

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

June 2008, Volume 18, Number 6



“Connecting good intentions with sound economics”

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President's Message

Dear Friends,

“What’s missing in these sermons is a vital understanding of economics.”

How intriguing that a pastor’s statement on politics would become a source of political controversy. This is what has happened with Senator Barack Obama’s pastor Jeremiah Wright, whose statements have been discussed in detail, to the point that Obama had to repudiate them. Little public attention is ever given to what the clergy say from the pulpit on economics. The common trope among sermons today is to blame the rich for the existence of the poor, and to call for government policy to redistribute wealth.

Business people sit in church and listen to these sermons with unease, knowing that something isn’t quite right about what they are hearing but not knowing precisely what. They know that their wealth is rather fragile, and it can only be protected through innovation and human service in the commercial sector. They wouldn’t have any wealth at all but for a great deal of sacrifice, and in the course of their business career, they never exploited the poor. They absorb that sense of guilt that is imposed by these sermons and wonder about how to deal with it. Some succumb and eventually support left-liberal political agendas that run contrary to free enterprise.

What’s missing in these sermons is a vital understanding of economics. It is not the case that in a free economy the property of the rich comes from exploiting the poor. How does that affect the biblical injunction to serve the poor? It means that the best way might not be to call on government to become a weapon of expropriation. The moral teachings concerning the poor impose a moral obligation on us, and those who enjoy the greatest material blessings are especially urged to use their resources to care for the least of these. Keep in mind that there is a difference between effective charity and symbolic political posturing that responds to propaganda but does not actually meet real needs.

What American clergy say in the pulpit does indeed have great influence over the shape of American culture. The next step is to see the need for a proper formation of those who speak in the name of the Gospel. There is a need for them to receive some degree of economic education.

In supporting the Acton Institute, you make a contribution toward this end.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rev. Robert A. Sirico".

Rev. Robert A. Sirico, President

ACTON INSTITUTE

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

Rev. Sirico Delivers Krieble Lecture

President Rev. Robert A. Sirico delivered the Krieble Lecture at the Annual Heritage Foundation Resource Bank Meeting on April 24 in Atlanta. His talk ranged widely over “the simple idea of human liberty” and what is required to preserve it. The Heritage Foundation is a research and educational institute whose mission is to formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense. “The state limited as it must be, exists for man, and not man for the state,” said Rev. Sirico. He noted that this idea has a long philosophical heritage and pedigree, and that it must be defended by every generation.

The Heritage Foundation’s Annual Resource Bank Meeting gathers more than 500 think-tank executives, public interest lawyers, policy experts, and elected officials from around the

world to discuss issues, strategies, and methods for advancing free-market, limited government public policies. The Resource Bank is conducted in partnership with groups such as the Atlas Economic Research Foundation, State Policy Network, and World Taxpayers Associations.

*“It was Christendom,
despite all of its fallible
human leaders, where free-
dom was fully born.”*

Rev. Sirico’s moving address on human liberty appealed to the value of moral and religious influence. “It was Christendom, despite all of its fallible human leaders, where freedom was fully born.” Man is “vivified by the breath of life. He is the bearer of *eternal* because he has an immortal destiny beyond this world.” Rev. Sirico also talked about the universal dignity and image of the person. “All reality is one reality, all truth is one truth. Our universe is created by one source that created us *ex nihilo*. The link between a good society and a free one is easy to establish, and even a good one is not easy to maintain,” he said. You can listen to Rev. Sirico’s address at Acton’s Powerblog Web site.



Rev. Robert Sirico

From Our Conference Participants

I have to thank the Acton Institute for the inspiration to decide to get involved in the public discussion of these ideas, as we prepare for the future, where nations need to be guided from a different perspective in which liberty is a keystone for development.

—Fernando Coronel Velasco Guayaquil,
Ecuador

My experience at the Acton Toward a Free and Virtuous Society conference deepened my outlook on a variety of subjects , ranging from theology and economics to the metaphysics of man and society. I am grateful to you for enabling me to attend.

—Janice Clark
Austin, Texas

What Should Christians Think About Global Warming?

