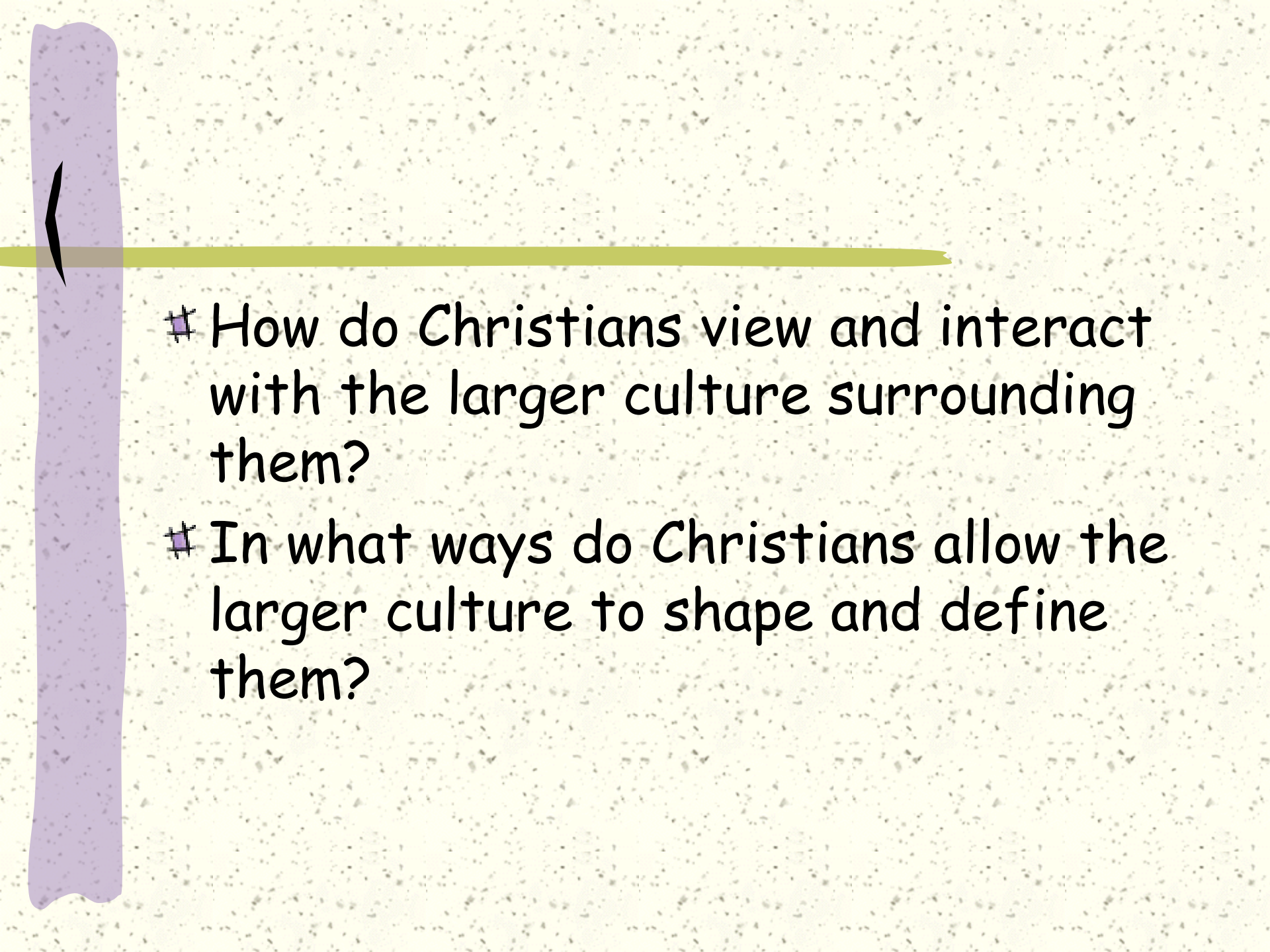


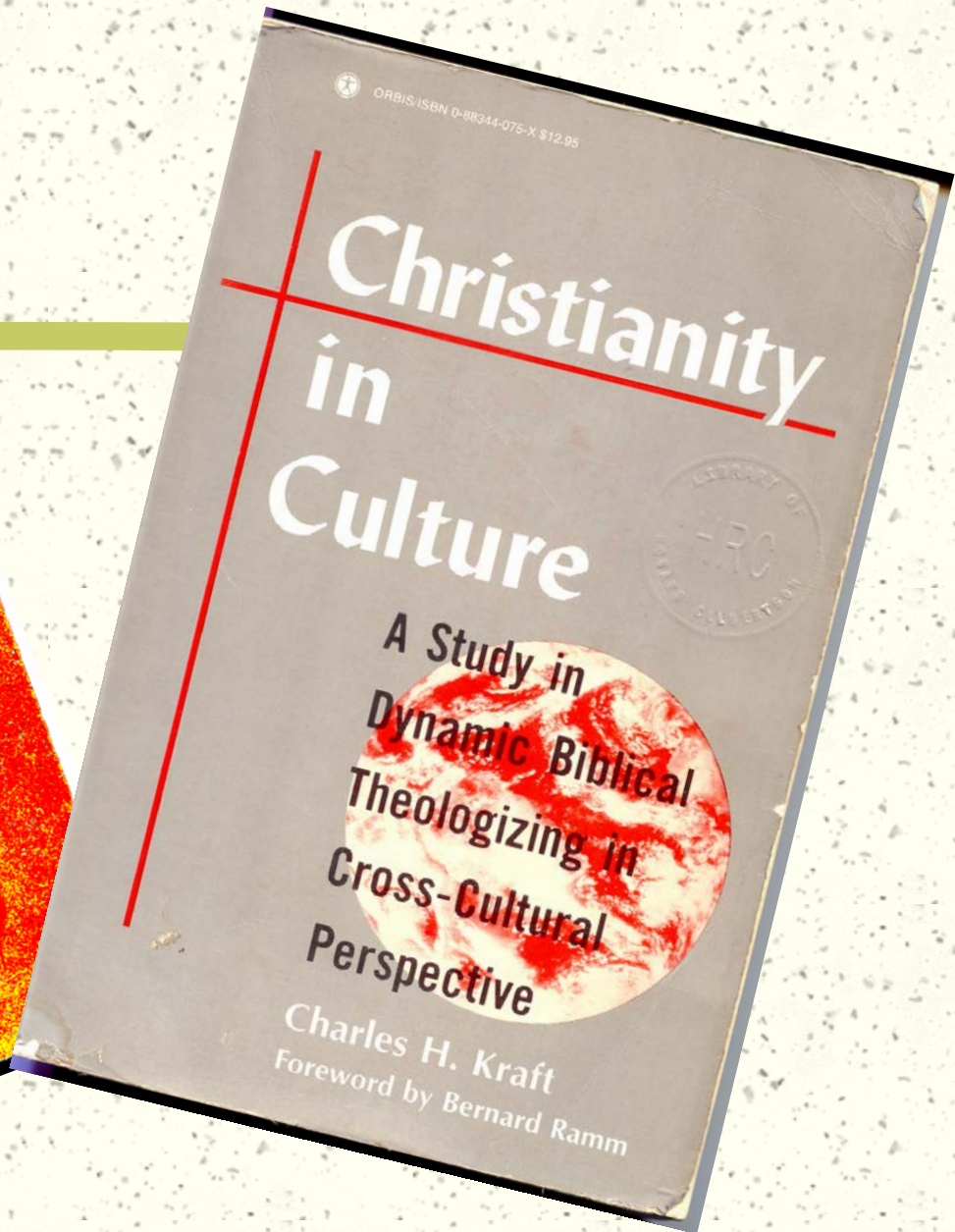
