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Abstract**Reinhold Niebuhr's doctrine on myth/symbol****Narumi Ikarashi**

The aim of this essay is to analyze and prove the importance of Reinhold Niebuhr's way of theological thought on "myth/symbol." His concept is fundamentally grounded on biblical perspective. His position, however, means that he never accept all stories of Bible as literal (he thoroughly rejects interpretations of literalism), and also never accept them as only supra-historical or mystical (but not mythical). He accepts them as myth/symbol, which means that understands it has paradoxical realms of history and supra-history. He thinks his own interpretation of bible could reflect on this dialectical perspective most seriously.

For Niebuhr, to use the word "myth/symbol" is not only as epistemological intension, but also as apologetical aim. Interpreting various kinds of thinking or philosophy as myth/symbol including Christianity, he relativizes, compares them and discloses his thought of *genuine* Christianity has best validity to maintain dialectical positon (because of this position, Niebuhr's interpretation of myth is basically different from R. Bultmann's existencial interpretation, and it also different from P. Tillich of ontological interpretation). He classify them three types; pre-scientific myth, rational myth, and parmanent myth. For Niebuhr, the latter is most important type of understanding realm of rationality (realm of history) and realm of meaning (realm of supra-history), which human being actually lives. According Niebuhr, we could grasp the realm of meaning only through faith.

There are some criticisms against the thought of Niebuhr on myth/symbol. In this essay, we deal with critics of American Thelogican, S. Hauerwas. According to him, Niebuhr's way to use myth has bulnerable point, especially on eschatology. This critic means Niebuhr's way of myth is not basically based on New Testament biblical perspective. Analyzing of Niebuhr's understanding on myth, we will defend Niebuhr's thought and prove the misunderstanding of his critics.