

Toward World History: American Historians and the Coming of the World History Course

GILBERT ALLARDYCE
University of New Brunswick

HISTORIANS have been death on world history. Most believe that the subject is simply too vast and visionary for academic study and too alien to the modern temper of their profession. In fact, however, Andrew D. White, first president of the American Historical Association (AHA), called upon his members at their first public meeting in 1884 to make the new organization a place for both specialized work and the higher endeavor that he described as “the summing up of history,” the study of the past on a world scale “We may indeed consider it as the trunk on which special histories and biographies are the living branches,” he said of world history, “giving to them and receiving from them growth and symmetry, drawing life from them, sending life into them.” The branches spread, but historians in the AHA sawed off the trunk. Not synthesis but empiricism became house style—history in fine grain, layered, textured, nuanced, footnoted. To criticize this style, one historian commented recently, is to criticize the practice of academic history in the United States. “This is the work we are good at,” he concluded; “it is the essence of professional history.”¹

If so, world history plainly does not come naturally to histori-

¹ Eric H. Monkkenen, “The Dangers of Synthesis,” *American Historical Review* (hereafter cited as *AHR*) 91 (1986): 1149. Andrew D. White, “On Studies in General History and the History of Civilizations,” *Papers of the American Historical Association* 1 (1885): 8.

ans Some say the fault is in ourselves and the narrowness of our discipline. Others say it is in the sheer impossibility of the subject itself. Is world history possible? Those who say it is begin from a simple premise: all the history in the world is not world history. Bishop Bossuet in the seventeenth century commented that just as world maps could be projected to appropriate detail, so world history could be scaled to proper size. This same idea, that world history was not more boundless than other histories but merely different in focus, became common to the literature that most influenced American historians on the subject. Thus Lord Acton in 1898 defined world history as "distinct from the combined history of all nations" and concentrated only upon "the common fortunes of mankind." To H. G. Wells in 1920, it was "something more and something less than the aggregate of the national histories," just as European history was something more and something less than the aggregate of all national histories on the continent. Others have explained that, to have a place in world history, events must be large, comprehensive, and compelling enough to affect whole segments of humanity. In sum, because humankind is so vast, its common history probably is fairly limited.² Indeed, someone said that world history can be written on a single page.

But what is world history? Here, on this question of the content of world history, some historians believe that this old subject simply has too much bad history to live down. They look on it in the way that astronomers look on astrology, that is, as an early and immature form of their discipline, a form all bound up in religion, metaphysics, and prophecy. Through twelve centuries, major church historians from Augustine to Bossuet infused world history with concepts of the sacred and profane. They identified it as the unfolding of the divine idea, as a revelation of the truth of Christianity, as the story of God's people in Europe and the Middle East. Thereafter, in the secular, universal histories of the Enlightenment, these religious ideas merely gave way to moral philosophy and metaphysical abstractions. However, with the rise of "scientific" history, the whole enterprise came under a cloud.

² Marshall Hodgson, "Interregional History as an Approach to World History," *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale (Journal of World History)*, published by Unesco; hereafter cited as CHM) 1 (1954): 716. H. G. Wells, *The Outline of History* 2 vols., (London, 1920), 2: v. Lord Acton, "Letter to Contributors to the *Cambridge Modern History*," in *Lord Acton: Essays in the Liberal Interpretation of History: Selected Papers*, ed. William H. McNeill (Chicago, 1967), p. 398. Jacques Benigne Bossuet, *Discourse on Universal History*, ed. Orest Ranum (Chicago, 1976), p. 4.

As the practice of history became professional, the practice of world history became identified with amateurism. The new history defined itself against the old, and apprentices in the vocation, reared on specialized research, learned to hold world history in suspicion as something outmoded, overblown, and metahistorical. Whoever said world history, said amateurism.

In our century, Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee formed new versions of world history out of the cultural pessimism of western society. They opened the subject to a new civilizational approach and, at the same time, turned it back upon itself, returning to ultimate questions about God and humanity that had aroused historians against the old universal history in the first place. Their work seemed to set university historians on edge, to challenge something fundamental in the contemporary practice of history. This response revealed, on the one hand, the considerable solidarity of the history profession in opposition to world history; on the other, it revealed the isolation of the profession from the reading public. Spengler and Toynbee made world history popular in the twentieth century, and their success with the book-buying populace, particularly in the United States, indicated the public appeal of histories with a claim to global scale and cosmic significance. In most academic literature, however, the writings of Spengler and Toynbee generally were dismissed as works of imagination, as philosophy, prophecy, pap. British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper, in reaction to the commercial success of Toynbee's work in America, quipped: "As a dollar earner . . . it ranks second only to whiskey."³ Indeed the influence of these modern masters of world history, rather than inspiring historians to return to the subject, caused them instead to harden against it. The result was to make universities hostile ground for world history in the United States.

This article concerns three historians who fought against this opposition in the profession and the universities. Louis Gottschalk and William H. McNeill of the University of Chicago and Leften S. Stavrianos of Northwestern University in the Evanston suburbs made Chicago the capital of world history in the United States. This is not a study of the works and ideas of these three men. Rather the purpose here is to draw from the lessons of their experiences in preparing the coming of world history in American education. The work of McNeill and Stavrianos in particular

³ Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Arnold Toynbee's Miliennium," *Encounter* 8 (1957): 14

inspired the rise of the World History Association (WHA), formed by young historians in 1982 to take over the cause of world history from these men of the older generation. This organization wants historians to turn the leading scholarship of the men studied here into effective world history courses through the art of classroom teaching. Their message, in short, is this: the way to make world history possible is to teach it. The late Warren I. Susman, vice president of the AHA Teaching Division in 1982, remarked that good scholarship becomes good history when it is forced to teach, when it is made to communicate knowledge in clear and systematic form. "The fact remains," he concluded, "that an effective course demands to be informed by effective scholarship and effective scholarship to have its impact fully felt needs to be *taught*." This, in effect, is what McNeill told world historians as well. "So my injunction to you is this," he declared: "Try to teach world history and you will find that it can be done."⁴

WORLD HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING:
LOUIS GOTTSCHALK AND THE UNESCO *History of Mankind*

Important, as a preliminary to this study of world history in American education, is the need to understand a moral idealism that is connected to the subject. World history was born in the religion and moral philosophy of the ancient world and, through time, has continued to carry along some of its original ethical ideals. This section of this article concerns one of the oldest of these ideals still clinging to this ancient subject: the ideal of world history as education for peace. Specifically, this section concerns the involvement of this ideal in the movement for international education. "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." This opening line to the charter of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization sums up the philosophy of this movement to promote education for international understanding. Basic to it is the notion that humanity is divided not by inherent or irreconcilable differences, but by things of the mind: prejudice, ethnocentrism, mistrust, and ignorance. Accordingly, lasting

⁴ William H. McNeill, "The World History Survey Course," in *1982 World History Teaching Conference*, ed. Joe C. Dixon and Neil D. Martin (Colorado Springs, 1983), p. 5. Warren I. Susman, "Annapolis Conference on the Introductory Course," *AHA Perspectives* 20 (1982): 23.

peace, in this perspective, can not rest on great power hegemony, military alliances, or economic systems; it must rest on understanding among peoples. Greek philosophers said, "Know thyself"; philosophers of international education say, "Know others."

The origins of this so-called international education philosophy generally are associated with Johann Amos Comenius, a seventeenth-century Moravian reformer who, alarmed by the religious wars of his time, envisioned a common education across political boundaries—with common books, schools, and teachers—as a basis for world peace. Writing after the First World War, H. G. Wells recalled this "old and neglected idea" of a common book of history to educate youth in common values. Wells observed that one book of world history, the Bible, had united western peoples for centuries; now, he remarked, a new book was needed to unite world peoples in the same way. "Why should we not have a great education conference of teachers, scientific men and historians from all the civilized peoples of the world," he exclaimed, "and why should they not draft out a standard world history for general use in the world's schools?"⁵ The *Unesco History of Mankind: Cultural and Scientific Development* (hereafter cited as the *History*), a composite world history in six volumes, was as close to this idea as educators have come so far. Involved was a cast of one thousand, with work on each volume assigned to a world-class historian who would be assisted by a team of consultants and area specialists from across the globe. In announcing the project in 1951, chief editor Ralph E. Turner, a Yale historian who had taken Unesco ideals to heart, reported that this work, when completed, was to be used as a source for another publication important to Unesco's mission of education for peace: a classroom textbook for schools of all countries. Here, in prospect, was the common textbook on a common history which, since Comenius, had been the ideal of international education philosophy.

Turner forecast that this Unesco world history would be "the most influential ever written." Great expectations. "The work . . . will form a source from which all peoples can take a vision of humanity as a whole," he explained in his original working paper for the *History*. "This purpose will be realized only if an objective, unbiased treatment is aimed at, so that that vision may possess a permanent value and further the cooperation of peoples thus made aware of their common bonds, of the harmony resulting

⁵ H. G. Wells, *The Salvaging of Civilization* (London, 1921), p. 109.

from natural contacts, and of a unity asserting itself in spite of apparent difference.”⁶ In this statement were articles of a secular faith: namely, that bad history divides humankind, that good history unites it, and that all peoples are one—all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding. The idea of a connection between education and peace, of course, was old and universal. The idea of a connection between history and peace was, to say the least, less widely shared.

In reporting the appointment in 1951 of University of Chicago historian Louis Gottschalk (1899–1975) to write the Unesco volume on the period 1300 to 1775 (volume 4), the *Chicago Tribune* had a name for this conception of world history for world peace: globaloney. “As every worthwhile history demonstrates,” the newspaper explained, “history is a record of the differences between men and nations.”⁷ This comment indicates the place of the Unesco History in a long debate within western thought over whether war or peace was the lesson of history, and whether, as a result, knowledge of the past was a source of conflict or understanding between peoples.

Apparently there is something moral about the idea of humankind. Toynhee, for example, claimed to find an ideal conception of “mankind” (a once winged word now deemed to be somewhat sexist) existing in every civilization known to history. In the west, ancient Stoic philosophers, long before Saint Augustine, spoke of the difference between two cities: one was the polis, the particular city in which citizens lived, to which their ties were political and legal; the other was the cosmopolis, the city of humanity, to which their ties were ethical and religious.⁸ Augustine spiritual-

⁶ Ralph E. Turner, “Working Paper of the Plan for a Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind,” copy in the Louis Gottschalk Papers, University of Chicago Archives (hereafter cited as GP), carton 19, folder 2, (1951; mimeographed). “1000 World Scholars Plan a Vast History of Mankind.” *New York Times* (December 18, 1951). The background to the *History* is described in the preface to Sir Leonard Woolley’s *History of Mankind: Cultural and Scientific Development*, vol. 1, *The Beginnings of Civilization* (London, 1963), pp. xvii–xxiv. The history of the idea of international education from Comenius to Unesco is traced in Basil Karp, “The Development of the Philosophy of UNESCO (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1951). pp. 1–23.

⁷ “U.N. Goes into the History Business,” *Chicago Tribune* (December 24, 1951).

⁸ Antonio Truyol y Serra, “The Idea of Man and World History from Seneca to Orosius and Saint Isidore of Seville,” *CHM* 6 (1961): 702. On the idea of mankind in world cultures, see W. Warren Wagar, ed., *History and the Idea of Mankind* (Albuquerque, 1971). According to authorities, world history, as opposed to the ethnocentric histories of Hebrew scripture and classical legend, was first developed in the

ized this world city into the City of God, the realm of sacred history, elevated above the profane history of nations and empires. Universal history, therefore, had origins in ideas of the moral unity of humankind. In the nineteenth century, for this reason, the subject became part of the international education philosophy of European peace movements working to make the teaching of history in schools compatible with the cause of peace.

From beginnings in Christian pacifism, these so-called bourgeois peace movements—as distinct from forms of radical antimilitarism on the left—came during the nineteenth century to perceive nationalism as mother of wars. In turn, internationalism and the equality of peoples became identified with peace. At a peace conference in Paris in 1849, Victor Hugo, for instance, described how a future world order would bring peace over the warring nations in the way that the nations brought peace over the warring provinces of the feudal past.⁹ Out of nineteenth-century ideas of progress, therefore, came a mythology of internationalism in which nations were identified with a passing history of war, and internationalism with a history of peace. Partly, this was a secular revision of the old Augustinian perception of two histories: one, national history, was all flags and battles, signifying nothing; the other, world history, involved the higher interests of humanity. Accordingly, world history became the ideal of peace education. Projects for this new history, however, first had to await the failure of an experiment to change the old history in a different way—that is, through the improvement of textbooks.

Reportedly, Bismarck once said that victory in the wars of German unification was made possible by two groups of men: Prussian officers and nationalist historians. Peace movements always feared this power of national history to turn a young man's fancy to thoughts of war and patriotism. In the late nineteenth century, as the development of public education systems coincided with a period of rising chauvinism, some peace educators perceived school textbooks to be at the core of this instruction in national

last two centuries B.C. by Hellenized orientals who integrated Greek, Roman, and Middle Eastern histories into a common narrative. World history concepts made a passing appearance in Islamic literature but did not develop in Asian sources. Ralph E. Turner, "World History and Universal Treatments," in *The American Historical Association's Guide to Historical Literature*, ed. G.F. Howe (New York, 1961), pp. 34–47.

