The Concept of Social Stratification According to Saint Thomas Aquinas

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THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION
ACCORDING TO SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

by

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LIFE

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iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter                                                                 Page
I. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................... 1

The problem of stratification in modern society -- Purpose of thesis -- The esteem with which the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas are viewed by the Church -- Procedure and scheme of analysis -- Definition of terms -- Stratification -- Functionalism in structure and in operation -- Scholastic definition of society.

II. HISTORICAL SKETCH .................................................................. 14

The social structure of the middle ages -- Social and economic changes of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries -- Life of St. Thomas Aquinas.

III. THE NECESSITY OF STRATIFICATION ACCORDING TO ST. THOMAS AQUINAS .................................................... 25

Based on natural inequality of men -- Division of labor according to ability -- Necessity of authority -- Relationship of the individual to the common good -- Summary.

IV. THE SYSTEM OF STRATIFICATION ACCORDING TO ST. THOMAS AQUINAS ........................................................................... 37

Society composed of rich and poor -- Desirability of large middle class -- Avoidance of extremes of wealth and poverty -- Virtue as basis of honor -- Relationship between classes -- Social charity as soul of social order -- Summary.

iv
V. ANALYSIS AND SUMMARY

Stratification in medieval society analyzed—
Stratification in the ideal society—Dimensions of ability, authority, and virtue—Divisions:
rulers, ruled, and clergy—Based on functionalism—Comparison of ideal with modern society—
Need for change.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At times the wagon of history moves along a straight and open road, at other times it has to turn a sharp corner. On the smooth highway little or no steering is necessary, nor need the map be consulted. But at the sharp corner, careful and alert driving is necessary, lest the precious load of tradition, culture, and worldly goods be upset. At the crossroads of history we must look for reorientation, consult the map, and ask ourselves: Where do the roads lead, where do we want to go?

History is at the crossroads today. The structures of societies all over the world are changing rapidly. More slowly, because more deeply rooted, the ideologies surrounding these structures are disintegrating. Social scientists, in the face of these upheavals, are becoming more aware of the necessity of social planning. Sociologists are increasingly recognizing the fact that sociology is not concerned merely with the empirical study of what is, but has the responsibility of drawing conclusions that will help society in its struggle to reach what ought to be. Sound social theory is necessary to keep society on an even keel.

One of the most notable social changes occurring throughout the world is in the stratification of society. Class distinctions and class lines have been altered or obliterated and then redrawn in many countries of Europe and Asia, while in the United States they appear to be entrenching themselves more firmly in our culture. This phenomenon has attracted the attention of sociologists in recent years, and has been the subject of numerous articles and books. Much attention has been given to the determination of classes, the basis of stratification, and the degree of class awareness in society. The necessity of formulating principles of stratification has been


3 "[T]here is a discernible tendency for more and more positions to become established and fixed . . . there seems to be a marked trend toward lessened interclass mobility and a consequent increasing fixation of boundaries. While upward mobility is still permissive, it is becoming more difficult; rigidities are developing."--Joyce O. Hertzler, "Some Tendencies Toward a Closed Class System in the United States," Social Forces, XXX, (March, 1952), pp. 313-314.

overlooked in all but a few instances. Nelson N. Foote⁴, in an article in *The American Journal of Sociology*, points to the necessity of setting up policies for the future, particularly since American aid is disturbing class structures over the world. Karl Mannheim⁵ declares: "The end of *laissez-faire* and the necessity for planning are unavoidable consequences of the present situation and the nature of modern techniques. . . . The concentration of all kinds of controls—economic, political, psychological, and mechanical—has gone so far . . . that the question is only who shall use these means of control and for what end."

The purpose of this thesis is to present a Catholic theory of social stratification according to the philosophical teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas upon which social planning could be based, and then to analyze this theory in the light of certain concepts. For, as Pope Leo XIII⁶ declares, "if the mind of man be healthy, and strongly grounded in solid and true principles,

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⁵ Freedom, Power, and Democratic Planning, p. 8.

it will assuredly be the source of great blessings, both as regards the good of individuals and as regards the common weal."

As an effort toward discovering these "solid and true principles" this paper is being written.

St. Thomas Aquinas was chosen because he is generally recognized as one of the greatest thinkers who ever lived. In his philosophical writings, he sets down basic principles, principles that of themselves are unchanging although circumstances may alter their application. Recognition of this fact has caused recent Popes to urge the study of St. Thomas in all Catholic institutions of higher learning. In an encyclical issued the fourth day of August, 1879, Pope Leo XIII states:

We, therefore, while We declare that everything wisely said should be received with willing and glad mind, as well as everything profitably discovered or thought out, exhort all of you, Venerable Brothers, with the greatest earnestness to restore the golden wisdom of St. Thomas, and to spread it as far as you can, for the safety and glory of the Catholic Faith, for the good of society, and for the increase of all the sciences.

Succeeding Popes have similarly exhorted the people. Pope Pius XI wrote the encyclical "Studiorum Ducem" on the occasion of the sixth centenary of the canonization of St. Thomas Aquinas urging all to turn to St. Thomas for light and inspiration. The present Holy Father, Pius XII, has often expressed

7 Ibid., xvi.
his desire to see the teachings of St. Thomas given precedence over others. In his address to the International Thomistic Congress, September 14, 1955, he declared: "you rightly judge that there is hardly a question, even among those that interest men today, which would not be clarified by applying to it one of the principles expressed by St. Thomas." Canon Law requires those preparing for the priesthood to study philosophy and theology "according to the arguments, doctrine, and principles of S. Thomas."

To discover principles to be applied to stratification, it was necessary to study the writings of St. Thomas, particularly those of a social and political nature, and extract pertinent material. In using untranslated materials, the author has made her own free translation. A difficulty in using the Commentary on Aristotle's Politics arises from the fact that there are some doubts as to its authenticity. Also the scholastic method of expounding these texts makes it difficult to distinguish St. Thomas' own views from those of Aristotle.

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9 Canon 1366, par. 2, quoted in Summa Theologica, I.

10 For a complete discussion of this problem, see Chapter IV.

However, Sertillanges points out that as St. Thomas was interested only in the truth as he found it in some text or other, he quoted it or commented on it as he believed it to be true without always checking to see whether or not the author meant the truth to be interpreted in that particular way. "He commentates on what the author meant to say rather than on what he actually says."\(^{12}\)

Material can be divided into proofs of the necessity of stratification, an analysis of the social structure, the basis of stratification, and the relationship between classes. Commentaries and studies of St. Thomas' political thought were very helpful in assembling and interpreting this material. A study of the medieval period and of the life of St. Thomas has also been made for a better understanding of his writings.\(^1\)

The analysis of this theory will follow the concepts employed in John F. Cuber and William F. Kenkel's *Social Stratification in the United States*.\(^{13}\) They may be stated in the form of three questions: Is stratification unidimensional or multidimensional? Are social classes discrete categories or do they


form a continuum? Is stratification to be explained in functional terms? Closely related to these questions is the problem of mobility, i.e., whether the class system is open or closed.

Although stratification is recognized as existing, it is not easily defined. Definitions tend to be descriptive and materialistic. Gerth and Mills\textsuperscript{14} describe stratification in the following manner:

Each rank or stratum in a society may be viewed as a stratum by virtue of the fact that all of its members have similar opportunities to get the things and experiences that are valued: things like cars, steady and high incomes, toys, or houses; experiences, like being given respect, being educated to certain levels, or being treated kindly. To belong to one stratum or another is to share with the other people in this stratum similar advantages.

A very similar definition is offered by Gideon Sjoberg: \textsuperscript{15} "a social class is a large aggregate of persons who occupy a similar position in a hierarchy by reason of their having similarly valued objective criteria."

These definitions help to describe what is meant by a class or stratum, and so aid in reaching a better understanding of these terms, but they do not emphasize the superior-inferior relationship that is a major aspect of the stratification system sufficiently, since they describe merely segments of the system.


\textsuperscript{15} "Are Social Classes in America Becoming more Rigid?", \textit{American Sociological Review}, XVI, pp. 775-776.
Also, they tend to portray social classes as being readily identifiable, discrete categories. A part of the scheme for analysis questions whether social classes form discrete categories or a continuum, and these definitions would not include the latter type of stratification. As used in this paper, stratification will mean: "a special type of social differentiation, signifying the existence of a systematic hierarchy of social positions whose occupants are treated as superior, equal, or inferior relative to one another in socially important aspects."16

In the definitions quoted, class is interchangeable with the term stratum. There is a tendency among certain authors to distinguish between the two; class being used more and more frequently to denote economic position.17 To reduce


17 "Differences in income, property, and occupation divide the members of modern societies into several strata or classes. Classes are thus aggregates of individuals and families in similar economic positions."--Ibid., p. 23.

"Class situation, in its simplest objective sense, has to do with the amount and source (property or work) of income as these affect the chances of people to obtain other available values."--Gerth and Mills, Character and Social Structure, p. 307. Mayer, and Gerth and Mills use the term status to refer to differentiation of prestige.

confusion, the term class will be used as seldom as possible in this paper. However, when used, it will denote a group of people occupying a similar position in a hierarchic structure of society.

Stratification may be unidimensional, based on one aspect of social living, or multidimensional, a manifestation of several status rankings. A multidimensional basis is more generally accepted, and the three dimensions most frequently used are economic worth, prestige, and power. Gerth and Mills also include occupation as a fourth dimension, but the majority of authors include occupation in the consideration of the economic worth dimension. Prestige refers to the "distribution of deference in a society," and by power is meant the "realization of one's will, even if this involves the resistance of others." Supporters of the unidimensional theory of stratification ordinarily use only the economic ranking.

W. Lloyd Warner, a pioneer in research on social stratification, has developed a stratification system which is

18 Ibid.; Cuber and Kenkel, Social Stratification, p. 23
19 Character and Social Structure, p. 307.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
composed of five or six discrete, sharply defined groups. More recently, sociologists have challenged his position, claiming the existing stratification system represents a continuum, that "there are several privilege, power, and status ranges, more or less continuous from top to bottom, with no clear lines of demarcation."  

The theory of functionalism was introduced into the literature by Kingsley Davis and W. E. Moore when they explained the presence of stratification in terms of the "requirement faced by any society of placing and motivating individuals in the social structure." According to this theory, certain positions require greater training and preparation than others, and they carry with them grave responsibilities. In order to insure that men will make the sacrifices necessary to fill these positions, society must offer high rewards in the form of prestige or wealth. Tumin has challenged this theory by pointing

22 W. Lloyd Warner, Marchia Meeker, and Kenneth Eells, Social Class in America (Chicago, 1949), is a summary of Warner's major hypotheses and methods.

