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## Toynbee vs. the Bible

To the Editor:

Arnold Toynbee's broadside against the Bible (Op-Ed Sept. 16) is but the latest in a series of attempts to blame Scriptures for all our ecological woes.

God must have broad shoulders. When science was fighting for recognition, it was fashionable to blame the Bible as the benighted bastion of the antiprogessive Neanderthals. Now that science and technology have gone too far, it is again the Bible that is stigmatized—this time for exactly the opposite reasons.

Toynbee refers to Genesis 1:28 and 3:19 as the offending passages. He seems to be quite selective. Why skip Genesis 1:29, 30, which places restrictions on man's exploitation of nature.

I cannot speak for Christianity or Islam, but Judaism certainly does not qualify for the ecocidal monotheism Toynbee wants to abandon in favor of Oriental religions and pre-Christian

classical literature. Adam was originally a vegetarian, and although Noah's sons were allowed to eat meat, Jewish dietary laws preserve aspects of the original vegetarianism (and the respect for nature and for life) by circumscribing man's unrestrained lust for the subdual of his environment. The Sabbath and the sabbatical year teach that "the earth is the Lord's" and that man is not in absolute mastery of the world but is responsible for it to God.

The symbiotic relationship of man and earth is throughout the Bible considered a blessing, and exile and alienation a curse. Jewish law interpreted Deuteronomy 20:19, 20 as prohibiting any vandalism against nature, whether in time of peace or war.

Is it possible that Toynbee and others like him have simply misread the Biblical passage—and equated "dominion . . . over the fowl of the air" with the right to foul the air?

(Rabbi) NORMAN LAMM  
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