

SOCIOLOGY

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Many Christians who are interested in relating the Bible to science express relief when they come to the social sciences. It is difficult, they say, to discover what significance the Bible has for sciences like physics and chemistry. Here impersonal experiment in the controlled experimental situation is the last word. It should, in contrast, be much easier to see how the Bible relates to society. Here individual standards and values enter into the picture. In studying the social sciences, one can attempt to demonstrate the relevancy of his own Christian convictions. One might easily conclude that the social sciences are thereby deprived of any claim to neutrality. Have they possibly escaped the effects of the neutrality postulate? That does not follow, especially if we think of neutrality in its deepest sense. In the past many have insisted that sociology as a science is altogether neutral. They have clearly seen that values play a role in social intercourse; but they have insisted that values do not directly affect sociology as a science. Recently this notion of the neutrality of social science has been challenged by advocates of the "New Left" and other radical groups; but their attack on neutrality only questions the pretended isolation of the science of sociology from the political and economic situation. It bypasses the idea that sociology might be dependent upon fundamentally religious, even Christian, presuppositions. Others now would defend the scientific aspects of social study, but they would insist that the deeper understanding of social groupings comes only by way of an intuitive grasp that is beyond the reach of scientific investigation. This view is accompanied, however, by the sharpest repudiation of the idea that sociology should be dependent upon a system of values or upon a fundamental orientation to a world view. Sociology has not escaped the effects of the neutrality postulate, especially when that is considered in its profound, biblical sense. In fact, in the realm of sociology the Christian will have to struggle as much as anywhere with the challenge of the neutrality of science. A. Foundation Problems Sociology is a young science. That is often given as a reason for the fact that it has not yet become clear as to its own field of investigation...L. It must be remembered, however, 1. For example, Georges Gurvitch, in his book *Twentieth Century Sociology*, says that sociology is now more mature than it was in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, he can still say that it is uncertain as to its field of investigation (pp. 3_4), and can speak of its "fumbling immaturity" (p. 6), "chaos" (p. 11), "aberrations" (p. 16), etc.-2- that confusion with regard to their foundations does not arise only with young sciences. Older sciences, such as mathematics and physics, periodically go through what are called "foundation crises." Every science must be able clearly to delineate its own field of investigation. Otherwise it will either be incorporated into other disciplines or will take over what properly belongs to them. Scientific imperialism is a constant threat. Many sociologists, however, would dismiss such an inquiry as being beside the point. They would put it aside as a hopeless remnant of metaphysical speculation. The sociologist can retain his position as a scientist only by sticking to the facts. Yet, a close look at the field of sociology indicates that foundational problems arise even when the bounds of strict sociological investigation are being observed. During the course of sociological investigation problems such as the following inevitably arise: Is sociology an all-embracing discipline, or is it one discipline among others? Is sociology a normative science; or is it a positive science, having to do only with facts? Is sociology concerned only with formal

considerations (e. g., with certain kinds of relationships), or is it also concerned with material content?

1. Form and Content The German sociologist, Vierkandt, has taken the formalistic point of view. The sociologist is not interested simply in relating facts. He is more interested in describing types of relationships, e. g., power relationships. Sociology is concerned with the ultimate forms of the psychical bonds which link men to one another. Simmel has also taken a formalistic point of view, drawing a sharp line between the forms of social relationships and their matter. Forms such as "competition," "division of labor," etc., appear in various contexts, e. g., economic and religious. The task of sociology is to disengage these formal relationships and to study them in isolation from their content.

2 Are these various contents, so-called, as expendable as the formalistic point of view maintains? Can the various "forms" of social intercourse be considered abstractly? 2. Cf. the discussion of Vierkandt and Simmel in Remkes Kooistra, *A Christian Approach to Sociology: Facts and Values*, Christian Perspectives Series 12L (Harroilton: Guardian Publishing Co., 1933 p. An English sociologist, Ginsberg, lays more stress upon the modes in which these supposed forms appear. One may not speak, for example, of "subordination" purely in the abstract. Subordination has various meanings, depending upon whether it refers to subordination in the family, the church, or the state. This observation will become of considerable importance to us as we proceed.

2. Norm and Fact The majority of American sociologists would likely regard our discussion so far with some amusement if not disdain. What you have been discussing, they might say, is not sociology in the strict sense of the word at all. It is social philosophy. The sociologist, they would add, can get along very well in his empirical social investigations without burdening himself with abstruse philosophical considerations. Sociology, in the strict sense of the term, traces out various factual, nonnormative correlations, e. g., the correlation between church membership and marital stability or the suicide rate. Sociology is purely descriptive of facts which are in themselves totally unrelated. All normative considerations, on the contrary, belong to social philosophy. This positivistic orientation accounts for the fact that many textbooks on sociology (especially American ones) are little more than an endless recital of facts, without a very clear notion of the framework into which these facts are to be placed if they are to be meaningful. It gradually becomes apparent, however, that even the most factual presentation assumes either consciously or unconsciously a framework of interpretation.

3 Very often this framework is a naturalistic one. All human values are said to have arisen out of a natural matrix. They themselves are at bottom nothing but facts." 3. The recent book of Matilda Riley, *Sociological Research*, I (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), says that one must employ theoretical "models" in order to approach the facts. Her approach is in conscious opposition to that of positivistic sociology. This constitutes an advance; but it is still a matter of decisive importance how these models are constructed.

4. One might think of Sumner's famous theory of the origin of law. Human conduct is first regulated by "folkways," which arise unconsciously and anonymously. They then change from mere habits and become imperative as "mores." Finally, institutions and laws are produced out of mores. Sumner's theory shows marked resemblances to the theory of the origin of law in irrational historicism. Important developments in sociological theory have clearly pointed out that the relationship between society and nature cannot simply be taken for granted. Inevitably sociologists have been faced with the question, What is the relationship of a social fact to a fact of nature? Can the same methods be employed in the study of society as in the study of nature? The question is sometimes put in the following terms. Can sociology employ the so-called "analytical method" of the natural sciences, or must it develop a method of its own? An indiscriminate concern with facts leaves out of consideration

whether the sociologist should learn to distinguish specifically social facts from other kinds of facts. Max Weber, a prominent social theorist, held that sociology should interpret specifically social behavior. Social behavior, he said is activity which in the intention of the agent has reference to the behavior of others and, in turn, is determined by it. An activity belongs to the sphere of nature when there is no intentional reference to the behavior of others. It is, however, difficult to understand what is meant here by the term "intentional." Does the social character of an act depend upon one's conscious relating of it to someone else's act? Are there not many social relationships where there is no such conscious intention? Think only of the casual still passing by of hundreds of thousands of people daily on the sidewalks of our great cities. If such casual relationships are called "intentional," has not the term become so broad that it has lost its meaning? More important still, are there any human activities or relationships which are purely natural? Can the realm of nature be thought of as a thing in itself, separated from what is higher, namely, the normative aspects of human experience? We reject such an idea.

3. General and Specific The problems we have already discussed tie in with yet a third, whether sociology is an all-embracing science or whether it is one science among others. As it was first conceived by its originator, Auguste Comte, sociology was a total science. Inasmuch as it dealt with the human and the social it was, he thought, the one science that offered a truly universal point of view. It employed the findings of all the previous sciences. Mankind had developed many rational disciplines already, but he had as yet failed to apply his scientific prowess to societal relations. A science of society, Comte thought, would be able to understand and to reconstruct society. His social theory, based on the ideal of science, had in view the engineering of a new society along rational lines.