⁹ Victor Hugo, *The United States of Europe: Presidential Address to the International Peace Congress, August 22, 1849* (Boston, 1914), pp. 4–5.

pride. Thus the Universal Peace Congress, for example, began in 1889 to agitate for textbook improvement, appealing to publishers to reduce coverage of military events, give more space to cultural developments, and revise passages likely to cause misunderstanding between peoples. The ideal here was not world history but good history, history without all the politics, without jingoism, prejudice, and error. In this sense, the perceived danger to international understanding was not in national history itself, but in its use and abuse by historians to glorify their own nations and misrepresent others. Bad history made bad neighbors. After the patriotic gore of the First World War, some peace movements became convinced, however, that this reform of national history was a lost cause and, at the same time, that the founding of a new organization of nations meant that the opportunity had come for a common world history textbook.¹⁰

When, in 1925, appeals to the League of Nations to sponsor a common world history for schools were debated in the League's Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, Spanish delegate Julio Casares y Sanchez convinced other committee members that the time for such "international romanticism" had not yet come. "We must recognize," he argued, "that in present circumstances it would be . . . premature to attempt the teaching of any subject, and especially of history, from an international point of view, and it is useless to try to impose any particular textbook on countries or even to recommend its adoption; states must be left full freedom to organize their teaching in their own way." Approved instead was the so-called Casares Plan, one more attempt "to reconcile truth and patriotism" through a textbook improvement program based on international good will. With the rise of fascism, however, good will was lost from diplomatic relations, and nationalist historians turned schoolhouses into places of state worship. Thus, after the Second World War, British historian Ernest Barker, adviser to Unesco, concluded that historians too were responsible for the war and that the world now needed a united history as much as a United Nations. Although programs for textbook improvement carried over into Unesco, history consultants to the new organization argued successfully that the only

¹⁰ On this movement for textbook improvement, see the Unesco publications, *Looking at the World Through Textbooks* (Paris, 1946), pp. 2-8, and Joseph A. Lauwerys, *History Textbooks and International Understanding* (Paris, 1953), pp. 39-48.

peace history was world history. "National history on a political basis, as it is taught everywhere, will never tend to reconcile the various peoples," French *Annales* historian Lucien Febvre advised Unesco in 1949; "We must create the possibilities of a new kind of teaching—the teaching of a non-political world history, a teaching which will be, by definition, consecrated to peace."¹¹

Such is the background to the following story of Gottschalk and the Unesco *History*. What makes Gottschalk's experience valuable here as a case study is just this clear and conscious effort to place world history at the service of peace and international understanding. Like most stories, this one is easiest to follow when one knows the end as well as the beginning. The work took Gottschalk twelve years—eight years beyond his original deadline. "I mailed the manuscript from Chicago . . . on January 22, 1964," he recalled, "and that day I went to the hospital with a heart attack."¹²

Gottschalk came to an interest in the role of history in peace education through work with the peace movement during the Second World War.¹³ The only American in the original group of historians chosen in 1951 to write the *History*, he began work when Unesco was still a First World intellectual club. Professor of early modern European history, he believed that Europeans, in discovering the globe after 1500, had created world history in the first place, and he intended as a result to concentrate his Unesco volume on the part of the world that he knew best and judged the most important: Europe. Accordingly, Gottschalk informed the directing committee for the Unesco project, the International Commission for a Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind (hereafter cited as the Commission), that his work would be entitled *The European Age, 1300–1775*. Here began Gottschalk's edu-

¹¹ "Report of Professor Lucien Febvre to the International Council for Philosophy and Social Science. May 1949," *CHM* 1 (1954): 957. Ernest Barker, "The Historian, Too, Must Stand Trial," *New York Times Magazine* (December 9, 1945), pp. 9, 45. Casares' speech is recorded in the League of Nations document, *Minutes of the Sessions of the Committee on International Cooperation: Sixth Session, July 27–30, 1925*, p. 14.

¹² Louis Gottschalk, "Writing World History," *The History Teacher* (hereafter cited as *HT*) 2 (1968): 18. Gottschalk reminisced on his Unesco experience in a speech in 1968, "The UNESCO World History," GP, carton 66, folder 3 (audiotape).

¹³ Louis Gottschalk, "Lessons of Modern History for World Peace," in *Approaches to World Peace: Fourth Symposium of the Conference on Science, Philosophy, and Religion*, ed. Lyman Bryson (New York, 1944), pp. 74–80.

cation in world history Unesco-style. In rejecting this proposed title, Commission president Pablo E. DeBerredo Carneiro (Brazil) informed Gottschalk that no age in world history could be called "European"; world history involved all regions equally, not any one region in particular.¹⁴ Within Unesco, the strength of this perspective increased in the following years as new nations emerged out of old western colonies to increase the number of so-called Third World peoples at the world organization. The new Unesco was a reflection of a new world, and Gottschalk was present at the creation. His challenge was to write world history for an organization at the end of its own "European age," when new, proud, and independent peoples came to claim an equal place in history.

Someone described procedures at Unesco as "the orchestration of diversity," the everyday internationalism of diplomats trying to avoid conflict and accommodate cultural differences. Turner, architect of the *History*, made these rules of the house the rules of this work as well. To be stressed was an international ideal of equality in diversity, independence within interdependence. "No matter how distinctive the several cultures of the world might have been and may remain," wrote Gottschalk in describing Turner's conception, "they show a perceptible tendency to interchange one with another, so that in the course of time they will appear . . . like a river system, each tributary rising from its own sources and running more or less independently for shorter or longer stretches but eventually . . . emerging to form a main stream, though without necessarily losing its own identity."¹⁵ All rivers flow to the sea; all cultures contribute to world culture. All give, all receive, and thus all cultures deserve an equal place in history—and equal time from historians.

Gottschalk recognized that these claims to equality would require him to "lean over backwards" against all the Eurocentric preconceptions ingrained in him by a lifetime of historical study. Most previous works on world history, he acknowledged, were typical western expressions, bound by the old classical perception of a core of civilization at the center of a world of barbarism. The rejection of this core-periphery model, however, was basic to

¹⁴ *Commission Internationale pour une Histoire Scientifique et Culturelle de l'Humanité: Procès verbaux . . . 19 février 1952*, GP, carton 18, folder 16, p. 57 (mimeographed).

¹⁵ Louis Gottschalk, Loren C. MacKinney, and Earl H. Pritchard, *History of Mankind: Cultural and Scientific Development*, vol. 4, *The Foundations of the Modern World*, 2 vols. (London, 1969), 1:xi.

Turner's plan for the Unesco *History*. To him, world history, as the story of all people, must be about all people equally. From the old Casares Plan and the movement for textbook improvement, Turner carried over the idea that prejudice and falsehood in history books were causes of conflicts between peoples, and the Unesco Commission, as a result, created elaborate safeguards to insure the equal and accurate treatment of all cultures and religions. This was to be peace history in pure form: without politics, without patriotism, without prejudice, and without offense to anyone. As Carneiro explained, "Neither Catholics, nor Protestants, nor Muslims, nor Jews, nor Hindus, nor Buddhists, nor Confucians, need fear historical interpretations which would reveal any kind of bias on the part of the numerous collaborators."¹⁶

Hegel called world history a form of world court in which historians judged the actions of peoples in the past. To Turner, in contrast, it was a form of international diplomacy. To remove misunderstandings about other cultures, he assigned a world cast of consultants, area specialists, national commissions, and assorted experts to review manuscript chapters for the *History* every step of the way—a process involving long delays and much waiting upon the mail systems of the world. "Never before," remarked a Unesco official, "has what I may call the decentralization of viewpoints and interpretations been carried so far in the science of history."¹⁷ Such international collaboration in the writing of world history, of course, had long been the dream of peace educators. To Gottschalk, it became a nightmare.

Wisely he recruited specialists of his own to help him in subjects outside of modern European history. Just as the Unesco project was history by committee, Gottschalk's work was history by team. Loren C. MacKinney, a medievalist at the University of North Carolina, and Asian specialist Earl H. Pritchard of the University of Chicago signed on as associate authors, and six junior scholars from around Chicago were enlisted as research assist-

¹⁶ Quoted in *United States Commission for UNESCO: Information Bulletin on the Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind* (n.d., mimeographed), copy in GP. Gottschalk discusses models for world history in his "Projects and Concepts of World History in the Twentieth Century," *XII Congrès international des sciences historiques: Rapports, 1965* (Vienna, n.d.), pp. 5–19. For a critical bibliography of world history literature, see Turner, "World History and Universal Treatments" (n. 8 above), pp. 37–47.

¹⁷ René Maheu, "Foreward" to Woolley (n. 6 above), p. xv. For a description of these procedures, see Caroline F. Ware, "The History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind: Some Problems of Interpretation," *CHM* 5 (1959): 270–77.

ants. These men, "largely paid out of my own pocket," said Gottschalk, stayed with him through twelve years of writing and rewriting during which his manuscript went through seven drafts and the junior scholars aged into seniors. Thus Marshall Hodgson, for example, joined the work as a young researcher on Islam and finished as chairman of the Department of Islamic Studies at Chicago. (Hodgson, an important figure in the world history tradition at Chicago in his own right, will not be discussed here. His own book on world history remained unfinished at his death in 1968.) Historian Karl J. Weintraub, once another of Gottschalk's assistants, has described to the present writer all the agonies of this long period of wrangling with area experts, religious authorities, cultural communities, national representatives, and interest groups of all kinds, each determined to do battle on all the fine points of interpretation and detail.¹⁸

Gottschalk himself estimated that parts of his work were sent to 350 advisors around the world, about sixty of whom returned objections—at length. One authority, for example, responded to forty pages of text with sixty pages of criticism. Not to be outdone, Soviet experts sent their complaints to Gottschalk in a package weighing thirty-six pounds. In contrast, one critic replied in a single word: "lousy." Another provided more detail. "In sum," he commented, "the work is deficient in information, distorted in proportion, untrustworthy in criticism, inaccurate in detail, and often inelegant in style. Its publication would, in my opinion, be a waste of time and money." By 1959, Gottschalk concluded that the task of writing a world history with justice to all and offense to none was simply beyond him. Mission impossible. "Every time I tried to satisfy one critic," he told Carneiro, "I would dissatisfy another. So I plead incompetence."¹⁹ Thus one of the best historians that America had to offer, a master scholar, former president (in 1953) of the American Historical Association, declared his talents to be unequal to the kind of history writing which peace movements had advocated since the last century. "I have found the task of preparing a volume that will satisfy me on world his-

¹⁸ Karl J. Weintraub, interview, July 28, 1983. On Hodgson, see Edmund Burke, III, "Islamic History as World History: Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 10 (1979): 241–64, and Burke's study, "Islam and World History: The Contribution of Marshall Hodgson," *Radical History Review* 39 (1987): 117–23.

¹⁹ Louis Gottschalk to Pablo E. DeBerredo Carneiro, June 24, 1959, GP, carton 18, folder 3. For letters on the criticisms above, see carton 20, folder 4.

tory from 1300 to 1775 beyond my capacity," Gottschalk concluded, "and believe the task of preparing one that will satisfy all the critics an impossible one."²⁰

To draw the lesson of this experience is to assess the Unesco conception of world history as a form of education for international understanding. "The essence of the matter," concluded one Commission member, "is that we are writing in a world full of tensions and of proud and sensitive peoples. And truth and accuracy are not enough, because truth does not always improve relations among peoples."²¹ Good history, it seems, could also make bad neighbors.

Attempting to avoid such offense to the pride of peoples, Turner instructed writers of the *History* from the start to emphasize the commonality of human achievement across cultures without, at the same time, making comparisons between the cultural works produced. The result was an approach in which writers gave equal space to describing the contributions of all cultures, but in which each contribution was described independently of others. Turner's intent was to limit comparative analysis of skills and creativity. A world history of all peoples, he explained in his working paper for the *History*, must not pass judgments on specific cultures. To do so—to compare the relative merit of creative works, to emphasize the contributions of particular geographical areas—was to view humankind from a limited perspective, and thus to return to old notions of higher and lower cultures, of core and periphery.

However, this approach, designed to solve one problem, led to another. If some Unesco critics complained of mistakes in Gottschalk's analysis, others complained that his work lacked analysis altogether. His manuscript, they charged, was a jumble: disconnected, encyclopedic, a mass of detail on activity in separate regions without larger focus on trends in culture and science on a world scale. To avoid comparing cultures, they claimed, Gottschalk avoided interpreting history. In particular, French Sorbonne historian Roland Mousnier objected that this kind of separate-but-equal approach obscured the most significant world development of the period 1300 to 1775—the rise of the west:

²⁰ Louis Gottschalk to R. Hooykaas, February 11, 1959. GP, carton 18, folder 3.

²¹ Caroline F. Ware, p. 277 (n. 17 above). After the death of the original appointee, Ware, a Howard University historian, was chosen (the second American after Gottschalk) to complete a volume of the *History*.