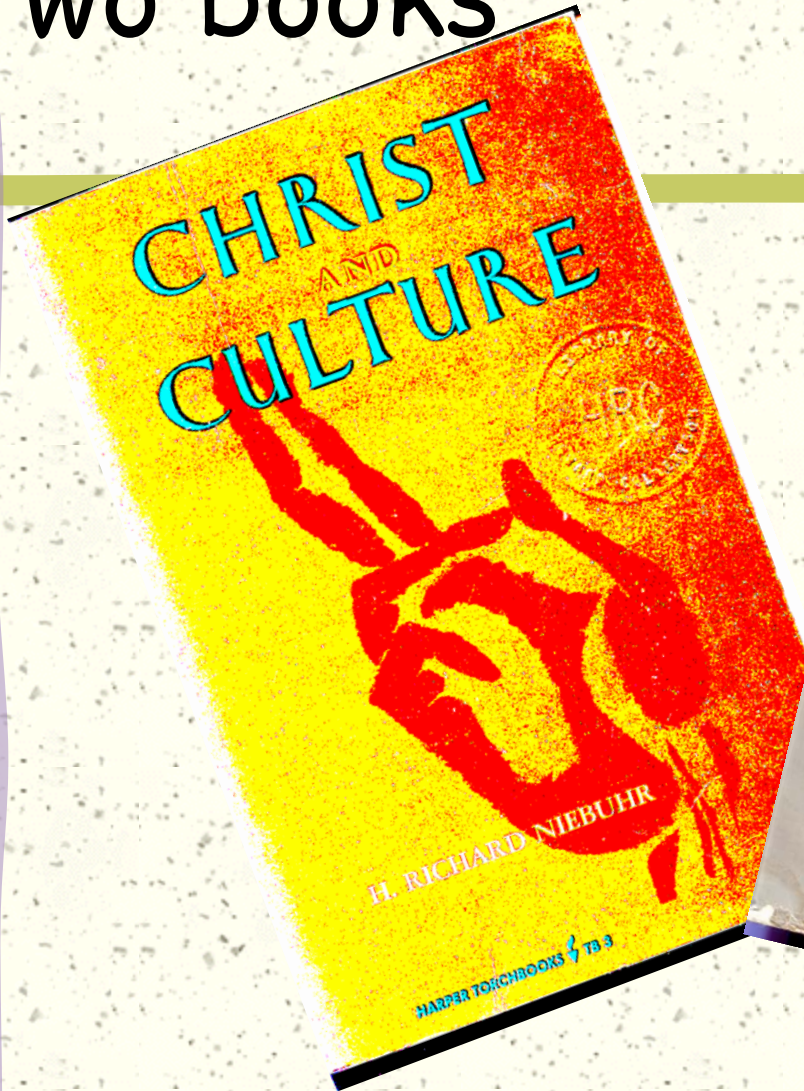
Christianity and culture