5- One cannot avoid the problem of the relationship of sociology to other disciplines. If sociology is an all-embracing discipline, the other sciences must be subordinated to it and distinguished from each other according to some acceptable criterion. If sociology is one discipline among others, it must have some mark to distinguish it from the others. Can even the so-called "social sciences" truly be brought under one denominator? If not, what is the basis for their interrelatedness? Herman Dooyeweerd maintains that the above problems remain insoluble if one proceeds on the immanence standpoint, i. e., if he takes his point of departure within a supposedly neutral theoretical thinking. Theoretical thought, he says, originates when one sets the logical function of his thought in an anti-thetic relation to a non-logical aspect of reality, e. g., the psychological, the biological, the social, economic. For this reason any absolutization of theoretical thought leads necessarily to the absolutization of one of the various temporal aspects of reality. If one takes his starting point within theoretical thought itself, he is led into inescapable embarrassments as he tries to define his field of investigation. In order to carry on a theoretical inquiry into social phenomena, one must have a concept of the social aspect of reality. Without such a concept, one cannot recognize social facts, much less subject them to a systematic inquiry. But in this attempt to define his field of inquiry the immanentist thinker encounters profound difficulties. He can define his field of investigation only by delimiting it from other possible fields of investigation. Such a delimitation, in turn, can be accomplished only on the background of an idea of the continuity between the various aspects which must be distinguished. If one has chosen his starting point within theoretical thought itself the necessary relationship of this thought to a particular aspect of reality forces him to find his common denominator, his principle of continuity, within one of the aspects of reality itself. He has therefore a priori eliminated the possibility of honoring the sovereignty within their own sphere of these various aspects. He has eliminated the possibility of discovering the continuity of the various sides of reality in the

transcendental horizon of cosmic time, which stream through the modal aspects and which holds them in unbreakable connection without destroying their individuality. For the immanentistic thinker there is only the possibility of seeking the unity of the various aspects within one of the aspects itself. This can take place, however, only at the expense of a fundamental distortion of reality. It is the source of innumerable difficulties which effectively bar the way to finding a satisfactory solution to the theoretic questions which arise within the various special sciences. Neither does it help to stop trying to discover the origin and merely to classify logically the various aspects according to genus and species. Such classification always assumes that the various sides have a common logical denominator and also a common logical divisor, and in terms of this common denominator and this common divisor the individuality of the aspects of reality is again annihilated. On the background of a common denominator, various sides of reality (e. g., the social or the economic) are distinguished according to specific characteristics. But to limit certain general, unspecified characteristics to a particular side of reality is to forbid them to the other sides. That is, in fact, impossible. Every side of reality, Dooyeweerd says, not only has its sovereignty within its own sphere but also a universality within its own sphere. Each aspect of reality reflects from its own standpoint every other aspect of reality. This is observed when one tries to understand the meaning of the analogical concepts, e. g., social space, legal causation, logical extension, etc. Even a cursory examination of some of the categories employed by sociologists illustrates the need to relate sociology to other disciplines. Sociology as well as other sciences uses such concepts as "law," "causation," "space," "movement," "life," etc. Do these categories have their meaning within the social realm? Or do they have their place elsewhere, and are they employed by the sociologist only as metaphors? Or is neither alternative true? One category used extensively in social science is "social space." Borrowing a term from biology, sociologists call the social space "ecology." Dooyeweerd has subjected the analogical concepts to a sharp and penetrating study in his work, *De analogische grondbegrippen der vakwetenschappen en hun betrekking tot de structuur van den menselijken ervaringshorizon* (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1974). In their complexity they can be understood, he thinks, only within the framework of a complete modal analysis of reality. During his career Dooyeweerd has given special attention to the analogical use of the category of causation. A special branch of sociology which deals with social space is "ecology." Ecology, then, deals with the spatial distributions and configurations of social groups and with the problems associated with such spatial configurations. As soon as ecology is defined, however, certain questions arise. Is social space the same as geometrical space, or even the same as the space which is dealt with by ecology in the realm of biology? A common sociological distinction would suggest that they are not. Sociologists distinguish between community and communality. A community is defined as a group which is confined to an area within a common geographical boundary. A communality, on the contrary, is defined as a group whose members are separated geographically but who are bound together by mutual interests or other ties. This distinction involves two different ways of viewing nearness and farness, i. e., two different kinds of space. Spatial relationships such as nearness and farness have different meanings for the sociologist and for the geometer or the geographer. One may be near to someone else in a geographical sense and yet be distant socially. Social distance might be manifested, for instance, in terms of a difference of social standing, e. g., that between a file clerk and a judge. The above discussion should have made it clear that one will inevitably be drawn into a study of the relationship between sociology and other sciences if he wishes to be clear about the concepts which are used within the

sphere of sociology itself. Even a glance at some of the special sociologies will also suggest this conclusion. Among them one hears of the sociology of knowledge, the sociology of law, the sociology of religion, etc. From the above discussion we may conclude that in order to carry on a discussion of the phenomena of social life, it is necessary to develop a concept of the social aspect of reality, in contrast to other aspects of reality. Without such a clear concept one cannot come to grips with what he is doing when he surveys facts from a social point of view or employs what are called social categories. In our opinion, progress towards the solution of the problems surrounding the field of sociology can be made only when one develops a view of reality which is inspired by the divine revelation given by God in the Scriptures.

6. A distinction between various kinds of space is found in Martin Heidegger's distinction between geographical space and the "spatializing" activity of human existence (Dasein).-8- B. The Problem of Individual and Community Further insight into the need for such a radical appraisal of the field of sociology can be obtained if we sample the history of a problem. that has been debated without really being solved by non-Christian sociology, the problem of the relationship of the individual and the community. In the history of social thought (not necessarily sociology in the modern sense of the term) there has been a steady conflict between those views which would make the group prior to the individual and those views which would make the individual prior to the group. In the ancient world the former view, which is called "universalistic," was represented by metaphysical realism. The latter view, which is called "individualistic," was represented by the nominalistic schools. In modern times the individualistic views have been largely psychological. Social groups have been thought to consist of congeries of individuals in their psychological interaction. Universalistic views, on the other hand, have been associated largely with the irrationalistic, historically oriented idealism which arose after Immanuel Kant. This historically oriented universalism seeks for some self-sufficient group in which man can discover the ultimate source of meaning for human life. The individual is thought to be embraced in an all-inclusive social group in terms of which he has his meaning.

1. Universalism In an attempt to overcome the scepticism of the Sophists, who denied the reality of the community, Aristotle developed his famous idea of man as a *zoon politikon*. The individual is not essentially isolated nor in conflict with the group; he is internally related to it, since it is only in the group that he can realize his inner nature. By himself the individual is incomplete. By nature each person strives towards his own self-realization, and since he cannot attain completion in isolation, he is led naturally to attach himself to a group. He is, by virtue of his birth, part of the family. His inner drive towards self-realization causes him to attach himself freely to the community and finally to the state. The societal groups are arranged in an ascending scale, from the lowest and least inclusive, the family, to the highest and most inclusive, the city state. Here, in this self-sufficient group, the individual finds his *telos*. The whole of social reality is arranged in a hierarchy, the most inclusive communities having a priority over the less inclusive, which are subordinated to the former as means to an end. The end point was found in the political unity, the polis

2 in which the individual discovered the community of the good life.-9- In the high Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas carried on the realistic tradition, synthesizing elements of the Christian faith with Aristotelian philosophy. According to his essence, man cannot be independent of the community, in which he first comes to his realization. Striving according to his nature for temporal happiness, man attaches himself to the community and then to the state, which gives him means for his prosperity which he cannot gain of himself. Like his philosophical mentor, Aristotle, Thomas believed that all communities are arranged in a hierarchical order. For him also the state was the highest, with the

qualification that it was the highest within the realm of nature. To the Aristotelian scheme, however, he added the institutional church, as the mystical body of Christ. Man's telos is not discovered in the highest community within the realm of nature, the state, but in the institution which pertains to the realm of grace, the church. Like Aristotle, Thomas regarded these groups to be related to each other as matter and form. A lower group is subordinate to a higher group as a means to an end. The individual is relatively autonomous; nevertheless, he is subject to the community and the state. The state, in turn, is subject to the church in all matters which pertain to the eternal wellbeing of the soul. The state is indeed autonomous in the realm of nature; but it is not able of itself to lead the individual to eternal blessedness. In this respect it is subject to the church. The sufficiency or insufficiency of each group is predetermined, being rooted in the metaphysical nature of reality. The more inclusive communities have the primacy over the less inclusive communities.

