

The Nations - Israel and Gentiles or What do we have to do with Race?

The World's Idea of Nationality and Race

- ❖ Sociological Organization is the main concerns of studies and activism
- ❖ Family and *Pater Familias* is blood and family name that matters. — first and oldest ideas of the nation.
 - ◆ The temptation and vice is toward Oligarchy and inherited 'wealth' and keeping that within those bloodlines.
- ❖ Nationalism is the identification of the government as Protector and Provider of a certain idea of who belongs and what we do, ie ideological view of a geographic area
 - ❖ Almost 100% of the time this idea is paired to violent enforcement within the society and is accompanied by superiority view of the 'national idea.' It almost always leads to the expansion of the country's power and ideas of 'best' outward.
 - ◆ Extreme Forms: American Exceptionalism (Manifest Destiny), Fascism and Communism
- ❖ Critical Theory — 'Race' in society has privilege and power groups
 - ❖ Ideas born in the 1800s about Progress; identifying Western Europe as superior
 - ❖ Power is the lens for Group Dynamics and becomes totalizing
 - ◆ Banding together as a group will gain political power with benefits
 - ❖ Identifying markers of color, voice (language, dialect), and dress show belonging to, or lack of, to the supposed group in power. You are the group based on Sex, Race, Class, and Gender: called intersectionality.
 - ◆ Anti-Racism? — The idea of divesting power and privilege or using it for the oppressed group.

- ❖ Patriotism is the idea of love for your people in their uniqueness, without ignoring their faults, a look that evaluates your people based on vices and virtues and how those are expressed in a culture. It is a love of actual people!

The Church's Understanding of the 'Nations'

- ❖ The Population Growth & their Division

- ❖ Population growth from Adam & Eve to many people

- ◆ Religious division begins quickly.

- ◆ Tower of Babel — the linguistic divisions of the nations begin

- ❖ Nationality

- ❖ Scriptures dealing with Nationality

- ◆ Genesis 17- God's promise to Abraham that he will be a "father of many nations"

- ◆ Jacob wrestles with God and is named Israel (Genesis 32)

- * Israel the rulership of God over a certain chosen people

- The Patriarchs to Judges to the Monarchy

- ◆ Exodus 12:38ff — a mixed multitude exits Egypt, crosses that Red Sea and receives the Law. This means that it was not only Jacob's blood descendants that become 'God's people'

- * I Corinthians 10:1-4 means they were "baptized in the Red Sea" crossing

- * Exodus 12:48 and Deuteronomy 4:5-7 show how a "stranger" can join Israel by circumcision and then partaking of the Passover. Nothing implies seeking these converts ie not proselytizing but the border was open to join.

- * In the New Testament the fundamental change is the Great Commission and that Baptism and the Eucharist becomes the means to join Israel.

- That is why it is called the New Testament!

◆ Psalms

*Psalm 2 — “Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.”

*Psalm 22 — “All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him.”

*Psalm 46 — “Be still, and know that I am God. I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth!”

◆ God’s justice will be given to whole Nations, not just individuals.

*Isaiah 42-43 — “Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations... Let all the nations gather together, and let the peoples assemble. Who among them can declare this, and show us the former things? Let them bring their witnesses to justify them, and let them hear and say, It is true.”

*Proverbs 14:34 — “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.”

*The Cross is part of this establishment of the Just situation

*John 11:48-52 — “If we let him go on thus, every one will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation.” But one of them, Ca’iaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all; you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish.” He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.”

- “Therefore it was fitting for the Lord to endure this, and to stretch out his hands, that with the one he might draw the ancient people and with the other those from the Gentiles, and join both together in himself.” (St. Athanasius, On the Incarnation 25)

❖ The Church is the Missionary

◆ Great Commission

*Matthew 28:18-20 — And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.

- The last teaching in Matthew’s Gospel

*Luke 24:44-47 — “Everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

- The last teaching in Luke’s Gospel

◆ Pentecost the Inverse of the Tower of Babel

*Acts 2 — all the nations came to Jerusalem for the Feast and were “added” to the disciples of Jesus

*Acts 8 — the Ethiopian eunuch

*Acts 16:25ff — the guard’s household is baptized and added to the believers

*Acts 18 — the Corinthians a pagan city are added to the believers

- The Corinthian Epistles all deal with factionalism and overcoming separations within the local church.

