

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

January 2008, Volume 19, Number 1



“Connecting good intentions with sound economics”

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President's Message

Dear Friends,

The Acton Institute has two broad social goals. First, make the case, moral and economic, that the market economy has a necessary institutional bulwark of freedom and prosperity. Second, shore up the cultural and moral foundations that both establish and preserve the market economy from being undermined by the state.

“Nor can the state instill these values or force people to keep them.”

Why is it important that the cultural and moral foundations of society be solid and rooted most firmly in a religious framework? Essentially it comes down to this: A society that has a low regard for promise-keeping and private property will collapse, and there is nothing that either economic actors or the state can do about it.

There is no form of private enforcement in the world that can enforce a rule against theft if the population itself does not carry with it the ethic of private property. Much less is the state able to manage a problem on this scale. If the whole of society becomes criminalized, no institution can prevent it, certainly not the state.

The same is true of other moral-cultural issues such as keeping commitments. If people don't pay their bills, interest rates will rise, the credit markets will dry up, and business would be unable to expand. Private markets and the state can handle some measure of antisocial activity. It cannot handle mass immorality. Nor can the state instill these values or force people to keep them. This must come from the human heart. It must be taught from a young age, reinforced in schools, and emphasized by our religious traditions.

There are societies that devolve into mass criminality and immorality. Not coincidentally, it is most common in societies and social sectors in which socialism is practiced. Think of the former Soviet Union. Émigrés tell amazing stories of what happens when there is no regard for property rights. And look at high-crime areas of big cities today. The correlation between welfare dependency and crime is not a coincidence.

So we need both: a market economy and a cultural foundation to a free society. By supporting our work, you are making a contribution to keeping our society free and prosperous.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Robert A. Sirico". The signature is fluid and cursive.

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.

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Acton Lecture Series: 2008 Speakers Announced

The Acton Institute's 2008 lecture series provides a powerful contrast of faith and liberty against social engineering and state control.

The first lecture takes place on January 3 and will be delivered by Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse. Roback Morse is a research fellow for the Acton Institute. Her lecture is titled, "Freedom, the Family and the Market, a Humane Response to the Socialist Attack on the Family." Having previously taught at Yale and George Mason University, as well as being a wife and mother, she brings a powerful perspective to the discussion of faith and policies that affect the family. Roback Morse also served as a research fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. The Hoover Institution's mission statement expresses the basic tenets it stands for: representative government, private enterprise, peace, personal freedom, and the safeguards of the American system.

In February, Dr. Glen Sunshine will deliver a lecture for the Acton Lecture Series titled, "Wealth, Work and the Church." This lecture will explore the biblical foundations of work and wealth in creation in

light of the history of the church to find the proper balance between the competing ideas of earthly riches in Christianity and the explosion of prosperity gospel, which incorrectly claims poverty is a curse. Dr. Sunshine is chair of the history department at Central Connecticut State University.

Rev. Robert Sirico will speak in March on "The Rise (and Eventual Downfall) of the New Religious Left." A new coalition of the religious left is organizing with other anti-free-market foes to squelch any return to the principles of limited government, while continuing their support to further the cause of big government. Rev. Sirico asks, "Can anyone stop them?" Additional speakers for the 2008 Acton Lecture Series will include:

- *Grace Marie Turner – April 10*
- *Dr. Arthur C. Brooks – May 22*
- *Michael Miller – July 24*
- *Dr. Jay Richards – August 14*
- *Dr. Samuel Gregg – September 18*



The Acton lecture series audience



Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse

From Our Conference Participants

Thank you for providing me with this incomparable opportunity to attend one of most exciting conferences I ever attended. The conference provided me a new approach of liberty and economics.

—Antero Alvarado
Caracas, Venezuela

Acton is a very unique organization, and I'm glad and thankful for its existence, for its mission, and for its staff. This year's conference was impacting and influential in my life.

—Jorge Smith
Coral Gables, Florida

Acton Co-Founders promote *The Call* and Free Markets in Manila

Acton's president Rev. Robert Sirico and executive director Kris Mauren went to the Philippines in November to promote *The Call of the Entrepreneur*. They also promoted free-market policies while meeting with Asian business, policy, and church leaders. On November 9 they attended a speaking engagement on morality and economics for the Center for Research and Communication Foundation. The CRC Foundation is dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge in the service of man and society. The CRC focuses on questions that bear on the dignity of the person, the unity of the family, civic responsibility, human solidarity, with the purpose of making current issues understood by decision-makers in business, government, and civil society, thus translating progressive ideas into action.

