

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

November / December 2011, Volume 21, Number 6



“connecting good intentions with sound economics”

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President's Message

"The one who invests it and brings back far more than the other enjoys the most praise."

A widespread assumption among people who associate with the religious left is that the rich are not in good standing with God, and therefore society should expropriate some portion of their wealth and share it with everyone else. That is part of the idea behind the Occupy Wall Street movement too.

But is it true? We only need to look at the parable of the talents to see that the Bible is more focused on the means and motives behind amassing wealth than the wealth itself. The master gives a certain number of resources to three servants and watches to see what they do with the resources. The one who invests it and brings back far more than the other enjoys the most praise.

This is a parable, so its primary purpose is not to teach economics or investment lessons. Nonetheless, an embedded presumption in the story is that the increasing and building wealth is not necessarily evil. It might even be praiseworthy. What about other Gospel teachings that seem to suggest that wealth comes with dangers? Again, we need to take a balanced look at this. Materialism is a problem that can afflict all classes in society.

Rather than issue blanket condemnations of wealth - which strike me as unjustified - we might consider the obligations that are attendant on everyone who lives amidst material plenty. We have an obligation to give to the poor. We must support our houses of worship. We should plan well for the future rather than merely consuming for the day. We must always be honest and truthful in our business dealings.

None of these moral strictures obligate states to pursue massive European-like wealth redistribution schemes. Too often, this ends up only feeding an overfed political and bureaucratic class at the expense of everyone else, whether rich or poor.

The Occupy movement should be focused on expanding opportunity for everyone in society rather than just taking money from one group in a pointless exercise of envy. At the Acton Institute, we believe in this opportunity society so that the one percent can eventually become the one hundred percent. Thank you for supporting our work.

The mission of the Acton Institute is to promote a free and virtuous society characterized by individual liberty and sustained by religious principles.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Robert Sirico". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Robert Sirico, President

ACTONINSTITUTE

Wisdom & Wonder Book Launch

Dr. Vincent Bacote, who was the speaker at the *Wisdom & Wonder* book launch, said Abraham Kuyper is still relevant “because there is confusion about the role of Christians in society.” The event took place on the campus of Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids on December 10. Dr. Bacote, Associate Professor of Theology and Director of the Center for Applied Christian Ethics at Wheaton College, addressed over 60 who attended the launch. “If you are a Christian, should you be involved in this world or merely on the periphery? Kuyper answered with a resounding yes,” added Dr. Bacote. Acton Institute and Kuyper College collaborated on the project that will ultimately see all of Kuyper’s seminal three-volume work *Common Grace* translated into English for the first time. Dr. Nelson Kloosterman, who serves as ethics consultant and executive director of Worldview Resources International, translated *Wisdom & Wonder*. Dr. Kloosterman will also oversee the entire translation of *Common Grace*.

“If you are a Christian
should you be involved in
this world...”

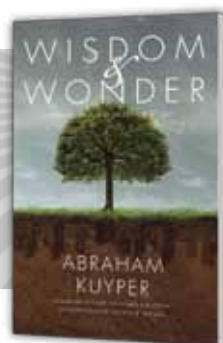
The event at the seminary concluded with a Q&A panel that included Dr. Bacote, Dr. Michael Wittmer of Grand Rapids Theological Seminary, and Dr. Nelson Kloosterman. Dr. Jordan Ballor, a research fellow at the Acton Institute, served as moderator for the panel. Dr. Stephen Grabill, director of programs at the Acton Institute, told the *Grand Rapids Press* before the book launch:

There are lots of important discussions going on right now within the broader evangelical community, and within the Christian Reformed Church, about science and art. Kuyper, writing on common grace in science and art, has so much to say about these topics. But his contribution gets overlooked because very few people can read Dutch.”

Wisdom & Wonder: Common Grace in Science & Art explores the views of Kuyper on the relationship between the Christian faith, culture, and God’s preserving work in the world. The first volume of *Common Grace* is set to appear in the fall of 2012.



Acton’s Jordan Ballor served as moderator for the book launch.



From Our Conference Participants

I have been invigorated and encouraged to dive deeper into the social and economic issues in my community. I have confidence in the sound and clear thinking that was presented to me at the conference.

—Christopher Brown
Regents College
Tamarac, Florida

I would like to express my gratitude for your generosity and kindness in supporting the work of Acton. It has allowed me to participate in this year’s Acton University.

—Jorge Smith
Knox Theological Seminary
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

3rd Annual Chicago Open Mic Night

The Acton Institute held its 3rd annual Open Mic Night on November 3 at the University Club of Chicago. The panelists fielded a host of questions about how to jumpstart the economy and the role of virtue in society.

Acton executive editor Kris Maureen emceed the event, and panelists included Acton President Rev. Robert Sirico, Brian Wesbury, and Heather Wilhelm. Wesbury is chief economist at First Trust Advisers L.P., a financial service based in Wheaton, Illinois and Wilhelm is a senior fellow at the Illinois Policy Institute.

Panelists agreed that the sectors of the economy that received little assistance and were not micro-managed or faced burdensome regulation by the federal government fared best. Wilhelm quoted H.L. Menken to great effect: "The urge to save humanity is almost always a false front for the urge to rule it."

Jim Healy, an advisor to Rev. Robert Sirico, summed up the importance of Open Mic Night:

ACTON News



The purpose of the Acton 'Open-Mic' evening is to provide a forum to discuss critical public-policy issues, so interested people can become better informed about those issues in order to take appropriate follow-up action as necessary to promote a free and virtuous society. This is one initiative where members of other conservative groups in the Chicago area join with us to advance the cause of liberty.

