

Globalism (Part Two): The Tents Of Shem

by Charles Whitaker

Forerunner, "Prophecy Watch," July 2001

Ronald McDonald tells an interesting story. Today, McDonald's has more than 25,000 fast-food outlets in 119 nations. The corporation's international revenues surpass its stateside revenues. In "closed" China, 235 McDonald's exist, in tiny Taiwan, 310, and in cramped Japan, 2,985.¹ As if that were not enough, a new McDonald's opens its doors somewhere on the planet every 17 hours. The company has staged an international culinary takeover, without firing a shot!

God told the same story millennia ago. In Genesis 9:27, Noah speaks of his sons, Shem and Japheth:

May God enlarge Japheth,
And may he dwell in the tents of Shem;
And may Canaan be his servant.

We witness the closing stages of Noah's comments today. Canaan, broadly the peoples of Africa, is in the process of being marginalized by world powers.² God has indeed "enlarged" the population, prestige, and power of Japheth, the Asian nations collectively, especially in the last hundred years or so. Japheth's general and widespread "blooming" is one of the most obvious and important trends today.

What is not so obvious, however, is the role of Shem in bringing about this growth. Nevertheless, the fact is incontrovertible: God has used (and is using) Shemitic civilization to transform Japheth into a great people. Japheth is coming to "dwell in the tents of Shem"—in those cultural fixtures originated by Americans and Europeans. This widespread realignment of cultural bearings, from traditional oriental to postindustrial occidental, often comes with reservation—and with a good deal of adaptation as well. Nevertheless, it has come about:

» The Japanese Emperor wears Western-style clothes. His people, isolated from the occident for centuries, have today thoroughly accepted the institution of capitalism, "a peculiar creation of Western culture."³ The Japanese people have come to feel quite at home "in the tents [and tenets] of Shem."

» India may lack an emperor but not Shem's tents. India is the world's largest democracy. Just like capitalism, democracy, as we will see shortly, is a Shemitic invention. In the 1830s, an Englishman, Lord Macaulay, formulated a civil and criminal legal code still used in India today. Macaulay believed that Britain's aim in ruling India should be the creation of "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste and intellect."⁴ To an extent, Britain succeeded.

» As is evident to all, China is moving into Shem's tents as well, slowly adopting a market economy. While no one can say for sure, there will probably be more of Shem in China's future.

One writer offers remarkable insight into these tents. He does not refer to Shem, but to his descendant, Abraham. The Abrahamic

world emerged from the triad of religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—that trace their roots in the Biblical patriarch and spawned the great secular ideologies of scientific empiricism, liberal democracy, and Marxism. Unlike the Buddhist and Hindu worldviews, the Abrahamic perspective sees nature as reducible to predictable laws and history as a process with a meaningful beginning, middle, and end. The Muslim, the Marxist, the democrat, the Baconian scientist, the Christian, and the Jew all share this fundamentally similar outlook on life.

Because the Western perspective focuses on the sibling rivalries between Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, Jefferson, Bacon, and Marx, it too often overlooks the extraordinary spread of Abrahamism out of its native Middle East into nearly *every* corner of the world. *Virtually every human culture that has encountered Abrahamic ideology has adopted it sooner or later.* Asia is no exception. In the last 100 years, each major Asian state has embraced at least one Abrahamic faith. Consequently, every Asian society is today engaged in a fundamental effort to reconcile its increasingly Abrahamic outlook with its native culture.⁵

The commentator concludes:

In fact, the twenty-first century may well be remembered more for the *end* of Asia than for its rise. On the one hand, the universal solvents of capitalism and Abrahamic ideology will continue to sow deep social and cultural changes among the peoples of geographical Asia, steadily reducing, transforming, and remixing—although probably never finally eliminating—the last traces of pre-Abrahamic culture.⁶

The point, of course, is not that Asia is "ending" as a power structure. Rather, Asia is buying into occidental thought at the cost of her traditional, oriental culture.

The Tent's Names

Shem's tents have names. Here are a few of them.

1. Most prominent of all is the *sovereign nation state*, "a European innovation that replaced feudalism and established the rule of law."⁷ This tent took years to erect, but a good benchmark date is 1648, when the Treaty of Westphalia ended Europe's Thirty Years' War and created a state-centered international order, which very slowly grew in power and popularity.

The Treaty was the death knell of feudalism, an economic system where the king owns *all* the land. For a fee (or fief), he parcels out the land to vassals, who in return owe him a part of the land's wealth, as well as military muscle and loyalty if the king should be attacked. The vassals could subdivide their fiefdoms, giving land to lesser nobles, and those nobles to yet more inferior nobles, and so on. Feudalism is government by loyalty oath.

Europe's development of a nation-state system "contrasts sharply with Asia's."⁸ The great potential of Japheth remained untapped by her leaders for centuries because they refused to set feudalism aside.

