

HISTORY AND PROF. TOYNBEE

A Critique Of Western Interpretation

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Professor Arnold J. Toynbee (1889–), English historian and sociologist, attempted to create a new philosophy of history. It has taken hold. Claiming that world history proceeds in great cycles of ups and downs, he tried to replace the idea of social progress by the theory of cycles. He preached that history is the sum of various civilizations which pass through the same stages of birth, growth, downfall, disintegration and destruction. Differing from Oswald Spengler (1880–1936), the German idealist philosopher,¹ Toynbee tries to prove that it is possible to save Western civilisation through clericalism. Toynbee combines belief in the cult of individuals with belief in divine revelation as the meaning of history and a hope of communion with Him.

Indeed, Western historians, sociologists, economists and philosophers have produced theories not only for the “refined”, who have received the benefits of Western education, but also for the general public. All these theories which pretend to present new systems are nevertheless the same old analysis simply wrap-

¹ Spengler was the ideologist of the Prussian Junkers, one of the theorists of early German fascism. His outstanding work *Decline of the West* (English translation, in two volumes, of *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 1918–1922) was a success with the ideologues of imperialism. Spengler's philosophy of history extolled the old Prussian spirit, chiefly its militarism. For Spengler, war was the external form of the highest human existence. Denying historical progress, Spengler, too, divides history into a number of independent, unique cultures, going through birth, development and death. According to him, history can be understood by studying the morphological structure of each culture. He says that the efflorescence of Western culture has been the epoch of feudalism, and further that Western culture has entered the period of decline beginning from the 19th Century, that is, the establishment of capitalism.

ped up in new garment. Prof. Toynbee's philosophy of history is no great exception. His main work is certainly *A Study of History*², in ten volumes, three of which appeared in 1934, another three in 1939 and the rest after 1945. These ten volumes were abridged by D.C. Somervell, first in two volumes,³ later in one.⁴ The ten-volume edition contains 6,290 pages, the indexes occupying 332. While separate volumes of his series were being completed, Toynbee published other works, notably *The World and the West*,⁵ *Civilisation on Trial*⁶ and *An Historian's Approach to Religion*.⁷

While some historians refused⁸ to take Toynbee's works seriously, the Western press received him generally enthusiastically.⁹ His adherents compared him to Newton or Darwin, and his method was likened to the discovery of quantum mechanics. *A Study of History* has certainly become the most widely known work of contemporary historical scholarship. Thousands of sets of the ten-volume edition have been sold while hundreds of thousands of the masterly one-volume abridgement have been circulated. There have been innumerable discussions of Toynbee's work in the press, over the radio and television, quite apart from seminars and lectures. His admirers believe that Toynbee is a power to reckon with in the world, that there is scarcely an aspect of the life of man in the modern or in the ancient world which

2 Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Vols. I-X, London, Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1934-1954.

3 *A Study of History* by A.J. Toynbee, Abridgement of Vols. I-VI and Vols. VII-X by D. C. Somervell, London, Oxford University Press, 1946, 1957.

4 *A Study of History* by A. J. Toynbee, Abridgement by D. C. Somervell, Complete in One Volume, London, Oxford University Press, 1960. (Hereafter referred to as *Study*.)

5 London, 1953.

6 New York, 1948.

7 London, 1956. For a more complete bibliography, see M. Popper, *A Bibliography of the Works in English of Arnold Toynbee: 1910-1954*, London, 1955.

8 Charles Trinkaus, "Toynbee Against History", *Science and Society*, Vol. XII, No. 2 (1948), pp. 278-239; J. R. Campbell, "Don't Let The Professor Fool You," *Daily Worker*, November 25, 1952; A. Hansen, "History and Mr. Toynbee", *Science and Society*, Vol. XIII, No. 2 (1949), pp. 119-135; R. Hilton, "A. J. Toynbee's System of Civilisations," *Toynbee and History: Critical Essays and Reviews*, ed. M. F. Ashley Montagu, Boston, Porter Sargent, 1956, pp. 39-73; Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Testing the Toynbee System", *Ibid.*, pp. 122-125.

9 *Atlantic*, January 1953.

his work does not touch upon and that his erudition is so vast that among those who read him "...the wonder grows that one small head can carry all he knows." The Greek elegiacs, the Latin phrasology, the neologisms and his prodigious show of learning greatly affects the general reader, who cannot escape thinking that he has read something great.

However, the question is to what extent does the works present a sound analysis of history. Did Toynbee really discover something that would justify such phenomenal success? Did he produce a new system, a new philosophy of history that provides a convincing explanation of social development? It appears that Toynbee drew up the plan for his colossal work as early as 1922. It would consist of thirteen large sections and would take forty years to write. Born to a well-to-do English family, he had been taught religion and ancient languages. He received his first history lessons from Biblical studies, which remained with him all his life. He was taught from childhood that the destiny of man was the Judgment Day. All his works carry the effects of religious conceptions. Having studied antiquity equally hard, mythology lived in him as forcefully as the Bible. Later, Milton, Shakespeare, Shelley, Faust and Valery made impressions on him. Drawing freely from the Bible, mythology, literature and actual history, he gathered a tremendous amount of material, from which he seems to have selected precisely that which helps to support his theories. Apart from this peculiar manner of selecting from historical facts, he also carried his research together with the work on the annual *Survey of International Affairs*, which had close connections with the British Foreign Office. Toynbee was not only the Director of this Institute for some years, he was also in government employment, taking part at several international conferences. Referring to the lectures that formed the basis of parts of his study, Toynbee says:

"When these invitations to lecture had thus given me the impetus required for finishing the book in the light of my experience since 1927, I should have found myself, overwhelmed by the accumulation of seven years, arrears of work on the Chatham House *Survey of International Affairs* - work which was the first call on my time and energy - but for the imagination, consideration, and generosity of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, the Rockefeller Foundation of New York, and the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton..."¹⁰

10 *Study*, Vol. VII, pp. viii-ix.