Sirico and Mauren also met with the National Institute for Policy Study on November 9. The meeting also included Liberal Party officials in the Philippines. Other important meetings included a discussion with the Foundation for Economic

the role business people play in our economy," said Rev. Sirico. "Without the coordinating institution of entrepreneurship, the poor will not have their needs met. People and societies will not have their hope for the future." The two-day visit was a valuable educational and learning experience for the Acton Institute as well as its friends overseas, who are highly esteemed.

Spring Arbor University Screens *The Call of the Entrepreneur*

The Call of the Entrepreneur screening hosted by Spring Arbor University in Spring Arbor, Michigan, was greeted with enthusiastic praise. The event was organized with the help of the Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) organization at the university. SIFE is dedicated to the principles of free enterprise.

Acton's development coordinator, Mandalyn Keeler, represented the Acton Institute at the campus screening. Keeler is an alumnus of the University. She had the opportunity to discuss the film with Dr. Caleb Chan, who is a business professor at the school, and Dr. James Coe, dean of the business school. "Both

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Rev. Robert Sirico



Students and guests at Acton's campus screening

Freedom and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. On November 10 Acton's co-founders held a discussion with the Brotherhood of Christian Businessmen and Professionals. To date, the BCBP can be found in 113 strategic business centers in the Philippines, covering thirty seven provinces and thirty eight dioceses. There are fifty one full chapters and sixty two outreaches in the Philippines and two outreaches in California.

The BCBP and Frederich Nauman Foundation assisted with the premiere of *The Call of the Entrepreneur* on November 10 in Makati City. Rev. Sirico spoke about the film following the premiere. "It is important that people understand and value

men were very pleased with the entire process and complimentary of the Acton Institute," said Keeler.

There were more than a hundred people in attendance for the screening. Keeler noted that after viewing the film many students expressed a desire to attend Acton University and participate in an internship at Acton. In addition, many students returned a survey that provided Acton with valuable feedback. Ninety eight percent of respondents ranked the film as exceptional or good, while 2 percent rated the film as fair. The film did not receive a single negative ranking. The screening at Spring Arbor is just one example of the expected 500 screenings on college campuses in the coming months.

Samuel Gregg and Michael Miller Discuss Hugo Chavez

Dr. Samuel Gregg and Michael Miller discussed the first electoral defeat of Venezuela's president, Hugo Chavez. The election was to be an endorsement of Chavez's plan to overhaul the constitution and weaken Venezuelan democracy. Dr. Gregg, who is the director of research at Acton, was a guest on Thor Tolo's radio program *Live From Seattle* on December 4. "People will remember, King Juan Carlos of Spain told Chavez, 'Why don't you just shut up,' Chavez for the first time was seen as a buffoon among people in his own country," Gregg said about a meeting among Latin American leaders. "The declining economic situation, the intervention of the Spanish king, and the opposition of the Catholic Church, really undid Chavez this time," added Gregg. Gregg also discussed Chavez's use of anti-American rhetoric to excite voters. "If you vote against me you are voting for the Bush administration and you're a traitor. He was essentially trying to invoke a lot of anti-American sentiment, but it didn't work. It wasn't enough this time. People in Latin America are more worried about if they can buy food than what administra-

tion is in power in the United States," said Gregg.

Acton's director of programs Michael Miller appeared on several radio stations to discuss the election. Miller appeared on *Kresta in the Afternoon* and *The Bill Meyer Show* on December 4. Miller also discussed the role of the Roman Catholic Church, which played a pivotal role in blocking Chavez's quest for even more power. "You had in the past liberation theology, which is a combination of Marxism with Christian language. Liberation theology was censored by the church and a lot of Catholic bishops are starting to recognize that in order for people to flourish you need private property and the rule of law," said Miller. "Catholics are not putting forward a plan for economic growth. But what they are doing is saying there are certain things that are right and certain things that are wrong, and certain types of government don't reflect the dignity of the person, and socialism is one of them," Miller added. Miller also declared, "His socialist plans are ultimately failing."

