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# **The Creative Role of Religion in the Emergence of a Sustainable World-Order**

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## **Introduction**

“The world stands in need of liberation.” So goes a popular song. In this article, I want to show that our contemporary society is basically violent (far more than needed and can be tolerated). Violence on this scale, left to itself, threatens to destroy all life on the precious planet. Thus the present world-order is not sustainable.. I argue that religious impulses can prevent a catastrophic annihilation of human race and lead to a “re-birthing of creation” or a new world-order. Though religions have failed many a times, I shall argue that religions have that enabling potential.

I begin the article by asserting that violence to some extent is inevitable. But the danger confronting us today is that ours has become an inherently violent society. This is followed by some theoretical considerations based on classical authors like Arnold Toynbee and a contemporary scholars like Martin Rees and Nick Bostrom. Then I study some of the positive contributions of religion and trace signs of hope for the emergence of a new and viable world-order.

Since this paper considers major fields of human life, I am constrained to be selective in the choice of arguments. Keeping in mind the main thrust of the paper, I have been forced to leave out many nuanced articulations of the arguments.

## **1. Normal Violence is inevitable to some extent**

A dispassionate look at nature reminds us that to some extent

violence is necessary and even healthy. As discerned by Charles Darwin, nature seems to favour “the survival of the fittest.” Competition for food and living space is part of life. Killing for food and fighting for mates are part of the ecological circle which enables nature to continue the cycle of birth, growth, death and decay. We see in nature that death of one leads to the birth of another.<sup>1</sup>

So biologists see the emergence and progressive evolution of life as a result of the “struggle for survival” that is inherent in nature. Some of the contemporary scholars go to the extent of postulating that life is the quest of the “selfish genes” to perpetuate itself!<sup>2</sup> Other respected scholars like Sigmund Freud and Lorenz Konrad maintain that there is an instinctual drive towards violence and death in every living being (Grossman 2004).<sup>3</sup> Seen from this perspective, limited violence and death is a natural process for individuals, for society and even for the species.

Even then, right from the beginning of the human race, there have been human attempts to counter even such natural violence. Jainism with its meticulous observance of *ahimsa* is a typical case. Vegetarianism, which is becoming popular today, is also a conscious attempt to reduce the quantum of violence and foster respect and reverence for life.

On the whole we may generalize and say that limited violence is necessary for ecological balance and the survival of life on the planet. This may be traced from the way life organizes and extends itself.

## **2. The Danger Today: Inherently Violent Society**

This type of a relationship continued even after the emergence of the human beings. But with the introduction of agriculture, the equation changed drastically. As demonstrated by Daniel Quinn<sup>4</sup> the introduction of agriculture and the possibility of preventing others from accessing the food, humans have become an exception to the normal laws of life. Humans stand out of the law of life and

use violence (against nature and against themselves) as an inherent weapon against life.

### ***Inherent Violence***

There are three aspects that agricultural humans did that are never done in the rest of the (animal) community and these are all fundamental to the present civilisational system.

First, they exterminated their competitors, which is something that never happens in nature. In nature, animals will defend their territories and their kills, and they invade their competitors' territories and pre-empt their kills. If competitors hunted each other down just to make them dead, then there would be no competitors. There would be simply one species at each level of competition: The Strongest. But that is how the world today is!

Second, they systematically destroyed the food of the competitors (animals) to make room for their own. But the rule in the natural community is to take what you need and leave the rest alone.

Third, they deny their opponents access to food. But in the natural community the rule is: "You may deny your competitors access to what you are eating, but you may not deny them access to food in general." This trend has continued in today's scientific advancement and economic capitalism and we are experiencing the full flowering of such an attitude to life.

Such a world view has led to:

- ◆ An abundance and material prosperity for an elite few.
- ◆ Mass Hunger and Poverty for the majority.
- ◆ Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) with which the elite can control the rest.