2. Individualism The ancient world was not altogether given over to universalism. Epicureanism, for instance, was individualistic. The late Middle Ages witnessed the breakdown of the great realistic philosophies and the resurgence of nominalism. According to nominalism, universals did not have reality; they were only general concepts which stood for a collection of individuals. Nominalism, aided by the rise of empirical scientific inquiry and the unparalleled economic expansion which provided a means of expression for the energetic individual, prepared the way for modern individualism. The philosopher Thomas Hobbes was an extreme individualist. In the state of nature, he said, before the rise of conventional laws which could act as a restraint, individuals are driven by their own inclinations. Each one seeks his own self-aggrandizement, striving to gain control of means to guarantee both his own security and that of his possessions. In the state of nature one has the right to strive for his own preservation, and no means can be denied him in this struggle. The natural state of mankind is the warfare of all against all (*bellum omnium contra omnes*). By way of calculating reason, however, the individual can come to understand that it is not advantageous for him to remain in the state of nature. In a state of total warfare it is always possible for man to encounter a challenge which he is unable to withstand. Reason dictates that he give up some of his rights in order that he might retain something for himself. It is more advantageous for him to maintain a relative balance of power than to commit everything in a life or death struggle. Reason dictates that one should seek to maintain peace as long as possible. Only if peace is not possible should he revert to the state of nature and employ whatever means he can for his survival. To establish the very possibility of peace the individual must be ready to surrender certain rights which are his by nature and to delegate them to an agency which will govern the warring individuals and keep them in harmony. To this end the state is created by way of a mutual contract between opposing individuals. Only in this fashion can a community be established in which one can be protected from the predatory instincts of the other. There comes into being, therefore, a state Leviathan, by whose grace the individual lives and against which he can revolt only at the risk of his own life.

3. The Universalist-Individualist Dilemma A theory is not individualistic because it claims to give the individual a greater place or to allow him to come to greater expression. The universalist makes the claim that it is in the universal community that the individual first comes to himself. Whether a theory is individualistic or universalistic depends upon whether the individual or the community is taken as the axis. Hobbes' theory of society is individualistic because the individual in the state of nature is thought to possess the full right of self-aggrandizement. According to the law of nature he may employ any and all means for his survival. The only limit to his self-aggrandizement is the individual's calculation that he will not be able to succeed. Prudence dictates

that his selfish interests can be maintained only if there is a relative balance of power within the framework of the state. There is, therefore, no inherent limitation to his self-interest. In the ancient universalistic systems, on the contrary, limits are set for the individual by the metaphysical structure of reality. His rights are predetermined. One can come to himself only within the limits which are set by reality itself. In the individualistic theories the individual is faced with a dilemma. He can never realize himself within the confines of organized society. At the same time, he can never realize himself outside of its bounds. This dilemma comes to clear expression in the social thought of Thomas Hobbes. The individual cannot realize himself within society because he must hand over his essentially unlimited prerogatives to the state Leviathan. By definition his self-realization is possible only if he is altogether untrammelled. He could come to self-realization only if all of the instruments of power were in his own hands. Apart from contact with other persons, however, he could not realize himself, for there would be no one to dominate. Within individualistic theories there is necessarily a conflict between the individual and the individual and the individual and the community. The universalistic theories, on the other hand, tend to swallow up the individual in the group. In the modern views, one group, most likely the state, is given preference above all other groups.

4. A Contemporary Effort at Solution There is currently a refined effort, associated with the phenomenological school, to overcome the dilemma of universalism and individualism in a purely theoretical fashion. It is represented by the sociology of Theodore Litt. The attempted solution proceeds on the assumption that the dilemma of the individual and the community arises from a false view of both. The individual is regarded as if he were a thing, artificially separated from the community. Because of this artificial separation it is necessary to decide whether it is the individual or the community which has the primacy. Thus arises the constant warfare between individualism and universalism.^{7 7'} Matilda Riley's approach shows signs of having been influenced by this type of thought. She distinguishes between causal analyses, which in her definition involve the reduction of social phenomena to nature, and the analysis of the social system, in which all of the factors are in (functional) interaction but are not related causally (pp. 12-13). She warns against the fallacy of reification (p. 14), which presumably would isolate one factor (as a separate thing) as the (causal) explanation of the rest. In terms of what we have observed about sphere-universality, we must question the possibility of setting off causal explanation from a meaning system.⁻¹²⁻ The separation of the individual and the community, it is said, arises because of a necessity of thought. Thought is bound to the ego-world relationship. By its very nature it spatializes, breaking the organic connection between the individual and the community and then seeking to bring them together again in a synthetic unity. This is the origin, e. g., of psychologistic theories, where the individual is viewed as a fundamentally independent entity with psychical needs which can be satisfied to a greater or lesser extent in group life. According to Litt, however, the individual and the group are originally not separate but are organically related. The individual is not an entity, a thing, which can be thought of apart from its relationships in the world, both with things and with persons. Ego and world are really only two perspectives of a simultaneous event. Fundamentally the individual has his being only in his interaction with other individuals. It is impossible to separate the individual from the community, for the individual has his being only within a closed circle of meaning in which others are also involved in a dialectical unity. According to this theory, the individual and the community do not have the identity of a thing; nor are they separate, having only external relationships with each other. They are reciprocal perspectives of an original and organic unity, the dialectical unity of the individual experiencing center and the

totality of meaning in which this individual symbolizes his life in relation to other individuals. Since all rational experience takes place within the subject-object relationship, which of itself involves spatialization, the relationship between two of these experiencing foci cannot be expressed in rational terms. The experience of the original, dialectical unity is irrational. It is the experience of an I-thou relationship. The I-thou relationship is fundamental. All other relationships, which are analyzable by reason, are derived. Within the latter everything is seen teleologically. The other person is conceived as being external, as a thing for use. Thinking about someone or experiencing him in any other fashion that sets him apart from us thingifies him. The original, organic bond with him is destroyed. The most fundamental criticism that this 8. Cf. Herman Dooyeweerd, *De crisis der humanistische staatpleer in het licht eener Calvinistische kosmologie en kennistheorie* (Amsterdam: W. Ten Have, 1931), pp. 48 ff., and *A New Critique, of Theoretical Thought, III* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1957), pp. 248-260.

13- phenomenological sociology can make of social life is that there has been a process of thingification and that men fail to encounter each other in an I-thou relationship. Phenomenological sociology itself can be criticized on at least two counts: 1) The original level of experiencing it seeks to disclose is not really the original, integral level which we encounter in our naive experience. 2) The theory involves a dimensional view of reality, distinguishing sharply between spatializing thought and experience and a supposedly original level of I-thou relationships.

