

# ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

April 2008, Volume 18, Number 4

*“Connecting good intentions with sound economics”*



Indigenous People © Jon Ng. Image from [www.isxc.hu](http://www.isxc.hu)

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# President's Message

Dear Friends,

I've received a flurry of questions about the relationship of Christianity to the environment. The issue involves a subject addressed in Genesis. God tells Adam and Eve to subdue the earth. Clearly, this is not immoral. Hurting others while doing so is. This is the essential framework for Christian environmentalism.

Modern environmentalism, however, is focused less on human beings and their betterment and more on the earth as a metaphysical entity. Here we have a perspective that is directed against a command of God to the human family to keep the garden. Of course there are many legitimate

concerns that fall under the category of environmentalism, from a need for clean water and air to the irrational idea that the jungle is morally superior to the garden.

Despite the recent baptism of extreme environmentalism into the cause of the Christian religion, its roots are actually with the third century dualistic religion known as Manichaeism. Its founder was Mani, a resident of Babylon. He posited two great forces in the universe: the light that is associated with the soul and pure spirit, and the dark that is associated with the body and matter. The obligation of the human person is to relinquish all dependencies on matter and body and instead to reflect entirely on matters of the spirit. Now, let me be clear here. I am not saying that a concern for clean air and water, and even a worry about endangered species, is heretical. The solutions to specific environmental problems are always at hand, coming not through the curbing of market and commercial activity but by firming up private property rights and enforcing strict liability rules.

To be concerned about such matters is compatible with Christianity, and obviously so. But this alone will not satisfy the radical environmentalists, for their vision of the proper ordering of man's place in the universe draws from a completely different strain of belief. That such a belief is now being woven into the fabric of Christian leftism, in many ways, represents a repudiation of a past emphasis on human well being.

The Acton Institute has a division devoted to researching these increasingly important issues. Thank you for your much needed support!



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Rev. Robert A. Sirico", written in a cursive style.

Rev. Robert A. Sirico, President

"I am not saying that a concern for clean air and water, and even a worry about endangered species, is heretical. "

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

**ACTON**INSTITUTE

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## Acton Sponsors Rome Seminar on *Populorum Progressio*

The Acton Institute sponsored a conference in Rome looking at international development assistance forty years after Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio*. The encyclical dealt with issues of economic justice and alleviating poverty in relation to the "development of peoples." The conference asked, "Has international development failed the poor?" Michael Miller, who is Acton's director of programs, spoke at the conference. "Paul VI was deeply moved by the harsh reality of poverty and *Populorum Progressio* was a call for Catholics and all people of good will to commit their hearts, minds, skills, and resources to help the poor," Miller said. Miller also noted, "Following *Populorum Progressio*, we want to think seriously about how to help the poor. Often the focus is on the causes of poverty—which is necessary—but it is equally if not more important to think about what causes wealth. Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto wrote that the developing world is teeming with entrepreneurs who are filled with ideas about how to create goods and services that meet human needs. We need to ask how that entrepre-

*"Following Populorum Progressio, we want to think seriously about how to help the poor."*

neurial spirit can be unleashed so the poorest of the poor can live lives that reflect their human dignity." John Paul II himself said, "Besides the earth, man's greatest resource is himself."

Other speakers at the Rome conference included Fr. Thomas Williams, L.C., who is a professor of theology at Regina Apostolorum, Professor Phillip Booth, who is a professor

at the Cass Business School and programme director for the Institute of Economic Affairs in London. Dr. Giampaolo Silvestri also spoke at the conference. Dr. Silvestri is the project director of the Foundation AVSI, a Milan-based NGO that implements development projects all over the world. Student and Acton intern in Rome Joseph Kosten noted, "The comments from the religious and lay people in attendance were overwhelmingly positive. Many said that the reason they enjoyed the conference so much was the clear explanation of Catholic Church teaching, the application of this teaching in a real setting, and the fact that so much is being done for the people of the developing world."



