



"World-gazing, are you?"

—asks Uncle Chris.

"No star-gazing for you — every day the world comes to your armchair.

"From the teeming acres of London ... Paris ... from lonely, sun-baked Woomera, South Australia ... from anywhere that news is made it's swiftly gathered—and news agencies vie with each other to get it to you as soon as they can. Your desire to have the truth quickly is all-important.

"What's more, you want to know what's happening in Hamilton ... or in Hokitika ... or Hungahunga. You want to know and you want to have it straight.

"And because you want these things the great news-gathering services of the world have come into being; and newspapers are in competition for your custom.

"A bit of a difference from when I was young. Remember the way they tacked the first copy off the press on the newspaper's bulletin board? Sometimes the 'news' was months old.

"There've been vast changes and no mistaking. Changes that have meant progress.

"And these news-gathering and newspaper industries are typical private enterprises. Firstly, there was the aim to meet a public need; second, there has always been competition to do this—and competition, as always, has induced efficiency, promoted progress.

"These typical private enterprises have created new opportunities, good employment and, as always, have brought benefits to the public at large."



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Colliding Civilisations

THE Reith Lectures for 1952 are not likely to be broadcast in New Zealand until near the end of the present year. Meanwhile they have been published,* and the controversy which followed them in England may be heightened rather than weakened in this country by the opportunity to read as well as listen. Readers who prefer to wait for the broadcasts can at least be given some indication of what is before them. The lectures came from Professor Arnold Toynbee, whose *Study of History*—now nearing completion—is undoubtedly one of the great books of our times. His subject is a topic treated more fully in the last four volumes of the *Study*, which are to be published in 1954. It can be described, very briefly, as a theory of colliding cultures.

In the past 500 years (says Toynbee) the non-Western world has felt the impact of Western civilisation, has accepted the technology and rejected the religion—Christianity—and is now hitting back with spiritual weapons. Communism is said to be a Western heresy. "It was a Western criticism of the West's failure to live up to her own Christian principles ... and a creed of Western origin which was at the same time an indictment of Western practice was, of course, just the spiritual weapon that an adversary of the West would like to pick up and turn against its makers." Toynbee does not say that Communism must prevail: "Marx's vision seems, in non-Marxian eyes, far too narrow and badly warped to be likely to prove permanently satisfying to human hearts and minds." But he goes on to strengthen his case by describing the reactions of other Eastern peoples to Western aggression, and

he ends by drawing an analogy between the present situation and the results of Graeco-Roman expansion.

These theories have been strongly criticised. It has been pointed out that Russia has her own history of aggression, and that the Islamic Powers—given a somewhat passive role by Toynbee—were always ready to take the offensive. Contrasts between the material interests of the West and the religious preoccupations of the East are said to be too arbitrary. Is it true to say that we are now in the "post-Christian" era? Can it be said that loss of faith has created a "spiritual vacuum" into which presently will come Eastern creeds? Aggression has not been exclusively a Western habit, and a reading of history which keeps it too closely in one part of the world is perhaps influenced more by the needs of a theory than the meanings of facts. Moreover, to make the theory persuasive its author has had to use simplified symbols.

A civilisation is a vast congeries of thoughts and actions spread over many different countries and large stretches of time. It is endlessly in flux, growing and changing, and by no means sealed off from alien influences. Under Toynbee's treatment, and through a prodigal use of metaphor, it becomes an entity, splitting off into parts which retain in embryo the potency of the whole. The peoples of the world have been drawn closer together since the Industrial Revolution. There may be further conflict, and perhaps the dominance of a single culture, before unification is reached in the distant future. But it may be doubted if events will run into the mould provided for them by Professor Toynbee. The great value of his lectures is their stimulating effect on the imagination. People who hear them may remain sceptical, but only if their minds are closed will they be able to avoid a useful collision of ideas.

*The World and the West, by Arnold Toynbee; Oxford University Press. English price, 7/6.

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