

Starter Resources for Exploring the Relationship Between Christ and Culture

Caveat: I don't endorse everything the authors or resources listed below have to say (or ever thought in their entire lives), but I think they're useful resources for starting research on this topic.

Relatively Recent Books (ordered according to what I think would be helpful to read first):

Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. New York, New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1951. 256 pps.

This is widely considered a classic (or at least a "nouveau" classic) on the subject and was written by the neo-orthodox theologian H. Richard Niebuhr while he taught at Yale University. In short, he accepts, "...a multiformity [rather than a uniformity] and individuality of men and movements in Christian history." Nonetheless he attempts to define five main types of ways the church (in the broadest sense) has related to culture. I recommend it first because it's well written and is fairly short; but I don't recommend this as the place to stop your investigation.

Here are a couple reviews:

<http://www.directionjournal.org/article/?1401>

<http://www.mtio.com/articles/bissar26.htm>

Carson, D.A. *Christ and Culture Revisited*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008. 228 pps.

This book is a very thoughtful, stimulating and orthodox response to Niebuhr's book (above). Carson is a first rate scholar and his book has received very positive reviews (just Google: Reviews of Christ and Culture Revisited). This book is very well thought of among evangelicals like myself, so it should be read, but it also should not be the only book read.

For a contrarian book review, see:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/octoberweb-only/142-21.0.html>

Carter, Craig. *Rethinking Christ and Culture: A Post-Christendom Perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006. 212 pps.

Another critique of Niebuhr's work which emphasizes a "post-Christendom" Anabaptist typology of Christ and culture which strongly rejects what it calls the view

that equates the gospel with liberal, democratic capitalism and especially rejects coercive violence.

Crouch, Andy. ***Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling***. Downer's Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2008. 271pp.

Crouch wants to make the case that Christians need to get beyond merely analyzing, condemning or copying culture and to get on to creating culture. This is a very well written and readable book that urges Christians to reject the allure of power and accept the allure of service. If you want to get a sense of his ideas before buying the book, here you can find three lectures he gave on it:

http://www.academicconnectionsgcm.org/Catacombs/Catacombs/Cultural_Analysis_%28Audio%29/Cultural_Analysis_%28Audio%29.html

Considered Classics:

Augustine. *The City of God*.

The City of God is a classic and one of the most influential books ever written about Christ and cultural issues. Writing after the fall of Rome in response (in part) to charges that Rome was sacked because its citizens had abandoned worship of the gods, Augustine makes the distinction between the Civitas Mundi (The City of the World or Man) and Civitas Deo (The City of God). Among the things he argues for is being able to distinguish the two and adopting a limited allegiance to the powers of this world (the city of man) and commitment to the eternal City of God.

Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. & *Summa Contra Gentiles*.

Aquinas' thoughts about Christ and culture are interspersed in these two works, but one main thing to see is that he is responding to cultural influence of Aristotle and how Christians might properly think about how it fits with revelation.

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