Crisis in the Public Square: A Reformational View*

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This article examines the contemporary crisis in the public square. Beginning with the surface-level issues of poor dialogue, hyper-personalization, and incivility, it then explores two common explanations for the root of these problems: the political view and the cultural view. While these have some merit, an alternative, Reformational view is put forward, based on the Kuyperian concept of sphere sovereignty, that offers a more nuanced explanation of our cultural crisis, including the roles of the market and globalization in that crisis today.

Introduction

Shortly before the breakdown of European Christendom in the Thirty Years War (1618–1648), Johannes Althusius, a Christian Reformed politician, made a strong statement about the need to engage with public life and the impossibility of living in self-absorbed isolation from society at large:

> The end of political "symbiotic" man is holy, just, comfortable, and happy symbiosis, a life lacking nothing either necessary or useful. Truly, in living this life no man is self-sufficient … or adequately endowed by nature.… Therefore, as long as he remains isolated and does not mingle in the society of men, he cannot live at all comfortably and well, even if he merely wants to live.… And so he begins to think by what means such symbiosis … can be instituted, cultivated, and conserved.[1]

Centuries later, Alexis de Tocqueville noticed that the rise of egalitarian democracy had at least to some extent enabled self-absorbed individuals to

maintain a reasonable standard of living with no need to engage with political affairs. In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville denounced the extreme kind of individualism that "disposes each member of the community to sever himself from the mass of his fellows and to draw apart with his family and his friends," despising the value of public life. "The interest of man is confined to those in close propinquity to himself."[2]

For Althusius, public life was a matter of survival. For Tocqueville, it had a different value. The danger faced by a society of self-absorbed individuals was that it would facilitate the rise of despotism, for the latter "sees in the separation among men the surest guarantee of its continuance, and it usually makes every effort to keep them separate."[3] The public square, by contrast, could offer an excellent vaccine against this sort of domination through division:

> When the members of a community … attend to public affairs, they are necessarily drawn from the circle of their own interests…. As soon as a man begins to treat of public affairs in public, he begins to perceive that he is not so independent of his fellow men as he had at first imagined, and that in order to obtain their support he must often lend them his co-operation.[4]

Both thinkers agreed that a collapse of public life could pose a threat to free and virtuous societies. Today, many observers worry about the situation of our political environment. Following this logic, then, we do well to consider the contemporary crisis in the public square.

In what follows, I provide an overview of the main challenges that we face in the public square. They are discussed both on the surface and on a deeper level, where there is some disagreement about the root causes of the current crisis. My other task here is to articulate a Christian interpretation of the problem, drawing on the Reformational tradition made famous by Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920) and creatively expanded by many of his followers. In my intellectual journey, this tradition of thought has enabled me to engage in important conversations on politics, society, and economics. It has provided me with conceptual tools that allow me to take part in those conversations as a believer in Jesus Christ who hopes to be able to contribute to a better understanding of politics, society and economics and who—like other believers—hopes to attain a faithful response to the issues we face within those realms.

Three Surface-Level Challenges

What sort of crisis are we facing in our political environment? I would like to make a tentative list of problems on the surface prior to a discussion of deeper issues about which there is more disagreement.

First, there has been a loss of substance in our conversations. Political issues are discussed in magazines, social media, and on TV with an unhealthy focus on gossip, scandal, and sensationalism. This is often done at the expense of accuracy or with little concern for the truth of what is being said.[5] The emphasis is normally on attacking the opponent, despite the well-known fact that personal attacks are not a very effective form of political persuasion.[6] People turn to memes, catchy phrases, and name-calling, substituting these for a genuine discussion of ideas, policy projects, or a more careful debate on values and priorities. There is, in short, a crisis of dialogue.

This relates to a second surface-level challenge, namely, the excessive personalization of public life. The traditional distinction between one's role as a public person and as a private person has collapsed, not least due to the effects of media technology and the use of social media. This affects, on the one hand, how we face politicians. We now tend to transpose our fascination for celebrity artists to the political realm. We seem too obsessed with the public figure as a private person, relegating the political programs defended by that person to the second plane.[7] On the other hand, this personalization of politics also has an impact on how we behave in the public square and what we expect from it. Because of the self-absorption denounced by Tocqueville, we end up reducing our engagement with public issues to a matter of personal feeling.[8] What we call "identity politics" is perhaps an instance of the excessive personalization and emotionalism in the public square on the side of the citizenry in general, to the point that so-called "safe spaces" must be provided at public universities.