The absence of any synthesis has made it impossible to establish hierarchies between civilizations, between peoples, and between states. . . . The authors of the book undoubtedly rejected any hierarchic structure because they confused the establishment of such series with value judgments and were reluctant to call into question the dignity of a given people or state. But nobody could take offence at such observations and, in any case, all civilizations, all regions of the globe, all states have contributed in turn to the general advancement of mankind. Could anyone have felt injured if the authors had emphasized the preponderant role played by Europe in the constitution of modern science, in the religious, philosophic, and political movement? Such observations are also part of the historians' profession.²²

Mousnier's conclusion, of course, was the premise that Gottschalk himself had started with: namely, that the period 1300 to 1775 began the European age in world history. Indeed Gottschalk confessed that, on one level, he was unable to meet this French criticism. Still he insisted that, at another level, his work proceeded from "an equally justifiable concept of world history." Following this concept, as developed in Turner's general plan, Unesco historians gave equal recognition to all peoples for *their* contribution to the human patrimony, rather than giving special recognition to the particular contributions of "preferred" peoples or regions. Anyway, Gottschalk argued, to stress material on the importance of western science, as Mousnier wanted to do, meant to subordinate material on religion, which still had greater influence than science in every other civilization on earth. "To reduce the amount of material on the East, as you suggest, in order to give more space to the West may appear proper to Europeans and Americans," Gottschalk explained to Mousnier, "but will only invite increased criticism from Asians, who have already been more severe in their criticism of volume 4 than you."²³

Thus world history Unesco-style reduced to a kind of entitlements program in which everyone received a share of the past. This was history in service to an ideal of international understanding, and, like most history with an agenda, its method was

²² Quoted by Guy S. Metraux, "Note on the Preparation and Editing of Volume IV," foreword to Gottschalk, *Foundations of the Modern World*, 1: xviii-xix.

²³ Louis Gottschalk to Roland Mousnier, March 2, 1959, GP, carton 18, folder 3. His published reply to Mousnier's general criticism appears in Metraux, "Note on the Preparation and Editing of Volume IV," 1: xix.

rigged for the purpose at hand. In this case, the method was a ready, "equal time" impartiality parading as "historical perspective." Gottschalk maintained that to concentrate on particular societies was to lose perspective. Critics replied that not to concentrate was to lose meaning. The art of historical interpretation, Mousnier argued, required just such concentration; it required priorities and a system of "hierarchies" in order to establish the relative importance of peoples and civilizations in time. After the publication of Gottschalk's volume in 1969, reviewers in historical journals joined Unesco critics in the conclusion that this history of all peoples equally was no history at all. "Everyone gets his share," one reviewer remarked, "but universalism has become antiquarianism and idealism has obscured the actual significance of the period." To make sense, others argued, world history between 1300 and 1775 had to be about some peoples more than others, and the theme of rising western influence made the most sense of all. "I have yet to be convinced," Harvard historian Franklin L. Ford complained of Gottschalk's coverage of developments, "that England in these centuries was less significant to the history of mankind, all mankind, than were Mandingo, the Mali Empire, Kano, and the Ashanti federation, dealt with earlier and at greater length."²⁴

Already, however, the Unesco Commission despaired of achieving consensus on a common world history. One result, as patience, time, and money ran out, was the abandonment of plans for a common textbook for world schools. Plainly, different peoples needed different histories. And just as they wanted their own national and civilizational histories, so they wanted their own world histories as well. However, more was involved in these Commission debates than simply the puncturing of old illusions about common schooling in a common history. At issue, more importantly, was a challenge not only to the concept of history as a form of education for peace, but also to the whole philosophy of international education and the founding idea of Unesco itself: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed."

Initially, Soviet representatives did not participate in the work of the *History*, but from the moment in 1954 that they decided to join the project, they introduced Marxist ideas of conflict that

²⁴ See Franklin L. Ford's review in *AHR* 77 (1972): 1407. Niels Steensgaard, "Universal History in Our Times," *Journal of Modern History* 45 (1973): 77.

clashed with Turner's peace history. In opposition were two traditions of thought. In one, history was the story of class war; to know the past was to know the need to struggle. In the other, history was the story of human interdependence; to know the past was to know the need for international understanding. Thus one side saw history as education for conflict, the other as education for peace. For Soviet historians, however, war and peace were not made by education alone. This particular challenge to Unesco ideals was as old as the organization itself. At the very beginning of Unesco debates in 1946, Yugoslav representative Vladislav Ribnikar, for example, argued that everyone familiar with history recognized that wars begin not "in the minds of men" but in material conditions of life. Therefore, he concluded, peace education and international understanding could neither explain the causes of wars in the past nor remove them in the future.²⁵ Histories begin in the minds of men, but wars do not.

This so-called realist critique of Unesco ideals came from delegates far and wide. A representative in the United States delegation, University of Chicago professor Richard P. McKeon, wrote in 1947 that most wars resulted not from ignorance but from reasoned interests, and that education may endanger peace rather than promote it. With new knowledge, he explained, especially knowledge of political ideologies and versions of history, peoples can identify new enemies and old wrongs. Others noted that learning about strangers may raise awareness not of their resemblance to ourselves but of their strangeness. Anyway, some of the worst wars were between peoples who knew each other best—Germans and Frenchmen fought like cats and dogs. Princeton psychologist Hadley Cantril, appointed in 1948 to direct a Unesco study project on "Tensions Affecting International Understanding," advised his researchers from the outset that the creed of international understanding was an institutional myth made necessary at Unesco by the organization's mission to serve peace within the limits of educational, scientific, and cultural development. "Tensions are deeply rooted in economic, political and technological conditions which are, as such, largely outside the prescribed framework of UNESCO's activities," he remarked. "No competent investigator

²⁵ Unesco, *Record of the General Conference: First Session, November 20–December 10, 1946* (Paris, 1946), pp. 38–39. For Soviet criticism of Turner's history, see *International Commission for a History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind: Thirteenth Meeting of the Bureau, Paris, 22–24 April 1959: Proceedings*, in GP, carton 18, folder 3.

in the field believes there is any magic formula that can remove 'tensions' or any specific tension, without regard to the social and economic conditions within which people live." To these "realists," therefore, international understanding was no escape from human conflict. "What help is it to the potential victim," one asked, "if the cannibal makes him understand what values and beliefs are responsible for his being eaten?"²⁶

Scholars have observed, however, that this debate on the idea of international understanding was clouded by differences in use of the term itself. Thus American educator Ralph H. Hunkins notes that proper assessment of the idea depended on what it was that one was trying to "understand" about another people, whether their culture, their intentions, their selfish interests, or their common humanity with ourselves. In this sense, even the comments of the "realists" quoted above are forms of international understanding. So, in fact, is the vexing comment of Baudelaire that it is *misunderstanding* that keeps the peace. "The world works by misunderstanding alone," claimed the French poet. "Everyone agrees because of universal misunderstanding, and if ever, by misfortune, we understood each other, we could never agree."²⁷ Many things are matters of interpretation. One example is the idea of international understanding. Another, as the present article has indicated, is the idea of world history as a form of education for peace.

For teachers of world history, therefore, the conclusion is this: as a story of cultural contacts and shared experiences, world history may indeed inspire a larger sense of human community; as a story of conflicts and exploitation, however, it may also perpetuate old quarrels and provide substance for new ones. No particular form of history is on the side of the angels; none more than another holds greater promise of peace. The earth today is full of world histories of hate in which peoples blame their troubles on communism, imperialism, or some other Great Satan. Historians who teach a contrasting history of "international understanding"

²⁶ Werner Levi, *Fundamentals of World Organization* (Minneapolis, 1950), p. 190. Hadley Cantril, "The Human Sciences and World Peace," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 12 (1948): 236. Richard P. McKeon, "The Program of UNESCO for 1947 and 1948," in *Learning and World Peace*, ed. Lyman Bryson (New York, 1948), p. 587.

²⁷ Quoted in Hugh Ragsdale, "Revolution of Westernization" (paper presented to the WHA, New York, December 27, 1985). Ralph H. Hunkins, "Education for International Understanding: A Critical Appraisal of the Literature" (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1968), pp. 118-31.

Unesco-style can only lead students to disillusionment. Therefore, to the talk about world history as education for peace, wise teachers should respond in the words of Dr. Johnson: "Sir, it is cant. My dear friend, rid your mind of cant."

TOWARD GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE: LEFTEN STAVRIANOS AND THE HIGH SCHOOL COURSE IN WORLD HISTORY

Gottschalk described a coming revolt against Eurocentrism in the study of world history. The future of the subject, he believed, lay in a more pluralist and universal approach. Europe had been the world for too long; now the earth was round. Today this perception of a need to "de-Europeanize" world history has become gospel in the world history movement. This section of the present article concerns the work of Leften Stavrianos (b. Vancouver, 1913) in bringing this idea to teachers of world history in American high schools. Stavrianos called for "a view from the moon," a higher, unifying vision of the whole human past. To him, world history in American education had never been about world history: it had been about Europe. The subject was always the west and the westernization of other continents, with Europeans at the center, Americans on the side, and everyone else on the planet in limbo.²⁸

It seems, however, that western historians have always resisted larger histories. Eurocentrism is us. Even though the history of ancient China, for example, was known to Europeans from the writings of Jesuit missionaries nearly a generation before Bosuet wrote his universal history in 1681, it took another century to break through the old western limits of sacred history. And even after the discovery of other peoples on the planet, the world beyond Europe often still remained as nonhistorical as before. In the nineteenth century, as the study of European states became the subject matter of history, the study of peoples without states became the subject matter of anthropology. Nonwestern peoples became "societies" and "cultures." Some, like the Egyptians and Chinese, were perceived as exhausted civilizations left behind by history. Others, supposedly more isolated, were conceived as

²⁸ L. S. Stavrianos, "A Global Perspective in the Organization of World History," in *New Perspectives in World History: 34th Yearbook of the National Council for the Social Studies*, ed. Shirley H. Engle (Washington, D.C., 1964), p. 616.

primitives and “exotics” who had never been part of history in the first place. Europeans had a history; others had customs, which were timeless and unchanging. “The history of European peoples could be found in the archives,” a historian comments, “the customs of . . . peoples overseas were to be found in the field.”²⁹

Scholars have described how western thinkers consistently invented categories to define this duality of the west and “the people without history”: civilization and primitivism, modernism and traditional society, development and underdevelopment, core and periphery. “Many of us,” explained Eric R. Wolf, “even grew up believing that this West has a genealogy, according to which ancient Greece begat Rome, Rome begat Christian Europe, Christian Europe begat the Renaissance, the Renaissance the Enlightenment, the Enlightenment political democracy and the industrial revolution.”³⁰ This was not only the history that most Westerners knew, it was their perception of the nature of history itself as well—its oneness, linear direction, and progressive movement. Incapable of transcending European experience, they were also incapable of so-called global perspective. For this reason, Toynbee compared the west to Sleeping Beauty: fair, alluring, but dead to the world. However, there is a kind of allure and romance in the idea of global perspective as well. British historian Geoffrey Barraclough, for example, claimed that such a universal vision could bring a revolution in consciousness, a breakout from the parochialism of histories limited to particular regions and peoples. “The change,” he asserted, “can be compared with that from the Ptolemaic to the Copernican picture of the universe; and its results, in opening new dimensions and changing our perspective, may well be no less revolutionary.” Such leaps of imagination perhaps suggest why the writing of world histories has been as persistent in western culture as the writing of utopian literature.³¹ In taking a different angle of vision, utopian literature attempts to transcend old limits to perception. There is some-

²⁹ Bernard S. Cohn, “Anthropology and History in the 1980s,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 12 (1981): 231. Edwin J. Van Kley, “Europe’s ‘Discovery’ of China and the Writing of World History,” *AHR* 76 (1971): 385.

³⁰ Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley, 1982), p. 5.

³¹ On the idea of world history as utopian literature, see W. Warren Wagar, *The City of Man: Prophecies of a World Civilization in Twentieth Century Thought* (Boston, 1963). Geoffrey Barraclough, “Universal History,” in *Approaches to History*, ed. H. R. Finberg (London, 1962), pp. 88, 101.

thing of this as well in Stavrianos's attempt to transcend the limits of Eurocentrism in the teaching of world history.

What gives Stavrianos's thought significance here as a study in the reaction against Eurocentrism is his radical separation of western and world history. To him, neither western civilization courses, European imperialism courses, nor courses of "the west in world history" type were offerings in world history. Instead, they were western histories, versions in which dynamic Europeans did their stuff to the passive populations that made up the rest of humankind. "It needs to be recognized," Stavrianos explained, "that world history and Western Civilization are inherently and fundamentally different, that they cannot be combined in any fashion, and each teacher must make the basic policy decision as to whether he will offer either the one or the other."³²

To him, this decision had important consequences in the education of American youth. For world history, Stavrianos argued, had one message for them and western history had another. His is a brave new world, with nuclear annihilation lying in one direction and a more vibrant interaction of cultures in the other. "We have the privilege," he wants students to know, "of living in what is without a doubt the most exciting and significant era in history." But this, he laments, is not what students learn from western history. Instead, as Europe and the United States lose mastery in the world, western history becomes like a dirge for the human race. Innocently, students project this dark present into a vision of a dark future. To Stavrianos, the answer to this western gloom is global perspective. It offers students not only a different past but also a different future to go with it.³³ Someone said the future is not what it used to be. That, to Stavrianos, was the good news of world history in global perspective.

Originally a Europeanist specializing in Greek history, Stavrianos was long conscious of the influence of boundaries between peoples. (Significantly, the two foremost world history academics in the United States, Stavrianos and McNeill, were born in Canada and published their early work in Greek history.) As early as

³² L. S. Stavrianos, "The Teaching of World History," *HT* 3(1969): 24.