The abundant luxury of a few, coupled with unbridled technological progress<sup>5</sup> has been miraculous. Human comfort, convenience and longevity of unimaginable magnitude has dawned on us. If we remember that Wright Brothers invented the airplane

just 100 years ago, we know that the revolution in transportation is of incredible magnitude. Similarly, when we realize that computers came to the scene about 20 years ago, that internet about 10 years and mobile phone about 5 years ago, we can imagine the rapidity and entrepreneurship inherent in these innovations. So we are right in asking: What would the next decade bring us? Marvellous innovations are imminent, especially in the field of Biotechnology and Nanotechnology.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, it is evident that such enormous material and technological benefits have not touched the quality of life of the majority of people in the world. This has led to large scale hunger and deprivation, giving rise to violence of different sorts. “The spiral of violence” spoken of by Archbishop Helder Camera has grown out of the fertile grounds of poverty and exploitation. Terrorism, which is a recent phenomenon is also the result of this tragic scenario. We just have not evolved a moral consciousness in consonance with our technological growth, that could enable all humans to live in modest abundance and prosperity.<sup>7</sup>

Along with the increase in destitution and exploitation, production of weapons of mass destruction has been on the increase. Other possible causes leading to the destruction of the human race are alarmingly escalating. Some of them may be enumerated: Breaking out of a nuclear War, Nuclear Contamination, Terrorist Violence, Chemical Pollution, Environmental Disaster, World War III, Lack of Population/Over-Population, Violence and Revolution, Genetic Manipulation (of humans), Chemical/Biological Warfare, Escape of New Virus, Bacteria from Laboratories, Mass Lethargy and Indifference, Seeking of Immediate Gratification, Philosophical indifference.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, violence has become an intrinsic part of our life at the social, cultural and even religious levels. Ignoring the problem (we live as if the issue of violence is not serious enough) is not going to be helpful. The mass genocides in countries like Sudan, Rwanda, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the state of Gujarat can be seen from this perspective.

As humans, we refuse to see the side-effects (“collateral damages”) of technological advancements. We refuse to look at the presence of the abject poverty and inhuman suffering of the millions of humans around us. What we like to forget is the fact these very technological marvels threatens to devour all of us. Unlimited technological progress, unbridled by our moral consciousness, seems to be leading us to our own self-annihilation. We prefer to remain oblivious of this situation.

To sum up: Humans have been consistently killing other species for their own apparent betterment. Humans have been consistently killing their own species for the lopsided betterment of a few. Unlike in the past, when they could never have destroyed the whole humanity, today we have the technological know-how and the actual possibility of total self-destruction.

### ***Case of Meiwes***

In this context an untypical case serves as illustration of the situation of our present society. Armin Meiwes, a middle-aged computer technician in Germany, killed and ate Bernd Juergen Brandes after posting an advertisement on the internet asking for a willing victim in 2001. Meiwes, who was jailed in January for killing and eating the flesh of a willing victim, is already the focus of a rock song and a film script. He has now signed over the media rights of his case to a production company in the city of Hamburg (to the Hamburg-based production firm Stampfwerk). Stampf said he had negotiated for nine months with Meiwes and his attorney Harald Ermel before winning their agreement to give Stampfwerk “the exclusive rights to the journalistic treatment of the case”. The hard rock band Rammstein has written a song about Meiwes called “Mein Teil”, or “My Part”.<sup>9</sup>

Without being judgemental, it may be noted that both the parties involved in this episode are well-educated people. They earned enough and lived comfortable lives. But there was something in both of them that led to his inhuman, barbaric act which is hardly imaginable. What is worse is, I believe, a society, which indirectly

encourages such bizarre cases! In this incident, it is obvious that death and cannibalism pays! Do such malicious deaths really pay? Are we as a society capable of dealing with such scenario?

### **3. Violent Death of Today's Civilization or that of Humanity**

After having studied the violent scenario in very general terms, I wish to explore some theoretical possibilities and apply them to our society. For this purpose I take first a classical author, Arnold Toynbee and his followers. This is followed briefly by the study of some contemporary authors including the Oxford scholar Nick Bostrom.

