

# Notes

March/April Vol. 31 No. 2



Ezequiel Vazquez-Ger, co-founder and managing partner of Seven Restaurant Group



Anne Rathbone Bradley, Ph.D. academic director at The Fund for American Studies

## A message from our president

Rev. Robert A. Sirico

Lord Acton once famously said that liberty is “the delicate fruit of a mature civilization.” All greatness is the result of a long and arduous cultivation. This is true not only for individual growth in art and virtue but also for societies as a whole. Liberty flourishes in a society supported by a moral culture that embraces the truth about the transcendent origin and destiny of the human person. This moral culture is the necessary basis for harmony and order within society.

In this issue, you will learn about our Poverty Cure Summit student essay contest and read insights

from the winners and honorable mentions. My hearty congratulations to them! Seeing our ideas shape and inform the thoughts of students is a wonderful gift and also a witness to the fruit we wish to cultivate in the next generation.

Our featured article is a recap of our recent Business Matters Conference. This virtual event focused on issues of business in volatile times, entrepreneurship, and the creation of value in service to others. The conference was a great success, with participants virtually attending from the world over. You will also learn how to access the recorded sessions online.

It is also a pleasure to share news of our Acton Lecture Series event in which Dr. Anthony Bradley, professor of religious studies at The King’s College,

addressed the question of “Why Black Lives Matter.” His is a distinctly Christian perspective on what is needed for Black communities to thrive from within.

Hot off the presses is our latest co-published translation of the works of Abraham Kuyper, *On Business and Economics*. The Dutch theologian and statesman addressed a wide range of topics, but his views on business and economics are often overlooked. This excellent volume fills that gap.

None of this would be possible without the generous support of our donors. Thank you! Your support is more important than ever in these difficult times. If you are just learning about Acton, be sure to check out our website, and please prayerfully consider supporting us in our mission. **N**

## Acton Events [REGISTER AT ACTON.ORG/EVENTS](https://acton.org/events) • [WATCH ONLINE AT ACTON.ORG/LIVE](https://acton.org/live)

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
APR 22-24	<b>Liberty, Markets and Responsibility</b> <i>Conference Series – This colloquium begins at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 22, 2021, and concludes late on Saturday, April 24, for Sunday morning departures.</i>	Holland, MI
APR 29	<b>Solzhenitsyn against Propaganda</b> <i>Acton Lecture Series featuring Jessica Hooten Wilson, Ph.D., University of Dallas. Event livestream is free and will be available to view @ noon Eastern on April 29.</i>	Online
JUN 23-24	<b>Acton University</b> <i>Mark your calendar! AU 2021 will be held online June 23 – 24 from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. EST</i>	Online

# Introducing the Poverty Cure Summit essay contest winners

Noah Gould

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How can we effectively combat poverty? Students from across the globe answered that question and brought fresh ideas to the table in our recent essay contest, which took place as part of the 2020 Poverty Cure Summit. The excerpts below demonstrate the wide variety of insights that students gained from the conference.

## FIRST PLACE:

*“Fighting poverty is like dealing with a chronic disease, and using palliative measures will not solve the problem.”*

Matheus Resende, Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie, Brazil

## SECOND PLACE:

*“The best solutions to poverty do not merely lift individuals out of poverty, but allow them the agency to mobilize.”*

Emma K. Randall, Patrick Henry College, United States

## THIRD PLACE:

*“We are in a war between transactional versus relational living. We have far too willingly relinquished basic freedoms and redefined what it means to live.”*

Margo Weller, Grove City College, United States

## HONORABLE MENTIONS:

*“Humanitarianism focuses on providing comfort ... Christ-like charity sees people as products of God’s love.”*

Victor Ayodeji, University of Lagos, Nigeria

*“We must allow human beings to enhance their capacity to create meaning and cultivate virtue.”*

Alex Aguirre, Navarra University, Spain

*“By calling someone ‘poor,’ we are essentially associating their identity and dignity as a human being to their economic status.”*

Salwa Mansuri, University College of London, United Kingdom

*“While the topic of curing poverty has always been of great interest to me, never before had I considered the impact that the sexual revolution has had on poverty itself.”*

Kaelyn C. Brooks, Colorado Christian University, United States

*“The average American professional commits about three felonies a day. Laws that are being broken target the poor.”*


Liam Vincent Carroll, Gordon College, United States

*“It is the responsibility of each individual and each local community to solve its own poverty challenge.”*

Cesar Giraldo, College el Redin, Spain

*“We must develop healthy institutions, as well as to foster trust and entrepreneurship.”*

Pedro Fernandes, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brazil

You can read the full essays from the contest winners by visiting <http://acton.is/essay>. 