Toynbee was very well received by the U. S. press, public and scientific bodies. But "my debt to the Rockefeller Foundation... is a greater one than I can put into words," he stated. This Foundation, which financed the completion of his work, is established by a family of multi-millionaires to "promote scientific research". The fund certainly gives them control over a large number of scientific bodies, American and foreign.

Toynbee concludes that history of mankind does not progress in a straight line, but is the sum of civilizations that grow, breakdown and disintegrate. This idea, upon which the author built his concepts, is really not a "discovery". It had been propounded before, especially by Spengler. Toynbee's work pretends to be a single continuous argument on the nature and pattern of the historical experience of the human race since the first appearance of the species of societies that he calls civilisations. Toynbee regards civilisations as contemporaneous and equivalent. He proposes that the "unity of civilisation" reduces the apparent plurality of civilisations to one. Of the twenty-one civilisations, he suggests, seven are still alive, fourteen are extinct, and of these at least three - the Egyptian, the Sumeric and the Minoan - go back to the "dawn of history." They are separated chronologically from living civilisations by the whole span of "historical time". Toynbee regards time as relative and that some six-thousand years has to be measured on the relevant time-scale, that is in the terms of the timespans of the civilisations themselves. If some civilisations go back to the "dawn of history", it is because what is generally called history is the history of man in a civilized society, but if by history one meant the whole period of man's life on Earth, one should find that the period producing civilisations covers only two per cent of the lifetime of mankind. Likewise, as to the differences in the value of civilisations, Toynbee regards value, like time, as a relative concept. Hence, he maintains that his twenty-one societies ought to be regarded, hypothetically, as philosophically contemporaneous and philosophically equivalent.¹¹ He criticizes those who regard the Western European as the only civilisation and accuses them egocentric provincialism. His good intention of examining Western civilisation from the point of view of non-Western communities remains, however, an unfulfilled promise.

11 *Study*, Abridgement, pp. 40-43.

Also is his description of himself as an empiric historian is unjustifiable. Especially from Volume VI on empiricism plays less and less a role in his concepts. Believing that not everything in history can be explained by laws arrived at empirically, he searches for the meaning in history outside the bounds of history itself. Accepting a theological conception of history, he seems to believe that the purpose of God is unknown and that it can only be perceived in part through intuition.

Toynbee's "civilisations" or "societies" are held together by a common culture, the most important aspect of which is religion. In fact, many Western sociologists reduce society to culture and culture to ideas and psychic experiences. For instance, Chinoy defines culture as that which is "learned by individuals as members of society; it is a way of life, modes of thinking, acting and feeling."¹² G. Murdock referred to the concept of culture as "the standards, beliefs and attitudes in terms of which people act."¹³ Linton defined culture as "the sum total of the ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behaviour..."¹⁴ Western sociologists such as Young and Mack speak of "learned behaviour."¹⁵ Many Western sociologists erroneously hold that the basis of cultural development is consciousness, and not material production. For instance, Linton states that the principal basis of culture is in human consciousness.¹⁶

However, material values lie at the basis of culture. Spiritual values are those which are reflected in the mind concerning the extent of our knowledge about, and mastery of nature and the position of social groups or classes at a particular stage of social development. In fact, culture is the sum total of material and spiritual values, depicting the level of technical progress, production, science, literature and the arts, at a given stage of the productive forces. The various material conditions during the primitive communal, slave-owning, feudal, capitalist and socialist periods of social development determine the different cultures. One should remember that social institutions are the superstruc-

12 Ely Chinoy, *Society: An Introduction to Sociology*, New York, 1961, s. 20.

13 *Ibid.*

14 Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man: An Introduction*, New York, 1936, p. 288.

15 K. Young and R. Mack, *Sociology and Social Life*, New York, 1959, s. 35.

16 R. Linton, *The Study of Man*, New York, 1936, pp. 36-37.

ture on the economic basis, their character determined by the state of development of the productive forces. This analysis does not exclude the possibility that culture may be studied separately and its own laws may be researched. But it is the mode of production that conditions the transition from one type of society to another. It is again the mode of production that determines passage from one culture to another. A new culture emerges with maturing of the necessary conditions in a society's material characteristics mature. And those material characteristics reflect the society's level of technical progress, or man's control over nature. Assertions such as: "social systems can only function as parts of a larger whole, the total culture of society"¹⁷ is confusing the effect with the cause. Culture is certainly one of the most important factors distinguishing human society from the animal world, but culture has no determining influence in the effort to interpret the origin and the direction of social development. Subordination of the whole of social life to a minor element within it deprives the researcher of a scientific basis. Further, culture may have a reciprocal influence on social production itself. That is a particular level of culture may be conducive to economic development or vice versa. But it is not the decisive factor because culture itself ultimately depends on the degree of development of material conditions and the society's structure as determined by such conditions. Since culture changes with the new periods in history and since it implies a definite stage, a definite people, a definite society and a definite class, it is necessary to study the laws of social development to understand culture.

