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Kitchen Redemption

An Interview with Brandon Chrostowski

A Journal of Religion, Economics, and Culture

Editor's Note



Sarah Stanley
Associate Editor

Early in October, I took a trip to Cleveland to learn about Edwins Leadership and Restaurant Institute and its founder, Brandon Chrostowski. Edwins is the “teaching hospital” of restaurants. It teaches people with zero hospitality experience the basics of restaurant business through a free six-month course. The one requirement to get into the program? Jail time. Chrostowski was inspired to start Edwins after his own brush with the law and a new beginning as a chef and entrepreneur. He discusses all this in an interview about the culinary world and Edwins. I also dive a little more into the history of Edwins and my

experience with the restaurant in an accompanying essay.

Have Christians in the United States been good stewards of creation? John A. Baden of the Foundation for Research on Economics and the Environment wrestles with this question in his review of Mark Stoll’s *Inherit the Holy Mountain: Religion and the Rise of American Environmentalism*.

On October 12, Angus Deaton was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for his research on consumption, poverty and welfare. Victor Claar discusses Deaton and the implications his work has on the global foreign aid industry in his essay “There is no such thing as ‘the poor.’”

The Double-Edged Sword unpacks a beatitude. The world wants to distract us with entertainment and fun, but Christians are called to take a hard look at the injustices in the world and mourn them.

Ray Nothstine reviews Russell Moore’s latest book, *Onward: Engaging the Culture Without Losing the Gospel*. Today’s culture seems either indifferent or, in some cases, openly hostile to Christianity, and Moore offers a guide on how to engage in this environment.

In spring 2015, Instituto Acton Argentina became a subsidiary of the Acton Institute and officially changed its name to Instituto Acton. In the FAQ, Kris Mauren discusses what this relationship means and describes some of the programs Instituto Acton offers.

His stirring speeches prompted young men to join the Union army on the spot, and he almost single-handedly founded Temple University. In the Liberal Tradition tells the story of soldier, pastor and orator Russell H. Conwell.

Closing the issue, Father Sirico reflects on the institute’s past, present and future in his last *R&L* column for 2015.

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Kitchen Redemption

An interview with Brandon Chrostowski

There are nearly 70 million Americans with a criminal record and more than 2 million currently incarcerated nationwide. Ohio alone houses 50,000 of these individuals, costing the state more than \$1.3 billion annually. Most of these people struggle with finding a job once they return to society. Not enough employers want to hire a convict, especially not a convicted felon. Because of the many difficulties they face, one in three released prisoners (some 20,000 are released each year in Ohio) wind up back in prison within three years of being freed. Without job and life skills, many of these people don't stand much of a chance in society. Edwins Leadership and Restaurant Institute in Cleveland, Ohio, is a nonprofit whose mission is to give formerly incarcerated adults the skills and support network they desperately need for successful reentry into productive employment. It offers a six-month program for former convicts to learn restaurant, leadership and entrepreneurial skills.

Brandon Chrostowski, founder and CEO of Edwins, was inspired to create the nonprofit after he received a second chance (see "Steak au poivre, cabernet sauvignon and second chances" in this issue). He began his career in the culinary world as a bus boy but worked his way up, apprenticing at Chicago's famous Charlie Trotter's and working for Paris's longest-standing Michelin 3-star restaurant, Lucas Carton. He received an associate's degree in culinary arts and a bachelor's degree in business and restaurant management from the Culinary Institute of America. He recently spoke to Religion & Liberty's associate editor Sarah Stanley at Edwins Restaurant in Cleveland.

R&L: Much has been made about your early brush with the law and how you found a mentor in a Detroit chef who opened a whole new world for you. Is Edwins a kind of way to scale up that gift you received?

Brandon Chrostowski: Exactly, yes. Simple as that. This is about learning a skill. It's about building esteem. It's about getting someone from where they are to where they want to be in the quickest way possible.

Talk to us about the Edwins Second Chance Life Skills Center, the residential campus you're building in Cleveland. How will that help those on the reentry path?

Well, it's helping right now. We've got six guys moved in. One woman. It's rocking and rolling. It gives someone that complete pipeline from release to reentry in a healthy way. And there's no homelessness in between.

The center provides housing and a job, the one-two punch. "How do I get a house? I need a job. If I can't get a job, how do I get a house?" So we've taken that out of the equation. The idea is to drive this mission and this experience as deep as possible. We should be able to provide them with whatever we can possibly provide them with, including housing, life-skills training, a fitness center and a library. It includes an alumni house as well, so graduates who need to subsidize cost can go there and live. Yes, it brings the circle together.

You're providing a structured environment, isn't that it?

Yes, just as you control a restaurant. If you're not in the industry, you don't understand it. People look at it and think it's chaos.

There's nothing more organized than a restaurant. You know, we control the flow by the reservations, who comes in, who doesn't. We control its order by the menu. So the kitchen dictates the menu in terms of what we can and cannot execute. It's all totally controllable. And the same goes for someone's return home. If you can help control where someone's at on this side after school, during school, then you have more success in trying to get them to where they'd like to be. So it just helps guarantee a safe arrival at their goal.

At Edwins, from the first initial steps to completion of the program, only 40 percent complete. Is this because it takes a special type of person to go through this and complete the program?

Yes, we ask a lot from them. First of all, we don't say no to anyone. So there's no cherry-picking. Some programs might say, "Hey, these are the five best out of ten," and then their completion rate's maybe 90 percent or whatever percent it may be. We don't ask about previous offenses. We don't care about previous education. It's all about moving forward. So that being said, we'll take on a class of 50 right now. We'll start Monday. In the first three weeks, we intentionally squeeze. And what does that look like? Students come in at 9 a.m. and leave at 4 p.m. We ask them to memorize. We're asking them to do things that are very uncomfortable. And someone needs to find comfort in that discomfort. If they can't, they're not

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Steak au poivre, cabernet sauvignon and second chances

By Sarah Stanley

The atmosphere at Edwins is calm and casual three hours before opening for business on a Friday afternoon. Someone has piped hip-hop music through the sound system, a far cry from the soft, ambient tracks that diners will hear later. A bartender inspects glasses while another vacuums the floor and others check that tables are properly set for dinner. Near a fireplace between the bar and the kitchen, a group of young men and women gather with small glasses for a beer tasting. “Who knows the main ingredients for beer?” the leader of the group asks. They discuss pairings of craft beer seasonal offerings with current menu items such as *artichauts barigoule* and *ris de veau-poêlé*, all of the students eager to learn and grow their knowledge.

The back of house is just as alive, with several men and women chopping green onions, some sautéing flageolet beans, some preparing ingredients for evening specials, and plenty of other kitchen commotion typical before a Friday shift.

