

# ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

*January / February 2016, Volume 26, Number 1*



*“connecting good intentions with sound economics”*

Sadao Watanabe, Japanese (1913-1996). John Calvin, 1963. Stencil print on momigami wrinkled paper. Calvin College, 2014.17.1, Gift of Lavina Hoogeveen.

## In This Issue

• Recapping Acton Events from 2015 • Celebrating Art at Acton • Acton University 2016 Speakers

# President's Message

Space prohibits discussion here of all that art both reflects and conjures in a well-ordered society. Suffice it to say, the great writers already have covered this ground extensively from Sir Philip Sidney asserting—after Aristotle and Horace—in 1595 that art represents aspects of creation for the purpose of its glorification to the French priest and moral philosopher A.G. Sertillanges, who wrote in 1921 in *The Intellectual Life: Its Spirit, Conditions, Methods*:

“We are indeed made in the image of God, otherwise known as *Imago Dei*...”

[C]ontact with writers of genius procures us the immediate advantage of lifting us to a higher plane; by their superiority alone they confer a benefit on us even before teaching us anything. They set the tone for us; they accustom us to air of the mountaintops. We were moving in a lower region; they bring us at one stroke into their own atmosphere. In that world of lofty thought, the face of truth seems to be unveiled; beauty shines forth; the fact that we follow and understand these seers makes us reflect that we are after all of the same race, that the universal

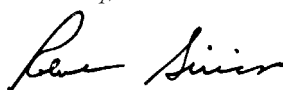
Soul is us, the Soul of souls, the Spirit to whom we have only to adapt ourselves in order to burst into divine speech, since at the source of all inspiration, always prophetic, there is “God, the first and supreme author of all one writes.”

True, Sidney and Sertillanges were expounding on the merits of literature specifically, but they just as easily could have been writing about the visual arts. These thoughts came to mind as I pondered the past year at Acton, which was marked by a bounty of delights in the visual realm.

I’m proud of the Acton Institute’s expanding mission to study the intersection of religion and liberty to include participation in Grand Rapids’ annual ArtPrize. Our building lobby this year featured five works from the 2015 competition, encompassing various visual media and subject matter from photography to sculpture. We also hosted, “Christmas,” a collection of Japanese stencil-dyed prints by Sadao Watanabe, including a rare print of John Calvin, commissioned by the Japan Calvin Translation Society. Last, but I hope not considered least, was the display of my personal terra-cotta nativity scene, which was made by Italian craftsmen and took me several years to collect every individual piece.

These works of art remind us that when remaining true to its nature, art serves as an ennobling representation of the human experience. Such art also reminds us of the blessings of talent, technique, and discipline bestowed on humanity by God. We are indeed made in the image of God, the *imago Dei*, and the best of humankind’s artistic endeavors honor our blessings and even how we sometimes fail in our attempts to lead virtuous lives. Alas, suppressing human liberty is an innovative enterprise engaged in daily by bureaucracies and legislatures. We continue to affirm the free and virtuous society using our rhetorical and media skills to win the day, but with art we’re assured of winning the movement. *Ars longa, vita brevis*.

Sincerely,



Rev. Robert Sirico, President

**ACTON**INSTITUTE

98 E. Fulton Street • Grand Rapids, MI 49503 • USA • [www.acton.org](http://www.acton.org)

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

## 2015 A record year for Acton

Last year was busy and exciting, not just at the Acton building in downtown Grand Rapids but at Acton events all over the world. Some stats from last year's calendar:

- nearly 5,000 unique attendees
- more than 40 events held
- first Acton conference held in the Middle East
- largest Acton University with nearly 1,000 attendees
- largest Annual Dinner with more than 800 attendees

In the Acton building, there were more than a dozen lunchtime Acton Lecture Series events, two film screenings and two art discussions with accompanying gallery openings and more. Acton staff and supporters were blessed to be able to hear from economists, college professors, think tank directors, religious freedom activists, artists and other intellectual giants. Lecturers included Arthur Brooks, president of the American

“...hear from economists, college professors, think tank directors, religious freedom activists, artists and other intellectual giants.”

