

CHAPTER 69 : 'BABYLON' AT ITS HEIGHT

Great are the wonders of the modern 'Babylon'! She is described in these words in holy prophecy:

"... the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication...all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies... she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously... that great city Babylon, that mighty city... The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men... that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!... What [city is] like unto this great city!... that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness!" (Revelation 17-19)

There have been a handful of 'Babylons' in world history, but none so great as this one. No previous 'Babylon' had knowledge so great as the modern 'Babylon': not ancient Egypt with its pyramids, nor ancient Babylon with its hanging gardens, nor Greece with its sophisticated philosophers, nor Rome with its network of roads and aqueducts. As was prophesied by Daniel of this increase in humanistic knowledge:

" many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

Such a great city would require as its foundation a stable yet humanistic government. Social stability is a necessary context for science and technology to flourish. And the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers dreamed about how such a city would be designed. Some conceived of an Aristotelian polity (a tripartite balance of democracy, republicanism, and oligarchy) as an ideal pattern of government. Plato called the ideal city-state Atlantis, and located it in the Atlantic Ocean. Centuries later Francis Bacon-Enlightenment statesmen, politician, and scientist – envisioned the New Atlantis, to be created in North America. Here is how it has been described:

“In 1627, Sir Francis Bacons' novel "The New Atlantis" was first published. It is the story of a crew of shipwrecked sailors who land upon the shores of a mysterious, unknown nation, whose people had developed a culture and technology far beyond any thing previously known. Amazingly prophetic, it spoke of buildings a half a mile tall, machines that flew through the air, ships that traveled beneath the sea and a government of Philosopher-Scientists serving an enlightened people who were dedicated to learning and higher achievement. "The New Atlantis" was Bacons' vision for a new "Golden Age",

and it became the inspiration for many influential American colonists, including several of Bacon's descendants, who settled in Virginia after its publication."

The Philosopher-Scientists Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson helped to inaugurate this New Atlantis, taking up Francis Bacon's cause in their own generation. And this great city has lived up to its dreams. The United States of America has been politically stable and economically prosperous. She has been the model humanistic state of the modern humanistic age. Her humanistic universities – patterned after Franklin's University of Pennsylvania and Jefferson's University of Virginia – are her fountains of knowledge and culture. From her have come many of the greatest technological innovations of the age: the light bulb, the movie cinema, the telephone, mass-produced automobiles, the airplane, radio, television, the computer, and the internet – to name but some of its many wonders.

"Liberty Enlightening the World" – otherwise known as the Statue of Liberty – is an apt symbol of America, given as a gift from France in honor of the first centennial of the United States. The pedestal was constructed by the United States and the copper statue showing the goddess of Liberty was a present by France, as a centennial gift and a sign of friendship between the two nations. It commemorated the centennial of the American Declaration of Independence, penned by Thomas Jefferson. The statue personifies humanistic liberty and freedom, breaking free from the religious establishment of the past. America has lighted the world with its secularist vision.

The United States has established a *Pax Americana* that surpasses the peace and prosperity that the ancient Roman empire engendered and upheld. The League of Nations was her conception, and the United Nations was her creation. Worldwide trade, transportation, and communication have flourished under her guidance and protection. The inter-connectedness of the world under ancient Rome pales in comparison to the inter-connectedness of the world under the New Rome. In this milieu, as in the milieu of the ancient Roman empire, access to the Word of God has been greatly enhanced. If nations have generally not submitted to the Word of God, it is not for lack of access to it, but rather willful rejection of it.

At the dawn of the new millennium she stands at the height of her greatness – the superpower of the world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER 69 : 'BABYLON' AT ITS HEIGHT

This second volume in a two-part series on church history is primarily an edited version of the following works on church history and Biblical interpretation:

James A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism* (Cassell & Company, Limited: London, Paris & New York. 1878). (see electronic version at <http://www.whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/James.A.Wylie.html>)

Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA, 1997). (see electronic version at <http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/About.htm>)

J. Parnell McCarter, *Sabbath Bible Survey Tests and Assignments* (PHSC: Grand Rapids, MI, 2003). (see electronic version at <http://www.puritans.net/curriculum/>)

J. Parnell McCarter, *Let My People Go* (PHSC: Grand Rapids, MI, 2003). (see electronic version at <http://www.puritans.net/curriculum/>)

The on-line resources of Historicism Research Foundation at <http://www.historicism.net/> also proved invaluable for my understanding of Biblical prophecy. Biblical prophecy concerning Christian church history, especially as revealed in the book of Revelation, serves as the foundation upon which all church histories should be based.

Other references especially consulted for this chapter include:

<http://www.wikipedia.org>

http://www.greatbuildings.com/buildings/Statue_of_Liberty.html

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