

Parables of a Great Nation

[Paper No. 2-A of the *Nehemiah Papers*]

I. M. Nehemiah © *August 2010*

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Parable 2008: The Shrub Years

Note: This is an old story retold in the context of America in 2008. The story can readily be adapted to describe previous administrations, thus America has needed this message for many decades. IMN

There once was a prosperous Great Nation. Its people selected the men and women who ruled it. Some rulers were very good; some were not. By tradition, the candidates to be ruler made major efforts to distinguish themselves from each other, but all were surprisingly similar, partly to appeal to the central majority of the people.

The current ruler, named Shrub, had been blessed by being the son of a previous ruler who had the blessing of being the ideological son of yet an earlier ruler who was almost regal. This was as close to a dynasty as had been seen in this nation. Ruler Shrub was highly opinionated and inclined toward personal feelings of right and wrong.

But who would carry on the dynasty? Because he had no sons to indoctrinate with his thinking, he looked at his twin daughters and said: "The two men who can each tell me an absolute truth shall join my family, and I shall prepare them to be rulers someday."

Many men came forth with their truths to be evaluated by the ruler. Of course, each one was thoroughly screened by the ruler's security forces.

Bachelor #1 was handsome, a past-president of his college fraternity, and a good talker. Ruler Shrub and his daughters liked him. He said: "The waters of the oceans shall flow forever." The ruler consulted experts who pointed out that water freezes and that the Arctic Ocean is virtually covered with solid ice. Ruler Shrub called on a scientific commission to verify this, and only then he accepted the findings (although he was habitually doubtful of scientific commissions). So Bachelor #1 was rejected by Ruler Shrub in spite of his protests that water under the Arctic ice stays liquid and does move a little. The ruler said: "No. Close, but no cigar," a jestful reference to old contests to win a cigar. The twins were not happy.

Bachelor #2 was similarly handsome and social, but more rugged, an outdoors type. The twins liked him also. He said: "The natural environment that sustains us is fragile and deserves major efforts for protection." A cheer went up from the environmentalists led by a prior candidate for ruler who had been gored in a previous selection. But key advisors to Ruler Shrub quickly pointed out how the prosperity of the nation depended greatly on current rates of use of natural resources and that the "green-minded" protectionists were fanatics (and some truly were) who were overlooking the ability of science and technology to solve the problems. Ruler Shrub weighed the evidence (but only for a minute or two because he had already decided about such matters many years before) and said: "No. Close, but just a cigar," a less-than-jestful reference to a previous ruler who had made some poor personal decisions.

The third man was Mr. Burton, a plump, bald, older fellow. Because of his age and prior marital status, the term “bachelor” was dropped. Candidate #3 said: “The powers of our businesses, sciences, finances, military and energy sectors assure us of continued and expanding greatness provided we take forceful measures for their continued strengths.” That was the short version. Actually, Mr. Burton spoke on and on, citing examples of how the current and previous rulers of the dynasty had taken such measures to maintain greatness, noting the break-up of the nation’s major rival by out-spending it [and driving up the national debt, which he did not mention]. He also cited expert testimony provided by business and energy management. There was no need to listen to any other “experts.” Of course Ruler Shrub and his advisors were highly impressed. But the twins were terrified. They begged their father to reject him. The ruler said: “Well, I must accept his absolute truth; it is exactly what I know to be true. But I will make him my vice-ruler and the intermediate heir-apparent while we continue the search.” The twins breathed a sigh of relief. And that is how Mr. Hal E. Burton became vice-ruler, only a heartbeat away from ruling the Great Nation.

Several dozen more candidates presented their absolute truths that related to love, patriotism, interest rates, ethnicity, science and much more. All were rejected, even the ones about the inevitability of death and taxes, about which Ruler Shrub cited the possible “Rapture” and declared he would someday eliminate taxes because businesses and wealthy people would surely agree to voluntarily sustain the nation.

One candidate had an absolute truth that “there is no perfect security system.” This was proven to be correct by revealing he was actually a cross-dresser (a female transvestite). The revelation touched off a flurry of controversy on historically taboo issues ranging from gender identity to same-sex marriage. Facing investigation, each of the security agencies promptly claimed it knew about him (her) all the time, but was testing the other agencies. Ruler Shrub accepted the agencies’ claims, and therefore, this candidate’s “truth” was not absolute.

