

# interpretation

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# interpretation

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# ARNOLD TOYNBEE: NATIONALISM AS A "FALSE GOD"

MARVIN PERRY

Nationalism was a principal force shaping European history from the French Revolution to World War II, and it has spread to the non-Western world with predictably disastrous results. In *A Study of History* and other works Arnold Toynbee devotes considerable attention to the phenomenon of nationalism. In this discussion we shall focus on Toynbee's conception of modern Western nationalism as a "false god" and his estimation of its future course.

## I

Toynbee defines nationalism as "a spirit which makes people feel and act and think about a part of any given society as though it were the whole of that society."<sup>1</sup> By designating people as "insiders" and "outsiders," states Toynbee, nationalism represents a regression to tribalism; by compelling man to worship his local community, it is the "political counterpart of polytheistic idolatry—the monstrous 'association' of false gods with God."<sup>2</sup> As God is One, so too is there a unity of humanity: this vision held by the prophets of all higher religions is at the center of Toynbee's thought. By corrupting this vision of universalism and by causing men to hanker after false gods, says Toynbee, nationalism has perverted man's spiritual development; by provoking fratricidal warfare among people that share a common civilization, it has hampered man's social progress. After studying all of man's civilizations beginning with ancient Sumeria, Toynbee concludes that nationalism has been responsible for "the death of no less than fourteen civilizations for certain, and perhaps of no less than sixteen, out of the twenty-one civilizations that had come into existence."<sup>3</sup>

Humanity's finest achievement, says Toynbee, has been the inspiration of the prophets of higher religions. Adherence to prophetic ideals enables man to overcome his natural self-centeredness and to uplift himself morally. Historically, the most formidable obstacle to the realization of these ideals has been the lower religion of nationalism: its narrow conception of humanity has set man against man in unholy warfare, and its deification of the parochial community has turned men away from the spiritual presence behind the universe. If twentieth-century

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History* (New York, 1962-64), I, p. 9. All references are to the paperback edition.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 407-8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, IX, p. 442.

man does not extricate himself from a tribal, neo-pagan, morally repellent nationalism, concludes Toynbee, it is doubtful that he will survive.

Modern nationalism sprouted on soil fertilized by the wreckage of Latin Christendom during the era of Renaissance and Reformation. The Renaissance revival of classical culture, one of whose elements was a fierce devotion to the city-state, "raised Western nationalism to a new pitch of intensity."<sup>4</sup> Modern man has remained infatuated with the Greeks and Romans, says Toynbee, because the ancients taught him how to infuse citizens with patriotic fervor, organize armies, and build a powerful state. For Toynbee the Greek devotion to his city-state was a form of idolatry; the Greek citizen drew the morally sinful and intellectually arrogant conclusion that his *polis*, a man-made institution, deserved worship. Since God alone is worthy of worship, this act of *hybris* had to end in disaster. Idolization of the local community, a false god, raised the psychological temperature of city-state warfare and culminated in the ruinous Peloponnesian War that precipitated the breakdown of Hellenic civilization.

This pagan deification of the parochial community was imitated by the citizens of Florence, Milan, Genoa, and the other Italian cities, who allowed loyalty to their local city to predominate over allegiance to *Respublica Christiana*. Machiavelli gave intellectual expression and moral approval to this new outlook. From Machiavelli, says Toynbee, was derived the principle that

if the worship of a parochial community constituted the whole duty of its subjects, then any community which was the object of such worship must be a moral absolute—a moral universe in itself which could be subject to no transcendent moral law in its physical collisions with other representatives of its own species.<sup>5</sup>

In absorbing and surpassing Hellenic parochialism, the modern West has behaved according to the Machiavellian precept that the state is a non-moral institution. The revival of Hellenism, says Toynbee, ministered to Western man's "insatiable lust for power which was the inevitable ruling passion in hearts that had relapsed from Christianity into a pagan worship of a Collective Humanity," and Western man pushed "this resuscitated political ideology of Hellenism to extremes that had never been approached by Hellenes themselves in their self-immolation on the altar of an idolized Leviathan."<sup>6</sup> In elevating the state over Christian morality, the West expressed a defiance of its Christian heritage while conveniently ignoring the principal lesson of Hellenism, namely, "that this inordinate divisive mindedness was the chief cause of Hellenic civilization's downfall."<sup>7</sup> And the same fate

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<sup>4</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *Change and Habit* (New York, 1966), p. 109.

