

**Abstract of "Polanyi and Niebuhr: The Science of Faith and
The Faith of Science"
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H. Richard Niebuhr, a major Christian ethicist and Michael Polanyi, a distinguished scientist turned philosopher had parallel concerns and views but they are yet to be coordinated. In 1956, H. Richard Niebuhr in his Christian Ethics class briefly commented that Michael Polanyi is a case of a scientist reflecting on his own commitments. At that point, Polanyi was an example of how we can see ethical and theological reflection occurring in other contexts, metaphors, and disciplinary inquiries such as science. In 1959 during a visit of Polanyi to Yale University, Niebuhr had Polanyi speak informally in the common room after dinner. Niebuhr gave Polanyi a copy of his well known book, The Meaning of Revelation. In 1962, Polanyi discussed meeting Niebuhr, but he was not sure about why Niebuhr gave him a copy of The Meaning of Revelation. In 1960, Niebuhr discussed Polanyi in Radical Monotheism and Western Culture. Niebuhr saw Polanyi as a moral thinker in science. Then in 1962, both Niebuhr and Polanyi gave lectures in Berkeley. Niebuhr presented the Earl Lectures that were published as The Responsible Self and Polanyi presented lectures on "History and Hope, An Analysis of Our Age." The two giant thinkers, both investigating the life of faith from different contexts, neither met nor communicated again after their Yale meeting. Nevertheless, they have similar concerns. Both emphasize strongly the fiduciary side of knowing and its function of leading us to knowledge of truth and moral responsibility. The Niebuhrian and Polanyian understanding of the role of faith as trust is critical in the continuing clash of science and religion among "the new atheists" and the cooperation of world religions in international politics. Together they help to provide a theory of faith as trust that liberates us from many distortions of the centrality of faith in all human life.