

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

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Works by Arnold J. Toynbee

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441) Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Future Religion of Africa*, in «New York Herald Tribune», European edition, January 14-15, 1961. Observer Foreign News Service article (see S.F. Morton's *Bibliography*, p. 210, no. 16550, January 10, 1961, *Nationalism, a dead end for mankind*).

442) No. 441 reprinted as *Nationalism Has No Future. «Mankind's Real Religion»*, in «The Daily Colonist» (Victoria, British Columbia), Sunday, January 22, 1961, p. 5.

443) No. 441 reprinted as *Islam – The Future Wave of the World*, in «The Islamic Review», March 1961, p. 3. Text below.

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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.

# ISLAM – THE FUTURE WAVE OF THE WORLD

by Arnold Toynbee

A great majority of the human race at the present moment nominally adheres to one or other of four old religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity or Islam. A large part of the minority adheres to other religions of the same age and kind: for instance, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Taoism. But mankind's real religion today is none of these; it is Nationalism, and this means the collective self-worship of some fraction of the human race. For the time being, at any rate, Nationalism has supplanted the nominal religions in fact, though not avowedly. Only Communism has been able to stand up to Nationalism, and this only in non-Communist countries. In Russia and China, Communism has become Nationalism's tool. Trotsky wanted to put Russia to work for international Communism, but Trotsky was defeated by Stalin – and the irony of Stalin's victory was that Stalin was not a Russian by origin. Of course, Georgian Stalin was not the first foreigner to become the leader of a national movement. Corsican Napoleon anticipated him in France, and Austrian Hitler followed him in Germany.

## Spectacle in Africa

If we want to see the long-drawn-out history of religion replayed at high speed, we can watch this spectacle in Africa. «Something new is always coming out of Africa», said the Romans, but it is as true today as it was 1,800 years ago. A single century has seen religion in Africa pass through a succession of phases: from magic and nature-worship to Islam and Christianity from these to Nationalism; and, through back towards the pre-Islamic and pre-Christian dispensation.

## Antidotes of Nationalism

Nationalism in Africa is determined to be "modern". But modern nationalism cherishes a nation's national heritage from the past. The more peculiar the heritage the better. So long as this national heritage is distinctive it is to be treasured, whether intrinsically good or bad. Nationalist Africa seems inclined to treasure its pre-Christian and pre-Islamic past. It is not easy to make a national religion of Christianity or Islam. The appeal of these two missionary religions is not local but universal. They address themselves to each individual human being that is born into the world. The objective of each of them is to convert the entire human race, and to make a reality of the brotherhood of man. Neither religion has achieved their identical ideal. Their destiny looks as it would be co-existence. But both their universalism and their individualism are genuine, and this puts them at loggerheads with Nationalism, since Nationalism is some particular fraction of the human race.

## Wave of the Future

For this reason, Nationalism in Africa tends to look back behind those two world religions to a specifically African past of its own. But which of the competing religions is "the wave of the future?". It is possible that neither Nationalism nor a resuscitated African magic and nature-worship will prove satisfying to human hearts and minds. These have the same spiritual needs in Africa as elsewhere. The weakness of Islam and Christianity is one that they share with the other "higher religions". In their long journey through time and space they have picked up a mass of accessories that are not only irrelevant but are, in some cases, contradictory to their original messages. This is one of the reasons why they have been losing their hold in recent times. On the other hand they have a strong point that is lacking in all the post-Christian ideologies – Nationalism, Communism and the rest. The historic higher religions have help and comfort to give to the individual on his way through this life. The way is hard, so the help is precious and people who have once had it will not find it easy to do without it. They may be put off by the outer shell that each of the higher religions has

acquired; but probably they will still yearn for the spiritual reality within. And, if they can break through the letter and recover the spirit they may yet return to the old religions in some new form.

### Respective Prospects

If the higher religions do, in truth, have something in them that meets the human soul's permanent spiritual needs, then their expectation of life will be longer than that of either the current ideologies or the primitive forms of religion and magic. In fact, we may expect to see the historic higher religions revive, and revive inwardly intact, however great may be the changes in their outer appearance. If Islam and Christianity were to revive in Africa, what would be their respective prospects?

One may perhaps guess that in Africa the winning religion will be one that has the spiritual power to overcome the divisions between nations and races and in this point Islam has an advantage which it has already profited. The sense of fraternity is strong enough in Islam to make Muslims of different races willing to inter-marry; and inter-marriage is the touchstone of genuine brotherhood. When Asian or North African Muslim missionaries convert Africans in the great region south of the Sahara, what emerges is a single Muslim community. When Western Christian missionaries convert Africans, what emerges is, all too often, a couple of separate communities, each Christian, but one white and the other black.

This is, unfortunately, the rule in Christendom, and the one outstanding exception to it proves its validity. The Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking Christian peoples seem to be as free from race-feeling as the Muslims are. In Mexico and in Brazil there are many races but a single nation, and it is probably no accident that the Spanish and Portuguese Christians should display this Muslim virtue. It looks as if it were a heritage from their Muslim past. Spain and Portugal were under Muslim rule for many centuries.

So long as this virtue is the monopoly of Islam in the greater part of Tropical Africa, Islam is going to increase there and Christianity is going to decrease. The moral for Christianity is that it should reform its practice to bring this into accord with its principles. For, in principle,

Christianity, no less than Islam, is a religion for all mankind – a religion that makes no distinction either of persons or of races.

The future lies with whatever religion or religions can create the spiritual brotherhood that is mankind's need today. Communism claims to be a sovereign unifier; Islam has been proving itself to be a unifier in Africa; Christianity could play the same role if it could bring itself to live up to its principles. Nationalism, however, stands for division, not for unity, so nationalism really has no future. It may destroy mankind and bury itself in the ruins, but it can do no more than that.

In the Atomic Age we have to choose between two extremes. If we are not to destroy ourselves we have to learn to live as a single united human family embracing all mankind without exception. In Africa we can see mankind in epitome. Of all the continents Africa may be the first that will give us a clue to our destiny.