

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

July/August 2008, Volume 18, Number 7/8



“Connecting good intentions with sound economics”

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President's Message

"We must not forget those less fortunate than us even as we struggle to make ends meet."

As I write, fears of recession are on the minds of many. Unemployment is rising. Investment is falling. Prices for fuel and food staples are on the increase. The cycle of bad news feeds on itself. People want to know what we can expect in the future. Much depends on the policy response. If Washington does not attempt to "fix" the problem, markets will clear after much pain, and we will enter into a growth path again. If policy makers institute controls on prices, which inflate ever more, and attempt bailouts of every failing enterprise, we could be looking at a long economic downturn.

There are some certainties about downturns. Families will feel the pinch even more. If past data indicates something, we can expect charitable contributions to fall. People will spend more time working rather than in leisure. Volunteering in houses of worship or other community-minded organizations will decline. Cultural activities are always the last funded and the first to go in a recession.

We can see, then, that on the margin, a decline in prosperity reduces our quality of life in many ways, not just material ones. Recessions hit areas of life that are central to what it means to live in a good society. Unlike some people who believe that declining living standards are somehow good for us, spiritually and otherwise, I believe that economic declines are always unfortunate and something to be regretted.

And yet we will make it through. There are impulses we must fight against. We must not forget those less fortunate than us even as we struggle to make ends meet. We must not lose sight of the important educational and spiritual work that we need to do even as we see our incomes and living standards fall. Let us pray for everyone who faces a family crisis as a result of decline.

During recessions, free markets also come under attack. In fact, free markets represent a solution to the problem, and recessions are the worst time to abandon them. Thank you for your support of our work, which I believe is more necessary now than ever.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Rev. Robert A. Sirico", written over a light background.

Rev. Robert A. Sirico, President

ACTONINSTITUTE

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

Lord Griffiths on Market Capitalism

Acton University 2008 was another prolific gathering for promoting the intellectual foundations of a free society. This year's attendees featured 400 participants from fifty one different countries. As Acton's director of programs, Michael Miller noted, "We are authentically diverse." This year's four day conference contained noteworthy lectures by twenty two faculty members for Acton University. There was over fifty different courses offered for the university, and many of the lectures are available on the Acton Institute PowerBlog site.

Lord Brian Griffiths delivered a lecture titled "A Theology of Market Capitalism." Lord Griffiths criticized theologians who use a soft form of Marxism to evaluate the world. He called this approach "disturbing." He pointed out that many church leaders are criticizing capitalism, while profiting from it at the same time. Speaking of social justice for the poor, Lord Griffiths added, "We believe in private property, free exchange,

"We need to be the
defenders of the rights of
the poor."

and free markets, but that's not the same as *laissez-faire*." He quoted Proverbs 31, saying, "We need to speak up for those who can't speak for themselves. We need to be the defenders of the rights of the poor." He also said, "The charge is made that market capitalism inevitably leads to consumerism, and this can be a tricky issue." Quoting John Paul II,

Lord Griffiths noted, "These criticisms are not directed so much at an economic system but at the ethical and human condition." Lord Griffiths noted that we need to distinguish the economic order from the moral and cultural order. He rightly slammed the prosperity gospel and continually stressed the importance of justice for the poor within market capitalism, tying it to our Christian duty, which separates us from secular defenders of *laissez-faire*. Lord Griffiths served as a special advisor to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and is the vice chairman of Goldman Sachs International.



Lord Griffiths speaking at Acton University

From Our Conference Participants

Acton has helped me understand more clearly what a society that is being redeemed will look like. Imperfect at best, yet none-the-less , a society, that at its most basic levels promotes human dignity.

—Michael Fogas
Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis

I have benefited greatly from the Acton Institute and for the great work that they do. The ideas at Acton have served as a framework from which I can understand the world in which I operate.

—Chris Tsai
New York, New York

Bloggers Enhance Acton University Coverage

With the desire of connecting with bloggers for Acton University, the Acton PowerBlog hosted a social gathering for interested bloggers. The Acton Institute was especially thankful for the presence of Fr. John Zuhlsdorf, Hunter Baker, and Tex. All of them receive considerable attention through their writings. Tex, a blogger pen name, writes at MereOrthodoxy.com and added to the coverage of Acton University with highly thoughtful analysis of the lectures and addresses. He wrote detailed critiques on the lectures of Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse, Dr. Stephen Grabill, and Mustafa Akyol.

