

ACTON notes

The Newsletter
of the
Acton Institute
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In This Issue

- Acton's New Documentary
(Pictured) Jimmy Lai, Hong Kong Entrepreneur, is interviewed
- Acton Lecture Series: Encore and Inaugural
- Remembering Milton Friedman, Champion of Freedom
- Middle School Student Explains World Poverty

Connecting good intentions with sound economics

President's Message

Dear Friends,

Americans think they have to deal with religious conflict, and truly important debates take place in this country. At the same time, it can be sobering to read the news from a country like India, where religious conflict is thickly woven into every aspect of political life.

Secular elites are forever finding ways to use the state to reduce the conflict, but in unhelpful ways.

The factions in India are broken down according to religious identity: Hindu, Muslim, Christian. The political elites affiliate with one of the groups and push its interests. Secular elites are forever finding ways to use the state to reduce the conflict, but in unhelpful ways. For example, there are debates concerning hiring quotas and programs to encourage inter-caste marriage.

Such programs tend to backfire by encouraging resentments against the use of power. Government has no business pushing reform programs to alter an institution (i.e., marriage and the family) that precedes the state. If India is to overcome its religious conflicts, it won't be through means of forced association.

Certainly, American history provides an excellent example of overcoming such conflict. Highly sectarian communities in colonial times discovered that they were mutually better off by trading their wares and services with each other. They learned to think of each other as valuable human beings rather than the enemy to be combated.

In this way, the advent of capitalistic modes of production contributes to social peace in societies with religiously heterogeneous populations. Incidentally, countries with centrally planned economies tend to have a very high degree of religious conflict. There, people with starkly different beliefs have no reason to get along, and planners win elections when they isolate groups and cater to their special interests.

Perhaps, then, the best method for countries like India to foster religious peace between groups will be to further liberalize the economic sector. This is only one of the many ways that economics and religion are conceptually related.

The Acton Institute is dedicated to further exploration of such issues, and your help is greatly appreciated in making that possible.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Rev. Robert A. Sirico". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Rev. Robert A. Sirico, President

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

ACTONINSTITUTE

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Acton to Release New Film

At the end of each year, many Acton supporters take time to reaffirm their belief in a free and virtuous society by contributing to Acton. Not surprisingly, with these gracious donations we have received an overwhelming number of requests for the trailer to Acton Media's forthcoming film, *The Call of the Entrepreneur*. The film, to be released this spring, will awaken viewers to the incredible beauty, mystery, and power of entrepreneurship.

The trailer features three entrepreneurs applying their talents in diverse places such as Hong Kong, New York City, and Ewart, Michigan. Each of them has one thing in common: success at applying energy to matter to create wealth.

In the trailer, an idyllic scene shows George Gilder, author of *Wealth and Poverty*, explaining the nature of entrepreneurial activity. Suddenly, one finds oneself standing on a busy city sidewalk looking up at the Chrysler Building's winged cornice ornament far above.

The film...will awaken
viewers to the incredible
beauty, mystery, and power
of entrepreneurship.

Before the mind registers the cornice looming into the foreground view, the perspective zooms back out and one finds oneself standing right across the street, but a few stories higher. The cornice is still there, eye-level now, as one peers out the window from a board room where Frank A. Hanna, III, a merchant banker from Atlanta is sitting.

Hanna has his own way of describing the work of an entrepreneur. "A zero-sum game is like poker. We all sit down at a table, and I only win if someone else loses. That's not the way a market works. That's not the way the wealth of New York City has been built."

Where does wealth come from, and is it bad or good? Find out when the documentary appears this spring.

If you have not seen the trailer, we invite you to visit www.acton.org. Get a glimpse of Acton's new foray into media and an exciting feature film to be released soon. Enjoy!



Scenes from "The Call of the Entrepreneur"

From Our Conference Participants

I was in search of the moral dimension to add to sound economics and politics. Acton University offered me that critical tool...thank you for your help in spreading powerful truths, inspiring ideas and authentic hope.

—Fernando Lanas
Saint Vincent Seminary
Latrobe, Pennsylvania

Academia is increasingly fraught with Marxist ideas, and Acton's voice is an essential force in counteracting this dangerous trend. Thank you for helping to make Acton the efficacious organization it is.

—Nicole Meline
Talbot School of Theology
Huntington Beach, California

Milton Friedman: Champion of Freedom

A great champion of freedom passed from this life on November 16 at the age of ninety-four. He was Milton Friedman, an economist and a moral thinker whose life and work deserves to be celebrated.