#### ***Arnold Toynbee***

Arnold Joseph Toynbee (April 14, 1889 - October 22, 1975) was a British historian whose ten-volume classical analysis of the rise and fall of civilizations, *A Study of History*, 1934 - 1961 (also known as *History of the World*) was very popular in its time. The theory elaborated in *A Study of History* was that of challenge-response as applied to a *civilization*, taken as a unit. In the *Study of History*, an investigation into the growth, development, and decay of civilizations, the problems of history, are considered in terms of cultural groups rather than nationalities. When a civilization responds to challenges, it grows. When it fails to respond to a challenge, it enters its period of decline.

The classic treatise is a comparative study of 26 civilizations in world history, analyzing their genesis, growth and disintegration. For Toynbee, a "civilization is a movement and not a condition, a voyage and not a harbour."<sup>10</sup> According to Toynbee's hypothesis, the failure of a civilization to survive was the result of its "inability to respond to moral and religious challenges, rather than to physical or environmental challenges." The main thesis of the work is that the well-being of a civilization depends on its ability to respond successfully to challenges, human and environmental. Of the 26 civilizations studied, according to Toynbee, only one—Western

Latin Christendom—is currently alive, and perhaps even this is in decline.<sup>11</sup> He has had considerable influence on modern attitudes toward history, religion, and international affairs.

He has been criticized for arbitrary generalizations, factual errors, and overemphasizing the regenerative force of religion. Toynbee helped to write and edit *A Survey of International Affairs* and produced works on a multitude of historical topics. His theory was criticized in that it emphasizes religion over other aspects in the big picture of civilizations. This is similar to the present day theory of *Clash of Civilizations* put forward by Samuel Huntington. Toynbee has influenced Oswald Spengler, although Toynbee saw his own views as more scientific and empirical than Spengler's.

He is emphatic that “civilizations die from suicide, not by murder.” So it is primarily the inner dynamics and contradictions that are responsible for the demise of a civilisation. It is insightful to note that Toynbee claims that “Civilizations in decline are consistently characterised by a tendency towards standardization and uniformity” (Toynbee 2005) Regarding our own contemporary civilization, Toynbee asserts that “We have been God-like in our planned breeding of our domesticated plants and animals, but we have been rabbit-like in our unplanned breeding of ourselves.”<sup>12</sup> Further he laments the fact that we have not been able to fill our leisure with productive and creative enterprises. “To be able to fill leisure intelligently is the last product of civilization” (Huntington 2005)

After analyzing the situation of our contemporary culture, Toynbee concludes: “The human race's prospects of survival were considerably better when we were defenceless against tigers than they are today when we have become defenceless against ourselves.” At the same time he gives us some hope. “I do not believe that civilizations have to die because civilization is not an organism. It is a product of wills.” Again the responsibility for the continuation or the demise of civilisation is laid on us. “As human beings, we are endowed with freedom of choice, and we cannot

shuffle off our responsibility upon the shoulders of God or nature. We must shoulder it ourselves. It is our responsibility.”<sup>13</sup> Are we capable of shouldering this responsibility?

### ***Oswald Spengler and Samuel Huntington***

Oswald Spengler (May 29, 1880 - May 8, 1936) was a German philosopher and mathematician. His work *The Decline of the West* argues that the development of civilizations follows a recognizable cyclical pattern. He was influenced by Toynbee and Georg Henrik von Wright in his views about our society. Spengler was a pivotal influence on Francis Parker Yockey, who wrote *Imperium* as a sequel to *The Decline of the West*. Yockey called Spengler “The Philosopher of the Twentieth Century.”<sup>14</sup> *The Decline of the West* <sup>15</sup> is a two-volume work, the first volume of which was published in the summer of 1918. Spengler revised this volume in 1922 and published the second volume, subtitled *Perspectives of World History* in 1923. The book includes the idea of Islam and Greeks being Magian<sup>16</sup> and the Western civilization being Faustian, and according to theories we are now living in the winter time of the Faustian civilization (Spengler 2004).

Samuel Phillips Huntington (born April 18, 1927) is a political scientist known for his analysis of the relationship between the military and the civil government, his investigation of *coup d’etats*, and his thesis that the central political actors of the 21st century will be civilizations rather than nation-states. In 1993, Huntington ignited a major debate in international relations with the publication in the journal *Foreign Affairs* of an extremely influential and often-cited article entitled “The Clash of Civilizations?” Huntington later expanded that article into a book, published in 1996, entitled *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.

