**Another Voice Podcast with Eric Nelson**

**to accompany Strayer/Nelson, *Ways of the World*, Third Edition**

**What’s changed over the past 2000 years? (Chapter 12)**

**SLIDE 12.1**

With a little imagination, this chapter’s survey of the world in the fifteenth century offers an opportunity to explore long-term changes on a global scale over the past 2000 years. To do so, take the role of an intergalactic visitor who first explored our planet at the dawn of the Common Era and then returned to earth for a second visit in 1450. What changes would most strike you and what would remain familiar?

**SLIDE 12.2 [Map: Religion and Commerce in the Afro-Eurasian World]**

In terms of change, you would undoubtedly note the emergence of two new world religions in the form of Islam and Christianity. These new faiths, along with the continued spread of Buddhism, had profoundly changed the religious landscape of Afro-Eurasia since your last visit at the start of the Common Era. Regions where human civilizations predominate had expanded and evolved as well. You would discover dynamic new states where none had existed before in East Africa, Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, and parts of East Asia. You would also likely comment on the growth of empires in the Andes and West Africa, but you might be amazed at the disappearance of the vaunted Roman Empire and the political fragmentation of Western Europe. Finally, it would be difficult for you to ignore the expansion and thickening of long-distance trade networks particularly in the Eastern Hemisphere, which had spawned commercialized economies producing goods for the market. Indeed, many of the new states in 1450 had emerged along these Silk, Sea and Sand Roads.

**SLIDE 12.3 [Image: Aztec Women]**

What would remain familiar? You would find that relatively little had changed in Australia, Polynesia, the Arctic, much of the Americas, and regions of southern Africa. Here gatherer hunter, agricultural village and chiefdom societies continued to predominate, even if more complex societies were taking root in some areas. Pastoralists also continued their way of life in their traditional regions of central and inner Asia, Arabia, the Sahara and East Africa.

Of the civilizations, the Chinese Empire was perhaps the state that had changed the least, having in the intervening period disintegrated and reassembled itself in a form with broad similarities to Han era China. Many other regions possessed states similar to those that had dominated the same regions nearly 1500 years earlier. Everywhere you would note that the daily activities of people in established civilizations had changed little since your first visit, with a vast majority of the population engaged in farming. Also, you would find little evidence of significant changes to class or gender hierarchies.

**SLIDE 12.4 [Image: One World]**

But, while there was no way to know at the time, in 1450 you were touring a world on the cusp of dramatic change. At the end of the fifteenth century, European exploration unleashed a period of rapid globalization which changed the cultural and political landscapes of the Americas, the Pacific, Australia, and through time, much of the rest of the world. A few centuries later, the Industrial Revolution ushered in further profound changes as an energy revolution transformed human productivity and shifted work for many from the farm to the factory. The Atlantic Revolutions, the emergence of ideologies like socialism and other developments transformed ideas about government and the social order. The dramatic rise of European power resulted in the establishment of European overseas empires, whose impact on the political, cultural and social landscape of the planet persisted even after their collapse. Perhaps the most marked changes would be the explosion of the human population and the virtual disappearance of some ancient ways of life like gatherer hunting or stateless agricultural societies. If you were to return today for a third visit, the relatively rapid pace of change over the past five centuries would be striking given the much slower trajectory over the previous 1500 years.