

Grounded Reformation or Global Devastation?

In a healthy society, three sectors function in balance while holding each other in check: a public sector of respected governments, a private sector of responsible enterprises, and a plural sector of robust communities. The vast majority of societies today are not so balanced, including those called communist, capitalist, and populist.¹ We live the consequences of this as amplified income disparities, decline of democracy, and hastening climate change. Please understand that we cannot resolve these problems without a significant restoration of balance across the sectors. For example, how can climate change be reversed as long as private forces drive conspicuous consumption?

The easy fixes are not working. We seek heroic leadership, only to find much of it impotent or autocratic. We hold lofty conferences on global warming whose net effect may be more of it—from the travel, let alone the talk. And proposals abound to fix the very capitalism that has caused so much of the imbalance. It is our societies that need fixing.

More encouraging are the social initiatives that champion improvements in human rights, sustainable environment, world peace, reformed education, better food, and much more—over a million of these, according to [one book](#). That book was published in 2007: consider how much worse the imbalance has become since then. The more that people strive to make things better, the worse the imbalance becomes.

This is because the forces for imbalance work in concert, for self-interest, while those for the common interest are scattered. They will have to consolidate around common cause, and that means putting reformation for balance front and center. The message of the 16th Century Reformation is that massive shift in social behavior begins, not at the “top” of some established institution, but with a groundswell of community engagement networked to challenge the corruption of established institutions. If we are to stop our descent into self-destruction, the sector that should be called plural will have to take its place alongside those called public and private.

Can something like reformation happen now, on a global scale? The deterioration of our climate is happening now, on that scale. Democracy is in decline now, far and wide, putting some nuclear weapons under the control of loose cannons. For the sake of our planet and our progeny, we require grounded reformation to stop global devastation.

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¹ The recent [Economist Democracy Index](#) lists only 22 countries as “full democracies”, comprising under 6% of the world’s population.