Soon the dinner rush is in full force. While Edwins Leadership and Restaurant Institute shares many traits with other restaurants in the Cleveland area, there are noticeable differences too. The restaurant is deliberately overstaffed. And the waiters, hosts and others, though professional and considerate, are visibly nervous, as they are still getting used to the experience of working in a busy dining room. The restaurant in Cleveland’s Shaker Square district features what

many would not find out of place in an upscale French restaurant: a contemporary dining room, a well-stocked bar, a state-of-the-art kitchen and even a garden just outside its walls. Edwins is, in fact, a leadership institute giving second chances to ex-offenders who want to learn the job and life skills necessary to provide for themselves and their families.

The institute was founded by Brandon Chrostowski, who had his own circuitous

“ I became fascinated by the rewarding pairing of wine with cheese as I am committed to the pairing of repentant men and women with the healing therapy of the culinary arts.”

path to productive society. Shortly after high school, he stood before a judge facing the real likelihood of being thrown into prison for ten or more years. As Chrostowski awaited his fate in the courtroom, he was at the lowest point of his life. “My soul was malnourished by sinfulness and regret,” he reflected years later. “Statistically, I was just another of-

fender.” The judge either saw potential in the individual before him or simply felt merciful that day; he sentenced Chrostowski to one year of probation.

During this time, Chrostowski met a Detroit chef who became his teacher and mentor. Chrostowski began to see connections between food and people: “I became fascinated by the rewarding pairing of wine with cheese as I am committed to the pairing of repentant men and women with the healing therapy of the culinary arts.” As well as training Chrostowski in the culinary arts, the chef fed Chrostowski’s spiritual hunger. The two men spoke about the Bible and studied passages together. Chrostowski admits that “the more I would pursue that [religious] path, the more things would open up.” He worked his way up through the culinary world, cooking in New York City, Chicago and France. He earned two degrees from the Culinary Institute of America. The judge’s act of mercy and the chef’s willingness and patience to mentor a troubled youth inspired Chrostowski to build Edwins. Ever since he was given his own second chance, he became concerned about ex-cons and those who struggle after prison. “I got a second chance, so they should as well,” Chrostowski says.

According to the 2014 Preliminary Semi-annual Uniform Crime Report by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Cleveland has one of the highest crime rates for a large city, though rates for most violent

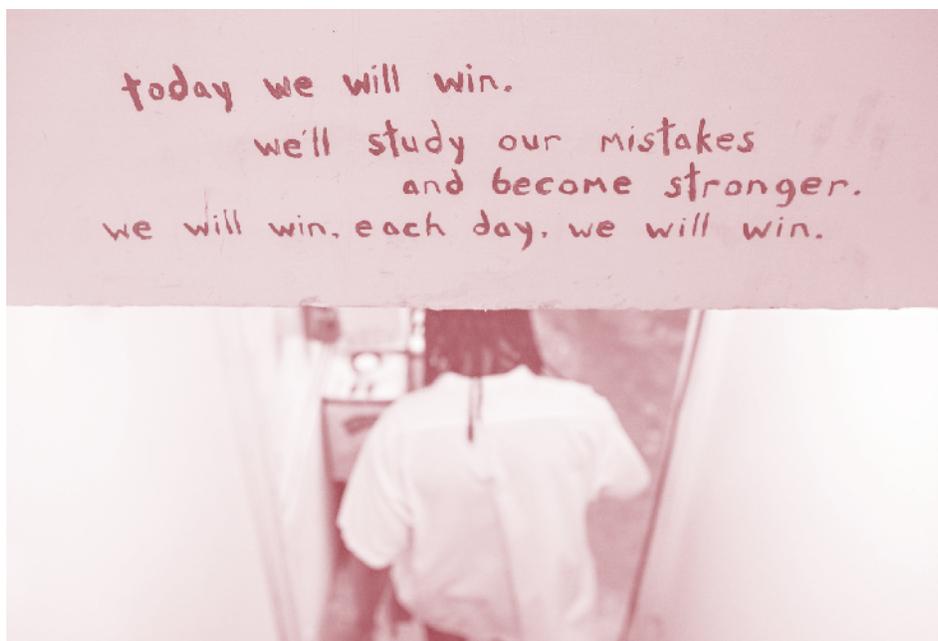
crimes were down from 2013 to 2014. After many of the city's criminals are sentenced and have served their time in prison, they return to the streets with little hope. Edwins lists the basic needs these individuals lack: goals and structured environment; job skills; availability of skilled jobs; income for housing; a support system; and a stable, supportive community. The management and training team at Edwins works with these men and women, exchanging challenges for opportunities in one of the most rewarding and growing industries. The organization's mission is "to teach a skilled trade in the culinary arts, empower willing minds through passion for the hospitality industry and prepare students for a successful transition into the world of business professionals."

Edwins Institute was founded in 2007 in New York City where it was incorporated as a 501c3 nonprofit organization. Chrostowski decided to move the institute to Cleveland because of the city's abysmal high school graduation rates, understanding that this is often an indicator of future incarceration rates. The restaurant opened in 2013 and a campus with housing for individuals in transition opened earlier this year.

Edwins is a philanthropic organization, not a restaurant. It is a nonprofit that serves the community of Cleveland by providing mentorship, training and support for individuals who desperately need it. That being said, the food, service and atmosphere in Edwins's dining room are better than many similar restaurants. Former criminals learning how to seat and serve large groups or how to make a per-

fect reduction sauce gain real, noticeable skills. The quality and taste of the food is phenomenal—you'd think it was prepared by four-star chefs, not ex-offenders finding their way in the culinary world.

Everyone working the front of house has a clear, defined task. One keeps an eye on guests' bread baskets, another refills water glasses. Servers wait on only one or two tables, focusing their attention on a manageable number of people. Giving students specific tasks and letting them master individual projects benefits not only these men and women who are eager to learn new life skills but also the guests who are hungry for great food and a nice atmosphere.



An Edwins' student passing by an encouraging sign placed by Chrostowski.

Anyone who has served jail time is eligible to apply for the program at Edwins. The entire training course is free, and once they start working in the restaurant, students receive a biweekly stipend. The curriculum is based on the courses Chrostowski took at the Culinary Institute of America, and it's not easy. It's six months of hard work as students spend long hours learning new skills, one after another. After in-class training, students start working at the restaurant. They rotate among the various jobs, both in the front of house where they interact with guests and in the back of house where

they prep food. The training has been compared to a "teaching hospital." Students get real-world experience and are surrounded by mentors and teachers. Chrostowski himself is on the floor (at least he was the night I was there). When he wasn't greeting customers and checking on the quality of the food, he was helping servers, preparing complicated dishes at guests' tables, while running between the dining room and the kitchen.

After six months, students must leave the Edwins program, but they stay close with their former teachers and mentors. The recidivism rate is zero percent. At the time of my interview at Edwins, there were 89 graduates, 98 percent were employed and no one had gone back to prison. Chrostowski did clarify that some students had fallen on hard times:

Now people have gotten back into addiction. But we stick by their side. We make sure they can get on a better path, and we always support them. Some

people might violate probation and get thrown back in jail for 30 days, but we go visit them and say, "Hey, man. Here are some books. When you come out, we're here."