Eventually everyone lost count of the number of candidates, so the next fellow became the “nth” candidate, or Candidate “N.” Candidate “N” presented himself in a manner quite unlike the prior ones; he just seemed to appear, make his statement, and depart. Afterwards, some thought he was old; others thought he was young. He could have been a divorcee, widower, single, or even married. He could have been a member of any church, either rich or poor, and even of undetermined ethnic/racial origin. Perhaps he was a she, but nobody wanted to raise that question. And he might even have been two or more people that were acting as a single author of his statement. Candidate “N” was an enigma, without a name. So he became known as “N,” the “N-igma.” Two details about himself that he clearly stated were that he dearly loved the Great Nation and was absolutely patriotic.

To the ruler and the people of the nation, Candidate “N” stated his absolute truth: “Throughout the history of this World, all previous powerful and prosperous nations have weakened and fallen, and –(making a slow sweeping gesture with his arm to indicate the grandeur of the Great Nation)– all this, too, shall pass away.”

After a moment of stunned silence, everyone erupted in discussion and outcries. The prosperous future of the nation had been questioned. The continuation of the world-leading power of the Great Nation had been challenged. The abilities of the ruler and all future rulers had been doubted. The vision of the long-term welfare of the people had been shaken.

The security forces could not produce any files on Candidate “N,” but questioned his patriotism. A news station showed its video from a side angle to make it appear that the

sweeping gesture was intended as a physical slap to the ruler. Ruler Shrub declared an end to the search for absolute truths, and the twins were happy to reconsider Candidates #1 and #2.

And Candidate “N”? He said to a few people close to him that he would return when the Great Nation was more receptive of ways to meet the inevitable challenges of the future. Then he just disappeared as quickly as he had arrived. He blended into the population of the nation quite naturally, being so non-distinct in age, appearance, background, and possibly number (surely “N” did not act alone). But whoever he or she or they were was not important. The message had been delivered.

To his (or her or their) credit, Candidate “N” remained unknown and never tried to gain fame or high office or fortune from that initial appearance. Some say she died soon after. Others swore he was an escapee from a prison for mentally insane criminals and was soon recaptured. Others stepped forward claiming to be Candidate “N,” but none could convince the people.

In truth, Candidate “N” could have been “N-ee-one,” “N-ee-body,” or “N-ee messenger.” To some people, he/she/they were the “N-emy.” Some spoke poorly of this “N-tee-Christ” because they believed themselves to be God’s chosen people. The ruler and many other leaders vowed that such a decline in the Great Nation would never occur under their reign or future reigns of “true patriots” who thought and acted as they did.

Some agreed with “N,” but felt powerless. Some even proclaimed the impending decline, but sounded like ancient Hebrew prophets of doom, such as Noah, Lot, Jeremiah, and Jonah.

The Great Nation was still strong and prosperous, and responses to the challenge of Candidate “N” were numerous and quite predictable. The military requested more of the national budget; big business guaranteed that less government control would assure prosperity; and the wealthy lobbied that lower taxes for them would benefit the nation. Religious leaders called for repentance while assuring believers that God would preserve the Great Nation; labor unions called for higher wages for their workers as a sure economic stimulus; and everyone sponsored patriotic parades. But no changes of lasting impact were made, and the Great Nation continued on its multi-decade course of perceived, unlimited greatness while heading almost blindly toward eventual decline.

And what about “N”? Simply gone, but he said that he would someday speak again and try to help the Great Nation in a time of need.

[End of Parable 2008.]

[Parable 2010 starts on the next page.]

Parables of a Great Nation

[Paper No. 2-B of the *Nehemiah Papers*]

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Parable 2010: The Weecan Years

There once was a prosperous Great Nation. Its people were led for many years by Ruler Shrub and his political allies, the Pachyderms. They had many followers during a period of great affluence. Revenues were strong (as had been shown by the previous ruler) but spectacularly insufficient when the Great Nation fought two wars while lowering income tax rates, especially on the wealthy. Money flowed freely, some great fortunes were made, the stock market raced higher and higher, and loans on houses were wonderfully easy to obtain. It was a good time to be in debt. How could anything go wrong?

