

Toynbee's Holy War

By ROBERT E. SEGAL

Arnold Toynbee, who looks upon religion as history and regards history as religion at different hours in his study, has acknowledged that it isn't likely that the Israelis themselves set fire to the Mosque Al Aqsa in Jerusalem. But he can well understand why the Arabs, for whom his sympathies are unbounded, consider the Israelis "responsible and culpable."

And if the fire down at the mosque proves the spark for an Islamic holy war, why, then, in the judgment of Dr. Toynbee, Israel's days are numbered.

Dr. Toynbee has been sitting in judgment on Judaism, Jews, and Israel for many years. Is it uncharitable to wonder now if it is wishful thinking on his part when he cites the possibility of "Jihad," the Muslim equivalent of a Christian "Crusade," as a fate about to overtake Israel? A Protestant of distinction, Professor Toynbee, in his piece about the mosque conflagration widely printed and widely read, made no mention at all of the fact that a fellow protestant had been arrested in connection with the fire. Why not speculate a little over that development and wonder if it might lead to Jihad against Protestantism?

One reason, perhaps, is that Dr. Toynbee seems bent on denigrating Israel to the end of his days. In his most recent book, "Experiences," he declares that Israel colonialism, since the establishment of the state of Israel "is one of the two blackest cases in the whole history of colonialism in the modern age." The other frightful example is America's treatment of the Indians. In Toynbee's mind, "evicting and robbing the native Arab inhabitants" on the part of the Jews who, with the backing of the United Nations, created the State of Israel, is on a par with what the white men early to our shores did to the Cherokees and Semonoles.

Thus Toynbee places Israel in the same league as the United States -- Bad company, in his book. "If it is true that an unbroken series of victorious wars makes a nation dangerous to the rest of the world and itself, the United States and Israel must be today the two most dangerous of the 125 sovereign states."

For Toynbee to conclude that Israel is the greatest present threat to world peace, as he does, should make scholars think twice regarding his role as historian. The years he spent as a special advisor to the British Foreign Office, with special emphasis on matters concerning the Middle East, should never be forgotten by those who evaluate his efforts to write history.

As to his cruel assertion 15 years ago that Judaism is, after all, only a fossilized Syrian cult, the distinguished authority on Palestinian archeology, Professor William Foxwell Albright, can be profitably consulted: "I do not agree with Toynbee's ideas at all on the Jews."

Albright has said: "The Jews do not have a fossil culture. I can't imagine any people having less of a fossil culture than the Jews... If anything is absolute nonsense, it is Toynbee's idea that Israel originated nationalism, fanaticism and especially separatism from other peoples... I'm in hearty disagreement with all of Toynbee's points about the role of the Jews in history."

Some think Toynbee might forgive the Jews while continuing to propagandize for the Arabs if only the Jews would realize that they can't fulfil a universal mission without giving up the claim to a separate ethos. But doubts persist.

And meanwhile, scholars, the mass media and the public accept Toynbee as one of the most knowledgeable of Middle East experts -- Toynbee who has stated Zionism and anti-Semitism are expressions on an identical point of view, Toynbee who has equated the treatment of Arabs by Israel with Nazi genocide against the Jews of Europe.

Thus the zealot. Thus the special pleader. Thus the scribe who gets religion confused with history, yet manages to stay in favor with both theologians and historians.

TEL AVIV (WNS) -- The American-owned Tapline pipeline section on the Golan Heights has been repaired and oil is now flowing smoothly through the facility, Israeli officials reported.

JERUSALEM (WNS) -- The General Assembly, the main governing board of the expanded Jewish Agency, will hold its first meeting during the latter part of 1970 in Jerusalem.

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