C. Towards a Christian Sociology

Unbelieving sociology builds on the foundation of the neutrality postulate. It does not allow itself to be infused with the truth of the Word of God, which could provide the key to an adequate understanding of man and his world. Such a key is indispensable if any science is to understand its field of investigation aright. Taking its starting point in a supposedly neutral and unprejudiced trust in thought itself, unbelieving sociology is forced to interpret the relationship of the individual to the group and of the group to other groups in the general scheme of whole and part. Either the individual is thought to be part of the group or the group is thought to be composed of a congeries of distinct individuals. On the immanence standpoint sociology has been driven between the horns of the individualist-universalist dilemma. Actually, the truth lies on neither side. One cannot reduce the individual to the group nor the group to the sum of the individuals which comprise it. In the first place, the individuality of a person is much deeper than any human community. The full individuality of a person cannot be exhausted within the confines of any terrestrial reality. The individual cannot discover his destiny, his telos, in any supposedly all-embracing group. In the second place, careful observation acquaints us with the fact that groups retain their 9. This is within the field of sociology the pendant of the I-thou thinking of Martin Luber in philosophy. Buber's thought has had a widespread influence in contemporary theology, e. g., on the thought of Emil Brunner. The same pattern of irrational phenomenological thinking is found in Martin Heidegger, in his description of the ego-world relationship (*In-der-Welt-sein*). Heidegger is currently having a considerable influence in theology. Cf. Robinson and Cobb, eds., *The Later Heidegger and Theology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).

identity even in spite of changes within their membership. Groups have a relatively constant structure which is more than: a reflection of the subjective will or activity of any one or even all of their members. Christian sociology must gain a perspective from which it is possible to take into account both of these insights. This must involve a radical break with the immanence standpoint. It is particularly Herman Dooyeweerd who has issued a call to break with immanence thinking in the field of sociology. Immanence thinking, he says, must employ the scheme of whole and part because it tries to use as a universal method of

interpretation what has only limited validity. It is forced to construe everything within the scheme of genus and species. Indeed, Dooyeweerd says, this method of concept-formation is valid for the classification of phenomena within a particular science, let us say, in biological classification; but it cannot be used to express the relationships between the various spheres of life like the family, the state, and the church. If one tries to distinguish the state from the family, for instance, by way of genus and species, he is bound to fall into a whole-part scheme. He must then seek the most inclusive social group of which all other groups are members, or he must seek some basis for relating what are altogether unrelated individual groupings.

1. Sphere.Sovereignty Christians have had by and large very little conception of the meaning of a Christian sociology. Most often they have held fast to the idea of individual, personal salvation and have greeted the idea of social action with distrust because they have associated it with the social gospel of liberal religion. It has not been too difficult for them to see the shortcomings of a social gospel, which confuses the gospel with programs for social reconstruction. It has been more difficult for them to see the inadequacy of the simple idea of personal regeneration as the foundation for a program of social betterment.

iu /...M11.●●●●●●■●●●●●●*■●●●●●7.4 10. A particularly crass objection to this evangelical myopia is found in Carl Sandburg's poem, "To a Contemporary Bunkshooter." His target was Billy Sunday. There is little indication that the popular evangelists of our day have seen through the problem in any basic way. The small book of Carl Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) issued a warning; but it did not provide an over-all analysis of the problem nor a basic solution. Its contribution has been to make the evangelical public somewhat more aware that a problem exists; but it has not given it the tools for a distinctly Christian approach to social problems.

-i5- In reacting to the evangelical aversion to social action we must not lose to sight that there was some justification for it. The evangelical apathy was in part an understandable reaction to the liberal social gospel. The evangelical sensed that profound issues were at stake. Liberalism demolished the Christian message of salvation by grace through the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ and viewed the church somewhat on the order of a service organization instead of the communion of the saints under the headship of Christ. In opposition the evangelical retreated into the realm of the individual relationship to God. At stake, it seemed to many, was the supernatural against the natural. The Christian teaching that the salvation of man depends upon the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart was pitted against the employment in social work of relatively impersonal means on a broad scale. It seemed that this necessarily impersonal approach would only cover up the basic need of the human heart and make it impossible to present an effective appeal to accept the gospel. Of course, some relief of human need could be provided through the diaconate. But evangelical concern was even more understandable, because it was precisely those who clamored for social action who were stressing the inadequacy of the traditional diaconate and were suggesting that the presentation of social aid in the context of a gospel witness would not truly reflect an attitude of disinterested love, because charity would then be only a means of proselytizing. Understanding the evangelical retreat, however, does not justify it. If one is to have a truly Christian attitude towards social problems, he must be able to rise above the isolationist attitude of the evangelical public. He will also need the basic insights which will allow him to undermine this isolation effectively. It must be remembered that enthusiasm for social work cannot take the place of social literacy. It must also be kept in mind that this social literacy must be altogether informed with a truly Christian spirit. Otherwise it will run amuck and will bring down on the Christians) heads the very evils

which frightened the evangelical into a retreat. What then of the change of heart on the part of a segment of evangelicalism? Does it have anything basic to offer us? Not really: That is the case because the evangelical has not become aware that his difficulties with regard to social action lie deeper than a simple lack of interest and concern.-16- The evangelical restriction of religion to the private realm is an effective deterrent to obtaining an adequate approach to social problems. True, religion is for him personal in a different sense than it is for the humanist. He does not mean that it is a matter of individual, private feeling. He holds that it is for all men, and that all men should hear and accept the preaching of the Word. Nevertheless, for him the gospel has to do with personal salvation alone and has nothing to do in a direct way with public life. It affects public life only as the fruits of personal religion make themselves felt in a wider circle. On this basis, both in theory and in practice, one is faced with a perfect dilemma. He must choose between the Christian faith and social work. He must either leave the personal Christian faith behind and enter into the use of what are essentially neutral and humanistic methods, or he must retreat, as he has most often done, into the sanctuary of personal faith. Of course, he could go along with the essentially humanistic methods and seek now and then to interject a personal word from the gospel to a soul that is headed for perdition. Unfortunately, in such a context, this personal testimony would most often seem to be out of place, not because the gospel was any less true but because there would be no real connection between the personal testimony and the social methods which were being used. A truly biblical approach will not view religion as being private, either in the sense of the humanist or in that of the retreating evangelical. The biblical view of religion is that it is the service of God with the whole heart, in whatever sphere of life. This service of God with the whole heart in every sphere of life has meaning only on the background of the Scriptural view of the sovereignty of God. The Christian cannot allow, as the humanist does, that there is an area of life that is altogether neutral. There is no area of life where the service of God is indifferent. As Abraham Kuyper put it, there is not a square inch of life concerning which Christ Jesus does not say, It is mine. In a developed culture, the impact of the Christian, to be effective, cannot be restricted simply to the personal level. Personal influence is indeed indispensable, but next to it there must be Christian social and political theory to act as a foundation for specifically Christian social action. Inevitably, the Christian finds that the demands of social action are thrust upon him. Where is he going to turn? Unable to gain a true foundation for a Christian social action, the-17- evangelical Christian has again and again been drawn towards the social gospel. Perhaps, he says, a balance must be discovered between the insights of the liberal Christian with his social gospel and the evangelical insight into the need for personal regeneration. Needless to say, it is dangerous to let oneself be drawn into a position where the only way out seems to be an uneasy truce with liberalism. A more fruitful approach has been discovered by those who have seen the need of abandoning the viewpoint which identifies the Christian position with personal regeneration alone. They have seen that redemption embraces not only the subjective life of the individual but the entire cosmos as well. Redemption is cosmic as well as personal. It was this breakthrough which provided the necessary background for the development of a fruitful means for Christian social theorizing, namely, the idea of sphere-sovereignty.-uThis theory was first developed explicitly by the Dutch statesman-philosopher and theologian Abraham Kuyper. It followed in the wake of the thought of the German Lutheran thinker Julius Stahl and the Dutch historian-philosopher Guillaume Groenou van Prinsterer. Both were influenced by the revival movement which emanated from Switzerland in the nineteenth century. Sphere-sovereignty entails, first of all, the idea of the absolute