23 Cuber and Kenkel, Social Stratification, p. 25. A summary of the main arguments favoring the continuum theory is presented on pp. 25-28.


out that the system fails to place the best men in the most important positions at all times, and that some rewards are out of proportion to the function performed. However, it remains true that, to a large extent, there is a proportion between service to society and rewards of prestige, power, and/or wealth, although at times the system is disfunctional as well as functional.

True functionalism is only operative in an open class system, where members are able to move frequently and easily from one stratum to another according to individual ability. Such movement is termed social mobility. In a closed class system, mobility is effectively restricted by factors such as color, religion, or family background. As a consequence, society is often deprived of the benefits it would have gained through proper utilization of the talents and abilities of all its members. Individuals with poor life chances, the members of the lower strata, frequently do not have high aspirations nor do they respond to motivation as they realize that they may never be able to attain the higher positions their abilities warrant. This situation is not limited to the closed class society as it also prevails, though in a lesser degree, in an open class society unless effective measures are taken to prevent it from developing.

Thus, a situation develops in which the stratification is functional in structure, but not in operation. Certain
occupations which require sacrifices in meeting training requirements, deferring personal satisfactions, and accepting responsibilities, reward the individuals who are willing to make the necessary sacrifices by gains in economic and prestige awards. Therefore, stratification is functional in structure. But the individuals who are able to aspire to these high ranking positions are not always the most capable members of society. Many of the capable members of society cannot afford to make the sacrifices mentioned above because they are in the lower strata of society. Differential chances limit aspiration levels.26 The stratification system, by its very nature, effectively blocks the efforts and limits the opportunities of the majority of individuals who compose the lower strata. In this way, stratification operates disfunctionally.27

Stratification does not exist in a vacuum; it is an orderly arrangement of the parts of society. To adequately understand it, therefore, so as to be able to propose principles upon which it should be based, one must first decide what is meant by society.

26 For further explanation of the relationship between status and life chances, see Mayer, Class and Society, Chapter 4, pp. 29-42; and Cuber and Kenkel, Social Stratification, pp. 17-20.

27 "Low life-chances can in many cases weave so inexorable a web around and within one's personality that from birth to the grave he cannot extricate himself from their consequences." Ibid., p. 298.
"Society in its broadest and most universal sense has been adequately defined as the grouping of persons for the accomplishment of some common purpose." In scholastic philosophy, the common purpose of society is the common good. In achieving the common good, or the temporal and spiritual well-being of society, the good of the individual is also achieved. As an individual, each person is merely a part of the whole, a member of society. The good of the whole is superior to the good of the part; therefore, the common good of society is superior to the private good of the individual, and he should serve the common good as a member of the whole. However, as a person, a spiritual being, he is superior to the common good, and so the common good should flow back to him and serve his best interests. This will occur naturally when he serves the common good, since it is in such service that men perfect themselves in the natural order. The end of society is the ethically good life of the community and the perfection of its members. The social order should be organized with this in view so that it may serve this end.


CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL SKETCH

To understand a man's thought adequately, it is necessary to understand, as far as possible, the man himself and the times in which he lived and wrote. As we are mainly interested in the social thought of St. Thomas Aquinas; it is that in his life which fitted him to write on social problems, and the social history of his times with which we are mainly concerned.

St. Thomas lived in what has been called "the heart of the Middle Ages."¹ It was a period of social change—the period of the formation of modern Europe. Father Vann² describes it as "a Renaissance, with a youthful note that the later Renaissance . . . will lack."

European civilization had been built upon feudalism, which is a "form of government based on land tenure . . .

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¹ Maurice de Wulf, Philosophy and Civilization in the Middle Ages (New York, 1953), p. 12.
characterized by political control of the feudal aristocracy. During the twelfth century changes began: politically, with the rise of centralized government in France and England, and the disunion and weakening of the Holy Roman Empire in Germany and Italy; economically, with the increase of commerce and the beginning of industry and banking; socially, with the rise of towns and the breakdown of the feudal system; and spiritually, with the reforms of Cluny and Citeaux, and the spread of the mendicant orders.

The feudal system was designed to meet the needs of people living in a society without sufficient order and authority to safeguard human rights. Each feudal estate was a self-sufficient, independent little world, bound only by loyalty and honor to a sovereign lord, who was acknowledged as king or emperor, or to a lesser lord. One who held land which belonged to another and who administered it for this more powerful lord, was called a vassal. During the centuries the system had grown very complex, and loyalties often conflicted.

Society was divided into three main strata: the clergy, the nobility, and the peasantry. Wealth, power, and prestige belonged to the clergy and the nobility. The clergy offered worship to God and ministered to men's spiritual needs;

3 James Westfall Thompson, History of the Middle Ages, (New York, 1931), p. 252.
the nobles governed and carried on warfare; the peasants labored to support themselves and the two privileged classes. Duties and rights were strictly defined and universally recognized.\(^4\)

Each of these strata was subdivided into several levels. The peasant class was almost totally composed of serfs. Slaves formed the lowest stratum, then the serfs of unfree origin. Above these were serfs who had exchanged freedom for protection during the ninth century. These groups tended to merge into one stratum as time went by. They were bound to the land and were sold with it. The highest form of serfdom was villeinage. Villeins were dependent freemen who were allotted lands from the lord's demesne. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries a free peasant group developed as peasants acquired tracts of land newly broken out of forest or waste.\(^5\)

Among the nobility, there were lesser and greater lords, depending on ownership of land. Relations often became very complex under systems of vassalage and sovereignty. Social differences were indicated by title, and though the titles were not universally applied, dukes and margraves were the greatest nobles. Certain great counts were their peers, but most counts were lower in rank and formed the most numerous group. Then came the lowest unit, composed of viscounts and barons.\(^5\)

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 267. 

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 255.
Among the clergy, there was a hierarchy based on both spiritual power and temporal possessions. The Church claimed sovereignty over the state in matters pertaining to faith and morals. Except for the parish priests and the mendicant orders, clergymen and monks owned land and possessed corresponding wealth and power. The ecclesiastical order was much as it is today: Pope, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, monsignors, and priests; but it was complicated politically by feudal holdings and vassalage.

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the growth of population forced younger sons to seek a form of life apart from the rural manors. Many became interested in commerce and found their fortunes in importing luxuries from other lands. Cities and towns began to spring up and a new class was formed—a merchant class. The merchants seem to have been the first to form guilds to protect themselves from excessive competition and to protect the quality of goods sold. As commerce became more complex, craft guilds began to arise. An occupational hierarchy developed within the craft guilds, based on knowledge and workmanship. The novice in a craft was apprenticed to a master. As his skill increased, the apprentice became a journeyman. When he finally was able to produce his "master-piece" he became a master. The apprentices and journeymen were treated as social equals by the masters during the early development of the guilds. Later, during the last half of the thirteenth cen-
tury, an employer-employee relationship developed and the guilds became less democratic and displayed monopolistic tendencies. Often the guilds acquired political power, sometimes jointly controlling the city, at other times one guild would dominate.

With the growth of cities, a market for agricultural products was developed. Formerly, feudal estates had supplied food only for consumption by those who dwelt on the estate. There was no use for surplus food. Lords who owned land near the newly formed towns, however, now found it profitable to raise food for sale. It became necessary to cultivate more land to support the townsfolk. In the areas that commercially were important, land and freedom were offered as inducements to peasants to settle on a lord's estate as tenants or colonists. These peasants were usually serfs who had left their former lords and had eluded pursuit.

Colonization of land was furthered by the Cistercian monks who drained and cleared large areas of land formerly considered worthless. Members of the nobility saw in it a means of rebuilding impaired fortunes; and merchants, through their civil governments, financed agricultural colonies near newly established trading centers to ensure a supply of foodstuffs for the townspeople. These changes greatly liberalized the opportunities of the serfs, who could settle as colonists in the newly opened areas, or could obtain freedom in the towns.
As a result, the rights and privileges of the lords were gradually reduced as they had to make concessions to the serfs to keep them from running away. However, the feudal system was never entirely abolished during these centuries. Seigneurial authority remained, as did the servile class, but powers of the former grew steadily less, and duties of the latter became easier.

With the increase of trade there was a corresponding increase in the use of money. Banking developed, particularly in Italy, and the Italian bankers soon had a monopoly on the banking system. Cash revenues became a necessity for the nobility, and many were reduced to debt and then to ruin for, although prices rose, feudal duties and rights, established by custom, remained the same. To meet the change in the economic system, lords began to sell enfranchisement, labor services and other feudal dues could be commuted for money, and demesne lands were often leased for cash. Self-government was granted to towns in return for financial support of the lords. During the thirteenth century, tenants began to receive leases to their lands. In this way the lords were able to circumvent the otherwise unchangeable system of feudal payments. Increased trade helped to develop specialization in agriculture. The more successful of the bourgeoisie and the peasants purchased land of their own, for land was still considered the main source and the most important symbol of wealth.
These changes did not occur simultaneously throughout Europe. The decay of the manorial system advanced in proportion to the development of commerce. As Henri Pirenne⁶ points out, "the changes in agricultural organisation and in the condition of the rural classes were very slow in all those parts of Europe which were not opened up by the great trade routes. Moreover, even where progress had been most rapid, the sway of the past remained powerful. . . . All things considered, the rural masses, who numerically formed the overwhelming majority of the population, played a purely passive role." However, in the parts of Europe where Saint Thomas Aquinas lived and wrote, these changes were occurring rapidly. The Low Countries and northern Italy were particularly progressive. In Germany the powerful Hanseatic League had developed, and in Italy the cities of Lombardy had shown their power, a power which was very real. The French monarchy used the militia of the cities to defeat unruly nobles, and the militia of the Lombard Cities defeated the Emperor Frederick I.

