

Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee and Sun Myung Moon - Decline of the West

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Exposition of Divine Principle defines in the chapter "Period of Preparation for the Advent of the Messiah" three stages of the maturation of religion, philosophy, politics and economy. Surprisingly even the modern interpretation of history, historiography, went through three stages: In the twentieth century, three scholars answered the "why question" on consecutive higher levels -- Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee and Sun Myung Moon. Each of them made outstanding contributions, explaining the driving forces behind history.

To learn from history is possible only if we know history. If we read history books or attend history classes, usually we learn many details but not why this or that happened. Many students try to find the whole truth, which is alas not revealed by scholarly books. As a student of history at Vienna University, I learned mainly facts -- when, where and what happened. But the question about the driving force behind events remained unanswered. Only Christian scholars elaborate on the divine providence. The German dictator Adolf Hitler used to shout, "The providence has chosen me" albeit he was the tool of the evil providence.



The quest for meaning in history

For ages learned men asked, Does history have meaning, structure or direction, beyond the individual events and actions that make it up? Historians tried piecing together the forces that underlie historical developments, but their answers may be as wrong as in the case of Karl Marx. The subject matter, Philosophy of History, asks if there is any design, purpose, directive principle, or finality in the processes of human history. We can also call True Father, among other things, a philosopher of history. Why? Because his teachings explain or interpret the cause of historic events, not only of biblical matters.

In the twentieth century, two outstanding historians were researching the driving force for the rise and fall of empires -- Oswald Spengler and Arnold J. Toynbee. The former was mentioned by True Father in his autobiography in Chapter Seven, "Global Harmony Starts on the Korean Peninsula": "The historian and philosopher Oswald Spengler put forth a cyclical theory of the rise and decline of civilizations...." and a few sentences later "Looking at today's Western culture, it appears that some of his thoughts were prophetic." In Exposition of Divine Principle, Chapter 6, "The Second Advent," at 3.3.5 (The Culmination of All Civilizations) we too read about the influence of geographical locations on the

development of specific civilizations and the comparison of the life cycle of a civilization with that of human beings from childhood, youth, middle age and old age as well as the seasonal sequence of cultures, all in line with Spengler's opinions.

Once the famous Henry Kissinger was asked by the New York Times, "Which philosophers have influenced you most?" Kissinger replied, "Spinoza, Kant and Spengler." The German Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) published several remarkable books. But when his book *The Decline of the West* came out in summer of 1918, it was a wild success. Soon it was translated into various languages around the globe, including Japanese. Perhaps people in the Far East associated the decline of the West with the rise of the East? At that time, it was imperative to read Spengler, to sympathize or revolt against him. He opens his two-volume work with the words, "In this book it is attempted for the first time the venture of predetermining history, of following the still untraveled stages in the destiny of a Culture and specifically of the only Culture in our time and on our planet, which is actually in the phase of fulfillment -- the West European-American." Spengler contended that because most civilizations pass through a life cycle, not only can the historian reconstruct the past but he can predict the spiritual forms, duration, meaning and product of the still unaccomplished stages! However, the decline of a civilization he perceives as a natural process like the withering of flowers. Spengler said that the Atlantic civilization had already passed through the creative stage and now stagnates in reflective mood and material comfort.

His style of making predictions reminds me of making a weather forecast: Data from the past is merged with present observations requiring the forecaster to remember a previous weather event that is expected to be mimicked by an upcoming event. Spengler predicted that about the year 2000, Western civilization would enter the period of a pre-death emergency! Shortly before his death in 1936, he prophetically remarked in a letter to Nazi-leader Hans Frank that "in ten years, the German Reich will probably no longer exist." Exactly nine years later the predicted fall of the Third Reich was reality.



Worrisome trends

Spengler defined thirteen symptoms typical of the decline stage, among them sensual lifestyle and craving for entertainment, loss of faith and the breakup of traditions, extreme materialism and breaches of taboos, wars of extermination like World War I, the madness of bureaucracy, urban life instead of the bliss of rural life, voluntary childlessness and ramping immorality, etc. The lifespan of a civilization he dated as a thousand years. Indeed, there are some cases like the Holy Roman Empire lasting from 800 until 1806, or the Byzantine Empire, which fit in this count. He also found parallels in flagship personalities and compared Confucius in China with Kant in Germany, Alexander the Great with Napoleon Bonaparte. The Divine Principle similarly compares Moses with St. Augustine, King David with Charlemagne. Oswald Spengler was convinced that his findings produce a "Copernican turn" in historiography sweeping away old views. His theory inspired prominent historians like Arnold J. Toynbee in Great Britain and publications like *The Clash of Civilizations* by Samuel Huntington.