Participants at the Seminar on *Populorum Progressio*



A Panel of Speakers Answers Participant Questions

## From Our Conference Participants

Thank you so much for the Acton Conference, and for your financial assistance to attend. Thank you for working to change our culture and people's lives for the sake of goodness, truth, freedom, and the Gospel.

—Tom Galpin  
St. Louis, Missouri

Because of Acton, I will now approach economic matters with subtlety and care, listening to economists and businessmen to find out what is really going on rather than making assumptions.

—John Drury, Princeton Theological Seminary  
Princeton, New Jersey

## Radio Free Acton is a New and Popular Media Feature

The Acton Institute has added a new podcast segment called Radio Free Acton to their website. Associate Editor Jordan Ballor noted about the popular podcast, "Radio Free Acton was conceived as a new media forum for lively discussion and dialogue about current issues and events. It's a way that we can connect with a lively audience and disseminate information to a broader constituency. Each episode offers a brief glimpse into the intellectual world of the Acton Institute, what we as a think tank are thinking about. We hope to engage our listeners more in the future by integrating audience comments and suggestions into the show." On February 27, the Acton Institute was fortunate to have Dr. Joseph Knippenberg as a special guest. Dr. Knippenberg offered his assessment of the newly released research on the American religious landscape by the Pew Forum. Dr. Knippenberg is a professor of politics at Oglethorpe University in Atlanta, Georgia. Associate editors Ray Nothstine and Jordan Ballor and host Marc Vander Mass also participated in the discussion. The podcast was titled "Contemplating Consumerist Religion." Past

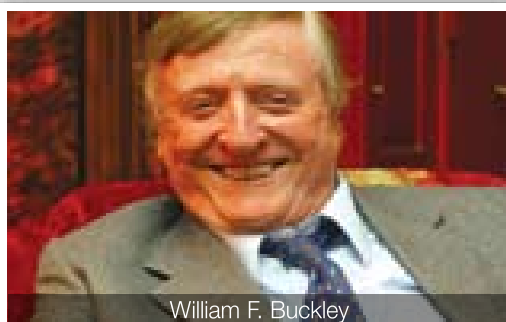
## Acton Awarded \$100,000 Grant

The Acton Institute has been awarded a \$100,000 grant by the Social Equity Venture Fund. This generous prize was the result of a competitive review process led by judges who are leaders in business and academic fields. The funds will go towards persuading Americans and other Westerners of the need for free enterprise solutions for alleviating poverty conditions in the developing world. We plan to use the prize for original research on this topic and to fund our third documentary. "The winners are inspired innovators who are breaking new ground that will help shape the dialogue around wealth creation," said Michael Fairbanks, co-founder of the Social Equity Venture (S.E.VEN) Fund. This competition and gift was made available through a generous gift from the John Templeton Foundation.

## Rev. Robert A. Sirico on William F. Buckley

Upon hearing of the passing of conservative icon William F. Buckley, Rev. Robert A. Sirico noted that Buckley was a supporter and contributor to the

## ACTON News



William F. Buckley

podcasts included discussions of primary results and religion in politics. Also featured in the podcast were special bonus interviews with 2008 Acton Lecture Series speakers Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse and Dr. Glenn Sunshine. "It has always seemed to me that a podcast was the next logical step after the creation of Acton's PowerBlog. It's another way for the Acton Institute to take the ideas we've been thinking and writing about for nearly twenty years and apply them to the issues and events of our time in a relevant and timely way. That's what we're trying to do with Radio Free Acton," says Vander Maas.

Acton Institute as well as a close friend. "He was the speaker at our first dinner, a year after we founded the institute. He accepted no honorarium for that, he wanted to give us a boost and was very successful at that," Rev. Sirico said. Rev. Sirico spent considerable time with Buckley when Pope John Paul II visited Cuba. "He was a man of faith and a man who understood his faith. He was a man who believed in liberty and organized one of the most significant magazines that made the case for human liberty and the conservative cause," Rev. Sirico added.