During the latter decades of the twelfth and the first half of the thirteenth centuries, the emperors had made many attempts to consolidate and increase their holdings. These attempts were unsuccessfully concluded upon the death of Frederick II in 1250. Germany and Italy disintegrated into numerous

principalities, large and small, often engaged in warring among themselves. In the meantime, the Capetians had already strengthened the French monarchy, and France enjoyed a unique position during the thirteenth century, although it had remained more agricultural than industrial. Paris was the "international city"—the "patria of the mind, the rival in men's hearts of Rome."8

The political and social turmoil of the time was matched by the intellectual ferment. Universities were springing up as the increasing population, and its concentration in towns, taxed the existing schools. To attract citizens, many of the larger towns tried to outdo one another in the establishment of schools. As the schools grew, the intellectual level was raised and they developed into universities. To add to the ferment, Aristotle had been re-discovered. This provoked a controversy that challenged men's wits, and helped to produce men of outstanding intellectual stature. Towering over them all, as the man who resolved the conflict between Aristotle and Christian philosophy, was St. Thomas Aquinas.

About the year 1225, during the wars between Frederick II and the Papacy, Thomas Aquinas was born at Roccasecca near

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7 Ibid., p. 155.

Naples. His mother was a Norman, Theodora, Countess of Teano, and his father was Landulf, Count of Aquin, nephew of Frederick Barbarossa.

At the age of five, Thomas was sent to the Benedictine Abbey at Monte Cassino. Due to renewed attacks on the monastery by Emperor Frederick II, he was removed from the abbey at the age of fourteen or fifteen and sent to Naples. Here he became acquainted with the Dominicans, and he took the habit in 1244. The mendicant orders were not well received in Europe at this time, and the noble Aquino family were not at all pleased with their son's choice. They had planned to make Thomas the abbot of Monte Cassino, a much more lucrative position in life, and far more suited to his social position than the one he was espousing. When they realized Thomas intended to remain a friar, they persuaded Pope Innocent IV to offer Thomas the abbacy of Monte Cassino, with the privilege of continuing to wear the Dominican habit. This plan failed, so Thomas was kidnapped by two of his brothers while on his way to Paris, and carried off to Roccasecca where he was kept a prisoner for a year. Persuasion and even temptation were unable to move him, and finally he either escaped or was released by his family, and rejoined the Dominicans.

Saint Thomas was sent to Paris to study under Saint Albert Magnus, who soon recognized the genius of his pupil, and
stimulated its growth and perfection. Albert was already an Aristotelian, and Saint Thomas soon developed a firm appreciation of Aristotle's logic and wisdom. When Albert went to Cologne in 1248, Thomas accompanied him and continued his studies for another four years. He then returned to Paris to begin teaching, and was made a Master in Theology in 1256. During this period he was called upon to defend the right of the friars to teach in the universities, a task he ably fulfilled.

In 1259, Thomas was summoned to Italy where he taught at the papal courts and was employed in various duties by the popes. Recalled to Paris in 1269, he spent four years defending his teachings from the attacks of Averroists, who interpreted Aristotle falsely, and the Augustinians, who would have condemned Aristotle altogether. His most formidable opponent was Siger de Brabant, an Averroist, but in 1270 Thomas gained a victory when thirteen propositions of Siger were condemned by the Bishop of Paris.

Thomas returned to Italy, and in 1274 was summoned by the Pope to the Council of Lyons. On the way he fell ill while visiting his sister in Campania. At his request, he was moved to the Cistercian monastery of Fossanuova where he died on March 7, 1274.

Saint Thomas is pictured as a tall, corpulent man. He was heavy and slow-moving, given to deep thought and contemplation which at times caused him to forget his surroundings.
There was about him a gentle serenity and evenness of temper, a kindness and humility, that was the most eloquent testimonial to the depth and clarity of his wisdom. His family background, his education, his choice of religious order, all gave him a cosmopolitan training and richness of experience that made him keenly aware of the social structure of his day. Born in Italy, he was educated in Germany, and taught in Rome and Paris—the two centers of the civilized world of the time. Chesterton aptly describes him as "the International Man . . . [who] . . . lived in the International Age."

Alive to the social problems of his day, Saint Thomas had the vision and genius to see deeply into, and beyond, these problems to that which is abiding because built on the nature of man. And because the time in which he lived was a time of change and strife, a time in which the social structure was rapidly changing, a time of challenge and of greatness, a time much like the present, it is of great profit to turn to his wisdom and knowledge of what is basic in man and society, for a clearer understanding of society as it ought to be. For though societies change, man's nature, upon which all society is based, does not. The moral principles by which all society must be guided if it is to realize its purpose, the common good, are eternally true.

CHAPTER III

THE NECESSITY OF STRATIFICATION
ACCORDING TO ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

It is not completely true that "all men are created equal," for ordinary observation of those about us reveals that men differ in talent, abilities, physical properties, and temperament. Some men are gifted with superior intellectual powers; others possess artistic skills; still others have greater physical strength and prowess. There are those who have a natural aptitude for leadership, while the vast majority do not possess the qualities of attracting and swaying men, of organization and command, that are necessary to develop into leaders. There exists a natural inequality among men in the physical, mental, spiritual, and moral realms, an inequality which is enhanced by differences in training, environment, and opportunity.

This inequality arises as a manifestation of Divine Providence; it is part of God's plan of creation. "As the divine wisdom is the cause of the distinction of things for the sake of the perfection of the universe, so is it the cause
of inequality."¹ What God does is marked by harmony based on right order. Right order can only be maintained when each object, each creature, has its proper place assigned to it. As St. Thomas states: "it belongs to Divine Providence to keep all things subject to it within the bounds of right order: so that, to wit, each thing be in its place and degree."² Thus it appears that God created the whole universe so that it reflects His order and harmony. The moon, the stars, the sun, and other heavenly bodies, have their appointed places in the universe. Here, on our planet, there is a subjection of inanimate to animate beings; with a further ordering of plants to animals and of animals to man. A diversity of beings was created to sustain, assist, and complement each other, and to complete the harmonious whole designed by God.

To be perfect, the universe had to be composed of diverse things. To refer to St. Thomas:

[E]ach and every part exists for the sake of its proper act . . . less honorable parts exist for the more honorable . . . all parts are for the perfection of the whole, as the matter for the form, since the parts are, as it were, the matter of the whole. . . . in the parts of the universe . . . every creature exists for its own proper act and perfection, and the less noble for the

¹ S.T., I, q. 47, a. 2, c., I, 247.

² St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, Literally Translated by the English Dominican Fathers, (London, 1923-1929), Book III, Chapter 78, IV, 125.
nobler, as those creatures that are less noble than man exist for the sake of man, whilst each and every creature exists for the perfection of the entire universe. Diversity is necessary for the perfection of the universe, and diversity gives rise to inequality; therefore, "inequality comes from the perfection of the whole."

This inequality is reflected and continued within human society. The purpose of all creation is to aid man in the fulfillment of God's plan and his own destiny. That this plan may be brought to successful completion, it was necessary that men be granted different gifts of nature and grace. Scripture tells us that man is created in the image and likeness of God, but God is infinite and cannot be reflected in a finite being except in an imperfect manner. It requires many men of varying gifts and abilities to approximate the image of God. Just as the stones in a building are placed in different parts to secure the perfection of the entire building, so too, men are placed in various levels to secure their proper relation to one another and to God.

Inequality among men is so basic it would have existed even in the primitive state of innocence. St. Thomas remarks:

"In the primitive state there would have been some inequality, at least as regards sex . . . and likewise as regards age . . . ."

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3 S.T., I, q. 65, a. 2, c., I, 326.

4 S.T., I, q. 47, a. 2, ad. 3, I, 247.
Moreover, as regards the soul, there would have been inequality, as to righteousness and knowledge. For man worked not of necessity, but of his own free-will... hence some would have made a greater advance in virtue and knowledge than others.

There might also have been bodily disparity. For the human body was not entirely exempt from the laws of nature, so as not to receive from exterior sources more or less advantage and help.

The first natural inequality that arises is that which exists in mental capacity. Following Aristotle, St. Thomas saw all men as falling into either of two groups: those endowed with greater foresight and prudence, and those having greater bodily strength. The former are more capable of directing and commanding, while the latter are better suited for executing the commands of the more intellectual. "Those who excel in intellect are naturally rulers, whereas those who are less intelligent, but strong in body, seem made by nature for service."

The inability of man to provide for all his own needs supplements this natural inequality. Man is a "social and

5 S.T., I, q. 96, a. 3, c., I, 487-488.

6 "Ille est naturaliter principans et dominans qui suo intellectu potest praevidere ea quae congruunt saluti, puta causando proficua et repellendo novica: ille autem qui potest per fortitudinem corporis implore opere quod sapiens mente praeviderit, est naturaliter subjectus et servus."--St. Thomas Aquinas, In Octo Libros Politicorum Aristotelis Expositio, (Quebec, 1940), Liber I, Lectio I, p. II.

7 Q.Q., III, 81, III, 206.
political animal," who, by nature, must live in a group. He needs the society of other men to reach his fullest development as a human being. Even in the most primitive societies, division of labor was necessary at least between male and female, young and old. The advance of civilization could only be accomplished when men learned to cooperate, each contributing to the welfare of all through his labor according to his ability. It is "necessary for man to live in a group so that each one may assist his fellows, and different men may be occupied in seeking by their reason to make different discoveries, one, for example, in medicine, one in this and another in that." 

Recognizing the providence of God as the cause of inequality among men, St. Thomas wrote:

[I]n what pertains to all mankind, one man is not able to do all things which are needed in a society, and, accordingly different people work at different tasks. This diversity of men in different functions happens in the first place, by Divine Providence which has so distributed the types of men that nothing necessary for life will ever be found wanting. But this also comes about from natural influences by which different men have different inclinations for this function or that manner of life. Because many things are needed for man's livelihood for which one man is not sufficient for himself, it is necessary

8 St. Thomas Aquinas, On the Governance of Rulers, tr. by Gerald B. Phelan, (New York, 1938), p. 34.

9 Ibid., pp. 34-35.
that different things be done by different men, that
some, for instance, should cultivate the land, that
some build houses and so forth.\textsuperscript{10}

To fulfill the many tasks necessary to preserve life and civiliza-
tion, God has granted various talents to men. For these talents
to be used to the best advantage, in harmony and peace, it is
necessary that a hierarchical relationship be established. And
this relationship arises naturally because of the nature of the
abilities granted to each individual. Here the universal primacy
of the spiritual over the corporal is reflected, as talents of
an intellectual nature take precedence over those of a physical
nature.

The divisions of labor which arise from the two causes
mentioned above; namely, the natural inequality of talents among
men, and man's inability to satisfy his needs by himself, is
further augmented in modern civilization by the creation of
artificial needs and the multiplication of means of gratifying
them. The progress of civilization has been marked by increasing
specialization and division of labor. As a consequence, the
natural inequalities of man have been intensified by the multi-
plication of opportunities for the use of talent. However, of
themselves these inequalities are "neither unjust nor undemocratic.