<sup>5</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs, 1933* (London, 1934), p. 116.

<sup>6</sup> *A Study of History*, IX, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Change and Habit*, p. 109.

will befall the modern world, insists Toynbee, if it fails to "exorcise this demon resolutely."<sup>8</sup>

A revived Hellenism was one fuel that has fed the furnace of nationalism. Modern Western nationalism, asserts Toynbee, has also been overheated by Christian fanaticism. The terrible ferocity of the wars of religion of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries alienated humane people from Christianity. The devotion withdrawn from Christianity was transferred to technology and secular ideologies—nationalism, individualism, communism. Of the three post-Christian ideologies,

Nationalism is the most obsessive. At any rate, Nationalism usually prevails over the others when these come into conflict with it. The devotion that has been transferred from Christianity to Nationalism has detached itself from what is good in Christianity but has clung to what is evil in it. It has repudiated the ideals of love, self-sacrifice, and concern for mankind as a whole that are Christianity's virtues; it has retained the fanaticism that is the common vice of the religions of the Judaic family, and this sour wine, poured into Nationalism's constricting bottle, has fermented there with explosive effects.<sup>9</sup>

Toynbee regards modern nationalism as a lower religion that worships collective human power instead of a higher spiritual reality. That man has been willing to sacrifice himself for this modern cult is an indication that nationalism "was in truth a religious revival in the spiritual vacuum left in human hearts by the evaporation of a higher religion."<sup>10</sup> As a neo-pagan religion that mistakenly worships Leviathan instead of the One God, modern nationalism has undermined Western man's moral and spiritual development; it has led him away from Christianity, which Toynbee regards as the soul of Western civilization.

Because modern nationalism has been power-driven by a fanaticism inherited from Christianity, it "is tribalism with a difference. The primitive religion has been deformed into an enormity."<sup>11</sup> Convinced that they were in possession of the true faith, religious fanatics during the wars of religion sought to impose spiritual unity by force; regarding the nation as the highest good, nationalist fanatics have sought to impose national unity by persecuting minorities and regimenting the population. The fusion of a revived Hellenic parochialism with Christian fanaticism aggravated fratricidal warfare and gave Western parochial sovereign states the capacity "to ruin their common civilization by ruining one another."<sup>12</sup> Nationalism had transformed the human community into a god, warfare into a holy crusade, atrocities into pagan sacrifices, traitors into heretics, citizens into true believers.

Toynbee believes that religion is a perennial need of man, a component

<sup>8</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *Hellenism* (New York, 1959), p. 253.

<sup>9</sup> *Change and Habit*, p. 110.

<sup>10</sup> *A Study of History*, VIIb, p. 521.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, V, p. 161.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, IX, p. 443.

of human nature. Through religion man tries to comprehend and reconcile himself to the awesome reality of life and death. A human being, whether he admits to it or not, insists Toynbee, cannot live without some form of religion. When he rejects a higher religion that stresses selflessness, love, and universalism, he will only embrace a lower religion that heightens his innate egocentricity. Thus Toynbee interprets modern nationalism as a lower religion, for it selfishly worships the collective human power of an expanded tribe at the expense of the rest of humanity. Whereas a higher religion emancipates man from his innate self-centeredness, nationalism intensifies the brutal, irrational, and selfish side of human nature. Nationalism and higher religions are competing faiths. Christianity has sought to free man from the self-destructive idolization of human power; by deifying the state, a human creation, nationalism has enmeshed man in sin. Christianity aspires to a brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God, while nationalism represents the "lamentable victory of parochialism over ecumenicalism."<sup>13</sup> Although the spiritual message of higher religions is infinitely superior to the sin and idolatry evoked by nationalism, the power nationalism exercises over man has not been broken by the higher religions. In 1971 Toynbee concluded:

in my belief, the worship of the collective human power of a fraction of the human race at the expense of the rest of the human race—nationalism, in other words—is the real religion today of a majority of people. Nationalism has been superseded only nominally by the "higher" religions, each of which aims at converting the whole of mankind to its own prescription for putting the individual into touch with ultimate reality. Whether we profess to be followers of one of the historic higher religions or not, almost all of us are nationalist under the skin.<sup>14</sup>

Nationalism has surpassed in power and influence both individualism and communism, the other post-Christian ideologies. And in common with these other ideologies it has been a poor substitute for Christianity, for it is "incapable of helping human beings to preserve their personalities,"<sup>15</sup> which is a basic need of all men. Both competitive individualism and ant-like collectivism deprive the individual of his dignity by regarding him as an object. So too does tribal-minded nationalism.

