

ADDITIONS, INTEGRATIONS, CORRECTIONS AND SUPPLEMENTS  
TO THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ARNOLD JOSEPH TOYNBEE\*

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Addition to Part I, Works by Arnold J. Toynbee

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316) Arnold Joseph Toynbee, *Toynbee says «We Can Save Our Civilization, If – (1), We Become Supra-National-Minded; (2) Become Religious-Minded Again»*, Friday Flashes, October 20<sup>th</sup>, From Address by Arnold J. Toynbee, Famous Historian Visiting at Stanford Institute of American History, in «The Commonwealth. Official Journal of the Commonwealth Club of California», XXVI, 44, October 30, 1950, pp. 199-200.

NOTE

A speech addressing the question *Is Our Civilization on the Way Out?*, delivered by Toynbee to the Commonwealth Club, San Francisco, on October 20, 1950.

See also nos. 311-315, 317-321.

A report on and excerpts from the San Francisco speech were also published in «New Outlook. A Digest of Ideas and Ideals», published by the New Century Foundation, Santa Monica (Calif.), which I haven't been able to retrace yet.

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\* *A Bibliography of Arnold J. Toynbee*, compiled by S. Fiona Morton, with a Foreword by Veronica M. Toynbee, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980.

## WE CAN SAVE OUR CIVILIZATION, IF ...

by Arnold J. Toynbee

Is our civilization on the way out? No – not unless we choose to let it go out.

- The answer to this question is within our power. But that is not to say it is an easy job.
- If we choose not to let our civilization go out, we are committing ourselves to some other choices as well, some very difficult.
- We shall have to become supra-national-minded instead of national-minded. We have been cultivating national-mindedness for the last 400-500 years.
- We shall have to undo that whole line of national feeling, and thought – reverse it, subordinate it. That won't be easy.
- A second example: We shall have to become religious-minded again, instead of becoming non-religious-minded.
- We have been non-religious-minded for more than 250 years. To wipe that out won't be easy, either.
- Why have we got to become supra-national-minded? Because national sovereignty, our modern Western form of political organization, won't work in an age of aviation and atomic science.
- In the new age we have run into, mankind will either have to destroy itself or subordinate, even scrap, these sovereignties which have commanded our loyalties the past several hundred years, and agree to the concentration of irresistible power in the hands of a single world government.
- This will mean some single concentration of power so irresistibly strong that no adversary can make war with any chance of success.
- Now, I suppose, when we are forced to face this choice, we shall swap national sovereignty or any other institution rather than wipe ourselves out.
- Somebody is going to establish a world government pretty soon. If the world doesn't congregate round the U.S., it will congregate round the U.S.S.R.

- It is up to us Westerners to see that it congregates round the U.S., but this means that we have to overcome our most familiar political habits and most cherished political prejudices. It is the line, not of least psychological resistance; but of most resistance.
- America's power is so predominant in the western world that in any political union of the United States and any other country, however fair a share may be given other countries, that share will be comparatively small.
- Obviously this will be a revolution for us. For you, too, it will be a revolution.
- Although your position will be preponderant, you will be losing some sovereignty you fought for in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.
- For us in England or Luxembourg, or Denmark, or Canada, it is not so difficult to realize our units are not enough to stand alone in the present world. For you it is more difficult.
- But America is feeling almost calmly that even she cannot stand alone. How else explain the revolution in your foreign policy – not only the Administration's but the people's foreign policy – since World War II?
- Why do we have to become religious minded again? For the first time for more than 250 years our western way of life has been challenged by a religion that rejects it, denounces it, and preaches an alternative way of spiritual life.
- The challenge to our western way of life from Islam ceased to be serious after the failure of the second Turkish siege of Vienna in A.D. 1683, and it was never so serious as the challenge from Communism.
- The measure of the seriousness of a hostile religion is its success in inviting converts.
- There were never any Moslem cells in western countries corresponding to the present Communist cells.
- Communism, like Islam, is a Christian heresy. Communism is an anti-Western religion of Western origin; it is a western critique of our western industrial way of life taken up by non-Westerners and used against us, but it is a more attractive religion for dissatisfied Westerners than Islam ever was, and at the same time it has, as Islam has had, a message for the non-Western and non-Russian three-quarters of mankind.
- Communism is a new version of a very old and – I would say – very false and bad religion: the worship of collective humanpower.

