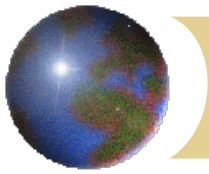


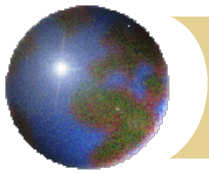
Theology and culture

Theology of Missions

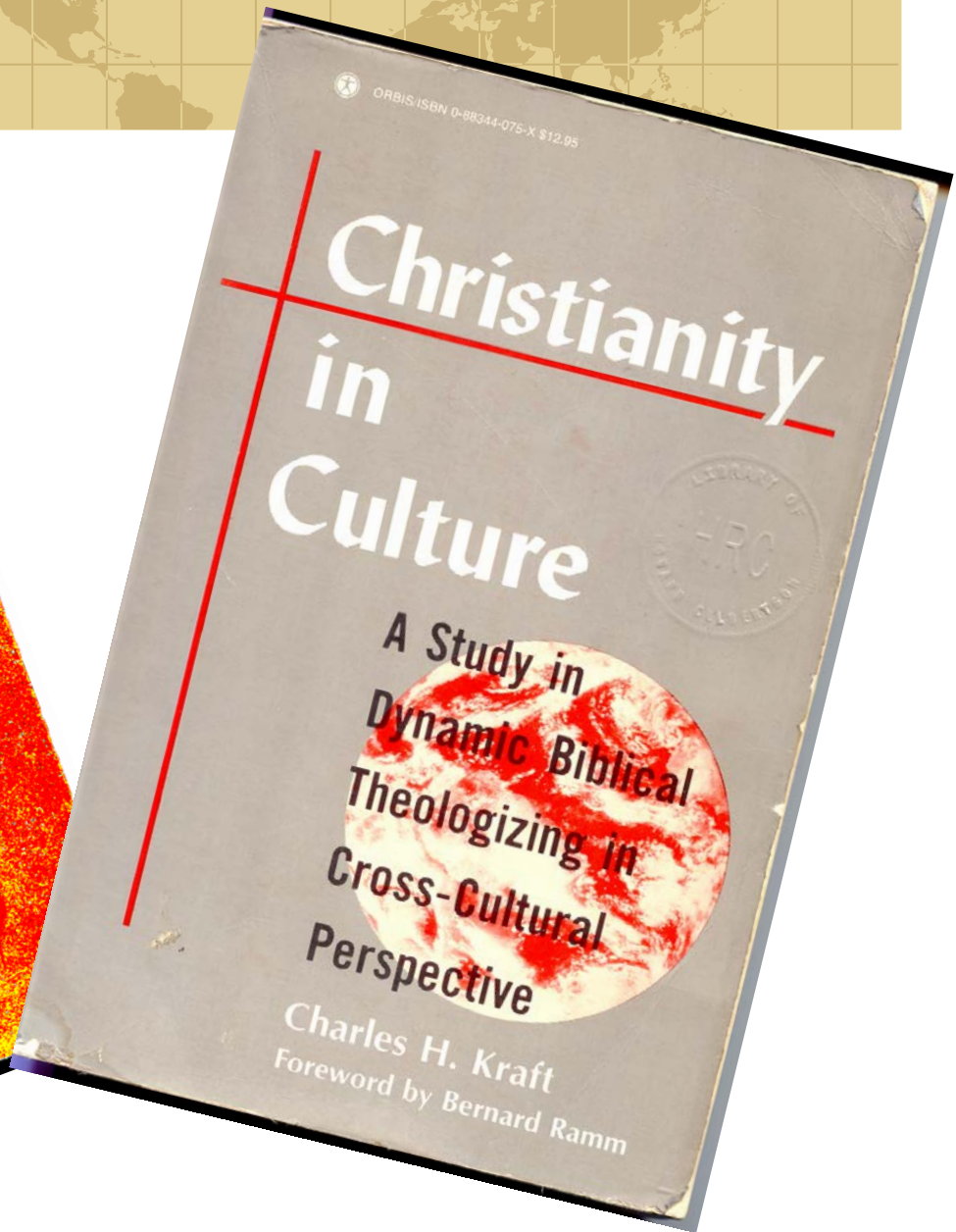
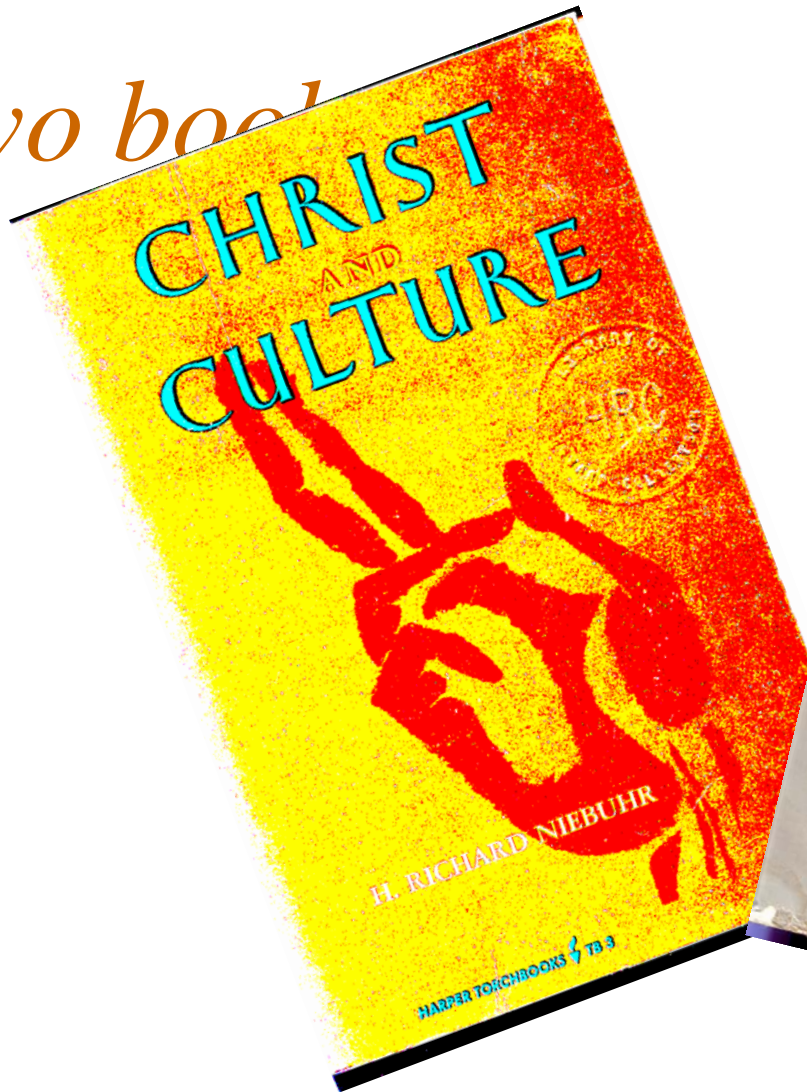
Southern Nazarene University

