

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

January / February 2015, Volume 25, Number 1



“connecting good intentions with sound economics”

In This Issue

- Acton Institute Named Top-Ranked Think Tank • AU Preparing for its 10th Anniversary
- Two New Monographs Shed Light on Human Trafficking and Consumerism

President's Message

The Acton Institute is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. As momentous as this milestone is, it pales in comparison to the people we have met and the relationships we have built along the way.

"To promote a free and virtuous society is at the heart of Acton's work."

Many of you know this story, but for those who do not: The genesis of the Acton Institute took place when I visited Johns Hopkins University to speak at The Cardinal Newman Society. It was there that a highly inquisitive and young Kris Mauren peppered me with questions; Kris and I forged a friendship long before we formed a think tank. The first official home of the Acton Institute was above a flower shop on Crescent Street in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Those of you who have had the pleasure of visiting our new home at 98

E. Fulton St. know that we have come a considerable distance, if not in miles, certainly in institutional capabilities.

Were I to sum up the past 25 years of the work of the Acton Institute, I would certainly consider the word "freedom." To promote a free and virtuous society is at the heart of Acton's work. Kris and I have enjoyed invaluable relationships with men like Charles Colson, Leonard Liggio, Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, and Jimmy Lai, all of whom have taught us abiding lessons regarding freedom, forgiveness, and human flourishing.

During the past 10 years, I have cherished the tremendous growth of Acton University. To stand at the podium at this event, looking out over an audience of nearly a thousand people, all of whom are passionately committed to building a free and virtuous society, is immensely gratifying. It is also heartening to know that many young people who came to Acton as interns are now working to promote Acton's Core Principles in their chosen professions.

Throughout 2015, the Acton Institute will be marking its 25th anniversary in various ways. For now, let me simply say "thank you" to all who have supported us in prayer, presence, and financial provision. We look forward to continuing our mission.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Rev. Robert Sirico".

Rev. Robert 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

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

Acton Breaks into Top Spots of Global Think Tank Ranking

For the past eight years, the University of Pennsylvania's Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) has researched think tanks worldwide and ranked the top few hundred in various categories. For the first time, the Acton Institute broke into the top 30 United States think tanks and the top 10 global social policy think tanks.

Highlights from the 2014 Global Go-To Think Tanks Report include:

- Acton 9th in the ranked Top Social Policy Think Tanks category (11th in 2013)
- Ranked 29th among Top Think Tanks in the U.S. (34th in 2013)
- Ranked 11th in Best Advocacy Campaign category for PovertyCure (10th in 2013)
- Ranked 17th in Best Think Tank Conference category for Acton University (17th in 2013)

“For the first time, the Acton Institute broke into the top 30 United States think tanks and the top 10 global social policy think tanks.”

The TTCSP maintains comprehensive data on almost 7,000 think tanks worldwide of those more than half are considered in the ranking, but fewer than 300 make it into the final report. The United States has the most think tanks with 1,830, followed by China with 429. In the United States, Washington, D.C. has the most of any state with 396. Michigan is home to Acton, as well as 30 other think tanks.

While Acton did well in the rankings, free market think tanks as a whole had a strong presence in the report this year, taking top spots in several categories for the United States and internationally. The report included a list of ranking criteria, which include the “quality and commitment of the think tank’s leadership; the quality, number, and reach of its publications; the think tank’s reputation with policymakers; its media reputation; its ability to produce new knowledge; financial stewardship; and the organization’s impact on society.”



The TTCSP has ranked Acton in top spots in numerous categories.

From Our Conference Participants

[Y]ou can only get to the very nature of a matter once you’ve seen every side of it, and Acton [University] was just that, confronting what I’ve been told on a daily basis with new ideas, new approaches to problems that humanity has faced since its early days, such as poverty, tyranny, and our own nature.

—Martha R.
Venezuela

My mind was stretched in the area of economics ... I feel more equipped to talk to my generation about liberty and social issues. The free market is worth protecting, and social helps are worth doing right. Our Christian walk is affected by such things, and we need to pray, seek wisdom, and act accordingly.

