of the rise and decline of Civilizations, it is tempting to consider him the latest representative of the cyclical conception of history, a philosophy so fundamentally opposed to the Occidental Christian conception of history as a theodicy. To the patient reader, however, it is revealed in time that according to Toynbee the Historic Civilizations have been called into existence by a benevolent Godhead mainly in order to give birth to the Universal Churches and their Higher Religions. And it is Christianity which holds the highest place among them (Toynbee is, before all, a devout Christian!). It is Christianity, therefore, which is destined to become the harbinger of a new Transfigured Ethereal Super-Civilization transplanting the Communion of Saints and the Kingdom of God to our planet. And by way of a miracle it is possible that our own Civilization and age are chosen by the Christian God to witness this momentous change!

Whether we are confronted with Hegel's Weltgeist, whether Marx presents us his class-conscious proletariat, or Toynbee resorts to the Highest Religion - in every instance it is ideas or elites or gods that turn the wheels of history overcoming the inertia of the masses. They are called upon by the highest authority of the universe to carry out what Lessing called Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts, the education of the human race, and to preside over the business of civilizing the masses. In their hands rests the ultimate responsibility for the promotion of the histories of isolated groups to a world history, which in turn transforms itself into the everlasting harmony of a perfect community.

The theological and metaphysical conception of "theodicy" applied originally to a static three-dimensional universe, where earthly evil was but the necessary means of achieving heavenly perfection, and where time was but the beginning of eternity. If placed into a secular, historical frame of reference, the term takes on a new meaning. Divine perfection and goodness are transplanted from the realm of a transcendent heaven to a future Kingdom of God on earth, toward which the historical process is directed. This Millenium retains the qualities of perfection, eternity, and justification of evil. It is no longer reached through death and salvation of the individual, but through mankind's historical progress in time[5].

The secularization and historization of the concept of theodicy is evidence for the recognition on the part of philosophers and historians that the religious picture of the universe and of the destiny of man is no longer adequate for the justification of evil which theodicy proposes. They reasoned justly that if history were only a negligible part of the cosmos,

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5) Cf. Carl L. Becker, The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers, 1932, esp. pp. 119 ff.