Democracy is still another force that has increased the intensity of modern nationalism. At first glance, observes Toynbee, it appears that democracy and nationalism stand in opposition. In essence democracy represents universalism, not parochialism, the rights of man, not the special destiny of a people. Democracy is characterized by

a spirit of fraternity which knows no bounds. . . . The natural field of action for Democracy is a field that embraces all Mankind; and it is on this range that its spiritual potency is beneficent. But when this potent spiritual driving-force is

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *Surviving the Future* (New York, 1971), p. 65.

<sup>15</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *Experiences* (New York, 1969), p. 325.

diverted into the mechanism of a parochial state, it not only ceases to be beneficent but becomes malignantly subversive. . . . Democracy imprisoned in parochial states degenerates into Nationalism.<sup>16</sup>

By turning democracy into an agent of nationalism the parochial state system poisoned the political life of the modern world.

It is in the area of warfare that democracy has caused the most havoc. With the breakup of the religious unity of Western Christendom in the sixteenth century, war became infused with a sectarian religious fanaticism that magnified "the evil of War into an unprecedented enormity."<sup>17</sup> By the eighteenth century there had been achieved a divorce between war and religion the immediate effect of which was to reduce the intensity of warfare to the lowest level ever attained in Western history. Warfare in the eighteenth century was relatively civilized—"temperate and moderate,"<sup>18</sup> said Gibbon. Wars were waged from limited aims, casualty rates were low, and the civilian population remained uninvolved. The ferocity and mass emotions that had characterized the wars of religion ended, as warfare was transformed into the "sport of kings," a game played for limited stakes and devoid of passion. Armies were not recruited by conscription and did not live off the countryside; peace terms were not crushing and countries were not wiped off the map. Princes were forced to wage moderate warfare, for there existed no great passion that could rally the nation to a total effort. In the eighteenth century many people regarded war in much the same manner as they did slavery—an ancient curse that was rapidly dissipating. It was the spiritual power of democracy that restored to war the ferocity displayed during the Wars of Religion. Democracy transformed the "sport of kings" into *la guerre totale*. The limited warfare of the eighteenth century turned out to be only a brief interlude between two bouts of fanaticism, the earlier wars of religion and the later wars of nationality. Once the people had become a "nation in arms" fighting for national survival, warfare could no longer remain temperate and indecisive. During the French Revolution war became an ideological struggle, and the flames of hatred fanned by mass emotions could not be extinguished by the rational and universal spirit of the *philosophes*.

Compounding the danger of democratic warfare was the emergence of militarism, which made war into a cult, something desirable in itself and worthy of human worship. In the years from von Moltke to Hitler, states Toynbee, young men embraced the military virtues because they had been

starved of other kinds of spiritual bread. . . . These latter-day Western worshippers of the "military virtues" are the epigoni of generations which were nurtured in the "Christian virtues"; and they began to be starved of the traditional Christian

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<sup>16</sup> *A Study of History*, IV, pp. 162-63.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in *Experiences*, p. 203.

morality, upon which their forebears had been brought up, when, at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the unbelief of a cultivated minority in the Western World began to infect the less sophisticated masses.<sup>19</sup>

Rejecting the creed of Isaiah and Jesus for a barbaric cult of the sword—could there be a more depressing example of spiritual backsliding?

Toynbee has called attention to a crucial development in the evolution of modern nationalism: in the process of feeding off democracy, nationalism destroys democracy's essential ideals. In the first half of the nineteenth century many liberal intellectuals identified nationalism with liberty. Liberal nationalists believed that a unified state free of foreign subjugation was in harmony with the principle of natural rights and insisted that love of country led to a love of humanity. "With all my ardent love of my nation," stated Frantisek Palacky, the Czech patriot, "I always esteem more highly the good of mankind and of learning than the good of the nation."<sup>20</sup> Addressing the Slavs, Giuseppe Mazzini declared: "We who have ourselves arisen in the name of our national right, believe in your right, and offer to help you to win it. But the purpose of our mission is the permanent and peaceful organization of Europe."<sup>21</sup> Liberal nationalism stressed individual freedom, humanitarianism, and cosmopolitanism; it sought to extend constitutionalism and the open society throughout Europe. But as nationalism gained in intensity, it soon clashed with liberal ideals, and few liberals hesitated to sacrifice liberal principles for nationalist goals.

