



ARNOLD JOSEPH TOYNBEE

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1889–1975

ARNOLD JOSEPH TOYNBEE was the most famous historian of his time and the most controversial. An abbreviated version of his principal work, *A Study of History*, published in 1946, became a run-away best seller; and during the ensuing fifteen years, Toynbee's ideas about the patterns of universal history, the relation of Western states and civilization to the rest of the world, and mankind's connection with God became a focus of widespread controversy in Great Britain and the United States, and in many other parts of the world where an official Marxism did not inhibit public debate.

Toynbee was born in London, 14 April 1889. His father, Harry V. Toynbee, was a social worker, following the example of his more famous brother, Arnold Toynbee (d. 1884), after whom the future historian was named. His mother had the distinction of having completed the equivalent of a B.A. in English History at Cambridge in an age when higher education for women was unusual, and her enthusiasm for historical studies communicated itself to the young Toynbee at a very tender age. In addition to his parents' influence, Toynbee's childhood was affected by a fiercely evangelical great uncle, who lived with the family and helped to imprint far-ranging familiarity with the King James Bible on the young boy.

At school, Toynbee met a different world. Schoolboy discipline, games, and ritual were generally uncongenial; but Greek and Latin language and literature, which constituted the staple of instruction at Wootton Court and Winchester, proved entrancing. Toynbee exhibited precocious studiousness under the stimulus of having to compete for scholarships, since his father's income was insufficient to pay the full charges at a school such as Winchester. As a result, he mastered Greek and Latin so thoroughly that in later life, whenever personal crises arose, he preferred to express his strongest emotions in Greek and Latin verse, reserving English for more commonplace purposes.

From Winchester he went to Oxford, entering Balliol College as a scholar in 1907. Early in his university career, his father suffered a nervous collapse and had to be institutionalized. Undoubtedly this was a severe shock for the budding scholar,

compounded by the financial difficulties into which Toynbee's mother and two sisters were thrust by the catastrophe. Not yet twenty years of age, Toynbee reacted by redoubling his already prodigious academic labours. He capped his First in Mods with a First in Greats.

Toynbee's extraordinary abilities and diligence led to the offer of a Fellowship at Balliol; but before taking up the academic duties this appointment involved, he was able to travel to Italy and Greece, thanks to a special fellowship grant. The academic year 1911-12 was therefore spent making direct acquaintance with the classical landscapes he had hitherto known only through books. In Rome and Italy his experiences were those to be expected of a promising young classicist; but in Greece, in addition to surveying classical remains, he encountered a different sort of world. At the time of his visit, a cluster of British classicists had begun to take lively interest in contemporary Greek folkways and peasant customs, partly because they thought survivals from antiquity might be discerned by suitably sensitized investigation, and partly because Greek rural life was then still exotic in the eyes of a cultivated Englishman, bearing, as it did, strong traces of the Byzantine and Ottoman pasts. Moreover, in the early months of 1912, while Toynbee was still in Greece, public affairs were moving feverishly towards the climax of the First Balkan War; and the young classicist, as soon as he had learned to converse in modern Greek, discovered a preoccupation with international politics and British foreign policy in remote Greek villages which had little analogue in the common rooms of Oxford, where the 'social question', to which his father and uncle had both devoted their principal energies, pre-empted public attention almost to the exclusion of foreign affairs.

By the time Toynbee returned to England and took up his duties as a Fellow at Balliol, 1912-15, he had developed two lasting concerns: an interest in current international affairs, stimulated by his experiences in Greece, and the conviction that Greek and Roman studies belonged together as aspects of a single whole. This viewpoint was unusual in British learning at the time, for a delicate literary taste had banished both the Hellenistic and Byzantine ages from learned attention. German scholarship, on the other hand, had already plunged into these abysses; and in a sense what the young Toynbee set out to do was to supplement the fine flower of traditional classical literary scholarship by combining the growing point of British classical studies (then focused especially around archaeological work and

the earliest beginnings of Greek civilization) with Hellenistic and Byzantine expertise ready to be imported from Germany. But the holistic vision of ancient Mediterranean history and culture that Toynbee had begun to nurse was distinctive and personal, and betrayed a synthetic cast of mind he was later to carry to greater and unexampled heights.

His first two publications bore the impress of his training, rather than of his ambitions. A brief note in the *Classical Review*, 'On Herodotus III. 90 and VII. 75, 76', appeared in 1910 when Toynbee was still an undergraduate, and bears the distinction of inaugurating the long series of his published works. It was technical as well as tiny and purely philological; but his second published work, 'The Growth of Sparta', which came out in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* in 1913, reflected the rapid maturation of his powers. In this lengthy article, Toynbee combined a close criticism of textual evidence with a keen eye for the landscape of Laconia and Messenia and a shrewd sense of the humanly probable.

The Great War of 1914-18 did not at first disturb the academic routines of the young Oxford don, for he had come back from Greece with a bad case of dysentery and was judged physically unfit. As a result, when his friends and contemporaries responded *en masse* to the heroic ideal implicit in classical literature by volunteering for military service and risking their lives for King and Country, the young Toynbee found himself on the sidelines, contemplating the mounting horror that slowly emerged from the strange rapture of August 1914. Teaching Thucydides, as he was doing, aroused uncanny echoes: were not Britons and Germans re-enacting the tragic, classic encounter between Athens and Sparta? Or was the parallel to 1915-16 more truly to be discerned in the ancient agony of the Hannibalic war?

As dismal news from the front continued to pour in, month after month, the conviction that men of old had already experienced shocks similar to those coming from France grew upon him. With this the idea upon which Toynbee was later to construct *A Study of History* began to germinate in his mind, for if the ancients had already trodden the path western European nation states were traversing in the twentieth century, was it not possible that there were rhythms and patterns in civilized history of an even more general kind? Under the stimulus of such thoughts and the distresses of the war, human affairs assumed a tragic form: overweening greed and pride leading to

disaster in accordance with an inevitable, though intelligible, pattern. Perhaps the literary form of Greek tragedy, analysed by Aristotle and applied to Athenian affairs by Thucydides, offered a master key to public as well as to private riddles of existence. But the only way to test such a grand hypothesis was to fit the totality of human experience, as recorded in history, into the tragic form; and for that the war years offered no time.

Instead, in 1915, Toynbee gave up his appointment at Oxford in order to assist Lord Bryce, at that time President of the British Academy, in investigating Turkish atrocities against the Armenians. But, characteristically, he supplemented this work by embarking on a general study of nationalities and their rivalries in Europe as a whole. The result was his first important book, *Nationality and the War* (1915). This work discussed how European political frontiers might best be rearranged to take into account the clamant nationalism of the age without undue disregard of economic and strategic considerations. Concepts which were later to find their way into the peace treaties of 1919–20 made an appearance in this book: guarantees for minorities; rights-of-way through alien territories; and an international committee with executive powers to administer such guarantees. The book's tone was liberal and imperial, and at the same time internationalist. Yet Toynbee's capacity to see things from the enemy's side allowed the youthful author to exhibit a quite generous tone towards Germany.