Dr. Jay Richards lectured on "What Should Christians Think About Global Warming?" The lecture occurred on April 17 at the Wealthy Street Theatre in Grand Rapids, Michigan. "This is God's world and we as stewards are held responsible for how we treat the environment," Dr. Richards said. "The controversy surrounding this issue is whether global warming is caused by humans. Are we causing it? If there is no cause by humans then there is no policy solution. But if we are, then there is the presence of a moral issue and perhaps then there is a need for political and policy solutions," he added.

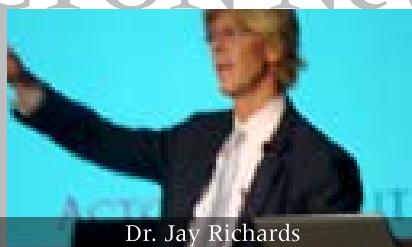
During the lecture he emphasized that we are in a slight warming period. This trend started in the middle of the nineteenth century. Dr. Richards believes a slight rise in temperatures by a few degrees might be better for humans on earth, and the planet as well. He also expressed skepticism in the United Nations Kyoto Protocol Treaty, which would cost the worldwide economy between

we have made in the last hundred years," Dr. Richards added. He referenced the reduction of deaths because of malaria and poisoned water. He also noted that human life expectancy is continually rising, and we have to keep perspective to focus on things we can actually influence for the better good of all society.

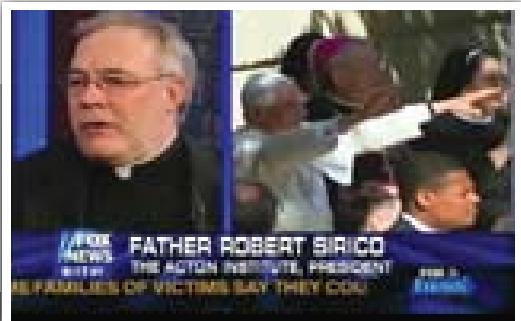
Rev. Sirico Discusses Pope Benedict's Visit to United States

Acton's president, Rev. Robert Sirico, discussed the significance of Pope Benedict's trip to the United States with several media outlets, including Fox News. Pope Benedict XVI visited the United States in mid-April for six days. The pope met with President Bush and presided over mass in Washington, D.C., and New York City. Rev. Sirico talked about Benedict's ability to strengthen the Catholic Church in the United States. "The images that are being projected across the country now and in the next few days will have a very positive impact," he added. He emphasized that Catholics run large private charities, taking that burden off the government, as well as the largest private education system in the country.

ACTION News



Dr. Jay Richards



Rev. Sirico also discussed the visit on the Ray Appleton Show. Rev. Sirico praised Benedict for addressing Catholic sexual abuse issues. "I really appreciate the way he dealt with this issue. He did not do it sensationalistically, but met with victims privately," Rev. Sirico said. He noted that victims spoke passionately about Pope Benedict's meeting with them. "I think his meeting with them will have a monumental impact," he added. "Benedict comes on the stage today when the problem is Islamo-fascism and secularism, and he is the right man for the job," said Rev. Sirico.

10-50 trillion dollars by 2050. The figures come from the Copenhagen consensus, which focuses on the international community's effort to solve the world's biggest challenges and on how to do this in the most cost-efficient manner. If the United States signed on to the treaty, the nation would be pledging to reduce our CO₂ emissions by 5 percent of our 1990 output. Dr. Richards says the problem with the plan is that even if all the nations signed on to the treaty it would do virtually nothing to slow down a temperature increase. The difference would be a 0.07 Celsius temperature gap by 2050. "Most of us in the United States are unaware of all the environmental progress

Repairing Health Care: Grace-Marie Turner

Grace-Marie Turner addressed the topic of repairing health care on April 10 for the Acton Lecture Series. Turner is the president of the Galen Institute, a non profit health and tax policy research center. Turner is widely published and has testified on many occasions for the U.S. Congress on health care issues. She believes conservatives and Christians should not be afraid to take greater ownership of this issue. She spoke passionately about helpful solutions for the uninsured at the lecture.