Some of Toynbee's civilisations, such as the Mayan, Yucatan, Andean and others, are little-known. On the other hand, he puts Greece and Rome into the same basket and calls them Hellenic. He takes liberties with other civilisations as well. For instance, he joins the Tibeto-Burman civilisation with that of India, Persian with Arabia and Korean with Japanese. He plays rather freely with diverse civilisations that he regards as the real units of history. All civilisations, according to him, move in a cycle. Setting forth stages in their development, namely, genesis (birth), growth, breakdown, dissolution and death, he relates history to

¹⁷ R. Linton, *Sociological Theory: Present-day Sociology from the Past*, New York, 1956, p. 262.

some divine plan, within whose bounds the individuals create civilisations. Giving the impression that society is an assembly of individuals creating their own history in accordance with their own free choice, he gives due importance neither to the development of the forces of production, nor to the overcoming of contradictions between the relations of production and the forces of production. Analysis of relations of production at each stage is something Toynbee avoids. On the other hand, he attests the ability to make real history to "creative personalities", the "geniuses", the "supermen" the "superhuman" or the "privileged human beings". It is they who appear, according to Toynbee, as saints, mystics, founders of religion, philosophers, generals and historians. The "creator" always finds himself overwhelmingly outnumbered by the inert uncreative mass. According to Toynbee, "all acts of social creation are the work either of individual creators or, at most, of creative minorities."¹⁸ When he glances at the great religious organisations in the world today, Christian, Islamic and Hindu, and finds that the great bulk of their nominal adherents, however, exalted the creeds to which they profess lip-service, still live in a mental atmosphere not far removed from simple paganism. He believes it is the same with recent achievements of Western materialistic civilisation and that Western scientific knowledge as well as the technique for turning it to account is perilously esoteric. He believes that the great new social forces of democracy and industrialism have been evoked by a tiny "creative minority", and the great mass of humanity still remains substantially on the same intellectual and moral level on which it lay before the titanic new social forces began to emerge. Toynbee cites Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, Peter the Great, Napoleon and others (twenty-six in all) to support his thesis of creative personalities, in whom he notes two characteristics, namely, withdrawal and return. They first withdraw to nurse their ideas in mystical ecstasy; then, they return to the people and start the act of creation. The individuals who perform this "miracle of creation", and who thereby bring about the growth of the societies in which they arise, are "more than mere men."¹⁹ For Toynbee, "they can work what to men seem miracles because they themselves are superhuman in a literal and no

¹⁸ *Study*, Abridgement, Vol. I, p. 214.

¹⁹ *Study*, Vol. III, p. 232.

mere metaphorical sense." Hence, all the achievements of the civilisation are the work of such great men, of heroes, superhumans or geniuses.

According to Toynbee, the very fact that the growths of civilisations are the work of creative individuals or creative minorities carries the implication that the uncreative majority will be left behind unless the pioneers can contrive some means of carrying this "sluggish rear-guard" along with them. In every growing civilisation, even when it is growing most lustily, the great majority of the participant individuals are in the same stagnant quiescent condition as the members of a primitive society which is in a state of rest. More than that, he says, the great majority of the participants in any civilisation in any phase are men of like passions -of identical human nature- with Primitive Man-kind. There is an overwhelming majority of ordinary people in the membership of even the most advanced and progressive civilisation; and the humanity of all these people is virtually primitive humanity. Hence, follows the problem of ensuring that the uncreative majority shall in fact follow the creative minority's lead. Toynbee suggests two solutions: drill and mysticism. Quoting Bergson,²⁰ he restates that the first method inculcates a morality consisting of impersonal habits; the second induces imitation of another personality, and even a spiritual union. Toynbee thinks that the masses are capable only of superficial and mechanical copying (mimesis). He says: "The problem of bringing the uncreative rank and file into line with the creative pioneers cannot be solved in practice, on the social scale, without bringing into play the faculty of sheer mimesis-one of the less exalted faculties of human nature..."²¹

There is nothing "new" in Toynbee's counterposing of "geniuses" and "masses". This theory on the role of the individual in history has been advanced previously. Outstanding people, leaders and organizers certainly do perform a function that is essential to society. They do appear at times when conditions are ripe for their appearance, when the masses create the objective conditions for the emergence of the outstanding indivi-

20 H. Bergson, *Les Deux Sources de la Morale et de la Religion*, Paris, 1932, pp. 98-99.

21 *Study*, Abridgement, Vol. I, p. 216.

duals who can organize the masses for a better future, or for the emergence of those leading the futile resistance of the dying classes. The importance of the activity of outstanding people is not limited to scientists, writers and artists, but also to men engaged in public affairs. No society can possibly govern without the help of an organisation. Every organisation must have some leadership and certainly some leaders. But to assert that outstanding individuals "create" all events, even civilisations, or that the cause of the wars and revolutions of the late Eighteenth Century was Napoleon or that the class struggle waged by the workers in the early Nineteenth Century was due to incitement by the communist leaders is devoid of scientific value.

The course of history is determined by the struggle of the large social groups, the masses. The role of the outstanding men in history can only be understood by evaluating their activity in relation to these large social groups. Outstanding men do not create civilisations, events or movements. But they can become the leaders of the masses or of social classes. The support that the large social groups give them are their real strength. No matter how intelligent the leader may be, without such support he cannot influence the course of events. It is the driving power behind the motives of men which constitutes the real ultimate force in history. It is these motives which set in motion great masses, not the motives of single individuals, however eminent they may be. And again, the motives of the masses are not formed coincidentally; they express a historical need, a law of history. The outstanding mistake of Toynbee and similar subjectivists is the failure to formulate correctly the problem of the relation between the characteristics of social development which are governed by law, and the role of outstanding men. Toynbee errs in seeing the greatness of leaders in their ability to enforce their own will. Certainly there are leaders who act against the objective laws of history. Having an interest in defending an existing order, they defend reaction. But no one individual, no matter how exceptional his will-power, may reverse the laws of history. If outstanding people have made a mark in history, it is because of the part they played in the further development of society, it is because their activity quickened the course of history and eased the birth pains of a new society.