Ministry, Church and Society
Southern Nazarene University

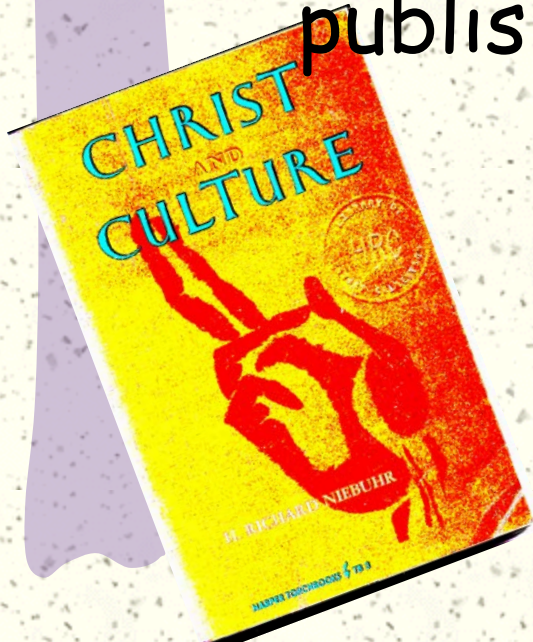
- 
- # How do Christians view and interact with the larger culture surrounding them?
 - # In what ways do Christians allow the larger culture to shape and define them?