The article and the book articulate his theory of a multi-civilizational world headed for conflict. In his writings, he is critical of both Western and non-Western behavior, accusing both of at times of being hypocritical and civilization-centric. He also warns that Western nations may lose their predominance if they fail to recognize the nature of this brewing tension. He asserts modestly:



“It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.” At the same time he is self-critical of the Western civilization: “The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerners often forget this fact, non-Westerners never do.”

Critics call *Clash of Civilizations* a covert way to legitimize aggression by the US-led West against the Third World, in order to keep the latter “in check”, that is, preventing their economic development. The latest book by Huntington, *Who Are We: The Challenges to America’s National Identity*, was released in May 2004. The subject is the meaning of American national identity and the possible threat posed to it by large-scale Latino immigration, which Huntington warns could “divide the United States into two peoples, two cultures, and two languages”. Like *The Clash of Civilizations*, this book has also stirred controversy, and some have accused Huntington of xenophobia.

In spite of these criticisms, it is evident that these authors have drawn our attention to the possible collapse of our civilization mainly due to inner contradictions.

### **Contemporary Scholars**

Following the lead given by these classical authors, some eminent contemporary authors like Sir Martin Rees predicts the end for humanity! Sir Martin Rees, Britain’s Royal Astronomer, has calculated that in the last century, we have increased our chances of an apocalypse from 20% to 50%. Rees’ recent book *Our Final Hour*, is full of dire predictions about our future. In the same vein, Ray Kurzweil<sup>17</sup> gave 50% of probability for humanity

surviving the next 100 years. Again, Bill Joy, Cofounder and Chief Scientist of Sun Microsystems, wrote a famous article: “Why the future doesn’t need us” (Joy, 2004).<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, Nick Bostrom and Rees wonder if philosophy alone can predict humanity’s fate. Specifically, both Bostrom and Rees have contemplated the Doomsday Argument as elucidated by Brandon Carter and John Leslie. In a nutshell, this argument suggests that we shouldn’t assume that our current place in the world is special, and that in all likelihood we are closer to the end than the beginning. Doomsday Argument is based on theoretical and probabilistic calculations. Nick Bostrom concludes his analysis of the Doomsday argument: “So although the Doomsday argument contains an interesting idea, it needs to be combined with additional assumptions and principles (some of which remain to be worked out) before it can be applied to the real world. In all likelihood, even when all details are filled in, there will be scope for differing opinions about our future. Nonetheless, a better understanding of observational selection effects will rule out certain kinds of hypotheses and impose surprising constraints on any coherent theorizing about the future of our species and about the distribution of observers in the universe” (Bostrom 2004).<sup>19</sup>

Given the fact that violence has become an integral and irresistible part of our human society the question that we can legitimately ask is: With the collapse of our civilization or world-order, will the whole of human race perish?<sup>20</sup> Do we really and realistically stand a chance? How can we determine our collective future?<sup>21</sup> Who determines our common destiny?

#### **4. Towards a New World Order: The Positive Contributions of Religion**

In spite of the bleak scenario, painted above, I have faith in the goodness of humanity and the nobility of individual hearts. This is what makes me hopeful. This is the source of our collective religious wisdom and common mystical experience.

What the Christians call “The Kingdom of God,” the Hindus name “Ramarajya” or the Marxian “Classless Society,” I believe are the deepest expression of the collective human utopia: a archetype in Jungian terms. Therein lies the values of equality, fraternity, liberty and the vision for the fullness of life, love, consciousness (Sat-cit-ananda). The fullness of life that every religion proclaims (John 10:10) is the source from which wells up the hope for humanity. If Jesus is the Ultimate Eschaton it is an inaugurated eschatology that we as Christians live. Therefore, the perennial religious Dream for a New Jerusalem, a new earth and new heavens is the motivating force in ushering in a new humanity. I do believe that only within the framework of such religious visions and values can a new world spring forth! In such a world, “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent— its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord” (Is 65: 25).

