

## Sola Diversity?

Cedarville University recently hosted a chapel speaker that presented a case for the need of diversity within the church. The most successful aspect of the chapel was the speaker's ability to define precisely what he intended by his use of "diversity". He specifically referred to diversity as ethnic backgrounds (i.e., Asian-American, African-American, White, etc.). Such a definition, while not affirmed, is commendable because he *defined* it. However, apart from his proffered definition, what remained was insufficient as far as Truth is concerned.

To begin, the speaker impressively cited several statistics about the current state of ethnicities that reside within the church, and was excited that the next decade will reverse 1,500 years of church history. Previously, approximately 80% of Christians were white. Presently, 60% are non-white. Moreover, the speaker stated further that the church is 10-20 years behind the world culturally. Furthermore, the speaker mentioned that proper Biblical interpretation cannot be successful apart from diversity, and that past American missionaries practiced colonization when they took their form of the gospel to parts of Africa and Asia. Finally, the speaker used Micah 4:1-3 as justification for his message.

I would like to humbly note several errors in the speaker's message necessary to promote a clear discussion on church diversity in relation to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

First, the coming diversification of the Church will not reverse 1,500 years of church history. Granted, the Church was not initially diverse (*all* of the Apostles were Jewish, and the first Christian church was composed of Jews). Still, with the reception of the Gospel by the Gentiles, the Church *naturally* diversified. That is, the Apostles took the Gospel to different parts of the globe. Paul preached the Gospel in Asia Minor and parts of Europe. Matthew spoke the Gospel in parts of Africa, and Thomas carried the Gospel all the way to India. Thus, the Church during the Middle Ages was already quite diverse with backgrounds from the Mediterranean, Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and the Far East.

TRUE The Gospel does not belong to one ethnic group, and it never has.

Second, the "fact" that the Church is 10-20 years behind the world remains problematic *if* the culture of the world is actually *progressing* toward, or pursuing God. There are serious eschatological issues to be discussed if one presumes that the world is progressing, i.e., getting better. The culture of the world is actually getting worse with an increasing cultural emphasis on man and the glorification of himself. Therefore, the Church should not reflect culture. The Church is not called to transform culture, not transform hearts. Only God can transform hearts, not Christians. We are called to many things, some of which include being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29), being transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:1-2), and being holy as He is holy (1. Pet. 1:16),

but we do not transform hearts or culture.

Third, in addressing the speaker's complaint against "colonization", certainly, the missionaries who did present the Gospel to different parts of Asia and Africa were of European descent. However, that does not mean that they presented a "white Gospel". Gospel Truth can be known even if only one ethnicity is providing it. If that is not the case, then our Gospel cannot be true because we originally received our Gospel from the Jews. Notwithstanding, the Bible is not given to any private interpretation (2 Pet. 1:20).

Also, such a view discounts the work of the Holy Spirit, who interprets the Scriptures. We have direct communication with the Father, along with the Spirit interceding for us, and bearing witness of us (Rom. 8:15-16, 26-27). Ethnic diversity is not needed to discover the Truth of the Gospel. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6).

Fourth, the Gospel is not about racial reconciliation, or about God's desires to place us on a mountaintop to "show us off." It is about God and His great glory, *not man!*

Fifth, the speaker ripped Micah 4:1-3 from its context, and essentially substituted "diversity" for "nations", a hermeneutical method that proves detrimental to comprehending the book of Micah correctly. The immediate context of the chapter is about the glorification of God, not man. God has no desires to place us on a mountain top to "show us off." Ultimately, the speaker has no Biblical support for his message, nor do others who purport that diversity is necessary for Gospel Truth.

The most outrageous element of the speaker's message was its inherent racism. He celebrated the increase of one race and the decrease of another within the church, which misses the point entirely. The centrality of the Gospel is Salvation of Christ by grace through faith alone. No more should be added, and no less should be taken. No other Gospel should be preached by anybody! (Gal. 1:5-8) While one may argue that Paul claimed to be all things to all men, Paul intended that for an individual-to-individual basis. The Church is not a political institution that is meant to integrate ethnic groups. Emphasizing diversity based upon skin color or ethnic backgrounds harbors favoritism toward a specific group of people. God does not show favoritism (Acts 10:34, Rom. 2:11, Gal. 2:6), nor should we. To usher in diversity based solely upon superficialities completely misses the point of the Gospel message, which is Christ's redemptive work, becoming the propitiation for *our* sins (Rom. 3:25). It is all about Him!

I beseech you, therefore, brethren, let us return to preaching the Gospel as we are compelled to do (1 Cor. 9:16), adding nothing to nor subtracting from it. There are no *ands*, or *buts* that need to be added. The Gospel, apart from diversity, is sufficient.

-ELUCIDATUS