Toynbee's ten-volume work contains little material on the primitive societies. He believes that civilisations emerge when people are faced with a challenge or upon the ruins of earlier societies. The challenge must not be too great, nor must it be too weak. The former condition leads to death and the latter to inability to produce an effective response. Because of the limitations of his class consciousness, Toynbee does not see that class societies emerge as a result of the disintegration of the primitive community, caused by an inner struggle. Outside attacks, dangerous neighbours and other conditions accelerate or decelerate the formation of a class.

Growth follows the emergence of civilisations. Toynbee tries to throw light upon the nature of their growth by the myth of Aeschylus' Promethean Trilogy. In the Aeschylean myth, the receiver of the "challenge", namely Zeus, is the loser. For Zeus is anxious to keep the Universe around him at a standstill. Zeus has no other idea except to keep himself enthroned, in solitary, motionless and tyrannical state. Prometheus, who is a kindler of fire, is a mythical personification of the continuity of the growth-process, "the Bergsonian *élan vital*. Prometheus knows that, unless Zeus keeps on the move, he will be overthrown; and therefore gives Zeus no peace. Toynbee calls in once again the aid of mythology to depict growth as a series of fresh challenges met with responses from gifted people with creative powers. However, in his ten-volume work he does not even mention the inner antagonisms of the slave owning or feudal societies which lead to change. The growth of civilisations does not, then, depend on the development of the productive forces. One reads with astonishment the following categorical statement in Toynbee: "Our empirical survey has made it abundantly clear that there is no correlation between progress in technique and progress in civilisation."²² If it is not the relations of production that determines the nature of the development of civilisation, what is it that does so? Toynbee says that it is "etherialisation", or change in organisation from complexity towards simplicity, a conversion of the soul from the World, the Flesh, and the Devil to the Kingdom of Heaven.²³

22 Italics mine. *Study*, Vol. III, pp. 173-174.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 191-192.

This state of growth is not eternal. There is a breakdown, which, according to Toynbee, results from the fatal mistake committed by the genius or the creative minority. The broken-down civilisations do not meet their death from an assassin's hand; hence, Prof. Toynbee says that in almost every instance he has been led to accept "a verdict of suicide."²⁴ He further states: "Our best hope of making some positive progress in our inquiry is to follow up *this single clue up*."²⁵ And the conclusion which he arrived at after a laborious search has been "divined with a sure intuition" by the poet Meredith, or Volney or Saint Matthew. C.F. Volney said: "La source de ses calamités... réside dans l'homme même; il la porte dans son coeur".²⁶ Further, Saint Matthew declared: "...Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies..."²⁷ Whether it is Volney's intuition or the Gospel, Toynbee accepts, in the footsteps of Saint Cyprian, the application of this "truth" to the entire field of social life. Utilizing quotations in different languages from mythology, the Greek tragedies, the Bible and the like, he describes the fatal mistake that bring societies to their destruction. He concludes that breakdowns are not pre-determined and that if mistakes could have been avoided by the creative minority, no crash would have taken place. The creative minority apparently had the freedom to make a choice. Having given the wrong response to the challenge, the creative minority loses all influence over the non-creative majority, and in spite of its lack of creativeness, the masses revolt, giving birth to the "proletariat".

Toynbee's "single clue" lives no room even for dialectics, the science of the most general laws governing the development of nature, society and thought. The scientific conception of dialectics was preceded by a long history of development. In antiquity, philosophers (Heraclitus, some thinkers of Miletus and the Pythagoreans) stressed the mutability of all existence, considering the world as a process, in which every property changed into its

24 *Study*, Vol. IV, p. 120.

25 Italics mine. *Ibid*.

26 C. F. Volney, "Les Ruines", *Oeuvres Complètes*, Paris, 1876, pp. 12-13. quoted in *ibid*.

27 Matt. XV. 18-20.

opposite. Plato gave credence to the dialectical conclusion that the higher genera of existence can be conceived only as being and not being, as identical to themselves and as passing into something else. Contradiction was the necessary condition. Dialectical ideas were enunciated by Nicholas of Cuca and Bruno. Later, Descartes produced specimen of dialectical thought in his cosmogony and Spinoza in his teaching on substance as the self-cause. Rousseau accepted contradiction as a condition of historical development and Diderot examined contradictions in the contemporary social consciousness. Kant developed dialectical ideas in his teaching of antinomies. Fichte's methods also contained important dialectical ideas. Schelling developed a similar appreciation of nature. With Hegel, for the first time, the whole world -natural, historical and intellectual- was represented as in constant motion, transformation and development. The attempt was made to bring out the internal connection that makes a continuous whole of all this movement and development. His teaching that all things arrive at their negation revolutionized life and thought. Later, the idealistic content of Hegel's philosophy was discarded and contradiction was accepted as revealing the motive force and source of all development. It contained the key to all other categories and principles of dialectical development - passage from quantitative changes to qualitative changes, interruptions, leaps, negation of the initial moment of development, negation of this very negation and repetition at a higher level of some aspects of the original state. Such an approach presents an understanding of the transition from one set of forms of generalisation to another deeper form. It helps to assess the objective historical requirements of development, the contradiction between the old and the new and the need of passage to higher forms to realize the progress of mankind.