Two books



Richard Niebuhr

- # Pastor in Evangelical and Reformed Church (St. Louis)
- # Yale seminary professor when he published *Christ and Culture* (1951)



Niebuhr's 5 classic positions

#1. Christ against culture

- Following Christ means rejecting loyalty to "sinful" culture
- Church's primary identity is that of resisting cultural accommodation
- A "holy huddle" of Christians who rarely dialog with outsiders

Niebuhr's classic positions

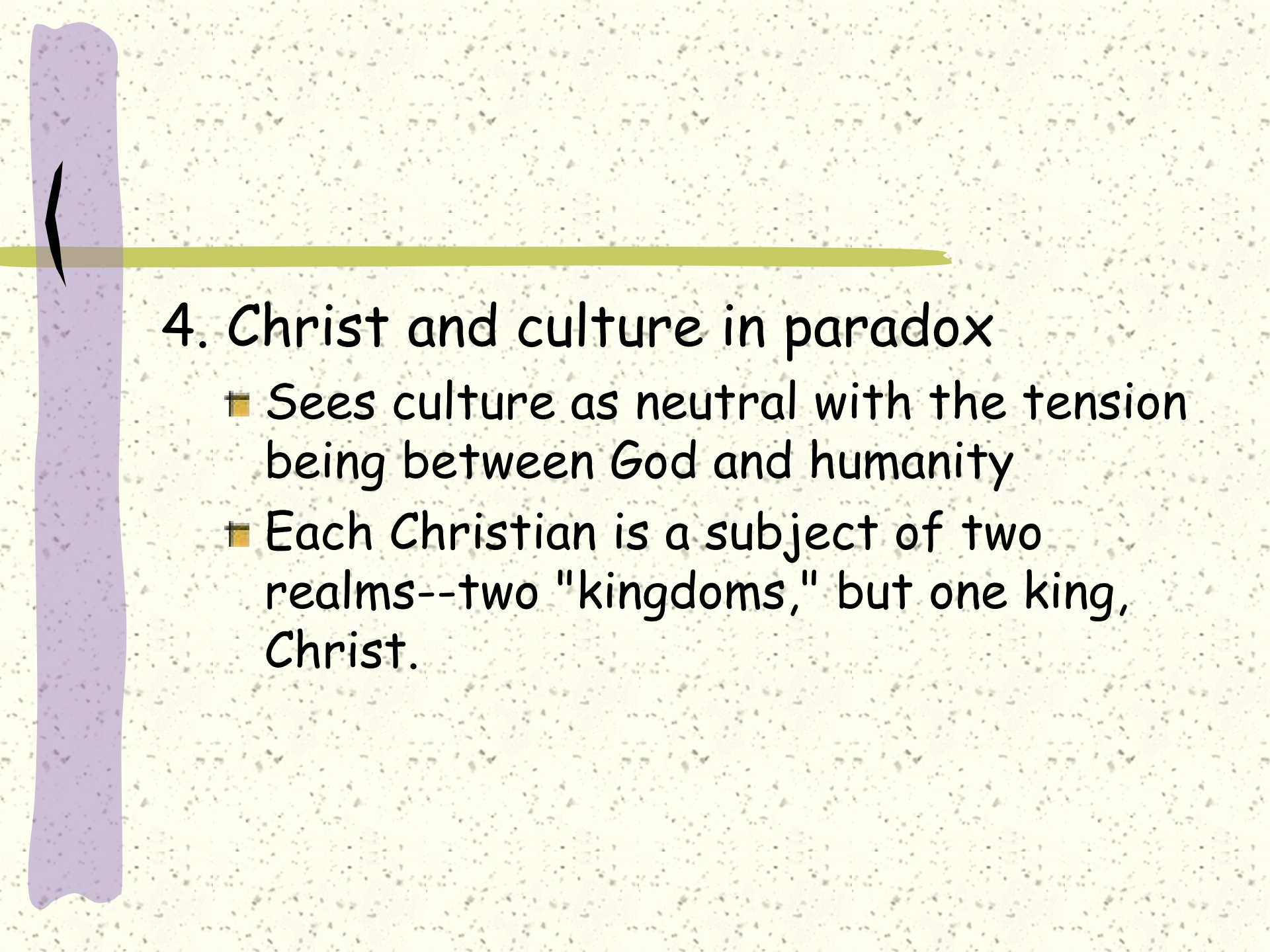
2. Christ of culture

- Uncritical, accommodationist perspective
- Affirming both Christ and culture and denying any necessary opposition between the two.
- Christianity and culture become fused regardless of their differences