◆ The Church exists as the body that is the “participant in [God’s] own immortal and loving life” and its purpose is to invite all the world, all the nations and those people in the nations, to the body of Christ and enter the Trinitarian Life by communion of the Body and Blood of the Son of God. (Athanasios Papathanasiou *Future, the Background of History*)

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*Language and Culture become the 'embodiment' of the voice of God that speaks in symbols understandable to the nation being invited.

❖Galatians 3 — Abraham's faith is the marker of being counted as a 'son of God' not bloodline.

◆This letter is possibly the first New Testament text ever written and preserved by the Church.

◆ Gal 3 "in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith... Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many; but, referring to one, "And to your offspring," which is Christ... now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

◆I Corinthians 12 makes the same point, that baptism is a unitive event into a single body, but also brings out the element of roles and functions differing, but that "all suffer together ... all rejoice together" then Paul turns toward spiritual gifts being the true meaning of roles.

◆1 Peter 2:9 — "you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy."

❖Revelation 7:9 — "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!"

❖ Summary:

❖ The Nations ie the Gentiles

◆ A Linguistic Group

◆ Religious adherent to a certain god or pantheon

◆ A geographically defined group

❖ A Holy Nation = the people that follow the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

◆ Israel and the Gentiles

*The Great Commission and Pentecost are the call and work to bring in all three divisions into Israel ie the Church

*Distinction in Church exists only at the cultural/linguistic level the more fundamental or ontological level we are united, *the Church is one*.

Nationalism or Ecclesiality

❖ Is it Church *in* or Church *of*?

❖ *of* implies that nation as a geographic/linguistic group is more important than Mission or Catholicity

❖ *in* implies that the Church is an 'outpost' a gathering of the Body of Christ in time and space at the Eucharist and extending from it. (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:2; Eph 1:1)

◆ "The Orthodox mission aims at the birth and growth of a real local church, not at the establishment of a branch of the type of multinational companies. No doubt, mission creates outposts; but outposts of the Kingdom" (Athanasios Papathanasiou, *Future, the Background of History*)

❖ Does biological heritage matter to the Church? To God?

❖ The Church cares about spiritual growth and fulfilling the Great Commission. This is not accomplished at the moment of Baptism nor at the moment of communion. The main focus is the 'making disciples.'

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- ◆ The Church has as her mission gathering all the nations to the throne of God (Mat 25:32; Rev 7:9, 21:24). It is a constitutive marker of the Church as Church to be 'missionary' that is to make disciples of the nations.
- ◆ "Ecclesiastical identity is rooted primarily in *biological discontinuity*. The human's "yes" or "no" to God's call has to be the personal option and risk — not a hereditary element. **Decay can be hereditary; sainthood cannot.** In strict theological terms, ecclesiastical identity is not acquired in an automatic way through biological birth with a traditionally Christian nation, family or community, but through personal consent which is the child of freedom and therefore can be revoked at any time, whereas DNA cannot." (Athanasios Papathanasiou *Future, the Background of History*)
- ◆ Baptism and Commitment to and Growth in Christ:
 - * "There must be a special moment when one must intentionally renew in one's awareness all the obligation of Christianity and place upon oneself their yoke as an unfailing law.
In Baptism they were accepted without awareness because then they were kept more by the mind and attitude of someone else and in simplicity, but now one must consciously place upon oneself the good yoke of Christ, choose the life of Christianity, and exclusively dedicate oneself to God, so that later all the days of one's life one might serve Him with enthusiasm. Here only does a man himself begin the Christian life. It existed in him previously, also, but one may say it proceeded not from his own activity, not from his own person. Now he himself, in his own person, begins to act in the spirit of a Christian. Before this, the light of Christ was in him like the light of the first day (of creation), which came not from one central source, but was diffused. But just as center had to be provided for the light, drawing it to the suns and planets, so also this (spiritual) light must be gathered together around the central point of our life — our consciousness.
A man becomes entirely human when he comes to self-awareness and independence of mind, when he becomes the complete master and commander of his own ideas and deeds and holds certain ideas not because

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other have given these to him, but because he himself finds them to be true.”
(St. Theophan the Recluse *The Path to Salvation* instructing ‘teachers of youth’)