As a direct result of this hyper-personalization of politics, incivility is a third surface-level challenge that we face in the public square. In *The Fall of Public Man*, philosopher Richard Sennett compares civility to a "mask" for public life. This mask allows us to interact with strangers *as strangers* in the construction of a bridge over this social gap, while maintaining the gap.[9] If, however, we lose any sense that there is, or should be, a healthy and workable distance between people in public life, then we should expect them to be hostile to those who are not like them, or to those who are not part of the inner circle. A group feels under threat if the rest of society is not compelled to embrace this group's lifestyle and worldview. The more intimate we become as public *personae*, the less sociable

we are likely to be through civility.[10] It is not a surprise that much of our engagement with the public square reflects an obsession with defining who is "in" and who is "out." Such decline in civility is an outcome of the fact that, with the stress too much on personalizing politics, the stakes are much higher. We feel personally threatened, or at least threatened as a group, if we do not have it our way. This third problem, related to incivility and classification by exclusion, is made obvious whenever someone feels offended and claims that you are against the poor, the working class, or women in general because you would like to see a balanced federal budget.

Democracy places a premium on equality and closeness, and this might be the seed of its dysfunctionality. In a short story by C. S. Lewis, the demon Screwtape proposes a toast to his friends in hell who attend the annual dinner of the Tempters' Training College for Young Devils. Toward the end of his speech, he makes the following remark: "It is our function to encourage the behavior, the manners, the whole attitude of mind, which democracies naturally like and enjoy, because these are the very things which, if unchecked, will destroy democracy."[11] So far, I have discussed the three surface-level problems of poor dialogue, hyperpersonalization, and incivility. There are, however, deeper political and cultural issues, to which I turn now.

The Political View

I would like to consider how others have defined the current crisis in the public square in their reflection on wider challenges posed by life in modern society. Some have framed this issue as a crisis of liberal democracy and the collapse of representation as a political model. Let me call this the "political" view. Others have interpreted the problem as a function of the rise of a peculiar kind of individualism in our culture. I name this the "cultural" view.

The political view is that the current crisis in the public square derives primarily from the inability of liberal democracy to offer proper representation to the average person in the street. The contribution of anthropologist Manuel Castells to this debate illustrates the political view. In his recent book, *Ruptura*, Castells identifies many problematic trends in democratic participation. He describes what he calls the "crisis of the old political order" in a list of negative phenomena:

> The subversion of democratic institutions by narcissistic chiefs who own the strings of power leveraged by people's abhorrence of institutional rottenness and social injustice; manipulation of frustrated hopes by serpent enchanters through the media; the apparent and transitory renewal of political representation by coopting projects for change … the pure and simple return of the unrestrained

> brutality of the state around the world … [a]nd, finally, the entrenchment of political cynicism … as a form of representation.[12]

All these problems are outcomes of a crisis of liberal democracy as such, or "the gradual collapse of a political model of representation and governance" and a "breach of relationship between rulers and the ruled."[13] Representative democracy, in this view, is as good as the population's belief that their rulers mirror the way they see and decide things. The problem is that contemporary politics has shaken this belief.[14] People feel poorly represented by their rulers.

Why is that so? According to Castells, this crisis of liberal democracy is a consequence of globalization, both because it limits the power of the state to respond to the demands of its own citizens and because it widens the gap between the ruling elite and the rest of the people. Globalization restricts the capacity of government reaction to the heavier problems experienced by the average person because many of those issues are global in scope.[15] The state now tackles them only indirectly, by making use of international organizations and their unelected technicians. This move aggravates the perception of a democratic deficit. People feel disenfranchised.[16] In addition to this, globalization encourages and maintains cosmopolitan networks of power, wealth, and influence for the ruling class. There is a general perception that the ruling class is cartelizing political power, creating barriers to entry into the political process. "Cosmopolitans and locals live increasingly in different dimensions of social practice" and, as a result, "the representation of humans in the democratic political construction based on the community defined by the nation-state undergoes a profound crisis of legitimacy."[17] The majority, on the one hand, is alienated from relevant decision-making processes. On the other, it retreats to the local level.