This was, accordingly, a book he never turned his back upon in later years. The same was not true of the propaganda pamphlets and larger treatises he wrote in 1916 and 1917, first on the Armenian atrocities and then on German terrorism in France and Belgium. To be sure, scholarly competence and conscience were both evident in his large tome, *Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire* (1916), which documented in minute detail the Turks' systematic effort to uproot Armenians from Anatolia. The tone of his shorter, more popular, propaganda writings is suggested by the title of one of them: *The Murderous Tyranny of the Turks* (1917). In later life Toynbee came to feel profoundly ashamed of his personal part in spreading war propaganda, describing it as 'poisonous', and sinful. Knowing that he had been systematically unfair to the Turks in 1915–17 made him lean over backward in writing about their actions against the Greeks in 1921.

Toynbee's growing knowledge of Ottoman affairs and his skill as a writer and synthesizer of bulky information led to an

appointment, in May 1918, in the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office; and from December 1918 to April 1919 he was a member of the British delegation to the Peace Conference in Paris. Toynbee played a very minor part in shaping the Treaty of Sèvres, and had no perceptible part in formulating the other treaties that emerged from the Peace Conference. But his general point of view on international affairs appears to have been in harmony with the prevailing attitudes among the British (and American) delegations. Toynbee subscribed to the right of national self-determination, within limits defined by the economic and strategic self-interest of the great powers. Above all, he pinned high hopes upon the establishment of an institutional means of adjusting international frictions by legal process so that repetition of the diplomatic failures of 1914 would become impossible.

In the Foreign Office and at the Peace Conference he moved among men of affairs, and was one of the circle of experts who felt that on-going 'scientific' study of international relations was needed to create a suitably well-informed public opinion capable of checking and sustaining future governmental foreign policies. International relations had proven themselves more critical to human life than anyone in Britain had suspected before 1914; more critical even than the social question. Men of goodwill were obligated, therefore, to try to repair the ignorance and indifference with which the British and American publics had been accustomed to regard events beyond their respective national borders. The result of such arguments was the establishment of what became the British (later, Royal) Institute of International Affairs in London and a sister organization, the Council on Foreign Relations, in New York.

In 1919, however, Toynbee returned to academic life, accepting the Korais Chair Modern Greek and Byzantine Language, Literature, and History in the University of London. This newly founded chair at King's College depended upon gifts from persons of Greek descent who wished to see the achievements of Byzantine and modern Greece taken more seriously in Great Britain. Such a post suited Toynbee's intellectual ambition for bringing the history of the ancient Mediterranean into a single conspectus running from 900 B.C. to 700 A.D. or beyond. On top of this, study of modern Greece would allow him to maintain his interest in current affairs. What he proposed doing came clear in a remarkable lecture, 'The Tragedy of Greece', which he delivered at Oxford in May 1920. In this he set forth con-

cisely and precisely the pattern of civilizational growth, breakdown, and rout-and-rally leading to eventual dissolution which he later was to use as normative for all civilizations in *A Study of History*. Many of his key terms appeared here for the first time, and the lecture clearly hints how Toynbee had already glimpsed systematic parallels between ancient and modern times. Nevertheless, the notion of a plurality of separate civilizations, equivalent one to another, does not appear in this 1920 lecture. The full scope of his later vision of historical patterning had yet to dawn upon him.

That global vision did take shape in the course of the next year, for it was while returning from a nine months' visit to Greece and Turkey, January–September 1921, that he jotted down the headings that defined the structure of *A Study of History*. What had been added to his earlier understanding was a consciousness of the reality of far-reaching differences between civilizations. From his new vantage point, the Greco-Roman and the subsequent western European experiences were only two exemplars of a larger class of civilizational histories, each of which could be expected to conform to the pattern he had already detected in Greco-Roman and modern European development.

Spengler had something to do with the enlargement of Toynbee's vision from Greco-Roman to global patterning of history. Shortly after delivering his lecture on 'The Tragedy of Greece' he read *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* in the summer of 1920, and, as he later said, 'wondered at first whether my whole inquiry had been disposed of by Spengler before even the questions, not to speak of the answers, had fully taken shape in my own mind'.¹ Spengler had anticipated Toynbee's own discovery of the civilizational unit of study and had likewise treated diverse civilizations as 'philosophically contemporary'. But when it came to explaining how birth and growth of a civilization took place, Toynbee felt he had something new to offer—what he called an 'empirical' approach, as against Spengler's dogmatic determinism.

Toynbee's encounter with Spengler's vision of multiple civilizations moving along parallel tracks was powerfully reinforced by the interpretation he made of events in post-war Turkey. In 1921 he got leave from his new post at the University of London in order to study at first hand what was happening in

¹ 'My View of History', reprinted in Arnold J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial* (New York, 1948), p. 9.

Anatolia, where warfare between Greek and Turkish forces had already demonstrated the fragility of the Treaty of Sèvres. To finance the trip, Toynbee became a correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*. This liberal newspaper, heir to Gladstonian traditions, was predisposed to be anti-Turkish; yet when Toynbee encountered evidences of Greek atrocities wreaked against Turkish inhabitants of Smyrna and adjacent regions of western Anatolia, he did not hesitate to write about what he had seen; and even when his reports aroused criticism in England, the *Guardian's* editor continued to publish what he sent back. Seeking to observe the struggle also from the Turkish side, Toynbee was grudgingly admitted, but soon won the confidence of Turkish nationalists by the sympathetic tone of his dispatches. Their desperate defence of Anatolia against the invading Greeks appealed to Toynbee's still-undimmed belief in the virtues of national self-determination; and the fact that Lloyd George's government was backing the Greek invaders, at least half-heartedly, meant that Britain was supporting an unjust cause. Such an angle of vision upon events in the Near East gave a cutting edge to his dispatches, and appalled the Greek patriots who had endowed his chair at the University of London.

Undoubtedly, Toynbee was partly inspired by his wish to atone for the unfairness of his wartime anti-Turkish propaganda. But simply to shift from attacking to defending the Turks was unsatisfactory. Toynbee felt a need to understand how ordinary human beings could resort to systematic brutality such as he saw displayed before his eyes in 1921. Observing the behaviour of outwardly civilized (i.e. westernized), men from both sides, he came to the conclusion that a breakdown of older Ottoman patterns of life and manners under the impact of ideas and ideals coming from western Europe was responsible for unleashing the human depravity he saw around him. The 'Eastern Question' that had long plagued the chancelleries of Europe was fundamentally a 'western question' for Greeks and Turks and all other peoples of the former Ottoman empire. The Armenian atrocities he had excoriated so harshly (as well as the more recent Greek and Turkish atrocities) were, from such a point of view, as much the fault of westerners as of Turks. They were the result of civilizational collision, followed by the breakdown and dissolution of the weaker partner; and in this encounter, by and large, westerners had been the aggressors, at least since 1699. What the atrocities registered was the inevitable and natural collapse of effective moral restraints on human behaviour—

restraints which only an intact and growing civilization could exert successfully.

Toynbee's new understanding provoked another book, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey* (1922). About two-thirds of this work consists of an account of what he had seen as correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*; but these narrative and descriptive chapters are set in an interpretative framework, expounding his new vision of civilizational encounter and the costs thereof. Turks and Greeks became not wicked offenders against civilized standards of behaviour, as had been the case in his wartime writings. Instead, both peoples were victims of a process far beyond their control, a process in which, if anyone was to blame, it was the restless and aggressive westerners who had intruded so forcefully upon the older Ottoman civilization, disrupting it and depriving the heirs of Ottoman society of any authentic, binding moral code.