Enterprise Institute; Lawrence Reed, president of the Foundation for Economic Education; Os Guinness, British author and social critic; Lela Gilbert, award-winning author with expertise on religious freedom; George Weigel, a political and social activist; Marina Nemat, a political prisoner under the Iranian government, and many others.

Just down the street from the Acton home office at a local Spanish restaurant, San Chez, a Tapas Bistro, Acton on Tap was held five times throughout the year, featuring Acton staff members and others in short, casual discussions with plenty of time for questions.

We're looking forward to 2016 being just as busy. Currently, ten lectures and screenings are already planned for the spring months. Please visit [www.acton.org/index/events](http://www.acton.org/index/events) for more information.



Lawrence Reed speaks at ALS about the challenging myths of progressivism.



National Review senior editor Jay Nordlinger speaking at ALS.

## From Our Conference Participants

I want to thank [Acton] for this investment in my life and the perspectives that have broadened my understanding of poverty, the poor and my responsibility to them ... I truly am blessed to see and hear from others in the ministry about the problem of poverty from a different viewpoint.

—George  
Cedar Hill, Texas

One of the areas that needs greater development in our church is that of community and economic development. Presently, we have partnerships with healthy organizations throughout our city, but our approach to holistic engagement has not been as strategic or sustainable as it needs to be...

—Neil  
Denver, Colorado



## A year of art at Acton

Part of Acton's mission is to pursue the good, the true and the beautiful. In 2015, Acton was certainly surrounded by the beautiful. Throughout the year, Acton hosted several art collections in the Prince Broekhuizen Gallery, facilitated art discussions and occasions and participated in ArtPrize, a 19-day art festival in downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The first display was "Seeing the sacred in the ordinary" by John August Swanson, from the Richard & Helen DeVos Collection. These serigraphs (intricate silk screens) are part of a large traveling exhibit that celebrates the Gospel story. Swanson created these pieces with nearly 90 color stencils, using lines, shapes, color and form to share his faith.

In April, the gallery was briefly home to Pamela Alderman's 2014 ArtPrize entry, "The Scarlet Cord." This is an installation dedicated to the children who are victims of sex trafficking and complemented an evening lecture about human trafficking.

In connection with an art discussion and ArtPrize

Japanese artist Sadao Watanabe. After becoming a Christian at an early age, Watanabe devoted his life and his art to depicting Biblical stories. Watanabe updated the process of *katazome*, a traditional Japanese folk method of stencil dying used with kimonos, and applied it to paper. The particular works in the Prince Broekhuizen Gallery were commissioned by the Japan Calvin Translation Society and included a rare print of Watanabe's John Calvin portrait.

Every September and October since 2009, the city of Grand Rapids has held ArtPrize. Art fills the streets and businesses of the downtown area and the public and professional art critics vote for their favorite pieces. Ever since moving to 98 E. Fulton in 2013, Acton has been an ArtPrize venue. In 2015, the lobby hosted five pieces: "Losing Connection," an encaustic by Marissa Voytenko; "Quantum Bubbles," a sculpture by Christine Soccio Romanell; "Blue Bridge by Winter Moonlight," a photograph by Christopher Gillespie; "Divine Transformation," a sculpture by Chelly Morris; and "I Spy ArtPrize," a mixed-media piece by Allison Polkowski.

## ACTON News



The Presepio through the windows of the Acton office building.



during the fall, the gallery housed a collection of Marissa Voytenko's work, "Quiet Spaces." It was a display of abstract encaustic two-dimensional pieces, featuring squares, blocks and grids. Voytenko uses her art to explore the opposing themes of order and chaos. She created the images by heating beeswax and damar resin. Several layers of encaustic medium were added on top of canvas or wood, and then Voytenko painted on top of the wax. This is one of the most ancient artistic methods and predates oil painting.