There are three common responses to this collapse of political representation. First, bottom-up grassroots movements seek to "articulate a new relationship between parliamentary representation and social representation."[18] A few years ago, we saw in the United States two examples of this first response: the 99 Percent or Occupy Wall Street protests and the Tea Party movement.[19] Second, charismatic politicians present themselves as revolutionary outsiders who will fight the system and restore the connection between political decisions and the preferences of the population in general.[20] Donald J. Trump's portrait of himself as a nonpolitician and his promise to "drain the swamp" appeals to the idea behind this second response. The third reaction is an "authoritarian turn" that has "explicitly raised doubts about the liberal model," particularly in Eastern Europe and Latin America, where we see growing support for "illiberal democracy."[21]

The Cultural View

In addition to this political view, there is also a second approach to the deeper crisis in the public square, which focuses on the radical individualistic traits of our contemporary culture. Besides Richard Sennett, philosopher Charles Taylor has also contributed to this discussion by following Tocqueville's idea that too much self-absorption poses a potential threat to public life.[22]

In *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Taylor discusses a type of individualism that is directed toward self-fulfillment. This modern view states that each person is entitled to find out for themselves the best way to live, based on what they think matters the most, or what they value as individuals. "People are called upon to be true to themselves and to seek their own self-fulfilment."[23] This has been denounced as a "dark side of individualism" that has gained strength in our contemporary culture because of the loss of "a sense of a higher purpose." Too much self-absorption "flattens and narrows our lives, makes them poorer in meaning and less concerned with others or society."[24] Taylor warns us of the danger of "fragmentation" resulting from this loss of a broader vision. We become "increasingly less capable of forming a common purpose and carrying it out" and much of what we do in the public square involves "partial groupings" and specific projects or causes, but not the entire community.[25] This explains the emphasis on issue-oriented campaigning and specific judicial battles in the US Supreme Court.[26] On general matters, disengagement is the normal attitude. Taylor goes as far as to declare that, in this mindset, "a common project comes to seem utopian and naïve."[27]

Sennett refers to a similar outcome of self-absorbed individualism in his essay on *The Fall of Public Man*. Like Taylor, Sennett alludes to the quest for authenticity as a modern problem: "Each person's self has become his principal burden; to know oneself has become an end, instead of a means through which one knows the world."[28] The public square has meaning only as a means to self-knowledge. This explains political disengagement, on the one hand, and, on the other, the strongly emotional character of contemporary political practice and discourse. "The public problem of contemporary society," says Sennett, "is two-fold: behavior and issues which are impersonal do not arouse much passion; the behavior and the issues begin to arouse passion when people treat them, falsely, as though they were matters of personality."[29] The phenomena of "identity politics" and of the secular charisma of political leaders are two instances where we can find political passion, precisely because what is public becomes personal.

Common to both the political and the cultural approach to this deeper crisis in the public square is the view that capitalism is somewhat at fault. Castells is under the impression, for example, that the powerlessness of the state in handling social problems caused by the latest economic crisis while at the same time bailing out big banks and corporations is an indication that capitalism alienates the common people from public life. Large media conglomerates feed despair to the population, conveying the message that radical change is impossible. Globalization as such impels the average person to withdraw from public, cosmopolitan life and to find refuge in belonging to a local group.[30]

Sennett links, among other factors, the rise of industrial capitalism to the fall of public man.[31] At first, the resulting transition to urban life was softened by a traditional framework for engagement with public affairs.[32] Later, the new bourgeois mindset took over the public square and reduced it to a realm of individual expression—"personality became a social category, and so intruded into the public realm."[33] Sennett discusses the poverty of contemporary public life within this framework. The popular feeling of resentment against the ruling class, the antiurban and anticosmopolitan inclinations of the populace and its tribalistic tendencies, together with an emphasis on the secular charisma of our political leaders are all described in this light.[34]

Castells articulates his critique of capitalism by focusing on contemporary globalization, whereas Sennett relies on a long-run historical argument. Taylor combines both sides when he denounces the pervasiveness of "instrumental reason," which for him is an effect of the expansion of the market's role in modern life. If applied outside the scope of economic relations, instrumental reason can lead to distortion, such as the use of the public square to pursue individualistic goals (public means to a self-centered end).[35] However, Taylor is less critical of capitalism than Sennett, in the sense that he would like to maintain a role for the market, if it is kept within clear limits set by the state and by intermediary associations. It is here that Taylor interacts with Tocqueville's concern with the potential loss of freedom entailed by disengagement from public life.[36]

To sum up thus far, in this discussion there seems to be a negative emphasis on individualism under liberal democracy and on globalization and the market economy. These elements are perceived to be connected to the deeper political and cultural crisis in the public square. There are also the surface-level problems of the poverty of dialogue, over-the-top personalization, and incivility in political life.