\textsuperscript{10} St. Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Quaestiones Quodlibetales},
\textit{Quodlibetum} 7, q. 7, a. 17, c., quoted by Rev. B. W. Dempsey,
They are societal, they postulate wide and united cooperation for the realization of elemental purposes of human living. Through these inequalities man learns to work with others and for others. He fulfills not only his material needs in this way, but also his spiritual needs, and thus more fully realizes the purpose of his existence.

Division of labor results in a splitting of the whole, society, into parts, occupational groups. However, if the "wide and united cooperation" mentioned above is to be achieved, these parts must be fitted together, must be ordered to one another. As this ordering forms a hierarchy, stratification occurs. In nature there is a subjection of the inferior to the superior; so also among men, the inferior must be subject. It is for this reason that intellectual inequalities were willed by God. "For good order would have been wanting in the human family if some were not governed by others wiser than themselves."

The diverse activities of men must be coordinated and directed toward the common good. Coordination requires that there be a relation of authority among men. Whenever men come together to form a group, it is necessary that some be endowed with authority to rule and others be disposed to accept their

11 Smith, Human Social Life, p. 25.
12 C.G., III, 79, IV, 128.
13 S.T., I, q. 92, a. 1, ad. 2, I, 466-467.
rule. "If, therefore, it is natural for man to live in the society of many, it is necessary that there exist among men some means by which the group may be governed. For where there are many men together, and each one is looking after his own interest, the group would be broken up and scattered unless there were also someone to take care of what appertains to the common weal." 14

Therefore Jacques Maritain 15 states that this relation of authority is demanded by natural law. An additional reason for the necessity of authority is adduced from the fact that some men surpass others in knowledge and virtue. "[T]he intellectual power by its very nature is a directive and governing power . . . those men who excel in the operative power need to be directed by those who excel in the intellectual power." 16 Some men are better managers and organizers than others; some are gifted with powers to persuade and attract. These are special gifts from God, and they are developed through the providence of God. St. Thomas points out that "this would not be fitting unless these gifts conduced to the benefit of others." 17

14 On the Governance of Rulers, p. 35.
15 Maritain, Scholasticism and Politics, p. 103.
16 C.C., III, 78, IV, 126.
17 S.T., I, q. 97, a. 4, c., I, 489.
Thus it can be seen that inequality gives rise to diversity, and diversity demands authority if peace and harmony are to be maintained. Authority, in turn, becomes another cause of inequality for it places a few individuals over others.

So far the necessity of stratification has been considered by viewing the parts: man, diversity of occupations, and authority. Now it will be considered by viewing the whole, society. Men come together and form groups through necessity, as has been demonstrated. Their ultimate reason for doing so is their eternal welfare. Their immediate reason is their temporal well-being, which is a means to the realization of their final goal.

"Now, every man is ordered to God by the divine law. Therefore it behooved the divine law to establish an ordered harmony, which is peace, among men, lest they be a hindrance to one another."\(^{18}\) As man is ordered to God as his last end, society must aid man to achieve his destiny. The end of society, therefore, is the common good, or the ethically good life of its members. This good, which is the good of the whole, rises superior to the good of the parts.

As the good of the whole is superior to the good of the part, so also the whole itself is superior to the part. The parts are subordinate to the whole, as the hand or the foot of a man

\(^{18}\) C.G., III, 78, IV, 126.
is subordinate to the whole man. In this subordination of parts there must be a hierarchical arrangement if good order is to be maintained. "A totality without hierarchy,--a whole without subordination of the parts to the whole,--such a supernatural marvel can only be found in the Divine Trinity."¹⁹

The state, or political community, is a natural society which has a real existence. It is an existence of order, not an existence of being, but it is a necessary institution. It forms the whole of which man is a part. It forms the whole which man must serve to realize the fulfillment of his human nature.

The political community having, in so far as it is a whole, its own reality, its own unity, and its own life, is by this very fact superior to its parts as such, and demands a hierarchic distribution of its organs; . . . Moreover, since the common work and the common good of the multitude must be procured in a world of contingency and singularity, which is the world of existence and of history, the agreement of minds cannot there be simply achieved by virtue of objective causality . . . It demands a practical direction proceeding from minds invested with a judgment and a command of operations.²⁰

The state, therefore, is superior to man as an individual, a material being. It can command man as long as it tends toward the common good. The private good of a man is subordinate to the good of society, and he must serve the common good.

¹⁹ Maritain, Scholasticism and Politics, p. 97.
²⁰ Ibid., p. 98.
This does not mean that man exists only for the state. Man, as an individual, as a part of the whole, is subordinate to the state. But as a person, a spiritual being with an eternal end, he is superior to the state, and the common good is only a good if it flows back to the members of society and promotes the best interests of each. It is the duty of authority to harmonize and order the parts so that their service of the state will result in their own perfection as human beings.

To summarize what has been said; the necessity of stratification rises from the following facts:

1. There exists a natural inequality among men based on an unequal distribution of talents.
   
2. Man is not able to fulfill his needs by himself, he requires the assistance of others.
   
3. When men come together in groups, they must be directed by some authority if peace and harmony are to prevail.
   
4. The common good can only be achieved through the subordination of the parts to the whole and a hierarchical ordering of the parts to each other.

Analysis of these concepts indicates that stratification is primarily functional, since it arises as a response to man's 21

21 Ibid., pp. 69-73.
needs, and ability is a major determinant of status. If ability is to be fully utilized so that each individual will attain the position for which he is best suited by nature, society must be composed of open classes. In this way, movement from one class to another will be frequent and easy. Those who are most capable intellectually will reach the highest positions, and possess the greatest authority. As authority tends to increase social distance, it can be considered as another dimension. Thus stratification appears to be multidimensional, with the two dimensions, ability and authority, reinforcing one another.
CHAPTER IV

THE SYSTEM OF STRATIFICATION ACCORDING
TO ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

A major difficulty presents itself in the discussion of stratification as presented in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, because he never directly wrote on the subject. In the Commentary on Aristotle's Politics, Book IV is devoted to a discussion of stratification, but Frederick Copleston, S.J., states that Peter of Auvergne completed the Commentary from Book III, Lesson 7.¹ This is substantiated by Vernon J. Bourke, in his Thomistic Bibliography.² Due to the respect in which St. Thomas held Aristotle, it could be assumed that here, as in so many other instances, St. Thomas would accept most of Aristotle's teachings since they do not contradict the teachings of Christianity. Bearing in mind the statement of A.D. Sertillanges³

³ Thomas Aquinas and His Work, p. 17.
that "St. Thomas adopted Aristotle's principles as a kind of framework," it may not be out of place to turn to Aristotle for the framework upon which to base this chapter, and particularly to the Commentary since it represents a Thomistic analysis and interpretation. Further justification for doing so arises from the fact that principles concerning relationships between status groups gleaned from authentic writings of St. Thomas indicate an agreement with the Aristotelian analysis of the social structure. Therefore, as a framework upon which to base a discussion of stratification, the following free translation of the pertinent sections of the Commentary is presented.

Although there are many groups in the political body, there seem to be two main ones—the rich and the poor. These two are the most opposed and are mutually exclusive, for though the same man can be a soldier, a farmer, a judge, and also virtuous, he cannot be both rich and poor at the same time. These two types are also most distinctive because the rich are generally few in number, while the poor are many.  

4 "In prima dicit quod cum sint multae partes civitatis; duae tamen videntur esse principales, et maxime oppositae; silicet divites et egeni. Alias enim partes contingit multis eisdem existere simul; verbi gratia idem possunt esse propugnantes et agricolae et artifices. Iterum idem possunt esse consiliantes et judicantes. Iterum cum his possunt esse virtuosi. Sed impossibile est unum et eundem simul esse divitem et pauperem. . . . Et dicit quod iterum divites et egeni videntur duae partes esse civitatis maxime contrariae, quia ut in pluribus divites sunt pauci et pauperes multi."—Liber IV, Lectio III, p. 207.
two most contrary classes, there is also, in most states, a middle class, one that is neither very rich nor very poor. 5

Within these main groups, there are smaller groups or categories. Among the poor, these divisions are based on material possessions or occupations, while distinctions among the rich are made on the basis of power. The different groups of common people are the farmers, the tradesmen, workmen, sailors, etc. These can be divided once more into sub-types. For example, some sailors sail only on warships, others are traders, others carry passengers or freight, while others spend their time in fishing. The lowest group among the common people is composed of those who must work for hire as they have nothing with which to sustain themselves, and those who are not free-born.

The upper ranks are distinguished into parts for some have riches, others are noble, others are virtuous and learned. Whoever is similar to these belongs to the upper class. 6 Very

5 "Item in multitudine civitatis quidam sunt divites et opulenti, quidam pauperes, paucam ut nullam habentes substantiam; quidam medii."--Liber IV, Lectio II, p. 199.

6 "In prima dicit quod plures sunt partes populi, differentes secundum speciem; et divitum similiter. Una quidem species vel pars populi est agricultura: alia circa artes, sicut operatores, alia quae versatur circa emptionem et venditionem; alia quae circa mare; et ista multas habet sub se species. Quae-dam enim est quae ordinatur ad bellicas operationes, alia quae ad pecunias acquirendas; alia est nautica solum quae merces venit; alia ad piscandum. . . . Ulterius est alia pars populi quae dicitur manualis, quae laborat manibus. Hoc autem est, quia modicam habent substantiam tales, unde possunt vivere; . . . Ulterius est alia species populi: scilicet si aliquis homo natus sit ex
often power resides with the wealthy, since these offices are unable to endure without wealth. Within the middle stratum, there are some who excel according to family and wealth, others excel in virtue.7

Of all the groups of the city, the middle group is the most necessary and the most excellent. Just as virtue is to be found in the middle way, so too, the best society is composed of those in the middle state. And this is true because society, or the state, is born of the citizens, and their life is the state's life. If then, virtue is found in the middle, the good life of the republic will be found in those of the middle class.8

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7 "Quidam enim sunt divites eo quod vacant circa nutrituinem equorum et aliorum animalium: tales enim non est difficile fieri divites: illud enim munus non possunt ferre nisi divites; et ideo antiquitus in illis civitatibus quorum potentia erat in equis et animalibus, erat politia paucorum: isti enim utebantur equis quos nutriebant contra adversarios, sicut contra vicinos; ...

