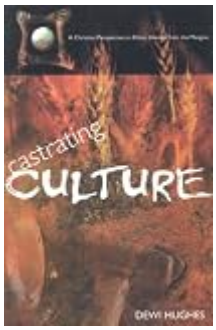
CASTRATING CULTURE

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Category: Reviews

I've just finished reading Castrating Culture by Dewi Hughes. Subtitled "A Christian perspective on ethnic identity from the margins" this is a book which basically does what it says on the tin. Dewi is a native Welsh speaker and writes about the issues of ethnicity and language from the position of someone who knows what it is like to be part of a margianlised culture.



Society at large (and, all too often, Christians) often sees ethnic diversity as a negative thing; leading to war, ethnic cleansing and racism. It is suggested that the progress of technology, Coca-Cola or even the Christian Gospel will draw all of humanity into a common family with a common culture and that eventually ethnic differences will fade away.

Dewi Hughes takes a very different stance to this. He does not deny the evils which have often been seen to be associated with racial differences, but nevertheless he makes a convincing case that we should see Ethnic identity as a positive attribute. Ethnic diversity, rooted in the diversity of the Trinitarian God is a gift from our creative God that needs to be preserved and nurtured. Sadly and all too often, majority cultures do not see the culture and identity of ethnic minorities as something to be treasured.

The rather odd title comes from a Quechua Christian leader who writes:

> *We simply want to take our place as indigenous and native Quechua people, understanding and living out the gospel. We assume our identity without shame, retialiation or dndignation against those who have caused harm to our past and castrated our culture.*

Though the concepts are sometimes fairly complex, Hughes makes keeps the book readable and accesible by illustrating what he is saying with reference to his own background and experiences. If you know nothing of the history of Welsh evangelicalism, this book would be worth reading just for that.Â As you would expect, the book has a lot of positive things to say about Bible translation both as a method of evangelism and as an affirmation of God's care for minorities. This final, rather long, quote rather neatly sums up the thrust of the whole book:

> *If it has taught us nothing else, Rwanda has taught us that to limit the meaning of the gospel to prayer, bible studay and private morality while leaving the world to define the social and political meaning of life is a recipe for disaster. In the context of this book, the situation in Rwanda highlights the need for a Christian understanding of ethnic identity which appreciates that, though often implicated in conflict, it is very rarely, if ever, the simple cause of conflict. In a fallen world, what is essentially good in God's creation is often used to serve evil ends.*

> *Rwanda is also a warning that we need to be very careful in the theory of ethnic identity that we advocate as Christians. While wanting to affirm diversity, we must be very careful not to contribute to the creation of conditions in which hatred and conflict can flourish.*

Amen!

If you are involved in Bible translation or ministry to minorities, this book is a must read. If you are looking for Biblical material on the ethnic minorities in Scripture, rather than a theological/political reflection then I would suggest that From Every People & Nation (Nsbt): A Biblical Theology of Race (New Studies in Biblical Theology) would be a better buy.