A Reformational Alternative

Now I would like to respond to those issues by drawing on a Christian and Reformational foundation. At the root, the current challenges in public life are essentially spiritual, and only secondarily of a political and cultural nature. They require a comprehensive view of the human person and social life, or, in Abraham Kuyper's words, an "architectonic critique," because they "cannot be explained from incidental causes but from a fault line in the very foundation of our social order."[37]

First, the problem is not primarily political or cultural. While there are indeed many shortcomings in liberal democracy and individualism, there are also several advantages. Kuyper's critique of the antireligion bias of French revolutionary liberalism may be extended to liberal democracy, insofar as, in its contemporary form, it asks us to leave our Christian worldview out of the public square.[38] As Miroslav Volf points out, "for religious people, it is an integral part of their religious commitment to base their convictions about public issues upon religious reasons."[39] It is not a surprise that Castells, Taylor, and Sennett complain about the lack of a sense of higher purpose in contemporary liberal democracy.

On the other hand, as Michael Novak reminds us, pluralistic liberal democracy allows for a sort of "transcendence which is approached by free consciences from a virtually infinite number of directions."[40] Even though Taylor disagrees with the relativistic kind of individualism behind today's emphasis on being true to oneself, the principle of authenticity is a "powerful moral ideal," in that it instructs us about the good life and its standards. By implication, there must be some transcendent side to it, something that goes beyond the individual.[41] This is clearly shown in Novak's argument that, within a liberal democracy, such values as "free speech," "tolerance," and "restraint" let people pursue individual authenticity while at the same time requiring them to acknowledge, by respecting those values, that "the common good transcends their own vision of the good, however passionately held."[42] Therefore, the problem on this level is not so much that contemporary life stresses the individual pursuit of happiness under a pluralistic political system.

I rely on Kuyper and others in the Reformational tradition to say that the underlying political and cultural challenge at hand is that we have come to expect too much of the political process and of our politicians. I am reminded here of the psalmist's warning against putting our trust in princes.[43] Kuyper and, later, Herman Dooyeweerd theorized about several different spheres in society, each of them created by God to develop a certain side of life. Each sphere is deemed sovereign within its own domain, which means no sphere is absolute or subsumes

the others.[44] The public square broadly understood cuts across several spheres, such as civil government, organized charity, the media, the university, and so on.[45]

Unfortunately, it seems that our thought and action narrow the diversity of purposes that the public square can serve by making them fit the sphere of policy and civil government. Concerns for identity issues, offensive speech, school curricula, and so on, are reframed as matters of public justice and objects of government control and judicial decisions.[46] When something falls under the category of public justice, the government will use the power of the sword to handle it. In many of the issue-areas, this will raise the stakes, leading to heated, emotional, and deeply personal debates and to a strong sense of urgency and of potential despair if we do not have it our way. This need not be so, but we must learn not to commit everything in the public square to the hands of civil government.

Second, while globalization and the market economy can have a negative impact in the way politics is organized, we should avoid portraying the market economy and globalization as necessary enemies of our sense of community in the public square.

The point about the market economy is more straightforward. It may be granted that modern industrial capitalism with its intensification of the division of labor has altered the way we understand and value community. We are no longer living in traditional, undifferentiated societies, a point that Kuyper bitterly highlighted in his critical assessment of the social question.[47] However, later Reformational thinkers have come to see the fact of social differentiation as a good historical unfolding of God's creation in response to the cultural mandate.[48] A market economy is not inherently antisocial. To the contrary, the existence of a well-differentiated economic sphere in modern life has advanced our historical progress. Novak discusses the business corporation to illustrate how the market economy encourages us to build community: "The system of democratic capitalism brought into prominence a novel social instrument: the voluntary association committed to business enterprise, the corporation. The assumption behind this invention is social, not individualistic. It holds that economic activity is fundamentally corporate, exceeding the capacity of any one individual alone."[49] Besides, says Novak, most work nowadays is "work for others." Therefore, "the business firm is primarily a community of persons who in various ways are trying to satisfy their basic needs and to form such businesses at the service of the whole society."[50] Taken this way, the market economy is a major asset that enriches our public square.