sovereignty of God over every aspect of life. Within the framework of the covenant of grace, this means the sovereignty of Jesus Christ. Correlate with the idea of the absolute sovereignty of God is the religious command given to man that he serve God with his whole heart f7 every realm of life. The theory of sphere-sovereignty also includes the insight that there is a sovereignty also of various spheres or orbits of life, a derived sovereignty which has been assigned 11. Cf, Robert D. Knudsen, "Calvinism in the Arena," *The Calvin Forum*, XVIII, #7 (Feb., 1953), pp. 139-142. 12. Friedrich Julius Stahl (1802-1861) was born in Mtinchen, of a Bavarian Jewish background. In 1819 he joined the evangelical church. Green came under Stahl's influence after 1848. Stahl's thinking, as a Lutheran, was still soteriologically oriented. The various spheres of life could not, therefore, be equally under the sovereignty of God. Instead, there is a distinction between the in/1r Christian life and the external worldly ordinances, to which the Christian must submit because of sin.-18- to them by the sovereign God. The bounds of each sphere have been set by God himself, so that each sphere has its own legitimation and competency within its own bounds. Each sphere, therefore, has its legitimation directly from God. No sphere of life can derive its legitimation from . any other sphere. Each has its own derived sovereignty, a competency within its own orbit which is given to it by its Lord. No sphere may transgress the bounds of competency of another sphere. Thus the state should not seek to regulate the internal affairs of the family. Neither should the church seek to regulate the affairs of the state. The church is not organized along the lines of a political patty. As we have already suggested, the principle of spheresovereignty presupposes a certain conception of religion. It rhymes with the idea that religion is the service of God with all one's heart in every sphere of life. The above definition of religion involves certain corollaries. As a consequence, religion is not limited to one aspect of life in distinction from other aspects. 13 It is not, for instance, a matter of religious interest or religious values. It is not even restricted to the service of God within the church as an institution, in contrast to non-ecclesiastical, supposedly profane spheres of life. According to the theory of spheresovereignty, there is no fundamental distinction between the holy and the secular. All levels and spheres of life are holy, not only in the sense that they are part of the creation which God declared to be good but also because they are subject to the direction of man, who in turn is responsible covenantally to his sovereign God. No sphere of life therefore is per se profane. No sphere of life need become holy by way of dedication or consecration. 13. It might be supposed that this Reformed view of religion is the same as that of Paul Tillich, and some Reformed writers have even quoted him with approval. Tillich maintains that religion does not have its locus in a particular function (e. g., an apriori mythical form) among others. Nor does it refer to an object among others. Religion is a "quality" of being, i. e., a directedness towards the unconditioned. At bottom every culture has an unconditioned element and is therefore fundamentally religious. Even though Tillich can say that nothing can be excluded from being a vehicle of the divine, he sets the holy in dialectical tension with the secular. Secular criticism is necessary if the holy is to appear in its purity, and this criticism is altogether autonomous. Such a dialectic is foreign to Reformed thinking and is destructive of the idea of spheresovereignty.-19- An area in which Christians have been articulate is that of the relationship between church and state. It should be clear by, now, however, that the idea of sphere-sovereignty does not correspond with the common notion concerning the separation of church and state. The idea of the separation of church and state is itself perfectly compatible with the idea that the church is holy and that the state is profane. Furthermore, the idea that a particular sphere of life has sphere.-sovereignty does not mean that it is separated from other spheres in an abstract and undefined way. The Dutch

philosopher-theologian Haitjema has accused Abraham Kuyper of playing unwittingly into the hands of the secularists by distinguishing the church and the state as two independently sovereign spheres of life.⁴ This attack deserves some comment. It is indeed true that his particular view of the relationship of the holy and the secular paradoxically brought Kuyper into the position of supporting secularization in a special sense. That is to say, Kuyper was in favor of breaking the hegemony of the church as an institution over other realms of life. He was in sympathy with the autonomy that the life of letters and economics gained from the church at the close of the Middle Ages. Haitjema's criticism, however, falls short of the mark. It does not do justice to Kuyper's position. It depends upon the notion that the source of Christian influence is restricted to the church as an institution, a position that Kuyper, of course, firmly rejected. It is not necessary to make the church as an institution central in order to give religious significance or direction to life. Instead, the church is one of many spheres, each of which exists by divine mandate and each of which has the divinely given responsibility of performing its tasks to the glory of God within its own sphere of competency. In another and more significant sense, therefore, Kuyper was entirely opposed to secularization. No area of life, he thought, was really secular. All of life is basically religious, in one or another direction, i. e., either for God or against him. The idea of sphere-sovereignty involves as we have seen, the idea that man has the covenant responsibility of fulfilling 14. In the sphere of common grace, Haitjema complains, Kuyper distinguished the sovereign spheres, each with its own • law of life according to the order of creation. In such a fashion he divorced these spheres in the most dangerous fashion from the influence of the Word of God as Holy Scripture and as word of the church. And thereby he unwittingly contributed to the secularization of public life. Haitjema, "Abraham Kuyper and die Theologie des hollfnd Ischen Neocalvinismus," *Zwischen den Zeiten*, IX (1931), 351.-20- the wi 11 of God s-pherestrerresponsibilities which have been given to him.. It is the responsibility of the Christian to track down the principles which pertain to the various spheres of life. By performing the duties of his office, he must bring every aspect of life into subjection to the rule of Christ. No sphere of life is excepted, Everywhere there should be the realization of the fact that, 1 things are of God, through God, and to God (Romans 11: 36). 1- 2. The Theory of Ideal Types Sphere-sovereignty, as a principle of sociological interpretation, can be understood more fully if it is contrasted with a well-known sociological theory, the so-called theory of ideal typew. Gurvitch explains this view in the following words: The ideal type is a construct of the investigator which he obtains by abstracting from concrete cases a characteristic in which he is interested 2 accentualizing it and defining it clearly, unambiguously, and uncomplicatedly by other characteristics." 16 Ideal type analysis is often polar, two traits being se+ over against each other. In this fashion distinctions have been made between the charismatic leader and the leader who exerts influence only because of his official position, the church type and the sect type (Troeltsch), economic man and philanthropic man, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gekellschaft* (Tennies), etc. A standard objection to the method of ideal types is that the isolated type is never realized fully in any real situation.. It remains an ideal construct, an abstract form that can never touch reality. In terms of the method of concept-formation involved. in the idea of sphere-sovereignty, the criticism of the method c' 15. For a more extensive discussion of the principle of sphere-sovereignty see H. Evan Runner, "Sphere-Sovereignty," *Christian Perspectives*, 1961 (Hamilton: Guardian Publishing Co., 1961), pp. 53-87. 16. Gurvitch, *Twentieth Century Sociology* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1945) 7 p. 30. The theory of ideal types is often supposed to represent a sociology of the human spirit in contrast to a naturalistic reductionism. The Christian sociologist, David O. Moberg even calls this kind of