Nationalism, which had seemed to him a generally beneficent form of liberation up to this time, now transformed itself into an ugly, destructive force, emanating from the West and creating the moral basis for endless brutality and violence. World War I itself, he had come to feel, was no more than a vast hetacomb to misguided nationalisms; and to see the disease spreading from the West, where it had shown its destructiveness so horribly in 1914-18, seemed simply tragic from Toynbee's transformed angle of vision.

Even when the holder of the Korais Chair supplemented such views with the publication of translations from classical Greek writers designed to illustrate *Greek Civilization and Character* (1924) and *Greek Historical Thought* (1924), the founders of the new chair felt outraged at what Toynbee was saying about the Greek invasion of Anatolia. Instead of defending Hellenism he was attacking it, or so they felt; and they made their displeasure known in such a fashion that Toynbee felt obliged to resign his chair in 1924.

Thus for a second time, Toynbee left academic life. This was a matter of very considerable pecuniary significance for the 35-year-old scholar. He had married Gilbert Murray's daughter, Rosalind, in 1913, and by 1924 they had three sons to look after and educate. In this emergency, Toynbee's friends from the Peace Conference delegation came to the rescue, securing an appointment for him at the British (soon to be retitled Royal) Institute of International Affairs. Toynbee's assignment was to write a survey of international affairs since the Peace Conference.

This was conceived as a continuation of the multi-volume *History of the Peace Conference*, which had been the first substantial piece of scholarly writing sponsored by the new Institute. As a matter of fact, Toynbee had already contributed an essay on events in Turkey since 1918 to Volume 6 of the *History of the Peace Conference*. Moreover, he shared the conviction that a dispassionate and accurate account of international events, kept up to date, could provide the English-speaking public with background information needed for intelligent judgement on matters of current international concern. But to be maximally useful, such volumes had to appear quickly.

Toynbee's initial appointment was for a single year. In that time he organized and wrote a volume surveying international events, 1920-3, published in 1925. Continuation of this effort was assured when the Sir Daniel L. Stevenson Chair in International Studies at the University of London was conferred upon Toynbee in 1925. Initially he planned to combine his duties at the Institute with part-time teaching in the University at the L.S.E.; but this proved impractical. As Director of Studies he became responsible for planning and supervising all research enterprises centred in Chatham House, where the Institute set up headquarters after 1925; but his personal assignment remained the preparation of an annual *Survey of International Affairs*. Thanks to unintermitted diligence and his extraordinary facility in synthesizing vast amounts of data quickly, Toynbee was able to publish an unbroken succession of stout and impressive volumes (in some years two) until 1938. From the beginning, Veronica Boulter assisted him in gathering material, checking details, and compiling indexes; and after 1925 she contributed chapters to the annual volumes. Increasingly, also, Toynbee delegated special topics, such as international finance and economics, in which he had never been much interested, to others.

Nevertheless, the planning and preparation of each annual *Survey* was an enormous task. Successive volumes focused on different parts of the world, depending on the course of events and on how earlier volumes had distributed emphasis. Thus, the *Survey* for 1924 devoted special attention to the U.S.S.R. and the Third International, and Toynbee here developed one of his favourite themes by classifying Communism as a secular religion. For 1925, Toynbee took on the Islamic world since 1920, and this grew to such proportions that it was published as a separate volume, while other authors dealt with the rest of

the world in a second, companion volume. For 1926, the *Survey* devoted more than one hundred pages to China; for 1927 attention shifted back to Europe.

From the beginning of the series, publication had lagged two years or more behind events; but in 1929 Toynbee managed to bring out two annual *Survey* volumes, for 1927 and 1928, thus catching up with the calendar as closely as any annual survey could ever hope to do. From that time onward his pattern of work was to decide in the last weeks of the year how to organize the topics to be dealt with in the next volume of the *Survey*, and then write furiously, largely on the basis of newspaper clippings, until about June, when the manuscript had to go off to the printer so as to come out before the end of the twelvemonth succeeding the events with which it dealt. With such a rhythm of work, facing deadlines week by week, the *Survey* might have become a mere catalogue of happenings; but Toynbee's remarkable facility for connecting present with past (and his growing knowledge of the past of each part of the world) gave depth and richness to his chronicle of each year's events. Increasingly, as he gained confidence in his capacity to produce a readable volume of about 500 pages each year, he gave freer rein to his imagination and personal judgements. This sometimes led to friction, particularly when he came down hard against Zionism, seeing it as yet another instance of disruptive, western-inspired nationalism akin to that which had fuelled Greco-Turkish and Turkish-Armenian mutual massacre.

By the summer of 1929, having at last brought the *Survey* up to date, Toynbee felt free to accept an invitation to visit the Far East and take part in a meeting of the newly founded Institute of Pacific Relations. Accordingly, between July 1929 and January 1930, he travelled overland to the Persian Gulf, visited India, China, and Japan for the first time, and returned home via the Trans-Siberian railroad. In this way he began his first-hand acquaintance with Asia and, as was his wont, wrote a book about it, *A Journey to China* (1931). An acute sense of place had long been characteristic of Toynbee's mind. Consequently, this initial encounter with the seat of each of the great Asian civilizations was an important part of his preparation for *A Study of History*, which he began to compose in 1930, as soon as he had dashed off yet another annual *Survey* for 1929.

Ever since 1921, when the plan for his great book had taken definite shape in his mind, Toynbee had been thinking about the project; and, beginning in 1922, he had used whatever spare

time he could find to compile notebooks, where he jotted down salient information and ideas derived from his reading. These notebooks became the quarry from which *A Study of History* and all his other scholarly books derived their facts and footnotes. In 1927 he had begun to prepare himself systematically for writing *A Study of History* by reading voraciously about parts of the world that had hitherto escaped his attention. In this way he was able to expand and fill out the original headings he had jotted down in 1921 with an increasing array of exempla; and could wrestle with some of the more refractory passages of world history that did not fit easily into the rhythm of civilizational genesis, growth, breakdown, and disintegration that he had initially applied only to the ancient Mediterranean. Systematic interplay between the annual *Survey* of international affairs and his larger study of human history can be seen in the way Toynbee shifted focus in the *Surveys*, devoting special attention to new regions of the earth year by year. This compelled him in each case to familiarize himself as best he could with the deeper past, geographical conditions, and cultural characteristics of the peoples involved. The resultant richness of context gave his accounts of contemporary events much of their special flavour and value; at the same time, the necessity of covering world events year by year made it impossible for him to cultivate expertise within only one or two civilizational regions of the earth. Globalism became inescapable because he took seriously his professional task of trying to understand current events against the background of the knowable human past—all of it.

