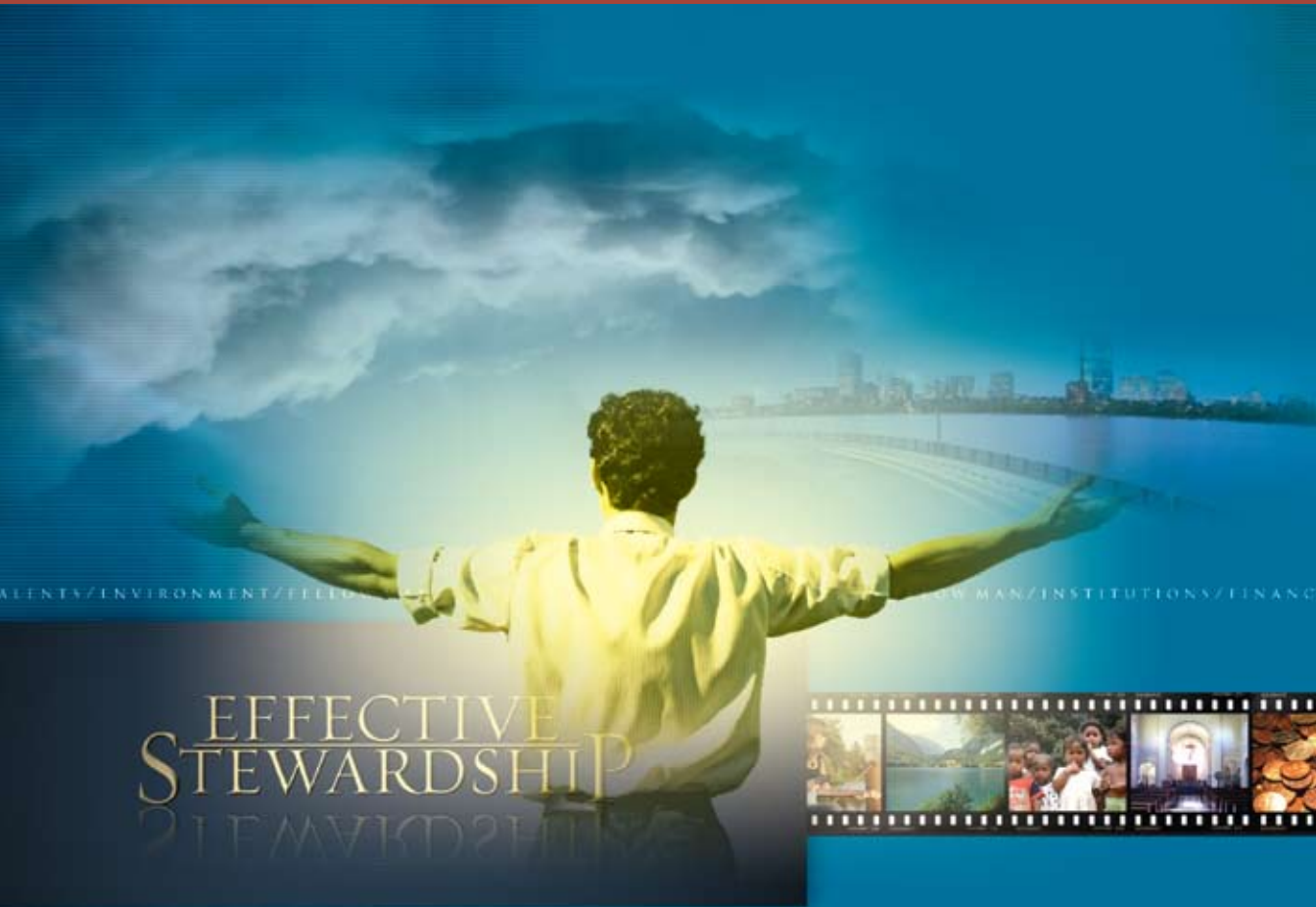


# ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter  
*February 2009, Volume 19, Number 2*



*“Connecting good intentions with sound economics”*

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# President's Message

"His writing on religion was nothing short of *imperious* in the best sense."