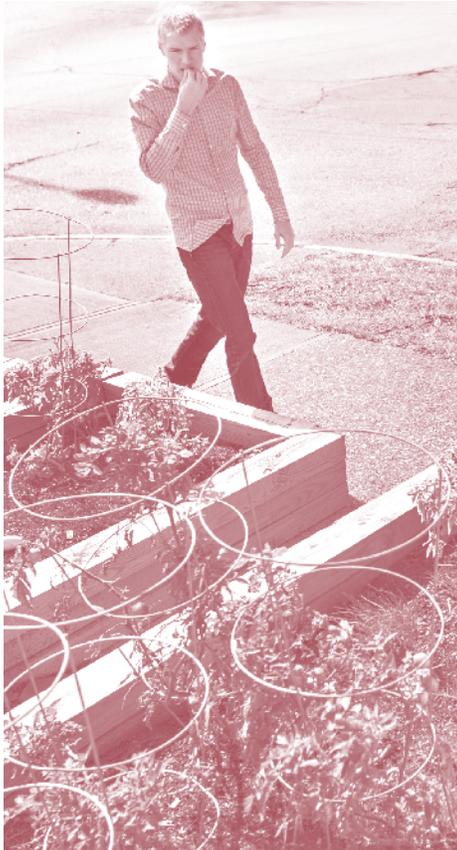
More than 35 local restaurants eagerly await classes to finish so they can hire graduates, giving these men and women the option to work where they want.

Edwins has won financial support from local churches, clergy members and other religious individuals, but the organization itself is not a ministry. When

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Chrostowski envisioned Edwins, he wanted it to be a center for life skills, not a place where certain beliefs are stipulated—even his own. “I have a personal faith that guides,” Chrostowski explains, “and the desire for a better tomorrow. That’s the guiding light, but I don’t cross any of that here at Edwins.” The bottom line, he says, is “about getting someone from where they are to where they want to be in the quickest way possible.”



Many individuals from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds go through the prison system and find themselves in need of job skills. Chrostowski notes that “there are a lot of Muslims in prison, and at the end of the day, we want to be a resource for everyone, regardless of their beliefs.” The Edwins team focuses on giving ex-convicts the foundation needed to take care of themselves and their families with no strings attached. He sums it up this way: “Every human being, regardless of their past, has the right to a fair and equal future.”

Double-Edged Sword: *The Power of the Word*

Matthew 5:4

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

One of the many titles of Christ is “Comforter.” Out of his endless love God comes to us as fully human. As fully God and man, Jesus mourns with us and for us, which is great news, but his atoning power and resurrection promises so much more than a sympathetic ear or important moral teachings. Despite the pain and affliction, Christ will transform our condition.

The type of mourning Christ speaks about in the Beatitudes is not just sadness, wailing or gnashing of teeth concerning our pitiful circumstances. Our Lord’s emphasis in the passage is on godly sorrow. Even the worldly and those who despise God can gnash their teeth and rage over their circumstances. But those who are close to the heart of God mourn over their sin and spiritual paralysis.

One of the problems with large segments of Christianity today, especially in the West, is that there is not enough mourning over sin. Sadly, some churches and sects that claim Christ openly celebrate sin and defy God’s Word. Christ is not speaking or offering comfort to those in continual defiance who rage against the will of God but, rather, those who are being made like him and in his image.

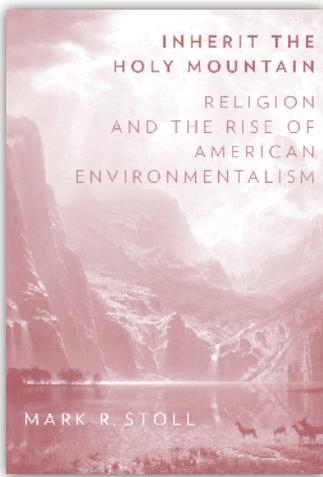
It is right to mourn for the world, which is unjust, cruel and unfair. “Those who mourn for the way the world is bear witness against the powers that be that things are not right,” declares Pope Benedict XVI.

The German Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “By ‘mourning’ Jesus, of course, means doing without what the world calls peace and prosperity: He means refusing to be in tune with the world or to accommodate oneself to its standards. Such men mourn for the world, for its guilt, its fate, and its fortune.”

Christ, whom the prophet Isaiah calls “a man of sorrows,” is not content with the world and the way he saw it. His compassion means he will not leave us in the condition he found us. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke’s Gospel is just a glimpse of the stunning reversal God has in mind for his people (Luke 16:19–31).

The powers that be in the world, the powers that run the world, do not want you to focus on the injustice of the world. They would rather you be distracted by entertainment culture and material things.

When we mourn for the world and its fate, we are saying that it is not supposed to be this way. That injustice, persecution and affliction are not the normal order of things. But when we engage the world on behalf of Christ and are grounded in the Word and spirit, we can powerfully witness against all the disorder and affliction that man has wreaked upon earth and point to the one who has “overcome the world.”



Steward or squander: religion and environmentalism in the United States

By John A. Baden

A Review of *Inherit the Holy Mountain: Religion and the Rise of American Environmentalism* by Mark Stoll (Oxford University Press, May 2015).

In his new book, Mark L. Stoll challenges the conventional green view that Christianity provides the western world a philosophy justifying anti-ecological behavior on personal, economic and political dimensions. He is a historian and the director of Environmental Studies at Texas Tech University.

Two of the most influential articles defining the culture and logic of contemporary environmentalism were published in *Science Magazine* in the late 1960s. Lynn White Jr. published the first, "The Historical Roots of Our Environmental Crisis," in 1967. The second, and even more influential *Science* article, was Garrett Hardin's 1968 "The Tragedy of the Commons" (it merely mentions religion). Both remain important today.

White argued that Christianity's assertion of man's divinely sanctioned superiority over nature generated the environmental crisis. This is based on Genesis in the Old Testament, a chapter long predating Christianity. However, Stoll states that White's thesis remains "in the back of a lot of people's minds when they think about religion and the environment."

In White's view, Christianity gave man license to impose his unfettered will on nature. The result was a vast collage of

ecological disturbance and resource waste. We squandered, not husbanded, nature's bounty of beaver and bison, woodlands and water, and even its air and artistry.

White argued that Judeo-Christian theology replaced pagan animism and normalized ecological exploitation. The Bible asserts man's dominion over nature and fosters anthropocentrism. Christianity makes a distinction between man (formed in God's image) and the rest of creation, which has no "soul" or "reason" and is thus ecologically inferior.

White posits these beliefs have led to an indifference toward nature. This orientation impacts our industrial "post-Christian" world. He concludes that applying more science and technology to the problem won't help. We must change humanity's fundamental ideas about nature and abandon "superior, contemptuous" attitudes that make us "willing to use [the earth] for our slightest whim." White suggests adopting St. Francis of Assisi as a model in imagining a "democracy" of creation in which all creatures are respected and man's rule over creation is delimited.