Writing at the American Spectator Blog, Hunter Baker, called the Acton Institute, “The next big center right think tank.” Baker also had generous words for Acton’s new documentary *The Birth of Freedom*. Baker praised the production quality, and felt the documentary would receive strong ratings if it aired on The History Channel or public television. One blogger, with the name Anneli, offered a testimony of sorts on the new documentary:

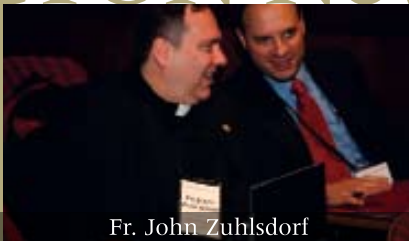
Fr. John Zuhlsdorf, who writes at wdtprs.com/blog/ has a huge Catholic audience of readers. He offered high praise for the passion of the young attendees of Acton University and the Acton support staff for their ability to find solutions to problems. Troy Camplin noted on his blog, “Even if the sessions weren’t as great as they were, it would have been worth going just to meet all the people I met.”

Rev. Sirico on Human Dignity

Acton’s president, Rev. Robert Sirico, wrapped up Acton University with a moving address titled “Piety and Technique.” Quoting Augustine and talking about his own spiritual conversion, Rev. Sirico testified, “Late have I loved you, O beauty ever ancient, ever new.” Speaking to the participants, Rev. Sirico added, “You understand that human freedom and human dignity is the birth-right of every human being.”

Rev. Sirico reminded the audience that many of our rights and liberties come from the Judeo-Christian heritage. “Reason and not force is the power and means of man’s survival,” said Rev. Sirico. There were also serious warnings from Acton’s president

ACTON News



Fr. John Zuhlsdorf



Christianity is not just a personal belief system, not merely a personal faith. Christianity has changed the world, changed social structures, political powers, defined justice, declared that all people, whether slave or master, Jew or Gentile, male or female are all one under Christ.

Has this always been true? No. Have great injustices been committed by the Church, by Christians? Of course. But step back, get a bigger picture of the history of how the advent of Christianity slowly changed the world, and then rejoice that we know the end of the story.

about the encroachment of government control over the lives of families and individuals. “There are voices in our nation and in our world that do not trust human liberty and distrust it in the name of religious and moral reasoning,” said Rev. Sirico.

He called the participants “tillers of the soil, with an obligation to nourish it.” He also added, “We must make the building of the free society once more a moral adventure, for its construction was morally inspired in the first place and it emerged from a vision of man and his inherent and transcendent dignity.”

Dr. Arthur C. Brooks Discusses Happiness

Dr. Arthur C. Brooks addressed the topic of happiness and faith on May 22 for the Acton Lecture Series. He is the author of *Gross National Happiness: Why*

Happiness Matters for America

- *and How We Can Get More of It*. Dr. Brooks is the Louis A.

Bantle Professor of Business

and Government Policy at

Syracuse University's Maxwell

School of Citizenship and

Public Affairs and Whitman

School of Management. "The studies show that 50

to 80 percent of happiness is determined by genetics," said Dr. Brooks. Dr. Brooks believes because of

this it's even more important to have public policies that foster and encourage happiness. He also

cited marriage and economic freedom as products that help make people happier.

The one kind of freedom that makes people more

unhappy is moral freedom. "The very happiest

people are those who have freedom in moral areas that they abridge of their own volition because of

their religious and ethical views," said Dr. Brooks.

"Religious people are about twice as likely to say they are very happy than secular people."

While money does not buy happiness, charitable giving helps people receive a greater joy and a sense of worth in their lives.

Dr. Brooks challenged the view that secularism provides the greatest happiness, as some of his academic colleagues have claimed. "Religious people are about twice as likely to say they are happier than secular people," said Dr.