3. Christ above culture

- An attempt at a synthesis of the two extreme positions
- The gospel elevates and validates the best of culture while rejecting that which is antithetical to the gospel
- Not "either-or" but always "both-and"



4. Christ and culture in paradox

- Sees culture as neutral with the tension being between God and humanity
- Each Christian is a subject of two realms--two "kingdoms," but one king, Christ.



5. Christ the transformer of culture

- A conversionist approach to culture
- Evil is a perversion of good rather than having its own fundamental reality
- The Puritan ethic perspective which sees the whole of life as in some sense requiring to be converted to Christ

Charles Kraft

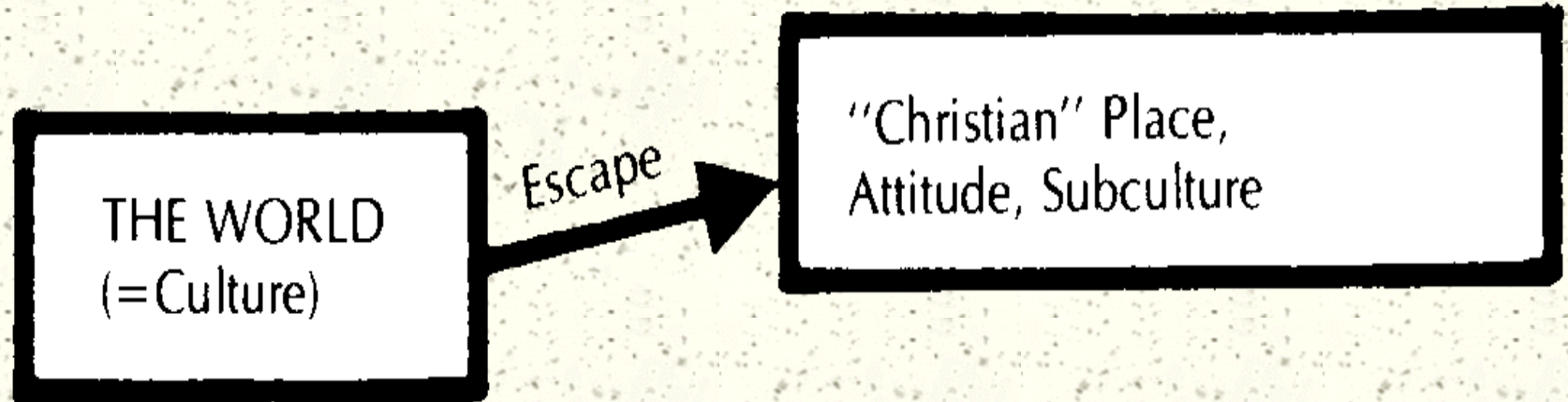
- # Missionary anthropologist
- # "Christianity in Culture," 30 years after Niebuhr
- # Sees 3 groupings of positions
 - God against culture
 - God in culture
 - God above culture