Consider that as early as the 13th century, the Mongol Genghis Khan could project enough power to threaten Eastern Europe. Even then, Japheth had a greater population than Europe and a greater economic potential by virtue of her large market. Asia, furthermore, enjoyed technological superiority over Europe, having "pioneered the development of clocks, the printing press, gunpowder, and iron."⁹ However, because of Asia's refusal to set aside her feudal system, her manpower and technology advantages were never able to serve her internationally. It was not until 1948, centuries after Europe put aside feudalism, that China followed suit. That happened when Mao Zedong consolidated his control over a number of Chinese warlords and proclaimed himself chairman of what later became the Peoples Republic of China (PRC). As we will see, in 1948 China stepped into one of Shem's tents—Marxism.

Japan, likewise, did not abandon her feudal system until the mid-19th century, after American Commodore Matthew Perry steamed into Tokyo Bay, demonstrating to the Japanese leadership the extent to which she had fallen behind the rest of the world during three centuries of strict isolationist policy. Japan, as well, subsequently set about to step into Shem's tents.

2. A second tent of Shem is the institution of *private property*, which the nation states established gradually and with varied success. While some peoples in antiquity enjoyed private property (notably those in ancient Israel), such rights were virtually nonexistent under feudalism. The right of common individuals to own property spurs entrepreneurial activities by permitting people to keep the fruits of their labors. It also encourages the clearing of land which otherwise would remain unused. An important spin-off of private property is the creation of a universally valued asset that serves as collateral for loans. Private property provided the "grubstake" upon which modern credit banking is based.¹⁰

3. *Democracy*, a system of government accountable to the people, is another tent of Shem. It received its European start in the parliaments that developed in the tenth century to "advise" kings, and it took a major, if somewhat abortive, step forward in the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215, which limited the powers of the king.

European states developed the notion that the sovereign (whether a monarch or a parliament) had a duty to protect subject and property in return for taxes and service in the army. Rulers in the Qing, Mughal, and Ottoman Empires, in contrast, never recognized a comparable responsibility to their subjects.¹¹

4. The *separation of church and state* is yet another of Shem's tents. The same treaty that established an incipient nation-state system in Europe, the Peace of Westphalia, also prompted the idea that man's government works best when civil and "sacred" power structures remain separate. The Catholic Church's hegemony eclipsed soon thereafter.

5. *Capitalism* is yet another tent of Shem. It arose in the power vacuum that resulted from the eclipse of the Catholic Church. The "creative destruction" characterizing capitalism could never operate until "organized religion lost its power to execute as heretics those entrepreneurs who would upset the status quo."¹²

Max Weber, focusing less on Catholicism, traced capitalism's rise to the "Protestant work ethic" that was an unintended consequence of the "reformed" theology peddled by John Calvin (1509-1564). More realistically, we can trace the roots of capitalism back to a nexus of a weakened church

hierarchy, the cool climate of northern Europe, the rise of technology, and the opportunity of millions to emigrate to the New World in search of a better life. All these factors—and others—combined to facilitate capital markets and mercantilism.

Much later in history, neo-mercantilist "export-promotion regimes were adopted by Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. . . . Almost all of the East Asian success stories, China included, are modern versions of the export-oriented form of mercantilism."¹³ Another economist claims that the economic success of China is a result of "European economics, commercial law, science and technology."¹⁴ These "Western institutions" interplaying with certain Asian values, "brought about successful development."¹⁵

6. Finally, some of Shem's tents are so undesirable as to be downright disgusting. Of such are *Marxist-communism*, *fascism* and *nazism*. For all their differences, each of these three totalitarian systems deny democracy and the rule of law. They all—though fascism to a lesser extent—get their intellectual underpinnings from Karl Marx. It is interesting to note that China, when she finally cast aside feudalism in the late 1940s, adopted communism as a culturally acceptable substitute for authoritarianism. She is only slowly and fitfully moving from this tent of Shem into somewhat more respectable digs.

These are the tents that Shem built. You can certainly identify others. With every passing day, Japheth is feeling more at home in them. They have been erected over the centuries by a number of occidental peoples, Israelites being among their major architects. Today, in fact, some of the more possessive Israelites claim to own them!

Globalism: Act One

Their claim contains a measure of truth, for the basic ideas behind globalism, chiefly democracy and capitalism, are certainly the products of Israelite thinking during the Enlightenment. It is not surprising then that modern-day Israel, especially Ephraim and Manasseh, are the peoples most committed to rebuilding Babel—to constructing a single, cohesive, globalized economic and governmental system. Two centuries

ago the world entered the first age of globalization. Trade and investment spread rapidly around the world, spurred by revolutions in communication and production technologies and a stable gold standard. Behind the scenes stood *Great Britain*—preeminent in manufacturing, finance, and naval power—which championed free trade throughout the Victorian era. . . . The result was an unprecedented flow of goods, capital, and people—and the rise of the first truly open world economy.¹⁶

Ephraim built a very great city, the British Empire. In fact, in terms of the relative size of monetary flows, the amount of world trade and the movement of peoples, the "first age of globalization" was at least as thoroughgoing as the second one, in which we dwell today.¹⁷ "In 1900 there was every reason to expect and welcome a future of continued world economic openness. . . . But this optimism was soon to end. The open world order came crashing down in 1914. . . ."¹⁸

