

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

January / February 2014, Volume 24, Number 1



Acton University 2013 Participants (Photo credit: Mark Schindbauer)

“connecting good intentions with sound economics”

In This Issue

- Acton Ranked as Top Think Tank • Blackwater's Erik Prince Talks About New Book
- Acton Hires Todd Huizinga to lead International Outreach • 2014 AU Evening Speakers Announced

President's Message

"Salt and Light." For Christians, this is a familiar phrase from the Gospel of Matthew, part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount:

"What passes as entertainment is dismaying."

You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Mt. 5:13-14

It seems as if we live in a tasteless and dim world. You can drive across America, eating bland, unsatisfying fast food in restaurants that look the same everywhere. What passes as entertainment is dismaying. Our nation's fight for religious liberty – once done on battlefields in the colonies – is now done in our own Supreme Court. Desiring to turn a blind eye to the dull, dim life around us is a great temptation. But we are called for so much more.

I am not sure that Christ had fast food and MTV on His mind (but maybe...) when He preached the Sermon on the Mount, but it applies to us and the time in which we live. It's a directive, based on who we are: immortal beings made in the image and likeness of God.

God is not dull, dim, bland or boring. God is magnificent, creative, loving, just, merciful, intelligent – and we are meant to reflect this. We are meant to preserve the good (as salt has been used for food preservation), to bring flavor to the world with our creativity and gifts, and to bring the light of truth to a world sorely in need.

One of the very best ways I know that Christians (and all good people of faith) can learn to live this out is at Acton University. We talk about what makes a good leader, whether in business, government, education or family. We discuss the rich religious foundations of human freedom, and how to guard them. We learn from people of salt and light from all over the world.

Our world is not meant to be dim, stale and bland. We are salt and light. Come to Acton University 2014; join us on that city on the mountain.

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



Sincerely,

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

Rev. Robert Sirico, President

ACTON INSTITUTE

98 E. Fulton Street • Grand Rapids, MI 49503 • USA • www.acton.org

Acton Ranked as a Top Think Tank

The University of Pennsylvania's Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program ranked the Acton Institute among the top social policy and top overall U.S. think tanks with the release of its 2013 Global Go-To Think Tanks Report. In a new category for the survey, now in its seventh year, Acton was listed at No. 17 among global think tanks for "best think tank conference" in recognition of general excellence in events and programming. The high ranking from the new category is based heavily on the success of programs like Acton University and the Toward a Free and Virtuous Society Conference events.

Highlights from the Report:

- Acton Institute 11th in the Top Social Policy Think Tanks (13th in 2012)
- Acton Institute 34th in Top Think Tanks in the United States (34th in 2012)
- 10th in Best Advocacy Campaign (19th in 2012) for PovertyCure.org.

"The process of nominating organizations and ranking them is rigorous and yearlong."

- In the new category "Best Think Tank Conference" Acton ranked 17th
- There are 1,828 think tanks in the U.S. (more than twice the number in 1980)

The Global Go-To Think Tank Index is the result of an international survey of over 1,950 scholars, public and private donors, policy makers, and journalists who helped rank more than 6,500 think tanks using a set of 18 criteria developed by the TTCSP. The process of nominating organizations and ranking them is rigorous and year-long. You can visit TTCSP's ranking page at <http://gotothinktank.com/rankings/> to view the 2013 report or to access reports from previous years.

James G. McGann, director of TTCSP noted, "In the world filled with tweets and sound bites that are often superficial and politically charged, it is critical to know where to turn for sound policy proposals that address the complex policy issues that policy-makers and the public face."



Acton Institute staff members in 2013.

From Our Conference Participants

I feel that, besides enriching my personal life, Acton University will enhance my business goals and teaching objectives.

*—Paul Keough
Westchester, Illinois*

Acton University was an unforgettable experience. I learned so much through conversations, debates with others, and many insightful lectures.

*—Maureen Bielinski
Brookfield, Wisconsin*

Blackwater's Erik Prince Talks About New Book

On February 18, founder and former CEO of Blackwater, Inc., Erik Prince, spoke about his controversial work at a sold-out event at the Acton Building in downtown Grand Rapids. Blackwater, renamed Academi in 2011, is an elite, privately-owned security service provider that is well-known for its work in Afghanistan and Iraq during the War on Terror. In 2005, six Blackwater USA independent contractors were killed in Iraq and two bodies were hung from a bridge when their helicopter was shot down. Prince's new book detailing his story is titled *Civilian Warriors: The Inside Story of Blackwater and the Unsung Heroes of the War on Terror*.