sociology "super-natural."-21- ideal types must be more fundamental. The theory of spheresovereignty does not allow a typical trait to be isolated and to be set up abstractly over against another typical trait. For instance, Maniesi view of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. distinguishes between natural, organic social groupings and those which depend upon legal, contractual arrangements, i. ec, upon agreements of will. It fails perforce to allow for the universality in their own spheres of the aspects in question. It fails to see that every social grouping has a legal side. By the same token it fails to see that no group contact or even personal. contact is unstructured. Similar remarks can be made about the distinction between the charismatic leader and the leader who leads only because of the authority inherent in his official position. Indeed, some leaders will exert influence because of their outstanding personalities while others will be more restricted because of a lack of personal. appeal. Nevertheless, it is a mistake to distinguish abstractly between charismatic leadership and the leadership exerted because of office. The so-called charismatic leader is not exalted above either the prerogatives nor the responsibilities of office. Just because of his powerful personality it will be possible for him to involve himself even more intimately in injustices, e. g., which can be ruinous both for him himself and for those whom he is seeking to lead. The principle of sphere-sovereignty involves a particular method of concept-formation and demands the development of a theory of structures of individuality. The followers of Abraham Kuyper have been exploring in these two directions. 3. Structures of Individuality The principle of sphere-sovereignty demands that there be a distinct theory of individuality. A major attempt at developing such a theory has been made by Herman Dooyeweerd. 14 Dooyeweerd makes a distinction between the casual social relationships which men sustain to one another, where there is differentiation. according to levels of personal ability, etc., and the social experience within the relatively permanent and stable connections such as the family, the state, and the church, where there is an inherent structure of authority. The latter have typical individuality structures, in which there is a typical relationship of authority and subordination. The individuality structure of a group must be understood in terms of its "founding" function and its "pilot" or "leading" 17. This he discusses in the third volume of his A New Critique of Theoretical Thought.function. Only by taking both of them into consideration can a proper definition of an individuality structure be obtained. a. The flaily The family, in the narrow sense of parents and their siblings, has a definite individuality structure It is biotically founded in the sexual union of man and wife and the natural begetting of offspring. This founding function stands in unbreakable connection with the pilot function, namely, the ethical communion of love between husbandaidwife and their childrem. The family as an individuality can be defined only if one takes into account both its founding function and its pilot function. It is the constant communion of love between husband and wife on the foundation of the biological union of the sexes and the natural begetting of offsprig, together with these children themselves. In considering the relationships within the family and the relationships which the family sustains to other social units, one must take the family's individuality structure into consideration. Its foundingmd its pilot functions give a peculiar individuality to all of its aspects. Furthermore, the founding and the pilot functions cannot be isolated fram each other. The communion of love between the husband and his wife (the pilot function) cannot be dissociated from their sexual union (the founding function). In married life the communion of love and sexual union are always interacting, either stimulating and reinforcing or deflating and weakening each other. The concrete method of thinking characteristic of the theory of sphere-sovereign' j is very apparent at this point. It does not think of the sexual life of man abstractly, e. g., simply as a natural

inclination without any inherent limits. Neither does it harbor a "spiritualistic" view of sexual life, as if it were something to be tolerated within the marriage bond, something that had nothing to contribute essentially to the "higher" and "spiritual" side of marriage. In this sense marriage is not "spiritual." The Christian sociologist should recognize the fundamental importance of the sexual element within the marriage relationship and within man's entire makeup. Nevertheless, he should not isolate this element. The marriage bond cannot, e. g., be considered to be a convenient arrangement for the mutual satisfaction of the sexual desires of the marriage partners. Neither is there any place for the divinization of the sexual urge, as it has so frequently taken place in contemporary life and literature. 18 The sexual must be given a prominent place in a truly Christian approach; nevertheless, it must be recognized that the sexual relationships within marriage must be guided by the pilot function, the communion of love between husband and wife. Man's sexual life has a specific structuration and individuality. Those who try to throw over the traces and practice free love do not discover a true freedom beyond the onerous restrictions of convention; they only invite personal decay and destruction and they help to demoralize the society around them. It is also unfortunate to think of the male as being naturally polygamous and the female as being naturally monogamous. Indeed, there is no automatically imposed limitation to the scope of the sexual urge; nevertheless, sexual cohabitation occurs rightfully only within the marriage bond. Apart from the marriage relationship it is degrading and destructive. It is a consequence of the Christianizing of culture that the monogamous marriage relationship became dominant, with a consequent respect for the woman as a person. De-Christianizing influences in our culture have brought with them a lessening of respect for the woman and an increase of instability and violence. The peculiar individuality structure of the family influences the relationships within it. The love between members of the family is not the same as the love which is expressed to persons outside of the family group. Furthermore, love within the family itself cannot be regarded in an abstract fashion. Love within the family is indeed love, but it is simplistic to speak in general about love without indicating whether one is speaking about the love of a father for his child, the love of a wife for her husband, etc. Each one has a nuance of its own which may not be lost to sight by the Christian theorist. There are also legal relationships within 18. An outstanding example is the writing of D. H. Lawrence. For him natural impulses, rid of the limitations of convention, are pure and creative. It is interesting that this is no longer the case in the novel of Golding, *The Lord of the Flies*. Here natural impulse has become ambiguous, as a divine and yet demonic current that is always ready to break to the surface of conventional life, when its restraining effect has been eroded. A Christian view of man must break altogether free from the romantically inspired distinction of nature and convention. In doing so it will gain a perspective from which to criticize broad currents of modern life and literature. The family. These also must be distinguished from the purely external legal relationships which the family sustains to individuals and to groups outside of itself. The family has internal financial relationships and problems. However, the family is not an economic unit, and the economic forces within the family circle never play themselves out in isolation from the individuality structure of the family. Thus there is even a relationship between the financial soundness of a family and the satisfactoriness of the sexual relationships of husband and wife. The individuality of the family is manifest profoundly in the specific relationships of authority and subordination which pertain within it. According to the Scriptures, the man is the head of the woman (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5: 23). The woman is admonished to render due obedience to her husband (I Peter 3: 1, 5). The parents have authority over their children, and the children are commanded to obey their

parents in the Lord (Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20). However, the specific relations of authority and subordination within the family should be led by the pilot function, the communion of love. Thus the husband is commanded to cherish his wife as he does his own body (Eph. 5: 28), to love her as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5: 25). Furthermore, fathers are admonished not to discourage their children (Eph. 6: 4). The family has a structure of authority which is peculiarly its own. The responsibilities of a father to his children are different from those of the same father to the children of a friend. Should he attempt to approach his friends children in the same way he approaches his own, he will quickly discover that the response is different. The tact with which one must approach situations in family groups other than his own is far more than a matter of social courtesy; it is a recognition of the specific individuality of the family unit, with its peculiar relationships of authority and subordination.