—Jeremy K.
Carrollton, Texas

Acton University Preparing for its 10th Anniversary

The Acton Institute's biggest event is turning 10 this year and getting even bigger. Registration for Acton University 2015 has been open for only a few weeks, but applications are pouring in and anticipation is building for the 4-day long conference being held June 16-19 at DeVos Place in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Registrations and confirmations are breaking previous records, promising an enthusiastic, and energetic group of attendees.

The conference originated in 2005, as the Acton Symposium, and was held at Grand Valley State University's Eberhard Center, which it quickly outgrew. That first year, there were around 250 applicants and just over 150 attendees. In 2014, there were almost 1,500 applicants and nearly 900 attendees. The conference has always included international participants, consistently attracting a large group of attendees from more than 70 countries. Participants have praised the conferences ecumenical nature, as classes reflect

rest were church leaders, business leaders, educators, non-profit administrators, consultants, and more. A study of the 2014 participants showed that the majority of attendees each directly influenced more than 100 others, primarily through teaching and small group leadership.

While social media has not always played a large part in the conference, in the last few years it has taken off as an effective tool for participants, Acton staff, and people who are unable to attend. Acton uses Twitter and Facebook for daily announcements and important updates. During the conference in 2014, the hashtag #ActonU was trending and generated great dialogue among attendees and people interested in the theme of the week, but who were not present. Acton University generated more than 15 million media impressions from online, print, and radio sources.

Thanks to very generous donors and foundations, Acton is able to offer travel scholarships and subsidized lodging to qualified applicants. What can you expect in 2015? More than 100 classes in a

ACTON News



In 2014, Acton University had nearly 900 attendees.



a broad number of religious backgrounds and attendees come from a great number of faiths. Even among the Christian participants, there is an even divide between Roman Catholics and Protestants. In 2005, there were fewer than 20 faculty members. While this year's conference will include more than 20 Speakers with backgrounds as diverse as the participants.

The conference attendees, while diverse in ethnic backgrounds, also represent a variety of professions and vocations. In 2014, around one quarter of the participants were full-time students. The

dozen categories, including new bonus courses from PovertyCure. There will be special screenings of Acton's popular new curriculum, "For the Life of the World: Letters to the Exiles," and of PovertyCure's award winning documentary, "Poverty Inc." Evening plenary speakers include Rev. Robert A. Sirico, co-founder of the Acton Institute, and Dr. Greg Thornbury, president of The King's College in New York City. For testimonials from last year's Acton University participants, be sure to watch "Be Inspired," an informative video on the conference's website at university.acton.org.

New Monographs on Human Trafficking & Consumerism

The latest monographs from the Acton Institute will explore timely and sometimes overlooked economic subjects. “The Cure for Consumerism” by Rev. Gregory Jensen is the second in the Orthodox Christian Social Thought Series. Since the onset of the Industrial Revolution, there has been a rapid growth of human flourishing, but critics of the market economy have argued that these improvements have led to consumerism and rampant materialism. This monograph will explore the possible cures for consumerism. Can society actively choose to consume less? Does our economic system need a complete overhaul? Rev. Jensen will explore these possibilities, synthesizing insights from the spiritual tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church with modern social science. This monograph will offer practical solutions to consumerism, putting both faith and economic freedom to work for the common good.

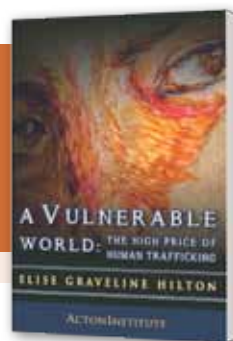
“A Vulnerable World: The High Price of Human Trafficking” by Elise Graveline Hilton explores the economics of the dark, hidden world of modern human slavery. An estimated 20 million people

are bought and sold annually for labor and sexual exploitation in a \$150 billion industry. This horrific industry robs people of their dignity and ability to flourish. “A Vulnerable World” is broken down into three sections. Hilton will discuss the business of human trafficking itself, the perpetrators of this hideous act, and the broad scope of this crime. She paints a picture of the most vulnerable individuals who are lured into this dark world, as well as what leads individuals to sell their children and other dependent relatives into a life of slavery and violence. Finally, Hilton will discuss possible ways to fight back against human trafficking, offering real-world solutions. This monograph is only one part of the work the Acton Institute is doing to raise awareness about this global phenomenon. This spring, Acton’s Prince-Broekhuizen Gallery will temporarily house Pamela Alderman’s 2014 Artprize entry “The Scarlet Cord,” a piece meant to shed awareness on sex slavery. On April 29, Hilton and Alderman will present a lecture on human trafficking in Acton’s Mark Murray Auditorium.



