
WESTERN
CIVILIZATIONS

EDWARD MCNALL BURNS

ROBERT E. LERNER

STANDISH MEACHAM

WESTERN CIVILIZATIONS

Their History and Their Culture

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*For Joseph R. Strayer;
Edith, Louisa, and Samuel Meacham*

PREFACE

The first eight enormously successful editions of *Western Civilizations*, appearing between 1941 and 1973, were brought out single-handedly by Edward McNall Burns. Professor Burns not only had the courage, vision, and fortitude to write a coherent survey of Western history from primeval times to his own day without collaborators, but he was a pioneer in conceiving of his textbook as a history of *civilizations* rather than as a chronicle of events. Thus although he penned a colorful and vigorous narrative, he laid as much stress on the evolution of ideas and institutions as on political developments. Not surprisingly, then, his *Western Civilizations* withstood passing historiographical fads. With periodic revisions it outlasted all its original competitors to become the preeminent and longest lived introductory survey in the field.

In accepting the assignment to revise *Western Civilizations* for the ninth edition in 1977 we accordingly had no doubts that we wished to retain the work's basic physiognomy. Yet the expansion of historical research over previously neglected subject matters as well as the progress of research in more traditional areas made it necessary to revise substantial portions. Realizing that we could not do everything at once, we brought Professor Burns's account up to the most recent state of knowledge wherever we perceived inadequacies, but concentrated our attentions especially on the Middle Ages and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

For this tenth edition we have followed the same strategy, concentrating our attentions now on Europe's early-modern era. More specifically, the chapter on the Renaissance (14) has been thoroughly overhauled and the five following chapters completing the early-modern unit have been almost entirely rewritten. The most important changes in Chapter 14 are the introduction of a new section on "The Italian Background," which examines the social and economic con-

texts of Italian Renaissance developments; the introduction of coverage of Lorenzo Valla and the place of women in the writings of Alberti and Castiglione; revised discussions of Michelangelo and Vesalius; and a fully rewritten treatment of the northern Renaissance which proceeds topically rather than geographically and emphasizes the centrality of Erasmus and Christian humanism. In Chapter 15 overseas discoveries and the Protestant and Catholic Reformations are brought together in one unit: whereas treatment of the Portuguese and Spanish voyages and colonizing activities was slighted in earlier editions of *Western Civilizations*, this material is now fully covered in what we hope is an engaging narrative. Thereafter the Lutheran upheaval is analyzed from the points of view of theology and politics, and the succeeding sections on other major developments in sixteenth-century religious history are fully reconceived with the aims of pursuing new organizational strategies, distilling the results of the best recent research, and paying special attention to the effects of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations on the history of women.

Chapter 16 on “the iron century” falling between about 1560 and 1660 is an addition to our table of contents. This chapter attempts to respond to the challenge of how to treat the period between Luther and Louis XIV by adopting the prevalent recent scholarly view that Early-Modern Europe experiences a thoroughgoing “general crisis.” Pursuit of this interpretation has enabled us to unite otherwise refractory material in an integrated manner. Thus Chapter 16 not only presents a narrative of religious wars and constitutional struggles against the backdrop of economic pressures and regionalist resentments of nationalizing tendencies but interrelates treatment of thought, literature, and art in ways which hitherto had been impossible.

While Chapters 17 through 19 correspond ostensibly to Chapters 16 through 18 of the Ninth Edition, they too have been substantially rewritten. Chapter 17 contrasts the dynamic world of the Commercial Revolution with the traditional institutions and assumptions of an ordered, hierarchical society, and suggests the dimensions and tensions of the social, economic, and demographic changes that occurred during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Material on capitalism and mercantilism has been sharpened and expanded, and now includes a full treatment of the slave trade. The section on agriculture and industry has been rewritten to emphasize the fact that the Industrial Revolution did not emerge *de novo* at the end of the eighteenth century, but was a logical conclusion to the economic expansionism experienced in the Early-Modern period. Recent scholarly research on demographic trends has been added to the chapter, as have materials concerning the patterns of daily life within all ranks of society. Poverty, education, and literacy, subjects dealt with heretofore in only the broadest terms, now receive their due. Chapter 18 contains an extended and comparative discussion of absolutism. We have expanded our coverage of the history of eastern Europe and of the important sub-

jects of warfare, diplomacy, and the development of the state system. We have also attempted to treat the political developments of the eighteenth century in a way that we hope will assist students to master the historical intricacies of the French Revolution by avoiding a sharp and potentially confusing break with pre-revolutionary Europe.