In marked contrast, Stoll explores the Christian foundations of conservation and the environmental movement. His book melds environmental and religious history. It demonstrates that Christianity, especially Congregationalist and Presbyterian denominations, gave America's early conservationists a strong and enduring

foundation for environmental stewardship. He observed: "Congregationalists produced conservation and forestry reservations ... the Forest Service, city, state, and national parks, and the Park Service."



Theodore Roosevelt, 1903

Progressive-Era reformers exemplify this. The era's noted achievement, the conservation movement of the late 1800s to 1920, worked to preserve and protect America's wildlife, wild lands and other

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natural resources. Leaders of that movement included ethnographer George Bird Grinnell, geologist F. V. Hayden, ecologist George Perkins Marsh, and the more well-known John Muir, Gifford Pinchot, John Wesley Powell and T. R. Roosevelt. All came from Presbyterian or Congregational church families.

Teddy Roosevelt founded the Boone and Crockett Club in 1887. It became the leading conservation organization of its era. Membership was a who's who of patrician sportsmen-conservationists, e.g., G. B. Grinnell, Yellowstone Park geologist Arnold

Divinity School for two years. Proud of descending from Mayflower settlers, he was a social equal of the conservation pioneers.

Stoddard's religious perspective is obvious: "On certain portions of our globe Almighty God has set a special imprint of divinity." He included Yellowstone as one of these few. He said it deserved (and I strongly believe it still deserves) special protection.

Stoddard wrote passionately about the marvels of Yellowstone. Here are his observations on the Liberty Cap formation at Mammoth: "The hand of time has stilled

government libertarian ideas and mount campaigns of misinformation ... (Mainline churches) could not withstand such money-driven values ...

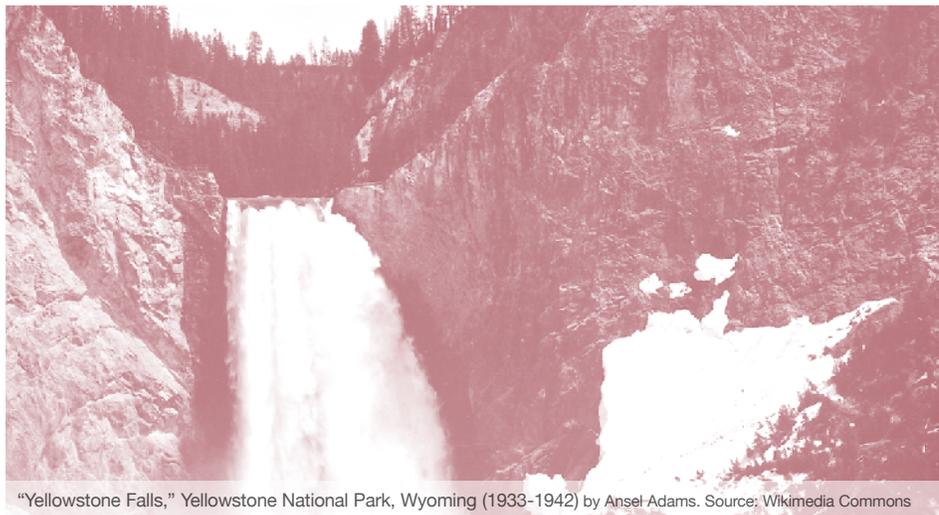
He concludes with a sentence I find encouraging: "If not dead yet, environmentalism is certainly weak, divided, and wandering in the wilderness." As a member of the Montana Wilderness Association and several wildlife conservation groups, I agree that many greens are lost.

Stoll's conclusion suffers from modest economic understanding and close identification with conventional green thinking. He sees institutions simplistically, not as the producers of often-perverse, ecology damaging information and incentives.

Fortunately, over the past 40 years my Bozeman colleagues and I have built these lost souls a gyroscope, one not easily thrown out of whack by politics. It points to the intersection of responsible liberty, modest prosperity and sustainable ecology. This analytic perspective begins with the understanding that education, wealth and demand for environmental quality are complements, they increase together. Most simply, smarter and richer usually are greener. Concurrently, technology generally lessens environmental impacts. Why? It economizes on inputs while reducing costs imposed on ecological systems.

Our analytic gyroscope works via environmental and commercial entrepreneurship, the rule of law, responsibility for the consequences of actions, minimal transfers by governments and secure property rights. That is where ecology, liberty and ecology converge. This should be a comfortable place for Christian environmentalists. I pray they'll find it.

John A. Baden is founder and chairman of the Foundation for Research on Economics and the Environment (FREE) in Bozeman, Montana.



Hague and forester Gifford Pinchot. They promoted conservation as an organizing principle of public policy. This principle had Christian foundations.

its passionate pulsations, and lain upon its stony lips the seal of silence." Another treasure is the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. "It is as if Almighty God had kept for His own use one part of creation that man might merely graze upon it, worship, and retire."

In short, Stoddard was philosophically and culturally aligned with the patrician conservationists of his time. As Christians, they stressed the moral obligation of stewardship.

In Stoll's view, culture corrupted by money determines environmental behavior:

Mammon ... has the bulliest pulpit of all ... corporations and certain wealthy individuals (fund) foundations to puff small-

" Stoddard's religious perspective is obvious: 'On certain portions of our globe Almighty God has set a special imprint of divinity.' "

John Lawson Stoddard (1850-1931) was a contemporary of these men. He graduated from Williams College and studied at Yale



Angus Deaton

There is no such thing as ‘the poor’

By Victor V. Claar

With the news that Angus Deaton had won the economics Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, the question of how best to help the poor in developing nations takes on greater urgency. Deaton earned his Ph.D. from Cambridge University in 1974 and has served on the faculty at Princeton University since 1983. Throughout his career he has studied the microeconomic underpinnings of broader questions regarding consumption and saving and their implications for poverty and efforts to reduce it.

By pioneering household surveys in poor countries, Deaton helped us gain a more accurate perspective on living standards and the particular consumption realities of the global poor. These data provided researchers with detailed micro-level data, so that economists working in economic development no longer needed to make broad and sweeping generalizations regarding the poor. Indeed, Deaton helped us better understand the specific spending patterns of the poor, making it possible to see what economic life looks like through the eyes of a poor person who is trying to be a good steward.

In a sense, Deaton’s work reframed the way in which we see the poor. In his way of thinking, there exists no such faceless, nameless group as “the poor.” Instead there are only poor people, and each of them manages their resources as effectively as circumstances permit.

In short, Deaton argues that aid agencies

undermine good governance in poor nations. When the leaders of poor countries can secure most of their funding needs via direct aid from the West, such leaders are no longer compelled to be responsive to the needs of the citizens, working toward their long-term good. Instead, such leaders have strong incentives to keep their citizens poor, using their own subjects as a justification to go begging on the world stage for even more aid.

Third-world autocrats would be unable to make this scam work without the good intentions, as well as the hubris, of so-called experts in development. And such hubris among economists extends far back into the twentieth century. For example, Deaton writes that “Keynes ... too believed that wise and public-spirited experts (like himself and his friends) could improve social welfare through government action, and worried less than did Hayek about government failure or the corruption of powerful well-meaning experts.”

