

THE DECAY AND THE RESTORATION OF CIVILIZATION,

"The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization" is volume one of "The Philosophy of Civilization" by Albert Schweitzer, translation by C.T. Campion. The following two passages from that volume seem very relevant to the Institute of World Culture and our current study of the European Renaissance:

"It is not the civilization of a race, but that of mankind, present and future alike, that we must give up as lost, if belief in a rebirth of our civilization is a vain thing.

But it need not be so given up. If the ethical is the essential element in civilization, decadence changes into renaissance as soon as ethical activities are set to work again in our convictions and in the ideas which we undertake to stamp upon reality. The attempt to bring this about is well worth making, and it should be world-wide."

"The renewal of civilization has nothing to do with movements which bear the character of experiences of the crowd; these are never anything but reactions to external happenings. But civilization can only revive when there shall come into being in a number of individuals a new tone of mind independent of the one prevalent among the crowd and in opposition to it, a tone of mind which will gradually win influence over the collective one, and in the end determine its character. It is only an ethical movement which can rescue us from the slough of barbarism, and the ethical comes into existence only in individuals.

The final decision as to what the future of a society shall be depends not on how near its organization is to perfection, but on the degrees of worthiness in its individual members. The most important, and yet the least easily determinable, element in history is the series of unobtrusive general changes which take place in the individual dispositions of the many."