Toynbee's take on history

Arnold J. Toynbee (1889–1975), author of numerous books and hundreds of articles is celebrated for his twelve-volume *Study of History*, examining in depth the rise and fall of twenty-three civilizations. The most famous quotation of him is "History repeats itself." Though Toynbee quoted Spengler many times, he drew a different conclusion and formulated the Law of Challenge-and-Response: The decline or rise of empires depends on the response to extreme challenges. (Note: today's extreme challenges could be climate change and mass migration). The key for success lies in the hands of the creative minorities; civilizations start to disintegrate when their creative minorities fail to respond sufficiently.

Contrary to Spengler, Toynbee perceived the possibility that the doom of a civilization can be suspended if it is grafted onto a new religion. For example, the ancient Greek-Hellenic civilization survived by

engrafting onto Christianity. The Byzantine Empire was the continuation of the Roman Empire in its eastern provinces and lasted until ad 1453 when the Turks conquered it. During most of its existence, the Byzantine Empire was the most powerful economic, cultural and military force in the West!

Toynbee predicted in his *Civilization on Trial* (1948) that our secular Western civilization, although headed for destruction, will first bring about the political and cultural unification of mankind. The coming world-embracing civilization will be essentially religious. Asked about the character of this future universal religion, he made only vague predictions such as that it will combine elements of all creeds equally. In his last book *"Mankind and Mother Earth,"* he warns about the impending collapse of Planet Earth, though in 1973 the state of the biosphere was better than today. Toynbee was convinced of the necessity to create a global nation (!) because the individual states cater only to their interests and sacrifice the common good for selfish gains. Unlike many leftist historians now and then, Toynbee refers to religion as the great regenerative force.



Decline or revival?

Not surprisingly, leftist intellectuals and journalists disparage Spengler and Toynbee because both define "humanization" as having the abilities of creativity and spirituality and not with man's ability to wield a tool! It is virtually impossible to describe all findings of Spengler and Toynbee here. Since their names are mentioned in some of our publications, I always felt attracted to learning more about them. Because True Father proclaimed forty years ago the arrival of the Pacific civilization and True Mother in her recent speeches takes up this topic too, I felt obliged to inform the public.

For that reasons I created the lecture "Europe—Decline or Revival," which I have presented (at time of writing) eight times in the cities of Vienna, Prague, Munich, Bonn and other places, mostly at UPF events. The lecture includes all the points mentioned in this article and more. Parts of the "Last Days" in *Exposition of Divine Principle* are also interwoven and it ends with the famous quote of Rabindranath Tagore, "In the Golden Age of Asia, Korea was one of its lamp-bearers and that lamp is waiting to be lighted once again for the illumination of the East." I anticipated some criticism in Munich or Bonn, since Germans are an intellectual audience, but all went well. On the contrary, quite many people shook my hand and thanked me warmly. They asked me about the future of Europe -- will everything decline? I replied that the old civilizations serve often as fertilizer for the new one. Though the Roman Empire declined in Western Europe in the fifth century, the Latin language, Roman law and architecture, the arts and sciences remained and combined with Christian elements during the Renaissance bore new fruits.

For my PowerPoint presentation, I used quotations from Father's autobiography, which say that the central civilization consistently moved West, that the Pacific era has finally arrived, that Asia is the cradle of world religions and that Korea's geography reminds us of ancient Rome and other input from "Global Harmony starts on the Korean Peninsula." I put messages from True Parents into my presentation as much as the respective audience might digest. Recently I felt that a historian like Oswald Spengler would hugely appreciate talking with True Father. Therefore, I registered him for liberation during the Hyo Jeong Festival. I pray, that he can teach the History of Restoration to the multitudes.

Oswald Spengler said that the decline stage of a civilization would last ninety to a hundred years. When we count the date 1918 as the beginning, in 2018 as the end of the Atlantic civilization is at hand. When he was asked which civilization will follow, he could not tell. We are lucky to know due to True Parents' proclamations that the Pacific era has begun. The word "pacific" means "peaceful." The Atlantic civilization was characterized by conflict and wars; that should be over. Additionally, the Pacific is related to female aspects whereas the Atlantic is associated with the male character. (Search via Google for "pacific synonym.")