Successes at reducing extreme global poverty have rarely occurred in places in which rich nations have made large investments in direct aid. Between 1970 and 2006, the global poverty rate has been reduced from 26.8 percent to 5.4 percent, with most of that progress transpiring in nations in which we have made relatively small aid investments.

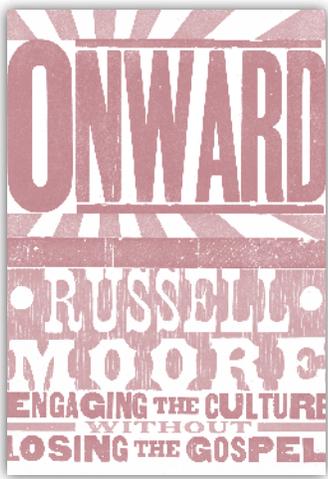
Suppose that Deaton is correct and direct aid leads to corruption. Deaton is certainly not alone in this view. For example, fair-

trade coffee champions Raluca Dragusanu, Daniele Giovannucci and Nathan Nunn argue that “direct transfers of money distort incentives, diverting effort away from productive activities and towards rent-seeking and corruption.” Is Deaton’s suggestion—to withhold aid as a means to encourage Third-World political leaders to act better toward their citizens—true for every kind of aid? What about aid designated for health care—especially when it is intended to save lives over the very near term?

Even here, Deaton contends that what appears merciful today may lead to long-term horrors. In his words, “Aid, including health aid, undermines democracy, makes leaders less democratic, and will hurt health in the end.” If aid of any kind makes it possible for brutal, ruthless dictators to remain in power, then that aid—despite its good intentions—may lead to even greater body counts under regimes that routinely abuse their own citizens and refuse to carry out reforms that would lead to better health outcomes over the long term.

If Deaton’s legacy is that we consider more carefully the likely costs and benefits of future foreign aid proposals before enacting them, then that is a legacy surely worthy of the economics Nobel.

*Victor V. Claar is professor of economics at Henderson, the public liberal arts university of Arkansas. He is a coauthor of *Economics in Christian Perspective* and author of *Acton’s Fair Trade? Its Prospects as a Poverty Solution*.*



After the culture wars

By Ray Nothstine

Review of *Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel* by Russell Moore (B&H Books, August 2015).

For much of its existence, America has been defined as an extension of the conservative Protestant values of its first settlers. That worldview is rapidly vanishing in America, and Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, the policy arm of the Southern Baptist Church, says now is the time for the church to reclaim its mission.

“We were never given a mission to promote ‘values’ in the first place, but to speak instead of sin and of righteousness and judgement, of Christ and his kingdom,” writes Moore. His new book *Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel* offers a blueprint for how to speak to a culture that is not only indifferent to but also openly hostile to Christianity.

We’ve heard for decades that many younger leaders within the church have grown tired of cultural wars and a po-

liticized Christianity, and Moore, in his mid-40s, certainly falls within this camp. Moore reminds us that “for those for whom everything is politics, claiming minority status seems nonsensical.”

Moore openly celebrates the end of civil religion and calls on the faithful to “em-

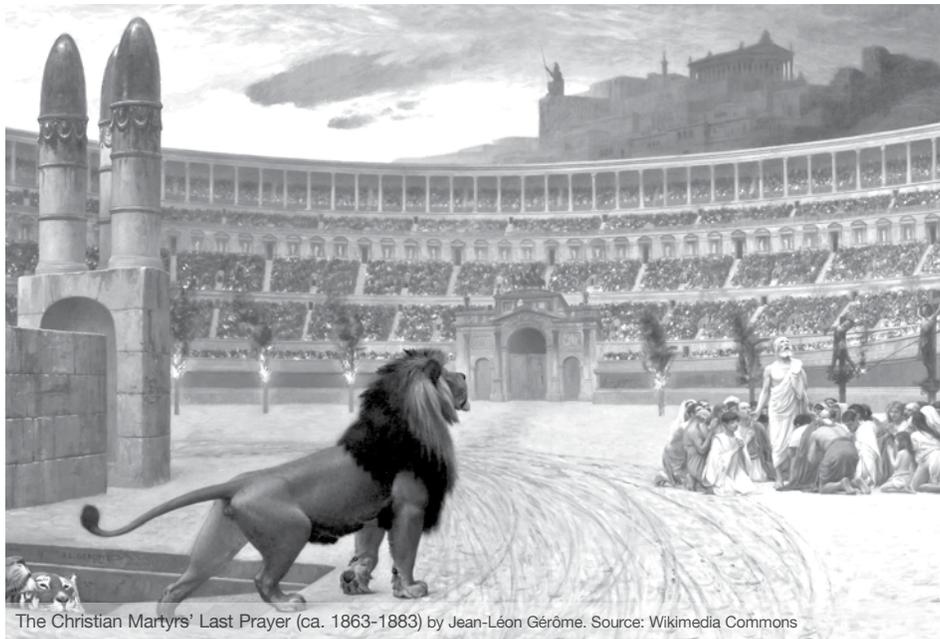
started on the wrong side of history and that according to the world, the right side was the Roman Empire. For too long, cultural Christianity has watered down the Gospel witness and made Christians lazy. Moore believes it is essential for the church and believers to recapture the richness of their doctrine and ortho-

doxy before the culture can again be truly engaged and transformed.

Despite all that has been lost within the culture and the wasteland of spiritual and moral poverty scattered across the land, this is not a pessimistic message. Besides, Moore likes to say the next Billy Graham might be drunk right now and the next

Mother Theresa might be a “heroin-addicted porn star.” Nor is it a surrender in any way to the culture which now demands pain and penalties for many who are unwilling to reimagine human sexuality and bow to the rising-tide secular worldview.

“In the short term, we have lost the culture war on sexual and family issues,” writes Moore. “Long-term, though, we



The Christian Martyrs' Last Prayer (ca. 1863-1883) by Jean-Léon Gérôme. Source: Wikimedia Commons

brace the freakishness” of the Gospel message because it is the “power unto salvation.” He often says that to be Christian means to believe strange things like “a previously dead man is going to show up in the sky, on a horse.”

Focusing on the strangeness and alien aspect of Christianity is a central focus for Moore. He likes to remind believers that because of the cross, Christianity

ought to stand by our conviction that marriage and family are resilient because they are embedded into the fabric of creation and thus cannot be upended by cultural mores or by court decrees.”

Moore wants readers to embrace the prophetic minority voice, not think of themselves as the defunct remnant of the moral majority. Embracing that mission allows for the church and believers to offer greater clarity in the public square concerning issues like salvation and atonement and what that means for the human person and their life. Championing a generic God and country message for the public square was never enough Moore argues.



Munich, Germany – May 10, 2014: Anti-Abortion Demonstration with participants carrying Christian Crosses and banners. Hundreds protested peacefully in Munich. © ETIENJones. istock.com

Moore offers an example of his ideal pastor in the church: “He is pro-life and pro-marriage, although he is likely to

speak of issues like homosexuality in theological and pastoral terms rather than in rhetoric warning of the ‘the gay agenda.’” Moore is especially critical of groups like “Red Letter Christians” or professional church activists who demand of government and the taxpayer the work assigned to the church and private charities. They, too, damage the church’s witness and a holistic Gospel.

