

Where There Is No Vision

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The Puritan vision of “A city set on a hill” under God’s law is fast fading in America, like the Cheshire Cat. Instead of a “Redeemer Nation,” we have become a “Debtor Nation,” wracked with reckless spending, gross sexual sin, legalized abortion and anarchic “flash mobs” among graduates of local daytime detention centers. As in Israel, God’s “law is no more; [our clerics] find no vision from the LORD” (Lamentations 2:9). The American city, like Jerusalem, has “become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers” (Isaiah 1:21).

How did we manage to squander our Puritan legacy of hard work and thrift that undergirds America’s industry? God’s people have once again ignored God’s ordained, progressive divisions *in* ministry and *of* ministry from business. Abraham ministered as prophet, priest and king to thousands of anonymous servant-saints. He was also a prosperous businessman with extensive holdings in livestock. His herdsmen later took up farming under Isaac (Genesis 26:12) to break a famine that threatened their herds. These successful pioneers developed the infrastructure needed for prosperous agriculture and animal husbandry, Israel’s future principal industries in the land of Canaan.

Later, division of Abraham’s ministry advanced as Mosaic law denied Levites a land inheritance in Canaan needed to earn their living as herdsmen and farmers (Numbers 18:19-24). Rather the Levites in teaching and worship ministries were to be supported by Israel’s tithes in their allotted cities in Canaan. Success of Levitical ministries was not measured in monetary terms of profit and loss but in terms of effectiveness of teaching and preaching. Thus, the Levite, Samuel, served effectively as prophet, priest, judge and ultimately king maker in Israel (I Samuel 7:1-8:22).

Samuel warned Israel against their untimely demand for a king. God’s law anticipated Israel’s need for a king (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). With patience, David could have been Israel’s first king. The move from decentralized rule under judges and tribal elders to a centralized monarchy was both inexorable and irrevocable. “And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you” (I Samuel 8:18).

The state’s ministry was thereafter separated from prophetic ministry. The man who preaches was not to be judge and executioner as Elijah unhappily realized only after his dramatic, unauthorized execution of the baby-killing prophets of Baal (I Kings 18:40; 19:1-4). Neither was the state to meddle in Levitical ministry as raging King Uzziah discovered when he tried to offer incense over eighty priests’ objections only to be stricken with leprosy (II Chronicles 26:14-20).

Unhappily, Puritans in New England sought to turn back the clock, by lumping the ministries of church, state and education together with business. Within six years of arrival Puritans founded Harvard College to assure a literate ministry in the future. In 1647, the “Old Deluder” law mandated tax-supported “common schools” in their townships and also helped provide future students for Harvard. But, Harvard as an endowed business was only tenuously tied to the church-related goals of its founders. When Harvard began its drift into anti-Christian Unitarianism, Puritans founded Yale, yet another endowed amalgam of business and ministry also subject to secularizing goal displacement.

The Puritans’ anachronistic state church hegemony ended in 1684 when Charles II revoked their colonial charter: sadly, their unstable mix of ministry and business *did not*. An “education market” emerged. “New academies were springing up all over the country, particularly in Massachusetts, where the town-supported common schools were being abandoned by the middle class”.¹ Then, Unitarian Horace Mann began to revitalize common schools and promote a utopian vision of nonsectarian schools whose curriculum excluded the Bible! Since then, oft under-capitalized, private academies have been at a competitive disadvantage with tax-supported, public schools however egregious their results.

Oil of ministry does not mix with a water-powered business template. Business bureaucracy is impersonal, perforce geared to develop a cost efficient routine required to make a profit. But impersonal routine is at odds with the personal, *ad hoc* approach needed in the ministries of justice, education, health and welfare. Unstable oil/water emulsions of ministry businesses are apt to degrade into agglomerations that are not profitable and do not really minister. In court, one can get as much justice as one can afford; with endless calls for reform to “level the playing field.” At school our children, at risk of drugs and bullets, must cope with a classroom cohort of beastly barbarians with sinful sentiments.

Since God’s people acquiesced to secular schools, America’s ministers have been steadily marginalized. We have lost the vision. We are warned, “*Where there is no vision, the people perish*” (Proverbs 29:18). So, let God’s people *here* and *now* resolve to rear up *local*, tithe-funded ministries to reclaim America’s vision of liberty under God’s law.

1. Blumenfeld, Samuel. *NEA: Trojan Horse In American Education*. Boise, ID: The Paradigm Co., 1994, page 13.