

Race, Culture, Tradition

by Mike Harris

These words do hang together. Each by itself is worthy of volumes, and I am limited to approximately five hundred words. We'll give it the old college try.

RACE, there is only one race! THE HUMAN RACE ! In the beginning, the planet earth was inhabited by the human race in pockets across the entire planet. These pockets of humanity, because of their isolation and the first law of nature, which is survival, developed certain rules. I'll call this Culture. As these cultural rules became hard and fast due to no challenges, some of them became Traditions. The foregoing is a simplification that is not easy to accept readily.

The human race is quite diverse. The geographic dispersion and the need to adapt in order to survive caused many distinctions. The inability to leave their confining environment fixed certain obvious physical characteristics to groups of peoples within the human race. They still were a part of the one human race but they appeared different in outer appearance. A million years has brought about little change to these distinct physical characteristics. But again, THE BRAIN with the ability to learn, to solve problems, to adapt was there in every corner of the planet and it is still apparent in every geographical area inhabited by the human race. Unless I wish to forego the other two parts of the topic I will leave it here and proceed to "culture".

Culture is a reflection of society. All creatures live in certain ways that makes for organization within a group. Whether it's a herd of deer, a pack of wolves, or coop of chickens there emerges a set of rules. In animals it is called instinct. Because these rules do not get changed by time or circumstances, only the fittest survive and certain creatures become extinct. However, the human with its brain is unique. While humans are herd creatures they are able to, and do change the rules. They adapt to their environment or adapt the environment to their needs. Fire to keep warm, clothes to protect the body and make living comfortable under adverse conditions. The human groups that form have a continuity and generations exist within this herd group. Humans change the rules and as the generations progress we have the development of culture. These groups although geographically isolated all form similar, yet diverse rules. For example, separate rules of behavior for males and females. Because smarter individuals emerge within these isolated groups, leaders take charge and societal hierarchy emerges. Some explanation for what might be unexplainable events leads to individuals who come up with answers for the unexplainable. Thus we have the best hunter is the leader of the hunt, the one who can give the best answer for the unexplainable becomes the leader in charge of the spirits, and purports that there must be a god of thunder, a god of wind, of rain, etc. As these rules are set in place and become fixed, the societal group begins to make rules around these fixed assumptions. Thus we have the start of Traditions.

Certain things are done in a particular way only "traditionally" with no deviation. All this works until the humans become mobile. He starts to travel and encounters other humans who seem very much the same, yet also different. The rules of one culture while similar are not the same. Traditions are the first to be challenged as these crumble in the face of new thoughts. Cultures begin to accommodate each other and a melding of the cultures takes place. The same fate awaits traditions as knowledge expands and the human race homogenizes. We learn, so we no longer have a god of thunder – we know that certain atmospheric conditions create thunder and all this because of the human brain of the human race. And I have used up my 500 words.

