

## Charlottesville

It was shocking to flip-on CNN at lunchtime on Saturday to see the white-supremacist-provoked riot unfolding in the quaint, small city of Charlottesville, Virginia. I cannot begin to understand the mentality of these guys rendering Nazi salutes and claiming that this country was meant to be exclusively or predominately for white people. \* This is some scary mob-insanity to behold!

This land was originally inhabited by brown-skinned descendants of migrants from Asia who migrated during prehistoric times over a land-bridge at the Bearing Strait of Alaska, (according to one theory). White Europeans came long after and African's were dragged over here against their wills as slaves by many of those Europeans. This is not a slam against white people, it's just the undeniable history! Though imperfect in his response, Abraham Lincoln was sufficiently enlightened to launch a challenge against this revised version of history:

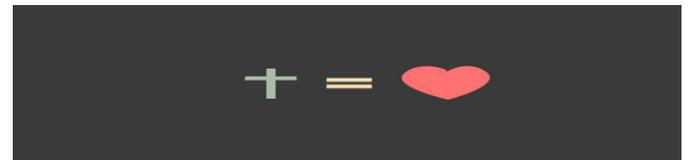
*"As a nation, we began by declaring that 'all men are created equal.' We now practically read it 'all men are created equal, except negroes.' When the Know-Nothings get control, it will read 'all men are created equal, except negroes, and foreigners, and Catholics.' When it comes to this I should prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty – to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, and without the base alloy of hypocrisy."*

— Abraham Lincoln, *Lincoln Letters*

I am a white man from a predominately white culture in Southeastern Massachusetts, having gone to schools and churches and shopping malls populated by predominately white people. I am hardly one to provide an adequate commentary on these matters. But I do listen to civil rights activists on the radio, and I read articles and I try to understand the perspective of those coming from communities where racial bigotry and hatred and unjust discrimination have been and are currently real. I must acknowledge "white privilege" if I am to be honest: I am and I have been privileged in this country, in large part simply because of the color of my skin. This is just a fact that cannot be taken for granted. My parents never had to have a special

talk with me as to how I should deal with the police in the case of a traffic stop or any other such encounter.

Racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and all forms of hatred are just simply inimical to our Christian Faith. How any Christian can claim otherwise is just a distortion of the Gospel. The love-command of our Lord is clearly not restricted to relations within the community of disciples since his command extends even to love of 'enemies.' Any Old Testament language expressive of disdain for foreigners or favoring racial purity must be understood in the context of Israel's mammoth struggle for survival as a people, their striving for pure worship over-against syncretism, (mixing elements of idolatry), and their efforts at restoration following the Babylonian Exile. Books like Ruth and Jonah are counter-arguments against these tendencies when they are divorced from their context.



Regrettably, the teachings of our Faith concerning marriage and human sexuality are interpreted by some as expressions of 'hate' or bigotry. However, these issues are differentiated from matters like skin color or ethnic make-up in that they pertain to the very essence of the human person as male and female. We propose certain things in this area as truths about the human person, not as assaults on those who propose differently. But these issues are complicated by many cultural factors I can't cover here.

The insanity of Charlottesville must be seen for what it is, scapegoat-ism and fear. People like easy answers and easy solutions, and it is quite easy to blame foreigners and minorities for problems too complicated to identify clearly and comprehensively. We hope and pray that people in these groups will come to see the folly in their ideology and soften their hearts to accept others in their full, God-given personhood, as equals both in their humanity and in their citizenship.

**\*I must admit that I only have a general understanding of what these groups represent in terms of racial ideologies.**