Prince credited his background and upbringing in West Michigan as a decisive factor for his entrepreneurial ideas and success. He lauded the success of Blackwater but noted, "We got caught up in the politics of the Iraqi war." He added that the, "hot air blowing in Washington became a blow torch."

Acton Taps Todd Huizinga to lead International Outreach

Career diplomat and think tank entrepreneur Todd Huizinga recently joined the Acton Institute as Director of International Outreach. Huizinga served in the U.S. State Department from 1992 – 2012. Huizinga served as deputy chief of mission at the U.S. embassy in Luxembourg, political counselor at the U.S. Mission to the European Union in Brussels, consul for political and economic affairs at the U.S. consulates in Hamburg and Munich, and consul for public affairs at the U.S. consulate in Monterrey, Mexico. He has also served at embassies and consulates in Dublin, Frankfurt and Costa Rica, and in the European Affairs Bureau of the U.S. Department of State in Washington.

He has received seven Meritorious Honor Awards for his diplomatic work, including for his reporting on political affairs in Germany and Costa Rica, his contributions to the creation of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, and his role in organizing visits of President Bill

ACTON News



Erik Prince author of *Civilian Warriors*.

During his presidential candidacy in 2008, then Senator Barack Obama utilized Blackwater security in a trip to Afghanistan. That same year Obama stated, "Blackwater is getting a bad rap." A small group of local protestors picketed outside of Acton's headquarters over the issue of allowing Prince to speak in Grand Rapids. A full video of Prince's presentation can be found at <http://blog.acton.org/archives/66012-video-erik-prince-civilian-warriors.html>.



Todd Huizinga

Clinton and President George W. Bush to Europe and Latin America. He was also awarded for spearheading U.S. government participation in the 2011 Munich Security Conference, attended by the U.S. secretary of state, nineteen U.S. Senators and Representatives, and other officials.

Huizinga, a Grand Rapids native and Calvin College graduate, co-founded the Transatlantic Christian Council, a non-profit corporation based in the Netherlands and the United States that promotes limited government, the free market, individual liberty, and civic virtue.

2014 Acton University Evening Speakers Announced

Acton University, which takes place from June 17-20 in Grand Rapids, Mich, features a powerful lineup of evening speakers for 2014. Andy Crouch, executive editor of *Christianity Today*, *New York Times* columnist Ross Douthat, and Makoto Fujimura, a public intellectual and artist, will join Rev. Robert Sirico in addressing 1,000 attendees from all over the world. In 2013, over 800 leaders and future leaders representing over 70 countries, from many faith traditions, attended Acton University.

Andy Crouch is the author of *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power*, published in October 2013. His book *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*, won *Christianity Today's* 2009 Book Award for Christianity and Culture and was named one of the best books of 2008 by *Publishers Weekly*, *Relevant*, *Outreach*, and *Leadership*. In 2012 he became executive editor of *Christianity Today*.

A bestselling author, Ross Douthat joined *The New York Times* as an op-ed columnist in April

2009. Previously, he was a senior editor at the *Atlantic* and a blogger for theatlantic.com. His most recent book is *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics* (Free Press, 2012).

Makoto Fujimura is an artist, writer, and speaker who is recognized worldwide as a cultural shaper. A Presidential appointee to the National Council on the Arts from 2003-2009, Fujimura served as an international advocate for the arts, speaking with decision-makers and advising governmental policies on the arts.

Fox News analyst Judge Andrew Napolitano will also be teaching at Acton University and leading a special "Lunch 'n Learn" program. Acton University 2014 will feature over 100 courses and over 55 teaching experts in their field. Find out more about Acton University at university.acton.org.



ACTON UNIVERSITY
SPACE IS LIMITED: REGISTER NOW
UNIVERSITY.ACTON.ORG



Left to Right: Andy Crouch, Ross Douthat, Makoto Fujimura, Rev. Robert Sirico

ACTON in the News

“Indeed it’s often excessive regulation that creates opportunities for financial shenanigans by industry insiders.”

—Excerpted from Samuel Gregg’s article in *The American Spectator*.