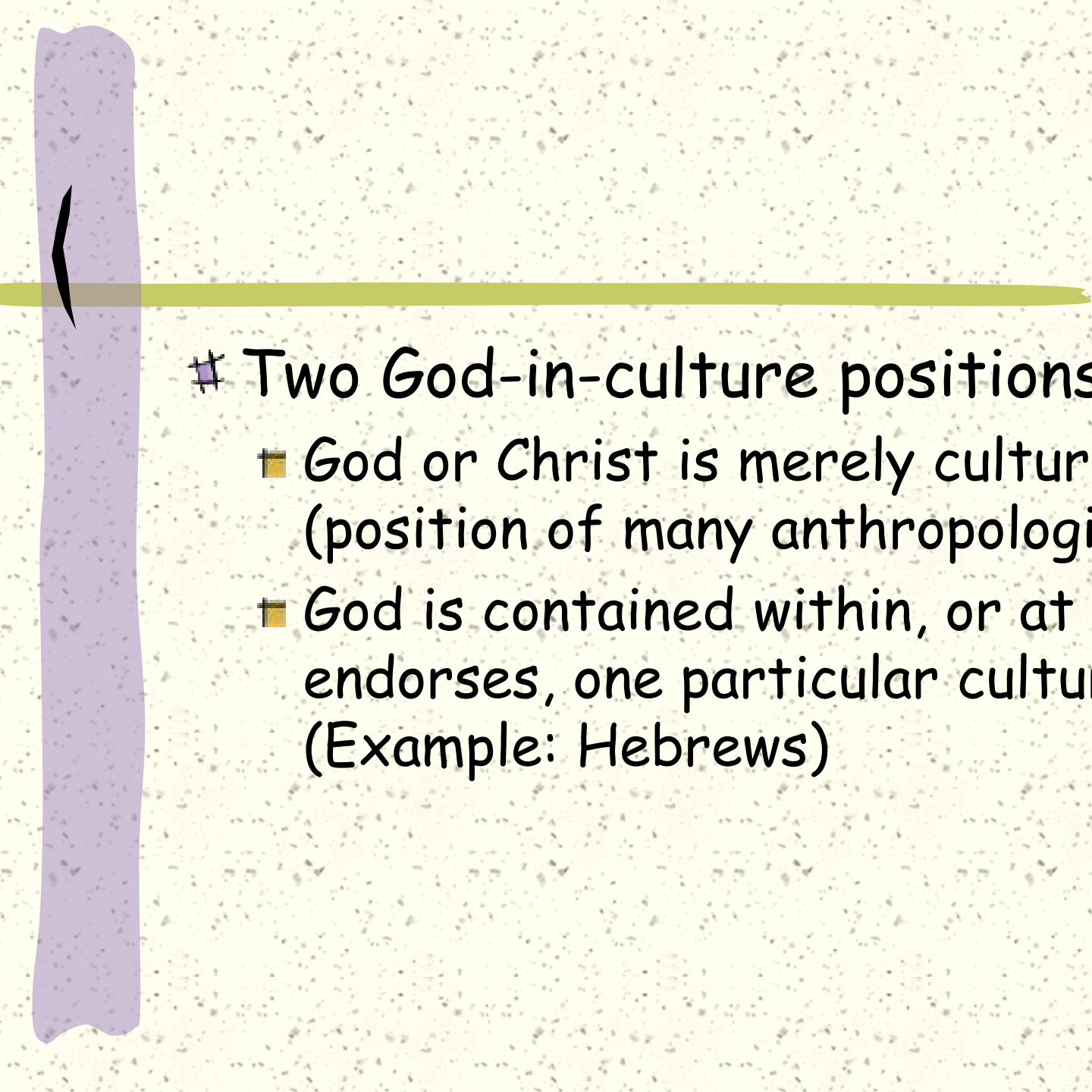


Charles Kraft's listing

God against culture

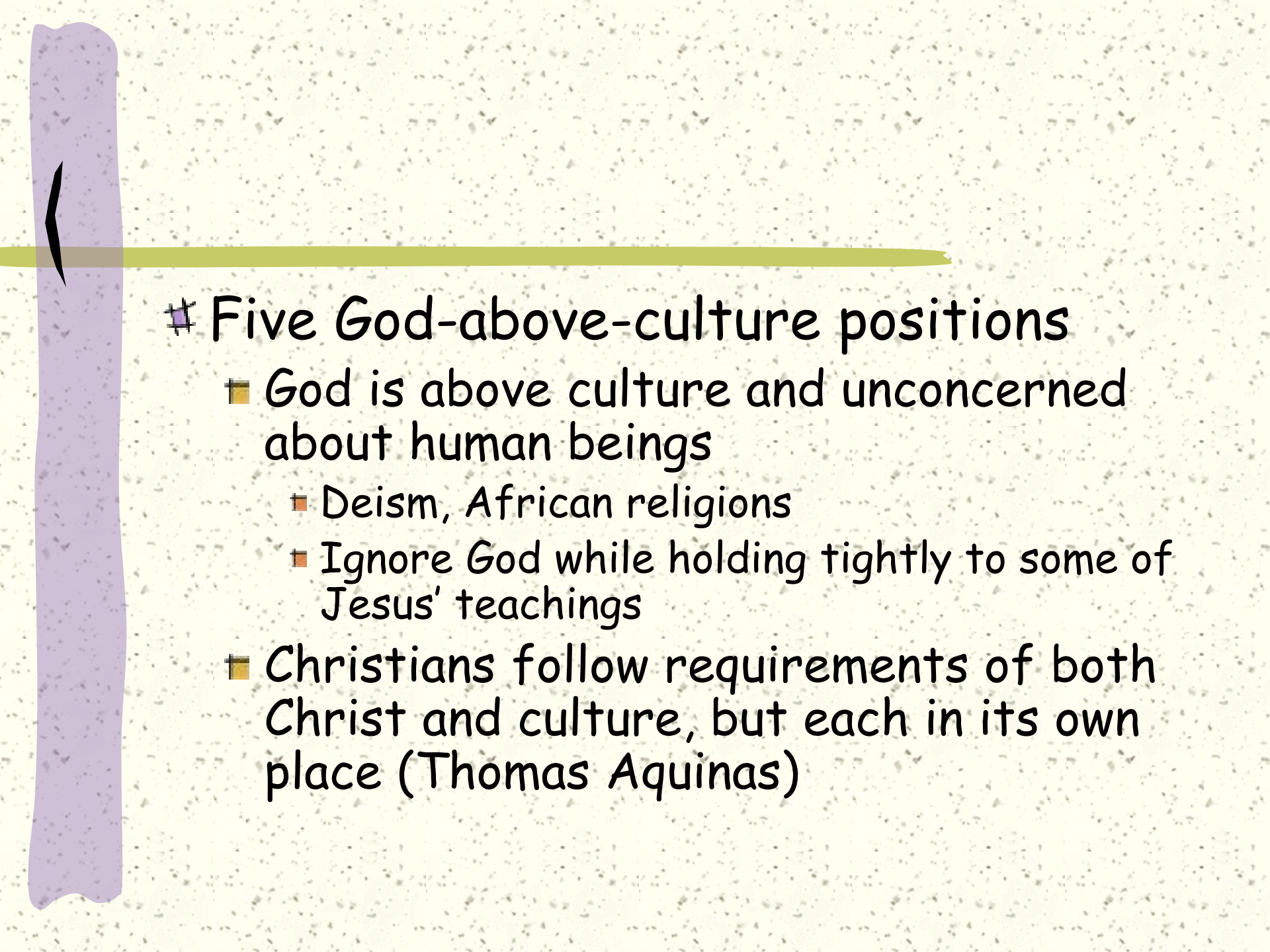
- Commitment to God is a decision to oppose culture
- Assumes all of culture is evil
 - Speaking in tongues





Two God-in-culture positions

- God or Christ is merely culture hero (position of many anthropologists)
- God is contained within, or at least endorses, one particular culture (Example: Hebrews)



Five God-above-culture positions

- God is above culture and unconcerned about human beings
 - Deism, African religions
 - Ignore God while holding tightly to some of Jesus' teachings
- Christians follow requirements of both Christ and culture, but each in its own place (Thomas Aquinas)



God-above-culture positions

- Dualism in which Christian is like an amphibian
- Conversionist (Augustine, Calvin)
 - Culture is corrupted but usable and even redeemable
- Christ above-but-through-culture

[Summary web page](#)

This PowerPoint presentation is available along with related materials and other PowerPoint presentations at <http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/ppt.htm>