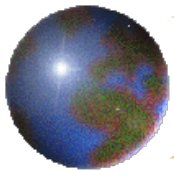


- ✚ Does what Christians believe give them a lens with which to view and interact with the surrounding culture?
- ✚ In what ways do Christians allow the larger culture to shape and define their beliefs?



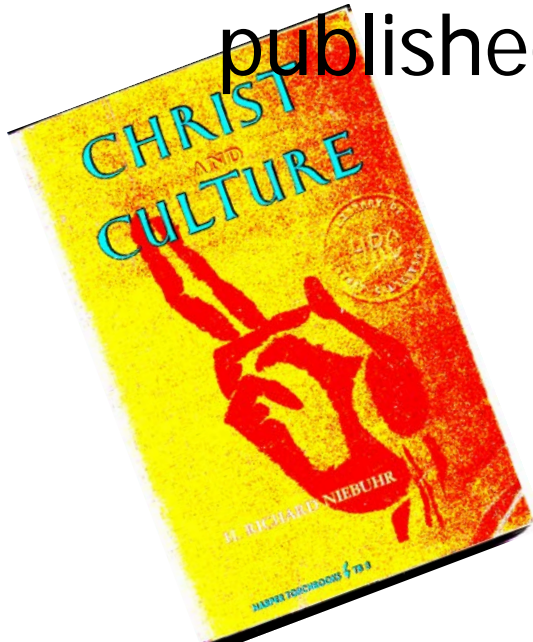
Two books

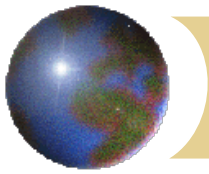




Richard Niebuhr

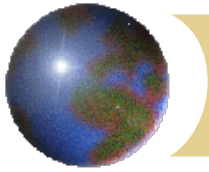
- ✦ Pastor in Evangelical and Reformed Church (St. Louis)
- ✦ Yale seminary professor when he published *Christ and Culture* (1951)





Niebuhr's 5 classic positions

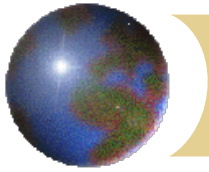
- ✚ 1. Christ against culture
 - ▣ Following Christ means rejecting loyalty to “sinful” culture
 - ▣ Church's primary identity is that of resisting cultural accommodation
 - ▣ A “holy huddle” of Christians who rarely dialog with outsiders



Niebuhr's classic positions

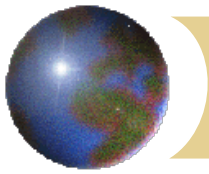
✚ 2. Christ of culture

- ❏ 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

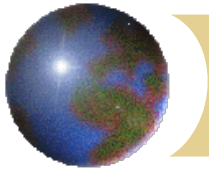


❖ 3. Christ above culture

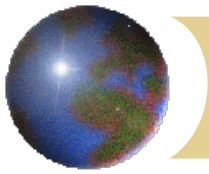
- ❖ An attempt at a synthesis of the two extreme positions
- ❖ The gospel elevates and validates the best of culture while rejecting that which is antithetical to the gospel
- ❖ Not “either-or” but always “both-and”



- ❖ 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.

