THE GOSPEL AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCE

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Category: Reviews

Having recently reviewed Castrating Culture, I was intrigued to find an article on the theology of ethnic identity in a recent edition of Themelios. The paper by Keith Fernando is of extra interest because he has lived and worked in Rwanda and clearly has deep insights into issues of race and conflict. He starts off with an overview of what is meant by ethnic identity, comparing it to nationality and race before moving on to examine the situation in Rwanda. He then discusses the Biblical issues surrounding ethnicity before closing with a very powerful section entitled *Loving the Ethnic Enemy.* I think this is well worth reading simply as an illustration of how to do theological reflection, but if you are involved in work which looks at ethnic identity (as Bible translators are) then you really should read it for the subject matter.

This quote from the conclusion gives you and idea of the content.

> *Love of the ethnic enemyâ€"of every enemyâ€"is what must characterise the church as the body of those who were themselves enemies of God and were reconciled through his love precisely when they were enemies and as enemies, in order that they should be enemies no longer (Rom 5:10). Having received that love and experiencing now its transforming power, God's own people can and must demonstrate it in the quality of their common life and in their engagement with a world of ethnic discord. Such love demonstrates grace and pardon. It pursues truth, justice, and peace across ethnic divides in society as well as in the church and personal relationships. It is radically counterculturalâ€"and dangerous. It is not natural but extraordinary and an affront to conventional human wisdom, exactly as the Samaritan's love was, and the Father's. But it is that very outrageous and supernatural character which brings conviction and the only true and lasting hope of communion beyond ethnicity, for 'by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another' (John 13:35). (Read More)*