When may capitalism become a threat? When the economic sphere oversteps its boundaries and hampers the mission of the other spheres. This often happens in market economies that lack an appropriate level of economic freedom to

operate, and where there is much incentive to make use of economic power to purchase favorable political outcomes.[51] Crony capitalism facilitates corruption, which in turn is a major source of popular disgust at the public square.[52] A market economy takes us farther from the "medieval village" model of community, but it builds up modern communities of work and service. Nothing intrinsic to contemporary economic life undermines the public square, unless the government allows crime and corruption.

As for globalization, we may agree that some of its aspects have encouraged a sense of alienation from the public square, particularly where decision-making by the power elite is far removed from the daily reality of the average person in the street. However, this paradoxically happens because of too much centralization, not decentralization.[53] Too much power is concentrated domestically on the federal level and internationally in supranational bureaucracy. Both sides of centralization, within countries and between countries, denote ways in which globalization can be misused as a process. Mass immigration is a good example of an unintended consequence of the combination of domestic centralization with centralization on a global scale. There is a rising concern in Western developed countries that mass immigration poses a major challenge to their way of life. Populists on the left and on the right denounce globalization as the sole cause behind it. A neglected point here is that certain countries attract more immigration precisely because they have a very centralized welfare state and a system of benefits that applies beyond emergency situations.[54] Abroad, these governments may be under the burden of inflexible supranational regulations, as exemplified in the recent case of the European Union against the government of Hungary on the issue of immigration.[55] There is, then, a problem with how the state has at the same time become more centralized at home and embraced supranational regulations. Proper governance on both levels "cannot be achieved by eliminating lower levels of government."[56]

The positive side of globalization, though, seems underemphasized in the discussion. As James W. Skillen puts it, "we might better think of the world as an arena where new valleys and peaks are emerging in a culturally diverse and institutionally differentiating world that is also, simultaneously, becoming more integrated."[57] To make use of a Reformational notion, globalization as a phenomenon has a certain creational structure, but it may be employed in different directions.[58] A commitment to societal coherence and diversification at home and abroad entails a redirection of domestic and international governance toward a less alienating position. This alternative way of framing globalization and the political process in general would restrict issues of public justice to their own sovereign sphere, allowing for the other spheres to flourish without subsuming

them to politics. Within the sphere of public justice, a suitable supplement to this change would be the decentralization and devolution of power to keep much of the policy planning and deliberation as close as possible to those affected by the decisions. This would be a God-honoring way of demonstrating that human knowledge is local, dispersed, and fragmentary, and of offering a more accessible invitation to take part in the public square.[59]

In short, globalization and capitalism are ways of organizing social and economic activity that have a certain structure and a certain direction. Political reductionism and too much centralization are ways of misdirecting the two. While there are complex political and sociocultural issues to be sorted out, we must not ignore the essentially religious root of the crisis we face in public life. We have put our trust in the political process, subsuming our entire pursuit of authenticity and community to the political realm and now misuse that inflated political system through centralization and concentration of power. A hyper-politicized and hyper-centralized public square are idolatrous distortions. We can only expect that they will lead those who are excluded from the process and from its benefits to a feeling of despair or indifference.

Conclusion

The public square is an intertwinement of many spheres which are sovereign in their own domains. Each of them has a potential role to play in human flourishing. I have argued that the deeper-level problems that we considered here result from distorting other spheres into the government sphere of public justice. When one sphere subsumes the others, we have a directional distortion of the public square. Direction is, at the root, a spiritual matter. We either use creational structures to honor God, or we use them to express our hope in an idol. We put too much hope in politics. A flattening atomization of civil society is the result feared by Tocqueville and now denounced by thinkers such as Castells, Sennett, and Taylor. We realize, perhaps at a very late stage, that we run the risk of having to face the overwhelming power of the state by ourselves, with no buffer in between. If in North America and in some European countries this flattening process is far from complete, it is only because of the persistence and perseverance of those who have made appropriate use of intermediary associations, which is precisely the direction in which Tocqueville, Kuyper, and Althusius would point. As Christians in the public square, what can we do now?