Chapter 19 represents another major change in the treatment of Early-Modern Europe. It covers seventeenth- and eighteenth-century intellectual achievements but focuses far more sharply than before on the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment. In this chapter new emphasis is placed on the achievements of Bacon, Descartes, and Newton; treatment of the ways in which the scientific revolution laid the groundwork for eighteenth-century thought is expanded; the coverage of all the foremost Enlightenment thinkers is reconceived (note too that Montesquieu and Adam Smith are now treated here rather than in the French Revolution chapter); and the coverage of art, literature, and music is reconceived (e.g., a new section on the rise of the novel, culminating in Jane Austen) and rewritten in order to convey the fullest possible measure of aesthetic appreciation integrated with historical analysis.

Of course, in concentrating on Early-Modern Europe we have not neglected to review all the rest of *Western Civilizations'* coverage, and where necessary have made some fundamental changes. In the chapter on Ancient Egypt the narrative of political history has been expanded to include treatment of the archaic period, and greater attention has been paid to the role of women. Occasional streamlining and revision of chronology have been introduced in several other chapters of Parts One and Two, and the title of Chapter 6 has been changed from "Hellenic Civilization" to "Greek Civilization" in order to avoid terminological confusion with the Hellenistic Civilization that followed. In view of the prior slighting of early Russian and eastern European history, an entirely new section on "The Formation of the Empire of Russia" has been added to Chapter 13 on the Later Middle Ages.

In the chapters on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, additions and innovations begin with an expanded treatment of the causes of the French Revolution and the inclusion of a discussion of the Vienna Settlement in Chapter 20. We have also increased our coverage of the social history of women, the spread of literacy, and the demographic shifts of the nineteenth century. The section on imperialism in Chapter 25 has been greatly expanded, as have those on the coming of the First World War in Chapter 27. In both cases we have introduced the historiographical controversies that have arisen over the interpretation of those events. As in earlier chapters we have added to our accounts of the history of eastern Europe, the expanded sections on Russia in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries being the most notable examples. Chapter 29 now contains a fuller—and, we hope, clearer—discussion of the varieties of totalitarianism that emerged in Europe during the interwar years. Finally, the treatment of the post-Second

World War world has been systematically revised and updated to accommodate new interpretations and recent developments.

In conjunction with the textual revisions the map and illustration programs have received serious attention. Five new maps have been added and the remaining maps have been amended as necessary. Nearly 40 percent of the over 800 illustrations are new to this edition, having been culled from a wide range of European and American archives. The text was the first to include color illustrations and continues to include far more color plates than any other book in the field. The new edition, like its predecessors, is available in a one-volume and a two-volume edition. Both the Instructor's Manual and the Study Guide, which includes numerous extracts from original and secondary sources, have undergone thorough revision as well.

Robert Lerner has had primary responsibility for Chapters 1 through 16 as well as Chapter 19, while Standish Meacham's province has lain with Chapters 17 and 18, and Chapters 20 through 32. The revision of Parts One and Two was facilitated greatly by criticisms offered by Edward W. Kase (Loyola University of Chicago) and Patrick F. O'Mara (Los Angeles City College). Firm bibliographical aid for Chapter 1 was provided by Loretta F. Smith, for Chapter 4 by Robert L. Cohn (Northwestern University), and for Chapters 6 and 7 by Brook Manville. Extraordinarily helpful suggestions for improving the early-modern coverage were provided by Carolyn C. Lougee (Stanford University; who no doubt would still prefer a very different Renaissance chapter than the one here presented), Paul J. Hauben (University of the Pacific), and David Longfellow (Rice University). Expert bibliographical guidance for early-modern art and music history came respectively from Richard Wendorf and William V. Porter (both of Northwestern University), helpful tips for illustrations came from Theresa Gross-Diaz and Klaus Arnold (University of Hamburg), and Vita Maniscalco and Tiina Ruus were argus-eyed readers. The later chapters have benefited from the careful and perceptive criticisms of Lamar Cecil (Washington and Lee University), Maarten Ultee (University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa), Margaret George (Northern Illinois University), John W. Carson (University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh), and John C. Olin (Fordham University). Valuable bibliographical assistance for modern art and music history was supplied by Charlotte Gomolak. At W. W. Norton, Ruth Mandel, as always, has been a resourceful picture-gatherer, and Ben Gamit an imaginative makeup artist. Without question, however, our greatest debt on this round is to Robert E. Kehoe, by title an editor but really Castiglione's ideal diplomat, man of letters, art connoisseur, impresario, and stage manager, all rolled into one.

Robert E. Lerner
Standish Meacham

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