



## Book Reviews

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### General works

*God's Image and Global Cultures: Integrating Faith and Culture in the Twenty-First Century*

By Kenneth Nehrbass

Eugene, OR: Cascade Books

2016. xix, 229 pp., paper. \$30.00 Kindle \$9.99

**Reviewed by:** Erik Aasland

Nehrbass has crafted an introduction to developing a theology of culture that is impressive in its scope, yet an enjoyable read. Nehrbass argues that “God’s plan is multiculturalism” (p. 14). Accordingly, Nehrbass advocates for cultural competency/adaptability. He recommends acculturation whereby individuals maintain their primary cultural identity and adapt to the other culture. His overall goal is to aid his audience in affirming the good and challenging the bad in their own cultures as well as being open to learn from other cultures. This approach suits both our globalized world and contemporary opportunities to relate to a multiplicity of cultures over one’s lifetime.

I was impressed with the care and detail with which Nehrbass approaches each topic. In terms of organization, the volume is laid out in four parts. Part I makes the case for multiculturalism as both learning to adapt in relating cross-culturally and nurturing an appreciation for other cultures. Part II directs the reader to consider how to understand, evaluate, and relate to cultures in a way that glorifies God and is open to His purposes. The weighty theological discussions are here. Part III addresses issues of cultural universals, contrasting systems, and cultural variables. The two chapters continue the emphasis on pursuing nuanced understanding and dynamically relating to other cultures rather than falling back on stereotypes or default approaches. Part IV marks a return and expansion on topics from Part I. Here, Nehrbass explains the “how to” of cultural competency.

This book was developed through classroom teaching which is evident in two aspects: (1) chapter topics are closely linked to pertinent questions; (2) longer, multi-segmented sections include brief application questions to ensure comprehension. These techniques give the book a more interactive feel.

Nehrbass aims at two different audiences. The primary focus is on challenging Evangelical students to be change-makers. His secondary audience is systematic

theologians. For the most part this serves his primary audience well, but it does lead him to focus primarily on propositional content and reasoning. The book will be of interest to Evangelical professors and students in intercultural studies, anthropology, and theology. It is well suited as a college textbook as well as required reading for missionaries preparing for the field.

*Incarnational Mission: Being with the World*

By Samuel Wells

Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans

2018. x, 254pp., paper, \$22.00

**Reviewed by:** Darrell Whiteman

Beautifully written and tightly argued, *Incarnational Mission* emphasizes the importance of being with people who are different from ourselves—those who are lapsed, seekers, those of no faith and those of other faiths, those who are hostile, our neighbors, and those who are excluded. In other words those who are “out of the fold” of traditional Christian circles. Wells’s unique contribution to the practice of and reflection on mission is his emphasis on *being with* as a form of mission. He contrasts this approach with the problem-solving mode of “working for” which assumes the concentration of power in the expert and the highly skilled and is the established model of social engagement, or “working with” that focuses on partnerships to empower the dispossessed and overcoming apathy, timidity, and lack of confidence. *Being with* as a model of mission rejects the problem-solving approach to mission and instead seeks to model enjoying people for their own sake. Wells notes that Jesus spent around 90% being with (in Nazareth), 9% working with (in Galilee), and only 1% working for (in Jerusalem).

Wells takes this theological foundation of being with and discusses eight dimensions of what being with actually involves in incarnational mission. They are presence, mystery, delight, participation, partnership, enjoyment, and glory. Samuel Wells, presently Vicar of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, London and former Dean of the Chapel at Duke University (2005–2012), has written a book that is “designed to stimulate renewal and reflective practice in mission” and has given the missiological world a needed perspective that is different from, or perhaps complementary to, much contemporary mission practice that is concerned more with the spiritual return on mission investment and managerial missiology than being with the Other as we join Jesus in his mission in the world.

*Missions: How the Local Church Goes Global*

By Andy Johnson

Wheaton: IL: Crossway

2017. 128 pp., cloth. \$11.99

**Reviewed by:** Jeremy Griffin