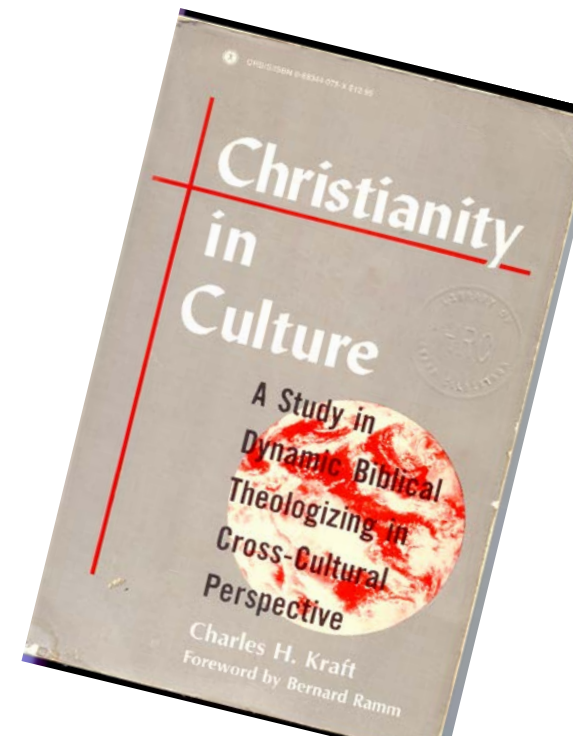


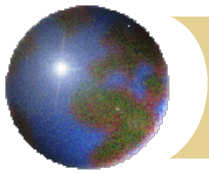
- ❖ 5. Christ the transformer of culture
 - ❖ A conversionist approach to culture
 - ❖ Evil is a perversion of good rather than having its own fundamental reality
 - ❖ The Puritan ethic perspective which sees the whole of life as in some sense requiring to be converted to Christ



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

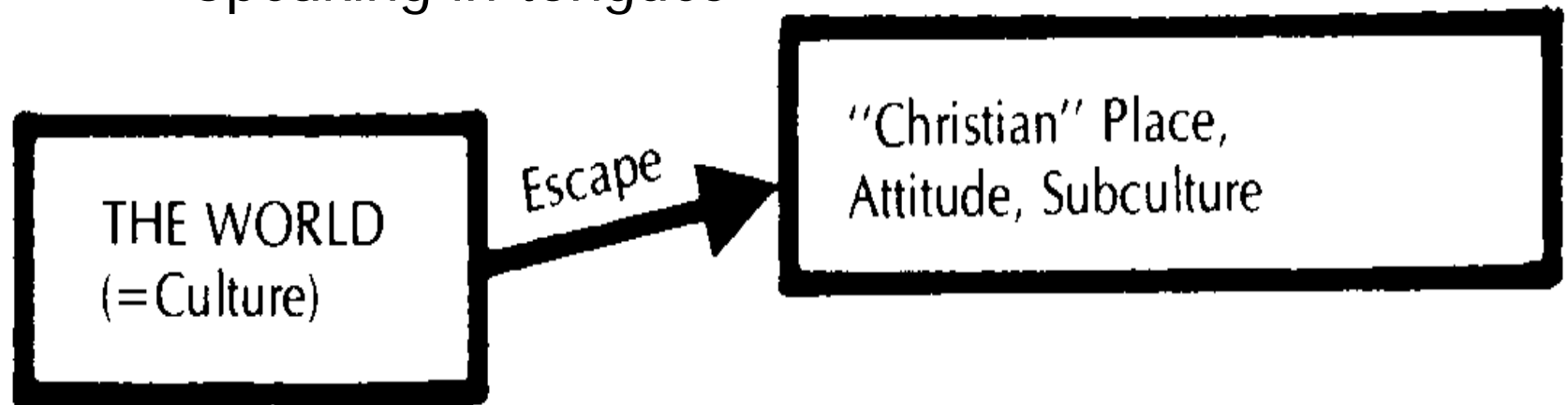


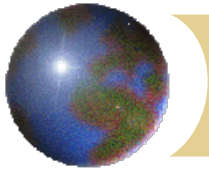


Charles Kraft's listing

✚ God against culture

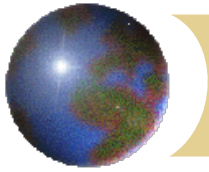
- ▣ Commitment to God is a decision to oppose culture
- ▣ Assumes all of culture is evil
 - Speaking in tongues





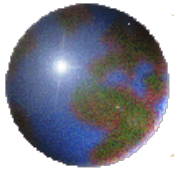
❖ Two God-in-culture positions

- ❖ 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

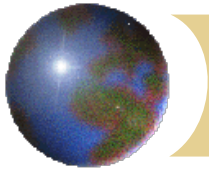
- ❑ God is above culture and unconcerned about human beings
 - Deism, African religions
 - Ignore God while holding tightly to some of Jesus' teachings
- ❑ Christians follow requirements of both Christ and culture, but each in its own place (Thomas Aquinas)



☉ 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>