But difficulties came quickly, like the bursting of a bubble. Although still a Great Nation, its troubles included the two wars, over thirty percent decline in its stock market, over ten trillion dollars of national debt, massive yearly deficit spending, unfavorable balance of trade, financial crises in home mortgages, looming disasters with credit card debt, and near insolvency of some state governments and pension plans. Compounding such troubles were an energy crisis, fifteen percent of the nation's most vulnerable citizens without health coverage, and plagues of greed, conspicuous consumption, lowered morality, declining education, unbalanced social well-being, and more.

As Ruler Shrub's reign came to a close, the Pachyderms chose a big Mac as their leader in the forthcoming elections. They advocated lower taxes, school vouchers, and private health insurance, which to some people seemed like lipstick on a pig wallowing into a great recession.

The other major political group, the Equines, vehemently called for change and even selected a candidate with a very strange name, Mr. Oyes Weecan. Promises, promises. Like universal health care equal to that of the national legislators (absurd). And including in the middle class those with net taxable incomes three to five times what a professional schoolteacher typically earns.

Both candidates were viewed suspiciously, even as new indicators of socio-economic difficulties became fearsomely evident. As increased trials and tribulations did fall upon the Great Nation, many people thought that neither seemed to address the crisis with sufficient urgency, except as needed to garner enough votes to be selected as the next ruler.

The victorious Ruler Weecan inherited all of the problems from Ruler Shrub and from all the previous rulers. To shake off the difficulties of the economic downturn, the Equine majority in the legislature set out to do what they knew best: to spend and to regulate (and eventually to tax the wealthy if they could). Considering the excessive de-regulation of previous decades, some rules were placed on the supposedly self-regulated financial sector that caused so much of the recent problems, but only after magnificent bailouts were provided to some entities "too big to fail." And, as the overall economy withered, funds for "recovery projects" pumped money into the pockets of the fortunate few, such as shovel-ready highway construction firms and

nearly-bankrupt state governments that were also poor managers of their funds. The jobs and the funds were to trickle down to the people. What little recovery there was faced constant challenges and threats, some even from greasy economies overseas.

Meanwhile, the Pachyderms simply lined up trunk-to-tail to attempt to block the Equine initiatives. Voting was strictly along party lines, with nearly all legislators representing their ideologies and not their constituencies. (But that is how they got elected, and their first priority seemed to be getting reelected.)

The Pachyderms were well aware that blocking tactics and criticisms of the Weecan efforts could eventually attract sufficient dissatisfaction that the political tides would shift, as they always do in this democracy. Elections typically have been the choosing of the lesser of two evils. During improving times, the incumbents have an advantage. But during declining or insufficiently improving times, those in power have a disadvantage. So the Pachyderms became the party of “Nope” and reaped benefits for doing nothing except advocating the return to policies that had contributed so much to the problems at hand.

Finally, in a self-serving show of bipartisan unity (because each wanted to claim leadership with the solutions), the Equines and Pachyderms issued a joint call for proposals to resolve the challenges facing the Great Nation.

Many of the Equines and Pachyderms spoke up (and were happy to be visible to the public), but all were basically quite similar. Neither side could see much further than the next election. And the political leaders knew that the people of the Great Nation were interested mainly in their own affluence, so the keys to power were tied largely to self-serving, short-term, minimal-effort, minimal-discomfort solutions. The proposals basically were haggings about rates of taxation, government approaches to international affairs including war and world leadership, and issues of social liberty such as abortions, guns, prayers, and education.

In other words, the proposals were much like what had been said before. And the economy continued to struggle, with indicators of further decline. Solutions were absent. The rhetoric was as much negative about the opposition as it was self-patronizing compliments.

The enigmatic “N” decided to come forth again, this time in writings via the Internet. He (or she or they) presented the following:

-- “And all this too shall pass away” was again emphasized. One hundred years of world leadership is but a blink in history, and decline is already beginning to be evident.

-- There is no possible way to return the economy to the heydays of luxury living, fat portfolios for retirement, and seemingly endless prosperity. That should not be our objective, because it is selfish and would lead to continuing problems that brought on the current difficulties.