Brooks. Additionally, Dr. Brooks said evangelical

Protestants and Orthodox Jews are the happiest

religious people out there, but every religious practicing group is happier than secularists. Dr. Brooks

also asks why is it that political conservatives are

happier than liberals? He says the data shows that

this is directly tied to a faith aspect. "Religious

people were a third more likely than secularists to

say they're optimistic about the future," says Dr

Brooks. The research of Dr. Brooks is highlighted

in the July issue of *Reader's Digest*.



Dr. Arthur C. Brooks

ACTON in the News

We can safely lay Jeremiah Wright to rest because he is not the pope of the black church; he speaks only for himself.

—Excerpted from Anthony Bradley's article in the *Tulsa Today*

Rev. Robert Sirico

Title: Religion in the Public Square

Program: *Conversations with Carl Zylstra*

Air Date: 5.30.08

Michael Miller

Title: John McCain and Climate Change

Program: *Intelligent Radio*

Air Date: 5.20.08

Anthony Bradley

Title: Moving on, Without Wright

Publisher: *Tulsa Today*

Date: 5.19.08

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.



Acton's Michelle Muccio in a panel discussion



Acton's Michelle Muccio with panel guests

Acton and You

On March 26, 2008, Northwood University, a business school for aspiring business leaders in Cedar Hill, Texas, held a private screening of *The Call of the Entrepreneur*. The film served as the main attraction for Northwood's 2008 Founder's Day, an event honoring the founding members of the university. *The Call of the Entrepreneur* was viewed by over 250 business students, faculty, and university board members and honorees.

Following the film, Michelle Muccio, Washington D.C. representative and production associate for

Acton Media, was featured in a panel discussion with David Kreiss and Michael Hoyer, two successful entrepreneurs, to discuss the importance of the entrepreneur in society. David Kreiss is the founder and CEO of KM2 Solutions, and Michael Hoyer owns and operates the North Texas Sailing School. Dennis McCuiston, host and executive producer of the award winning McCuiston Program on PBS, served as the panel's facilitator.

Northwood University's Cedar Hill campus is located eighteen miles from downtown Dallas, Texas.

Acton Institute's
Eighteenth Annual Dinner

Thursday, October 30

Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids, Michigan

For more information please call 800.345.2256

ACTON Book Shoppe

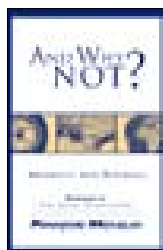


Tensions in 18th Century Liberal Thought

by Michael Miller

The 18th Century was a flowering of enlightenment thought and reflection on liberty that led it divergent directions one resulting in the American Revolution, one in the French Revolution. Why did this happen, what role did Christianity play in this?

CD 45 mins Original Price \$11.95 Sale \$10.00

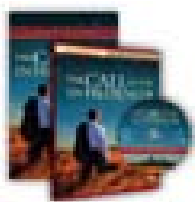


And Why Not? Morality and Business

by François Michelin

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

Paperback 91 pages Original Price \$12.00 Sale \$8.50



The Call of the Entrepreneur DVD and Study Guide

produced by Acton Media

A merchant banker. A failing dairy farmer. A refugee from Communist China. One risked his savings. One risked his farm. One risked his life. Why do their stories matter? Because how we view entrepreneurs—as greedy or altruistic, as virtuous or vicious—shapes the destinies of men and nations.

Length 60 minutes Original Price \$30.00 Sale \$25.00

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	PRICE	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Tensions in 18th Century Liberal Thought	\$10.00		
And Why Not? Morality and Business	\$8.50		
The Call of the Entrepreneur DVD and Study Guide	\$25.00		

Make checks payable to "Acton Institute." For orders in the United States, Canada, and Mexico: for the first item, add US \$5.75 for shipping; plus US \$1.00 for each additional item. Overseas orders: US \$6.75 for the first item, plus US \$1.75 for each additional item.

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Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
July 24	Acton Lecture Series The Victory of Socialism? Michael Miller to speak	Grand Rapids, Michigan
Sept 4	<i>The Blrth of Freedom</i> Premiere Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art	Chicago, Illinois

STAFF ACTIVITIES/DEADLINES

Date	Event	Location
July 21	Annual Acton Lecture The Centre for Independent Studies Rev. Robert A. Sirico to speak	Sydney, Australia
August 5	Grand Rapids Legatus Rev. Robert A. Sirico to speak	Grand Rapids, Michigan

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