The final collection that Acton staff and visitors were able to enjoy was "Christmas," a collection by

To celebrate the Christmas season, Acton had a special window display facing Veteran's Park and Fulton Street in downtown Grand Rapids. The display, "Wise men still seek Him," featured a rare nativity set, Cathedral glass-inspired paint and more. Acton's president and cofounder, Rev. Robert Sirico, initiated the exhibition, wanting to create a proper display for his personal *presepio* (extended nativity scene). This set is made up of 171 individual pieces. The figures were handmade in Naples from terra-cotta and also include stiffened fabric for the clothing. The set depicts people from every walk of life going about the usual day-to-day chores that would have occurred on the day Christ was born.

# Acton University registration now open

Registration for Acton University 2016 opened on November 16. The conference will be held at the DeVos Place in downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan, from June 14–17. Registration is open until May 20, 2016 at midnight EST. The conference fees are **\$500 for students and \$750 for regular attendees**. This year includes 15 first-time faculty members, 42 new courses (for a total of 121), and online registration for all hotel reservations.

The following four keynote speakers also have been announced:

**Vernon L. Smith:** 2002 Nobel Prize winner in economic sciences for his groundbreaking work in experimental economics. He has the George L. Argyros Chair in Finance and Economics and is a research scholar in the Economic Science Institute at Chapman University. He has served as president of the International Foundation for Research in Experimental Economics since 1997.

**Magatte Wade:** passionate adventurer and idealistic entrepreneur. Born in Senegal and educated

in Germany and France, she left for the United States to begin a career as soon as she could. She lived and worked in Silicon Valley at the height of the dot-com boom and started a beverage company that obtained national distribution at leading natural food retailers and distributors.

**William B. Allen:** emeritus professor of political philosophy in the Department of Political Science and emeritus dean, James Madison College, at Michigan State University. Currently he serves as Veritas Fund Senior Fellow in the Matthew J. Ryan Center for the Study of Free Institutions and the Public Good at Villanova University.

**Rev. Robert Sirico:** president and cofounder of the Acton Institute and pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus parish in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His writings on religious, political, economic and social matters are published in a variety of journals, including: the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, Forbes, the London Financial Times, the Washington Times, the Detroit News and National Review.



From L to R: Magatte Wade, Vernon L. Smith, William B. Allen, Rev. Robert Sirico



## ACTON in the News

“Provocative documentary from Acton Institute fellow examines why those in need aren’t always thankful for giving—and what can be done to better improve their situation.”

—Excerpted from a review of *Poverty, Inc.*  
in *Variety* magazine.

### *Poverty, Inc.*

Title: Acton Institute film on poverty wins \$100K Templeton Freedom Award  
Publication: The Grand Rapids Press  
Date: 11.15.15

### Samuel Gregg

Title: The End of Europe  
Publication: Public Discourse  
Date: 11.17.15

### Rev. Robert Sirico

Title: Can the free market help combat climate change?  
Program: Vatican Viewpoint  
Air Date: 12.03.15

## Reminder

### Help Acton Promote Freedom and Virtue!

The Acton Institute depends on the generosity of supporters like you. If you have not donated to Acton but enjoy *Acton Notes*, please consider helping us meet our goals! Your help makes possible our mission to promote a free and virtuous society. You may choose to donate using the envelope provided, or you may visit the Acton website to make a secure donation online. We send our heartfelt thanks to those of you who have been so generous in the past with your strategic support as well as your prayers. You have a broad vision and a generous heart.

## INTRODUCE ACTON TO A FRIEND

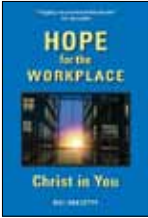
KNOW SOMEONE WHO WOULD BE INTERESTED IN THE WORK OF THE ACTON INSTITUTE? USE OUR WEBSITE TO SEND THEM AN E-MAIL WITH INFORMATION ON OUR PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES. THANKS FOR PROMOTING FREEDOM AND VIRTUE!

**Visit: [www.acton.org/refer](http://www.acton.org/refer)**

## ACTON ANNUAL DINNER



# ACTON Book Shop



## HOPE FOR THE WORKPLACE

By Bill Dalgetty

Bill Dalgetty draws from extensive experience in business and workplace ministry to examine the challenges faced by Christians seeking to live out their faith in today's workplace. God's solutions to these common workplace issues are set forth in a straightforward, conversational style.

