MATERIALS FOR THE STUDY OF THE WORK AND THOUGHT OF ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE

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WRITINGS ON THE EMPIRES IN WORLD HISTORY, III

Arnold Joseph Toynbee, *My Feeling about the Roman Empire*, in A.J. Toynbee, *The Tragedy of Greece*, A Lecture delivered for the Professor of Greek to Candidates for Honours in *Literae Humaniores* at Oxford in May 1920, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1921, pp. 41-42.

NOTE

See also
– Arnold J. Toynbee, *History*, in *The Legacy of Greece*, edited by R.W. Livingstone, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1921, p. 320;
– Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Conductivity of Universal States*, in A.J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 12 vols., Issued under the Auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, Oxford University Press, 1934-1961, vol. VII (1954), Part VI, *Universal States*, *C*, *Universal States as Means*, II, *Services and Beneficiaries*, (*a*), pp. 60-61;
– Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Abridgment of volumes I-X by D.C. Somervell, 2 vols., Issued under the Auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, Oxford University Press, 1946-1957, vol. II, Abridgment of volumes VII-X, p. 13.

MY FEELING ABOUT THE ROMAN EMPIRE

by Arnold J. Toynbee

I can best express my personal feeling about the Empire in a parable. It was like the sea round whose shores its network of city-states was strung. The Mediterranean seems at first sight a poor substitute for the rivers that have given their waters to make it. Those were living waters, whether they ran muddy or clear; the sea seems just salt and still and dead. But as soon as we study the sea, we find movement and life there also. There are silent currents circulating perpetually from one part to another, and the surface-water that seems to be lost by evaporation is not really lost, but will descend in distant places and seasons, with its bitterness all distilled away, as life-giving rain. And as these surface-waters are drawn off into the clouds, their place is taken by lower layers continually rising from the depths. The sea itself is in constant and creative motion, but the influence of this great body of water extends far beyond its shores. One finds it softening the extremes of temperature, quickening the vegetation, and prospering the life of animals and men, in the distant heart of continents and among peoples that have never heard its name.