

To argue, as Niebuhr again and again clearly seems to do (cf., e.g., *Children of Light and Children of Darkness*: 70) that sin corrupts by inevitably substituting an ideology in place of a scheme of real justice strikes me as following much the same logic as is involved in saying that sin invariably expresses itself by transgressing the law instead of keeping it.

I should wish to hold, on the contrary, that, just as sin can express itself precisely by flawlessly keeping the law, so sin can use even a scheme of real justice that is entirely free of ideological taint as a means of boasting and as an instrument for asserting one's own special interest at the expense of others'.

Of course, this in no way means that any scheme of justice is to be accepted uncritically. It only means that sin, in its essence, is as different from ideological corruption as it is from moral transgression, notwithstanding its close relation to the one as well as the other.

7 June 1999