

Had Miller not added “actually” to his statement about eating and drinking Jesus I would have no complaint. Because the author is Anglican, it is expected he would hold the view of transubstantiation (or a variation of it); but the confusion – at least in my mind – comes when I try to marry the statement above with his final phrase of the paragraph which states how one enters the kingdom. I may be nit-picking, but how Miller is describing the entrance into the Kingdom seems a bit unclear. Do we do so by “actually” eating and drinking Jesus in the Lord’s Supper or do we do so by merely accepting him as Lord of the Kingdom?

Finally, I must note how I wanted to break out into applause as Miller closed the book. He makes a statement that resonates among those of us who have ministered to Muslims. It stands as both a challenge to Christians of placid faith and the challenge of Islam: “I find the public religion of Muslims (and Eastern Orthodox Christians) compelling and refreshing. Yes, sometimes it can be confrontational, but the introspective Christianity of the West with its quietism and compartmentalization strikes me as defeatist, bland, and feeble-hearted” (Loc. 1428). May the Lord use this book to stir his people in the West and elsewhere to a more vibrant faith and vital witness, especially among Muslim neighbors.

Jeff Morton
North Dakota, USA

Nehrbass, Kenneth. *God’s Image and Global Cultures: Integrating Faith and Culture in the Twenty-First Century*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016. xx + 229 pages. \$30.00, paper.

Modern missionaries cringe when old pictures of indigenous peoples clad in white shirts and black ties, gathered for worship with English hymnals in hand, pop up from the recent past. These pictures are a reminder of the ongoing struggle to discern between one’s own mere cultural preferences and cultural forms that are the necessary outworking of a biblical worldview. While the battle may have shifted away from shirts and ties, the problem of culture remains. Kenneth Nehrbass’s volume is a helpful guide for “World Changers” (a term Nehrbass uses to describe missionaries and other cross-cultural workers) to understand culture and to equip themselves for cross-cultural impact.

Nehrbass has been both a pastor and a member of Wycliffe Bible Translators. He now directs and teaches in the Intercultural Studies program at Biola University. A key observation and assertion for him is that globalization has a major impact on culture. With nearly 190 million people living outside their home nation and 44 million of them forcibly displaced, the opportunity for Christians to reach people groups that were formerly inaccessible has never been greater (11). The church however has had a varied response toward the acculturation of these migrants. The author builds the case

that God's plan is multiculturalism. While aspects of culture may change as peoples move, "deep structures" of culture persist. In order for the gospel to penetrate these cultures, a one size fits all "McChristianity" is inadequate. The gospel must be contextualized to be accurately communicated from one culture to another.

Culture is famously difficult to define. *God's Image in Global Cultures* attempts to build a theology of culture. Functioning with a faithful evangelical framework that embraces the authority of Scripture, Nehrbass examines whether the cultures of the Bible should be read as prescriptive for all Christians or merely descriptive of those other places and times. He wrestles with the questions that arise from looking for a normative cultural type in Scripture. Nehrbass points his readers to the nature of the Trinity itself as the fountainhead of all culture.

After exploring various theories that exist for why humans are cultural beings, the author concludes that the answer is rooted in men and women bearing the image of God. Humanity bears God's image in a creative way. Nehrbass states, "The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit fellowship in creative activity. Humans, as image-bearers, are mediators or stewards of the order of creation and that is really what culture is about: "'The creative re-ordering of existence'.... This is by its very nature a socio-cultural activity'" (62–63). He goes on to argue that cultures are an outflow of humanity's image bearing. Cultural output may be morally good or morally evil, but in creating culture, humanity is demonstrating the functional image of God – "to be in God's image is to function in cultural ways" (73).

If Adam and Eve were created in the garden of Eden with an original culture, then shouldn't Christians be seeking to regain that cultural archetype? Nehrbass answers that question with a resounding, No! Rather than being created with a set culture that should be emulated for all time, Adam and Eve were created as culture *makers*. Cultural diversity is a product not of the Fall, but rather of mankind being created in God's image. Because God created humanity to be creators, the diversity that one sees in the world should be expected.

Nehrbass tackles the tough questions that face anyone working in multicultural ministry: is it right to change a culture, and how does one evaluate a culture without being ethnocentric? Here Nehrbass walks a tightrope by guiding the reader to evaluate cultural features without labeling the "sum total of one culture as better than the sum total of another culture" (113). Cross-cultural workers are encouraged to withhold judgement until they are able to properly study and analyze a culture in detail. Beyond cultural traits that are clearly defined in the Scripture as good or evil, Nehrbass suggests that cultural activities should be evaluated based on how they allow us to "enjoy God without idolizing culture" (113). Cultures are not static and change is inevitable. It is a given that making disciples of the nations will result in the transformation of a culture.

In examining God's plan for culture, the author identifies five systems that must exist within a culture: political system, economic system, religious system, material system, and social system

(145–46). He then works through each of these systems to demonstrate that there can be diversity in the ways that a culture organizes itself and still be in submission to Christ. While Nehrbass treats each of these categories only briefly, his analysis is sufficient to convince readers that 1) the tendency toward ethnocentric bias is strong, but that 2) there is a faithful path forward.

The value of *God's Image and Global Cultures* is found in the way that practical application is built on the foundation of a theology of culture. Chapter 10 examines thirteen “value orientations” that are often described as dyadic categories. These categories are often presented as polar opposites. Categories such as individualist/collectivistic, honor/shame, and being/doing are examined in detail from a biblical Christian perspective. Nehrbass helpfully provides charts with key characteristics of each value orientation and Scripture that coincides with each value category. He challenges the reader to examine his or her own culture on a continuum from low to high on each of the of value orientations, and compare the results to a kingdom view of that same value orientation. The author then provides concrete examples of how this exercise could be used to foster more effective multicultural ministry.

As someone who has struggled with the tension of desiring to effect gospel transformation while also being uncertain of his own cultural biases, this reviewer found *God's Image and Global Cultures* to be immensely helpful. Nehrbass demonstrates a high view of Scripture throughout as he wrestles with the implications of the authority of God's Word on one's understanding of culture and cultural interaction. On points with which many other missiologists might disagree, such as his interpretation of *ethne* in Revelation 7 (70–71), Nehrbass's exegesis and supporting arguments are clear enough to provide the reader a map for tracing his thought process and coming to his or her own conclusions.

Nehrbass balances biblical exposition with broad scholarly interaction. He exposes the reader to key thinkers in ethics, philosophy, and anthropology and interacts with them in a way that models the cultural interaction that he prescribes throughout the book. The reader is left not only with a working knowledge of the scholarly discussions around culture but also with practical steps to evaluate, engage, and change culture. The explicit practical applications and the many discussion questions provided make this an excellent resource for small groups and missions teams. *God's Image and Global Cultures* should be required reading for all missions leaders.

Scott Dunford
Pennsylvania, USA