When we discuss this topic as people of faith, we tend to forget how controversial it is to treat our presence in the public square as a manifestation of our religion. The prevailing modern liberal mindset discourages this idea, to say

the least. At worst, it is flat-out hostile to the notion of bringing faith to bear on issues of public policy, justice, and society. In America, a key claim raised against a distinctively Christian engagement with culture in general is that the US Constitution speaks of a separation of church and state—and that is interpreted as a claim for the separation of religion and anything you argue or do in public. In Europe, secularists make a similar case for keeping religion out of the public square based on the principle of *laïcité*. However, even if we are so tempted, we cannot follow that path.

As encouragement, I echo the words of Hans Rookmaaker, a Reformational thinker who did much to enhance our understanding of how Christians should engage with culture: "Although there is no promise that Christianity will again be acknowledged as influential in our society, our task is not to shy away from our responsibilities…. We are admonished to be humble, not to dream of doing God's work in our own strength. At the same time we are commanded to be righteous, to do our task, to walk in God's ways."[60] Rookmaaker suggested the following formula as a guideline: "weep, pray, think, work." As we weep, pray, and think about the current crisis in the public square, let us remember that Christian individuals and organizations are not immune to the problems examined here—poor expression in our political conversations, inappropriate personalization of our public lives, and lack of civility. We are not immune to the idolatry of reducing the potential richness of the public square to the monochromatic path of centralized policy and legal decision-making.

As we set out to work, let us keep in mind that we already count on a diversity of communities and intermediary associations that can do much to help us recover our public square. The church can improve the quality of our conversations by preaching against false witness and enforcing spiritual discipline. The university, the debate club, or the model United Nations can foster a sense of public life and offer an environment where discussions and decisions are not necessarily a matter of superimposing our personal quest for authenticity on others. The extended family is an excellent arena to practice civility—we need not pursue the same closeness with distant relatives that we have with our siblings, but we must be polite. The business company provides some space for figuring out who we are and how exactly we are called to serve others with our work. Finally, the political committee campaigning against violence shows us that civil government has its God-given role of promoting order and public justice.

Notes

1.   Johannes Althusius, *Politica* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995), 1.3–5. This quotation is taken from Frederick S. Carney's abridged edition of *Politica*.

2.   Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve (New York: George Adlard, 1839), 2.2.2. Quotes taken from the third American edition.

3.   Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 2.2.4.

4.   Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 2.2.4.

5.   Manuel Castells, *Ruptura: A Crise da Democracia Liberal* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2018), 27–28. For a discussion of this point relevant to Christian ethics, see Davi Lago, *Brasil Polifônico: Os Evangélicos e as Estruturas de Poder* (São Paulo: Mundo Cristão, 2018), 41–45.

6.   See, for example, Liam C. Mallow and Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz, "Going Positive: The Effects of Negative and Positive Advertising on Candidate Success and Voter Turnout," *Research and Politics* (January–March 2016): 1–15.

7.   Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (London: Penguin, 2002), 4, 25, 265.

8.   Sennett, *Fall of Public Man*, 5, 261–62.

9.   Sennett, *Fall of Public Man*, 264–65.

10. Sennett, *Fall of Public Man*, 265–66.

11. C. S. Lewis, "Screwtape Proposes a Toast," *The Saturday Evening Post*, December 19, 1959, 89.

12. Castells, *Ruptura*, 144–45.

13. Castells, *Ruptura*, 7–8.

14. Castells, *Ruptura*, 12.

15. Castells, *Ruptura*, 17–19.

16. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Globalization's Democratic Deficit: How to Make International Institutions More Accountable," *Foreign Affairs* 80, no. 4 (2001): 2–6.

17. Castells, *Ruptura*, 94.

18. Castells, *Ruptura*, 9.

19. Todd Gitlin, "The Left Declares Its Independence," *The New York Times*, October 8, 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/09/opinion/sunday/occupy-wall-street-and-the-tea-party.html.