Samuel Gregg

Title: Finally, A Conservative Leader
Publication: *The American Spectator*
Date: 2.6.14

Rev. Robert Sirico

Title: The Leadership of Pope Francis
Program: *The Warren Pierce Show*
Air Date: 1.13.14

Rev. Robert Sirico

Title: Pope Francis, Without the Politics
Publication: *The Detroit News*
Date: 1.2.14

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 mission to promote a free and virtuous society. You may choose to donate using the envelope provided, or you may visit the Acton website 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.

INTRODUCE ACTON TO A FRIEND

KNOW SOMEONE WHO WOULD BE INTERESTED IN THE WORK OF THE ACTON INSTITUTE? USE OUR WEBSITE TO SEND THEM AN E-MAIL WITH INFORMATION ON OUR PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES. THANKS FOR PROMOTING FREEDOM AND VIRTUE!

Visit: www.acton.org/refer

ACTON UNIVERSITY 2013



ACTON Book Shop

Acton University Pocket Drive: 2010-2013 Lecture Bundle

By Acton Institute



Own all of the lectures from Acton University on a USB flash drive with this inexpensive bundle. Valued at \$179, these lectures were recorded from Acton University sessions from 2010 to 2013. The flash drive comes with lectures organized by year and each includes the lecturer and course title in the file name.

181 Lectures Sale \$29.95

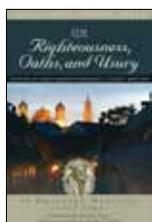


Catholicism, Ecology, and the Environment

By Acton Institute

Is modern environmentalism compatible with Christianity? Bishop Dominique Rey provides answers to this critical question in this theological reflection on the relationships among God, man, and nature. Drawing on Scripture, the insights of Church Fathers, and recent magisterial teaching on ecological issues.

Softcover 63 pages Sale \$6.00

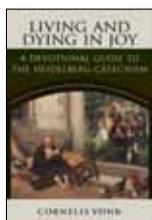


On Righteousness, Oaths, and Usury

By Christian's Library Press

This text is a translation of Wolfgang Musculus' commentary on Psalm 15 and his related appendices on the topics of oaths and usury. In these selections from his expansive exegetical work, Musculus presents a theological exposition of the psalm and gives guidance in matters of enduring relevance for Christian living.

Softcover 160 pages Sale \$9.95



Living and Dying in Joy: A Devotional Guide to the Heidelberg Catechism

By Christian's Library Press

What do you need to know in order to live and die in the joy of this comfort? The Christian art of living and dying in joy is explored in this guide to the catechism, which focuses on the biblical background and exposition of the grand themes of misery, redemption, and gratitude.

Softcover 274 pages Sale \$18.00

For our fastest service and a complete list of titles, visit store.acton.org

	PRICE	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Acton University Pocket Drive: 2010-2013 Lecture Bundle	\$29.95		
Catholicism, Ecology, and the Environment: A Bishop's Reflection	\$6.00		
On Righteousness, Oaths, and Usury	\$9.95		
Living and Dying in Joy: A Devotional Guide to the Heidelberg Catechism	\$18.00		

Make checks payable to "Acton Institute." For orders in the United States, Canada, and Mexico: for the first item, add US \$6.75 for shipping; plus US \$1.00 for each additional item. Overseas orders: US \$8.75 for the first item, plus US \$1.75 for each additional item.

Michigan residents add 6% sales tax _____

(see rates at left) Shipping _____

(enclose check or credit card information) Total _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Country _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Credit Card Number _____ Security Code _____

Mastercard Visa Am Ex _____ Signature _____ Expiration Date _____

Call 616-454-3080 **Fax** 616-454-9454 **Mail** Acton Institute, 98 E. Fulton St, Grand Rapids MI 49503

ACTON notes

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
GRAND RAPIDS, MI
PERMIT 986

Acton Institute • 98 E. Fulton Street • Grand Rapids, MI 49503 • USA

ACTON notes

Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
Mar 13	American Presidents: The Best and the Worst Lawrence Reed to Speak at the Acton Lecture Series	Grand Rapids, MI
Mar 23	Hildegard of Bingen and the Living Light Performance at the Acton Institute Mark Murray Auditorium	Grand Rapids, MI
Apr 8	Acton on Tap: The Real War on Women Elise Hilton to Speak	Grand Rapids, MI
Apr 10	Chicago Luncheon Rev. Robert Sirico to Speak	Chicago, IL
Apr 23	Judicial Engagement and the Constitution Chip Mellor to Speak at the Acton Lecture Series	Grand Rapids, MI
Apr 29	Rome Conference Faith, State, and the Economy: Perspectives from East and West	Rome, Italy