Toynbee's definition of the "proletariat" is also unusual. He means by this term a disobedient social group, which is in a given society, but not *of* that society. He further distinguishes the "internal" proletariat living in a given society from the "external", proletariat living outside it.²⁸ In Toynbee, there is no clear description of the proletariat as a social class. His principles of division do not contain the essence of the problem. It seems

²⁸ *Study*, Vol. II, pp. 316-317.

arbitrary. If the society is not absolutely homogenous, then it consists of different strata and social groups. The basis of the division of a society must be sought in the relationship of particular groups of people in a system of social production. Such particular groups are called social classes, of which the proletariat is one. More exactly, classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a system of social economy. This does not mean, of course, that all differences apart from those of class origin are of no value. The nation, for instance, is a stable form of community that does not coincide with the class division. Classes, on the other hand, are divided into "basic" and "non-basic", in accordance with the place they occupy in history. The *basic* classes are those without which the mode of production cannot exist and which owe their existence to this mode of production itself. The classes in a bourgeois society, for instance, are the capitalists and the proletariat, just as in feudal society they are the feudals and the serfs, and in a slave society they are the slave-owners and the slaves. The relations between these classes are antagonistic, because they are based on conflicting interests. The proletariat, then, is clearly a social class and is also a part of the capitalistic socio-economic formation. All of Toynbee's subjective definitions and examples fail to blur the historical reality of the actual position of the proletariat.

Toynbee proposes the "Time of Troubles" as the first stage in the process of disintegration. By this he means a span of usually 400 years of wars, civil wars and revolutions. He ends such "times" with a forcible conquest by one "universal state" on the lines of a *pax Romana*. The vulgarisation of society, the "barbarisation" of art, sinfulness and pessimism - Toynbee takes these all as the characteristics of disintegration. He maintains that "saviours" arrive and seek salvation by returning to old times, or by leaping into the future or they seek salvation in flight from reality. None, he proposes, is a way out. The only way is "transfiguration", or religious renaissance.

Toynbee fails to point out clearly that the constant change, replacement by other forms, is in the nature of things. New forms are continually born, obsolete forms are incessantly replaced. To carry further the idea of dialectics mentioned in the above

paragraph, one has to stress that development does not cease when one phenomenon is negated by another. The new phenomena also includes new contradictions. Such negation must be distinguished from mechanical destruction. For instance, when an ant is crushed, that is mechanical negation, it is destruction that puts an end to the life of the object. What is meant here is a certain connection between the old and the new, negating the obsolete and preserving the viable. This view considers social development as progress, taking place not in a straight line or a circular course, but repeating the stages already passed in a different way, on a higher basis, in spirals. Society develops in a way similar to the way a human organism grows starting with a simple organism. In spite of regressions or passing stagnations, there is always an upward movement. Toynbee does not seem to have conducted his research with the aid of the generalised experience of all the sciences. He does not seem to have purged his mind of false eternal truths, nor has he developed a pattern of thought hostile to subjective interpretations.

Although Toynbee frequently says that all civilisations are philosophically equal, there is probably a "chosen" one in his heart. He says only five -the Western Christian, the Eastern Orthodox Christian, Islam, the Hindu and the Far Eastern- are alive today. All, except the Western Christian, have experienced, according to Toynbee, a breakdown. The Western Christian is the only one radiating creative energy; the Eastern Orthodox, which includes the Soviet Union, and the Far Eastern, which embraces China as well, have all disintegrated, he says.

At what stage of development is Toynbee's "chosen" civilisation? At times, he seems to believe that the Western Christian civilisation has not experienced a breakdown. He says: "...Of the living organisations every one has already broken down and is in process of disintegration except our own."²⁹ After this categorical statement, he adds nevertheless in the very next paragraph: "And what of our Western civilisation?... The best judges would probably declare that our 'time of troubles' had undoubtedly descended upon us." This, then, is an acceptance of a state of disintegration. In fact, he accepts papal theocracy under Gregory VII as the climax of the Western Christian civilisation. In

²⁹ *Study, Abridgement*, Vol. I, p. 245.

his opinion, the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Age of Enlightenment have all carried Western civilisation farther from its Christian sources. Toynbee describes contemporary Westerners as "ex-Christians" and contemporary Western society as "*plebs occidentalis nuper christiana*". (Western people who were once Christians) He says:

"...In the days when the surviving civilisations were all still living under the aegis of the surviving higher religions..., 'going to church'...was an automatic education in History...This education was as effective as it was informal... Christ and His apostles, the saints and the martyrs, the patriarchs and the prophets and the Biblical vista of History from the Creation through the Fall and the Redemption to the Last Things, were in truth realities of far greater importance for Christian souls than the parochial secular histories... The longer the writer of this Study lived, the more glad he was that he had been born early enough in the Western Civilisation's day to have been taken to church as a child every Sunday... and to have received his formal education at a school... in which the study of the Greek and Latin classics, by which the Medieval Western study of Scripture and Theology had been replaced as a result of a fifteenth-century Italian renaissance, had not yet been ousted in its turn by a study of Western vernacular languages and literatures, Medieval and Modern Western History, and a latter-day Western physical science."³⁰

Toynbee sees signs of disintegration such as internal differentiation or the appearance of a dominant minority in contemporary Western civilisation. The decline of religion and social solidarity seem to him as the most important signs of disintegration. He even notes the decline in art. He says that the prevailing tendency to abandon the Western artistic traditions is no involuntary capitulation to a paralytic stroke of technical incompetence, but the deliberate abandonment of a style of art losing its appeal because this generation is "ceasing to cultivate its aesthetic sensibilities on the traditional Western lines."³¹ While the Westerners have been wrapped in self-complacent admiration of the spiritual vacuum, he believes, a Tropical African spirit of music and dancing and statuary has made "an unholy alliance with a pseudo- Byzantine spirit of painting and bas-relief, and has entered in to dwell in a house that it has found empty..." He maintains that the abandonment of the traditional artistic technique is "the consequence of some kind of spiritual breakdown in our Western Civilisation."