During and after the revolutions of 1848 liberals demonstrated an increasing fascination for nationalism and the power-state and a decreasing commitment to liberalism. The link between liberalism and nationalism was completely severed in the last decades of the nineteenth century by integral nationalists who not only glorified state power but also insisted that liberalism was an obstacle to the achievement of nationalist ends. In the early part of the century liberals had stressed the close connection between nationalism and individual freedom, considering the nationalist goal of liberation and unity to be in accord with the rights of man. In the last part of the century, integral nationalists attacked liberalism as the principal menace to national greatness, removing, in the process, all restraints imposed by liberal principles that sanctified human dignity and exalted reason. As nationalism became increasingly dissociated from liberalism, it began to embrace mythical modes of thought. No longer committed to liberal goals of freedom and reason, nationalists became entranced with the cult of ancestors, the cult of native soil, the cult of heroes, the cult of the leader, the cult of force, the cult of the state. By the end of the nineteenth century a narrowminded,

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<sup>19</sup> *A Study of History*, IV, pp. 644-45.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Hans Kohn, *Pan-Slavism* (South Bend, Ind., 1953), pp. 66-67.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 44.

openly bellicose, and absurdly racist chauvinism stalked the European continent, attracting both the elite and the masses. Some thinkers recognized the danger: an astute German philosopher wrote in 1902 that supersensitive nationalism has become a very serious danger for all peoples of Europe; because of it they are in danger of losing the feeling for human values. Nationalism, pushed to an extreme, just like sectarianism, destroys moral and even logical consciousness. Just and unjust, good and bad, true and false, lose their meaning; what men condemn as disgraceful and inhuman when done by others, they recommend in the same breath to their own peoples as something to be done to a foreign country.<sup>22</sup>

World War I and Nazism were the terrible fulfillment of these dangerous trends in European nationalism. Liberalism had nurtured nationalism and had contributed to its success, but the momentum of nationalism could not be contained by liberal principles.

Another force that has contributed to nationalism's "demonic dynamism"<sup>23</sup> is industrialism. Like democracy, industrialism is ecumenical in spirit, for it "will not work freely or effectively or beneficently except in so far as the world is organized into one single field of economic activity."<sup>24</sup> But when industrialism made its appearance, the Western world was already broken up into a multitude of petty politico-economic units that erected barriers to economic integration. "Caught in the trammels of the Parochial State,"<sup>25</sup> industrialism, like democracy, has been unable to fulfill its essential nature. Instead of building a world order, industrialism, like democracy, has fortified the parochial state which seeks to promote its own economic interests at the expense of the rest of humanity.

Toynbee views the Industrial Revolution that began in the West during the eighteenth century as the "unmistakable counterpart of the economic revolution that had overtaken the Hellenic World in the sixth century B.C."<sup>26</sup> At that time the Greek city-states were becoming economically interdependent while remaining politically divided. This incongruity created intolerable tensions that triggered endemic interstate warfare. With the Peloponnesian War the Hellenic world entered its time of troubles; it never survived them, despite the reprieve granted it by the Roman Empire. The Western world has also become economically interdependent, but, remaining politically fractured, it has waged ferocious fratricidal warfare.

The parochial-minded national state, created in a different social context, was not prepared to cope with the ecumenical forces of democracy

<sup>22</sup> Friedrich Meinecke, *The German Catastrophe* (Boston, 1963), pp. 23-24.

<sup>23</sup> *Change and Habit*, p. 109.

<sup>24</sup> *A Study of History*, IV, p. 169.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, IX, p. 444.

and industrialism. The attempt to confine these new and dynamic forces within the framework of the national state, concludes Toynbee, resulted in the totalitarian state. Only a modification of parochial sovereignty could have dealt creatively with industrialism and democracy; perverted by their imprisonment within the national state, these two ecumenical forces contributed to the power of totalitarian nationalism.