I first met Milton and Rose Friedman in 1990 and recall how delighted they were to meet a priest who shared so many of their economic ideas. They were unfailingly supportive and encouraging over the years to the work of the Acton Institute.

While many of Milton Friedman's positions are commonplace in politics today, forty years ago, he was very much the radical. His clarion call to rethink the merit of government control of the economy inspired several generations to look more deeply at the wisdom of nineteenth and eighteenth century thinkers.

We had our differences on questions of religion to be sure, specifically on the notion that liberty needs to be oriented to truth in order to insure its proper

Middle School Student Explains World Poverty

On the second day of class at Northview Junior High School in Michigan, twelve-year-old Ian Burgler was ready for another year, another class, another schedule, another football season. Of course, Ian is not just another kid. He thinks carefully about relevant issues, and with remarkable clarity.

On this particular day he heard a lot of ideas brought up in social studies class. The discussion happened to be world hunger. The teacher asked students, "Why do you think people are starving in Africa?"

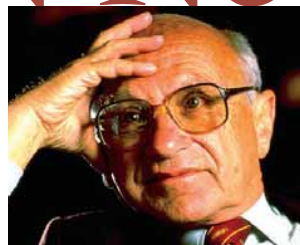
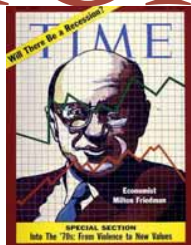
"We don't send them enough food!"

"Americans hog it all!"

"There's too many people and not enough to go around!" were the answers many students gave.

"Isn't corrupted government part of the problem?" Ian's voice hushed the room. He pressed into the awkward silence. "Africa certainly has plenty of land and natural resources, and we send over lots of aid. But nothing seems to be working, and now

ACTON News



Milton Friedman



Ian Burgler

use. Nonetheless, our exchanges on these matters, in person or in writing, were always pleasant and friendly. It was just his nature to be kind but those who pursue the vision of a society that is both virtuous and free find support in his work, for his faith was in the capacity of a free people to manage their lives in absence of relentless government dictate. He saw that freedom works and that freedom is good. All who share his faith are in his debt, now and for many generations to come.

Excerpted from an article titled "Milton Friedman and the Human Element" published by Acton November 17, 2006 by Rev. Robert A. Sirico, president of the Acton Institute.

things are getting worse."

The teacher nodded, so Ian continued. "Maybe if they could just trade on the free market like America does, maybe they could get out of poverty on their own, if their governments would only let them."

The teacher gave him a quizzical look, but agreed and thought, "How does this kid even know what the free market is?"

Happy New Year to Ian, his parents Catherine and Marcel, and siblings Roman, Eric, and Isabella! Special thanks to Catherine for sending us the story. "I see a bright future for the world through Ian's eyes." We do too, Catherine.

Acton Lecture Series: Encore and Inaugural

As an encore for the 2005 Acton Lecture Series, Dr. Stephen Grabill introduced his new book *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics* on December 14. The book is the latest imprint in the prestigious Emory University Studies in Law and Religion series edited by John Witte, Jr.

Dr. Grabill spoke on natural law's important implications for today's society. To find out more about Dr. Grabill and natural law, you may visit his Acton News and Commentaries on Acton's Web site, or view his blog at www.commonnotions.blogspot.com/.

The 2007 Acton Lecture Series will kick off in Grand Rapids on January 9 when Dr. Michael Casey explores how arguments articulated by religious believers become radioactive in politics in a lecture called "The Religion of Politics."

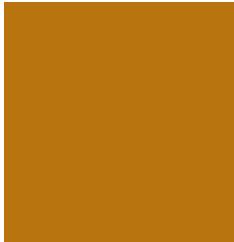
Dr. Casey will explore how religious interventions into political and public debates have changed in recent years. Today it seems that even when arguments based on reason and science are advanced

by religious believers in the public square, the very fact that these are being articulated by religious believers is widely regarded as somehow invalidating the argument. Conversely, the contributions of secularists—no matter how incoherent—seem to escape every form of public scrutiny. Dr. Casey will examine how this strange situation has emerged, its implications for reasoned debate in democratic societies, and what might be done to change it.

Dr. Casey is a permanent fellow at the John Paul II Institute in Melbourne, Australia, and the private secretary to Cardinal George Pell, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sydney. He is currently serving as a visiting fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C. The author of many papers and articles as well as the book *Meaninglessness*, Dr. Casey was awarded the \$10,000 Novak Award in 2002 by the Acton Institute for his contributions to thinking concerning the relationship between religion and economic liberty.