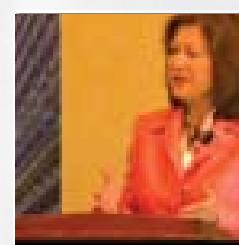
One of the most significant points she made was the need for making health care portable, which would keep people from losing their coverage when they change jobs. Tying health care to an employer is problematic. No other major country ties insurance to their employer. "Three in ten workers change jobs every year," she noted. That variable in itself is the main reason that the number of uninsured is so high. The policy of this country has created much

"Allowing greater competition in the health insurance industry would lead to more affordable premiums."

of the crisis we are currently facing.

Turner declared that universal government mandated programs would definitely cause government bureaucracies to be the ones making decisions about your health care needs. Unfortunately, individuals and families would lose a lot of freedom related to their care.

Providing tax breaks to individuals, just like businesses receive, would reduce the number of uninsured. In an article this year in USA Today, Grace-Marine Turner noted, "Allowing greater competition in the health insurance industry would lead to more affordable premiums. Giving consumers a greater incentive to shop for value would put power in the hands of doctors and patients, not government. Market-oriented reforms, coupled with assistance for those at the lower end of the economic scale, would be a far better solution."



Grace-Marie Turner

ACTON in the News

The government is not giving cash away but returning to taxpaying citizens what is and should be our own money.

—Excerpted from Jordan Ballor's article in the *Detroit News*

Ray Nothstine

Title: Congress Finally Gets The Ethanol Memo
Program: *The G. Gordon Liddy Show*
Air Date: 5.8.2008

Jordan Ballor

Title: Avoid Uncle Sam's tax rebate attitude of 'spend all you can'
Publisher: *Detroit News*
Date: 5.6.2008

Dr. Jay Richards

Title: An Earth Day Review of Global Warming
Program: *Panhandle Live*
Air Date: 4.22.2008

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 and You

The July Acton Lecture Series will feature Acton's director of programs, Michael Miller. His July 24 address is titled, "The Victory of Socialism?" Miller states, "Socialism did not die with the collapse of the Soviet Union," and examines the advance of socialism in cultural institutions, academia, media, government, and religion. Miller looks at current advances in socialism abroad, and asks, "While we celebrated the triumph of freedom has socialism won over the culture?"

For the August Acton Lecture series, Dr. Jay Richards will follow up on the highly successful

premiere of *The Birth of Freedom*. Dr. Richards will talk and lead discussion about some of the themes from Acton's new documentary, *The Birth of Freedom*. The film examines the contributions of the Judeo-Christian tradition to the rise of political and economic freedom in the West. At the May 8 premiere in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Dr. Richards, Dr. Samuel Gregg, and Dr. William Allen all served on a highly informative panel that discussed the significance of the documentary and its intent. Dr. Richards is the executive producer for *The Birth of Freedom*.

ACTON UNIVERSITY

JUNE 10–13 SYMPOSIUM OF FAITH, ECONOMICS, LIBERTY

Grand Rapids
Michigan

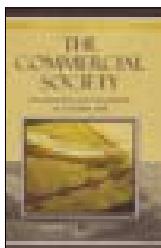
2008 "The seminars and conferences of the Acton Institute provide the world's foremost training in the theology and philosophy of the free-market model." *Michael Lee, adjunct professor, Johns Hopkins University*

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.

ACTON Book Shoppe



The Commercial Society

by Samuel Gregg

Guided by the thoughts of Alexis de Tocqueville, The Commercial Society identifies and explores elements that must exist within a society for commercial order to take root and flourish. Gregg studies the challenges that have consistently impeded and occasionally undermined commercial order, including the persistence of "corporatist" values and political movements.

Paperback 177 pages Original Price \$16.95 Sale \$15.00



And Why Not? Morality and Business

by Francois Michelin

This book-length extended interview provides fascinating insights into the mind of Francois 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
<u>The Commercial Society</u>	\$15.00		
<u>And Why Not? Morality and Business</u>	\$8.50		
<u>The Call of the Entrepreneur DVD and Study Guide</u>	\$25.00		

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Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event
June 10-13	Acton University
June 19	Birth of Freedom Premiere National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution
July 24	Acton Lecture Series The Victory of Socialism? Michael Miller to speak

Location

Grand Rapids, Michigan
Washington D.C.
Grand Rapids, Michigan

STAFF ACTIVITIES/DEADLINES

Date	Event
July 21	Annual Acton Lecture The Center for Independent Studies Rev. Robert A. Sirico to speak

Location

Sydney, Australia