30 *Study*, Vol. X, p. 5.

31 *Study*, Vol. IV, p. 52.

The Medieval papal state apparently represents the peak of Western Civilisation, says Toynbee, so distrustful of the forces of the modern world. However, he thinks destruction is not inevitable; it all seems to depend on committing or avoiding a fatal mistake. If such mistakes have already been committed, they can be corrected by religious renaissance. So runs Toynbee's thinking. Since the West has failed to live up to its own Christian principles, Toynbee believes, communism has emerged as the "product of uneasy Western consciences."³² The West ought to unite, arm and defend its frontiers. But where are those frontiers? They include Indochina, Malaya and Korea. It is surprising to see Prof. Toynbee enlarging "Western" frontiers to such an extent when he treats even the Western and the Eastern Christian Civilisations separately for as, he says, have "always been foreign to one another."³³ His hopes that many non-Western countries will embrace Western "values" (or interests) and that in India and China the preaching of Christianity could play an important role in promoting this alliance seem rather far-fetched. Christianity's future success cannot be guaranteed by suggesting corrections of the mistakes committed by the Jesuits in the 16th and the 17th Centuries. Taking care not to call "Western society" by its proper name, capitalism, Toynbee suggests that relations could be established with the peoples that he would like to see "Westernised" in a spirit of humanity, knowing very well that in the world's experience of the West, the West has been the aggressor at all times.³⁴ Who can get a different impression if one slips out of Western skin and look at the West through the eyes of the great non-Western majority? The Chinese, Turks, Arabs, Indians, Viatnamese, Ethiopians, Congolese or Cubans, each would realte similar experiences. The Russians would remind one of 1610, 1709, 1812, 1915 , 1917-1924 and 1941.

In spite of all these historical facts, that Toynbee must accept, he wants Western civilisation to triumph. He asks whether a return to religion would not mark a spiritual advance. He then propounds this amazing proposition: "The world-wide expansion of a secular Modern Western civilisation would translate

³² Arnold Toynbee, *The World and the West*, London, Oxford University Press, 1953, p. 14.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

itself into political form at no distant date through the establishment of a universal state which would fulfill at last the ideal of a polity of this species by embracing the entire surface of the planet in a commonwealth that would have *no physical frontiers*.”³⁵ What will happen when the West creates a universal state? Then, “the respective adherents of the four living higher religions might come to recognize that their once rival systems were so many alternate approaches to the One True God along avenues offering diverse partial glimpses of the Beatific Vision.”³⁶ Such a universal state would mix the teachings of Socrates, Plato, Buddha, Christ, Zoroaster, Mohammed, Peter, Paul, St. Augustine, Washington, Cromwell, Mazzini, Sun Yat-sen, Gandhi and Lenin, and the principles of free enterprise will combine with socialism. How can a doctrine of revolution rub shoulders with a creed of obedience? How can such a society of mass eclecticism be created? Toynbee concludes that such a society can be created by a miracle - and religion is that miracle-maker. After all, men are created to prepare their souls for life after death, better social order, based on scientific facts, can only be a secondary objective!

According to Toynbee, religion alone can bring salvation. Only religion can be the granite foundation of a new universal state. Well, which religion is that? Before 1940, Toynbee thought of Catholicism as the only true faith. He now accepts Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Budism as “higher religions”. He has even changed his former assumption that civilisations have been the the protagonists in history and that the role of churches has been subordinate. He later opened his mind to the possibility that the churches might be the protagonists, and that the histories of the civilisations might have to be envisaged and interpreted in terms, not of their destinies, “but of their effect on the history of Religion.”³⁷ He adds: “The idea may seem novel and paradoxical, but it is, after all the method of approach to history employed in the collection of books that we call the Bible.” He pointed out that on the basis of this view he revised his previous assumptions about the *raison d'être* of civilisations.

Further, he does not seem to regard civilisations as equal and simultaneous any longer. In Vol. VII he rearranges them

35 Italics mine. *Study*, Abridgement, Vol. II, p. 118.

36 *Ibid.*

37 *Study*, Abridgement, Vol. II, p. 87.

depending on their participation in the founding of "higher religions." The summary of his new listing is as follows:

- 1) Primitive societies
- 2) Primary civilisations (Egyptian, Sumeric, Indus, Minoan and Shang)
- 3) Secondary Civilisations (Babylonian, Indic, Syriac and Hellenic, Sinic)
- 4) Higher Religions (Judaism and Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Buddhism)
- 5) Tertiary Civilisations (Hindu, Iranian, Arabic, Western Christianity, Orthodox Christianity and Far Eastern).

The Primary Civilisations are derived from the Primitive Societies, the Secondary Civilisations from the Primary Civilisations and so on. For example Indic comes from Indus culture, Hinduism from Indic, and Hindu from Hinduism. He further makes a selection from Higher Religions and picks up four which correspond to four principal psychological types: Hinduism for thinking, Christianity for feeling, Islam for sensation and Buddhism for intuition. He believes that each of the higher religions satisfy some widely experienced human need and that each of them correspond and minister to one of the psychological types into which human nature is differentiated. He thinks that each of the higher religions is apt to lay stress on some particular aspect of "God's relation to Man, or of the individual soul's relation to the religious community, or of the religious community's relation to the political."³⁸

The "miracle" to unite Mankind under a new church presumes a new Messiah. Hugh R. Trevor-Roper's guess that Toynbee is suggesting himself may well be correct.³⁹ That Oxford historian regards Toynbee's study as "untrue, illogical and dogmatic."⁴⁰ He believes that Toynbee's mind is "fundamentally anti-rational and illiberal." Terms such as "decline" or "decay", that should be neutral for his "scientific" purpose, he equates with what he dislikes, namely, the development of rationalism.