³³ L. S. Stavrianos, "From 'Why World History' to 'What World History?'" *Social Education* (hereafter cited as *SE*) 39 (1975): 362. Stavrianos's world optimism is best expressed in his *The Promise of the Coming Dark Age* (San Francisco, 1976); it is more tempered in *Global Rift: The Third World Comes of Age* (New York, 1981).

the 1940s, he turned to world history in reaction to what he perceived to be the limitations of the traditional western civilization survey as education for Americans involved after the Second World War in larger international commitments. "I felt the need at the time for another course with a global perspective," he recalled of his first thoughts about world history, "and this feeling was strengthened during the Korean War when so many of our students left our campuses for the Far East with negligible knowledge or understanding of what they were about to face."³⁴ After Sputnik in 1957, this perception of a national need for education in nonwestern cultures became more widely shared in the United States, and with the National Defense Education Act in the next year, government, universities, and private foundations in the field of education came together in the idea that instruction in foreign languages, area studies, and international education was in the national defense interests of the United States. In this way, Stavrianos's ideas were part of a larger cultural expression, with origins in a period when Americans were more at home in the world, when students looked on nonwestern peoples with a kind of peace corps idealism, and when international education was identified with American political interests.

In particular, Stavrianos's ideas connected him with those advocating the "global approach to international education, and the work of his Global History Project at Northwestern University largely coincided with the rise and decline of the globalism idea in American learning between 1957 and 1975. Partly, the term global history was simply a modish, space age name for world history. Partly, it was a term intended to contrast a world overview, transcending cultures and states, with the older, limited focus of area studies on particular nonwestern regions and languages. Area studies stressed the need to understand nonwestern cultures in their own context. This, to Stavrianos, was as parochial as Eurocentrism. Even before Sputnik, however, area studies methods, first developed for national strategic reasons during the Second World War, were already losing influence. After Sputnik, the work to supersede them with a new global approach took off with the first voyages into space.

³⁴ L. S. Stavrianos, "Project for Research and Teaching in World History" (grant application, 1957), in the papers of Dean of Faculties Payton S. Wild, Northwestern University Archives.

Before Sputnik, Stavrianos in 1952 had modest plans for a single course in world history at Northwestern. After Sputnik, he designed a whole new world history program from freshman survey to graduate studies. By 1961, he thought—wrongly, as it turned out—that he had convinced the entire faculty to convert most introductory courses in the liberal arts to the global approach. Writing to departments in that year, he stressed that changing the perspective of courses depended first on changing the perspective of teachers:

The potentiality can be realized only if each course is genuinely global and meaningfully integrated. . . . In the case of the World History course, for example, it would not suffice to have the specialist on Asia, followed by the specialists on Europe, Africa, Latin America, etc., and thus cover the globe and assume that the course is global. This would be a superficial and worthless hodgepodge of fragments of existing courses. Rather it is essential that one person invest the time and thought required to really integrate the course and to master the interrelationships and inner dynamism that inevitably would be overlooked in a vaudeville-style course.³⁵

Gathering Faculty resistance indicated, however, that the hold of traditional approaches was too strong. So was the hold of traditional histories. “Stavrianos knows full well that all of his own colleagues do not share his convictions,” the history department chairman reported; “Perhaps he is engaged in a controversy which will make the quarrels of the ancients and the moderns . . . seem like mere skirmishes.”³⁶

“You can not globalize courses,” Stavrianos concluded, “without globalizing the instructors.” This was the lesson that he carried into the work of his World History Project on the world history course in high schools. Supported by the Carnegie Foundation, this project was part of the response to the crisis of confidence in American education that followed the Sputnik surprise,

³⁵ L. S. Stavrianos to Northwestern University Faculty, memorandum, April 14, 1961, Wild Papers, Northwestern University Archives. Stavrianos's plans for global studies at Northwestern are outlined in his “Memorandum to the History Department: World History Project” (1958), and “Project for the Introduction of Globally-Oriented Introductory Courses” (1961), in the papers of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Simeon E. Leland, Northwestern University Archives.

³⁶ Gray C. Boyce, “Department of History: Annual Report, 1958–59,” Leland Papers, Northwestern University Archives.

when an infusion of federal and foundation grants opened opportunities for reform in the teaching of high school subjects. None needed it more than the world history course. This was a lady with a past. World history was at once the oldest history course in public high schools and the most despised by teachers and students alike. To Stavrianos, this failing was the result of what he described as “the sheepskin curtain”—the communications barrier between universities and secondary schools that kept the influence of professional historians out of the social studies. Therefore, to understand Stavrianos’s place in the story of the world history course in high schools, it is necessary to review the history of this relationship between historians and secondary teachers in the making of the world history class and fixing it on the European past.

The original high school world history course, called “General History,” can be traced back to the beginning of the high school itself in Boston in 1821. It evolved from a second-year course, “Ancient and Modern History and Chronology,” given at Boston English High School in that year, a course itself developed from older Latin school instruction designed to provide historical background to the study of classical languages. As it spread to other locations, the course continued to focus on the ancient past, and only gradually did it expand to include later centuries. Covering a history beginning with Adam and Eve, the course mixed biblical history and classical mythology; but the line of development toward European history was clear. For, despite a reputation for dreariness and dry facts, the course had a clear organizing idea: history was the story of the “true religion” of Christianity. “Civilization,” affirmed Samuel G. Goodrich in his course textbook in 1828, “has followed in the train of Christianity.” When, with the decline of religious thinking in the nineteenth century, this principle of organization lost influence in textbook writing, other authors turned to secular themes of race and “progress,” thus continuing in the same way to make Europe the equivalent of civilization. If, today, world history is represented as a way to overcome ethnocentrism, General History at this time was more a way to teach it. “The history of the civilized world is the history of the Aryan, Semitic, and Hametic races,” explained William Swinton in his *Outlines of the World’s History*, one of the most popular texts of the 1870s. “We are fully authorized to say that the Aryans are peculiarly the race of *progress*; and a very large part of the his-

tory of the world must be taken up with an account of the contributions which the Aryan nations have made to the common stock of civilization."³⁷

At the end of the nineteenth century, as amateur historians gave way to professionals, Philip V. N. Myers virtually cornered the textbook market in General History. Where earlier texts fixed on politics and wars, Myers' *A General History for Colleges and High School* gave coverage to economic and social developments and added brief sections on non-western areas. Whereas Swinton in 1874, for example, failed even to list either India or China in his index, Myers in 1889 gave five pages of coverage to each of these areas (compared with 373 on ancient civilization and 328 on Europe) and ten to the expansion of Islam. Other authors followed the leader, but plainly no one knew what to do with the rest of the world. Bare descriptions of nonwestern peoples were added as supplements, chapters standing in isolation—usually at the end of the book—from the European story. Thus General History grew, but it did not change. Myers in 1889 continued the racial theme that gave justification to the old preoccupation with European history. "Of all the races," he explained, "the White, or Caucasian, exhibits by far the most perfect type, physically, intellectually, and morally."³⁸ However, by the time his text appeared in the 1906 edition, Myers had removed these racial references, and Eurocentrism was simply left on its own, without a legitimizing myth or clear principle of organization.

In a survey of teachers and students of General History in 1887, Albert Bushnell Hart of Harvard reported that the class—like most high school history at the time—was taken up with recitation drills and the textbook method. "It was mostly conglomerate, scrap-book history," an educator recalled some time later, "and merely tied together dynastic and ecclesiastical occurrences. . . . It was predominantly political, with a few comments on cultural developments and religious clashes. It stressed wars and schisms;

³⁷ William Swinton, *Outlines of the World's History: Ancient, Medieval and Modern* (New York, 1874), pp. 3, 4. Samuel G. Goodrich, *Outlines of Chronology: Ancient and Modern* (Boston, 1828), p. 201. On the origins and spread of General History, see John E. Stout, *The Development of High School Curricula in the North Central States from 1860 to 1918* (Chicago, 1921), pp. 174–79; William F. Russell, "The Entrance of History into the Curriculum of the Secondary School," *History Teachers' Magazine* 5 (1914): 311–18; and Calvin O. Davis, "Public Secondary Education in Michigan: Its History and Contemporary Tendencies" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1914), pp. 59–66, 262.

³⁸ Philip V. N. Myers, *A General History for Colleges and High Schools* (Boston, 1889), p. 2.

pictured kings and queens, feudal lords and bishops, popes and emperors; emphasized dates and names . . . and made the study of history largely an exercise of the memory. Geographically it was confined to the Mediterranean basin, and to Western Europe, with brief allusions to the New World, Asia, and Africa.”³⁹

To enliven student interest, Wellesley College historian Mary D. Sheldon tried unsuccessfully in 1885 to introduce the source method to General History, but the course resisted everything new—except more names and dates. In these years, therefore, just as historians began to organize their profession in the United States, General History was a sitting duck for critics of history in the schools. Observers described it as a course in disorder: over-stuffed, meaningless, and plain boring. Meeting in 1892, members of the Conference on History, Civil Government, and Political Economy, a subcommittee of the famous Committee of Ten on Secondary School Subjects, recorded their fears that the class was turning students away from the study of history altogether. “The opinion of the Conference is decidedly against single courses in general history,” they reported, “because it is almost impossible to carry them on without the study degenerating into a mere assemblage of dates and names.”⁴⁰

On came the American Historical Association. From the beginning of their organized existence as a profession, historians in the AHA wanted to get rid of General History. In 1899, the report of the organization’s Committee of Seven, the first group of college historians to review systematically the condition of history in high schools, made the course anathema. The committee found General History offered in about half of the over two hundred schools it surveyed in 1897; by 1915, reports to the United States Commissioner of Education from over seven thousand schools indicated that only 5% were still teaching the course. Instead, the new order in schools across the country was the four-block curriculum recommended by the Committee of Seven: (1) ancient history, (2) Euro-

³⁹ Alexander C. Flick, “Content of World History Courses in Schools and Colleges,” *Proceedings of the Association of History Teachers of the Middle States and Maryland*, no. 25 (1927), pp. 60–61. Albert Bushnell Hart, *History in High and Preparatory Schools* (Syracuse, 1887), pp. 5–6.

⁴⁰ National Education Association, *Report of the Committee on Secondary School Subjects* (Washington, 1893), p. 174. Albert Bushnell Hart, “Conference on History, Civil Government and Political Economy: Preliminary Report, January 13, 1893” (typescript), Charles W. Eliot papers, Harvard University Archives. Mary D. Sheldon, *Studies in General History* (Boston, 1895). For a description of daily instruction in a General History class at this period, see Stuarl MacKibbin, “Outline Course of Study in History,” *Education* 10 (1889): 164–66.

pean history, (3) English history, and (4) American history. These were the good old days. "Those in charge of these schools had so much confidence and faith in the leadership of the American Historical Association," recalled Rolla M. Tryon in 1935, "that they almost ceased merely *offering* history, but *required* it instead." Scholars have described a period of cooperation between colleges and schools in curriculum making that began in 1884. For historians, this defeat of General History was evidence of their own breakthrough of influence in high schools. The course, it seemed, was gone with the wind. "It was eliminated root and branch," a midwestern professor commented in 1919, "and the space which it once occupied has since been so covered that few, if any, of the later generation of school pupils know of its former existence."⁴¹

However, this was not the final solution to the General History problem. After America's crusade for democracy in the First World War, some educators called for a return to world history—the term "world history" was now used in part to distinguish the subject from the old, discredited General History—in order to prepare citizens for the nation's new international involvements. In 1919, the National Education Association (NEA) asked the AHA for recommendations to adjust school work to this wider conception of citizenship education. What followed was an important episode in AHA history in which historians renounced all association with the world history idea and school teachers took it up in their place.

What was involved was the report of the AHA Committee on History and Education for Citizenship in Schools. During 1919–20, committee members debated two ideas of world history, both a response—in different ways—to the war experience. One, which set the new direction for the subject in schools, was the idea of world history as the story of democracy, a progressive version of the Whig interpretation of history in which the human past

⁴¹ Calvin O. Davis, "A Course in World History," *The Historical Outlook* (hereafter cited as *HO*) 10 (1919): 453. Rolla M. Tryon, *The Social Sciences as School Subjects: Report of the Commission on the Social Studies* (New York, 1935), p. 177. American Historical Association, *The Study of History in Schools: Report to the American Historical Association by the Committee of Seven* (New York, 1899). For a rearguard defense of General History as a course preserving the unity of history, see Lucy M. Salmon, "Unity in College Entrance History," *Educational Review* 12 (1896): 165–68; and Edward Van Dyke Robinson, "An Ideal Course in History for Secondary Schools," *The School Review* 6 (1898): 672–78. On college-school cooperation in this period, see Edward A. Krug, *The Shaping of the American High School* (Madison, 1969).

became, as someone has described it, "American history pushed back through time." This approach, in effect, gave Eurocentrism a new lease on life in world history, with the theme of democratic development in the west taking the place of the old themes of religion and race. Conversely, the other idea, a reflection of the crisis of confidence caused by the Great War, was an expression of the loss of faith in western values. Here began the reaction against Eurocentrism in world history. Influential, in this connection, was the work of H. G. Wells, *The Outline of History*, calling in 1920 for world history in schools as a basis for a world community of understanding and belief. The AHA committee, however, wanted no part of this world "religion," recommending instead a tenth-grade world survey based on a "growth of democracy" theme. But the AHA wanted no part of this either. Members opposed anything resembling the old General History, and, with widespread resistance to the committee recommendation, the organization decided to stick to the friendly old Committee of Seven curriculum.⁴²

However, these good old days of AHA influence in the schools were numbered. The early grip of history on the curriculum can be explained in part by the fact that the history profession got into the schools first, establishing a virtual monopoly in humane studies long before the social science disciplines organized their own efforts to crack the curriculum. What broke this monopoly was not only the crush of these new competitors, but the influence as well of the so-called New History, developed by historians of the progressive movement to make the study of the past useful to public life in the present. Historian of education Hazel W. Hertzberg has explained how educators during the period of the First World War brought this New History together with ideas of citizenship education to form the social studies movement. In the work of the Committee on Social Studies of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (in which secondary teachers outnumbered college professors), established by the National Education Association in 1913, the father of the New History, James Harvey Robinson, stole the show with his ideas on recent history as instruction for democratic citizenship. Members complained of the Committee of Seven curriculum as being too academic for this kind of practical teaching, too remote from problems of contemporary life, and too much an instrument of "college domination"

⁴² Daniel C. Knowlton, "Report of the Committee on History and Education for Citizenship: Syllabus for Modern History in the Tenth Grade," *HO* 12 (1921): 165–84.

over the schools. "The customary four units," asserted the committee report in 1916, "which have been largely fixed in character by the traditions of the historian and the requirements of the college, are more or less discredited as ill adapted to the requirements of secondary education."⁴³ Over the following years, this committee's proposals for a new social studies curriculum did battle with the old Committee of Seven subjects. The result was a "terrific overhauling" of the secondary curriculum, which broke the influence of the history profession in schools and brought on the reign of the social studies.