R&L Interviews Dolphus Weary

Dolphus Weary, president of R.E.A.L. Christian Foundation in Mississippi, is interviewed in the Fall 2011 issue of *Religion & Liberty*. Weary, a popular minister and speaker offers a unique story about

his experience growing up in grinding poverty and segregation in rural Mississippi. He was previously a leader in Mendenhall Ministries from 1971 to 1997, a ministry that works to empower people to overcome poverty and hopelessness. The model of Mendenhall Ministries has been widely adopted in other parts of the country and it received national recognition by President George H.W. Bush in 1991 as one of the Daily Points of Light.

R&L Managing editor Ray Nothstine commented on the interview:

Dolphus Weary brings tremendous credibility to the issue of poverty. He has overcome many obstacles in his own life and turned it into a powerful testimony. As the Acton Institute further engages the issues that surround poverty, it is important that we learn from people like Weary. He is the embodiment of a person that is not afraid to roll up their sleeves and do the hard work of ministering to the 'least of these.'

Aid & Enterprise Conference

On December 1, Acton hosted a conference titled "From Aid to Enterprise: Economic Liberty and Solutions to Poverty" in London. The conference



Lord Brian Griffiths

explored the limits and unintended consequences of aid and the role of business in poverty alleviation. Lord Brian Griffiths, who previously spoke at Acton University in 2008, was among the speakers. He discussed the moral basis of a market economy, highlighting the importance of freedom, private property, competitive markets, and a just society. "I don't think you can have a market economy without certain values. In other words, it requires certain institutions...but it also requires people to hold certain values," declared Lord Griffiths. This conference wraps up a series of Acton events that took place on four continents over the last two years on the topic of enterprise solutions to poverty.

Jordan Ballor Debates Gideon Strauss

On October 21, at the Christian Legal Society's 50th Anniversary Conference in Chicago, Acton's Dr. Jordan Ballor and Dr. Gideon Strauss of the Center for Public Justice (CPJ) faced off for the third time this year to debate the question of the proper Christian perspective toward justice, poverty, politics, and the state. Interestingly, both participants actually had much in common, since both are Reformed Christians and engage social issues from this perspective.

Dr. Ballor set the stage by outlining the basic institutions of society: family, Church, business (or culture, more broadly), and the state. Having established each as integral spheres, Jordan asked the question, "Whose problem is poverty?" Business, after all, creates jobs and wealth; the family is meant to provide for the basic needs of its members; and the Church has been established, with regards to poverty, to fill in any gaps through charitable giving. Only temporarily and

as a last resort, and only to the Church's shame, should the state be involved in alleviating the hardships of the poor.

"Having certain programs as a safety net is fine... so long as no one gets caught in it."

To this, Dr. Strauss responded by attempting to broaden our definition of the state to include each citizen and to argue that what we need is not less government but better government, one in which entitlement reform

would be focused on the rich rather than the poor. Dr. Ballor, however, contended that the real difference between them was rather that he believed government to be "better at less." Having certain programs as a safety net is fine... so long as no one gets caught in it. The problem, according to Dr. Ballor, is that too few people look at these as temporary fixes anymore, and they are not adequately designed to be.

In the end, no participant had the last word in a lively debate that will surely continue.



African kids with Obama belt © Sadi Ugur OKCU. iStockPhoto.com



ACTON in the News

Instead, Europe needs more honesty and less fiscal fibbing ..."

—Excerpted from Dr. Samuel Gregg's article in *National Review Online*.

Michael Miller

Title: Real Solutions to Poverty
Program: *Tony Gates Show*
Air Date: 12.5.11

Dr. Samuel Gregg

Title: Eurocracy Run Amuck
Publisher: *National Review Online*
Date: 11.22.11

Dr. Samuel Gregg

Title: America's Gerontocracy
Publisher: *National Review Online*
Date: 11.7.11

Reminder

Help Acton Promote Freedom and Virtue!

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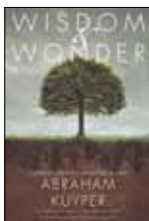
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ACTON UNIVERSITY 2011



ACTON Book Shoppe



Wisdom and Wonder

By Abraham Kuyper

Wisdom & Wonder: Common Grace in Science & Art is a new and complete translation of two sections that the Dutch Reformed theologian and politician Abraham Kuyper intended for his larger three-volume work on common grace.

Hardcover 182 pages Original Price \$26.99 Sale \$24.00

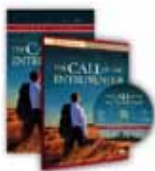


Stewardship Study Bible

Published by Zondervan

Christian stewardship is about more than the money we drop into the collection plate. Stewardship is everything we do after we say we believe. In this five session video study, you will learn how to think critically and biblically about the areas of responsibility that have been entrusted to you by God.

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Produced by Acton Media

Examining several core themes including the pernicious effects of zero-sum-game thinking, the role of entrepreneurs in creating new wealth, the risk-taking element of enterprise, and the role of limited government, property rights, rule of law, and free markets.

DVD 60 mins Original Price \$25.00 Sale \$20.00



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produced by Acton Media

Humans are separated by enormous differences in talent and circumstance. Why would any- one believe that all men are created equal? That all should be free? That all deserve a voice in choosing their leaders? Why would any nation consider this a self-evident truth? How is freedom born?

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	PRICE	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Wisdom & Wonder	\$24.00		
Stewardship Study Bible	\$35.00		
The Call of the Entrepreneur DVD and Study Guide	\$20.00		
Birth of Freedom DVD and Study Guide	\$20.00		

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Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
Jun 12	Acton University	Grand Rapids, MI

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notes

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