-- The roots of the problems of the Great Nation are found where the “Five Realms of Power” are out of balance. 1) The Economics of Captitalism-20 plays favorites to those with wealth, giving inappropriate influence over 2) Governance by Democracy. [*Government is excessively influenced by money.*] The power of 3) Religion is being distorted by extremes of both the conservative and liberal Faiths, while 4) Justice through Laws is being manipulated to favor the wealthy and the politically powerful. [*Polarized opinions are warping the legal system to be supportive of favoritism and inequalities inherent in “Capitalism20.”*] Interestingly, the weakest Realm, the power of 5) Love with Service, offers the greatest hope for bringing the five realms of power back into balance. [*Meaningful, non-monetary recognition and reward for service should massively offset the power of money to influence public policy and societal behavior.*]

Clearly, those few sentences could not present the full reasoning, so “N” announced the availability of the “*Nehemiah Papers*” on the Internet, with access via the Facebook page entitled, “Nehemiah Papers.”

At first, nothing happened. Too few readers; nobody helped bring the Papers to the attention of the public. And “N” was essentially unheard.

Then “N” tried to reach the public through the ageless tradition of parables and parodies. She did not expect stalwart Pachyderms and Equines to assist much, but there were hopes that freethinkers might make the *Nehemiah Papers* better known. “N” only wanted those writings to be openly discussed by the Great Nation. She sought neither recognition nor personal involvement beyond her written statements.

The *Nehemiah Papers* contain nothing inflammatory and no personal attacks. Just some soundly reasoned observations that look into the heart of the Great Nation to understand the causes of its problems and the prospects of continuing decline or possible stability. Other topics and proposals by “N” include:

A definition and basic proposal for “Capitalism21” appropriate for our new century, intending to balance better the Five Realms of Power.

An equitable system for compulsory national service for everyone (male and female) age 18 to 55, with major impact on job creation, training, and solution of some national problems, with some allowances for service by teachers, police, and other public servants with earnings under a set maximum or in hardship areas.

75% tax bracket for income over a million dollars, but allowing some taxpayer influence on the use of the high-bracket funds, such as efforts for Charter Neighborhoods.

“Charter Neighborhoods” to improve locations where most people would not want to live, including massive campaigns against crime, drugs, and corruption.

Job creation in education, public safety, social work, and fields that strengthen the nation’s qualities, not its quantities.

Creation of jobs and industry for environmentally sound solutions to the energy issues, again building the nation instead of shipping its wealth overseas.

Sources of Wealth, to understand the nature of wealth and its responsibilities.

Poverty in the Great Nation and Abroad, to show that even the “middle class” is highly privileged and needs to consider the necessary sacrifices to prevent an otherwise unavoidable decline.

Restrictions on the welfare system and revisions of health care, but strengthening the minimal base services to all people.

Elimination of “serial incumbents” who seek reelection more than they seek viable and forceful changes, either by term limits or rejection by voters.

Creation of “moderate politics” either by the rise of a new political party, the election of independents, or by the empowerment of moderates within their existing parties.

Foreign policies consistent with the values of I. M. Nehemiah.

Implementation of long-term solutions, many of which would be popular only when true leadership surfaces in the Great Nation, while rejecting the temptations of short-term power or financial gain.

* * * * *

“N” emphasized that the current pathways of the Great Nation were leading to decline, and that drastic changes were needed immediately to delay or possibly avoid that decline. But

the needed steps would involve sacrifices so significant that no former leading nation had ever implemented them in time to maintain its position of greatness.

Is the Great Nation ready for these and other messages from “N”? The response to the *Nehemiah Papers* released in August – October 2010 will either have zero impact, or could set the flavor for the coming political session when the Great Nation tries to correct its course. Then, Ruler Weecan, the other elected leaders, and the concerned people will show if they are able to steer the Ship of State from the brink of unrecoverable decline onto a course for continued (but different) greatness. As “N” says: “We must never be the same again.”

And what about “N”? He, she or they continue to reside within the Great Nation, just regular people interested in the future of this country. No fame, no glory, no interviews, no income, no expenses, and no trace of who they are. They are hoping that solutions to the causes of the impending decline of the Great Nation can be seen and implemented in time.

Best wishes.

I. M. N.