There have been heated debates on the role religion plays in aggravating violence. Here, I overlook this negative aspect of religion in order to focus on what religion and religious groups do to counter violent tendencies and to create a human society that is viable, holistic and integrated, where respect for others and life fosters a world of peace and joy.

I also believe that the only agent that can meaningfully propel and guide the progress of technology is religion. Therefore religious insights and visions alone can usher in a new world free of such brutal violence. Only such religious values can create a society of joy, peace and prosperity. Some of the salient religious or mystical insights that could enable the creation of such a new world order are:

**1. No Other Gods:**<sup>22</sup> Only genuine mysticism can free us from our instinctual drive for worshipping other Gods. We tend to create gods that suit us, gods in our own likeness. We are inclined to fashion gods with our own hands or intellect that fit our own expectations and fancies. But the true God tells us that He/She

cannot be manipulated by our physical, emotional or intellectual powers. Only when we can bow down before the Ultimate (Other) can we abandon ourselves and in the process foster forgiveness, fondness, creativity.

Further, religious vision frees us from the need to be a master. It pleads for self-mastery (mastery over ego) rather than mastery over matter (technology), people (authoritarianism) and even life (genetics).

**2. Repent and Change Your Hearts:** Every religion pleads for a change of heart or perspective. We cannot keep ourselves at the centre of the universe. Going against **hubris** inherent in the human heart (Tower of Babel), religions urge us to live a life of self-abandonment, where life is cherished, accepting our limitations gracefully. Further, religions help us to realise that we are not responsible fully for the mess we are in, and that we are not the sole master in the universe. There is another power, who is equally responsible for the running of the universe. When we can change our hearts and turn ourselves to others (and to God), we are in a better position to bring about the Kingdom of God.

**3. Forgive without Forgetting:** Only religions can inspire us to forgive those who have done harm intentionally. Without such unselfishness forgiveness, the spiral of violence can never end. Common sense may dictate forgiveness for pragmatic purpose. A forgiveness that stems from genuine sense of the dependency on an Ultimate can be healing and bring about reconciliation and freedom from violence.

**4. Loving the Enemies:** the religious imperative to love the enemies and do good to those who are against us cannot be explained rationally. But such a sense of genuine concern provides us with an authentic space for reconciliation and freedom from violence.

**5. Sin and Conversion:** Genuine religions enable us to acknowledging evil designs and our own sinfulness without becoming paralyzed. The presence of evil in today's world and in

our own hearts cannot be denied. Religions help us to understand injustice and feel with the victims without becoming cynical. They help us to experience pain without being bitter. Religious vision provides us with both the inner resource and the external commitment for bringing about a radical U-turn, so that we can change our way of life. “And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Is. 2:4).

**6. *Anticipating the (Glorious) Future in the Present:*** Religious insights also urge us to understand the past meaningfully; to acknowledge the present gratefully and to anticipate the future gracefully. Realizing that the past, the present and the future belong together, such a holistic vision provides us with the energy to commit ourselves to a sustainable future, learning from past mistakes and drawing from present experience of joy, love and hope. Such a dynamic hope for the future makes the present life enabling and self-fulfilling.

**7. *God, the Ultimate Hope:*** Only religious impulse can provide us with Values larger than myself. A religious vision inspires us to commit ourselves to causes that are all-encompassing, knowing that God is the ultimate hope for all that exists. Such an experience of the Ultimate provides us with a sense of openness, spirit of compassion, readiness for commitment! This enables us to live for others even in (through) my own death! When I do not need to fear my own death, then everything is possible for me! That provides me with living hope.

**8. *The final fulfilment (for LIFE):*** “Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.” (Joel 2: 28) Religion evokes in us the assurance that the dreams of the innocent, the ideals of the youth and the hopes of the old do matter. That ultimately nothing is in vain. That the utopian vision leads us to a fulfilment that encompasses the whole reality. That the weakness, duplicity and frailty of the present will be subsumed into a living future that is

the fulfilment of life. Traditional religions that have emphasized the need for saving individual souls can easily adapt themselves to preserving and fostering life, which is threatened now, both from within and without.