The dangerous tendencies in modern Western nationalism culminated in National Socialism, a repudiation of "the moral and religious essence of Western Christian culture."<sup>27</sup> In rejecting Christianity for their human god, Hitler, and his goddess, the German state, the German people had adopted a perverse neopagan religion. Toynbee believes that Nazism was not a peculiarly German phenomenon but a German expression of the crisis in Western civilization—the rejection of Christianity and the pursuit of false gods. In the late seventeenth century, enthusiasm for religion began to wane in a Western world disillusioned and disheartened by generations of religious conflicts. The decline of Christianity created a discomfiting spiritual vacuum which was filled by post-Christian ideologies, of which nationalism was the most powerful and Nazism the most malignant expression. The essential reason why Nazism won over the youth with astonishing ease was not force or propaganda but latent idealism searching for a cause. The spiritual vacuum that emerged with the decline of religion could not be filled by liberalism, for its stress upon self-interest, utilitarianism, and commercialism "seemed to be extinguishing the vision without which Society cannot endure."<sup>28</sup> To many young people National Socialism was a new faith. Toynbee wrote in 1933:

The truth seems to be that the enlightened skepticism of the eighteenth-century elite . . . had produced an immense and intolerable spiritual void—with the consequence that any new spiritual force, however primitive and crude, could count upon a welcome in the house thus swept and garnished. Viewed with a sympathetic eye, the neopagan movements might be regarded as a pathetic effort on the part of twentieth-century Western Youth, to begin again, from the bottom, the ascent of the spiritual ladder, by setting its foot clumsily on the lowest rung. The tragedy of the Western World, in this age, was its division against itself through a conflict between an ancestral Church which had lost its hold over the masses, and a generation which had gone a-whoring after false gods under the delusion that it was recapturing its lost spiritual birthright.<sup>29</sup>

The experience of National Socialism contains lessons for the West in particular and mankind in general. The Nazi era demonstrated anew the precariousness of civilization, the fragility of reason, and the immutability of original sin. The glorification of Teutonic ancestors and the racial delusions about the "blond beast" indicated that a Germany disillusioned

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<sup>27</sup> *Change and Habit*, p. 18.

<sup>28</sup> *A Study of History*, VIIb, p. 520.

<sup>29</sup> *Survey of International Affairs, 1933*, pp. 133-34.

with Western civilization was retreating into the darkness of the primeval forest from which the German tribes had come. The conversion of the barbarians to civilization had not rooted out barbarism from the West; in the form of National Socialism, "barbarism was taking its revenge by finding its way into the souls of its Western conquerors."<sup>30</sup> That a Western people could fall so low indicates that the West had not risen so high—that it is continually menaced by a morally perverse barbarism that it harbors in its own breast. For Toynbee, Nazism represented "one phase of the struggle between the spirit of Western Christendom and the spirit of European barbarism which Christianity had sometimes charmed and had thereby partially tamed, but had never wholly exorcised."<sup>31</sup> When the West abandoned its devotion to God, who is love, it became capable of every moral enormity. This, for Toynbee, is the true lesson of Hitlerism. The Nazi experience reinforced his belief that civilizations are still experiments in which man seeks to rise above the level of the primitive, and that these experiments often end in failure.

The moral catastrophe of Nazism, insists Toynbee, demonstrates anew the limitations of reason and the inadequacy of a nonreligious conception of liberty. The secular values of the Enlightenment, unbuttressed by Christian spirituality, are insufficient to restrain man's basest impulses. When the West discarded Christian dogma in reaction to the savagery of the wars of religion, it also dispensed with Christian love, a loss unforgivable and unendurable. After the Nazi experience it has become "impossible to retain Modern Western Man's latter-day dogmatic belief in the inevitable progress of a secularized Western Civilization and in the self-perfectibility of a graceless Human Nature."<sup>32</sup>

While Nazism emerged within Europe among a people that had been Christians for more than a thousand years, it was as much a human problem as it was a purely German or Western one, for there lurks a vein of Original Sin in human nature everywhere to which Hitlerism makes a strong appeal. The moral is that civilization is nowhere and never secure. It is a thin cake of custom overlying a molten mass of wickedness that is always boiling up for an opportunity to burst out. Civilization cannot ever be taken for granted. Its price is eternal vigilance and ceaseless spiritual effort.<sup>33</sup>

## II

The institution of the national state and the ideology of nationalism have spread from their birthplace in Western Europe throughout the globe, blazing "a trail of persecution, eviction, and massacre."<sup>34</sup> National-

<sup>30</sup> *A Study of History*, IX, p. 450.

<sup>31</sup> *Survey of International Affairs*, 1933, p. 202.

