

26/5/2013. *The Babel principle, II: Why UKIP won voters and how to inform the debate about immigration and multiculturalism*

At Babel, God divided the human race by language (Genesis 11), ultimately for our own good. This, combined with another biblical principle, can shed light on the immigration debate. After the Exodus from Egypt, God gave the Hebrew people a land of their own in which they administered the laws. Foreigners – gentiles who shared the vision after hearing of God – were welcome to come and live there, where they would be treated impartially; but they would accommodate to the Mosaic system, not vice-versa. That is a core precedent. It was understood by the leaders of the USA who welcomed immigration a century ago. They offered migrants a clear vision of what they would be joining, and migrants flocked from many lands to it. Multiculturalism, in contrast, treats not only all individuals in a single land equally (equality before the law, which is right), but all *cultures* – even though the purpose of immigration is to join a culture that you prefer to live in than your own. (You can always go back if you don't like it.) Not even heaven will be multicultural; rather, it will be a genuine Christian culture (not like the nominal ones of European history). As for multiculturalism, it is an incoherent myth, just like neutral multifaith religious lessons, because in every place there must be a single legal system and an agreed way to make the laws, and those are part of the prevailing culture. In Britain that means parliamentary democracy and freedom under the rule of law (which has been influenced for the better by Christians in public life). This system has attracted to Britain many immigrants of other cultures and languages. Members of immigrant communities should have their say in lawmaking through the democratic process at Westminster, but the British constitution of parliamentary democracy is still an umbrella over multiculturalism. Likewise the Roman Emperor was an umbrella over his subject peoples, no matter how cosmopolitan the streets of Rome were.

Historically, cultures have interacted by trade and warfare. The best ideas of each culture are generally spread via trading links; the classicist Gilbert Highet has interpreted history as a process of teaching and learning between cultures (in an essay called *The Migration of Ideas*). But multiculturalism is novel. What happens if the guest cultures do not all share the vision of how the country should be run? From inside a religion, what matters is its truth-claim, but from outside what matters is how its believers are told to treat nonbelievers. What if one or more of the immigrant cultures has aims to overthrow parliamentary democracy? Multiculturalism cannot cope with that scenario, for Jesus warned us that *A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand* (Mark 3:24). It is right that Sikhs have a longstanding homeland in the Punjab; right that Hindus have one in India, and so on; so why do multiculturalists wish to make England the location of an experiment for everybody else, rather than a home for English culture and people who wish to live by it? Multiculturalists hint that this question is racist, but perhaps *they* are. Equality quangos justify themselves by magnifying rather than mollifying grievances. As for figures, between 1997 and 2009 the net influx of migrants to the UK quadrupled, and a Downing Street speechwriter called Andrew Neather later went on record as saying that that government's plan was to multiculturalise Britain by stealth, and if challenged then use economic rather than cultural arguments as justification. Unskilled migrants should not be admitted when several million Britons are unemployed. A report (*The Fiscal Effects of Immigration to the UK* by University College London academics Christian Dustmann and Tommaso Frattini, published in the *Economic Journal* in 2014) found that migrants from outside the European Economic Area – mainly from India, Pakistan and Commonwealth countries in Africa – consumed £117.9 billion more between 1995 and 2011 in public expenditure (NHS costs, welfare, education *etc*) than they contributed in taxes. Britain currently grants citizenship to more immigrants than any other European country. No mainstream political party has taken the resulting concerns of the electorate seriously, and I am relieved that a new party has gained enough votes to trigger political debate before genuinely racist alternatives become significant. That party, the UK Independence Party (UKIP), advocates a drastic reduction in immigration and quitting the EU (whose own accountants have failed to find its books satisfactory for 17 years running, in their annual audit). Whether or not UKIP understands the fact, it is reaping the benefits of sticking to the biblical Babel principle. I am not saying that Britain should not let any migrants in, but our immigration policy should be informed by an unsuppressed debate conducted without insults, should not be based on the idea of multiculturalism, and should be determined entirely in Britain.

Multiculturalism means that the authorities are reluctant to intervene against cultural practices that were unknown here until migrants brought them, such as female genital mutilation (FGM or 'female circumcision'). But this barbaric practice is clearly illegal under English law. Furthermore, rulings of Sharia

and Jewish 'Beth Din' courts, which currently have been granted some official standing, must be regarded as private arrangements; it must not be possible for one party to get a binding ruling in these courts if the other party refuses to go to them, and no ruling of such courts must violate English law. Moreover the criminal law of England must be enforced impartially. To turn a blind eye to practices such as FGM because of 'cultural sensitivity' means failure to police the legal rights and safeguard the bodies of many vulnerable young girls. Our authorities have ignored and even silenced whistleblowers, using selective deployment of laws against free speech and citing 'community cohesion.' The epidemic of sexual abuse of white girls by a part of the Asian community (most notoriously in Rotherham) was systematically ignored for that reason.

Language is the biggest component of culture, reflecting the Babel principle. The best way for immigrants to make a success of themselves is to learn the language of their new home, which greatly widens their options. At present, grants are available under multiculturalist policies to help migrant groups celebrate their own cultures, but why should Muslim taxpayers in Britain subsidise a party for Sikhs, or vice-versa? The money should be spent offering immigrants English lessons and leaving them free to celebrate their own cultures using the larger salaries they gain as a result.

When using the word 'we', British Christians (especially Anglicans!) must be careful to distinguish between the church and the British. It is good to love your nation, for Jesus Christ passionately loved his own people, the Jews (Matt 23:37). Christians are called to love individuals regardless of cultural identity, and it is not inconsistent to do that while being concerned at policies that widen divisions in society. As for our attitude to other peoples, realism is called for, about them *and about ourselves* (Matt 7:3). Jesus was realistic about the flaws of the Jews. There is no room for racism, for all people are sinners descended from Adam, and Christians are rescued from our sin out of every nation; Jesus said that he wouldn't return until the gospel has been preached to all peoples (Matt 24:14). You cannot choose what nation you were born into, but in God's mercy you can choose Jesus Christ. Heaven will be a multiracial Christian culture. You can get a foretaste of it in some of our congregations today.