People Shopping. Credit: iStockphoto.com © Robert Churchill

Acton is set to release two new monographs, “The Cure for Consumerism” and “A Vulnerable World.”



ACTON in the News

“A synthesis of free market economics within an overall moral framework requires a consistent application of the principle that free trade and human rights ought to mutually complement each other.”

—Excerpted from Rev. Robert A. Sirico’s article in *Real Clear Religion*.

Rev. Robert A. Sirico

Title: The End of Cuba’s Double Despotism

Publication: Real Clear Religion

Date: 12.20.14

Rev. Robert A. Sirico

Title: Free Market Economics and Morality

Program: C-Span

Air Date: 12.25.14

Samuel Gregg

Title: Thinking about Pope Francis

Program: Kresta in the Afternoon

Air Date: 1.13.15

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 of you 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-CALVIN LECTURE 2014



ACTON Book Shop



ACTON UNIVERSITY 2014 FLASH DRIVE BUNDLE

Produced by Acton Institute

Own all 107 of the lectures from Acton University 2014 on a USB flash drive with this inexpensive bundle. Valued at \$105.93, these lectures were recorded live at Acton University 2014 sessions. The drive itself comes with lectures numbered, including the lecturer and course title in the file name.

USB flash drive Sale \$9.99



CREATION AND THE HEART OF MAN

By Fr. Michael Butler and Andrew P. Morriss

Creation and the Heart of Man uniquely takes the discussion of Orthodox environmental ethics from abstract principles to thoughtful interaction with the concrete, sensitive to the inviolability of human dignity, the plight of the poor, and our common destiny of communion with God.

Softcover 91 pages Sale \$6.00

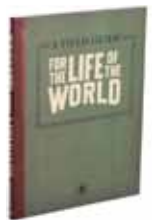


WORK: THE MEANING OF YOUR LIFE

By Lester DeKoster

Where do we find the core of life's meaning? Right on the job! At whatever work we do — with head or hand, from kitchen to executive suite, from your house to the White House. "Work is the great equalizer — everyone has to come to it in order to find meaning in living: no short cuts, no detours, no bargain rates."

Softcover 75 pages Sale \$3.95



FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD - A FIELD GUIDE

By Heidi Segal

For the Life of the World is an entertaining film series and study that explores the deeper meaning of Salvation. The companion *Field Guide* jump-starts group and individual investigation and includes additional content to enhance the film experience.

Hardcover 78 pages Sale \$9.99

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

| | PRICE | QUANTITY | TOTAL |
|---|--------|----------|-------|
| ACTON UNIVERSITY 2014 FLASH DRIVE BUNDLE | \$9.99 | | |
| CREATION AND THE HEART OF MAN | \$6.00 | | |
| WORK: THE MEANING OF YOUR LIFE | \$3.95 | | |
| FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD - A FIELD GUIDE | \$9.99 | | |

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 |
|---------------|---|------------------|
| Feb 26 | The (Actual) Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism Gene Veith to Speak | Grand Rapids, MI |
| Mar 25 | Uncle Sam Can't Count Burt Folsom to Speak | Grand Rapids, MI |
| Apr 9 | The Power of the Gospel However Dark the Times Os Guinness to Speak | Grand Rapids, MI |
| Apr 16 | The Poverty of Nations: A Solution Wayne Grudem and Barry Asmus to Speak | Grand Rapids, MI |
| Apr 23 | Between Church and Market: Some Points of Clarification Rev. Robert Sirico to Speak | Chicago, IL |
| May 6 | Pope Francis and the Modern Papacy George Weigel to Speak | Grand Rapids, MI |