This cross-fertilization between work at Chatham House and his private scholarly enterprise achieved a new intensity after 1930, when the actual composition of *A Study of History* got under way. From 1931 Toynbee detected in the course of public affairs a mounting 'world crisis'—a crisis that ominously conformed to patterns of breakdown and dissolution he had discerned in Greco-Roman civilization during World War I. Toynbee's hope that the League of Nations might be able to adjust international rivalries peaceably met its first massive disappointment with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931: the failure of the League of Nations to do anything effective to check Japan seemed to him a clear enough augury of further disasters to come. This failure coincided, of course, with an economic depression of unexampled severity, and in the *Survey* for 1931 Toynbee interpreted these events as indicative of a general breakdown of Western civilization.

With a growing sense of impending disaster (reinforced in 1933 by Hitler's accession to power in Germany), Toynbee toiled heroically to press ahead with his vast enterprise while simultaneously fulfilling his duties at Chatham House. The quotations with which he adorned the title page of the first three volumes of *A Study of History*, when they appeared in 1934, reflect his mood very clearly:

‘Work . . . while it is day . . .’
 ‘Nox ruit Aenea . . .’
 ‘Thought shall be harder
 Heart the keener
 Mood shall be the more
 as our might lessens.’

The three sources—*John* ix, 4, the *Aeneid* vi, 539, and the *Lay of the Battle of Maldon*—also aptly illustrate the primary sources of his inspiration; Biblical, classical, and British.

Of the three, it was the classical thought-world that predominated in the first volumes of *A Study of History*, dealing as they do with the genesis and growth of civilizations. The plot of the whole *Study* was clearly set forth in the Introduction. Toynbee first argued for the reality of ‘civilizations’ as intelligible units of historical study and then sketched the phenomena of breakdown—a time of troubles, the emergence of a universal state, a universal church, and internal and external proletariats—so as to know what to look for in an ‘empirical’ survey of the past intended to identify the civilizations which thenceforth were to become the units of study throughout the rest of the book. The measuring rod for this search of the recorded past was Toynbee’s vision of ancient Mediterranean history as set forth in his 1920 lecture, ‘The Tragedy of Greece’.

By far the most obvious markers, defining deaths and births of civilizations, were universal states, analogous to the Roman Empire, and universal churches, analogous to the Christian Church. Wherever Toynbee found a state comparable to the Roman Empire and a religious organization comparable to the Christian Church, he discerned a transition from an ‘apparented’ to an ‘affiliated’ civilization; and when, as in the case of the early caliphate, there seemed to be a succession of empires with no intervening disintegration followed by genesis and growth of a new ‘affiliated’ civilization, he saved the system by declaring that the caliphate played the role of universal state for a Syriac civilization that had gone underground for a thousand years, being overlaid by an intrusive Hellenism.

Such extravagances strained but did not destroy the credibility of his hypothesis, taken as a whole; and the impressive sweep of Toynbee's erudition, running across all centuries of recorded history and completely around the globe, assured his book of a generally polite reception, and of sufficient sales to require a second edition in 1935. The historical profession paid little attention, but among the general public, as events moved towards the outbreak of World War II, Toynbee's vision of repetitive patterns in history gained ever-enhanced plausibility. The relevance of Thucydides' portrayal of Athens and Sparta to contemporary international confrontations, which had so impressed Toynbee in 1914, came to life again in the late 1930s as Hitler's war drew closer. No one seemed capable of checking international lawlessness, and economic depression at home, persisting both in Britain and the United States until the very eve of the war, intensified the public sense of being caught in vast and irreversible processes. If comparison with what had happened long ago and far away, whether in the ancient Mediterranean or in China, India, or Peru, seemed to cast light on current perplexities and impotence, then a scattered band of thoughtful and troubled readers were willing and eager to accept Toynbee's guidance through realms of historic time and space which traditional educational patterns in English-speaking countries had left almost totally out of account.

Toynbee's role as interpreter of current dilemmas was reinforced by the British Broadcasting Corporation, which from 1929 onwards, invited him to give talks on current events and related themes. In addition to such appearances on the Home Services of the B.B.C., Toynbee did a good deal of broadcasting to foreign countries, through the Overseas Service, and on occasion delivered talks in French, German, Turkish, Greek, and other languages in which he was reasonably fluent. He also was quite prolific as a journalist, writing mainly on current events during the inter-war years for a wide variety of newspapers and journals. Some of his articles were signed; many appeared anonymously and were often undertaken because he needed extra income.

The public professional reputation Toynbee had achieved by the middle and later 1930s was countered by family difficulties, climaxing in the suicide of his eldest son in 1939. In addition, the breakdown of the post-war international order, with Italy's attack on Ethiopia in 1933-4, swiftly followed by Hitler's re-assertion of German power, presented Toynbee with sombre themes for his work at Chatham House. Increasingly he came

to blame the British government for failing to act resolutely; and in the *Survey* for 1935, he departed from the tone of detachment which had hitherto dominated his writings on current affairs by prefacing Volume II, 'Abyssinia and Italy', with a scathing denunciation of British policy-makers for their lack of courage and sincerity.

Under the impetus of these private and public distresses, Toynbee found his classical mode of thought increasingly inadequate. It was all very well, perhaps, to anatomize the breakdown of human civilizations; but what about action—doing something about it? And what about the pain and suffering—how was that to be borne? His wife became a convert to Roman Catholicism; and in the late 1930s Toynbee himself flirted with the Roman faith but never overcame long-standing doubts and reservations. He had broken away from his Christian upbringing by becoming an agnostic while a student at Oxford; and his subsequent studies of other religious traditions had not made it easier for him to accept the tenets of any Christian creed.

Yet his mind turned achingly away from the secularism that had dominated his thought hitherto. Ever since the war of 1914–18, he had felt himself living on borrowed time, having been so strangely spared by his dysentery from the slaughter that had destroyed so many of his contemporaries. In the post-war years, by dedicating his efforts to spreading knowledge about international affairs, he could hope to contribute to the banishment of war. In that fashion he might in some sense repay a debt owed to those sacrificed in the Great War. But after 1933 such a view of his life-work rang hollow. He might be devoting his energies to the most critical human problem of the twentieth century—how to regulate international affairs. But he now found himself among those urging the British government to resist aggression, even at the risk of war. Repeated failure of that effort brought steadily closer the prospect of a new and more terrible war from which Western civilization might scarcely be expected to emerge intact. Where amidst such futility lay the meaning of human life?

Little by little Toynbee worked his way towards an answer. Perhaps it was a mistake to value civilization as the supreme achievement of human creativity, as he had done hitherto. Perhaps religions were more important than civilizations. Perhaps, even, the personal anguish of his son's suicide and the failure of his life's work for peace had a value and meaning of its own, if only he were wise enough to react creatively. If nothing else,

pain taught the vanity of human wishes; acceptance of that insight might eventually breed genuine humility; and true humility in turn might open the soul to awareness of an ultimate spiritual reality, unattainable by mere reason and beyond the realm of ordinary human experience.

In his initial plan for *A Study of History*, each universal religion served as a chrysalis within which a spark of vital continuity passed from a dying civilization to its heir. From his new point of view, values were reversed. Civilizations ceased to be ends in themselves, and served instead as mere vehicles for spirituality and religion. Periods of breakdown acquired special significance, since in such times, when human suffering was unusually intense, men of special spiritual capacity might be stimulated to open their souls to that ultimate reality which Toynbee now confidently came to call God.