The glories and promise of the first age of globalism ended in the conflagration of the First World War. Ephraim began his decline. There followed about a seven-decade period (1918-1988) of *Sturm und Drang*, during which the world successively witnessed a deep and prolonged economic

depression, then another fighting war followed by a "Cold War." Of the fighting war, one commentator makes an almost breathtaking appraisal: "The strength acquired by the United States in the aftermath of World War II was far greater than any single nation had ever possessed, at least since the Roman Empire."¹⁹

Globalism: Act Two

The Cold War, following quickly on the heels of World War II, provided the rationale for the United States to maintain her military strength in order to "contain" communism. For decades, she maintained it. Then, in the late 1980s, the Soviet Union suddenly collapsed, her former client states fragmenting into squabbling, impoverished Third World nations. "[T]he end of the Cold War left the United States in an unprecedented position of preeminence."²⁰ Awash in wealth and military assets, the United States just could not resist the temptation to lead the world, as a second Rome.

Today the world is well into the second age of globalization, propelled by technological revolutions and the advanced industrial states' commitment to the liberalization of capital and trade. This time, the *United States* has put its hegemonic weight behind developing the open world economy—creating multilateral institutions, sponsoring trade rounds, opening its own markets to imports, and singing the praises of commercial liberalism.²¹

The "technological revolutions" are primarily in the areas of transportation, communication and information processing. These technologies facilitate the rapid movement of goods, money and people, as well as the gathering and analysis of vast amounts of data. The Internet and the computer have teamed up to provide at least a somewhat effective counterbalance to the effect of multiple languages. The ease with which people can communicate worldwide has made the creation of a "global village" appear even more possible.

The technology, the money, the leadership, the military muscle is American. As one writer puts it, "[G]lobalization is made in America."²² Another is even more emphatic:

Today's international system is built not around a balance of power but around American hegemony. The international financial institutions were fashioned by Americans and serve American interests. The international security structures are chiefly a collection of American-led alliances. What Americans like to call international "norms" are really reflections of American and West European principles.²³

Today, America is leading the world's second age of globalization, pushing people around the world to "dwell in the tents of Shem." Next month, we will briefly trace the development of globalist and internationalist policies in American history and examine a key prophecy about Joseph's tendency to lead nations, Israelite and Gentile alike, into global integration.

Endnotes

1 James L. Watson, "China's Big Mac Attack," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2000, p. 120.

2 See especially *United States Interests and Policies in Africa: Transition to a New Era*, edited by Karl P. Magyer, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

3 Robert J. Samuelson, "The Spirit of Capitalism," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2001, p. 205.

4 Quoted by Neil McInnes, "'Orientalism,' the Evolution of a Concept," *The National Interest*, Winter 1998/1999, p. 73. As a rule, the British thought their political/economic /social institutions were universal.

5 Walter Mead, "The End of Asia? Redefining a Changing Continent," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2000, p. 156 (emphasis added). Mead is Senior Fellow in U.S. Foreign Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations. His comments are part of his review of *Thunder from the East: Portrait of a Rising Asia*, by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, New York: Alfred A. Knoph, 2000.

6 Mead, *ibid.*, p. 161. (Emphasis added)

7 Bruce R. Scott, "The Great Divide in the Global Village," *Foreign Affairs*, January /February 2001, p. 160. Scott is Paul W. Cherington Professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School.

8 Scott, *ibid.*, p. 172.

9 Scott, *ibid.*, p. 172.

10 Robert J. Samuelson, "The Spirit of Capitalism," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2001, p. 205.

11 Scott, *ibid.*, p. 172.

12 Scott, *ibid.*, p. 173.

13 Scott, *ibid.*, p. 173.

14 W. J. F. Jenner, *The Tyranny of History: The Roots of China's Crisis*, London: Penguin, 1992, p. 172.

15 Deepak Lal, "Does Modernization Require Westernization?" *The Independent Review*, Summer 2000, p. 5. Lal is James S. Coleman Professor of International Development Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles.

16 G. J. Ikenberry, "Don't Panic: How Secure Is Globalization's Future?" *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2000, p. 145 (emphasis added). Ikenberry's remarks appear in a review of Robert Gilpin's book, *The Challenge of Global Capitalism: The World Economy in the 21st Century*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000. See also, Martin Wolf, "Will the Nation-State Survive Globalization?" *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2001, p. 179.

17 See also Kenneth Waltz, "Globalization and American Power," *The National Interest*, Spring 2000, p. 48:

Finding that the level of [economic] interdependence in 1999 approximately equals that of 1920 is hardly surprising. What is true of trade also holds for capital flows, again as a percentage of GDP. . . . Despite today's ease of communications, financial markets in 1900 were at least as integrated as they are now.

18 Ikenberry, *ibid.*, p. 145.

19 Robert Kagan, "The Benevolent Empire," *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1998, p. 24.

20 Stephen Walt, "The Ties That Fray: Why Europe and America Are Drifting Apart," *The National Interest*, Winter 1998/1999, p. 3.

21 Ikenberry, *ibid.*, p. 145 (emphasis added).

22 Waltz, *ibid.*, p. 46.

23 Robert Kagan and William Kristol, "The Present Danger," *The National Interest*, Spring 2000, p. 57.