The social studies, a term used originally to describe offerings in history, civics, and political economy, became more broadly defined after the turn of the century as "the social sciences simplified for pedagogical purposes." From this conception came the professional mythology of the "education men" of the schools and teachers colleges as specialists in course-making and curricula in the field. If history and the social sciences were the subject matter of university scholars, they asserted, social studies was the subject matter of teachers and educators. In this way, the struggle of education reformers for the social studies was a struggle against the influence of historians in the schools. In 1921, reform leaders established the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) as the professional organization of social studies teachers. From now on, remarked a reformer, the curriculum was the business of educators.⁴⁴ One result, as described below, was the return of the once and future course in world history. Swept from the schools during the rise of history professionals, the course returned with the rise of professional educators. If, therefore, the passing of General History marked the rise of AHA influence in secondary education, this second coming of world history was a sign of its decline.

Visiting high schools during 1923–24, Columbia University Teachers College historian J. Montgomery Gambrill found principals caught up everywhere in curriculum making. The squeeze was on. With subjects old and new clamoring for space, these educators worked to compress subject matter into new social studies

⁴³ National Education Association, *The Social Studies in Secondary Education: Report of the Committee on Social Studies of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education* (Washington, 1916), p. 40. Hazel W. Hertzberg, *Social Studies Reform, 1880–1980* (Boulder, n.d.), p. 27.

⁴⁴ Harold O. Rugg, letter published in *HO* 12 (1921): 184–89.

offerings. In this, the discipline of history, still dominant, served them as the integrating subject for social studies material—but Gambrill did not like the form of history that some were using. His complaint: General History was coming back. This new tenth-grade course, he lamented, was too much like the old one, “overwhelmingly European in content and point of view,” with none of the sweep and spirit that H. G. Wells tried to bring to the subject:

Any one who has the opportunity of visiting schools and making inquiries will soon learn that very often the new course is introduced simply to cover as much ground as possible in the one year of history other than American which is offered, and that the . . . conflicting demands of other social studies are the real explanation, rather than any recognition of a World Community or of the need for a new world history. Such a practice is simply a reversion to the old “general history” so vigorously attacked a generation ago and for many years so completely discredited.

Historians objected that the course had no recommendation from any of their organizations. To some educators, however, it was “the answer to the curriculum-maker’s prayers.” The subject and the social studies just seemed to go together. “The world story naturally brings in world geography,” a school principal told Gambrill; “the world-wide race contacts permit a natural introduction of all required sociology; the historical development of governmental and economic problems furnishes more concrete material for elementary study of political science and economics than the textbook presentation based almost entirely on recent or present-day government and economic questions.”⁴⁵ Further, this world story made room not only for other subjects but also for other histories. “Here was a one-year course into which could be compressed all that was worthwhile which had formerly been taught in ancient, medieval and modern, and English history,” remarked another educator. “A three-year course in one to be taught on the sophomore level in high school seemed almost too good to be true.” Thus in 1924 the History Curricula Inquiry, organized by the AHA to examine the crumbling of the Committee of

⁴⁵ J. Montgomery Gambrill, “Some Tendencies and Issues in the Making of Social Studies Curricula,” *HO* 15 (1924): 54; and “The New World History,” *HO* 18 (1927): 267. Observers first noted the return of the General History survey in 1919. Arley B. Show, “One or Two Years of European History in High Schools?” *HO* 10 (1919): 283.

Seven curriculum, reported that world history was feeding on other history offerings, and that, as a result, separate courses in ancient, medieval, and English history were dwindling in number (see figure 1). The Inquiry found American history—as much a fixture in the classroom as Old Glory—taught in all of the 504 high schools that it surveyed; in contrast world history, as yet, was taught in only eighty. But even this slow advance of the subject contrasted significantly with what appeared to be a larger retreat of history subjects in general. “It does seem to be true,” concluded Inquiry chairman Edgar Dawson, “that as leadership in the making of curricula passes from the Committee of Seven to the NEA Committee on Social Studies, the amount of history other than that of the United States tends to decrease.”⁴⁶

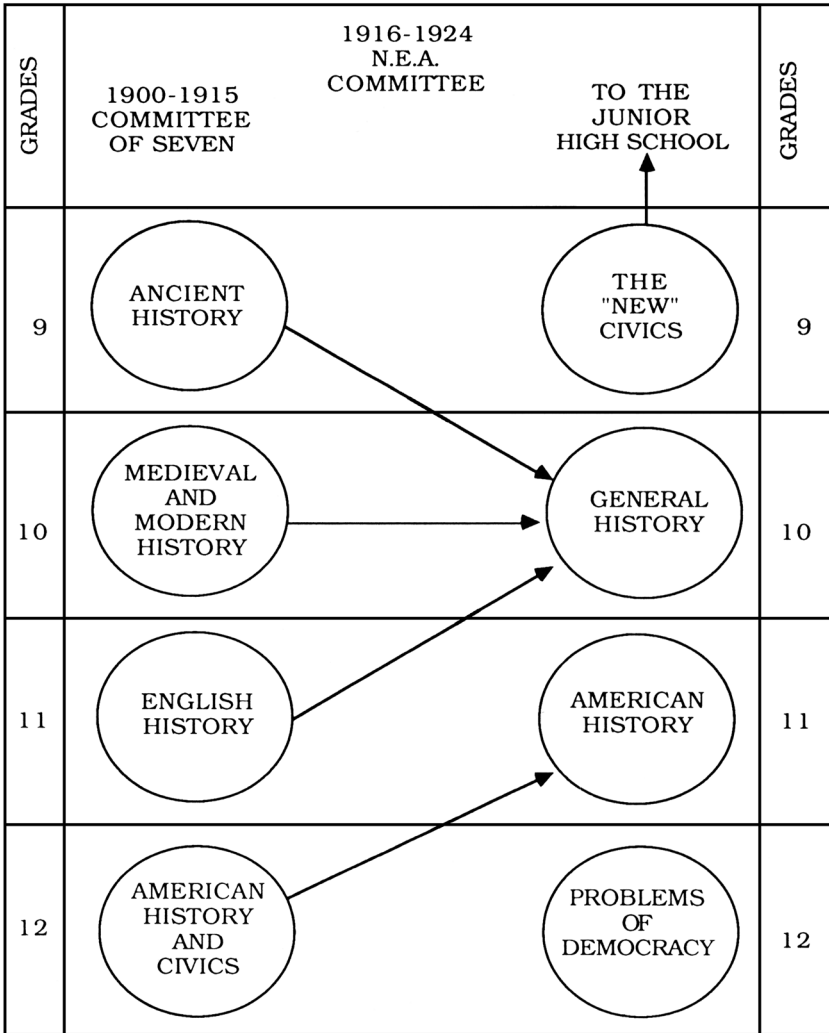
Professors complained of a power grab by educators and lamented the passing of a history of cooperation between academic scholars and secondary teachers in forming history programs. Hazel Hertzberg, however, in her study of the social studies movement, identified these complaints as part of a mythology among historians of a golden age of history in public schools, which, as they perceive it, was suddenly ended by the barbarian invasions of educationists and administrators. In fact, this parting between historians and social studies teachers, Hertzberg explains, was more civilized, with cooperation between the AHA and NCSS continuing across the growing distance between universities and high schools. Over time, however, unfamiliarity bred contempt. Hertzberg notes that historians lost interest in pedagogy and made “education” and “social studies” terms of opprobrium. Educators, in turn, belittled historians in ivory towers. “These specialists,” one remarked in 1934, “have been viewed, perhaps justly, in education circles as remote from classroom activities and experimental and progressive activity, as conservative or even reactionary, and as uncooperative or even hostile to schoolmen.”⁴⁷ So descended the sheepskin curtain.

As this curtain came down, however, world history course

⁴⁶ Edgar Dawson, “The History Inquiry,” *HO* 15 (1924): 269. A. K. King, “Is World History as Successful as We Thought It Would Be?” *High School Journal* 20 (1937): 185.

⁴⁷ E. M. Hunt. “The Conclusions and Recommendations of the Commission on the Social Studies of the American Historical Association,” *The Social Studies* (hereafter cited as *SS*) 25 (1934): 282. Hertzberg, pp. 65–92 (n. 43 above). Arthur E. Bestor, *Educational Wastelands: The Retreat from Learning, in Our Public Schools* (Urbana, 1953), pp. 44, 103.

Figure 1. The Drift in Many Schools. From Edgar Dawson, "The History Inquiry," *Historical Outlook* 15 (1942): 251.



enrollment went up, and up. Observers traced the steady rise of enrollments in the class. In 1934 student numbers reached a half million (12% of all pupils in grades nine to twelve), marking the breakthrough of world history as the leading course in "foreign" (read non-American) history. The drawing power of this one-year

survey, authorities concluded, was not in the appeal of its subject matter but in the opportunity that it offered students to avoid two years of work in other foreign history areas. Thus the success of world history was both preserving instruction in non-American history and reducing the amount of time that pupils were devoting to the study of history in general. The United States Office of Education reported in 1934 that enrollment gains in world history, in fact, were making up for losses in all other foreign histories:

Within the history groups of subjects the evidence indicates . . . that American history has been largely holding its own, English history has almost been eliminated, and two-year sequences in foreign history are gradually giving way to one-year courses in world history. . . . While the percentages of pupils studying foreign history might at first sight suggest a falling off in number of pupils reached, more careful examination of the data does not justify such a conclusion. Pupils are now much more often than some years ago giving only one year to study of the history of foreign nations, but, owing to the rapid rise of world history, the proportion of the pupils who are exposed to foreign history at some place in their high school courses appears not to have diminished.⁴⁸

By 1949 the numbers in world history, over 870,000 students (16%), were much greater than those in all other foreign history courses combined (4%)—and rising. From nearly 59% of all tenth graders in 1949, world history enrollments reached over 69%, a million and a half students, by 1961. “The one-year course in world history,” reported an educator, “has emerged as the model offering next in popularity to American history.”⁴⁹ Thus, at the beginning of the 1960s, history in high schools was standing on two legs. One was the eleventh-grade course in American history, a national institution, made compulsory by law in many states, and safeguarded everywhere by civic and patriotic organizations. The other was world history. This course, in terms of enrollment, was

⁴⁸ U.S. Office of Education, *Offerings and Registrations in High School Subjects: 1933–1934*, Bulletin no. 6 (Washington, 1938), p. 6. Arthur Dillman Gray. “The One Year Course in World History,” *HO* 23 (1932): 407–9.

⁴⁹ Edgar B. Wesley, “The Potentialities of World History in a World Society,” in *Improving The Teaching of World History*, ed. Edith West, (Washington, 1949). p. 1. William E. Pulliam, *The Status of World History Instruction in American Secondary Schools* (Washington, 1972), pp. 8, 15–16, 20. In 1961, according to Pulliam, world history was taught in 87% of all four-year high schools, American history in 93%, modern Europe in 4%, and ancient and medieval Europe in 3%.

one of the great success stories in the history of American education; in terms of everything else, it was a running failure. Students declared it to be too aimless; teachers, too boundless; educators, too stale. In 1949, NCSS president Dorothy McClure identified the course as the sick man of the social studies curriculum. "Random surveys of opinion among teachers and students alike," she remarked, "indicate that perhaps no other part of the social studies program is more criticized than the one-year, elective world history course." Making his rounds of high schools, James Bryant Conant in 1958 reported "widespread disappointment" with the class. Education critic Martin Mayer, after his own survey in 1961, described it as the course "everyone hates."⁵⁰ So fared world history when, in the same year, Stavrianos called teachers to a new global approach to the subject.