Personal mystical experiences helped to define Toynbee's new frame of mind. The first of these occurred not long after the end of World War I, and Toynbee interpreted it as a communion 'with all that had been, and was, and was to come'.¹ A subsequent experience in China in 1929 and a renewed encounter with what he later described in autobiographical writings as a 'transcendent spiritual presence' occurred in 1939.² It seems certain that these events moved him deeply, and convinced him of the authenticity of divine revelation, even if the fleeting glimpses of transcendent reality, vouchsafed to him, were devoid of intellectual content.

Toynbee's changing evaluation of the relation between religion and civilization appeared only marginally in Volumes 4-6 of *A Study of History*. These were published in 1939, just two weeks before World War II broke out. They dealt with breakdowns and disintegrations of civilizations, and, as before, Toynbee's erudition and global vision, the aptness of his metaphors, and the persuasiveness of the terms he used to describe recurrent phenomena of human history aroused much awe and admiration, even though most professional historians continued to disregard his book. He was, however, elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1937. These continuities from his first volumes were supplemented by a number of passages in which Toynbee boldly discussed God's relationship to humankind. Yet on the whole such passages remained subordinate. His original scheme of working out a comparative study of how civilizations broke down and then disintegrated, showing the common

¹ *A Study of History*, x. 139.

² *Experiences*, p. 176.

features and stages through which they passed *en route* to their final dissolution, continued to dominate the work.

The outbreak of World War II abruptly altered the pattern of Toynbee's life. He interrupted his work on *A Study of History*, dispatching the notes he had made for the remaining portions of the work to New York for safe keeping. His annual surveys of international relations were also suspended; only the first of three volumes describing the events of 1938 came out until after the war had ended. Instead, he accepted official appointment in 1939 as Director of Foreign Research and Press Service; and in 1943 changed titles by becoming Director of the Research Department of the Foreign Office. In 1946 he climaxed his official career by serving as a member of the British delegation to the Peace Conference in Paris; but as in 1919, his role was minor, despite the dignity years and knowledge had by now conferred upon him. Marginality hardly mattered, for by 1946 British weight in international relations had been diminished by the rise of new giant powers east and west; and the hopefulness with which Toynbee had worked at Paris in 1919 was absent from a settlement dominated by mounting distrust between the wartime allies and overshadowed by the destructive power of atomic weapons.

During the war years, the flow of Toynbee's publications almost stopped, except for a lecture, 'Christianity and Civilization' (1940), delivered at Oxford during the week when France collapsed before the Nazis. In this lecture Toynbee sounded like a man ripe for conversion to the Church of Rome; but the crisis passed, and he remained an agnostic to the end of his life as far as religion was concerned. Eventually, his family difficulties were lessened by a separation from his wife in 1942. This eventuated in a divorce in May 1946, followed by remarriage to his long-time assistant, Veronica Boulter, in September of the same year. His second wife thenceforward supported him by bringing a warm, astringent commonsense and brisk practicality to everyday matters, as well as continuing to assist him with all of his literary and scholarly enterprises.

On returning from Paris in 1946, Toynbee left government service and went back to Chatham House. He did not, however, resume the effort to write an annual survey of international affairs. Instead, he delegated that task to others; but as Director of Studies he organized a multi-volumed wartime *Survey* to fill in the gap between 1938 and 1947, when annual volumes were resumed. By the date of his retirement in 1955, at the age of 65,

the wartime volumes were complete; but younger experts who had been assigned the task of producing an annual survey found it impossible to keep up with events. Indeed, the extraordinary character of Toynbee's performance between 1924 and 1938 was demonstrated by the way a series of very competent successors foundered in attempting to carry his feat forward into the post-war years. Eventually the enterprise was abandoned with the publication in 1970 of a volume surveying the year 1962—a mere eight years behindhand.

Toynbee's principal concern after the end of the war was to complete *A Study of History*. The first six volumes had dealt with only five of the thirteen headings he had projected in 1921. Yet in writing Volumes 4–6, on the breakdown and disintegration of civilizations, he had already dealt extensively with matter originally reserved for treatment under the headings, 'Universal States', 'Universal Churches', and 'Heroic Ages'. This meant that apart from the difficulty of picking up where he had left off after some seven strenuous years, working from notes, some of which had been compiled initially as far back as the 1920s, Toynbee had to alter the scale of the final sections of *A Study of History* to avoid repeating what he had already said in the earlier parts.

A more important problem was the shift in his point of view which had become firm and fully conscious by 1946, when he resumed work on the great project. He was now prepared to recognize generational differences between civilizations he had once declared to be philosophically contemporary, ranking them according to their relationship to 'higher' religions. The three-generational norm offered by the sequence Minoan–Hellenic–Western European civilizations could be matched elsewhere in the world; and he now believed that slow self-revelation of God through the development of religion and spirituality linked successive civilizations into a grander whole, moving towards some still unascertainable goal of spiritual improvement.

Such a re-evaluation of human experience was profoundly at odds with the framework of his first volumes. Toynbee had, in fact, shifted from a cyclical view of the past, elaborated from classical theories about the cycle of city-state constitutions, towards a linear model for human history, derived from and closely akin to the Judaeo-Christian Providential view of human affairs. The difficulty of reconciling his new point of view with the old framework deprived the task of completing *A Study of History* of much of the *élan* so obvious in the earlier volumes. But

with a doggedness perfectly characteristic of him, Toynbee stubbornly stuck to his self-appointed task until it was completed.

Long before he set the last word to the last page of his monumental work, he became suddenly famous. This occurred in 1946–7, with the publication of a condensation of Volumes 1–6 of *A Study of History*. A skilful précis had been prepared during the war by D. C. Somervell, and in 1946 Toynbee approved its publication after making some small alterations. The 617-page volume appeared in Britain in 1946, but the American edition did not come out until mid March, 1947. Its publication, therefore, happened to coincide with the proclamation of the Truman Doctrine, whereby the President of the United States invited Congress to fund the containment of Communism, wherever it might show its hand.

At such a moment, Toynbee's pre-war vision of world history struck a resonant chord among many influential Americans. Were, there, perhaps, forces in human affairs that constrained public behaviour, whether or not men wished it so? Was the American Century, already proclaimed by Henry Luce, publisher of *Time* and *Life* magazines, fore-ordained by ineluctable historical patterns? More specifically, was the United States destined to play the role of Rome or of Carthage in its sudden new confrontation with the Soviet Union? The editors of *Time* decided that such questions were well worth asking, even though neither Toynbee himself nor his book could ever be made to give clear and unambiguous answers. Accordingly, the American publication of Somervell's abridgement of *A Study of History* provided the occasion for a *Time* cover story (17 March 1947). Toynbee became, almost overnight, a public personality to whom prophetic powers were freely imputed. He happened to be in the United States at the time this avalanche of publicity descended upon him; and Toynbee certainly did what he could to damp back the more extravagant vulgarizations to which his ideas were subjected by American journalists. In particular, he refused to say that the Universal State of the future must or ought to be an American empire, and instead insisted that options towards the future remained open, so far as he could see, in spite of any, and all, indications of the imminent onset of a Universal State for western civilization.