Fr. Richard John Neuhaus, a friend and famed intellectual who died on January 8, 2009, didn't write on economics much, but he made an important contribution to the subject in any case. His writing on religion was nothing short of *imperious* in the best sense. Faith touchesadsadsaated.

In his writings, he took on nearly the whole of modern intellectual culture. But he ended up raising the profile of religious thought, providing a new outlet for many writers and bringing ideas to the forefront in a way that truly did have a massive cultural import.

Among the subjects that are part of a broad view of truth is economics. It speaks of the inner logic behind the production and distribution of material goods and services. In a world in which there were no scarcities, there would be no need for economic science. But because of the structure of the world—the state of nature offers little to permit us to survive; production and distribution are unavoidable requirements.

At the same time, economics needs faith to prevent the science from sinking into a materialist pit. Marxism was and is bad science, but it is also bad faith in the sense that it denies that the human person is anything other than a pure consumer or a cog in the production machine. Any economic system that denies the complexity of human choice and the deeper spiritual needs of the human person will end in nonsense and even disaster.

Fr. Neuhaus saw the need to complete the picture of society by integrating religion and testing ideas against orthodoxy and the truth about man. This is why I so appreciate his work, and believe that it points the way toward the fullest appreciation of the integration of economic truth into social analysis.

This champion of truth and freedom has died, but his vision lives on in the work of the Acton Institute, which you have so generously supported.

Sincerely,

Rev. Robert A. Sirico, President



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Sirico". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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

161 Ottawa Avenue NW, Suite 301 • Grand Rapids, MI 49503 • USA • [www.acton.org](http://www.acton.org)

# Stewardship Curriculum Receives Praise

*The Effective Stewardship* curriculum and study guide has received generous praise from religious figures and church leaders across the United States. Thanks to a generous grant, a sample DVD and guide was sent to thousands of Protestant churches and organizations, and Catholic parishes and organizations last summer. The task was a monumental effort and could not have been completed without the help of many on the Acton Institute staff.

The *Effective Stewardship* curriculum provides a manageable, five-week study for small groups or larger auditorium classes. It will help Christians to think economically and to avoid many common economic pitfalls. And it will help them to understand that Christian stewardship touches every aspect of our lives.

Charles W. Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship Ministries, called the curriculum “a great piece of work which has filled in a lot of the blanks in my own thinking.” Colson also praised the Acton publication *Environmental Stewardship in the Judeo-Christian*

*Tradition*, calling it “nothing less than a masterpiece.”

Among the various responses and feedback the Acton Institute received, there was a constant theme of thankfulness and timeliness for the materials that were sent out. Christian clergy were excited to receive faith-oriented material on the subjects of talents, environment, fellow man, church and family, and finances that all offered a fresh and thoughtful perspective. Another strength of the curriculum is that it greatly encourages dialogue and discussion within study groups that utilize the material.

Zondervan, a very distinguished publishing company is planning to market the curriculum, giving it an even greater reach. The curriculum is becoming an essential tool for religious leaders to learn more about the Acton Institute, and will be invaluable for educating congregants across the country. To find out more about the DVD curriculum and to view the main trailer and the individual trailers for each lesson, go to [www.effectivestewardship.com](http://www.effectivestewardship.com).

“...Christian stewardship touches every aspect of our lives.”



A Screenshot from The Effective Stewardship



The Effective Stewardship DVD & Book now on sale at [effectivestewardship.com](http://effectivestewardship.com)

## From Our Conference Participants

The conference was enriching in so many ways, I came away with an enlarged and enlightened view on several topical issues we engaged with over the course. Rev. Sirico challenged some of my views on economics and governance.

—Rev. Victor Akongwale  
London, England

This conference was thought provoking because I was able to interact and share ideas with people from different cultural and religious backgrounds. This shows a real commitment by Acton to work earnestly to foster future religious leaders.

—Nils Hernandez  
Baltimore, Maryland

## Is Capitalism Dead?

Rev. Robert A. Sirico was interviewed on Ave Maria Radio on January 8 by host Al Kresta. He was asked about the remarks made by Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor who said that "Capitalism has died." Rev. Sirico countered by saying, "The free enterprise system, when constructed upon an ethical center, is the system that should be seen as recommended to people who come out of the system of socialism." Rev. Sirico noted that many of the economic problems associated with the current crisis were not caused by free markets, but rather government intervention. He cited the government's involvement of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac as root causes of our current financial woes.