These criticisms of the world history class were part of a larger and more powerful attack at this period on the condition of secondary education in America. Critics spoke of a "failure by comparison," an incapacity of schools to match the rigor of Soviet education in teaching fundamental skills. After Sputnik in 1957, this criticism widened into a wholesale condemnation of the "progressive" curriculum in the United States. This was the background to a "decade of experiment" during which, as indicated earlier, various funded "projects," based mainly in universities, worked on methods to bring new toughness and stimulation to school subjects. One result was the development of the "new social studies," designed to involve students in critical thinking and the celebrated "discovery method." Another was the effort to give relevance to the curriculum by opening it to the "issues" of the 1960s. Involved in this was the effort of Stavrianos's World History Project at Northwestern to bring "globalism" to the world history course. This course, since its rebirth in the movement for citizenship education after the First World War, had little internal development. Instruction concentrated on the evolution of western democracy, with more and more "ground covering" of other world areas added on over the years. Against this, the small band of critics calling for a more international approach made little

⁵⁰ Martin Mayer, *Where, When, and Why? Social Studies in American Schools* (New York, 1962), p. 22. James Bryant Conant, *The American High School Today* (New York, 1959), p. 42. Dorothy McClure, "Needed Revisions in World History Programs," in West, ed., p. 25 (n. 49 above).

progress.⁵¹ Now, however, in a period of popular fascination with the new space age, the course appeared more vulnerable to change.

Future historians are likely to make much of this impact of space on American education. As if conjured up by the magic of the first photographs from space of the blue planet, movements appeared to advocate the education of youth in global consciousness. Most wanted to bring a global perspective to the whole curriculum, and, in this connection, Stavrianos's work with the world history course was but a small pan of a larger design. All global studies movements were together, however, in using the woeful reputation of this course to beat their opponents over the head and to explain why Americans were ignorant of world affairs. The quaint little Eurocentric world that boys and girls learned about in schools, argued one of these global educators, was no longer the world they lived in:

For over one hundred years there has been some form of teaching about people outside America's geographical borders in both elementary and secondary schools. All of us have traced the storied Nile to its source while learning that Egypt is her gracious gift. We have memorized the Plantagenet kings and sung about the Alps. Events of the 1960s, however, changed all that. The Soviet launching of Sputnik had set the USA on her ear. . . . When most of us try to recall what we were taught about human cultures from kindergarten through grade 12, we remember only United States history, the history of our own home state, and what was lumped into a bag known as "world" history, namely European, emphatically Western culture, commencing in Mesopotamia and the Nile Valley. Suddenly out of the 1960s, sprang Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Canada.⁵²

Through the work of global studies movements, this idea of a wider world made inroads into the social studies. For a time, globalism was the word. In some schools, old world history offerings,

⁵¹ For a remarkable example of this criticism, anticipating present arguments for the "global" approach, see Marshall Hodgson, "World History and a World Outlook," *SS* 35 (1944): 297-301. Elmer Ellis, "The Permanence of Learning in World History," *SS* 25 (1934): 133-36.

⁵² Betty Billiard, "Personal Statement to the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies," *President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies: Background Papers and Studies* (Washington, D.C., 1979), p. 2. On global education movements, see James M. Becker, ed. *Schooling for a Global Age* (New York, 1979), pp. 245-336.

once bound to western perspectives, were converted to surveys of “World Cultures.” More importantly, attacks on the old Eurocentric approach now became the most familiar criticism of world history teaching. Thus the larger influence of global studies movements carried along the effort of Stavrianos to bring the ideal of “global perspective” in world history to intellectual fashion. The ideal endured, but the movements did not.

Oil crisis, pollution crisis, population crisis—these were some of the concepts that spread the idea after 1973 that an era of affluence and growth was over. “Spaceship Earth” became part of the new imagery of the global studies movements to educate pupils in the notion of global interdependence on a small and endangered planet. “We humans are all in this together,” affirmed one movement leader. “The fate of some of us is quickly becoming the fate of all of us.” After the Vietnam war, however, Americans were coming in from the cold of international involvements and looking to themselves. Popular writers spoke of the “big chill”; educators called it “back to basics.” A poll by the National School Board Association found that public school officials ranked high the need for more instruction in basic skills, consumerism, and parenting; they ranked low the needs of global studies and world history. To them, the most important issues for the nation were domestic problems of crime, violence, and family breakdown; the least important were global problems of conflict and poverty. Spaceship Earth would not fly. By 1979, global studies movements lamented the decline of funding and the hard reality that their cause was dead at the roots.⁵³

With the sharp decline of history enrollments in colleges and schools after 1970, some educators feared that the same fate was overtaking the subject of history itself. At fault, some believed, were antihistorical currents within global studies and the “new social studies.” True, certain elements in global studies movements always doubted the value of history to international education. Understanding the historical causes of global problems, they believed, was less useful—and potentially more divisive—than

⁵³ *Strength through Wisdom: A Critique of United States Capability. A Report to the President from the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies* (Washington, 1979), pp. 1, 9, 16–17. James H. Mecklenburger, *What Priority for Global Education: A National School Board Association Survey of School Board Members and School Superintendents* (Washington, 1979), pp. 1–12. James M. Becker and Gerald Marker, *A Final Report on the Mid-America Program for Global Perspectives in Education* (Bloomington, 1979), p. 1.

understanding the need for world cooperation in the present. The global village was no place to dig up the past. In addition, some in the new social studies questioned the value of history in developing individual powers of analysis and conceptualization useful to problem solving in the present. To them, history instead was associated with older methods of recitation and drill, intended to compel students to memorize a body of accumulated knowledge about the past. In 1975, the Committee on the Status of History, appointed by the Organization of American Historians (OAH), reported that it found a troubling opinion in the land. "This is the widely held assumption," explained chairman Richard S. Kirkendall, "that history is not a useful subject, not useful for an individual eager to find a job and not useful for a society eager to solve its problems."⁵⁴ This report on history's time of troubles in the 1970s revived old fears among historians that the social studies were undoing history in the schools. In reality, history teachers were undoing the new social studies.

Surveys in the 1970s confirmed that the vogue of the new social studies was passing with little influence on instruction. "The decade of change and innovation in the schools," concluded a Kettering Foundation report in 1973, "had little or no lasting effect on the content of school programs or the quality of teaching and learning." The great chain of teaching was strong. As part of this triumph of teacher conservatism over the innovations of the new social studies, history continued to dominate the social studies. But lack of student interest in the subject, critics noted, appeared to have become a generational phenomenon. Americans, one remarked, were never much interested in history in the first place; now, among the young, the subject seemed to be ready for the waxworks.⁵⁵

"Something must be done," warned an educator, "and done

⁵⁴ Richard S. Kirkendall, "The Status of History in the Schools," *Journal of American History* 62 (1975): 563; and "More History. Better History," *SE* 40 (1976): 449. On the new social studies, see John D. Haas, *The Era of the New Social Studies* (ERIC, 1977).

⁵⁵ Fred M. Hechinger, "Waxworks History," *Saturday Review* (May 29, 1976). *The Reform of Secondary Education: A Report to the Public and the Profession: The National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education, Established by the Charles F. Kettering Foundation* (New York, 1973), p. 7. For surveys on the decline of the new social studies, see James P. Shaver, G. L. Davis, and Suzanne W. Helburn, "The Status of Social Studies Education," *SE* 43 (1979): 150-53, and Richard E. Gross, "The Status of the Social Studies in the Public Schools of the United States," *SE* 41 (1977): 194-200.

shortly, or world history, as well as history in general, will no longer be a part of the school curriculum." A perception that the universities were failing the schools, and that the subject of history was paying the price, was gaining strength. Responding, the AHA, OAH, and NCSS became active in programs to encourage contacts between history educators at both levels. Writing in 1978, AHA Teaching Division vice-president Warren Susman lamented the difference between the good old days, now "almost legendary," when historians involved themselves in high school matters, and the current separation between professors and teachers. "It is still *them* and *us*," he complained, "still two separate worlds, with a few tentative bridges thrown across the gap."⁵⁶

In one way, the bridge thrown across by Stavrianos helped to open the road toward global perspective in world history. In another, it was a bridge to nowhere. As indicated, Stavrianos believed that breaking the hold of Eurocentrism over world history depended on breaking the barrier between universities and schools. In truth, however, world history in universities was as dead a language as Latin. Historians, in fact, were probably more distant from the subject than school teachers. "I liked teaching high school world history, and I wanted to be the best high school world history teacher I could be," remarked one educator, for example, in recalling his return to university to better prepare himself in the subject. "I asked for all their courses in world history. They did not have any. I suggested pasting some courses together from the catalog. They said I first had to choose a speciality." What such students did not learn in universities they could not pass on as teachers in the schools. "Thus," Stavrianos observed, "there has been a vicious circle of inadequate training at both levels, interacting back and forth between high school and college, and preventing substantial progress all along the line." Teachers taught the world history they knew. In sum, they taught European history.⁵⁷ By 1965, Stavrianos, in response, was planning a graduate program at Northwestern to produce future teachers in world history. However, events within the university (not dis-

⁵⁶ Warren Susman, "Report of the Vice-President, Teaching Division," *AHA Annual Report: 1978* (Washington, 1979), p. 58. Pulliam (n. 49 above), p. 79.

⁵⁷ L. S. Stavrianos, "New Viewpoints in Teaching World History" (paper presented to the NCSS, November 25, 1961), pp. 6–7; "World History Program: Northwestern University" (grant report, 1959), Wild Papers, Northwestern University Archives. Howard Mehlinger, "World History in Secondary Education," *1982 World History Teaching Conference* (Colorado Springs, 1983), pp. 8–9.

cussed here) caused him to put these plans on hold and, eventually, to take up opportunities at another institution. When, in 1973, he ended his teaching at Northwestern, America's fascination with globalism was ending as well.

Stavrianos believes today, however, that the intellectual transition from European to global perspective in world history largely has been achieved—"at least in theory." A survey in 1985 by Douglas D. Alder of current high school textbooks on the subject confirmed that, while most works continued to give priority to western history, a gradual trend was underway toward broader world coverage. However, the result, Alder observed, was much diversity in new approaches and little agreement on new content. "There seems to be no clear ideas about what to include," he remarked, "and what to leave out."⁵⁸ Thus the effect of the global approach was to discredit the old Eurocentrism, which once provided easy and familiar themes for the world history course, without replacing it with an integrating concept that historians could agree on. Having gained the whole world, the course lost its bearings. In this sense, the idea of global perspective was a form of negativism, powerful in overturning the old approach but powerless to produce a new one. Figuratively, Stavrianos spoke of global perspective as "a view from the moon"; in fact, however, a view from the moon reveals only the globe itself, with nothing human or historical in sight. Rather than solving the problem of the world history course, global perspective made it more difficult. There was nothing wrong with the Eurocentric approach to world history—except that it was not world history. Now, however, with the intellectual conversion to the global approach, teachers faced a question made more terrible by this loss of western orientation: what is world history?

Finding an answer, Stavrianos agrees, is the next task for world historians. When he wrote his high school textbook, *A Global History of Man*, in 1962, Stavrianos was involved in an "equal time" philosophy designed to counter the prevailing western approach. "At all times," he told teachers of the period, "one basic rule must be kept in mind: that no European movement or institution be treated unless non-European movements or institutions of similar magnitude and world significance also be taught."

⁵⁸ Douglas D. Alder, "World History Textbooks for the Secondary Schools," (typescript, 1986), p. 11.

Beginning with a unified survey of the human past, his text mostly was taken up with separate chapters on different cultural regions, each approached through a “flashback technique” in which—in pursuit of “relevance”—present conditions were traced back to origins in the past. Critics objected to Stavrianos’s present-mindedness, his treatment of the west as one civilization among equals, and his separate, area-studies approach to world cultures. Now, however, observers note that of all the world history textbooks produced in the era of the new social studies, only this one continues to be used widely in schools.⁵⁹ Today, Stavrianos affirms, he would write a different book. Global perspective was a first step toward global history; but most writers, he explains, simply piled global history upon western history, the new social history upon the old political history, history from below upon history from above. Thus the new approach added to the old problem too much material and too few principles of selection. The need, Stavrianos concludes, is for historians to take the second step toward global history: the design of an integrating framework, an overarching idea of organization, which can raise up the value of the course and cut down the size. “Dare to be relevant,” he urges. “Dare to omit.”⁶⁰

In 1973, at the end of the “decade of experiment” in schools, members of the Kettering Foundation commission mentioned above concluded that dissatisfaction with the world history course probably was greater than before. After this, the rising influence of the global approach made the subject still more difficult to handle for teachers and students alike. Researchers Douglas D. Alder and Matthew T. Downey, in a 1985 study on the condition of history in schools, reported: “From many quarters comes the message that the course is not well taught, is not received well by students, and is confined to the unimaginative presentation of far too much detail.” Courses on ancient, European, and English history once made up a large part of the history

⁵⁹ Howard Mehlinger, (n. 57 above) p. 10, L. S. Stavrianos, Loretta Kreider Andrews, John R. McLane, Frank R. Safford, and James E. Sheridan, *A Global History of Man* (Boston, 1962). Stavrianos’s original ideas on the structure of world history were outlined in the introduction to this text. They are elaborated in his “Technology as a Central Theme for World History,” in *Proceedings: The Conference on Technology in World History, Aspen, June 14–15, 1985*, ed. John P. Mueller (Greeley, Colo., 1986). pp. 1–6.

⁶⁰ L. S. Stavrianos to the author, March 5, 1987.

curriculum in high schools; now this beleaguered one-year course on world history was about all that remained on the human past outside the United States.

Saving this course, Alder and Downey concluded, was the major task for teachers of history. "What the world history course needs," they affirmed, "is an adequate conceptual base."⁶¹ After turning away from a long and hard course toward the west, the ship of world history was lost at sea. To the rescue came the World History Association. For this organization, saving world history was part of an even greater task in American education: saving the study of history itself.

