

## MASTER'S THESIS

### Reinhold Niebuhr as a Christian realist: an essay on interpreting his thought

Seto, Wood Hung Andy

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Reinhold Niebuhr as a Christian Realist:  
An Essay on Interpreting His Thought

SETO Wood Hung, Andy

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for the degree of

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## ABSTRACT

The primary objective of my investigation is to interpret Niebuhr's thoughts, vis-à-vis two social gospel thinkers, to show to what extent he was a Christian realist. The secondary objective, which is closely related to the primary, is to outline the continuities as well as the discontinuities between the thoughts of Niebuhr and those of Shailer Mathews and Eli Stanley Jones. I shall try to show whether or not there are idealistic orientations in Niebuhr's thoughts and realistic orientations in Mathews' and Jones'. I shall limit my study to the writing of Niebuhr published between 1932 and 1945. And the method I use to carry out the investigation and to achieve the objectives is to contrast the thoughts of Niebuhr with those of Shailer Mathews and Eli Stanley Jones. First, I shall expound the thoughts of Mathews and Jones analytically to render some basic tenets of the social gospel movement. I shall then interpret Niebuhr's thoughts by contrasting his five major works published between 1932 and 1944, with the thoughts of Mathews and Jones. Lastly, I shall conclude my investigation by responding to the secondary objective, and inferring that Christian realism is an accurate and appropriate label for Niebuhr's thoughts. I shall propose some facets of Niebuhr's thoughts that characterise him as a Christian realist.

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