

Paradigms of ethnicity and power

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In his excellent piece on the 5 paradigms of ethnicity RCW seems to imply that those who espouse the 3 paradigms focussing on globalism are able to imagine or envisage a world without ethnic identity. However, if historical precedent is anything to go by globalism has, thus far, always been an expression of ethnonationalism. No one can stand outside history and culture to advocate for some system of government, production of goods etc that can be identified as beyond ethnicity. An ethnic identity is made up of the following characteristics: a common proper name; a belief in a common ancestry; a shared history, memories of a common past; elements of a common culture, such as, language, customs, material culture, religion; a link with a homeland; a sense of solidarity. What has happened historically is that certain ethnic identities have been able to build up their power so that they can impose their history, culture and sense of solidarity to the detriment of the history, culture and sense of solidarity of other ethnic identities - and then have the cheek to call their destruction of less powerful identities a great blessing to them! Internationalists cannot avoid speaking and once they open their mouths they identify allegiance to an ethnic identity. It is vain to protest that what is in view is an internationalism of ideas or economic or political practice because such internationalism will be impossible to achieve without communication and communication means language - which means ethnic identity. We are back with Babel in Genesis 11. What happened in the plain of Shinar was that a people decided to grasp authority over all humankind and by uniting all humanity and its ingenuity make a name for themselves that would ensure their security. God had to come down to see the great tower they were building but he saw clearly where their intentions would lead - to a greater and greater ability on the part of humanity to rebel against his will. So, God confused their language and their lack of ability to communicate soon destroyed their great imperial project and they drifted away from each other and God's intention that there should be a multi-ethnic world was achieved. But this was but the first attempt of many that a particular ethnic identity has tried to build a world dominating empire. Christianity has probably always functioned in the context of empires that were aiming for world domination. It may be helpful to see how the biblical ideal of blessing the nations has played out ? and is playing out ? in this context.