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FEATURED STORY

# Ezequiel Vazquez-Ger joins Business Matters 2021

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**O**n February 25, 2021, the Acton Institute hosted its third Business Matters event. The one-day conference brings together business leaders and CEOs to discuss business ethics. For the first time the event streamed online to a global audience. Because of the unprecedented challenges facing businesses and entrepreneurs, this year's theme was "Certain Principles for Uncertain Times."

Executive director and Acton co-founder, Kris Alan Mauren, hosted the event and provided the opening remarks. "We are in the midst of challenging and volatile times. Businesses are being tested to survive in a climate of fluctuating markets, civil unrest, political upheaval and a prolonged pandemic that has forced many businesses to redefine themselves," said Mauren. "With these challenges come difficult ethical questions for business people and demands for innovation." To tackle these challenges, Mauren introduced the speakers and panel discussions, starting with an inspiring session titled "Doing Business in a Pandemic," featuring Anne Rathbone Bradley, Ph.D., academic director at The Fund for American Studies, and Ezequiel Vazquez-Ger, co-founder and managing partner of Seven Restaurant Group.

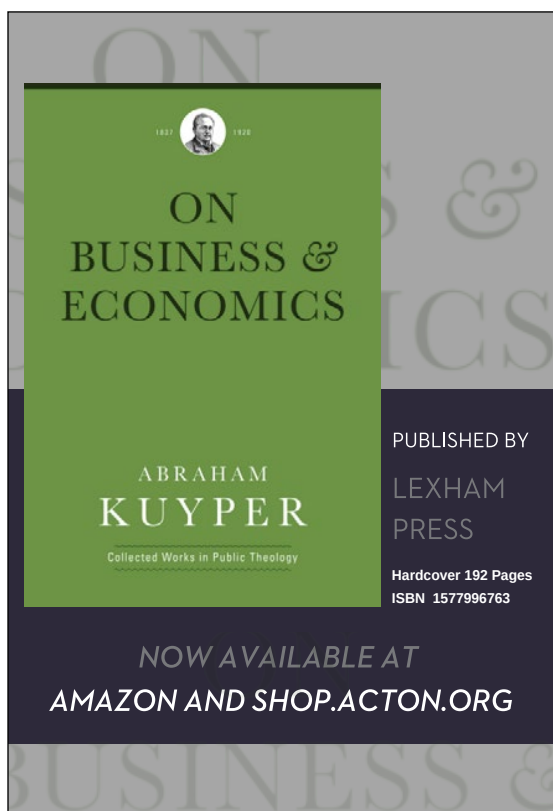
Vazquez-Ger began by sharing his incredible journey of leaving Argentina to move to



the US for work. As a trained economist, Vazquez-Ger started working in political consulting and eventually started his own D.C.-based firm. “I worked with some of the best business groups in Latin America, doing crisis management,” explained Vazquez-Ger. But after several years, and despite his success, he decided to take a risk and “do something completely different.”

Following a visit to an impressive Venezuelan restaurant in Baltimore, Vazquez-Ger decided to inquire if the chef (Enrique Limardo) would consider moving to D.C. to start a restaurant together. Despite Vazquez-Ger’s lack of restaurant experience, Chef Enrique agreed, and eventually they opened Seven Reasons. The restaurant was an instant success and was voted “best restaurant in the Americas” by *Esquire* magazine. Unfortunately, when the pandemic struck, the new restaurant was forced to temporarily close. But instead of relying on government assistance to stay afloat, the owners decided they were the ones best positioned to ensure their restaurant’s success. “In the end, if I want to succeed, it’s not about depending on the government. It’s gonna depend on how we deal with the situation and learn to adapt and turn a crisis into an opportunity,” explained Vazquez-Ger. And so Vazquez-Ger and his team innovated, creating a very successful takeout menu delivered by staff members. Because of their creativity, Seven Reasons not only weathered the closures but also thrived, and they are in the process of opening another restaurant in D.C.

The uplifting conversation set the tone for the conference. Following sessions, which featured Doug DeVos, co-chair of the Amway board of directors, and John Mackey, co-founder and CEO of Whole Foods Market, addressed how the pandemic and government restrictions are no match for the entrepreneurial spirit and human innovation. N



## ACTON INSTITUTE

Check out the Acton Institute's official YouTube page to watch videos from Business Matters 2021 and the Acton Lecture Series.