Subdivit medios; et dicit quid praeter differentias istorum divitum sunt aliae differentiae mediorum: quorum quidam exceedunt secundum genus et nobilitatem, alii exceedunt secundum virtute."—Liber IV, Lectio II, p. 200.

8 "Qua respublica comparatur ad civitatem sicut vita. Est enim respublica ordo civitatis. Ordo autem vita est quaedam ejus, cujus est. Ideo respublica vita est civitatis. Et sicut cessante vita cessat illud cujus est, sic cessante respublica cessat civitas. . . .
This is true for the following four reasons. First, neither the rich nor the poor easily obey reason. Those who do excel in beauty, fortitude, nobility, or fortune, do not submit easily to reason because they despise others and are inclined to use them for personal gain. Also, they often indulge in disorderly pleasures and thus become worthless, for these things make them decline from right reason. Moreover, the poor, the weak, and the vile become greedy and are worthless in small ways. They practise fraud or deceit in the effort to gain riches and power, often harming persons through cunning and contempt. Thus, neither the rich nor the poor easily obey reason.9

9 "Probat hoc per rationes. Et dividitur in quatuor, secundum quod probat per quatuor rationes... In prima intendit istam rationem. Illi sunt optimi cives, qui facillime obediunt rationi: sed medi in civitate facillime obediunt rationi, non autem extreimi: ergo medi sunt optimi cives... Et ratio hujus est quia ille qui excedit, vel in pulchritudine, vel in fortitudine, vel in nobilitate, vel divitias alios contemnit, et fit injuriosus, et inclinatur etiam propter exessum alijus istorum ad inordinates delectationes, et sunt nequam magis, quia ista eos faciunt declinare ab eo quod est secundum rationem rectam. Egeni autem, valde debiles vel viles, deficiunt a ratione et fiunt avari, et in parvis nequam valde... Isti autem superegeni diversos modos et diversas vias inveniunt, quibus possint habere divitias, vel potentiam, vel alium tale, praeter rationem. Propter quod manifestum est quod sunt astuti et nequam in parvis valde."--Ibid., p. 230.
Second, they do not love their rulers nor care for the common good. Those are best in the state who love their rulers, care for the magistrates, and consider well the common good. But the rich do not love masters, nor do they consider the common good. Neither are they willing to sacrifice their own interests and pursuits to serve in public office. The poor do not love rulers for they consider themselves oppressed by them, and they cannot afford to neglect their living to serve in public offices since they are barely able to survive.

Third, the rich and poor also fail to obey their rulers. The rich have never learned to obey, and this inability comes to them from childhood. They are not accustomed to subjection even to their teachers, and they cannot incline later to the opposite of that to which they have been inclined since birth. Those who are very poor hate their rulers for they believe themselves oppressed, and are not subject but servile to them. If society were composed of only these two classes, it would be a society of slaves and masters.

10 "Illi sunt optime in civitate, qui amant principes et magistratus curant, ac bene consulunt bono republicae: sed mediis amant principes, non autem extremai. Illae enim, qui sunt excellenter divites, non amant ipsos, nec consequenter bene consulunt: haec autem republicae damnosa sunt. Iste pauperes etiam principes non amant, quia opprimi reputant se ab eis. Quare manifestum est, quod extremai non sunt optimi civis."—Ibid.

11 "[Q]ua quia illi qui excedunt alios in bonis fortunae, sicut in divitiis, potentibus, et in amicis et in consimilibus, nec subjici volunt aliis nec scient. Et hoc instat statim eis a
Fourth, the poor envy the rich since they have what the poor lack. And the poor plot against the rich to overthrow them and seize their riches. The rich, seeing that they possess what the poor do not, despise the poor and treat them with contempt. Those of the middle stratum, however, as they have enough for their own needs, do not envy the rich. As they do not have an overabundance, they are not contemptuous either, nor are they subject to the envy and plotting of the poor. 12

In the ideal society, greater equality will exist, and envy and hatred will be kept at a minimum. There will always be differences, but extremes must be avoided. This final aspect of stratification is what most concerned St. Thomas Aquinas, since

pueritia. Nam a pueritia in delitiis nutriti sunt. Et ideo doc-toribus non sunt assueti subjici; propter hoc non subjici, eis volunt, quia non possunt inclinari ad oppositum ejus ad quid in-cinatur ex assuetudine: sed statim ex nativitate inclinantur ad oppositum ejus quod est subjici. Et ideo etiam addiscere nolunt. Istri etiam qui excellenter egene sunt, intantum sunt humiles, quod nescient principari, sed subjici etiam servili prin-cipatu; nam subjiciuntur principatu despotico qui est domini ad servum. Si igitur civitas sit ex istis, erit ex servis et domi-nis."--Ibid.

12 "[I]lli qui sunt de numero egenorum invidentes sunt. Illi autem qui sunt de numero excedentium in bonis fortunae, con-temnentes sunt alios, et hoc appareat. Divites enim et potentes videntes se habere ea quae non habent alii, illos despiciunt et contemnunt. Egeni et deficientes videntes quod non habent ea quae alii habent, invident illis, sed mediis non. Quia enim ad sufficicntiam habent, non invident: non contemnunt autem, quia non sunt valde excedentes."--Ibid., p. 231.
it involves a moral relation between men. The various excerpts from his writings which deal with the relationship of the rich to the poor are substantially in agreement with Aristotle's analysis. For St. Thomas as for Aristotle, there are two main divisions of society—the rich and the poor. St. Thomas, however, recognizes in the existence of these two groups the designs of Providence. He agrees with Aristotle on the necessity of reducing inequalities in society, but he looks to the good of the person rather than merely the good of the state. According to Father Murphy, St. Thomas insinuates that "if a man has more than he should, he is not what he ought to be."  

To lessen inequality between men, the state should make regulations to prevent wealth from falling into the hands of a few. Thus, in some states of ancient times, it was forbidden that anyone sell his possessions except in great need; and under the Old Law, the Old Testament, transfer of ownership was permitted only in cases of necessity, and was valid for a certain period. At the expiration of the stipulated period, usually seven years, possessions had to be returned to the original owner or to his heirs.  

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14 S.T., I-II, q. 105, a. 2, ad. 3, I, 1095-1096.
advantage of the need of his neighbor for his own advancement, and men were prevented from accumulating large estates through the impoverishment of others.

Regulation by the state to lessen inequality will never abolish inequality, nor should it attempt to. As was shown in the previous chapter, there will always be inequalities; therefore, there will always be stratification. It is necessary, then, to discover what the basis of stratification ought to be. Wealth is not a sufficient basis since it is a commodity outside of the person who possesses it, and it cannot affect his intrinsic worth. St. Thomas teaches that

virtue alone is the due cause of a person being honored. . . . a person may be honored not only for his own virtue, but also for another's: thus princes and prelates, although they be wicked, are honored as standing in God's place, and as representing the community . . . The aged should be honored, because old age is a sign of virtue, though the sign fail at times . . . The rich ought to be honored by reason of their occupying a higher position in the community: but if they be honored merely for their wealth, it will be the sin of respect of persons.15

Although all virtuous men are worthy of honor, there are gradations of respect and honor due. Those who rule the community are worthy of the highest honor, while those in authority of any kind or who contribute more to the common good than others, are deserving of more honor than those who do less.

15 S.T., II-II, q. 63, a. 3, c., II, 1464-1465.
In all arts and positions of authority they are more worthy of praise who rule others well than those who live well under others' direction. In speculative matters, for instance, it is greater to impart truth to others by teaching them than to be able to grasp what is taught by others. So, too, among the crafts an architect who plans a building is more highly esteemed and paid a higher wage when the builder who does the manual labour under his direction: also in warfare the strategy of the general wins greater glory from victory than the bravery of the soldier. It is the same for the ruler of a multitude.  

As the highest power of man is the intellectual power, those who excel in this power should be placed in authority over other men for "those who excel in intellect are naturally rulers . . . [also] . . . disorder results when a man is set in authority, not because of his excellency in intellect, but because he has usurped the government by bodily force, or because he has been appointed to rule through motives of sensual desire."  

Virtue and intellectual power are the main criteria of a man's worth; those who possess these in the highest degree are to be given the highest positions and the greatest honor, that of guiding others and directing them to the common good.

From the fact that some are more worthy of honor than others, there also arises a distinction among ranks, even as regards material possessions. Although extremes of wealth and

16 On the Governance of Rulers, pp. 73-74.

17 C.G., III, 81, III, 206.
poverty should be guarded against, this does not mean that per-
fected equality should exist in the distribution of material goods.
In the quotation cited above, St. Thomas states that "an architect
who plans a building is more highly esteemed and paid a higher
wage than the builder who does the manual labour." Thus recogni-
tion is given to the differing value of the contribution each
individual or group makes to society. This recognition takes
forms other than pecuniary returns. As far as whole groups or
strata are concerned, this recognition may mean greater rights
or privileges commensurate with duties imposed on certain occu-
pational groups. "Rights must be carefully defined; not only
the general ones, but those of particular classes of the people,
such as the military, magisterial, etc. Each man is to be ac-
corded that which befits his office and station." 18 But no man
is to be accorded more than he deserves.