One of the most perilous issues in America today is religious liberty, and Moore, of course, offers a rigorous defense. He calls on the church to articulate exactly why religious liberty is important in the American Republic and to explain what happens without it, which history has repeatedly shown ends in violence and war. Moore is fond of echoing the thought of Christians throughout the centuries that freedom of conscience and religious liberty are essential reminders that the state is not ultimate.

“A state that can pave over the conscience—anyone’s conscience—without a compelling interest in doing so, is a state that is unfettered to do virtually anything,” declares Moore.

Moore’s aggressive defense of religious liberty is essential, too, because it emphasizes his insistence on the church’s championing of evangelism. While the overly political church in America compromised the Gospel witness, Moore hopes the bludgeoning defeat within the culture wars allows

the church to be vigorous again with evangelism. Undoubtedly, it’s important

that the church focus on improving its witness and word within a fractured, decaying culture. “But our vote for president is less important than our vote to receive new members for baptism into our churches,” reminds Moore.

Emphasizing the strangeness of Christianity highlights the differences between it and the culture all the more. This is important because as the casualty list

“ This is why he has the optimism to boldly declare and hope for an America that is not merely ‘post-Christian’ but is a ‘pre-Christian’ missionary field with a starving populace seeking meaning and fulfillment.”

from a spiritually bankrupt culture continues to grow, so does the need for a message and Savior that will rescue them. Moore’s voice is powerful and relevant because he better than most recognizes this fact. He notes that “people who don’t want Christianity don’t want almost Christianity.” This is why he has the optimism to boldly declare and hope for an America that is not merely “post-Christian” but is a “pre-Christian” missionary field with a starving populace seeking meaning and fulfillment.

Moore’s *Onward* is a powerful reminder that the strongest voice and witness often come from an emboldened and confident minority that is willing to cling to and declare the truth at any cost.

Ray Nothstine is a graduate of Asbury Theological Seminary and lives in North Carolina.

going to make it in a restaurant. So those first three weeks, we'll easily weed out 30 percent of the students. After those three weeks, we don't lose more than 10 percent. We present everyone an opportunity.

With a lot of support and structure.

We have tutors, and we're offering every tool possible to help these men and women succeed, but if you don't show up, you don't show up on time, or if your ego gets in the way—you're going to fold. So let's find out now who's ready and who's not. But anyone who drops out can still apply in another two months. Every two months a new class starts. They can keep coming back. Maybe they're not ready now. Maybe they just need to grow up a little and come back later. Making the transition out of prison is not easy. In the restaurant, you're making ten times more decisions a day at a quicker speed. We let someone settle in, go forward, and then when they're ready they come back and they're in.

We see a major shift in prisoner reentry programs to job training and entrepreneurship, and it has been said that the best anti-poverty program is a good job. You have said that "if you work hard, you'll always be employable." Does that ring true in what you've seen at Edwins?

Restaurants are waiting to hire. If you can work hard and if you know something about your skill, you're more than employable. You're a leader. That's why Edwins is also a leadership institute. We're not trying to pump out bodies that can prep food. We're looking for people who can lead in the kitchen.

The example I always give is about when I worked in France. I just bought a ticket and went to France and showed up at this guy's restaurant. I did not speak the language, but I moved up because they realized, "This guy's going to work hard. He'll do anything we ask. He may not understand what we're asking him, but he knows how to cook, and he does what he's asked." And it didn't matter. Language did not matter. The same held true when I worked in Manhattan. When you have people who are immigrants, don't speak

the language, what do they do? They bang out what they need to bang out. Education, background, nothing matters in a restaurant except what you're able to do in the here and now.

For those who find employment after leaving Edwins, is there any kind of support system to keep them on track?

Mostly the alumni will kind of check in with us. Nothing can replace that relationship you build with somebody. Nothing. Not a checkpoint, not an HR manager. Culture and commitment and trust is all earned. So most of the time we don't need to check in with our students. They'll call us back and say, "Things are going well, and I'm doing this" or "I'm at a crossroads. Should I take this job or that job?" Even if



Chrostowski talking to teacher and students.

they don't call us up, we stay in contact with them. Every three months we're on them. "What's going on? What's going on?" Yesterday afternoon we got a call. One of our graduates got thrown out of their place. So someone came and put them right into housing, and we're sticking by their side until they get back on their feet. It's a lifelong support system. We're there when we need to be. We're family.

Edwins has won broad financial support from foundations, philanthropists and churches. As you've grown and served more people, how have you been able to maintain the integrity of your original vision?

When a potential donor comes and has their own idea for what should go on here,

they don't become donors. They can keep their money. I turned down \$200,000 because someone wanted to have strings attached. "No, you don't get it."

We don't take any state or federal money. Any donor who wants to have stipulations and new rules isn't really welcome. Now restrictions are different. So if someone's giving us money that's restricted to students' education, that means instructors and salary. That means pots and pans. Some people say I want it to go just to housing. No problem.

It's taken me 10 years to get here, from 2004 to 2014 to build this. It could have taken four years if I would have cut corners. We had a vision and were able to stick to it. But sometimes sticking to your ethics will cost you a lot of time. But now look, someone comes in this door, they get a fair and equal opportunity. They need a home, that's available. That's all because of doing it slow, steady and without compromise.

I know you chose the hospitality industry for this program very specifically. Ohio restaurants take in \$16 billion in sales each year. More than half a million Ohio residents are employed in this industry, which is a growing one. However, do you see the Edwins model as something that could be used in other industries? If so, which ones?

Absolutely. This is the first time in U.S. history that grocery market sales have fallen second to restaurant sales. Seven out of ten jobs in Ohio are centered around food, whether it's farming, agriculture, a restaurant or food processing. It's huge. There's always going to be a job in this industry. But going back to other industries, right now I'm working with a demolition company. So we're building a curriculum. I've tried working with a steel company. They didn't have the infrastructure to make this happen. I'm working with the county government. The county would like to take this model and inject a little bit of it into the county landscape. So whether that's people working in construction or on roads or in the county hall, there's a possibility we can bring this concept to that arena.

There's not going to be another Edwins

restaurant. I don't want another restaurant. Franchising won't happen. To be able to touch every person, to have excellent results, to be the best in the world—that's something.

But we do want to drive our skills deeper, so we're opening up a fish shop. A meat shop would be next after the dorms. We're teaching a student how to butcher. We're also decreasing our cost of goods 30 percent. This is all possible. But the last thing I ever want to do is another restaurant.

So how do you spread the word to other companies, other careers and just build this curriculum out to their specs? It doesn't cost anybody anything. So I could work with you for a day and say, "Hey, without changing what you do, here's a way you can mentor someone and teach them what you know in three months, six months, whatever." But the point is you build out an existing company, existing culture, existing success, and then you find out what makes it successful. And beneath it, you build a subheading, beneath that you try to get accreditation locally, nationally, that can help someone take this and then go elsewhere. It's super simple.