IN SEARCH OF WORLD HISTORY: WILLIAM H. McNEILL AND THE WORLD HISTORY ASSOCIATION

For the good of history, the AHA in the last century wanted to banish world history from American education. For the same reason, the World History Association (WHA) now wants to bring it back. Thus the subject once accused of deadening student interest in history is presently acclaimed as the one needed to restore it to life. In so identifying world history with the larger needs of history in the curriculum, WHA members, now numbering around 700, were taking up the cause of one of their idols in the older generation of historians. "No one would have any difficulty in explaining the rise of world history as a movement and as a field of study," remarked WHA President Kevin Reilly in 1986. "It is due to William McNeill."⁶²

McNeill's book, *The Rise of the West*, winner of the National Book Award in History and Biography in 1960, gave him a place among modern masters of world history.⁶³ In the history profession, however, he was long a voice in the wilderness. But just as this lonely warrior came to retire from his teaching career at the University of Chicago in 1983, he was joined by the small army of

⁶¹ Douglas D. Alder and Matthew T. Downey, "Problem Areas in the History Curriculum," in *History in the Schools*, ed. Matthew T. Downey (Washington, D.C., 1985), pp. 14, 16. On recent trends in world history enrollments, see Douglas D. Alder, "Is World History Disappearing?" (typescript).

⁶² Kevin Reilly, *World History Bulletin* 4 (1987): 1 (this newsletter of the WHA is cited hereafter as *WHB*).

⁶³ William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (Chicago, 1963).

the WHA. Established in the previous year, this organization represented the coming of a new generation to what had been a long and losing battle waged by McNeill (b. Vancouver, 1917), Stavrianos, and a few other isolated figures in the history profession. Importantly, the WHA was a response as well to the crisis in history enrollments, which, as indicated, had come to consciousness in the 1970s. In McNeill these young historians found someone whose prescription for world history was, at the same time, a prescription for this crisis in their discipline.

For years, McNeill had been crying world history or ruin. "Without such a course to teach the students of any and every specialism," he contended during the enrollments crunch in 1976, "the place of history in our colleges and universities is going to continue to shrink, almost for sure." Students, he asserted, simply were not listening to historians any more. Without something important and useful to teach, history professors, McNeill warned, were fated to follow classics professors down the road to irrelevance and antiquarianism. "Who besides ourselves really cares for the details that fill our learned journals and monographs?" he asked. "Why should we expect to be paid for doing things no one cares much about? Why should students listen to us? Why should anyone?"⁶⁴ So in the thought of McNeill, the continuing influence of history—and the career interests of historians—were identified with the cause of world history. Therefore, to the global ideas that the WHA inherited from Stavrianos and the international education movements of the previous period, members added a critique of things in the profession that McNeill held responsible for the crisis of history teaching in the first place: the reign of specialization, the primacy of empirical research over historical synthesis, the breakdown of the introductory course, the failure to educate youth for public duties of citizenship, and the irrelevance of much of the old Eurocentric subject matter.

The WHA, in terms of organization, came out of the effort of the AHA to turn historians and high school teachers to thoughts of cooperation. Appropriately, it was founded at the AHA annual meeting at Washington in December 1982, a meeting marking the high point of anguish over the state of university–high school

⁶⁴ William H. McNeill, "A Defense of World History," and "Beyond Western Civilization: Rebuilding the Survey," in *Mythistory and Other Essays* (Chicago, 1986), pp. 94, 105.

relations. In spirit, however, the organization was born earlier at a Teaching Division regional conference on world history instruction at the Air Force Academy (May 12–14, 1982). There, reported an organizer, participants experienced “a definite sense of movement on behalf of the world history course which includes secondary, college, and university teachers.” World historians were off to the crusades. During his own difficult struggle against an unyielding profession, McNeill had come to represent this fight for world history as a moral imperative for historians, a professional duty, “a great and holy calling.” There was, he believed, a real hunger for world history out there. “Human minds,” he affirmed, “yearn to understand things in the largest possible way.” The present generation of historians was the first, McNeill believed, able to respond to this yearning in a serious way. Events had shaken them loose from western ethnocentrism. At the same time, these young historians were the first to be active at a period when study and description of nonwestern societies had achieved global coverage.⁶⁵ For WHA members, therefore, real world history now was possible in the classroom.

In America, however, it was not the crusading season. Gottschalk and Stavrianos began their work when universities were at ease with the federal government and Americans were at ease with their place in the world. Now, after Vietnam, universities were more wary and citizens more insular. In Washington, a new administration reflected a new mood in the nation. “The college curriculum must take the non-Western world into account,” acknowledged the chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1984. “But the core of the American college curriculum—its heart and soul—should be the civilization of the West, source of the most powerful and pervasive influences on America and all of its people.”⁶⁶ Internationalism runs warm and cold in the life of the country, and interest in international education runs with it. In the 1980s, advocates of world history found a cold

⁶⁵ William H. McNeill, “A Defense of World History,” p. 93, and “The Rise of the West as a Long-Term Process,” p. 43, in *Mythistory*. The Teaching Division conference proceedings were published by the Air Force Academy, *1982 World History Teaching Conference*. Kevin Reilly describes the founding meeting in Washington in “World History Association Established,” *AHA Perspectives* 21 (1983): 7. Four sessions at the 1982 AHA meeting were devoted to teaching issues. The gloom at these proceedings over university–high school relations is reported by David Felix in *Network News Exchange* 8 (1983): 2.

⁶⁶ William J. Bennett, *To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education* (Washington, D.C., 1984), p. 39.

climate in America. Within the history profession, as always, they faced a virtual nuclear winter.

As described, world history in high schools was a course that never worked. In colleges, it was a course never really tried. When, for example, an international mood in the nation after the First World War caused some voices to call on universities for world history instruction, historians instead developed the western civilization course, giving the European past a world dimension of its own. After the Second World War, educators called again for world history and international subjects to educate Americans for world leadership. "Modern man," a commission on education advised President Harry S. Truman in 1947, "needs to sense the sweep of world history in order to see his own civilization in the context of other cultures." Instead, historians and social scientists turned this time to the study of other cultures in their own context. Not the sweep of world history but the closed theaters of area studies increased in universities, adding to the proliferation of electives that expanded the curriculum in the 1960s. To McNeill, this era of area studies, like the era of Eurocentric history before it, postponed and complicated the development of a unified world approach. Indeed the increased funding for international education in this period following Sputnik, he concluded, provided historians with the means to do what they wanted to do. They wanted to specialize. In his presidential address to the AHA in 1983, Philip D. Curtin summed up the result: "Where the field of history grew broader and richer, the training of historians grew narrower."⁶⁷

McNeill believes that this aversion of the historical profession to world history has something to do with the immensity of the subject itself. Trained to value accuracy of fact above conceptual synthesis, historians, he contends, shrink before the scale of world history. It appears, however, that some historians find the subject not so much awesome as simply too amateur. Revealing, in this connection, is a practice on some campuses where history departments provide a solitary world history course open to non-history majors only and offer the subject in the way that colonists once offered beads to natives. Not taking the course seriously

⁶⁷ Philip D. Curtin, "Depth, Span, and Relevance," *AHR* 80 (1984): 1. McNeill, "The World History Survey Course," *1982 World History Teaching Conference*, p. 3. *Higher Education for American Democracy: A Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education* (New York, 1947), p. 17.

themselves, these departments make it light and breezy for students as well. Evident here is a state of mind, a presumption that world history is good enough for science majors and the football team, but not for historians in training.

Thus, to establish the subject in the curriculum, WHA members, McNeill observes, must first make world history intellectually compelling. Second, they must convince deans and administrators that—with university budgets strained—it can be taught inexpensively to large survey classes. This, he told his following in 1982, was the way in which the western civilization course swept the country during the interwar period. At this particular time, however, these young world historians were more concerned with still another possibility: namely, that western civilization was about to sweep the country again. The return of Harvard University to a core curriculum in 1978 marked the coming of a chill to college campuses—the end of a period of lively curricular change and a return to the general education philosophy of a common learning and core courses. Among historians, discussions focused particularly on the old western civilization survey, a course battered and sometimes blown away by the storms of the sixties. Critics dismissed the course as something for an earlier day, a form of citizenship education intended to teach sons and daughters of old world immigrants to identify with a common culture: one heritage, one history, one course. American values and the practice of history itself, they argued, were now too different and diverse to be contained in such a course. So was the planet we live on. “Emerging,” the present writer remarked in a study of the western civilization course in 1982, “were other peoples, other histories, a globe of historic diversity beyond the imagination of earlier Westerners, a cosmos where pluralism replaced the oneness of history and where human experience could not be ordered into a unilineal pattern of development.”⁶⁸ No matter. As educators revived the idea of core courses, some history departments revived the teaching of western civilization. Who says you can’t go home again?

However, the western civilization course has a special place in the imagination of WHA members. Although they want to see world history implanted at every level of education from high

⁶⁸ Gilbert Allardyce, “The Rise and Fall of the Western Civilization Course,” *AHR* 87 (1982): 717. McNeill, “The World History Survey Course” (n. 4 above), p. 4.

school to graduate training, their time and energy is devoted in particular to the project of replacing western civilization as the freshman survey. In part, they are inspired by the old western civilization success story; in part, they are troubled by the continuing hold of the course upon the history profession. McNeill recalled that his own student encounter with western civilization was one of the most “dazzling experiences of my life”; now, however, he believes that the whole idea of “civilization” is time-bound. From the eighteenth century, he explains, came the idea of the west as civilization itself, the one and only, a high, singular, and unique unit in history. In the early twentieth century, masters of world history described in turn a multiplicity of civilizations, each different in style but alike in historical development. Now, McNeill speculates, as modern communications transcend all boundaries, the prospect arises that the era of civilizations is a passing phase in world history. Thus, he concludes, the concept of civilizational units needs to be rethought; and so does the concept of civilizational history based upon it.⁶⁹

The civilizational approach, McNeill observes, by concentrating study on a defined geographic area rather than the larger space over which cross-cultural and global developments occur, divides historical experience. In contrast, world history unites it. Therefore, world history is the proper subject for the introductory survey; equally, the survey is the proper course for world history. Specialized work in the field at advanced and graduate levels generally must focus on specific topics and time periods. The survey, however, provides the sweep for world history to do what only world history can do: unite the whole human past and be total, global, and universal in time and space. In consequence, however, the survey, more than any other course in world history, poses the old, awful question: What is world history? So far, a compelling response has eluded the WHA. What the organization needs, a member remarked, is “a simple, all-encompassing, elegant idea” with the power to order all human experience.

In fact, just such an elegant idea explained the appeal of the original western civilization course. The course was based on

⁶⁹ William H. McNeill, “The Era of Civilizations in World History,” *WHB* 4 (1986–87): 1–4. On world history as graduate study, see the paper of Jerry H. Bentley on the new Ph.D. field in world history (inspired by the comparative approach of Philip Curtin) at the University of Hawaii, “Graduate Education and Research in World History,” *WHB* 5 (1988): 3–7.

what McNeill described as “a great idea about the whole human past,” the idea of history as the evolution of freedom. The most compelling interpretations of the past, he observed, are those that people want to believe in. This one, in which a flattering view of English history was elevated into a Eurocentric perception of the whole human adventure, “set the mold within which the English-speaking world has tended to view modern times ever since.”⁷⁰ To become effective classroom history, however, a great idea requires a good teacher to make it clear and simple. At Columbia University early in this century, James Harvey Robinson, father of western civilization, formed this idea, generally known as the Whig interpretation of history, into a course that became the model for the most successful class in the history of higher education in America. However, McNeill has explained how, with time, this original vision faded, how new subject matter clouded over the old liberal theme of the progress of freedom, and how historians in the 1960s, having lost faith in western civilization ideas, gave up this grand old survey and the mass enrollments that went with it. Says McNeill, “We cut our own throats.” With the waning of Whig history, he comments, historians returned to confusion about the larger shape of the past. Such was the background to the search of the WHA for another idea and another teacher.

It seems what members want is an idea of history at once global and American, something that reacts against the Eurocentrism of western civilization and yet remains “our history,” a history with the kind of spirit and values that American youth want to believe in. For this reason, the two most common approaches to global analysis, modernization theory and world system methods, appear unbecoming, the first being too western, the second too much the other way around. When Cyril E. Black in 1982 advocated modernization theory as a conceptual theme for the world history survey, he was careful to explain that, contrary to received opinion, this theory was neither conditioned by western bias nor constructed on European experience. Critics, however, objected that this approach made world history appear too much the son of western civilization, a global version of western “progress,” drawing again on ancient perceptions of a core civilization bringing light to a periphery in darkness. In contrast, world system theory

⁷⁰ William H. McNeill, “Introduction” to *Lord Acton* (n. 2 above), p. xviii. McNeill, “Beyond Western Civilization: Rebuilding the Survey,” pp. 101–2.

provided quite a different analysis of core and periphery in which the west's werewolf accumulation of wealth was used to explain the poverty of almost everyone else on the planet.⁷¹ Here critics objected that this approach would make the world history survey not an extension of the western civilization idea but a revolt against it: an antiwestern civilization course and a judgment on the west, its imperialism, its economic hegemony, and its hold over the lives of other peoples. Educators were aware that the focus of global studies on world hunger, pollution, resource exploitation, and other issues that could implicate the economic behavior of rich and developed nations made this subject matter delicate for Americans; the focus of world system theory on a historical explanation of how the world got this way would likely make the world history course more disturbing still. Stavrianos believed that a view of world history from the moon would challenge American consciousness; no doubt, a view from the Third World would challenge it even more. Western civilization, originating in friendly Whiggish ideals, and subject to little public controversy as a result, was good, consensus history for educating American youth. Compared to this, world history in world-system style is likely to appear, to some taxpayers at least, as downright subversive.