<sup>32</sup> *A Study of History*, VIII, p. 289.

<sup>33</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *Acquaintances* (New York, 1967), p. 294.

<sup>34</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *The World and The West*, published with *Civilization on Trial* (Cleveland, O., 1958), p. 280.

ism, which historically "has been by far the commonest cause of mortality among civilizations,"<sup>35</sup> has become the religion of most of humanity in the contemporary world. While the problems that threaten human survival can only be solved by a global effort, the number of parochial sovereign states has increased, and the temperature of nationalism remains high. In a world that desperately requires global thinking, says Toynbee, we continue to worship a fraction of mankind at the expense of the human race. The lower religion of nationalism continues to be "the prime conditioner which enables the 'establishment' to turn men into soldiers and train them to kill their fellow human beings without personal animosity but also without compunction."<sup>36</sup> War is an institutionalized form of violence that did not exist prior to the appearance of states; wars are waged by people who have achieved a large degree of political organization. Regarding war as "a parasite on the institution of local sovereignty,"<sup>37</sup> Toynbee insists that only by destroying the host can we eliminate the parasite. The need for a world-state has never been more pressing than today, for the persistence of nationalism in an age of global pollution, world-wide overpopulation, and atomic weapons is, for Toynbee, nothing less than "a death-wish."<sup>38</sup>

Toynbee believes that a political system's merit depends on its ability "to rid human social life of the violence that is the price of anarchy."<sup>39</sup> Judged by this standard, world-states have been considerably more successful than city-states or national states; they have succeeded in providing a large measure of domestic order and unity while engaging in relatively few wars with states beyond their borders. For example, in the two centuries after 27 B.C. "the Roman Empire endured not more than half-a-dozen years of internal warfare. . . . War seemed to have been banished from the center of civilization to its periphery and to have been transformed into police-operations against barbarians beyond the pale; and even on the single frontier where, along the Euphrates the Roman Empire marched with another organized state, the total number of war-years during these two centuries was hardly more than fifteen."<sup>40</sup> While political divisiveness is as old as the first hunting bands, world-mindedness is a relatively recent phenomenon; it made its appearance only after civilization had already been established. World-states were formed when one state delivered a knockout blow to its competitors. But the age-old habit of divisiveness inherited from the early days of prehistory persisted long after the establishment of the world-state. Often, defeated peoples rejected the peace and stability imposed by the world-

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<sup>35</sup> *A Study of History*, IX, p. 442.

<sup>36</sup> *Surviving the Future*, p. 116.

<sup>37</sup> *Experiences*, p. 84.

<sup>38</sup> *Change and Habit*, p. 112.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>40</sup> *Survey of International Affairs, 1928* (London, 1934), p. 4.

state and rose in nationalist revolt. In our own day, the subordination of the universal elements of communism to the demands of Russian nationalism is another indication of the greater appeal of parochial-mindedness than of world-mindedness. Yet world-states have not been without their appeal, as evidenced by the loyalty Rome received from the different peoples that composed the empire.

While tribalism is a deeply ingrained and formidable habit, it is still a product of culture and not an ineradicable trait of human nature. Toynbee feels that man can be taught to regard a world-state as a superior form of political organization and that he can learn to subordinate parochial sentiments to a world-wide loyalty. Since 1500 certain developments have served to push mankind into the direction of a single society. Ironically, the West, which has been notoriously plagued with political parochialism, has been the agent in this movement towards ecumenicalism. The spread of Western technology, institutions, and ideas throughout the globe is bringing the world together in a common culture. Spearheading the global diffusion of Western civilization is a world-wide intelligentsia comparable to the hellenizers, who served as the medium for the cultural unification of the ancient Mediterranean world. Perhaps the modern intelligentsia, many of whom already think and behave as world citizens, will serve as "the social and cultural cement for the holding together of a world-state."<sup>41</sup>

Another promising sign for future world unity is the growing economic and political consolidation of western Europe since World War II. This radically new departure is "a good augury, considering how deeply ingrained is nationalism in the tradition of Western European peoples. . . . If the Western European peoples can unite with each other voluntarily, as they are now demonstrating they can, a voluntary unity of mankind, on a global scale, is not a utopian objective."<sup>42</sup>

The future world-state will not be greatly centralized, predicts Toynbee, for the peoples of the world will only reluctantly support world government. Moreover, in an era of atomic weapons, recalcitrant national states cannot be coerced into accepting world authority. While states will not put themselves out of business, they might be persuaded to surrender certain prerogatives for the sake of self-preservation. Realizing that the alternative may be self-destruction, mankind will choose a form of world government, but unlike the world-states of the past, which were unitary states imposed by force, the coming world-state will be a voluntary federal union. But to be effective it must have the power to prevent local units, driven by parochial loyalties, from engaging in war. Toynbee believes that the proper end of statesmanship is the "harmony between 'national' and 'universal,'" but if this harmony is to endure and succeed, "the authority

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<sup>41</sup> *Change and Habit*, p. 155.