Another place I'd like to get to is education. And manufacturing. The big five in Cleveland are education, hospital, manufacturing, banking and hospitality.

You put a lot of emphasis on "all the little lessons of humility and hard work" in what you do. Do these old-school virtues still apply in America in the 21st century?

Anyone who has those basic virtues, if you want to call them that, or basic values has an edge. They are the ones leading and building. Very often the worker bees are the ones who don't have those values and are attracted to something so pure that they'll work for it. To truly embody it, those are the leaders today. There's a reason. You know, there's no TV show, no music video, nothing that's going to replace hard work. Nothing's going to replace trust. And nothing's going to replace someone sacrificing for someone else. There's nothing that will replace that. But it's all based on keeping a very clear vision of what's right and what's wrong and trying our best to keep it that way. ■■■■

What is Instituto Acton?

The Buenos Aires-based organization formerly known as Instituto Acton Argentina became a subsidiary of the Acton Institute in the spring of 2015. Instituto Acton, while independent for the time being, will share common objectives and goals with the Acton Institute. It is led by Executive Director Cecilia G. de Vázquez Ger and conducts its work primarily in Spanish. The institute's mission is to promote a free and virtuous society, characterized by the validity of personal rights and the market economy in harmony with the principles of the Judeo-Christian faith.

The core of the Instituto's work consists of academic activities, such as conferences and research, and also sharing work and events through digital communication and institutional relations. Programs include: *Acton Joven*, *cursos online*, *presentaciones de PovertyCure* and *seminarios*. *Acton Joven* (Young Acton) is a program designed specifically for young people interested in a free and virtuous society. They meet monthly to learn about, discuss and debate important topics. *Cursos online* are virtual classrooms that allow students of all ages to learn from leaders in real time using webpages, live videos, and the opportunity to live chat with the course teachers. For their *presentaciones de PovertyCure* (PovertyCure presentations), the Instituto works with PovertyCure resources and team members to explain how to rethink aid and poverty alleviation. The Instituto holds several *seminarios* (lectures and seminars) throughout the year on various topics. Its impressive program lineup is complemented by its successful outreach. In 2014, the Instituto was Latin America's top think tank in terms of the number of social media profiles managed by the organization, especially on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Instituto Acton should not be confused with Istituto Acton (note the subtle spelling difference), the office representing Acton in Rome. This office has done considerable work reaching leaders throughout Europe for nearly a decade, and we're excited to see the great work from Instituto Acton in Latin America. For more information, please visit www.institutoacton.org.

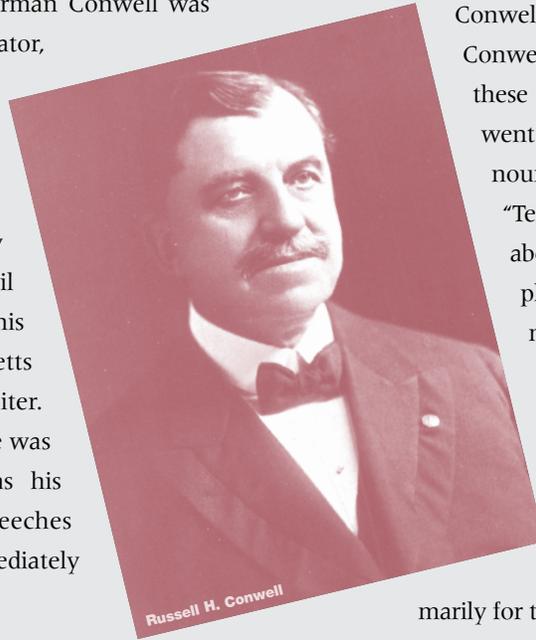


Kris Alan Mauren
Executive Director

Russell H. Conwell [1843 – 1925]

Greatness consists not in the holding of some future office, but really consists in doing great deeds with little means and the accomplishment of vast purposes from the private ranks of life. To be great at all, one must be great here, now.

Most famous for founding Temple University (just about single handedly), Russell Herman Conwell was an accomplished minister, orator, philanthropist, soldier, lawyer, entrepreneur, writer and more. When he was 18, he enrolled at Yale University but didn't stay there for long. After the Civil War began, he returned to his home state of Massachusetts where he became a recruiter. Even at such a young age, he was an accomplished speaker as his stirring and patriotic speeches inspired young men to immediately join the Union army.



After the war, Conwell earned a bachelor of laws degree from the University of Albany and later was ordained at the Newton Seminary in Newton, Massachusetts. He had been gaining fame as an orator and lecturer, so when he moved to Philadelphia in 1882 to pastor the Grace Baptist Church, he was already relatively well known. His most famous speech "Acres of Diamonds" drew many crowds. The part lecture, part sermon, part autobiography focused on the value of education and the importance of service to both family and community. He argued that success could be obtained through education and that it was the duty of educated, successful individuals to serve the less fortunate. He also encouraged people to invest in their own community. "Your diamonds are not in far distant mountains or in yonder seas," he said. "They are in your own backyard, if you but dig for them."

His dedication to hard work and education is most evident in the founding of Temple University. In 1884, a young printer had no money for education but was interested in joining the ministry. He asked Conwell for advice on how to overcome this financial obstacle, and Conwell offered to privately tutor him for free. Soon several students joined Conwell's informal classes until the number reached 40. Conwell enlisted volunteer teachers to help educate these young people in his church's basement. This went on until 1887 when Conwell officially announced his intent to create the formal institution "Temple College." He personally spread the word about the new school, with a building strategically placed within walking and riding distance from many factories, making education convenient and easy for the workers there. In the first month, 200 interested people signed up, and by 1888, Temple College was incorporated and chartered by the state of Pennsylvania. The purpose of the school was "the support of an education institution, intended primarily for the benefit of working men" (later "and for men and women desirous of attending the same" was added). There was no tuition, and prospective students did not have to have previously studied anywhere to get in. Conwell did not want anything to come between hardworking individuals pursuing knowledge and an education.

In 1892, Temple held its first commencement with eighteen graduates, including four women, receiving a bachelor of oratory. Fifteen years later, the college was incorporated as a university. Today, Temple University is a public research university with nearly 40,000 students and 3,000 academic staff. Conwell served as president of the faculty at Temple until he died on December 6, 1925. He is buried, with his wife, Sarah, in the Founder's Garden on Temple's campus.



The power of liberty

Now that the last dish and utensil for the Acton Annual Dinner has been cleared, washed and put away, we find ourselves preparing for Thanksgiving Day and Christmas. This is a special season often set aside for two cornerstones of our modern civilization: worship and family, which have intersected often in literature.

In James Joyce's classic novel *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, readers witness the tensions between the public life of those engaged in religious vocations and their flocks. In this instance, the protagonist's father, Simon Dedalus, argues with Dante Riordan over Christmas dinner. The subject is whether it is proper for the parish priest to turn "the house of God into a polling booth" and "preach politics from the altar."