Toynbee's unwillingness to prophesy did not prevent the abridgement of *A Study of History* from becoming a best seller. More than 200,000 copies of the book were sold in the United

States alone. The book was translated into fourteen European and six Asian languages, and, for the ensuing fifteen years, Toynbee's ideas about history and religion, as set forth in this book, became matters of widespread debate. Controversy was especially acute in intellectual circles of English-speaking countries and in Germany. At first the French held aloof; Marxian orthodoxy inhibited discussion in all Communist countries; and in Latin America and Japan Toynbee's reputation crested a decade or two later. Amidst all the din, Toynbee kept steadfastly working away at the task of completing his great work according to plan; but in the meanwhile he reinforced his fame and threw fresh fuel on to the fires of controversy surrounding his name by accepting numerous invitations to lecture before college and university audiences, by appearing on radio and television both in Britain and America, and by publishing a continued flow of books largely derived from such public appearances.

A pamphlet, *Can We Know the Pattern of the Past?*, published in 1948, marked the onset of concerted professional criticism of the method and substance of *A Study of History*. It consisted of a recorded B.B.C. debate between Toynbee and the Dutch historian, Pieter Geyl; and the polite tone of their exchange did not really disguise the fundamental discrepancy of viewpoint which made Toynbee uninterested in Geyl's refutation of details. Toynbee's irenic and Olympian detachment may have merely infuriated his professional critics; his current publications, assuredly, paid absolutely no attention to what they had to say.

The first of these, *Civilization on Trial* (1948), announced Toynbee's new religiosity to the world far more conspicuously than before. As he said in the preface:

The governing idea is the familiar one that the universe becomes intelligible to the extent of our ability to apprehend it as a whole . . . An intelligible field of historical study is not to be found within any national framework; we must expand our historical horizon to think in terms of an entire civilization. But this wider framework is still too narrow, for civilizations, like nations, are plural, not singular; there are different civilizations which meet and, out of their encounters, societies of another species, the higher religions, are born into this world. That is not, however, the end of the historian's quest, for no higher religion is intelligible in terms of this world only. The mundane history of the higher religions is one aspect of the life of a Kingdom of Heaven of which this world is one province. So history passes over into theology. 'To Him return ye every one.'

In addition, the first essay in the book, 'My View of History',

inaugurated Toynbee's autobiographical writings by explaining how he had arrived at the plan for *A Study in History* in 1921.

War and Civilization, published in 1950, was no more than a series of extracts from the first six volumes of *A Study of History*; but *The Prospects for Western Civilizations*, published in 1949 on the basis of lectures delivered at Columbia University, and *The World and the West* (1952), based on the Reith lectures for 1952, anticipated and summarized themes to be dealt with at greater length in the final volumes of *A Study of History*. The first of these was relatively uncontroversial. Toynbee, as before, refused to foreclose the future and refrained from predicting the early onset of a Universal State for western civilization. The Reith lectures, however, provoked a storm of criticism. They consisted of a harsh indictment of the West for past aggressions against the other peoples of the world. The tone offended many British listeners, since in large measure it was their empire that was being condemned and at the very moment of its magnanimous surrender!

As he was later to admit, Toynbee was once again leaning over backwards in an effort to see the world through the eyes of non-Western peoples; and in so doing denigrated or disregarded Western achievements. He merely intended to strip away blinkers that an overweening self-esteem had imposed on generations of Europeans and Americans; but the shock he thus deliberately administered proved sharper than he had anticipated. For it was this book, more than anything that had gone before, that provoked a series of bitter, angry denunciations. In particular, Toynbee was accused of betraying western values of freedom and democracy, law and rationality, at a time when, at the onset of the Cold War, the West's liberal and pluralist ways of life seemed hard-pressed to defend themselves against Soviet aggression and the threat of atomic holocaust.

Another factor that embittered the attack on Toynbee's ideas was the way he had dismissed the Jews in *A Study of History* as a 'fossil' of Syriac society. This term rankled; and his additional condemnation of Zionism as a particularly reprehensible example of the modern heresy of nationalism exposed Toynbee to the accusation of being anti-semitic. To be sure, he found one or two defenders among anti-Zionist Jews, but most Jewish opinion resented Toynbee's way of treating post-exilic history and found many spokesmen to express their displeasure.

In 1953 the last four volumes of *A Study of History* finally appeared, thirty-two years from the time the grand structure

had been conceived. The new volumes provided fresh ammunition for the chorus of unfriendly critics. Many fastened upon the extraordinary prose poem with which Toynbee ended his vast work. It is a prayer of intercession addressed to gods and prophets, philosophers, poets, and saints selected from all the civilized traditions known to humanity. The sacramental goal Toynbee had ascribed to the study of history in his preface to *Civilization on Trial* here found overt literary expression; and did so in a form that offended believers and unbelievers alike. Hostile critics jumped to the conclusion that Toynbee personally aspired to the prophetic role of interpreting 'ultimate spiritual reality' to ordinary twentieth-century mankind.

As Toynbee was later to confess, the final four volumes of *A Study of History* were less successful in their execution than the first six. The discrepancy between his post-war views and the structure he had laid down in 1921 was too great to overcome; the task of filling out all the corners of his original blueprint simply lost its savour. Hence, for example, the section 'Heroic Ages' received merely perfunctory treatment, since Toynbee had come to feel that these barbarian creations lacked central significance in human history, being far removed from higher religion.

An Historian's Approach to Religion (published in 1956 on the basis of the Gifford lectures delivered at Edinburgh in 1952 and 1953, immediately after the completion of *A Study of History*), was Toynbee's effort to correct the unhappy disproportion between theme and structure that had disfigured the final volumes of his great work. Yet the book remains fragmentary. A first part deals with 'The Dawn of the Higher Religions' by rearranging and condensing material drawn from *A Study of History*. Part II was largely new, and dealt with the theme of 'Religion in a Westernizing World'. Toynbee concentrated attention mainly on the secularization of European thought in the seventeenth century, but in tracing results and consequences of this departure from Christian faith he contented himself with general statements that echoed what he had said already in the later volumes of *A Study of History*. The fact was that he had neither the leisure nor the appetite for reworking and exploring the West's historic record in modern times so as to fit it into his new religious world view; accordingly, the impact of this book was slight.

When he retired from Chatham House in 1955, Toynbee was eager to leave behind all the controversy he had stirred up. In 1956-7 he and his wife travelled around the world, and as

usual, he recorded some of his experiences in a graceful travel book, *East to West: A Journey Round the World* (1958). On his return to London, Toynbee started work with renewed vigour on a study of Roman republican history. After eight years' intensive work, his researches resulted in two massive volumes, published in 1965 under the title, *Hannibal's Legacy*. It is hard to escape the impression that in returning to the meticulous detail so characteristic of classical scholarship, Toynbee was seeking to prove himself a fully accredited member of the historical profession and thus rebut, not in words but in deed, the charges so many angry historians had made against *A Study of History*. If so, he succeeded, for *Hannibal's Legacy* triumphantly met the exacting standards of classical scholarship and was well received by professional reviewers, even though, or perhaps rather because, Toynbee's conclusions about the impact of the Hannibalic War on Roman society closely conformed to prevailing ideas. Thus his two stately tomes codified existing scholarship on Roman republican history between 266 and 133 B.C., rather than offering any important new hypotheses.