20. Sennett, *Fall of Public Man*, 277.

21. Jacques Rupnik, "The Crisis of Liberalism," *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 3 (2018): 26–27.

22. Unlike Tocqueville, though, Taylor does not believe that the contemporary manifestation of atomistic individualism entails government despotism and Sennett seems critical of the view that equality is the force driving this decline of public life.

23. Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 14.

24. Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 4.

25. Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 112–13.

26. Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 114–15.

27. Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 113.

28. Sennett, *Fall of Public Man*, 4.

29. Sennett, *Fall of Public Man*, 6.

30. Castells, *Ruptura*, 14, 17–18, 37–38, 93–94.

31. Sennett, *Fall of Public Man*, 127.

32. Sennett, *Fall of Public Man*, 141.

33. Sennett, *Fall of Public Man*, 149. Sennett's idea goes against the notion that massification is to be blamed for the decline of public life. Contrast with Kuyper's anti-urban and anti-cosmopolitan views. Abraham Kuyper, *Pro Rege*, vol. 1: The Kingship of Christ in His Majesty, trans. Albert Gootjes (Bellingham: Lexham, 2016), 67–73.

34. Sennett, *Fall of Public Man*, chap. 12–13.

35. Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 4–5, 117.

36. Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 9–10, 112–13.

37. Abraham Kuyper, "The Social Question and the Christian Religion," in *Makers of Modern Christian Social Thought: Leo XIII and Abraham Kuyper on the Social Question*, ed. Jordan J. Ballor (Grand Rapids: Acton Institute, 2016), 64–65. I thank Dr. Jordan Ballor for highlighting the importance of this quote.

38. See Abraham Kuyper, *Our Program: A Christian Political Manifesto*, trans. Harry Van Dyke (Bellingham: Lexham, 2015), 2, 58; for a contemporary liberal account, see Mark Lilla, *The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West* (New York: Vintage, 2008), 308–9.

39. Miroslav Volf, *Uma Fé Pública: Como o Cristão Pode Contribuir para o Bem Comum* (São Paulo: Mundo Cristão, 2018), 150.

40. Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (New York: Touchstone, 1983), 53.

41. Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 15.

42. Novak, *Democratic Capitalism*, 54.

43. See Psalm 146:3.

44. Abraham Kuyper, *Calvinism: Six Stone-Lectures* (Amsterdam: Höveker & Wormser, 1899), 90–91, 96–97; Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 3: *The Structures of Individuality of Temporal Reality* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969), 283.

45. See Jonathan Chaplin, *Herman Dooyeweerd: Christian Philosopher of State and Civil Society* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 16–18 and chaps. 6–7.

46. I acknowledge that this is a more restrictive adaptation of Kuyper's idea. Richard Mouw and Jonathan Chaplin are examples of Reformational scholars allowing for a stronger government presence. See Richard J. Mouw, *The Challenge of Cultural Discipleship: Essays in the Line of Abraham Kuyper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 35–36; Chaplin, *Dooyeweerd*, chap. 11.

47. Kuyper, "The Social Question," 70–72.

48. See Genesis 1:28–29; Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 2: *The General Theory of the Modal Sphere*s (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969), 229–83.

49. Novak, *Democratic Capitalism*, 130–31.

50. Michael Novak, *Business as a Calling: Work and the Examined Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 125–26.

51. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, former president of Brazil, makes this general point and then offers an extended example in that country's current political crisis in Fernando Henrique Cardoso, *Crise e Reinvenção da Política no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2018), 49–57.

52. Castells, *Ruptura*, 23–25.

53. See Wilhelm Röpke, *A Humane Economy: The Social Framework of the Free Market* (Chicago: Regnery, 1960), 242–44.

54. Kevin Drew and Cajsa Collin, "Sweden's Debate: How Warmly to Welcome Outsiders," *US News*, July 10, 2017, https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2017-07-10/immigration-forces-sweden-to-re-evaluate-its-welfare-state.

55. "The European Parliament Condemns Hungary," *The Economist*, September 13, 2018, https://www.economist.com/europe/2018/09/13/the-european-parliament-condemns-hungary.

56. James W. Skillen, *The Good of Politics: A Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 186.

57. Skillen, *The Good of Politics*, 185.

58. This refers to the concepts of structure and direction. See Albert Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basis for a Reformational Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 59.

59. See F. A. Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society," *The American Economic Review* 35, no. 4 (1945): 519–30.

60. Hans R. Rookmaaker, *Art Needs No Justification* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 26.