³⁸ *Study*, Vol. VII, p. 716.

³⁹ H. R. Trevor-Roper, "Arnold Toynbee's Millennium", *Encounter*, June 1957, pp. 14-28.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Just as during the decomposition of the Hellenic society there arose a Messiah preaching a Message giving mankind, predetermined to death, a new hope of spiritual life, today as well the need for a new religion requires a new Messiah. And who is to be this new Messiah? The Xth Volume makes a suggestion. Has not Toynbee "vouchsafed" certain singular experiences which raise him above the other historians?⁴¹ He tells us that six times was he "rapt into a momentary communion" with long-past events, and that on the seventh he even "found himself" in communion not only with this or that episode in history but "with all that had been, and was, and was to come."⁴² The autobiographical details in Vol. X are in the style of a Messiah, in the same rank as Christ or Mohammed. After all, he had devoured *Paradise Lost* in three days when he was yet eight,⁴³ had seen all from the Great Wall of China "wriggling like a snake over billowy mountains" to the Ottoman tiles in the mosque of Rüstem Paşa or from the Golden Gate at San Francisco to the "thirsty cities" of the Puuc.⁴⁴ Had he been preparing himself for the modest role of a prophet? Once he dreamed clasping the foot of a crucifix and heard Someone say: "*Amplexus expecta*" (cling and wait).⁴⁵ It is maniacal to relate such dreams or visions to readers in a work that pretends to explain history.

Frankly, Toynbee's studies do not really require a scientific criticism. His method is clearly a refutation of the scientific approach, of the rational knowledge of history. Behind his admirable erudition, this "scientific phraseology" based on extensive material, there is Toynbee intuition, the irrational dogmatism. He showers upon us enormous amount of material selected to prove the validity of his metaphysical fantasies, mystical hypotheses and subjective visions. His method is anything but "sober British empiricism." His basic assumptions are often questionable and his application of them arbitrary. He does not deduce his theories from historical facts, nor does he test his beliefs with them; he selects dates, anectodes, quotations, figures from the mythology

41 Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, "Testing the Toynbee System", *Toynbee and History*, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

42 *Study*, Vol. X, p. 139.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 235.

44 *Ibid.*, pp. 216-217.

45 *Study*, Vol. IX, pp. 634-635.

or the Bible to "prove" theories that therefore are based only on air. He first states interesting theories, then selects incidents to illustrate them and expects us to believe in them. He seems to believe that his theories are "empirically-proved" by such a method. His supposition, for instance, that the time of the Papal Schism is the zenith of western civilisation and that the Renaissance was the beginning of its downfall is a great perversion of history.

Hence, his conclusions on the downfall of civilisations and his solutions are far from being convincing. First of all, the development of society follows an ascending line, a forward movement. This conclusion can be reached by scientific analysis of the historical process, of objective criteria. The objective criteria of progress is different in various spheres of life. Indices for literacy, number of schools or libraries may give an idea of cultural progress; the average expectation of life may be an indicator of health and material welfare. Other criteria may be applied to measure other aspects of life. However, to get an over-all view of the general development one ought to look at the all-embracing criteria, namely, the development of the productive forces. The more the productive forces develop, the faster the rate of growth is. The development of the productive forces is a direct index of progress, because the degree of such development determines the extent of men's mastery over nature. Further, such development determines progress in other fields of social life as well. Only after men began to create surplus products in addition to the means of subsistence essential to sustain the life of the producers, were they able to devote themselves to art and literature. It was production of the surplus that led to the first cultural progress. Consequently, with the replacement of one formation by another more progressive one which opens up fresh possibilities for the further development of the productive forces, socio-political changes also result, making progress possible in various other spheres. The productive forces develop in the direction of the complete liberation of mankind from social oppression which is just as violent as the forces of nature. Having established that the development of the productive forces is the decisive criterion of progress, we may conclude that the character of society is progressively inclined. There is always technical improvement, increased productivity, new possibilities for the growth of the produc-

tive forces and parallel progressive changes in the whole of the society.

If social progress is determined by the development of the productive forces, it also follows that the forward movement of the society is a historical necessity. Such movement cannot be halted or arrested. Compared to feudalism, capitalism was a progressive movement that came into existence no matter what individuals or classes did. At present, the production relations of capitalism have become fetters on the development of the productive forces. The sustenance of such relations is becoming burdensome to society. Although the ideologists of the bourgeoisie defended the idea of progress in the Eighteenth Century when the middle class was ascending, the present-day bourgeoisie rejects it. Their theorists deny progress and advocate stagnation or even retrogression. Toynbee's cyclical theory attempts to hide progress and suggests that although Western civilisation is admittedly in a state of decline, its replacement by another will not be progress, but simply transition to another cycle which will start from childhood and grow into old age.

Other bourgeois ideologues deny progress and simply refer to "social change". Progress is possible, they say, only in science and technology. Change in social life is presented as of "accidental nature." Further, certain calamities of the ascending capitalist system are explained as "human nature." By way of remedy, they even preach a return to the domination of the Church or to pastoral life. Some of them, such as Huxley or Forster, prophesy a grim future of humanity, a hopeless pessimism which reflects the fate of the bourgeois class in general rather than mankind. The decline of the bourgeoisie is not necessarily the decline of humanity or of civilisation as a whole.