Dr. Michael Casey



Dr. Stephen Grabill



ACTON in the News

I'm not sure what is worse: a charitable organization that folds because it can't find donors or a charitable organization that thrives solely because it appeases Washington.

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

Mr. Chuck Colson

Title: War of the Worlds
Program: *Acton Annual Dinner*
Air Date: 10.26.2006

Rev. Robert A. Sirico

Title: Election 2006: Voters show disdain for politics as usual
Publisher: *Detroit News*
Publication Date: 11.14.2006

Dr. Samuel Gregg

Title: Pope Benedict in Turkey
Program: *The Laura Ingraham Show*
Air Date: 11.28.2006

Reminder

Year-End Giving

If you have not made a year-end gift to Acton, we hope you will consider it. Your donation will make 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 already responded to our year-end appeal letter. You have a broad vision and a generous heart.



Rev. Robert Sirico at Detroit Athletic Club



Detroit Luncheon audience

Acton and You

Detroit Luncheon

On October 20, Acton hosted the annual Detroit Luncheon at the Detroit Athletic Club near Comerica Park. At the event Father Sirico offered a lecture titled "The Ten Pillars of the Moral Economy," after which Mrs. Rosemary Kirt of Rochester Hills, Michigan, offered Father Sirico a Detroit Tigers baseball cap. Many thanks go out to Rosemary for her help planning the event, and to Mrs. Laura Lauer for her role as emcee.



Rev. Sirico talks with Rev. Ron Richards and Rev. Paul Ballien



Luncheon guests Rick and Erik Coules



ACTON UNIVERSITY

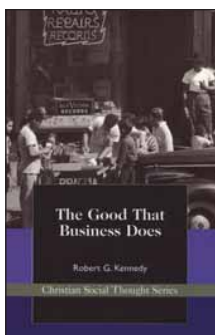
JUNE 12-15 CONFERENCE HELD IN GRAND RAPIDS, MI

Registration for Acton University is already filling up! Many applications have been received and space is limited. If you or someone you know would like to learn about the foundations of a society sustained by freedom and virtue, apply today.

Travel, lodging, and registration scholarships will be offered to select students.

Register today at www.acton.org/ActonU or call 800.345.2286

ACTON Book Shoppe



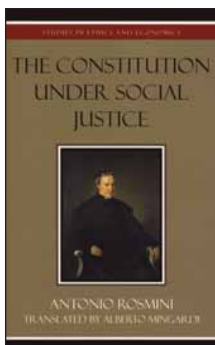
The Good that Business Does

by Robert G. Kennedy

One of the major political challenges of the modern era has been to manage the integration of business into the life of the civil community. Similarly, Christian social thinkers have struggled to integrate business activity into their account of morality, justice, and the common good. While the disciplines of economics and law teach us much about the character of contemporary business, their descriptions are limited. Drawing on the natural law conception of basic goods, this monograph offers a fuller treatment of the role of business in society and of its moral obligations.

Paperback 91 pages

Price \$6.00



The Constitution Under Social Justice

by Antonio Rosmini-Serbati

Antonio Rosmini-Serbati (1797–1855) was one of the first natural law scholars to bring natural law thinking into a conversation with the market economic order that was beginning to emerge in Europe in the nineteenth century. His reflections on matters such as the origin, nature, and limits of private property, the role of the state, and the nature of human reason show him to be a unique, innovative thinker who nonetheless was determined to work within the parameters of Catholic doctrine.

Paperback 191 pages

Price \$14.95

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Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

| Date | Event | Location |
|---------|---|------------------------|
| Jan. 9 | Acton Lecture Series “The Religion of Politics” Dr. Michael Casey to speak | Grand Rapids, Michigan |
| Jan. 25 | Acton Institute Dinner And Reception “The Ten Pillars of the Moral Economy” Rev. Robert A. Sirico to speak | Tampa, Florida |
| Jan. 28 | Acton Institute Dinner And Reception “The Ten Pillars of the Moral Economy” Rev. Robert A. Sirico to speak | Naples, Florida |
| Jan. 31 | 2007 Novak Award Winner Announced | |

STAFF ACTIVITIES

| Date | Event | Location |
|---------|--|-----------------|
| Jan. 14 | A Reformed View of Natural Law Ada Christian Reformed Church Dr. Stephen Grabill to speak | Ada, Michigan |
| Jan. 27 | Economics and Catholic Social Thought Hosted by Lateran University and Centesimus Annus Foundation Flavio Felice to participate | Florence, Italy |

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