Sirico declared that if free markets are in fact dead, "We should all mourn." He added, "It is the free economy that raised people out of poverty internationally. It is free markets creating access to work, trade, globalization that has raised people out of poverty without even intending, but socialism has left the largest piles of bodies

## Remembering Neuhaus

The Acton Institute and Rev. Robert Sirico were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of a long-time friend, Fr. Richard John Neuhaus on January 8. Neuhaus is well known for his astounding 1984 book: *The Naked Public Square*, and his journal *First Things*. Neuhaus argued in *The Naked Public Square* that religious faith and ideas were wrongfully being diminished and excluded from society. "His legacy is rich: at once intellectual, political and spiritual; his prose was unfailingly engaging and his thought deep and probing. His insights into the moral foundations of the American experiment remind one of the work of another New York priest, John Courtney Murray, SJ," said Rev. Sirico.

## A Special Thank You

As we begin 2009, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support over the last year. The Acton Institute has come a long way from its humble beginnings, and we have enjoyed working with you to defend freedom and

# ACTON News



Fr. Richard John Neuhaus



of any ideology or movement in history over the last century." Rev. Robert Sirico warned against a radical capitalism without morality, referencing the thoughts of John Paul II in *Centesimus Annus*. Michael Miller, director of programs at the Acton Institute also weighed in on the remarks by Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor in a commentary where he explained how John Paul II illustrated "the important truth that markets are fundamentally human relationships," and "how markets "have a moral dimension." The Acton Institute is always ready to counter well meaning yet potentially harmful economic proclamations.

virtue these past nineteen years. We know how important every dollar is, especially during these difficult economic times, and we deeply appreciate every one that was generously donated. Also, please know that your investment is making a lasting impact. This year, with your help and encouragement, we were able to continue the success of our multimedia endeavors with the *Birth of Freedom* and our *Effective Stewardship* curriculum, expand our critical work with future religious leaders and business people, and fortify our scholarly research with new publications. Thank you! We could not do it without you, the supporters of the institute, and we hope our work in this new year will earn your continued confidence and friendship.

# Dr. Condit Sounds Health Care Alarm

Dr. Donald P. Condit sounded the alarm for reform in the health care system at the Acton Lecture Series on January 15 by declaring “health care reform is for this generation.” Dr. Condit, who offered an impressive array of facts and figures, called the status quo and greater government takeover of the industry “an unsustainable resource consumption.” By continuing down this path, he noted, “We are only kicking the can down the road to our kids and grandkids.” He cited the horrendous future costs of current entitlements like Medicare and the stress it will put on the government because of the retiring baby-boom generation.

Dr. Condit made the case that relying on employers to provide health care is becoming an unsustainable burden as well. The system is unfair to workers because of the inability to make positive career changes for health reasons. He cited the tax inequity, “where 60 percent of workers receive health benefits tax-free and 40 percent of workers don’t, and pay taxes as well.” He criticized the lack of choice and competition that an employer-based health system breeds. Dr. Condit believes that the government

could take the \$250 billion subsidy currently given to employers and instead help families and individuals purchase private insurance, especially those who might have problems purchasing insurance because of a pre-existing medical condition.

Another area of concern that Dr. Condit put considerable focus on in the health care crisis is the danger of socialized medicine. “Half of health care expenditures are currently paid for by the government now,” said Dr. Condit. While sheer cost is a grave concern under a single payer system, so is rationing, respect for life, and inefficiency. Dr. Condit stressed the duty to improve access, affordability, and the quality of care. Dr. Condit also pointed to portability, reforming the tax law, competition, and disease prevention as additional important steps to reform. A great strength of his presentation was paying attention to those who have a financial need so they are not left without options for coverage. Dr. Condit, MD, MBA, is an orthopedic surgeon specializing in hand surgery in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



## ACTON in the News

After all, the tradition of gift-giving is rooted in the gift that God offers to the world in his Son who comes in the appearance of a frail babe.