Such theories aim to slow down the struggle against the existing order. The history of society, however, presents a progress, a forward movement not only as a consequence of social laws, but also with the conscious activity of man whose organised and purposeful struggle will cause rapid progress.

However, to say that the history of society presents a picture of progress does not mean that such progress takes place uninterruptedly and harmoniously. The forward-looking progressive movement of history is a general tendency, including

halts and retreats. It is these temporary diversions that encourage some Western writers in their attempts to refute the idea of progress. In fact, what may look like a retrogression to some, may be liberation for others. Further, the development of all aspects of social life is not even. For instance, although the replacement of slave society by feudalism in Western Europe had opened up new possibilities for the development of the productive forces, the domination of the Church, especially its Catholic branch, had pushed culture back in comparison with the Hellenic achievement. Capitalism also represents progress as a replacement for feudalism. But the conditions of progress under capitalism also contain contradictions. For instance, the beginning of capitalist production was unthinkable without an army of exploited workers. The development of capitalism took place while allowing ruthlessness, starvation and overwork. While capitalist relations represented a higher form of society, some men living under it became enslaved, and improved machinery that was to ease human life made it an oppressive cage for others. Capitalism also brought regression, decline, suffering and disaster for some nations. While the Western world developed in terms of economy and culture, the majority of mankind living in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Australia and Oceania were all colonised. The development of Western Europe brought ruin not only to the peoples of these continents, but also to the "eastern" part of Europe. Their development was also retarded. Further, development in different regions of the same country was also uneven. The South in the United States and Southern Italy are examples. In short, progress under capitalism is of a contradictory character. History is certainly full of such contradictions, diversions or superficial retreats. But such complexities do not change the general tendency toward progress. Moreover, such contradictions of progress do not always accompany the development of society. They may be eliminated in the future with more progress and not through returning to past stages of development, or theories such as the reinstatement of the Church's domination.

The capitalist economy, that is the economy of the Western world is becoming increasingly unstable. It no longer holds sway over the majority of mankind. In fact, the emergence and the consolidation of the new socialist system, the collapse of colonialism and the exacerbation of all internal and external contra-

dictions in the Western countries are the three basic challenges to the Western world. The modern epoch is a struggle between these two camps. The Western world is no longer able to ensure its life by former means. Previously, production was realised by the monopolies chiefly without state participation. Now, to withstand the blows of the crises, the corporations need the active support of the state. Pretending that the government is "controlling" the capitalist economy and introducing "planning", the state tries to protect the monopolies from the disastrous consequences of the recurring crises. Under the garb of "planning", the state build roads, opens up harbors or erects electric power stations to assist the monopolies. The state grants credits to them, appoints their leading men as ministers or ambassadors. The military and police functions of the state reach huge dimensions. Taxes taken from the people are spent on long-term contracts, which protect the monopolies from market fluctuations. The state becomes inclined to conduct wars abroad and suppress discontent at home by resorting to force. While the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act⁴⁶ in the United States has made it difficult for the American unions to strike, the police have increasingly clashed with American youth. State-monopolistic measures within the existing system also aim to unite world reaction to prevent the colonial system from going to pieces. Therefore, the militarisation of the economy is naturally linked with such new tendencies of our epoch. The interest of the big corporations in the arms race is understandable since armament is a source of super-profits. However, the militarisation of the economy is not a solution, because although there is a temporary rise in the wage levels in war industry, there is no increase in civilian production. There is even a decline of production made for peaceful purposes. Militarisation further increases the tax burden, reduces the ability to compete in the world market, leads to inflation and generally exhausts the national economy. Such measures, then, exert some influence on the crisis, but do not eliminate its causes.

Toynbee, on the other hand, becomes more and more a clairvoyant, his study increasingly being based on irrational intuition. Avoiding the decisive socio-economic structure of socie-

⁴⁶ Arthur Cecil Bining, *The Rise of American Economic Life*, New York, Scribner's, 1955, p. 685.

ties, he lumps together slave-owning, feudal and capitalist societies, using the Hellenic civilisation, for instance, as a historical yardstick while analysing, say, the modern Western society. Jumping from one topic to another, from century to century, from one myth to a poetic image, he is just chatting than giving us a scientific interpretation of really what went on and what is to come. Toynbee does not really seem to know the difference between "erudition" and "scholarship".⁴⁷ One is impressed by the wealth of footnotes, but he does not seem to understand the crucial problem of the struggle between the exploiter and the exploited. In fact, upheavals, wars and revolutions frighten him. One may abhor the imperialistic war of 1914-1918, but why should one speak in disgust of the Sixteenth Century German peasant war. Why should the Paris Commune be "an ominous outbreak of savagery in the Parisian underworld."⁴⁸ Why should he make capital out to the philistine notion of materialism asserting that materialism is narrowing of spiritual life? To think that the materialists are not concerned with humanism, civilisation, freedom and happiness, but only with the "low" material needs of the individual is a mere caricature. When a person understands from materialism not the scientific philosophical trend which considers matter as primary and consciousness as secondary, maintaining that the latter is a product of the former, thus the world can be understood but instead understands materialism as profit hunting and the lust of the flesh, he is apparently in an environment where such filthy vices are the rule. The only aim of progress is certainly not clothing and feeding although happiness is next to impossible in poverty. Especially for a materialist, the ideals of progress are much wider, embracing every aspect of life. The world society will achieve this destination, in accordance with its own rules of progress.

47 Walter Kaufmann, "Toynbee and Super-History," *Toynbee and History*, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

48 *Study*, Abridgement, Vol. II, p. 309.