<sup>42</sup> Arnold Toynbee, "For the First Time in 30,000 Years," *World View*, March 1972, p. 9.

of the 'universal,' and the loyalty paid to it, must be paramount."<sup>43</sup>

Consistent with his interpretation of history, Toynbee insists that the coming world polity requires a religious base, for only by expressing devotion to God can man overcome the limitations of parochialism and live in brotherly unity. Western technology is an inadequate scaffolding upon which to construct world unity; so too are the post-Christian ideologies, which offer man a limited conception of humanity and an inadequate understanding of the purpose of life. Only by turning once again to the true prophets of universalism—Isaiah, Jesus, Buddha, Gandhi—can man fashion an enduring world order. Without this spiritual infusion mankind might not succeed in making the leap from tribalism to ecumenicalism, from idol worship to spirituality.

For a true and lasting peace, a religious revolution is, I am sure, a *sine qua non*. By religion, as I hope I have made clear, I mean the overcoming of self-centeredness, in both individuals and communities, by getting into a communion with the spiritual presence behind the universe and by bringing our wills into harmony with it. I think this is the key to peace, but we are very far from picking up this key and using it, and until we do, the survival of the human race will continue to be in doubt.<sup>44</sup>

If the future world-state manages to eliminate the war and class conflict that have traditionally wrecked civilizations and succeeds in coping with pollution and overpopulation, the next problem confronting mankind would be the role of leisure in a mechanized world. Toynbee fears that leisure lavished on a proletarian majority will lead to cultural deterioration. What irony it would be if the reward for the elimination of war and class conflict turns out to be the mass of mankind wallowing in Plato's "Commonwealth of Swine." To prevent mechanization from crushing the spirit, the society of the future must create an educational system that stimulates aesthetic and intellectual growth. But Toynbee also recognizes that only a relatively few people possess the intrinsic gifts required for art and thought. Consequently, if man is to use leisure "in the service of some high calling to which all men would find themselves able to devote their lives, then Mankind must turn again for salvation to Religion," which provides "an infinite spiritual scope for Everyman."<sup>45</sup>

### III

Toynbee's study of history leads him to conclude that "our greatest need is for spiritual improvement in ourselves and in our relations with our fellow human beings."<sup>46</sup> For man to achieve this spiritual end he must "break out of the prison of his inborn self-centeredness and enter

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<sup>43</sup> *A Study of History*, XII, p. 619.

<sup>44</sup> *Surviving the Future*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>45</sup> *A Study of History*, IX, p. 618.

<sup>46</sup> *Surviving the Future*, p. 47.

into communion . . . with some reality that is greater, more important, more valuable, and more lasting than the individual himself."<sup>47</sup> The way to accomplish this is to turn once again to humanity's greatest teachers, the prophets of higher religions, who saw God as One and mankind as Unity. By recognizing that God alone is the supreme value in the universe, man liberates himself. He owes no ultimate loyalty to a state or ideology, for they are only man-made idols and God has sternly warned against the worship of false gods. Man's ultimate concern is moral growth not power, fame, or riches, which are also man-made idols. By focusing on God, Toynbee maintains, man becomes a free moral agent, for no human person, no human institution, no human tradition can claim his soul. He also overcomes self-centeredness and is thus enabled to treat his fellows with respect and even love. It is through a spiritual communion with God that man becomes conscious of his own humanity. Because the higher religions address themselves to all mankind, not just to a part of it, they enable man to "overcome the political barriers between parochial states and even the cultural barriers between parochial civilizations."<sup>48</sup> Without expressing allegiance to God, men will not be able to dispense with their tribal loyalties and dwell together in peace.