b. The State The state also has its own structure of individuality and its own peculiar sphere of competency. Unlike the family, it is historically founded, being the result of the free forming activity of man. The leading function of the state is juridical in nature. The state has the power of the sword over a particular geographical area by reason of a duly constituted authority. The state has a sovereignty that cannot be derived from that of any other group. The state is not subject to the church, not even in matters which are supposed to pertain to the eternal blessedness of the soul. True enough, in a society which is as yet undifferentiated there is no clear distinction between the-25- cultic, the state, and the family. Think, for instance, of how these were merged in the family group as it existed in the time of Abraham. It is only in the course of historical differentiation that these have been separated. The idea is widely held in Christian circles that the state is an institution which has arisen because of sin. Certainly the element of coercion which characterizes the activities of the state is a consequence of sin. In the course of historical differentiation, however, some kind of central authority resembling that of the state would most likely have arisen, even if there had been no sin. Because of its sovereignty within its own sphere, the state has a direct responsibility to God. It must in its own fashion seek to carry out the divine will. It has a divine responsibility to administer justice within its bounds. It must put down injustice and prevent civil disorder. The foundation of the authority of the state cannot be sought, therefore, in the will of the people, in the *volunte generale*. Failure to strive for justice, even when justice has become unpopular, will lead to strife and disorder, precisely the things which the state should seek to overcome. The authority of the state is not ultimate and unlimited. It is not a state Leviathan. It has its own sphere of competency, whose bounds it may not transgress. Indeed, the state has often sought to transgress its own limits. Such attempts, however, always lead to disruption. There are, in addition, some areas that the state cannot control, try as it will. It cannot control the inner faith of its citizens. A totalitarian state may seek to establish a system of thought control; but it can accomplish its purpose only by appealing to the faith of its people by way of clever propaganda. To go beyond, to use thought control in the sense of "brainwashing;" would maim its citizens and would tend to undermine the state itself. A limit to the power of the state has been manifested when it has tried to uproot the family. Needless to say it has always failed in this attempt. Any proper definition of the state should establish its limitations. If the state is regarded to be one particular kind of organization of man's psychical impulses, there is no clear delimitation possible of its bounds and of its responsibilities. The Christian sociologist must seek to establish its specific individuality.

c. The Industrial Unit In a developed culture the rise of the industrial unit and of so-called "industrial society" is inevitable. Historical progress depends upon invention and the technical instruments which-26- spring from it. These machines will undergo progressive

sophistication, and there will be an increasing division of labor in their fabrication and use. The organization of the industrial society and its specific problems have molded our age profoundly. The industrial unit is also historically founded. It has its leading function in the economic sphere. Thus, it is economically qualified in its individuality. Its test of success or failure is a specifically economic one. The relationships within the industrial unit will be patterned according to its specific individuality. Within the family, for educational purposes, there can be a certain arbitrariness with respect to economic matters. A father, for instance, might not reward his children in each instance exactly alike. He might not give them gifts which cost equal amounts. He might not always reward them equally for little jobs they have performed around the house. Within the context of the family, this might be a loving strategem to teach the children contentment with what they have. In the providence of God, they will not always obtain what they deserve, nor will they be rewarded equally. To teach a religious truth Christ taught the parable of the men who were given a penny for working in the field, irrespective of the time they had labored. Within the industrial unit, on the contrary, there must be a strict economic *quid pro quo*. Failure in this regard transforms the economic unit into something else. It also destroys the freedom of the workers. The danger involved in the failure to recognize the specific individuality of the economic unit is shown by the following example, which is an actual experience. A young girl is employed by a business concern as a secretary. Since she is engaged, she is eager to leave the office at quitting time, so she can be with her fiance. The other girls at the office, however, eager to gain preferment and advancement, are in the habit of staying at the office after hours, putting in overtime without additional compensation. The result is that the engaged girl feels a moral compulsion to stay at the office. Exercising her right to go home at quitting time, she is resented by the other girls. Staying at the office robs her of her freedom to be with her fiance. Because there is no strict economic *quid pro quo*, office morale is weakened and the freedom of the employees is infringed upon. In such a case the business is no longer truly an economically qualified group. Its character has changed. It now resembles a free social grouping, where the members are tied together by moral compulsion. Such compulsion is, of course, present when there is a family industrial unit. There are more than economic considerations that play a basic role within a family industry, with a corresponding chance that problems of a non-economic nature will fundamentally affect production.

d. The Church The church as an institution is also historically founded. That fact may help to account for the perplexity of those who try to understand social life in terms of man's natural impulses and who discover that they cannot find such a legitimation for the church. The church's legitimation cannot be understood apart from the historical events which founded it and apart from the commands of Christ which established its nature. 1-9 The church is the institution which has been entrusted with the proclamation of the word-revelation of God and the administration of the sacraments. This task establishes the specific individuality of the church as an institution. Everything that the church does should be set within the context of the specific commission that God has given to it. All of its internal and external relationships will be influenced by its leading function. The church, as well as the family and the state, has a great number of internal relationships. Within the church there are social, legal, aesthetic, economic, etc., relationships. The church has internal economic relationships; nevertheless, it is not an economic unit *ku: se*. Its appeal for funds, and other economic matters within its bounds, must be guided by its pilot function. The church, like the state, exercises discipline. Unless its influence is of such a nature that it can bring social sanctions to bear upon its members, however, it soon discovers that its exercise of discipline differs markedly from that of other

social groups and especially from that of the state. In many instances the individual who is brought under discipline will simply withdraw himself from the fellowship of the church. In taking this action he resists the God-given authority of the church, but he places himself effectively out of reach. Unlike the state the church does not have the power of the sword over a particular area. Its method is persuasion. Even Søren Kierkegaard's attempt to found the church upon a "pre-functional" anxiety is inadequate. Without angst, he said, we could close the churches. Our discussion of the legitimation of the church should throw doubt upon the current popular distinction of the historical (Historie) and the historic (Geschichte). The nature of the church cannot be understood in an historic (geschichtlich) fashion, apart from genetic, historical considerations regarding its origin. Its appeal must be that of spiritual persuasion, with a readiness to receive again the erring sinner when he turns himself by divine providence. Especially relevant to our age is the problem of the relationship of the institutional church to social problems. An awareness of the specific individuality of the church will prevent the Christian from seeking to tie in the church with social programs as such. The Christian church is not organized along the lines of a social or a political pressure group. The church has social influence only as a by-product of its performance of its own peculiar functions, the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and the proper administration of discipline within its own bounds. Indeed, its preaching can bear on social issues, but only in the sense of seeking to persuade the warring factions to adhere to clear biblical teachings. It also has an influence upon society, when it, for instance, opens its doors freely to all who are confessing believers in Jesus Christ, irregardless of their differences of race or social standing. But such influences should be entirely subordinated to its primary function as a church. When the church seeks, on the contrary, in an organized fashion to bring social and political pressure to bear, it ceases to this extent to be the church. If we understand properly what it should mean, we might well take as our own the well-known slogan, "Let the church be the church." +

Objections to sphere-sovereignty. A common objection to the theory of sphere-sovereignty is that it is an empty idea. One might object that the talk about spheres and about competency is meaningless. If one has power, he is able to exercise that power without any consideration of boundaries, other than those which are set by the strength and range of that power itself. When one does not actually possess power, the objector might continue, all talk about rights, competency, or sovereignty is vain. One is caught in the web of an idealism which has no real contact with the situation. Furthermore, much of the discussion about the spheres is tautologous in its form. If one says, for instance, that the family has the right to exert authority only within the bounds of its own competency, he is making what is a perfectly tautologous statement. It would be rejected by many as being meaningless. 20. It is disquieting to see how the evangelical public has been ranging itself behind conservative political movements without inquiring whether their conservatism is anything more than an expression of individualistic humanistic philosophy. It is especially disquieting when such a political slant becomes intimately connected with the life of the church or seminary. Inevitably it will hinder the true preaching of the gospel. 29- Some persons also have difficulty when one explains that the theory of sphere-sovereignty does not pretend once and for all to define rigidly the exact bounds between the church, the state, the family, the economic unit, etc. Historical conditions change, and the boundaries between the various spheres will shift somewhat. Is then the theory of sphere-sovereignty anything more than a rough schematization that can give us little help in solving the actual problems as they face us in church-state, labor-management, and other social relations? In answer to the first question, one might remark that the

