "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16:4 (September 1974): 387-415. Craig Lockard has a useful discussion of the modernization versus world system debates in "Global History, Modernization and the World System Approach: A Critique," *The History Teacher* 14:4 (August 1981): 496-515. For a sampling of reaction to Wallerstein, see the following: Peter Gourevitch, "The International System and Regime Formation," *Comparative Politics* (April 1978): 419-438; Gertrude Lenzer, review of *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century* by Immanuel Wallerstein, *New York Times Book Review*, 29 December, 1974, 16-18; a review symposium by Theda Skocpol, Morris Janowitz, and Joan Thirsk on *The Modern World System*, by Immanuel Wallerstein, *American Journal of Sociology* 85:5 (March 1977): 1075-1101. Thomas Richard Shannon has applied and analyzed Wallerstein's approach in a textbook for student use in *An Introduction to the World-System Perspective* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989). For a modernization approach to contemporary history which shows great insight into the

- powerful, seductive impact of the West on the less developed world, see Theodore Von Laue, *The World Revolution of Westernization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
13. "The Changing Shape of World History," in Ross Dunn, *The New World History: A Teacher's Companion* (New York: Bedford/St Martin's, 2000), 148. Dunn's book is an exceptionally useful collection of discussions and debates on the relative value of Western Civilization versus World History, as well as discussions on the various issues involved in conceptualizing and teaching World History.
 14. *Ibid.*, 155.
 15. *Ibid.*, 156.
 16. "The Rise of the West After Twenty-five Years," 19.
 17. *Ibid.*, 20.
 18. McNeill, "The Changing Shape of World History," 156.
 19. "The Rise of the West After Twenty-five Years," 21.
 20. Allardyce, 73. See Barraclough's discussion on the advantages and problems of a materialistic scheme for writing World History in *Main Trends in History* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1991), 158-161. Though somewhat out dated, Barraclough's *Introduction to Contemporary History* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964) is still a useful discussion on the problems of continuity, discontinuity and modern periodization.
 21. *Ibid.*
 22. Barraclough, *Main Trends*, 159.
 23. McNeill kept revising his original *Rise of the West*. The latest edition is a two volume work titled *A History of the Human Community*. Vol. I: *Prehistory to 1500*. Vol II: *1500 to the Present* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997).
 24. "The Clash of Civilizations," in Samuel P. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilization? The Debate* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1997), 1.
 25. *Ibid.*, 2.
 26. *Ibid.*, 4-6.
 27. *Ibid.*, 17.
 28. *Ibid.*
 29. *Ibid.*, 18.
 30. A representative collection of critics is published in response to his article in the *Foreign Affairs* publication. See note 24.
 31. *Ibid.*, 57.
 32. *Ibid.*, 62-63.
 33. *Ibid.*, 67.
 34. "Introductory College Course in Non-American History: An Ethnocentric View," in Dunn, 100.
 35. *Ibid.*, 101.
 36. Jacob Neusner, "It is Time to Stop Apologizing for Western Civilization and To Start Analyzing Why It Defines World Culture," in Dunn, 105.
 37. Allardyce, 41.
 38. "The Future of World History," *The New World History*, 551.
 39. Michael Geyer and Charles Bright, "World History in a Global Age," *American Historical Review* 100 (October 1995): 1059.
 40. *Ibid.*
 41. *The New World History*, 555. In his acknowledgment of two levels of integration, McNeill's discussion parallels Dunn's position, though he places his major emphasis on the globalization trends as the direction history is headed. Dunn, 155-157.
 42. *Ibid.*
 43. For a very helpful discussion of the ways of structuring a course in Western Civilization and in World History respectively, see Michael F. Doyle, "'Hisperanto': Western Civilization in the Global Curriculum," *Perspectives* (American Historical Association) 36 (May 1998): 1, 24-28, and Edmund Burke III and Ross E Dunn, "Western Civ in the Global Curriculum: A Response," *Perspectives* (American Historical Association) 36 (Oct 1998): 31-33. The discussion is also printed in Dunn, *The New World History*, 512-526.