One of the most important aspects of stratification,
and one that is at the root of class antagonism, is the problem
of relationships between the wealthy and the poor. Those who
possess more of the world's goods than others have certain obli-
gations towards the less fortunate. St. Thomas distinguishes
here between the right to own and the right to use. "The tem-
poral goods which God grants us, are ours as to the ownership,

18 Murphy, "Purpose of the State," Scholastic Philo-
osophy, p. 110.
but as to the use of them, they belong not to us alone but also to such others as we are able to succor out of what we have over and above our needs."¹⁹ Ownership, the right to have and to dispose of property, is merely a stewardship since all things were made by God and ultimately belong to Him. To fulfill our needs, God permits us to take possession of His property and use it as though it were our own. Some are permitted to own more than others; "excess of riches is granted by God to some, in order that they may obtain the merit of a good stewardship."²⁰ Those who possess goods in excess of their own needs have the duty of aiding others, and may sin mortally by not fulfilling this duty.²¹ However, a man need not give away all he possesses, nor does his stewardship require that he give until an equality is established between himself and his neighbor. A man's needs differ with his station in life. Therefore, "it would be inordinate to deprive oneself of one's own, in order to give to others to such an extent that the residue would be insufficient for one to live in keeping with one's station and the ordinary occurrences of life; for no man ought to live unbecomingly."²²

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19 S.T., II-II, q. 32, a. 5, ad. 2, II, 1328.
20 S.T., II-II, q. 117, a. 1, ad. 1, II, 1681.
21 S.T., II-II, q. 32, a. 5, ad. 3, II, 1328.
22 S.T., II-II, q. 32, a. 6, c., II, 1329.
Ownership is private, but use should be in common. In this respect, duties are reciprocal for goods belong to all in common in two ways. First, as regards care. All should share the burden of caring for property by not damaging it, by not deliberately or through negligence causing loss, and by returning lost goods or property to the rightful owner. Secondly, as regards fruits. Under the old law of the Jews, all were allowed to eat the fruit of the vine, or the corn from the fields, but they were not allowed to carry any away with them. Also, forgotten sheaves or bunches of grapes were to be left behind for the poor. The purpose of this was "to accustom men to give of their own to others readily." If the rich fail to help the poor, and reduce them to great need, a man may take what is necessary to preserve life. St. Thomas states that "if the need be so manifest and urgent, that it is evident that the present need must be remedied by whatever means be at hand ... then it is lawful for a man to succor his own need by means of another's property, by taking it either openly or secretly: nor is this properly speaking theft or robbery."
Besides the relationship between rich and poor, there is also the relationship between rulers and ruled to be considered. Those who are subject to authority owe respect and obedience to this authority; a respect which is due in conscience and which does not depend on the will of the people. "Men being equal in essence, this exigency of the political totality,—that one should be placed above the other to guide the common work,—can establish a genuine right to be obeyed." 26 All men share this duty toward those in authority, since acceptance of governance by others is essential to the harmonious development of the social order.

The principle of subordination requires that each individual subordinate his activity to the common good so that he and his fellowmen may reach their ultimate goal. "Since... every man is a part of the state, it is impossible that a man be good, unless he be well proportionate to the common good." 27 Selfishness and self-seeking injure the harmony of a well-ordered community, whether it be the selfishness of the individual or the selfishness of a group or economic stratum. The only effective force to counteract this selfishness is charity, specifically that charity termed social. "What the man's soul is to his body,

27 *S.T.*, I-II, q. 92, a. 2, ad. 3, I, 1001.
that social charity is to the social body. It gives life, and through this life unity, and harmony, and power to the social order. For charity is a unitive force, even as the soul in the human body. Without this unitive force the social body disintegrates and dies.  

The following conclusions are presented as a summary of the important points covered in this chapter:

1. Society is composed of three strata: the rich, the poor, and the middle strata, each of which can be subdivided into smaller groups. The rich and the poor form the two most important groups.

2. In the ideal society, extremes of wealth and poverty will be avoided as much as possible, and the middle stratum will become the largest and most influential.

3. Virtue, as expressed in moral excellence and in contribution to the common good, should be the basis of honor in society.

4. The rich and the poor have certain duties and obligations towards each other and to the common good, which in justice and charity should be fulfilled.

From the above conclusions, it appears that society is stratified into discrete categories: the rich, the poor, and the

middle strata. Within these major divisions are substrata, which seem to form continuums rather than discrete groups in the upper and middle strata. The three major divisions are made on the basis of economic worth, which makes it seem that stratification is unidimensional. This appears to be in conflict with the findings of Chapter III, in which it was stated that ability and authority are the dimensions of stratification. A distinction must be made between the real society, which bases its valuation of individuals on economic considerations, and the ideal society in which the basis of stratification is virtue. As virtue is partially expressed by one's contribution to the common good, virtue is related to ability. Therefore, ability is at least indirectly recognized as affecting the social structure. A further attempt to resolve the apparent contradiction will be presented in the following chapter.
CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS AND SUMMARY

"A civilized society . . . is a society created around a definite and distinctive kind of order . . . It is in a word the order which is created by the subjection of the lower to the higher, in the inner, the external, the individual and the social lives of individuals."\(^1\) The necessity of subjection of the lower to the higher has already been discussed.\(^2\) To aid in deciding how the distinction between higher and lower is to be made, principles have been drawn from the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. In this chapter, these principles will be more thoroughly analyzed and applied to the stratification system.

In reviewing the material gathered from the writings of St. Thomas, it appears that he was discussing two distinct structures—the real order and the ideal order. When discussing the moral application of the divine or human law, St. Thomas wrote of the then existing order. When writing philosophically of the

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2 See Chapter III.
principles which govern all human relationships, he wrote of a more ideal order. Since this paper is intended to present principles upon which society ought to be stratified, the ideal order is of more importance. Therefore, the real order will be dealt with only briefly.

**Stratification in the Real Society**

Viewed realistically, society in the thirteenth century was divided into two large groups, the rich and the poor. There was also a middle class, but St. Thomas lived at a time when this group was just emerging, and it had not yet attained the power and recognition it did later. It was evident enough to be mentioned, and the desirability of a large middle class was apparent, but it had not yet become sufficiently coherent to be a part of the general problem. Only where the guilds had developed power in areas such as Lombardy and the Low Countries was there a notable middle stratum.

These main strata were subdivided, with different dimensions being employed for each group. The poor were subdivided according to occupation; the rich and the middle strata according to wealth, family, virtue and learning. The major strata were discrete, being distinct, recognizable groups, and would appear to have been closed classes. The subdivisions within the groups most likely formed a continuum in the upper stratum, since there were several dimensions employed. Wealth and family would tend
to solidify status, but virtue and learning are subject to greater variety, change, and interpretation. Where multidimensional rankings are employed, social position becomes less rigidly defined since the weighting of the various dimensions may differ even among members of the same social group. During the later middle ages, family became more important than virtue, and material possessions were increasingly given more weight than the other dimensions employed, especially in areas where the feudal system was most rapidly disintegrating.

Among the poor, substrata were more apt to be discrete since occupations were usually hereditary. There were recognizable distinctions and gradations of prestige and authority between the serfs, villeins, and the craftsmen of a manor. In the towns, before the merchants and craftsmen attained middle class status, a greater equality existed between apprentice, journeyman, and master than was found later, and the subdivisions were based on occupation. Members of the same craft formed guilds, which determined not only their economic life but also their social life. As the townspeople reached middle status, an employer-employee relationship developed, and stratification occurred on new lines. This change was largely due to the increase of commerce, the growth of the towns, and the consequent increase of competition.

Society was organized functionally, with rights and duties defined for holders of the numerous positions in the social structure. The nobility of the period had the duty of protecting and governing the serfs and townspeople who dwelt on their lands, and in return they received the power and wealth necessary to discharge this function. The townspeople and serfs contributed the goods and services necessary to maintain the lord and his knights. However, as most positions and occupations depended on birth, not ability, little effort was made to discover and develop the talents of the poor. A closed class system, such as existed in medieval Europe, does not operate functionally since the most capable members of society are not always utilized to their fullest capacity. The accident of birth restricts them to a social level which it is difficult, almost impossible, to change. There are always exceptions, as society is dynamic, and constantly changing. The most notable exception during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was the opportunity of freedom offered by the towns particularly during the early formation of the guilds. Here serfs who successfully attained freedom could use whatever abilities and talents they possessed in commerce or industry, and reach a position in the social hierarchy more commensurate with their talents.

The characteristics of stratification in medieval society are the following:
1. It was a two-class system, multidimensional, with a high degree of crystallization, economic worth being the main dimension. Rankings in the prestige and power orders tended to be parallel with and largely dependent on economic rank. The two major strata were the rich and the poor; however, in the thirteenth century, the middle class emerged. The major strata were subdivided into smaller groups, on the basis of occupation in the lower and middle strata, and on the basis of wealth, power, and lineage in the upper stratum.

2. The major strata formed discrete categories; however, the subdivisions in the upper stratum tended to form a continuum.

3. Although the stratification system had arisen in response to a need, and thus was functional in structure, the hereditary nature of social positions had rendered the system disfunctional in operation. Only where the stratification system was undergoing change did functionalism operate freely as a determining force in stratification.

4. Gerhard Lenski uses the term "status crystallization" to refer to consistencies in ratings on the various dimension scales. When ratings in the economic, power, and prestige orders converge, with the individual ranking either high or low on all three scales, crystallization is said to be high. When there are variations in rankings, crystallization is low. A social structure in which a high degree of crystallization prevails is more stable and conservative than one with low crystallization. See Lenski, "Status Crystallization," American Sociological Review, XIX, (August, 1954, pp. 405-413.
Stratification in the Ideal Society

Of greater importance than the social system just portrayed is the analysis of the ideal society built upon the philosophical principles of St. Thomas Aquinas. A description of this society will be presented, and it will then be analyzed.

The structure of an instrument or institution is determined by its purpose or the end for which it was formed. The structure of society must be determined by its purpose if it is to be useful. If in our present day society, self-gratification through material possessions is the goal of the majority, the person who achieves the greatest amount of self-gratification, or who appears to have done so, would be the one who is envied and emulated. "Too often American economic groups—business, industry, finance, labor farmers, and the professions—have sought selfish gains to the neglect of both public interest and private rights. . . . There are many roots to the social problem today, but its moral and spiritual causes are fundamental. A philosophy of secularism, materialism, selfish individualism, greed, avarice, limitless ambition, and denial of social interests is bound to make society unhealthy."  

5 S.T., I-II, q. 95, a. 3, c., I, 1015.

Society should be built upon firmer foundations, principles drawn from its own nature and the nature of man. St. Thomas states that "men form groups for the purpose of living well together, a thing which the individual man living alone could not attain. But a good life is a virtuous life. Therefore a virtuous life is the end for which men form groups." Here is the purpose for which men come together—to aid one another in virtuous living. St. Thomas goes on to warn that "it is not the ultimate end of an assembled multitude to live virtuously, but through virtuous living to attain to the possession of God." This is the end and the purpose of society, that men may be virtuous and thus attain God. The former is the immediate end of society, the latter the ultimate end. In scholastic terminology, the virtuous life toward which men in community strive is called the common good. This is what should determine the structure of society.

Although all men have the same ultimate end, God, they do not have the same means for reaching their end. "An has an end to which his whole life and all his actions are ordered; for man is an intelligent agent, and it is clearly the part of an intelligent agent to act in view of an end. Men, however, adopt different methods in proceeding towards to their proposed

7 On the Governance of Rulers, p. 97.
8 Ibid., p. 98.
end, as the diversity of men's pursuits and actions clearly indicates." That these diverse actions and pursuits may work together harmoniously to achieve the common good, order is established, an order built on reason and a recognition of man's spiritual destiny.