HONI BRADLEY  
BLACK LIVES MATTER  
59:26

CONSCIOUS LEADERSHIP  
JOHN MACKAY  
NEW BOMBERA AUSA  
42:05

BUSINESS MATTERS 2021  
PLAY ALL  
42:05

DOING BUSINESS IN A PANDEMIC  
TIMELINESS UNCERTAINTY  
42:05

youtube.com/actoninstitute

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**BRIEF**

## Latest Abraham Kuyper volume available now

Dan Hugger

*On Business and Economics*, the latest volume in Abraham Kuyper's Collected Works in Public Theology, is available now. This is the eleventh volume of an ongoing twelve-volume publishing collaboration between Lexham Press and the Acton Institute. The editor of this collection, Peter S. Heslam, has ably assembled Kuyper's key writings touching on business and economics.

In his vast treasury of writings, Abraham Kuyper addressed nearly every sphere of society, including politics, science and the arts. But his views on business and economics are often overlooked because he rarely engaged with that sphere directly. Still, his doctrine of common grace has great significance for showing how Christ is at work in the workplace.

In this anthology of essays, speeches and reflections, we see Kuyper's attempts to think positively and creatively about the calling and potential of business. Included are his ideas about economic freedom, the eternal value of earthly work, stewardship and philanthropy, economic globalization, the workings of God's grace in business, and the social function of money.

Highlights from this volume include excerpts from Kuyper's commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, which unpack his distinctively Reformed perspective on business, economics and vocation. His address "The Social Question and the Christian Religion" to the first Christian Social Congress offers a Christian perspective on the social problems of the modern world. **N**

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**BRIEF**

## Anthony Bradley: "Why Black Lives Matter"

Ben Stoner

On March 18, the Acton Institute was excited to welcome Dr. Anthony Bradley, professor and chair of religious and theological studies at The King's College (NY) and Acton research fellow, to speak as part of Acton's Lecture Series online. The lecture, "Why Black Lives Matter," was largely based on Dr. Bradley's recent book by the same name. During his talk, Dr. Bradley provided a distinctly Christian perspective on what is needed for black communities to thrive from within. Dr. Bradley began by explaining the difference between the Black Lives Matter movement and the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s. "The Black Lives Matter movement has intentionally kept the Black church on the far periphery of their advocacy of Black flourishing," said Bradley. "I believe this to be a profound error." Later Dr. Bradley offered what he believes black communities truly need to thrive.

"We cannot have a thriving black life or community without thriving black families. Mothers and fathers and children together in a community of moral formation." Dr. Bradley repeatedly addressed the importance of education as an essential avenue to black flourishing. "Education is the preparation for active participation in the marketplace."

Dr. Bradley concluded his talk on a hopeful note, emphasizing how important it is for black people to be included in the various networks of exchange. "Economic empowerment, through education, through entrepreneurship. These are the sorts of things that allow a dignity, an agency and virtue to thrive." **N**



# ACTON INSTITUTE

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## 2020 YEAR IN REVIEW



TOGETHER WE ACCOMPLISHED SO MUCH!

With your support, 2020 was a year of new audiences, new events and a new focus. Take a look at our 2020 Annual Report to see all we accomplished - thanks to you!

<https://acton.institute>

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# ACTON

## LECTURE SERIES

## JOIN US ONLINE

**April 29, 2021 • 12:00p.m.**



*Jessica Hooten Wilson, Ph.D. University of Dallas  
Louise Cowan Scholar in Residence*

### SOLZHENITSYN AGAINST PROPAGANDA

Too loosely is the word "Marxist" used to insult a conflicting viewpoint. When we conscript people to a "side" and reduce them with a label, we participate in the same silencing and censoring that we hope to fight against. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wisely refused to choose a side in American politics. While the Russian dissident did battle the unjust control of the Soviets in his country, he chose the most powerful of weapons—novels. He argued for the convincingness of art to force "even an opposing heart to surrender." Through fiction, Solzhenitsyn provides a way to love our so-called enemies, encourage conversation rather than silencing, and, even when all appears despairing, open the door to hope.

LIVESTREAM @ [ACTON.ORG/LIVE](https://acton.org/live)

**Our lunchtime Lecture Series has gone virtual. Stream this special event free from the comfort of your home!**