**9. *Being at Home in this Universe:*** Being at home in the Universe: In spite of the apparent contradictions and anxiety we feel in this world, religion gives us the certitude that everything is good (Gen 1) and that we can feel at home in this universe. This feeling of at-homeness stems from our deepest rootedness in the universe and our fellow-living beings. Being at home, we can safely reach out to all in need. “Because the poor are despoiled, because the needy groan, I will now rise up,” says the Lord; “I will place them in the safety for which they long.” Without negating a future eschatological vision, this sense of belongings urges us to transform this world with deepest commitment and fullest hope in the present.

**10. *Abandonment to God:*** Finally religious insights enable us to abandon ourselves in the hands of God, after having tried our best. It is this spirit of genuine self-surrender and abandonment that makes one struggle hard to change the living situation and at the same time open to surprises. Such an attitude of active acceptance and self-surrender helps us to find ways of coping with violence creatively.

## **5. Conclusion: Signs of hope**

There is so much of basic goodness in human hearts. In spite of human greed and wickedness, people are generous and gracious with regards to their time, talent and wealth. Even the calamity of Tsunami has shown this. The general sense of disillusionment with the present violent world order has caused the emergence of many alternative movements in ecology, economics, spirituality and life-style. So we can legitimately move from a Doom’s Day Apocalypse to religious Eschatology of Hope. That is the collective dream and archetypal hope of the human race.

In spite of the violence evident in our society, the positive signs are overwhelming. Some of these are: Wealth of nature

(Abundance in reality), Creativity in life (possibility for change), Spontaneity of spirit (human creativity) and Surprise in life (openness to the new). A Nelson Mandela who came out of the prison without any trace of bitterness, a Mahatma Gandhi who dedicated his life totally to God, a Mother Teresa who offered herself lovingly in the service of the poor and an Albert Einstein a scientist and radical mystic, offers us with living signs of hope for today's world. More than any of these, it is the ordinary people, the simple people on the margins who have nurtured a sense of fondness for life and trusted in God who provides us with the ultimate guarantee that violence can be transformed to love in the ultimate crucible of suffering. So Mathew Arnold is not completely right, when he wrote:

*Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born.*<sup>23</sup>

Religion is that midwife which enables the re-birthing of a new world-order, a new humanity. The perennial religious values and mystical insights provide us with hope to transcend the violent world-order and create a new one with joy, freedom and life. Such a world will be rooted in faith, open to the other and related to each other. In short, it would be sustainable. In this creative enterprise other human ventures like science and politics will be partners in collaboration.

## Notes

1. This is true both of individuals and of species. It has been suggested that if the powerful family of dinosaurs had not become extinct, human race would not have evolved
2. Richard Dawkins has popularized this notion in his classic *Selfish Genes*.
3. Freud has characterized this "drive towards death" as "thanathos."
4. See Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael*, Bantam Books.
5. In an editorial entitled "Fax of the matter Vienna", TOI, 25th Sept, 2004, an experiment conducted in Vienna is described, in which

material bodies can be faxed (or transmitted as electric signals). That is technology going beyond any conceivable achievements!

6. "Converging Technologies for Improving Human Performance: Nanotechnology, Biotechnology, Information Technology and Cognitive Science" accessed at <http://www.wtec.org/ConvergingTechnologies/>
7. The significant question to be asked is: Can technological problems be solved by better technology? My answer is no. technological problems may be partially solved by higher technology, which at the same time creates newer problems.
8. It may be noted that some of these reasons are of philosophical/religious nature too. The list given is selective and partial. None can make an exhaustive list of the human made dangers facing humanity. Most often such calamities happen with an element of unpredictability. For more detailed description see: Hanson, Robin 1998 Critiquing the Doomsday Argument 27Aug98 <http://hanson.gmu.edu/nodoom.html>.
9. Rammstein 2005 See "Mein Teil" accessed at: [http://www.virgin.net/music/singlereviews/rammstein\\_meinteil.html](http://www.virgin.net/music/singlereviews/rammstein_meinteil.html)
10. The quotes are from Toynbee Arnold 2004: accessed at: <http://chatna.com/author/toynbee.htm>
11. All the above quotes are from the internet. Some other informative quotes of Arnold Toynbee are: "Compassion is the desire that moves the individual self to widen the scope of its self-concern to embrace the whole of the universal self." Again he says, "History is a vision of God's creation on the move." And "The equation of religion with belief is rather recent." About achieving one's goal, he remarks insightfully, "It is a paradoxical but profoundly true and important principle of life that the most likely way to reach a goal is to be aiming not at that goal itself but at some more ambitious goal beyond it."
12. Quotes are from internet. He also affirms: "There is a kind of intellectual provincialism in the dogma that 'life is just one damned thing after another.' Human affairs do not become intelligible until they are seen as a whole."
13. He pleads against apathy and for enthusiasm in facing the human situation. It is interesting to see how he traces the origin of enthusiasm: "Apathy can be overcome by enthusiasm, and enthusiasm can only be aroused by two things: first, an ideal, which takes the imagination by storm, and second, a definite intelligible



