As the title suggests, D. A. Carson’s *Christ & Culture Revisited* (Eerdmans, 2008) is a critique of H. Richard Niebuhr’s influential book on Christian ethics, *Christ & Culture* (Harper & Row, 1951). Niebuhr was a modern pioneer in evaluating how Christianity relates to secular culture. His classic work presents five types (models) of Christian ethics to which, admittedly, “no individual wholly conforms.” His types are: Christ against culture, the Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox, and Christ the transformer of culture.

Anyone who seriously considers Christian ethics, and particularly issues related to culture, will eventually encounter Niebuhr’s typologies. Carson does so from the vantage point of a conservative evangelical living in the twenty-first century. Carson offers a thorough evaluation of each of Niebuhr’s typologies. But Carson offers more than a mere critique; he makes suggestions of his own for how Christianity should exist within a (post)modern, Western culture.

As a conservative evangelical, Carson is careful to keep the church separated from culture, no matter which culture it may be. Carson is also quick to recognize that no meaningful
transformation of culture is possible without the supernatural intervention of God, and this ultimately will transpire at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ when He establishes His earthly kingdom. This severely tempers Niebuhr’s most optimistic typologies about the church influencing secular culture.

Carson devotes a lot of attention to Church and state matters, democracy, freedom, and power, things American Christians should be sensitive to, particularly in the light of our “Christian nation” mythos. The church’s life in a secular world needs to be defined politically as well as socially. In short we must answer the question, *What does it mean to be a Christian in North America today?* This involves every aspect of our lives including the social, economic, political, technological, and entertainment realms.

Much of the literature in evangelical Christianity is intellectually void, but Carson is far from sentimental, homiletical, or patronizing. He deals with these issues intelligently. He interacts with the issues historically, philosophically, theologically, and pragmatically. The book is worth its cost if only for its bibliography. All that said, the book is quintessentially D. A. Carson: he is a scholar, and his books can be challenging to read. The serious student of culture should first read Niebuhr.