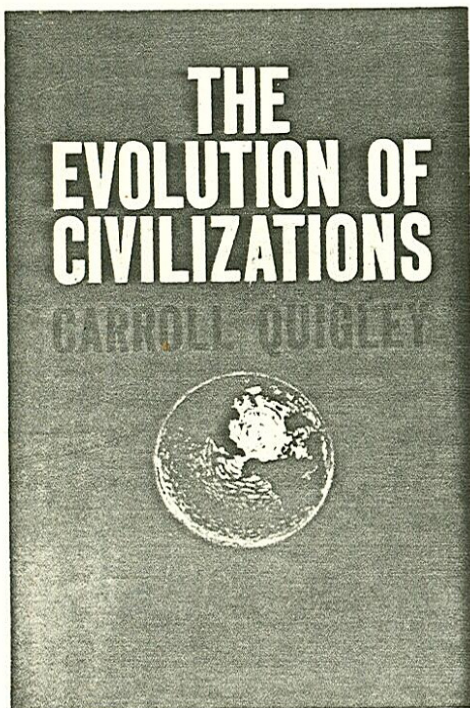


Books



The Evolution of Civilizations, by Carroll Quigley. (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1960. Pp. x, 281, \$5.95)

Reviewed by Elmer Louis Kayser.

A WORK of the importance of *The Evolution of Civilizations* deserves much more than the hurried first reading that a deadline has imposed. Reading Professor Quigley's volume is a pleasant, but rather exacting exercise. He demonstrates Toynbeean erudition and non-Toynbeean brevity.

It is fortunate that a brief review is expected, for a truly critical review would have to be longer than the book itself. A vast time span, a tremendous area and an amazing diversity of fields are involved. A high degree of selectivity must be exercised in determining what material is to be presented. The sector is small within which anyone could claim the competence of a specialist. The work of others must be used and judgments made. A detailed criticism under these circumstances becomes a race between author and critic to see who has read the latest monograph or special study and made the soundest evaluation of it. Toynbee in reconsidering the first ten volumes of *The Study*

of *History* in the recent twelfth volume found that there had been new writing while he was publishing which made it desirable that he make changes. The blurb (author unknown) on the jacket of the latest Toynbee volume goes so far as to assert that, during the publication of the First Decade of Toynbee, new discoveries in some fields "have changed the picture almost out of recognition."

The present reviewer accepts the historical data which Professor Quigley uses as what a competent scholar selected at the time of writing as valid supports for the ideas that he presents. The reviewer makes no attempt to examine these individually and critically. His interest is in what the author was trying to do, in the patterns of thinking that he sets up.

The author is thinking of aggregates of human beings as they constitute themselves in social groups and various types of society: parasitic societies, producing societies, and civilizations, depending upon whether the members have the major portion of their relationships outside the group or within it. He finds "two dozen civilizations," living and dead, within the last ten millennia and suggest various groupings. Before discussing historical change, he considers methods of analyzing the evolution of a society, the resultant of development and morphology. Civilizations pass through seven stages: mixture, gestation, expansion, age of conflict, universal empire, decay, and invasion which he offers as a convenient way of breaking into segments an intricate historical process.

Elmer Louis Kayser is the Dean of University Students and Professor of European History at The George Washington University. Born in Washington, Dean Kayser holds his A.B., M.A., and LL.D. from George Washington, and a Ph.D. from Columbia University. Vitally interested in International Affairs, Dean Kayser is the author of several books, an Associate Editor of *World Affairs*, and a director of the *American Peace Society*.

A very interesting chapter devoted to the physical setting of the earliest civilizations is followed by a detailed discussion of Mesopotamia, Canaanite and Minoan, Classical and Western Civilizations. These discussions of the civilizations which relate directly to the stream of Western Civilization through historic time occupy the major portion of the study. In a final word of conclusion, Professor Quigley states his belief that six points have emerged from his study. The first three, he points out, merely underscore well-recognized and long accepted points of view. The last three, he feels, represent a real contribution. They are: the seven stages (which proves as Toynbee's does not, a basis for an analysis of the whole course of the evolution of a civilization including the earliest phases), an improved nomenclature and techniques for dealing with historical problems.

Professor Quigley's indebtedness to his predecessors is obvious and acknowledged. While he lacks the Wagnerian tone of Spengler and the severely classical attitudes of Toynbee, he does have the more direct approach of the social scientist. His heavy emphasis on scientific method in the first chapter, even though he concludes by pointing out the difference between the natural and social sciences in the subjective factor, leads us to expect a much more rigorous method than the one applied. In this case, we notice such statements as "To be sure there are difficulties, but in some cases, at least these can be explained away." You wonder again at the grading system applied to Western society in the chart on page 81. The reviewer is not sure just how it is determined when a civilization reaches "its peak of achievement" and how this is related to the seven stages of development.

All of these are matters of detail. The important fact is that the author has distilled from a vast store of historical knowledge a highly suggestive approach for the systematic study of major historical movements. The real review will probably have to wait until that traveler from New Zealand in the midst of a vast solitude, standing on a broken arch of London Bridge, has finished his sketch of the ruins of St. Paul's.

END



<http://www.CarrollQuigley.net>