

at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in 2009. Piper's chapter gives an account of his early spiritual and intellectual influences, followed by the retelling of his college, seminary and doctoral years. Particularly in terms of his PhD studies, Piper's account of his engagement in Munich is largely negative. He worked among liberal New Testament scholars with whom he felt he had little in common. That the experience was not one he enjoyed is evident: 'I used my Fuller-taught method of observation and analysis to write an acceptable dissertation, and then left Germany as quickly as I could.' (42) Disappointing in this regard is that Piper offers no constructive account of how an evangelical theologian might relate to non-evangelical academic colleagues.

A significant portion of Piper's chapter is taken up with his Christian Hedonism concept. In his inimitable style, he offers an explanation of how God is most glorified in us when we are most pleased in him. This notion obviously takes a central place in all of Piper's thinking but it is one he has expounded at length in numerous other places, and as such it seemed rather unnecessary to repeat it here where his audience expects to read primarily about the convergence of pastoral calling and scholarship.

The remainder of his chapter explains how Piper understands the term 'scholar'. In summary, a scholarly pastor is defined as one who engages his mind as he ministers. Such a pastor is theologically and exegetically rigorous, but his 'scholarship' is defined without any relation to the academy. For one trained in a European context, Piper offers a very non-European definition of scholarship.

Carson's chapter begins with the acknowledgement that it is difficult to provide a concrete definition of the word 'scholar'. He notes that in the European sense, the title 'scholar' is always given by one's peers in relation to significant academic contribution, and is thus inextricably linked to the academy. However, having noted the ambiguity of the term, he does little to provide clarification. (Perhaps the major shortcoming of this book is that it never properly defines half of its subject matter.) Like Piper, Carson recounts his path through university education. At Cambridge, his *Doktorvader* was a Roman Catholic monk who espoused a higher critical reading of the New Testament. Carson's account of his doctoral studies reads far more winsomely than that of Piper: he makes such study in a mainstream environment appear stretching, interesting and worthwhile for a young evangelical. Anecdotal, he provides helpful material for evangelical students pursuing doctoral degrees under non-evangelical supervisors: he adopted a respectful, interested attitude towards his supervisor and fellow students, and offers helpful reminders that the doctoral student needs to be involved in a local church. However, Carson focuses more on how he acted than on why he did so. We are still waiting for a rigorous exploration of the principles, rather than practices, of orthodox doctoral students who choose to pursue doctoral stud-

ies under less conservative supervisors. (Perhaps such a study would prove more fruitful in examining such theologians as Adolf Schlatter and Herman Bavinck, for whom the choice to study under liberal theologians arguably came at a greater personal cost?)

Carson's seems the more useful of the two chapters. Piper's view of his doctoral years is neither constructive nor useful. Is there truly nothing more encouraging to tell evangelical doctoral students in similar situations? Furthermore, the centrality of Christian Hedonism in his approach to the pastor-scholar model means that if one is unconvinced by his signature emphasis, the consequent pastor-scholar paradigm will also appear unconvincing.

This book is useful primarily in the topic it raises. Questions abound concerning the vocations of pastor and scholar, and these questions will only become more significant as ever increasing numbers of seminary graduates pursue doctoral degrees. However, this book by no means offers the last word on these questions.

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***'The Responsibility of the Church for Society' and  
Other Essays by H. Richard Niebuhr***  
**Library of Theological Ethics**  
**Kristine A. Culp (ed.)**

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**SUMMARY**

Kristine A. Culp presents essays by H. Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962), one of the most influential theological ethicists of the twentieth century. She introduces his theological thinking and presents his 'method of polar analysis'. The reviewer is convinced that these essays are important for reflection on the church's social responsibility today. These classic texts are weighty enough to be reprinted and published again and the volume is an important contribution to the understanding of American Protestant theology. Niebuhr can be a great inspiration for social ethics.

**RÉSUMÉ**

Kristine A. Culp rassemble ici des articles de H. Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962), qui aura été l'un des plus influents penseurs de l'éthique théologique du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Elle présente sa pensée théologique et sa « méthode d'analyse polaire ». Ces essais revêtent une importance certaine pour la réflexion sur la responsabilité sociale de l'Église aujourd'hui. Ces textes connus valent largement la peine d'être réédités et l'ouvrage constitue une contribution importante à la compréhension de la théologie protestante américaine. Niebuhr peut stimuler grandement la réflexion dans le domaine de l'éthique sociale.



## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Kristine A. Culp bringt Aufsätze von H. Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962), einem der einflussreichsten theologischen Ethiker des 20. Jahrhunderts. Sie gibt eine Einführung in sein theologisches Denken und stellt seine Methode der ‚polaren Analyse‘ dar. Der Autor der Buchbesprechung ist davon überzeugt, dass diese Aufsätze bedeutend sind für die Reflektion über die gegenwärtige soziale Verantwortung der Kirche. Diese klassischen Texte sind von derartigem Gehalt, dass sie erneut gedruckt und veröffentlicht werden konnten. Der Band stellt einen wichtigen Beitrag zum Verständnis amerikanischer protestantischer Theologie dar. Niebuhr kann eine wichtige Inspiration für den Bereich sozialer Ethik geben.

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The Library of Theological Ethics is designed to present a selection of important texts that would otherwise be unavailable for scholarly purposes and classroom use. The editors of the series will make more extensive use of classic texts in order to enable scholars and teachers to train new generations of theologians, ethicists and ministers.

For this volume the editor, Kristine A. Culp, has chosen essays by H. Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962) who was one of the most influential theological ethicists of the twentieth century. The editor gives an introduction to Niebuhr's theological thinking and presents his 'method of polar analysis'. The idea is to suggest a fully dialectical pattern of theological thinking in which contrasting positions neither simply oppose each other, nor are readily resolved into each other, but continue to convert and generate among themselves. Kristine Culp underlines that this ever-converting, generative approach of Niebuhr's yields a basic picture of the reality of life before God as an emergent field of tensions and transformations. This approach replaces a view of theology as offering a master strategy for resolving the ambiguity of the Church and contrasts with efforts focused on ensuring institutional or dogmatic stabilisation.

The chosen essays are arranged in three parts. Part I deals with 'Division and Disorder in the Church' and contains essays from the years 1929 to 1948. Part II takes up 'The Reality and Responsibility of the Church' and includes Niebuhr's emphasis on Christianity as a movement and the emergence of his 'method of polar analysis', his affirmation of the Church as a reality and not an ideality, and his powerful interpretation of the purpose of the Church as the increase of the love of God and neighbour. The essays in this part are from the years 1937 to 1956. Part III contains essays from the years 1948 to 1960 under the title 'The Churches and the Whole Human Community'. These essays repeat the reality and responsibility of the Church in relation to an ecumenical vision of the whole inhabited human world, and extend the themes of reconciliation and ongoing reformation to the wider world.

The editor recommends that the reader starts with the essay 'The Responsibility of the Church for Soci-

ety' (1946) or 'The Churches and the Body of Christ' (1953). Alternatively, the concluding essay, 'Reformation: Continuing Imperative' (1960), offers Niebuhr's own assessment of his developing and abiding concerns. The essays have greatest coherence when they are read in the roughly chronological order in which they have been arranged.

Talking about the responsibility of the Church for society, Niebuhr warns against the temptations of worldliness and isolationism. Instead of asking 'What does the Lord require?' the worldly church has fallen into the temptation to ask 'What does the nation or the civilization require?' Such a church thinks of itself as responsible to society prior to God rather than to God prior to society. Its end is more the promotion of the glory of society than that of God. Isolationism is the heresy opposite to worldliness. It appears when the Church seeks to respond to God but does so only for itself. The isolated church regards the secular societies with which it lives as outside the divine concern. Niebuhr's alternative is a Church which practises apostolic responsibility and behaves as the friend of publicans and sinners. The social responsibility of the Church needs also to be described as that of the pioneer. The Church becomes a pioneer and representative of society in the practice of equality before God, in the reformation of institutions, and in the acceptance of mutual responsibility of individuals for each other. For Niebuhr, love of God and the neighbour must be demonstrated directly through the Church's social responsibility.

The volume concludes with Niebuhr's own retrospective evaluation of his theological thinking. In the early 1930s he abandoned his connection with the ethics- and religion-centred way of thinking about God and humanity which is generally called liberal. Instead he became affiliated with the movement variously called dialectical theology, theology of crisis, neo-orthodoxy and Barthianism, but in 1960 he wrote that he had dissociated himself from Karl Barth's theology. He wanted to argue that nothing in history is fixed – neither liberalism nor orthodoxy, neither church-union nor churchly relevance to the world. My primary concern today, he says, is not to protest. It is still that of the reformation of the Church. Niebuhr concludes his *Apologia pro vita sua* by saying: 'I still believe that reformation is a permanent movement, that *metanoia* is the continuous demand made on us in historical life.'

After reading Niebuhr's essays, I am convinced that they still have something substantial to say about the church's social responsibility today. These classic texts are weighty enough to be reprinted and published again. The volume is an important contribution to the understanding of American Protestant theology in the middle of the twentieth century. Niebuhr's loyalty to Christ, gratitude to God and responsibility for the world can still be of great inspiration for systematic theology, especially in the field of social ethics.

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