**Softcover 142 pages    Sale \$11.00**

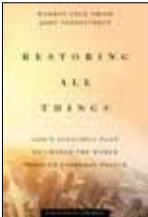


## THE CONSERVATIVE HEART

By Arthur C. Brooks

In Brooks's daring vision, this conservative movement fights poverty, promotes equal opportunity, celebrates earned success and values spiritual enlightenment. It is an inclusive movement with a positive agenda to help people lead happier, more hopeful and more satisfied lives.

**Hardcover 256 pages    Sale \$27.99**



## RESTORING ALL THINGS

By John Stonestreet and Warren Cole Smith

Two leading experts on Christianity and culture show readers how God is powerfully active and intensely engaged in fulfilling his promise to restore all things unto himself. Through real-life stories of justice, mercy, love, and forgiveness, they present a God who is intimately involved in his creation.

**Softcover 240 pages    Sale \$16.99**



## THE DIVINE CONSPIRACY CONTINUED

By Dallas Willard and Gary Black Jr.

In *The Divine Conspiracy*, revered Christian philosopher and scholar Dallas Willard critiqued the church's obsession with "sin management" and revolutionized our understanding of true Christian discipleship. This sequel offers a revolutionary vision of how the kingdom of God is made real on earth.

**Softcover 352 pages    Sale \$14.99**

For our fastest service and a complete list of titles, visit [store.acton.org](http://store.acton.org)

|  | PRICE | QUANTITY | TOTAL |
|--|-------|----------|-------|
|--|-------|----------|-------|

|                        |         |  |  |
|------------------------|---------|--|--|
| HOPE FOR THE WORKPLACE | \$11.00 |  |  |
|------------------------|---------|--|--|

|                        |         |  |  |
|------------------------|---------|--|--|
| THE CONSERVATIVE HEART | \$27.99 |  |  |
|------------------------|---------|--|--|

|                      |         |  |  |
|----------------------|---------|--|--|
| RESTORING ALL THINGS | \$16.99 |  |  |
|----------------------|---------|--|--|

|                                 |         |  |  |
|---------------------------------|---------|--|--|
| THE DIVINE CONSPIRACY CONTINUED | \$14.99 |  |  |
|---------------------------------|---------|--|--|

Make checks payable to "Acton Institute." For orders in the United States, Canada, and Mexico: for the first item, add US \$6.75 for shipping; plus US \$1.00 for each additional item. Overseas orders: US \$8.75 for the first item, plus US \$1.75 for each additional item.

Michigan residents add 6% sales tax \_\_\_\_\_

(see rates at left) Shipping \_\_\_\_\_

(enclose check or credit card information) Total \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code \_\_\_\_\_

☐Mastercard ☐Visa ☐Am Ex    Signature \_\_\_\_\_    Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Call** 616-454-3080    **Fax** 616-454-9454    **Mail** Acton Institute, 98 E. Fulton St, Grand Rapids, MI 49503



# ACTON notes

NONPROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
GRAND RAPIDS, MI  
PERMIT 986

Acton Institute • 98 E. Fulton Street • Grand Rapids, MI 49503 • USA

## ACTON notes

### Calendar of Events

#### ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

| Date          | Event   | Location         |
|---------------|---|------------------|
| <b>Feb 18</b> | <b>Debate: Distributism vs. Free markets</b><br>Acton Lecture Series - Jay Richards & Joseph Pearce to debate | Grand Rapids, MI |
| <b>Mar 3</b>  | <b>PovertyCure</b><br>Acton Lecture Series - Michael M. Miller to speak                                       | Grand Rapids, MI |
| <b>Mar 17</b> | <b>The New Totalitarian Temptation</b><br>Acton Lecture Series - Todd Huizinga to speak                       | Grand Rapids, MI |
| <b>Mar 30</b> | <b>Pope Francis, Poverty and the Economy</b><br>Acton Lecture Series - Samuel Gregg to speak                  | Grand Rapids, MI |