# Wealth, Work, and the Church

Dr. Glenn Sunshine spoke about wealth and work in relation to Christian Scripture and tradition at the Acton Lecture Series on February 14, 2008.

“Adam was created to work, and work predates the fall,”

Dr. Sunshine said. He noted how Adam was intended to enjoy the fruits of his labor.

He also explained how, after the fall of humankind, work

turned to drudgery and our ability to produce, as well as our ability to enjoy fruits of our labor was damaged. God’s purpose is to bless and restore human flourishing. Dr. Sunshine used numerous examples in the Old and New Testament to address the topics of wealth, economic justice, and giving.

Speaking of Old Testament accounts, Dr. Sunshine noted, “God is concerned about idolatry but he is also concerned with economic matters. Wealth is not necessarily a sign of blessings. Some receive their wealth the wrong way or spend it the wrong way.” Addressing New Testament passages and errors in prosperity gospel or the Word-Faith move-

“We are to use our wealth for the advancement of his kingdom and Christ will hold us responsible for that.”

ment he said, “Poverty is not necessarily a curse. Being poor [is] not necessarily virtuous. The poor however, often live by faith and their survival relies

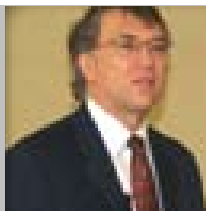
on the faith and God.” At

the same time, Dr. Sunshine noted, “The poor can be just as materialistic as the rich.”

Speaking of the Gospel story of Zaccheus he said, “We are to use our wealth for the

advancement of his kingdom and Christ will hold us responsible for that.”

Dr. Sunshine explained how there are massive problems with the condemnation of wealth by some in the church. At the same time, prosperity gospel theologies make serious errors. It mistakes our desires for God, and it puts authority over God. “It also suggests Mother Theresa blew it as a Christian. That is ridiculous. We need to find a proper sense how all of this works together,” Dr. Sunshine said. If you would like to listen to the entire address, visit the website of the Acton Institute.



Dr. Sunshine speaking on wealth and work



## ACTON in the News

Buckley was the dominant figure of his time in shaping the Catholic contribution to American public life.

—Excerpted from Rev. Raymond De Souza’s article in *National Catholic Register*

### Dr. Samuel Gregg

Title: Changes in Kosovo and Cuba

Program: *Morning Air*

Air Date: 2.26.2008

### Rev. Raymond De Souza

Title: Buckley’s Catholic Legacy

Publisher: *National Catholic Register*

Date: 3.4.2008

### Michael Miller

Title: There Are No New Sins

Program: *The Maria Sanchez Show*

Air Date: 3.11.2008

## 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 continuing mission to promote a free and virtuous society. You may choose to donate using the envelope provided, or you may visit <https://secure.lexi.net/acton> to make a secure donation online. We send our heartfelt thanks to those 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.



## Acton and You

The 2008 Acton University is set for June 10-13 in downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan. Acton University is much more than an educational endeavor; it is about building a culture of faith and freedom. "People of faith do not understand the market and condemn it on moral grounds. Economists, meanwhile, have come to see the discipline as a purely secular enterprise," says Rev. Robert Sirico. While progress is being made, there is much work to be done. Some of the lecturers include Lord Brian Griffiths, who has held many highly prestigious economic leadership and teaching positions and has

served as a special adviser to Margaret Thatcher. Mr. John Beckett will also speak at Acton University. Beckett is the celebrated author of *Loving Monday: Succeeding in Business Without Selling Your Soul*. Beckett is also a founding board member of The King's College in New York City, serves on the board of Campus Crusade for Christ, International, and is a director of Graphic Packaging Corporation. He has also been named "Christian Businessman of the Year" by the Christian Broadcasting network (1999). If you have any questions about Acton University contact Kara Eagle at the Acton Institute.