Gottschalk and Unesco historians believed that such core-periphery theories of world history were too often theories of cultural superiority or economic exploitation. Their desire, instead, was not to take sides but to perceive, beyond human conflicts and systems of exploitation, a unified and constructive direction to the human enterprise. Where humankind is one, there is no side to take. In assuming this same attitude, WHA historians reveal themselves as heirs not only of this international education tradition, but also of the western civilization outlook; that is, of a liberal, optimistic, and progressive interpretation of the past that affirms the good American belief in human potential, cultural contacts, and open societies. To them, no one has done more than

⁷¹ Craig A. Lockard, "Global History, Modernization, and World System Approach: A Critique," and Cyril E. Black, "Modernization as an Organizing Principle for World History," in 1982 *World History Teaching Conference*, pp. 55–67, 69–83. On modernization theory, see Black's *The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study in Comparative History* (New York, 1966). On world system analysis, see Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1974).

McNeill to bring world history out of European metaphysics and into the positive and practical spirit of this form of American historiography. "William H. McNeill," asserted WHA president Kevin Reilly, "has turned the study of the human past from a philosophical meditation into an empirical, historical account."⁷² McNeill himself describes all histories as "mythhistories," rival versions of the past, which, for those who accept them, provide collective identities and respond to human needs for belief and belonging. In this sense, his own version of world history probably can be described as the mythistory of most WHA members.

McNeill himself came to world history after "delving into the earth" of material history (his Ph.D. dissertation was on the potato). Importantly, this old history lived on in the new. His journey began in a revolt in 1939 against his graduate supervisor at Cornell, Carl Becker, and against the kind of Eurocentric history that Becker represented. On his own, he discovered first the contrasting history of eastern Europe, which aroused his interest in the diversity of cultures, and thereafter Toynbee's larger history of the world, which instilled the idea of a unity behind the whole human experience. McNeill recalled that he was "transported" by the global sweep of Toynbee's vision—but only so far. "The aspect of human life on which my attention fastened—the technological, material and ecological—was the polar opposite," he explains, "from what had come to interest Toynbee."⁷³ Toynbee looked to God and McNeill to the good earth.

His own world history, therefore, combined an enchantment with the sweep of the human adventure with a secular and materialist approach to subject matter. On the one hand, McNeill loved the task of high synthesis (he confides that, during ten years of research for *The Rise of the West*, he never took a note!). On the other, his works were solid and down to earth, with ideas and concepts borrowed from the same familiar sources used by most other working historians in the United States—from the social sciences, the Annales school, and the tradition of history as social process. The result was at once academic and American. Thus McNeill comments that he learned from *Annales* historians to recognize the power of geography and climate over life and mind, yet

⁷² Kevin Reilly (n. 62 above), p. 1.

⁷³ William H. McNeill, "Arnold J. Toynbee", in *Mythistory*, p. 197. McNeill recounts his intellectual development in the essays republished in *Mythistory*.

tempered this determinism by holding to his American faith in the influence of the human will in history as well. His native attitudes can be recognized too in his account of world history as the human ascent through know-how, skills, and inventions, to a position of power over the natural world. Here, in McNeill's celebration of global intercourse and enterprise, in liberal notions of a human impulse to truck and barter, in assumption of an invisible hand turning cultural contacts to larger human ends, was a world history in American dress. McNeill reports, in this connection, that he had never been at home with Toynbee's perception of civilizations as separate organisms, each alone, self-absorbed, and little affected by other peoples. Influenced by the work of American anthropologists on cultural borrowings among Native Americans, he fixed instead on the opposing thesis that cultural interaction was "the main drivewheel" of world history. Encounters with outsiders possessing superior skills, McNeill concluded, set cultures into motion to imitate or resist the stranger. So evolved the organizing idea of *The Rise of the West* in 1963: "I simply set out to identify in any given age where the center of highest skills was located," he explained. "By describing them and then asking how neighboring peoples reacted to such achievements, a comprehensive structure for successive periods of world history emerges." The result, therefore, was an approach that featured the diversity of cultures and, at the same time, ordered world history into one story.

It was also an approach with a moral dimension, a people-to-people history, concerned with cultural exchanges and the ties that bind. To Stavrianos, the world before 1500 was a lonely place of separate civilizations. To McNeill, cultural encounters broke through this separation much earlier. In *The Rise of the West*, he described how "the stimulus of contacts" was inseparable from the development of civilized life in the ancient Middle East. Rejecting the Unesco "equal time" approach to the history of world cultures, McNeill, in this work in 1963, portrayed the ascendancy of the west as the predominant development in modern history. More recently, however, he has drawn earlier civilizations more closely together. He describes now an "ecumenical cosmopolitanism" emerging in ancient times along the cord of agrarian lands running from China into Africa and Mediterranean Europe—the so-called Eurasian ecumene. By A.D. 1000, trade routes here developed into a "sophisticated world market" where east and

west came together." In this perspective, the European voyages of discovery in xsoo, for example, mark not the origins of world history but a further extension to the Americas of this vast Eurasian network of communications and commerce. Thus, to WHA members in search of an authentic and integral world history with particular relevance to American students, McNeill offers a version that, in settling accounts with the old Eurocentrism, provides these students at the same time with a sense of the place of their own western civilization within the longer and larger history of an ecumenical global community.

What attracts WHA members to McNeill as well is his easy gift for making the transition to this history in American education appear to be a matter of simple logic and public interest. "Surely it takes only a little common sense," he explains, "to see that some sort of world history is the only way a college can do justice to students who live in a world where events in Asia, Africa, and Latin America are as likely to involve the United States in critical actions as anything happening in Europe and North America." Indeed McNeill makes historians and their craft seem important to life. Versions of history, he observes, provide peoples with ideals and inspirations, with motivation to bond together and act in common. When believed in and acted upon, histories thus can condition and direct collective behavior. In this sense, histories are to humans what instincts are to animals. World history alone, McNeill acknowledges, is too pale and pluralistic to satisfy the depth of human needs for identity and belonging. Separate peoples need separate histories, strident histories, histories of "us" against "them," myths that unite fellow citizens against enemies. But in a nuclear age, he insists, something is needed to make up for these separate mythhistories; something is needed to balance them and to nurture the sense that all peoples are world citizens as well. If historians do not take up their duty to develop this ecumenical history, he warns, the profession will have nothing important to teach, and other mythmakers will lead opinion in more dangerous directions.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ William H. McNeill, "The Rise of the West as a Long-Term Process," in *Mythistory*, p. 64. The concept of an Eurasian ecumene was first proposed by anthropologist A. L. Kroeber and developed by Marshall Hodgson. See Hodgson, "Hemispheric Interregional History as an Approach to World History," *CHM* 1 (1954): 715-23.

⁷⁵ William H. McNeill, "Mythistory, or Truth, Myth, History, and Historians," in *Mythistory*, pp. 13-17.

This summary reveals McNeill's faith in world history as something involving larger human interests and appealing to the better part of ourselves. His version of it, as described here, is compelling, ethical, American-and problematic. Scholars have noted that the process of cultural diffusion, the process on which McNeill has constructed his whole interpretation of the past, is the most difficult and debated issue in the field of world history. Indeed the great philosophers of the subject have disagreed most on the very questions of whether cultural borrowing or cultural isolation was the way of the past, and whether, as a result, unity or pluralism was the nature of human history. But one of McNeill's achievements, we have observed, was to lead the subject of world history out of such abstract quarrels in the philosophy of history. As a result, the impulse of his WHA admirers is not so much to theorize about world history as to think about how to teach it. However, if they have taken McNeill's diffusion theory as their own, some have found less satisfaction in the general theme of his work; that is, the human struggle for control over the environment, the natural world—and other humans. Certainly the pursuit of power is less “elegant” as a structuring concept than the old western civilization idea of the pursuit of liberty. Thus Ross E. Dunn, first president of the WHA, concluded in 1985 that most members still sought a more appealing vision of the world past.⁷⁶

Neither Stavrianos nor McNeill left disciples at Northwestern and the University of Chicago to continue the development of the world history courses that they taught there. And although these two pioneers of world history in American education remain active in retirement, the further elaboration of their design for the subject probably depends now on their WHA offspring who continue to work the classroom. Thus the question, “What is world history?” passes to the next generation. Important here is the fact that this new interest in world history came on the heels of a vast expansion of history fields in the 1960s and 1970s. The WHA, as a result, is an ingathering of historians of all kinds, with many engaged, in their own way, in shaping the world history

⁷⁶ Ross E. Dunn, “The Challenge of Hemispheric History,” *HT* 18 (1985): 37–38. For a good discussion on the problems of diffusion theories in world history, see Matthew Melko, “The Interaction of Civilizations: An Essay,” *CHM* 11 (1969): 559–77. Critics have cited McNeill's spare coverage of isolated pre-Columbian America as evidence of the limits of his diffusion theory. He defends this approach to the world history course in “World History in the Schools,” *New Movements in the Study and Teaching of History*, ed. Martin Ballard (London, 1970), pp. 16–25.

course in the image of their own fields. Therefore, the struggle to define world history is also a struggle for turf. One WHA member, for example, dismissed another's textbook on international history as "too political" for use in world history instruction. The proper subject of world history, this social historian explained, was social contacts, not political affairs; it was the everyday life of common people, not the military power of nations. The international historian disagreed—by half. Wrote he: "Let our students be exposed to both perspectives—world history from the bottom up, international history from the top down, if you will—through a multiplicity of texts and assigned readings."⁷⁷ The more the better. Thus, in the new organization, world historians find themselves in the same old double bind: they have too much history to put into one course and not enough agreement on what history to take out of it.

During a tour of campuses in 1985, however, AHA president Carl H. Degler noted the spreading influence of the new organization. "I was surprised," he reported, "by the rising interest in courses in world history." Degler found most departments were recovering on their own from the decline in student numbers; most were still leaning heavily on the western civilization course; and most still had the same old doubts about world history. But most also believed that the subject was coming nevertheless. "Even the most conservative departments," he concluded, "including those with a limited number of faculty, display a growing sense of the need to look beyond Europe and its offspring in North America." In the same year, after debate at a national conference on the question of the introductory course in history—western civilization or world history?—Professor Richard E. Sullivan reported the same verdict. "I predict that one of the prime messages conveyed to our colleges across the country," he remarked, "is the necessity—perhaps even the urgent necessity—to consider developing a world history course as a substitute for a western civilization course."⁷⁸

⁷⁷ See the reply of William R. Keylor, "World History and International History," *WHB* 3 (1985): 3, to the review by Joe Gowaskie of Keylor's *The Twentieth-Century World: An International History* (New York, 1984), in *WHB* 2 (1984): 8.

⁷⁸ Richard E. Sullivan, "Summary Statement," in *What Americans Should Know: Western Civilization or World History?: Proceedings of a Conference at Michigan State University, April 21–23, 1985*, ed. Josef W. Konvitz (East Lansing, 1985), p. 260. Carl H. Degler, "How Fares History: A Personal and Impressionistic Report, Part II," *AHA Perspectives* 25 (1987): 4–6.

“World history,” McNeill observed, “was once taken for granted as the only sensible basis for understanding the past.” It seems some historians now think so again. Dr. Johnson said that second marriages represent the triumph of hope over experience. Hope for this second time around between historians and world history depends in large part on a realistic assessment of the problems and limitations of world history as a course of study. As indicated in comments here on Gottschalk and the Unesco project, the subject has always promised more than it can deliver. Others have warned historians of a high price to pay. Richard Sullivan, for example, commented that a conversion to freshman world history would require teachers to acquire a whole new knowledge base and “survey wisdom.” It would mean more abstraction, more synthesis, more “teaching by generalization,” more techniques borrowed from the social sciences. It would mean, in Sullivan’s terms, a focus on history of a different kind: “long term processes in place of accretive events, commonalities in place of lineality, collectivities in place of individuals, structure in place of conscious choices, problems in place of shared values.” All this, Sullivan concludes, will mean “revolutionary changes” for a history profession raised on inductive methods.⁷⁹ As the previous section on Stavrianos indicates, however, revolutionary changes are not academic style. Probably, given the conservatism of educators, the WHA must somehow make world history come easy to American teachers and students, or it will not come at all.

Thus, in effect, the question, “What is world history?” can be reduced to another: What is world history in the United States? Gottschalk learned two things from his Unesco experience: first, that future world history must focus more on the nonwestern world; and, second, that each nation, at the same time, must work out a version of this history appropriate to its own people.⁸⁰ These are the directions in which Stavrianos and McNeill have led the world history survey. In conception, the general advance is toward a course that is neither global history in pure form nor western civilization in world dimension. It is something in between. Beyond this, it seems that the search for an elegant and meaningful idea behind the human experience on earth, a search probably

⁷⁹ Richard E. Sullivan (n. 78 above), pp. 262–63.

⁸⁰ Louis Gottschalk, “Projects and Concepts of World History in the Twentieth Century” (n. 16 above), pp. 14–15.

as old as human thought, is likely to continue as long as the subject of world history itself. Finally, then, what is world history in the United States? It is not everything that some historians claim it to be, but it is something that more historians should try to teach.