Yet Toynbee was not content to immerse himself in Roman history to the exclusion of all else. Invitations to lecture continued to pour in, and encounters with his critics could not entirely be avoided. In the ten years 1957–66, no fewer than ten books resulted from these casual sideshows, for Toynbee had now reached an eminence from which anything he said or wrote—indeed in some cases tape recordings of his conversation with an interrogator—could break into print; and since his views on global history and religion were well defined by now, he often repeated himself, or elaborated upon themes already familiar from his other writings. Nevertheless, like an artist who returns again and again to a motif, seeking always to improve upon its former expression, so Toynbee, in reworking old material, always added new touches.

For anyone else the litany of titles his casual labours called into being would be dazzling and incredible: *Mexico e Occidente* (1957), *Christianity among the Religions of the World* (1957), *America and the World Revolution* (1962), *The Present Day Experiment in Western Civilization* (1962), *The Economy of the Western Hemisphere* (1962), and *Comparing Notes: A Dialogue across a Generation*, with his son, Philip Toynbee (1963). The first and penultimate of these books were based on lectures delivered before Latin American audiences, and allowed Toynbee to articulate anew an old theme with which his father and his famous uncle had been

identified: to wit, the conflict between economic efficiency and social justice, and the importance of preferring the latter to the former. Thus in addressing Third World audiences, he came back to the 'social question' of his youth. A return to tasks and ideas first conceived in his early years was, indeed, characteristic of Toynbee's old age, and he deployed his time in a remarkably systematic way, addressing himself successively first to one and then to another of the unfinished items left over from his days as a student and young don at Oxford.

Lecture trips to Asia and Africa produced two more travel books in the early 1960s: *Between Oxus and Jumna* (1961) and *Between Niger and Nile* (1965); but the most interesting and significant of his publications before the appearance of *Hannibal's Legacy* was the result of his effort to respond constructively to the criticisms *A Study of History* provoked. Two publications of 1961 conveyed Toynbee's answers to his critics: *L'histoire et ses Interpretations*, *Entretiens autour de Arnold Toynbee*, edited by Raymond Aron, and a new twelfth volume¹ of *A Study of History*, entitled 'Reconsiderations'.

Aron's colloquy brought Toynbee up against the French intellectual establishment. Pervasive differences of outlook inhibited real exchange of views. The laicism and technocratic cast of most French historical scholarship made it all but impossible for those present to take Toynbee's religiosity seriously; and they remained unimpressed by a great system that left so little room for France, past or future. Nevertheless, in 1968, after Winston Churchill's death, Toynbee was elected to his vacated place in the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, at the Institut de France. Only one of the innumerable honours he received ranked higher in Toynbee's own estimation, and that was his inscription 'Ad Portes' in his old school at Winchester.

These honours came only later when initial misunderstandings had faded. But in 1961 much the same tone-deafness as between critic and author betrayed itself in Toynbee's own effort to respond to what had been said about him. Nevertheless, his 'Reconsiderations' is a remarkable volume, for Toynbee set out to appraise the strengths and weaknesses of *A Study of History* in the light of his own second thoughts, stimulated by what others had said. He did so in a disarmingly open-minded way. Citing a total of 168 critics, some at length, others only in passing, he freely confessed to his fundamental change of mind between the

¹ Volume XI was an *Historical Atlas and Gazetteer* (1959) prepared by Edward D. Myres.

early and later volumes. He altered the roster of civilizations he had discerned in the first volume radically; and he admitted his fault in systematically undervaluing the West and its achievements. But on essentials he remained firm. The usefulness of civilizational comparisons, the importance of religion and of spiritual forces over all others, the evilness of greed and idolization of collective self-interest, whether national interests or any other: on these and other key points he remained unrepentant; and corrections about details, of a sort that had bulked large in his critics' attacks, he deigned to notice only occasionally.

How much of the grand system of *A Study of History* remained after Toynbee's 'Reconsiderations' was not perfectly clear. He felt that the task now devolved upon other, younger persons to pick up where he had left off and make what sense they could of the world's history. In the remaining years of his life, he preferred to pursue other themes, leaving the anger and notoriety of the years between 1947 and 1961 behind. The modest and gentle tone that pervaded 'Reconsiderations' did much to disarm criticism, as Pieter Geyl confessed, even though he still felt that his original objections had not been really answered. From this time onwards, debate over Toynbee's ideas dropped off in England and the United States almost as sharply as it had burst upon the intellectual scene; but in more distant lands, especially Japan and Latin America, Toynbee's reputation waxed as debate waned in the English-speaking and European countries.

With the publication of *Hannibal's Legacy* in 1965 (together with an earlier book, *Hellenism*, in 1959), Toynbee could justly feel that he had defended his credibility as an historian. During the next ten years of his life, four themes dominated his writing, of which only two were of real importance to him. Fragmentary autobiography and semi-autobiographical travel books continued to break into print, along with discussions of religious and metahistorical matters; but the cutting edge of Toynbee's mind was reserved (1) for reflections on the contemporary world scene (continuing in a more speculative way the work of his mature years on the annual *Survey*), and (2) for continued scholarly examination of critical phases of ancient Mediterranean history.

Age did little to slow the pace of his writing, as a recital of titles will indicate. Autobiographical and travel books included the following: *Acquaintances* (1967), *Between Maule and Amazon* (1967), and *Experiences* (1969). Books dealing with religious and metahistorical matters included: *Change and Habit: The Chal-*

lence of our Time (1966), *Man's Concern with Death* (1968), *Science in Human Affairs* (1968), *Surviving the Future* (1971), *Toynbee on Toynbee: A Conversation between A. J. Toynbee and G. R. Urban* (1974), and a posthumous book, *The Toynbee-Ikeda Dialogue: Man Himself Must Choose* (1976). Generally speaking, Toynbee showed a more relaxed view of ultimate things in these books. In *Surviving the Future*, for instance, which consists of edited and reorganized excerpts from a very lengthy dialogue with a Japanese professor, Toynbee expressed much more optimism than he had in earlier years, when the prospect of atomic war had weighed heavily on his mind. Postponement of Armageddon led him to think that perhaps catastrophe might yet be escaped; and the student unrest and rebellion, so prevalent in the late 1960s, appeared to Toynbee as a healthy sign—proof of a continued upwelling of youthful idealism. Frictions that had been so evident in discourse with Europeans and Americans were absent in his encounters with non-westerners, for whom his vision of the West's unrighteous intrusion upon the rest of the world was welcome. Moreover, his Japanese interrogators were prepared to listen respectfully to Toynbee's religious speculations, since his aspirations matched their own more closely than they matched those of westerners, whether Christian or agnostic.

Gratifying as Toynbee's reception in Japan and other alien lands undoubtedly was, his central intellectual endeavour nevertheless remained elsewhere. With Hannibal behind him, he busily pursued additional lines of inquiry into aspects of classical antiquity that he had dropped when World War I interrupted his first academic career. *Some Problems of Greek History* (1969) was the next fruit of this effort. The longest single essay in this book was an erudite up-dating of his 1913 article on the expansion of Sparta; but he also took up a number of other often highly technical themes connected with the post-Mycenaean Völkerwanderung and the Hellenization of Macedonia and near-by areas. As a final touch, however, he inserted two essays on what might have been if Philip of Macedon had lived to die a natural death, or, alternatively, if his son Alexander had lived a normal life span. The catastrophic reorganization of political history these *jeux d'esprits* conjured up were intended to illustrate the importance he was prepared to attribute to individuals in shaping events—a view of the past Toynbee had been accused of rejecting in favour of some fixed, predetermined pattern.