# ACTON UNIVERSITY

JUNE 10-13 SYMPOSIUM OF FAITH, ECONOMICS, LIBERTY

Grand Rapids  
Michigan

2008

"The seminars and conferences of the Acton Institute provide the world's foremost training in the theology and philosophy of the free-market model." *Michael Lee, adjunct professor, Johns Hopkins University*

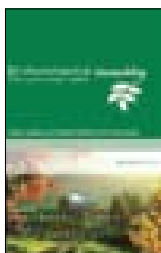
**Registration for Acton University is already filling up! If you or someone you know would like to learn about the foundations of a society sustained by freedom and virtue, apply today at [www.acton.org/ActonU](http://www.acton.org/ActonU)**



**Apply today at [www.acton.org/actonu](http://www.acton.org/actonu)** Travel, lodging, and registration scholarships will be offered to select students.



# ACTON Book Shoppe



## Environmental Stewardship in the Judeo-Christian Tradition *new introduction by Dr. Jay W. Richards*

A fair and honest debate about religious responses to environmental issues should always distinguish theological principles from prudential judgments. The Cornwall Declaration and the accompanying essays in this volume were written to do just that. They seek to articulate the broad Judeo-Christian theological principles concerning the environment.

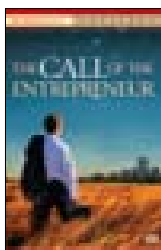
**Paperback 119 pages Original Price \$10.00 Sale \$8.00**



## A Proper Christian Approach to the Environment (DVD) *by The Acton Institute*

Recorded at the Lord Acton Lecture Series on May 3, 2000, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Rev. Robert Sirico, president of Acton Institute, and Rev. Matthew Fox, president of the University of Creation Spirituality, discuss and debate - from very different perspectives - appropriate Christian responses to environmental concerns.

**Length 129 minutes Original Price \$17.00 Sale \$15.00**



## The Call of the Entrepreneur (DVD) *produced by Acton Media*

A merchant banker. A failing dairy farmer. A refugee from Communist China. One risked his savings. One risked his farm. One risked his life. Why do their stories matter? Because how we view entrepreneurs—as greedy or altruistic, as virtuous or vicious—shapes the destinies of men and nations.

**Length 60 minutes Original Price \$22.00 Sale \$20.00**

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visit [www.acton.org/bookshoppe](http://www.acton.org/bookshoppe).**

	PRICE	QUANTITY	TOTAL
<a href="#">Environmental Stewardship in the Judeo-Christian Tradition</a>	\$8.00		
<a href="#">A Proper Christian Approach to the Environment (DVD)</a>	\$15.00		
<a href="#">The Call of the Entrepreneur (DVD)</a>	\$20.00		

Make checks payable to "Acton Institute." For orders in the United States, Canada, and Mexico: for the first item, add US \$3.75 for shipping; plus US \$1.00 for each additional item. Overseas orders: US \$5.75 for the first item, plus US \$1.75 for each additional item.

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Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
April 10	<b>Acton Lecture Series</b> "Health Care System through Christian Principles" Mrs. Grace Marie Turner to speak	Grand Rapids, Michigan
June	<b>Registration now Open for Acton University</b>	Grand Rapids, Michigan

STAFF ACTIVITIES/DEADLINES

Date	Event	Location
April 3	<b>Culture of Enterprise Colloquium</b> Dr. Samuel Gregg to speak	Washington, DC
April 12	<b>Philadelphia Society Annual General Meeting</b> Dr. Samuel Gregg to speak	Washington, DC
April 15	<b>Society of Business, Industry, and Economics</b> Dr. Jay Richards to speak	Destin, Florida
April 17	<b>Acton Lecture Series</b> "Global Warming" Dr. Jay Richards to speak	Grand Rapids, Michigan

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