—Excerpted from Rev. Robert Sirico’s article in *The Detroit News*

### Rev. Robert Sirico

Title: Did Capitalism Die?  
Program: Ava Maria Radio *Al Kresta Show*  
Air Date: 1.8.09

### Rev. Robert Sirico

Title: Giving Gifts Embodies Spirit of Christmas and Nourishes the Soul  
Publisher: *The Detroit News*  
Date: 12.23.08

### Anthony Bradley

Title: Greenboozled  
Program: Ava Maria Radio *Al Kresta Show*  
Air Date: 12.16.08

## 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.



Dr. Samuel Gregg to speak on America's Economic Crisis



Mr. Michael Miller speaking at last years Lecture Series

## Acton and You

If you are in the Grand Rapids area, please make plans on joining us this year for the Acton Lecture Series at St. Cecilia's Music Center. The next lecture will feature Acton's director of research, Dr. Samuel Gregg. Dr. Gregg will be speaking on "America's Economic Crisis: Looking Back, Looking Forward." This timely and relevant lecture is scheduled for February 12. Other lecturers for 2009 are Mr. Laurence Reed, Acton's president Rev. Robert Sirico, Mrs. Teresa Tomeo, and Mr. Michael Miller. Mr. Lawrence Reed is the former president of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy and the new president of the Foundation for Economic Education. Mr.

Reed will speak on "The Importance of Character in a Free Society."

The Acton Lecture Series began in 1991 as a service to the local community. Through the series, the institute seeks to bring knowledgeable and thought-provoking speakers to the area, providing our local audience in Grand Rapids, Michigan, with the opportunity to interact with prominent thinkers on issues of faith and freedom. If you would like additional information concerning the lecture series, you can contact Mandalyn Keeler through the Grand Rapids office or at [mkeeler@acton.org](mailto:mkeeler@acton.org).

## Register Now for the 2009 Conference June 16-19

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)



### ACTON UNIVERSITY

Grand Rapids, MI

- ✓ **Design** your own curriculum.
- ✓ **Meet** and listen to international experts in their fields.
- ✓ **Network** with people from all over the world.
- ✓ **Deepen** your understanding of the integration of sound economics, rigorous philosophy, and Judeo-Christian faith.

# ACTON Book Shoppe

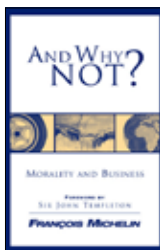


## Effective Stewardship DVD Curriculum and Study Guide

*produced by Acton Media*

As these five lessons make clear, Christian stewardship is about more than the money we drop into the collection plate. Stewardship extends to our talents, to the environment, to church and family, to our fellow man, and yes, to the money in our bank accounts. Stewardship, as the saying goes, is everything we do after we say we believe.

**DVD 100 mins Original Price \$45.00 Sale \$39.99**



## And Why Not? Morality and Business

*by François Michelin*

This book-length extended interview provides fascinating insights into the mind of François Michelin, the former managing partner of Michelin Group. He sat down with two journalists and discussed his management philosophy and his deeply felt Christian faith. Mr. Michelin speaks eloquently about the creative dimension of free enterprise and the commercial world.

**Paperback 91 pages Original Price \$12.00 Sale \$8.00**



## Banking, Justice and the Common Good

*by Samuel Gregg*

The art of creating, managing, loaning, and investing money has always been fraught with moral hazards. Unfortunately, the widespread habit of viewing banking in a less than positive light has contributed to a misunderstanding of a human activity that not only contributes to human prosperity, but also creates a sphere of endeavor in which people can pursue virtue.

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## Calendar of Events

### ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
Feb 12	<b>America's Economic Crisis: Looking Back, Looking Forward</b> Dr. Samuel Gregg to speak at Acton Lecture Series	Grand Rapids, MI
Mar 12-15	<b>Toward a Free and Virtuous Society</b>	Waxahachie, TX

### STAFF ACTIVITIES/DEADLINES

Date	Event	Location
Feb 16	<b>Catholic Education, Public Funding and the Secular State</b> Dr. Samuel Gregg to speak.	Rome, Italy

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