Mrs. Riordan protests that priests deserve reverence regardless, to which Mr. Dedalus responds: "They have only themselves to blame" for his perceived disrespect. He continues: "If they took a fool's advice they would confine their attention to religion." Mrs. Riordan counters: "It is religion. They are doing their duty in warning the people ... They must direct their flocks."

Both Mr. Dedalus and Mrs. Riordan make salient points, of course, but Riordan grants too much authority to clergy, whereas Dedalus grants perhaps too little.

Twenty-five years ago, we inaugurated the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty to counter the progressive impulse promulgated from the pulpit and pervasive throughout much of the political community. Too often we witnessed first-hand how the solutions promoted to address the world's problems by liberal politicians, talking heads, pastors, priests, nuns, ministers and laypersons were rooted in statist responses. For these individuals, no dilemma, it seems, is too unwieldy for growing government and sacrificing freedoms.

We based our counterarguments not only in the ageless wisdom of saints, clergy and theologians but also in economic, scientific and public policy studies, as well as in the conclusions hinted or

arrived at in literature, film, music and other arts. We have eschewed the right/left polarizations of secular ideologies in favor of where the facts—with spiritual guidance—objectively led us.

Time and again we have discovered the immutable truth that liberty promotes prosperity and diminishes poverty. Increasing economic freedom throughout the world has significantly decreased extreme poverty in only two decades.

The news of a 50 percent decrease of extreme poverty in 20 years—reported by the World Bank, no less—gets even better. Not only did 900 million souls rise from destitution, this past month the same source released data indicating absolute poverty (measured as \$1.90 a day) fell another 12.8 percent this year to 702 million people or slightly more than 10 percent of the world's population. At this rate, the World Bank boldly predicts it could attain its goal of eradicating all world poverty by 2030.

These remarkable achievements didn't occur in a vacuum. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit's 2015 Global Food Security Index, there is a direct correlation between a country's economic freedom and access to food. For example, the countries ranked in the bottom 15 of the 109 countries surveyed all scored lowest on the survey's democracy index. Conversely, the 24 countries identified as full democracies all received high rankings for food security.

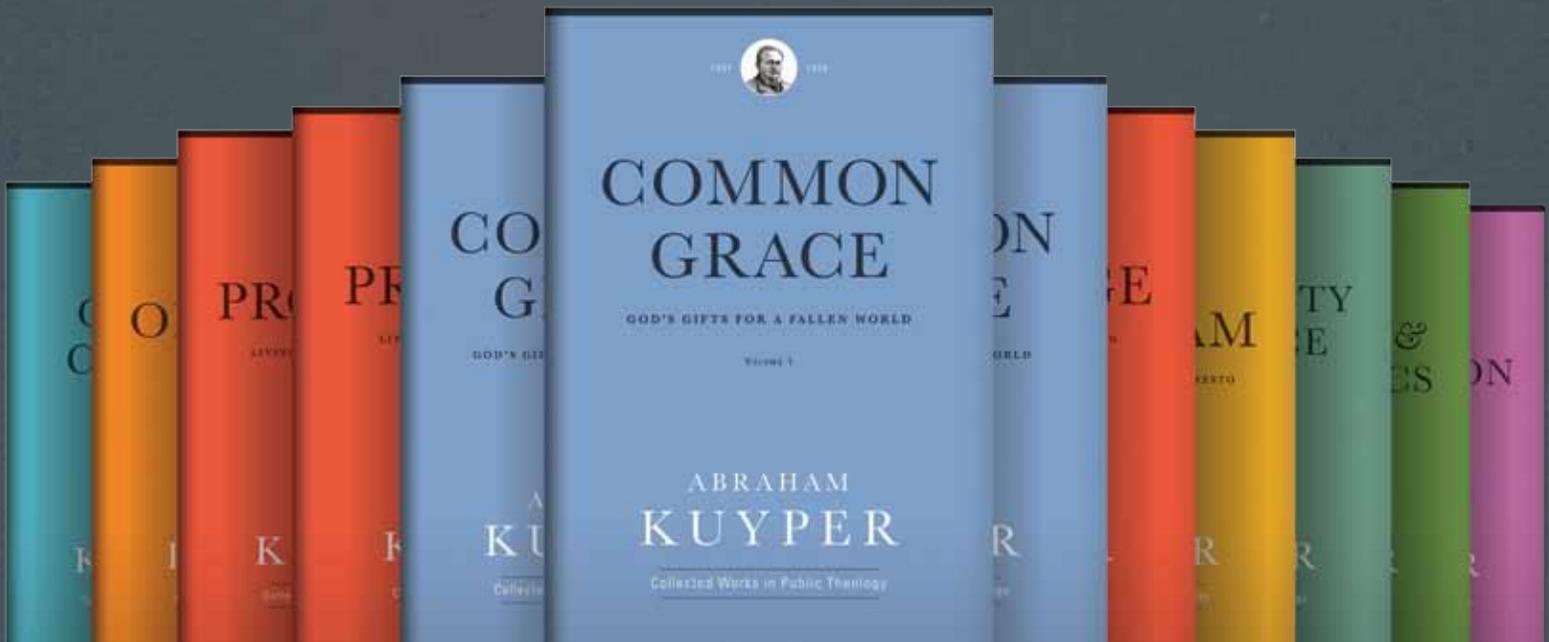
I'm tremendously proud of Acton's achievements over the past quarter century and am filled with gratitude for those who have contributed to our successes through the years. However, there's much more work to be done when it comes to rolling back the tide of often well-intended initiatives, actions and opinions that counterintuitively inflict harm on those least able to assist themselves.

Championing the free and virtuous society for the benefit of as many people as possible is the reason we established the Acton Institute. As we enter our second 25 years, I feel as though we've only just begun.

Rev. Robert A. Sirico is president and cofounder of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty.

ABRAHAM KUYPER

Collected Works in Public Theology



Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920) was one of the most extraordinary individuals of his time: the founder of a political party, a university, and a Reformed denomination, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, and an incredibly prolific author on a dizzying array of subjects. Despite these accomplishments, his importance and contribution have not been widely recognized in North America. This is beginning to change.

A resurgence of interest in Kuyper, his life, and his writings is taking hold as Christians search for ways to faithfully understand and engage culture.

Lexham Press is pleased to announce the publication of a major series of new translations of Kuyper's writings in public theology. Created in partnership with the Kuyper Translation Society and the Acton Institute, the Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology will mark a historic moment in Kuyper studies, and we hope it will deepen and enrich the church's interest and engagement in public theology.

In twelve handsome volumes, this collection will bring Kuyper's thoughts on a broad range of topics to an entirely new audience. Publication will begin in the fall of 2015 and is projected to be completed within two years.

The first volume to be published is *Our Program: A Christian Political Manifesto*, in which Kuyper frames his Christian political vision, distinguished from the programs of the nineteenth-century modernists who took their cues from the French Revolution. It was this work that launched his celebrated career as pastor, theologian, and educator.



OUR PROGRAM A Christian Political Manifesto

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