plan for carrying that ideal into practice.”

14. See both websites [http://oswald\\_spengler.exsудо.com/](http://oswald_spengler.exsудо.com/) and [http://www.serebella.com/encyclopedia/article-Oswald\\_Spengler.html](http://www.serebella.com/encyclopedia/article-Oswald_Spengler.html) accessed on December 2004.
15. *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* in German. Original 1919.
16. See the article John Landon, “World History And The Eonic Effect: Civilization, Darwinism, and Theories of Evolution,” [http://eonic.8m.com/1st/chapthree\\_2.htm](http://eonic.8m.com/1st/chapthree_2.htm), accessed on November 2004.
17. The inventor of the first reading machine for the blind is a prominent personality in computer and artificial intelligence studies.
18. It appeared in the *Wired Magazine*. The author of course is sympathetic to the human concerns and is criticizing the way the computer industry is taking over human functions.
19. See his website for further details: According to him the past consists of doomed humans, while the present is a serious play and the future belongs to the transhumans.
20. Will there be one world or no world at all? (Eine Welt oder keine Welt).
21. See my article, “Towards a Spirituality for Life,” *Jnanadeepa* 7/2 Jan 2004, 44-57.
22. It may be noted that I am inspired by my Christian religious convictions to formulate the theses, though I wish to apply them to all and no religious traditions.
23. The quote continues:  
With nowhere yet to rest my head,  
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.  
Their faith, my tears, the world deride—  
I come to shed them at their side (Taken from internet).

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*Contd from p. 168.*

Chapter ten deals with pastoral planning, catechetical method and methodological implications. While clarifying the concept of method, this chapter presents the methodological itinerary of catechesis. Raising the question about the methods to be used in today's catechesis, this chapter proposes a list of choices and maintains that there is no single approach for everyone or every place.

Chapter eleven pinpoints the role and the competence of the catechists and highlights the importance of their formation. With regard to the competence, the triple dimension of being, knowing and knowing-how is highlighted. As regards formation, the pastoral care of catechists and the pedagogy of formation are proposed.

The title along with content of the book is very relevant to our times in the context of catechetical ministry. Since the book is an Indian Publication intended to a large extent as handbook for a practical use in catechetical ministry in India, when it makes reference to multi-faith context in chapter one, the Indian multi-religious context could have been mentioned explicitly in order to show concrete contextual cultural significance.

Though chapter four highlights the link between catechesis and inculturation a concrete reference to inculturating catechesis in the Indian cultural context would have made the contribution of this book more valuable. Precisely because this book is an Indian publication in the field of Catechetics, it cannot ignore the Indian cultural context and its implications especially in the post-conciliar era.

It is commendable that chapter four analyses the Christian faith experience with reference to the biblical experience whose convergence with human experience gives rise to faith experience. Since the bible plays an indispensable role in catechesis, a separate chapter on catechesis and the bible would have been very much appreciated just as chapter nine on catechesis and liturgy brings out the close relationship between both.

The concept of transformation which is implicit in the title of the book could have been explicitly elaborated in the book in order to present catechetical formation as transformation. Finally we can say that the entire book is a very valuable contribution to catechetical ministry.

*Lorenzo Fernando*