If *Some Problems of Greek History* explored issues left over from his youthful investigation of the early phases of ancient

Mediterranean history, Toynbee's next scholarly book, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and his World* (1973) undertook an exploration of the Byzantine postlude to that civilization. This, too, had been an ambition of Toynbee's early career; and rather to his surprise he lived to find the time and energy for the attempt. Nevertheless, while working on *Porphyrogenitus*, Toynbee suffered a serious heart attack, and he never entirely recovered his vigour thereafter. The book betrays a certain incompleteness: themes Toynbee announced at the beginning were not explored, and it seems clear that diminishing physical vigour was what prevented his study of Byzantium from becoming another multi-volumed work comparable to *Hannibal's Legacy*.

Any ordinary man half Toynbee's age might have found his work in Greek and Byzantine history quite enough for ten years; but as was his wont, he continued to maintain a lively interest in current events and never gave up the effort to make sense of the confusion of detail. He did so along two lines: interpreting the manifold political upheavals in the so-called Third World as a peasants' rebellion against their hitherto disadvantaged condition; and viewing the cities into which humanity was crowding as the new, emerging and still-to-be-defined contexts within which future human life was apparently destined to situate itself. If so, some of the inhuman gigantism of the major cities of the twentieth century would have to be overcome; and planning for the future might perhaps benefit by study of the ways in which great cities of the past had been built and maintained.

The theme of a peasant revolution dated back to some of his lectures of the early 1960s. Similarly, his interest in cities and their design attained a new focus after 1962 when he first encountered Constantine Doxiades, a Greek architect and city planner, whose expansive views complemented and stimulated Toynbee's own far-ranging imagination. The upshot, as might be expected, was a number of new books: *Cities of Destiny* (1967), *Cities on the Move* (1970), and *An Ekistical Study of the Hellenic City State* (1971). The first of these is a handsomely illustrated volume, planned by Toynbee but executed by a number of different hands. Toynbee provided a typology of cities in a prefatory chapter, as well as making some remarks on the problem of organizing an emergent world megalopolis on a more nearly human scale. *Cities on the Move* was a full-scale development of these themes, drawing illustrations from the whole range of human history and looking ahead towards the twenty-first century with a confidence and optimism in mankind's capacity to

solve problems of the future that contrasted sharply with his sombre tone of the 1950s. *An Ekistical Study of the Hellenic City State* combined Toynbee's classical with his new urban interest and he intended to proceed from this to a large-scale exploration of the ecological encounter between humanity and earth's resources. But the manuscript, published posthumously with the title *Mankind and Mother Earth* (1976), in spite of some programmatic statements at the beginning, does not really succeed in applying the new concepts with which Toynbee had been experimenting to the data of the world's history.

Cities of Destiny had been a commissioned work; and the publishers were so pleased with the result that they persuaded Toynbee to edit two more similar lavishly illustrated works: *Crucible of Christianity* (1969) and *Half the World: The History and Cultures of China and Japan* (1973). For each of these books, Toynbee wrote a prefatory essay. He also designed the chapter headings, and recruited distinguished scholars to write for a semi-popular audience, but left the task of assembling the illustrations to others. Nevertheless, the preparation of these books required careful interweaving of text and illustrations. This experience probably helped to broaden Toynbee's acquaintance with art and sharpen his awareness of the way in which works of art may be used as historical sources. From his earliest years he had been sensitized to literature, and in unusual degree; now in his old age he began to sensitize himself also to visual art in a fashion hitherto unfamiliar to him. This waxing interest found forceful expression in a lecture delivered in 1969 and published as 'Art: Communicative or Esoteric?' in E. F. Fry, ed., *The Future of Art* (1970). A further monument to Toynbee's emerging sensitivity to visual art was the issue of a new illustrated and abbreviated edition of *A Study of History* in 1972.

These new lines of inquiry and sensibility and Toynbee's perpetually renewed literary undertakings were suddenly cut short in August 1974, when he suffered a stroke, and lost the capacity to speak and write. Thereafter he lived in a nursing home until his death on 22 October 1975, at the age of 86.

What is there to say of a man who worked so hard, accomplished so much, suffered greatly, and nevertheless attained a graciousness of spirit that set him apart from ordinary mortals? His fame and the storm of criticism he aroused were both based largely on misunderstanding of his central concerns; but misunderstanding is the normal condition of human efforts at

communication. What is historically significant is that his books, articles, and lectures together with innumerable radio and television appearances roused the liveliest responses, whether of adulation or of repudiation, and thus became a powerful element in the general intellectual history of his age. Few men attain such importance; and when they do, it is because their words somehow release thoughts and emotions previously only latent among their readers or listeners. Toynbee's career is extraordinary in this respect in that he aroused such responses not merely among his own countrymen and in the United States, and not merely within the circle of European civilization, but also among peoples of alien cultural traditions, whose encounter with modernity had followed widely differing paths.

There was, throughout Toynbee's career, a consistent intellectual impulse towards synthesis. First he set out to put all ancient Mediterranean history into one whole; then he raised his sights to include all human history; ultimately he added the supernal to the terrestrial realm of universal history. This consistent grasp after wholeness was matched by the extraordinary energy and systematic thoroughness with which he carried through each of his intellectual undertakings. His life was long enough for him to accomplish—or nearly accomplish, since *Constantine Porphyrogenitus* is really only a fragment of his plan—everything he set out to investigate.

In view of the variety and range of his projects, this was an astounding achievement. He paid the price in the form of life-long discipline of work which gave him time for little else than reading, speaking, and writing. Yet throughout his life, prodigious powers of concentration, phenomenal memory, and sheer physical endurance of a regimen at which most men would have quailed, all were subordinated to his lively, restless imagination. This faculty, raised to the highest pitch by his youthful immersion in literature—Biblical, Classical and European—allowed him to construct hypotheses of the most daring kind with a profusion that only men of genius attain. That some of these hypotheses proved faulty never much bothered Toynbee; he was ready enough to surrender them when evidence showed them inadequate. He proved this over and over again in his 'Reconsiderations'; but the collapse of one hypothesis was for him simply an occasion to struggle after a new and more embracing one within which to organise afresh the tumult of detail.

He was, thus, a literary artist and intellectual in the heroic, Platonic mould. Like Plato, who defined the major questions

for Greek and much of modern philosophy, Toynbee opened a series of new questions for historians to wrestle with. Whether worthy successors will emulate his effort at making all human history intelligible remains to be seen; but no more vibrant challenge to professional insulation from the great, perennial questions of human life has issued from an historian's pen in the twentieth century; and whatever the future may do to Toynbee's reputation, it seems sure that his work will stand as a monument of twentieth century thought and feeling, registering for all who care to read, the reaction of a very powerful intellect to the Time of Troubles through which he lived.

WILLIAM H. MCNEILL