question of power relations cannot be eliminated from the picture. Certainly without the foundation of historical power there can be no realization of the sovereignty of the spheres which are historically founded. In the case of the naturally founded group, the family, one might point to the repeated failure of attempts to uproot it as an evidence of its sovereignty in its own sphere. To our mind such an argument has some force. Even though its sphere can be invaded, the family cannot be destroyed so long as this world continues. The main thrust of the argument, however, must be against the idea that the various spheres of life are simply human constructs on the background of a completely pliable human nature and human interrelatedness. Power itself is only understood within the context of the cosmomic order of reality. Its limitation is not simply that of its own force or range. If meaninglessness and chaos are to be avoided, the proper limits of power must be observed. Furthermore, any view which would unleash sheer power is forced nevertheless to consider questions of right and legitimation. This we discovered in our discussion of Thomas Hobbes. In order to form his concepts he posits a state of nature in which man has the right of self-aggrandizement, even though it need not be supposed that he thought that this state of nature ever was an historical reality. The tautologous form of the language about sphere-sovereignty, to approach the second question, may be due to the fact that it seeks to open up, or to disclose, areas which cannot be reduced to each other. The question then will be, Can one obtain a meaningful view of reality, which is free from disastrous antinomy, if he does not accept the theory of sphere-sovereignty as a presupposition? According to the philosophy of the cosmomic idea, the nuclei of meaning of the various modes of reality cannot be defined. Their presupposition is what makes all definition possible. Without the proper delimitation of their bounds one falls into antinomy in the formation of his concepts. Likewise, in the discussion of the spheres of society one cannot obtain clarity in his distinctions and definitions unless he distinguishes various spheres, which indeed are interlaced with one another but which have their own sovereignty in their own orbits. As one focuses on these spheres, his thought will become circular; but presupposing them will be the only avenue to clarity and precision with regard to questions which fall within their scope.

The considerations we have just mentioned help us to approach the problem which is found in our third type of objection. It is not the purpose of the theory of sphere-sovereignty to delineate hard and fast boundaries between the spheres. It is, as it were, to discover the points at which each sphere is rooted and suspended. The movement of the boundaries between the spheres is therefore not denied; rather, it is pointed out that this movement will be structured according to the individuality of the spheres which are involved in it. Think only of the delicate relationship between the family and the state which is brought into being by draft laws, and think of the great variety that these laws can take. Nevertheless, the very framing of such laws, involving as it does the relationship of the state and the family, will have to take their specific individualities into consideration. Just as a vine may be rooted solidly in the ground and yet its branches display a remarkable mobility as they seek to hold in the wall which the vine is climbing, so the individual spheres may be rooted separately and yet manifest a complex interrelatedness and a strong variation in the precise fashion they are interrelated. The theory of sphere-sovereignty is not confined to a narrow range of biblical evidence or human experience. It is tied in with an entire method of approach to the understanding of our God-created world. It has extensive application and can be shown to be fruitful in actual practice.

D. Appendix I: Marxist Sociology
The Marxists are advocating a sociology that challenges not only the dominant schools of sociology in America but also the newer schools that are competing here for attention. The views of Marx are

commended for having focused on man in his concrete wholeness. For Marxist sociology the immediate datum is man in alienation. In taking this position, the Marxists stand in the line of Hegel and the existentialists, both of which have considered man in his immediate situation to be abstract and alienated from himself. The Marxists, however, claim that only they have seen this alienation in its true proportions. For the Neo-Marxists everything is already qualified, that it is "objectified" or "thingified." When this situation has been discerned, there has already been a reflection. By way of this reflection one passes from the given, the state of alienation, to what is beyond it. This reflection is on man in his societal position-- on a concrete level that is not objectified or objectifiable. The method of Marxist sociology is a typically dialectical one. It does not fix what it intends directly in its gaze; instead, it discerns it indirectly in the negation of its opposite. While remaining in the medium of what is objectified, it seeks to move away from objectification. In its dialectical method it aims to take position against a method of analysis, in which discrete elements are synthesized into a contradictionless unity. Its method is to fix its attention on the present in its tensionful character and to discern in it the seeds of the future. It also resists positivism, in which there is the ideal of the complete knowledge of the facts. In contrast it desires to make a physiognomy of a given totality. In this desire it reveals its historical orientation, of which we shall speak presently. Marxism has been embraced by some leading intellectuals as the position that most adequately takes account of man in his concrete situation. Considered from its own viewpoint, there is indeed an attempt to avoid abstraction and to focus by way of reflection on man in his wholeness. Marx pretended to have discovered the point from which man can be seen, without the mystification, e. g., of religion, in his totality. That, he thought, could only be of man in his socio-economic situation.-32- Thus some Marxists and their Christian sympathizers have shown a predilection for the second commandment and its prohibition of idolatry. Marxist sociology would claim to have transcended in its view of man any special standpoint and to have provided the key to man in his universality. The historical orientation of Marxism, however, would belie this claim. "There is...an idolatry within Marx's position itself. Its secularization involves that it misses the true point of origin of the cosmos and that it must seek it falsely in something created. This situation manifests itself in Marx's preoccupation with history. Without taking account of this preoccupation one cannot at all understand Marx's thought. "Marx's thought centers in history. That is well recognized. Man is not supposed to take his cue from any eternal, thus a-historical norm, for example, a norm of ethics. He is to respond to the call that arises out of the historical moment. He is to act in concord with what is to be the future. His call is to break with what is, in favor of joining the struggle for what is to be. One is supposed to break with the conservative stance of what is now widely called 'the establishment' and to assume a stance that is truly progressive. "To be truly progressive is to be truly historical^{1 2} , and to be truly historical is to be truly progressive.""- To have understood something in terms of its material conditions, i. e., in terms of the real, concrete-historical conditions, is to have understood it in its genesis. There is in this formulation, however, already a covert absolutization of the historical that cannot be explained in a neutral way. Some Marxists have reflected deeply and critically enough to recognize this. They understand that opposing positions that take a basic stance against them cannot be overcome by way of a neutral, scientific investigation; they can be overcome only when the need for them has been removed by transforming the concrete situation which gave them rise. There is indeed a considerable amount of ambiguity in this Marxist claim. It is true nevertheless that there is here a reflection of sufficient depth to bring many Marxists to the acknowledgment that their position rests

upon a fundamental commitment that is even of a religious character. A question arises concerning the success of their reflection on man in his concrete situation, however, when the his21. Robert D. Knudsen, "Anathema or Dialogue?" *The Westminster Theological Journal*, XXXIV (1971-1972), 147-147.-33- torical orientation of their position is taken under review. It shows that a historicistic orientation must fail to come up with a criterion for historical action. "One cannot decide what is truly progressive and truly historical...without coming up with a standard or criterion for the historical. Yet it is precisely such a criterion of the historical that historicism-- and Marxism is historicistic-- must reject. According to historicism, law in its entirety must arise out of history, there cannot be a law that holds or history and in that sense stands outside of history. 11f22 A Christian sociology must attempt to show, in meeting the challenge of Marxism, that it can provide a still more radical idea of transcendence, in terms of which the origin of meaning of human life is laid bare. The viewpoint of sphere-sovereignty, which has been set forth in outline above, will not tolerate an absolutization of the historical. The historical is but one aspect among others. 23 The various spheres of society do not have their origin in history, even though some of them arise only in the process of differentiation in history. They are constant structures within which individual changes take place. 22. *Ibid.*, p. 147. 23. Cf. Robert D. Knudsen, *Historz* (mimeographed), 1969. For a brief treatment of Marxism see especially pp. 6, 21-22, 23.

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NOTE FROM THE PROPRIETOR OF THIS WEBSITE, Dr. Jan H. Boer

The history of this document is vague as indicated at the top. This bibliography is full of misspellings but still useful.

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