

Wall Street Protest Stirs Christian Controversy

Beyond the protests on Wall Street, there is a battle brewing between the religious left and the religious right.

So-called “religious left” voices have praised Wall Street occupiers whose demands range from cancellation of all debt, open borders, government control of health care and free college education, among other expansions of big government.

Institute on Religion & Democracy president Mark Tooley points squarely at Sojourners chief Jim Wallis, who has praised the Wall Street occupiers. Tooley also notes pacifist activist Shane Claiborne, who has compared the occupiers to St. Francis of Assisi. Even Massachusetts clergy joined the occupiers wearing saintly white robes, Tooley notes, and officials of United Methodist Women flocked to the occupiers with their own similar placards urging class warfare.

“The many college-age Wall Street occupiers concerned about college debt and real world responsibilities can be possibly excused for youthful naiveté. But middle-aged church activists, some of whom may be trying to relive their street activism of 40 years ago, should show more discernment and wisdom,” Tooley argued. “Covetous battle cries for class resentment and even greater coercive wealth redistribution through an ever expanding big government do not resemble traditional Christianity.”

As Tooley sees it, wise religious leaders should call their flocks to the common good. They would know that in a fallen world, he says, no government or system of laws can seize property or massively redistribute income without creating even greater injustice.

“The Scriptures call for believers to put away childish

things,” Tooley says. “Religious activists who have aligned with the Wall Street Occupation should model mature Christian discernment, not echo angry resentments that dream of a secular utopia.”

Which side of this debate are you on?