

Stephen Balch: One of the things that you can see, and you can see this at the university level, is the continual diminution of the courses that are offered as Western. Western Civilization, Western history used to be a very common rubric; if you looked at university and college catalogues, you could see courses described that way almost everywhere. The National Association of Scholars that I used to head did a study back in 2011 in which it catalogued the extent of the decline. They have, indeed, not quite, but almost disappeared. They either have been eliminated altogether, or have been replaced with something called World civilization which attempts to give equal time to everyone, and often is critical of the West when it deals with the West; or, if they were once required, they've now become electives that a lot of students are not going to bother to take. So, that's a fairly well-documented trend. I can recall a story: a Midwestern university decided that the word "greatness", and of course Western civilization programs sometimes are built around great books, they decided that the word "greatness" was suspect; because, after all, it suggested that somethings were better than others, and there was probably some sinister intent, they thought, behind that suggestion. And so, the English department at that institution went through their catalogue and removed any reference to "great." Which led one of the campus critics of this to say he was glad that it didn't happen in Classics because then a course about "Alexander the Great" would have had to be renamed "Alexander the Average." So, you have that kind of thing underway as well.

Stephen Balch: If you look at the world of journalism, the world of philanthropy, the world of politics, you can find large and influential institutions on both sides of the ideological divide and both sides of most issues. But if you look at the academy, and I would include K-12 to a large degree as well as higher education, you find almost no presence for "conservative voices"; for those voices that are pleased, more or less, with the cultural and political dispensation that we have; that think our history has been much more one of achievement than of sinning and evil; that by and large think of Western society and American society as a great good thing instead of a benighted legacy. So, the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. I mean, education has a role that no other of the institutions I mentioned has. It is a watershed; it is upstream from everything else; it's a place where people are politically and culturally socialized, where they get a sense of what the basic rights and wrongs are, what they should be concerned about, what allows you to stand forth as a good person, what sort of emblems of belief you can wear that will gain you approbation and advancement. So, the fact that our universities and colleges and, to a degree, our schools are very ideologically one-sided not only has a disproportionate influence later on, on the balance of political debate in the land, but it also has a terribly baleful impact on education itself because if there is one thing education should be able to allow you to do, it's to assess varied opinion. And if you only hear one side of whatever the kind of political conflict is, as John Stuart Mill once said, you not only don't know the other side, but you don't even know your own side because its only by hearing what other people have to say that you develop some kind of self-consciousness and critical awareness of the things that you believe. So, it's bad in terms of creating a wholesome balance of discourse in the larger body politic, and it's bad in terms of the kind of education you get from it which is an education of platitudes, repeated endlessly of moralistic clichés that no one ever thinks twice about. And it is not the kind of education that allows for the sort of self-critical citizenship that a free society should have.

Stephen Balch: The West, in a way, is the engine that makes the world work. It's the place where all sorts of beneficial innovations have been produced. And it's also the place where the institutions that allow those innovations to come to pass and to be disseminated exist. The West is, or has been for a long time at any rate, a kind of magnet drawing the rest of humanity to it. Not that there aren't other kind of streams in the cultural current that sort of mix in in world culture, but the West has really been the powerhouse, the energizer, the thing that has transformed the

human condition in a way I think that most folks would feel, if they thought about it at least, indispensable. We don't want to go back to a kind of more brutal, savage, intolerant, irrational time; we want to go forward if we can, but we can only do it if we understand the achievements that we've made through the West and have confidence in our status as the children of that achievement who now have received the torch and need to carry it forward. So, we need to have confidence, and we need to have a reasonable amount of pride. And this doesn't simply refer to people whose ancestry is Western. It refers to all people who have become part of the Western project, wherever they happen to be in the world or whoever they happen to be in the United States of America. So, we are not going to be able to defend all of this if we buy into the notion that, basically, it's bad, and that we should repent and feel guilty. We're not going to defend, adequately, all of this unless we understand what has made it work. And the need to have a good education about the West is to gain that confidence, is to gain those understandings, is to, as well, see where the West has fallen short—but to have a realistic appraisal of what the overall result has been. And I think, a realistic appraisal of the overall result has to be, in my opinion, a positive one.