- It is another version of the religion that the early Christians were up against when they were asked to worship Rome and Caesar – to worship man in his collective form.
- This is a false religion because man is not God; and it is a bad religion because, whenever man puts himself in the place of God, he goes off the rails, makes costly mistakes, commits horrible crimes.
- Hitlerism is an example: the self-worship of German nationalism under the leadership of the Nazi party.
- But worship of collective humanpower is a genuine religion, which can call out all the powers of enthusiasm and devotion in the people who believe in it.
- And communism is the only form of collective man worship that makes any sense in our atomic age. It makes more sense than nationalism in the atomic age.
- The worship of national fragments of collective man in an atomic age will become the worship of Moloch: it is race suicide.
- Western men did something more momentous than splitting the atom at the beginning of the modern chapter. We split the social atom when we split Western Christendom into national fragments, each accustomed to think of itself as universal.
- The fissile fragments of split matter – physical or spiritual – are extraordinarily dynamic, also extraordinarily poisonous.
- Now we can see the deadly side of nationalism, now that we have split physical atoms.
- If we can't worship mankind, can we worship individual man? Individual man have been worshipped – Hitler, for example. Greece and Rome openly worshipped an Alexander the Great or a Roman emperor.
- It would be too ridiculous to worship any individual man or woman as God – above all, to worship one's individual self: that is lunacy.
- If man is to worship man in some form, Communism today holds the field against any other form of man worship
- What makes all but a small minority of us Westerners so passionately opposed to Communism? It seems to us to be out to destroy what we value most in life: individual liberty, individual human rights.

- But suppose the Communists challenge us on this issue; suppose they say: “How can you have the face to pit your petty, frivolous, selfish, short-lived individual interests against the permanent general interest of the human race?».
- Isn't the Communist stand for the interest of the anthep, as against the interests of the individual ants, more reasonable, more noble, more unselfish, more worthy of our enthusiasm and our devotion?
- The answer depends on the relative values we place on the ant heap and on individual ants.
- If a human ant is only a worker in an anthep, then the ant heap is bound to be much more important.
- Why do we believe that each individual human ant is so much more valuable than the human ant heap that the individual's rights have priority over the claims of collective humanity?
- We have no answer if we do not believe in a God outside and above ourselves – our collective selves and our individual selves alike.
- If we do believe in God, we do have an answer: The individual soul is of absolute value for us, because it is of absolute value in the sight of God.
- The individual human being is a child of God; the human ant heap isn't; therefore the individual's rights are paramount, so long as the individual shows himself worthy of these rights by behaving as God's child toward a God who behaves toward human beings as their father.
- But can we believe that just by choosing to? The one thing certain about religion is that one can't play fast and loose with it.
- One can't first dismiss it and then whistle it back to bed like a dog, just because it turns out more convenient after all to have this dog called religion following obediently at our heels.
- Religion isn't like that. «The spirit bloweth where it liketh».
- We can choose to turn our minds and hearts and minds toward religion again. We can choose to accept the spirited challenge of communism.

- We can't say, though, in advance, what our answer is going to be. It may be that when we face the issue squarely, we shall throw over our belief in the absolute value of individual souls if the Communist challenge forces us to recognize that our belief in this depends upon belief in God.
- Or, it may be that we shall believe in God again.
- We cannot tell which way we are going to go; but I think the challenge which Communism has now presented to our late modern post-Christian civilization is going to drive us to this parting of the ways, and compel us to take either one way or the other.
- Whether our civilization is on the way out depends on whether we do, or do not, take the religious way again.