

THANKS TO HIM, OUR LIVES ARE RICHER

Carroll Quigley was one of those rare men who could not help but leave a deep impression on everyone he met. Because of his robust character, sentiments among his students and colleagues ran the entire gamut from intense hatred of the man to heartfelt love and affection. Quigley was often described as pompous, arrogant, dogmatic, egotistical and hypocritical. In the eyes of others, he was informed, stimulating and knowledgeable, if not brilliant. I do not believe, however, that any of these strictly personal or purely subjective views do justice to Carroll Quigley as a professor and as an educator. I wish, therefore, to reflect briefly on Dr. Quigley *as an educator*; I believe that many will share my perspective.

Five and a half years ago, Dr. Quigley told the students in his final *Development of Civilization* class that they were attending Georgetown to receive a formal education which entailed, at the very least, learning to think and learning to write. If nothing else was gained from his course, Dr. Quigley assured us that we *would* learn these basic skills.

Dr. Quigley pursued his role as an educator by lecturing on the evolution of civilizations and by giving exams that generally consisted of one or two brief questions. A typical Quigley exam question was, "Trace the history of the human diet from the beginning to 1000 B.C." Needless to say, half an hour did not permit a thorough analysis of this problem. But Quigley's purpose was deeper, I think, than merely teaching 200 freshmen that the heroic hunting peoples of the paleolithic lived on mastodon meat and fermented mare's milk. He wanted his students to think clearly about a difficult



Dr. Carroll Quigley

problem and to express their ideas in a logical and concise manner.

Obviously, the exam question on the history of the human diet had no single, correct answer. But no difficult problem does; no matter how convinced or certain we might be, we can never possess the ultimate or perfect answer to any real problem. Our solutions and ideas are simply conjectural and approximate; they beg for improvement. Based on *this* knowledge—the knowledge of the infinity of our ignorance—Carroll Quigley lectured—and often berated—his students.

We were taught by Dr. Quigley that mankind's greatest tragedies were the consequence of man's adherence to mistaken or outmoded ideas. The most pernicious of these false ideas are the belief in the perfection of knowledge and that the truth is ours to possess. The belief in the infallibility of human knowledge destroyed classical civilization and threatens to destroy our own. It was

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faith in the false god of perfect knowledge that led to the silencing of Galileo by the Inquisition, the Reign of Terror in France, the slaughter of a whole generation at the River Somme and the burning of Wilhelm Reich's books by the U.S. government. It was this same sort of intellectual intransigence that deluded our leaders into believing that strategic bombing could crush the Vietnamese Revolution and has led our civilization closer and closer to ecological disaster.

Quigley was often accused of hypocrisy for flaunting his own knowledge while condemning others for doing the same. On the contrary, Dr. Quigley told his students:

"Don't believe a word from anyone, including me. Go and seek out the truth yourselves." It mattered little in the long run, Quigley told us, what career we chose, just so long as our careers were guided by a striving for excellence, a tenacity for the truth and a desire to actualize our potentialities while helping others to do the same.

Whether he was well liked in his lifetime is immaterial. I simply hope that with his passing, we all recognize that Quigley gave his best for his students and for Georgetown. Because of Carroll Quigley, our class ranks may have been slightly poorer. But thanks to him, our lives are infinitely richer.

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