Dr. Samuel Gregg



Michael Miller



Hugo Chavez suffered his first electoral defeat

ACTON in the News

Despite the overall increase in almost everyone's living standards, the economic inequalities that exist in commercial society are a source of considerable anxiety for many.

—Excerpted from Dr. Samuel Gregg's article in *Budget & Tax News*

Dr. Samuel Gregg

Title: The Hazards of Government-Mandated Equality
Publisher: *Budget & Tax News*
Date: 12.1.2007

Michael Miller

Title: Chavez, Socialism, Free Trade and the Catholic Church
Program: *The Bill Meyer Show*
Air Date: 12.4.2007

Rev. Robert A. Sirico

Title: Did Romney pass faith test?
Publisher: *Detroit News*
Date: 12.7.2007

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. Jay Richards speaking at last year's Acton Lecture Series



Acton Lecture audience participants asking questions

Acton and You

Registration is quickly filling up for Acton University, which takes place in Grand Rapids, Michigan from June 10-13. Acton University is not for students only, donors and friends of the Acton Institute are also invited to attend. If you would like to attend, or if you are interested in sponsoring a student please email Acton's program officer Kara Eagle at keagle@acton.org. The conference website is located at www.acton.org/actonu. Participants of Acton University will benefit greatly from the first class scholarship. Participants will have the unique opportunity to delve into the framework and foundations that

makes the free and virtuous society so significant and superior.

If you are planning on attending any or all of the Acton Lecture Series for 2008, there is a new location in downtown Grand Rapids. Instead of our lectures taking place at the Waters building, they have been moved to the St. Cecilia Music Center, with parking adjacent to the building. All lectures are Thursdays 12:00 to 1:30 P.M. The range and depth of the speakers and their topics will make for an exciting year. Please make every effort to join us. For additional information please email Mandy Keeler at mkeeler@acton.org or visit www.acton.org/als.

ACTON UNIVERSITY

JUNE 10-13 SYMPOSIUM OF FAITH, ECONOMICS, LIBERTY

Grand Rapids
Michigan

2008

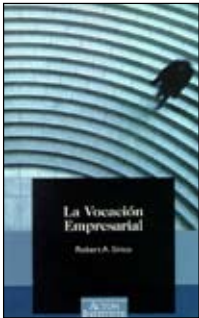
"The seminars and conferences of the Acton Institute provide the world's foremost training in the theology and philosophy of the free-market model." *Michael Lee, adjunct professor, Johns Hopkins University*

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



Apply today at www.acton.org/actonu *Travel, lodging, and registration scholarships will be offered to select students.*

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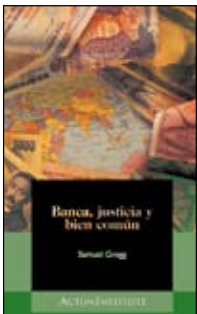
Call of the Entrepreneur–La Vocación Empresarial

by Rev. Robert A. Sirico

In this essay, Robert A. Sirico draws upon theology, philosophy, and history to outline the contours of what he calls the entrepreneurial vocation, and its relationship with the deeper Judeo–Christian message concerning the incomparable dignity of man and the sanctification of the world through human work.

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by Samuel Gregg

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Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
Jan 3	Acton Lecture Series <i>Freedom, the Family and the Market</i> Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse to speak	Grand Rapids, Michigan

June	Registration now Open for Acton University	Grand Rapids, Michigan
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STAFF ACTIVITIES/DEADLINES

Date	Event	Location
Jan 3-6	Liberty Fund Conference Dr. Samuel Gregg to Direct	Grand Rapids, Michigan
Jan 22	Business as a Moral Enterprise North Detroit Legatus Chapter Michael Miller to speak	Detroit, Michigan
Jan 27	Debate with Christopher Hitchens Stanford University Dr. Jay Richards to debate on God, Religion, and Public Square	Palo Alto, California
Jan 29	Myths Christians Believe Milwaukee Athletic Club Dr. Jay Richards to speak	Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Jan 31	Lecture on Environmental Stewardship Calvin Theological Seminary Dr. Jay Richards to speak	Grand Rapids, Michigan

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