

## **The Neo-Calvinist or neo-kuyperian Concept of "Spheres"**

The following material outlines the basic God-given structures, or systems of influence, of Society. They are grounded in the creational ordinances found in the Book of Genesis. This is an important theoretical and idealistic concept basic to Neo-Calvinism. Each of these Spheres has specific functions and norms or boundaries. They are permanent forms even though the actual members of them at any specific time and place may vary.

### **Marriage and Family**

Individual men and women are meant to live together as husband and wife, as "one flesh", i.e.- in a committed, covenant relationship. Ideally, they are to be "fruitful", i.e.- have children (if possible) and live together as an inter-generational family, i.e.- as the basic "Covenant Community". It is absolutely integral to God's Plan for Society. When a son marries, he and his wife begin another family, but these new family units together are intended to be an extended part of the original family, always responsible for each other. That includes the responsibilities of worship, work and providing an education for the children and practical welfare for members of the Family going through tough times.

In practice, the family that most closely follows this Biblical Model is the rural farm family. The challenge now, of course, is how to follow this Model in our modern urban, non-agricultural Society. It can be done, as demonstrated in cities with ethnic enclaves where "the old ways" are still practiced.

### **Church (a local organization)**

Ideally, Christian Families in a local area are to assemble, worship and share their lives with other Families (and minister to even others) as a wider Community of Faith (aka "a church").

### **Civic Associations**

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The primary function of the basic Sphere of Marriage and Family is to act as God's agent in His world, obeying God's command to our original Parents to reproduce and go forth to care for the Natural Environment (Creation) and continue God's work of cultivating it for the common good of all. This is called the Cultural Mandate, another important neo-Calvinist concept. To this end, other Spheres will naturally arise. To cultivate is to develop culture. As culture and the necessary organization and technology that it requires develop, the result is a Civilization. There will be voluntary Associations for research & development, work, production and distribution of goods and services (Business and Commerce). Associations will also arise for Education, Communication, the Arts and Recreation. These are all extensions of the Creational Ordinances. None of these Spheres are the responsibility of Civil Government nor are they autonomous. They must cooperate with each other and function according to the laws of God, accountable to Him.

The essential preface to this entire discussion is knowledge of the Torah. The Law of God is the absolute Foundation upon which to build social policy and the benchmark or yard stick by which to measure all the options that necessarily arise on these Topics.

### **Civil Government is also a Creational Ordinance.**

Each Creational social system has its own authority known as "Sphere Sovereignty", but none of them are absolute or autonomous. Marriage-Family (including Education), Church and Community Civic Associations (including Commerce) are meant to cooperate but must not interfere with the other's responsibilities.

Because all the individuals involved in the Spheres are sinners, there will be injustice. As systems, the Spheres will malfunction or fail in their respective responsibilities. The main function of Civil Government is to respect the Sphere Sovereignty, but control or stop transgressions within or between Spheres, wherever they may occur under established Law and Constitutional Order. In this regard Civil Government is good and to be supported. However, Civil Government is not to usurp or curtail the responsibilities of the other Spheres. It has a tendency to do exactly that and so it too must be restrained. The concern is not with the size of Government, but with Civil Government becoming abusive with its authority or becoming intrusive in the affairs of the Spheres.

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An additional concept applies here: "Subsidiarity". Government should not do for people what they can or ought to do for themselves. And larger organizations must not replace or override what can be done by smaller or subsidiary organizations. Local is best. Less is more.