The order which ought to be established is one designed to utilize men's abilities to further the common good. "To whomsoever God gives a power, it is given in relation to the effect of that power; for then are all things disposed in the best way, when each one is directed to all the goods that it has a natural aptitude to produce." God, in His Providence, has placed all creation at man's disposal, and has given him the talents and abilities necessary to make the best use of creation in order to reach his goal. He has arranged it that these abilities and talents are so distributed throughout the world that man will be able to have his needs properly fulfilled, and resources will be properly utilized, if equal opportunities are given to all to develop their potentialities.

The highest ability of man is his intellect; therefore, those who have the greatest intellectual ability should be the rulers and directors of society and of its various institu-


10 *C.G.*, III, 78, III, 196.
tions. Power must be exercised for the common good, and not for the individual good of the one who possesses it. For only in seeking the common good, does the individual truly realize his own personal good.

There are two types of rulers, religious and secular. The religious or clergy form a separate stratum of society and are superior to the secular rulers for they perform a higher function. Among secular rulers are included directors and managers of economic, scientific, and cultural institutions, as well as political. These two groups will be termed the clergy and the rulers. The majority of people will be in the lowest stratum, the ruled. The terms applied to these groups are purely arbitrary, and will not be found in the writings of St. Thomas, but they seem to suggest the basis upon which the division is made far better than the customary terms, rich and poor.

The basis upon which men are to be stratified is virtue. "Honor . . . is due to excellence: and the excellence of a man is gauged chiefly according to his virtue." Ability and authority are the other dimensions upon which stratification should be based. Wealth has only slight value as a basis for honor, and, as stated previously, should never be its sole basis.

11 S.T., II-II, q. 145, a. 1, c., II, 1781.
as this would be a sin of respect of persons. However, wealth should be used as an indication that a man is being honored. Those who contribute more to the common good are deserving of more in return. Also it costs more to fulfill an office of authority than it does to fulfill a lesser position. This is a distinction which has been lost in modern society which renders honor to those who possess wealth instead of rewarding with wealth those who are deserving of honor.

In the ideal society, some will be wealthier than others due to their superior abilities. However, as wealth should only be given to those who deserve it because of their virtue and ability, it is to be expected that the rich will more readily recognize their responsibility as stewards of God's gifts. They will then be more liberal, with a liberality that is based on justice as well as on charity. The state has the duty of regulating wealth so that it does not fall into the hands of a few but is more equitably distributed among the citizens. Thus the extremes of wealth and poverty will be avoided, and the majority will occupy a middle status if an economic ranking of society were to be made.

Since society is organized around the principle of service to the common good as a means of self-perfection, it will

12 See Chapter IV, p. 45.
require a method of recognizing and utilizing all talents in the best possible way. Life chances of the poor must be increased, so that their talents and abilities can be more fully utilized. A society that fails in this respect denies itself and its members all the benefits which would be derived from the contributions of these potentially able members.

To summarize what has been stated about the ideal society: it is a society based on order; organized around a specific purpose, the common good; with a definite goal, the attainment of God by each individual through virtuous living. There are three distinct strata: the clergy, the rulers, and the ruled. The rulers will be the wealthiest, but extremes of wealth and poverty are to be avoided. Virtue, authority, and ability, particularly intellectual ability, are the dimensions of stratification.

Conclusions

Analysis of this society will be based on the three questions proposed earlier in this thesis. The first question is: "Is stratification unidimensional or multidimensional?" It would seem to be unidimensional, based on virtue, for St. Thomas said that "virtue alone is the due cause of a person

13 Chapter I, pp. 6-7.
being honored."\textsuperscript{14} However, in another place he stated: "Honor ... is due to excellence: and the excellence of a man is gauged \textit{chiefly} according to his virtue."\textsuperscript{15} St. Thomas is very exact in his writings, and would not have used the word \textit{chiefly} if there were not bases other than virtue for honoring a man.

There seem to be two other dimensions, and these are ability and authority. Both of these can exist apart from virtue, or can be possessed by persons who are less virtuous than others. Ability should be honored whenever it is used to promote the common good, and the degree of ability would determine the degree of honor, with intellectual ability recognized as superior to physical skill or prowess. For, "it is greater to impart truth to others by teaching them than to be able to grasp what is taught by others. ... an architect who plans a building is more highly esteemed and paid a higher wage than the builder who does the manual labour ... the strategy of the general wins greater glory from victory than the bravery of the soldier."\textsuperscript{16}

Authority is deserving of honor since the ruler is God's representative, and even though he be a poor representative, the

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{S.T.}, II-II, q. 63, a. 3, c., II, 1464.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{S.T.}, II-II, q. 145, a. 1, c., II, 1781. Italics not in the original.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{On the Governance of Rulers}, pp. 73-74.
Christian who is striving to lead a virtuous life realizes that all authority comes from God and therefore is to be respected. If virtue and ability are properly considered in choosing rulers, the likelihood of undeserving persons attaining authority can be reduced. Stratification thus appears to multidimensional, with a high degree of crystallization.

The second question on which this analysis is based is: "Are social classes discrete categories or do they form a continuum?" This question is the most difficult to answer, but it would seem that the social structure envisioned in the ideal society would be composed of discrete categories. There are three distinct divisions, the rulers and the ruled, which would correspond to the rich and the poor in classifications based on wealth, and the clergy.

The reasons for stratifying society in this way are as follows: It was previously mentioned that there are three dimensions, virtue, ability, and authority. In an ideal society, authority and ability would be found together, for ability would be the main reason for placing an individual in authority. "Those who excel in intellect are naturally rulers."17 Intellectual ability, a natural prudence and counsel, would place an individual in the ruling class. Members of this class would hold positions

17 G.G., III, 81, III, 206.
of authority in the political, economic, scientific, and cultural life of the group. It has been stated above that these members would receive greater rewards than those who act under their directions. These latter, due to inferior ability, or ability along non-intellectual lines, would form the lower stratum, the ruled.

The clergy would form a distinct stratum, since their vocation sets them off from the rest of society. In some respects, particularly as to ability and virtue, it would be a parallel group formed alongside the other two, although it is hoped that the clergy would excel in virtue. Some of the clergy excel in ability, others do not. On the whole, the clergy would more closely resemble the upper stratum. In authority, the clergy would be ranked higher than the rulers, for "those to whom pertains the care of immediate ends should be subject to him to whom pertains the care of the ultimate end, and be directed by his rule."18 In a hierarchical distribution according to ends served, the clergy would form the highest stratum with the rulers immediately below, and the ruled would be the lowest stratum.

The dimension of virtue as a prestige factor would operate more within each of the major strata to subdivide these into smaller groups, than it would figure as an element in placing

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18 On the Governance of Rulers, p. 99.
individuals in one of the major strata. It is assumed that in a society oriented toward spiritual values, members would be at least striving to be virtuous. Virtue might operate more directly as a prestige factor if someone of superior ability did not lead a virtuous life, and made no attempt to attain virtue. Such an individual would not be accorded the high status he would otherwise attain, but would probably become a member of a substratum composed of similar individuals of varying abilities. The degree to which each member of society acquired virtue would help to determine his status within the major stratum in which he was placed because of his abilities. These substrata would probably form a continuum as virtue is not a quantitative substance that can be clearly demarcated.

The question, "Is stratification to be explained in functional terms?", has already been answered in the affirmative by the very fact that ability is one of the most important dimensions. The whole system of reward and merit rests on the individual's contribution to the common good, with the recognition that virtue itself is the greatest contribution one can make. A man's ability, and the manner in which it is employed, is the main determining factor of his social status. "Man is a master of his actions; and yet, in so far as he belongs to another, i.e., the community of which he forms a part, he merits or demerits,
inasmuch as he disposes his actions well or ill."\textsuperscript{19} This is a more basic functionalism than that proposed by Kingsley Davis and W. E. Moore. Here functionalism does not operate merely as an inducement to some men to aspire for higher positions or take upon themselves onerous burdens in return for monetary rewards or greater prestige. Rather it is a sublimation of the same principle, which urges each man to discover the vocation in which he can perfect himself and best serve his fellow men and his God. On the discovery of his proper vocation and the fullest development of his abilities, the good of both the individual and of society rests. "Since ... every man is a part of the state, it is impossible that a man be good, unless he be well proportionate to the common good: nor can the whole be well consistent unless its parts be proportionate to it."\textsuperscript{20} In a truly functional system, society will aid each individual to fulfill his potentialities by equalizing opportunities throughout the entire stratification system.

A system in which functionalism is permitted to operate freely would naturally be an open class system. Individuals would move freely from one stratum to another according to their abilities. Regulations which would prevent concentrations of wealth,

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{S.T.}, I-II, q. 21, a. 3, ad. 2, I, 687.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{S.T.}, I-II, q. 92, a. 2, ad. 3, I, 1001-1002.
and tend to remove extremes of wealth and poverty, would aid the process. Also, in a society that was spiritually oriented and that did not prize wealth as an end but only as a means, the stigma of belonging to a lower stratum would be considerably lessened. God's will would be recognized and accepted.

The characteristics of stratification in the ideal society can be summarized as follows:

1. Stratification is multidimensional, the three dimensions being virtue, ability, and authority. There is high degree of crystallization, with ability the determining dimension. The possession of authority would depend on ability, and in a spiritually oriented society, it can be expected that virtue would highly correlate with ability.

2. The major strata: clergy, rulers, and ruled, form discrete categories. Subdivisions within the major strata would probably form a continuum based largely on virtue.

3. Stratification is essentially functional, and will remain so as long as classes are open and a high rate of mobility is maintained.

The society described is perhaps impossible to attain, but ideals that are attainable are no longer ideals. In comparing the ideal to American society, there are interesting differences and likenesses that might be pointed out.
One of the basic differences between the ideal and the real societies is the value system. American society appears to value material prosperity and comfort above spiritual goods. The ideal society recognizes that "God has not created us for the perishable and transitory things of earth, but for things heavenly and everlasting." Materialistic though our society is however, there are many of its leaders in all fields, who are deeply concerned with the intense materialism and paganism they see around them. While much of America remains pagan in its outlook, there are deep stirrings of spirituality that are making


23 The need of returning moral and ethical principles to all phases of life has become the subject of many articles and lectures recently. Two examples which emphasize the need of greater morality in business relationships and in relations between nations are: "The Spiritual Responsibility of American Business and Industry," an address given by Clement D. Johnson, Chairman of the Board, Chamber of Commerce of the United States, reported in Vital Speeches, XXII, (December 15, 1955), pp. 151-153; and Howard Trivers' article, "Morality and Foreign Affairs," The Virginia Quarterly Review, XXXII, (Summer, 1956), pp. 345-360.
themselves felt; and much of it is occurring on a highly intellectual level, the level which develops and puts forth ideas that shape the future. Forces are working in the opposite direction as well, but the concern has been aroused, and the reaction to paganism that has been provoked among thoughtful people is most encouraging.