A strong element of humanism pervades Toynbee's religious orientation. He does not celebrate the irrational, but insists that reason, unilluminated by a prophetic concern for humanity, will distort human values with computer-like indifference. He does not negate this world for some unknown after-life or cling dogmatically to the doctrines of a sectarian church, nor does he retreat into fruitless despair. He believes that the ideals of the City of God do benefit the City of Man. By setting our foot on the spiritual path, he states, we can make ourselves better and improve our relations with each other. And for Toynbee the City of Man is a true cosmopolis; it embraces all mankind, not just Christians or Westerners.

Toynbee's humanism is clearly discerned in his attitude towards technology, which he regards as still another false god, another example of man idolizing his own power, another grievous substitute for God, another "shocking vent for Original Sin and a serious threat to Man's welfare and perhaps even to his existence."<sup>49</sup> In the fifth century B.C., Toynbee reminds us, Socrates, finding the theories of the natural philosophers inadequate for dealing with human problems, turned away from a study of nature to the study of man and society. Toynbee calls for a similar reorientation. He yearns for a modern Socrates who would convince man to channel his energies into developing his moral and spiritual potential, who would instruct man how to utilize technology so that it does not warp human souls. The techniques and tools created

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>48</sup> *A Survey of History*, VIIIb, p. 433.

<sup>49</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *An Historian's Approach to Religion* (New York, 1956), p. 238.

by man's intellect can be enormously effective in bettering the human condition, but "we have not the spiritual power or understanding or goodness to use these tools right. . . . We need another Socrates."<sup>50</sup> Both technology and nationalism, in contrast to higher religions, care nothing for the individual human personality—man's dignity and his need for personal consolation and spiritual uplifting. For Toynbee, man becomes fully human when he sees the spiritual significance of life and the moral potential of his own personality. Technology must promote this end, he says, if we are to avoid either Huxley's *Brave New World* or the destruction of the planet. And, it should be added, Toynbee warned of the dangers of technology long before it became fashionable to do so.

Only through spirituality and universalism can mankind preserve itself and the individual fulfill himself—this is the essence of Toynbee's thought. His was one response to the crisis of Western civilization that defined the first half of the twentieth century. Having lost confidence in reason and committed no longer to freedom, some thinkers found a new faith in fascism. Rejecting liberal society and entranced by a utopian vision of the "end of days," others converted to communism. Shattered by the senseless slaughter of World War I, Toynbee became disillusioned with a Western civilization that had repudiated Christianity for technology and ideologies. Because liberalism had dispensed with Christian love and the Christian precept that man's liberty came from God's grace, it was too selfish and competitive to preserve the sacrosanctity of the personality; because the rationalism of the Enlightenment was spiritually empty, it could not contain the brutal and irrational side of human nature that constitutes man's original sin. Holding that the liberal-rationalist tradition alone was inadequate to protect man from Leviathan or to provide for his spiritual needs, Toynbee has urged mankind to listen again to its religious prophets, who have taught the presence of God, the dignity of man, the unity of humanity, and communion with Absolute Reality as the true purpose of life. If we reject the prophetic ideals of higher religions, he warns, we shall continue to pursue false gods whose power to wreck civilization has been demonstrated. Only through the higher religions can mankind find the spiritual strength to counter the "demonic dynamism" of nationalism, the most dangerous of these idols.

Toynbee has been accused of returning to myths, escaping into illusion, and underestimating the narrowmindedness of religion-dominated societies. Moreover, his critics say, Toynbee's hostility to all forms of parochialism blinds him to differences between varieties of nationalism. For example, to call Zionists disciples of the Nazis seems simplistic, if not grotesque. To some critics, Toynbee's religious orientation is fanciful, foolish, dangerous, and hateful. Nevertheless, he cannot easily be dismissed.

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<sup>50</sup> *Surviving the Future*, p. 43.

After the experience of the twentieth century even the staunchest defenders of the Enlightenment tradition have reservations regarding the capacity of reason to heal humanity's ills, and only the naïve interpret history as linear progress. Nor are we so certain about the efficacy of unrestricted technological growth, and the "noble" principle of self-determination of peoples continues to cause much mischief. Toynbee compels us to confront the irrational, to find a constructive outlet for its creative energies, and to cope with its destructive capacities. He forces the rationalist, the technologist, and the nationalist to ponder the implications of their beliefs, and he reminds a secularly oriented humanity that religious sentiments have not been eradicated but have been rerouted into ideologies, of which nationalism is the most pernicious.