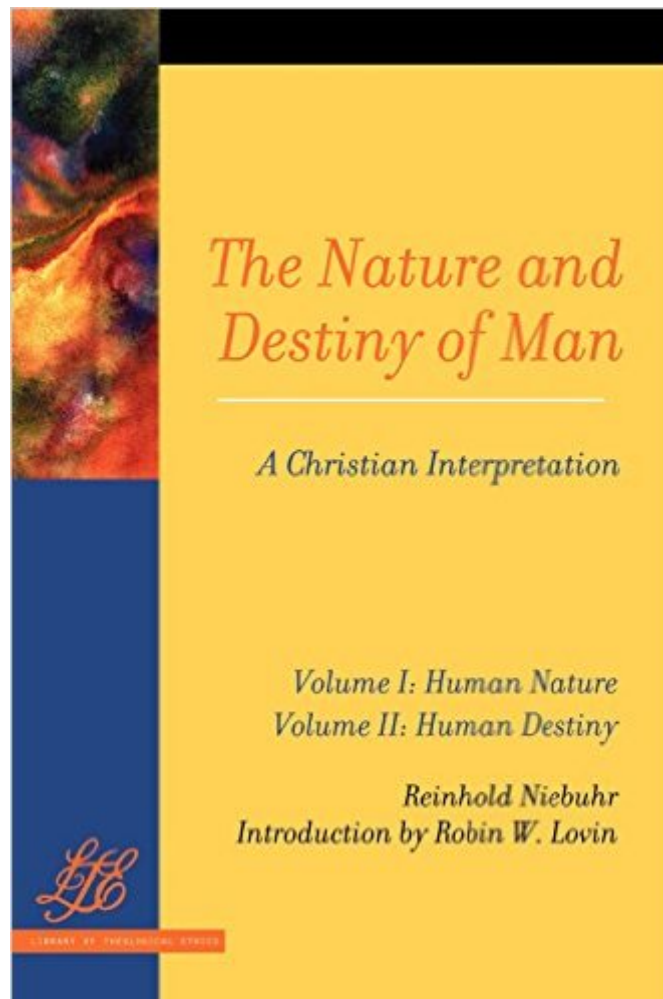


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The Nature And Destiny Of Man: A Christian Interpretation (2 Volume Set)



Synopsis

The Nature and Destiny of Man issues a vigorous challenge to Western civilization to understand its roots in the faith of the Bible, particularly the Hebraic tradition. The growth, corruption, and purification of the important Western emphases on individuality are insightfully chronicled here. This book is arguably Reinhold Niebuhr's most important work. It offers a sustained articulation of Niebuhr's theological ethics and is considered a landmark in twentieth-century thought. The Library of Theological Ethics series focuses on what it means to think theologically and ethically. It presents a selection of important and otherwise unavailable texts in easily accessible form. Volumes in this series will enable sustained dialogue with predecessors through reflection on classic works in the field.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In the Nature and Destiny of Man, Reinhold Niebuhr, the influential "Christian realist" theologian, deals with big issues: the nature of man, history, and the end of the history. He offers deep - I would say profound - support for his views, but not proof. He offers one interpretation of the meaning of life's mysteries but not the only possible interpretation. Niebuhr begins by arguing that the Christian view of man's nature, compared with alternative views, is more complete and offers more explanatory power. According to the Christian view, man is made in the image of God. Unlike alternative views that establish a good/bad duality between mind and body, in the Christian view, both mind and body are good because both are created by God. Man is made to live in harmony with others and God's will but violates this harmony when he - inevitably - makes himself the center

and source of meaning for his life. Man has tremendous creative and imaginative powers, and his mind can transcend both itself (since he can make his own thoughts the object of contemplation) and the natural world (since he can manipulate natural forces to create new possibilities and vitalities of nature). Because man cannot find ultimate meaning in what he can transcend, he cannot find ultimate meaning within himself or in the natural world. This is why we turn to religion. Christianity is a religion of revelation, meaning that Christians believe that God must speak to us in order for us to arrive at a correct understanding of his nature and will. If the Bible is to be believed, God spoke to man throughout history but his message was not clearly understood. Because of our misunderstanding, and because God's law is so radically different from man's law, Jesus' message was highly offensive to his listeners.

Karl Paul Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) was an American theologian and "public intellectual" during the mid-20th century. In the Preface for the Scribner Library Edition, he writes, "It was my purpose to trace the growth, corruption and purification of these two concepts in the ages of Western history in order to create a better understanding between the historical roots and the several disciplines of our modern culture which were concerned with the human situation... my thesis ... was that individual selfhood is expressed in the self's capacity for self-transcendence and not in its rational capacity for conceptual and analytic procedures." He asserts that there are basically two views of human nature: The Graeco-Roman, and the Biblical. "Plato and Aristotle thus share a common rationalism; and also a common dualism... The Bible knows nothing of a good mind and an evil body." Here are some representative quotations from the book: "The fact that man ... cannot find the end of life except in God is the mark of his creativity and uniqueness." (V1, Ch. 4) "The fact of self-transcendence leads inevitably to the search for a God who transcends the world." (V1, Ch. 6) "Religion, by whatever name, is the inevitable fruit of the spiritual nature of man; and religious intolerance and pride is the final expression of his sinfulness." (V1, Ch. 7) "Human personality has a depth and a uniqueness which escapes the ordinary processes of knowledge." (V1, Ch. 10) "(L)ife can approach its original innocency only by aspiring to its unlimited end." (V2, Ch. 3) "(N)o sinful self-centredness can ever destroy the structure of freedom and self-transcendence in man." (V2, Ch.

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