A likeness between the ideal and the modern society can be found in the dimensions of stratification. Ability, virtue, 

24 These stirrings have found expression in many movements designed to renew and extend Christianity in society. Among Catholic movements are the Christopher Movement, the Catholic Worker group, Friendship House, Integrity, and the numerous Catholic Action groups. These are described and evaluated by Paul H. Furfey in Fire on the Earth, (New York, 1936), and in Cronin, Catholic Social Principles. There are various non-Catholic movements as well, the most prominent being the revival movement led by Billy Graham. Another important movement is the "Back to God" movement sponsored by the American Legion. (See "Back to God" Movement," America, XC, (February 20, 1954), p. 526.) Commonweal reports that "A greater proportion of Americans attend church today than ever before. Within the last fifteen years the number of church goers has gone from approximately forty-nine per cent to sixty per cent of the total population."—"Religion in Popular Culture," Commonweal, LXIII, (October 7, 1955), p. 5.

A further indication of the aroused interest in religion is the popularity of motion pictures, and radio and television programs, that have religious themes, and of books such as The Power of Positive Thinking by Norman V. Peale, Peace of Soul and Life is Worth Living by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen and Seven Storey Mountain and The Sign of Jonas by Thomas Merton.

and authority find rough parallels in economic worth, prestige, and power. Economic worth includes wealth and occupation. In the terminology used here, this would be represented by ability, since ability would determine occupation, and wealth would be one of the rewards for proper use of ability. Prestige, or honor, would depend on virtue; and power is represented by authority. The terms, therefore, are related, but their connotations when employed by modern sociologists are vastly different than when viewed in the light of Scholastic philosophy. The former reflects the modern materialistic viewpoint, while the latter reflects the Scholastic concern for the spiritual.

The social structure in America resembles a continuum, whereas the ideal society is divided into discrete categories. Which is more desirable is difficult to judge. There are advantages in having everyone know his position in the stratification system and in having others recognize this position. The advantages rest on the supposition that members are spiritually oriented and sincerely concerned with contributing their share to the common good. Even the lowliest positions are dignified when considered as a means of promoting the common good. Also, discrete categories are only desirable when the positions, or occupations are categorized, not the individuals who fill them. Only if there is mobility, and if life chances of individuals do not depend upon the stratum into which they happen to be born, are discrete categories beneficial. In this type of situation,
the importance of virtue is revealed, for only the humble can be content knowing that anyone is considered superior to him, and only the virtuous can ever be truly superior.

Functionalism operates to some degree in American society, but discrepancies in opportunities for training and education waste much of the talent distributed among the poor, by never developing it. It would seem that a public education system would eliminate most differences and tend to equalize opportunities, but it has failed to do so. Not only are there great differences in the quality of equipment and personnel between schools in different areas, but the cost of higher education necessary for the development of superior talents is prohibitive to those whose incomes are low or even moderate. A greater appreciation of intellectual ability would help to remedy this, but for a more complete utilization of talent, the entire system of admittance to higher education would have to be revised.

Other tendencies in American life that correspond to the society presented in this paper are the efforts made by both government and industry to reduce the extremes of wealth and poverty. The government demonstrates its recognition of the undesirability of huge fortunes by its taxation system, and it

strives to better the conditions of the unfortunate through social legislation. Industry has tried to lessen the gap between labor and capital, at least in a few instances, by profit-sharing plans, labor-management councils, and other devices designed to give the workers a greater share in ownership. Both government and industry have tried to encourage the development of talents and skills, the government through scholarships and funds for research, industry by establishing training programs and supplying aid to workers who desire to advance themselves. However, there is still much to be done, and the majority of people do not as yet benefit sufficiently from these plans.

Before progress toward the establishment of an ideal society can be made, there must be a basic change in philosophy, for it has been shown that this is the most fundamental difference between the ideal and the real society. Such a change can only come slowly, but a basic change is taking place at present. There is evidence that the uncertainties of the present have awakened in many the desire for a more secure foundation upon which to build the future. This desire, this change, has not been channelized in any particular direction, and is capable of coming under the influence of those who would make society more materialistic than it is. "If Society is to be cured now, in no other way can it be cured but by a return to the Christian life and Christian institutions. When a Society is perishing, the true advice to give
to those who would restore it is, to recall it to the principles from which it sprung; for the purpose and perfection of an association is to aim at and to attain that for which it was formed, and its operation should be put in motion and inspired by the end and object which originally gave it its being."\(^{27}\)

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APPENDIX

A CONSIDERATION OF THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN THE PROPER STRATIFICATION OF SOCIETY

Throughout this paper mention has been made of the duty of government to regulate possession of wealth, to prevent concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, and to lessen the extremes of wealth and poverty. The question may arise as to the extent of regulation that is necessary to realize a social order built upon principles such as proposed here. It is evident that a social order, based on justice and charity, will not automatically evolve from an individualistic, competitive economy. The necessity of a certain amount of government regulation of abuses has become apparent in our own society. How much more regulation is necessary or desirable depends upon the ends to be attained. If the stratification system is to aid in promoting the common good, some provision must be made to equalize opportunities of individuals so that ability, not family fortune, will determine who will achieve high status. The duties of government, therefore, will become more comprehensive and its responsibilities greater as it fulfills its function more perfectly.
The purpose of government is "to bring the thing govern-
ed in a suitable way to its proper end."\(^1\) The immediate end of
society is a virtuous life; the ultimate end is the possession of
God.\(^2\) The way in which these ends are to be realized is through
the living of a good life by each individual. The government has
the responsibility of promoting and encouraging a virtuous life
among the citizens, and in this way of promoting the common good.

There are three things necessary to establish the common
good. "First of all, that the multitude be established in the
unity of peace. Second, that the multitude . . . be guided to
good deeds . . . In the third place, it is necessary that there
be at hand a sufficient supply of the things required for proper
living, procured by the ruler's efforts."\(^3\) Peace, virtue, and
the necessities of life are the essentials with which government
should be concerned, and these essentials all depend on good order
in society. Peace is the "tranquillity of order,"\(^4\) an "ordered
harmony,"\(^5\) which demands a proper subjection of the inferior to
the superior.\(^6\)

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1 On the Governance of Rulers, p. 95.
2 Ibid., p. 98.
3 Ibid., p. 103.
4 S.T., II-II, q. 29, a. 2, ad. 1, II, 1314.
5 C.G., III, 78, IV, 126.
6 C.G., III, 79, IV, 128.
Governments have ordinarily fulfilled their obligation to maintain at least outward peace and order. It is in the area of promotion of virtue that governments have not acted, except in an extremely negative fashion. Yet St. Thomas states that "the proper effect of law is to lead its subjects to their proper virtue: . . . to make those to whom it is given good, either simply or in some particular respect." Government's principal concern should be "to establish a virtuous life in the multitude . . . to preserve it once established . . . to promote its greater perfection." A stratification system which recognized virtue as a dimension would be affected to a greater degree by legislation designed to promote virtue than would another type of system.

The duty of governments to ensure "a proper supply of the things required for proper living," has become apparent since the depression of the 1930's and the devastation of recent wars. To some extent, taxation and legislation have operated to lessen the extremes of wealth and poverty. That this is a legitimate function of government is affirmed by St. Thomas when he asserts that government "must provide for each one what is necessary for his particular condition and state in life." 

7 S.T., I-II, q. 92, a. 1, c., I, 1001.
8 On the Governance of Rulers, p. 102.
9 Ibid., p. 94.
The promotion of peace, the fostering of virtue, and the insurance of a sufficiency of the necessities of life for all men are the duties and responsibilities of the government. Thus the power and the sphere of government are greatly expanded. Government becomes more than a policeman, a negative force; it becomes a positive force, actively promoting justice and the common welfare.

Critics may raise the question as to whether or not modern governments can apply principles enunciated in the Middle Ages, when the huge concentrations of wealth and power that mark the modern state were unknown. The Church, through the Holy Father, re-asserts these same principles. "The first duty... of the rulers of the State should be to make sure that the laws and institutions, the general character and administration of the commonwealth, shall be such as to produce of themselves public well-being and private prosperity.... it is in the power of a ruler to benefit every order of the State, and amongst the rest to promote in the highest degree the interests of the poor; and this by virtue of his office, and without being exposed to any suspicion of undue interference—for it is the province of the commonwealth to consult for the common good."10 Thus it is recognized by the Church that the ruler can legislate in any area that affects the common good.

The powers of the state, however, are not unlimited. It is not intended to dominate society. Rather, society is to remain a truly hierarchical structure, composed of many groups working in harmony to promote the common good. It is the duty of the government to aid these lesser groups to achieve the objectives mentioned before—greater equality and harmony between classes. Only if these groups fail to attain these objectives, should the government take over, and then only for as long a period as is absolutely necessary. For "it is wrong to withdraw from the individual and commit to the community at large what private enterprise and industry can accomplish . . . it is an injustice, a grave evil and a disturbance of right order for a larger and higher organization to arrogate to itself functions which can be performed efficiently by smaller and lower bodies. . . . the true aim of all social activity should be to help individual members of the social body, but never to destroy or absorb them."

Thus it appears that although the sphere of activity of government should be enlarged and its concerns and interests should be broadened to include more phases of social life than has been customary in the past, it should operate largely through existing organizations and groups within the larger society. In

doing so, government must curb the tendency of individuals and
groups to advance their own interests without concern for the
rights of others, and encourage a spirit of cooperation and of
charity. For, as Pope Pius XI has declared, "all . . . groups
should be fused into a harmonious unity inspired by the principle
of the common good. And the genuine and chief function of public
and civil authority consists precisely in the efficacious fur­
thering of this harmony and co-ordination of all social forces."12

12 "On Atheistic Communism," Five Great Encyclicals,
p. 188.
The thesis submitted by Sister Mary Ann Frances, O.S.F. (Biesel), has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Sociology.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

12/18/56
Date
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