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Recommended Citation

Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol35/iss35/8

The choices are interesting, debatable: Wells, Spengler, Toynbee, Sorokin, Dawson, Mumford, McNeill. Spengler, Toynbee and Sorokin: are they world historians or civilizationists? Wells? Wasn’t he a popularizer, an amateur, a forerunner perhaps? Did Sorokin, Dawson and Mumford have enough range to be called world historians? Even Spengler, for that matter? And is McNeill the last world historian, as Costello thinks? Has no one since had the range to qualify? Or is it that writers of world history tend to write textbooks? Any set of choices, of course, will raise questions like these. Be it noted for a civilizationist, there are questions.

For Costello, these writers all had something important to say, all provided insights into the dilemmas of the 20th century, and all, as his title suggests, countered what he perceives to an ahistorical modernism. If anything, except for McNeill, all were philosophically conservative, with strong feelings for the superiority of past periods over the present. And all, including McNeill, saw the present as a time of crisis. Except for Sorokin and Spengler, all were Anglo-Americans, and even Sorokin wrote his *Social and Cultural Dynamics in America.*

On the whole, Costello's handling of his choices seems sensible. Compared to the critics of the fifties, say, he appears reasonable, neither outraged nor sycophantic. He chose his historians because they had something interesting to say about important subjects. But he also treats the reader to a fair sampling of criticism of each, including his own.

In making some observations that follow, I am topically reorganizing Costello. He treats each of his historians discretely, but it is easy to reorganize diachronically, since each chapter follows a similar format.

The subtitle is important. Costello sees these historians as having a deeper perspective than those who see the present as an entirely new phase of history, a modern phase. But he is also concerned about what each had to say about the present and future: how each places our situation, and on the basis of past experience, how each assesses possibilities. What each historian had in common, Costello thinks, is that our century has been one of crisis, and that the writing of world history should provide perspective on this crisis; in most cases more than perspective: prescription.

There are brief biographies of each. They are not compared, but it is striking that Wells, Spengler, Toynbee and Sorokin had trouble with fathers, while Mumford never had a father at all. Only Dawson and McNeill seem to have had reasonably normal paternal relationships. Wells, Spengler and Mumford experienced poverty, Sorokin poverty, revolution, a death sentence and exile. Dawson was always in poor health. Toynbee was not poor, but had to make his way on
scholarship, and was weighed down by guilt at having avoided serving in World War I. Spengler, Toynbee, Sorokin and Dawson all seem to have experienced periods of alienation. Only McNeill seems to have had to provide his own challenge.

All are seen to have weaknesses. Wells was called a "brilliant amateur" by McNeill, but Costello sees his Outline as a "Reader's Digest of World History." Spengler is perceived as a shoddy scholar, his book "convoluted" and opaque. Toynbee's Study "remains like a bombed-out cathedral shell." He was the most criticized historian of the 20th Century, perhaps of all time, attacked for methodology, errors of data, failure to support, personal prejudice, pessimism and confusion of history with theology. Sorokin's problem was that he was using sensate empirical data with a good deal of manipulation to make the case for the superiority of cultures that eschew empirical data. The difficulty with Dawson is finding a coherent theory. Compared to his contemporaries, he seems Eurocentric, returning to the idea that Christianity before the Reformation provided the best spiritual reality. Mumford, like Sorokin and Dawson, has a Western bias to his work, and like Wells engages in a considerable swing from optimism to pessimism over the course of his career. While he contended that we control our destiny, one gets the impression that like Dawson he saw the Middle Ages as the golden days of history. McNeill is least criticized by critics or Costello. Like the others, his emphasis on the power and coherence of historical epochs implies determinism, undercuts whatever he might say about the wisdom of contemporary human response to events. But his historical view and his tone are accepted as reasonable. He is perceived to be the least eschatological, the most optimistic.

Nevertheless, each is seen to have attained a considerable achievement. Wells' Outline sold two million copies, thus bringing world history world attention.

Spengler set many of the problems his successors had to address. His idea of separate cultural histories, his determinism, his rejection of the idea of progress, his relation of moral conduct to the imperatives of time and culture all would have impact on historical thinking for the rest of the century.

Most of the civilizations Toynbee surveyed we still accept, with modifications. He loosened Spengler's determinism to a set of historical laws framing free will. He perceived the central role of religion in the creation and destruction of civilizations. He was unsurpassed in wealth of detail, application of paradigm and dramatic expression of the Western Crisis.

Sorokin also had amazing scope, providing a new model of sociology epistemology, an epochal alternative to discrete civilizations that subsequent world historians preferred, a concept of cultural integration that provided insight into Spengler's concept of cultural soul, and greater attention to art, literature and philosophy than Toynbee could provide.

Dawson supplied an alternative view that accommodated his contempo-
rarities. Like Sorokin he saw sequences of epochs, but each of these epochs contained discrete cultures, as in Spengler and Toynbee. Like Toynbee he focused on the importance of religion in cultural development. When spirituality broke down, it was replaced by bureaucracy and family degeneration.

Mumford, the only member of this group to win the ISCSC's rarely awarded Quigley Prize, paid attention to organization, of cities, of systems, of technology. Unlike Sorokin and Dawson, he welcomed the material aspects of life, and contrary to the implications of other historians, he stressed that people have repeatedly altered their plan of life. He emphasized the role of women in the shift to agriculture and development of higher religion. He saw much of history as a battle for control of the machine and the mentality that accompanied it.

McNeill, who Costello perceives as the "most detached, clinical and dispassionate" of the world historians, took a more modest view of his role than his predecessors. He saw the writing of world history as providing a grounding for establishing a climate of opinion rather than an overriding explanation. He has been more concerned about ecological balances, and has aimed to demonstrate continuity in world history.

When it came to prescription for the contemporary society, all world historians have the problem that they have subordinated the individual to the great movements of history. How, then, can individuals suddenly take control of these forces in our own time? Nevertheless, all have tried to do so. Wells, though he later became more pessimistic, saw an historical progression toward the unity of mankind (as they said in those days), symbolized by a world state. Spengler, true to his model, saw Faustian Man playing a heroic role in a doomed cause. Toynbee saw salvation in a higher universal religion that would transcend civilizations. Sorokin expected a return through crisis to an ideational society. Dawson hoped for a return of the West to the fold of an enlightened Catholicism that would provide world spiritual guidance. Mumford, though also increasingly pessimistic, saw the best hope in a concerted effort to break through domination or organization and machine to recover a life of community scale and human interaction. McNeill, fearing war, bureaucracy, overpopulation and rapid communication of disease, nevertheless felt that these were problems that, with understanding, could be addressed and overcome.

Despite various problems I had with it, I found the book rewarding. I'm sure most readers will be inspired to go out and write a world history of their own.

Matthew Melko