

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

March / April 2012, Volume 22, Number 2



Artist rendition of new building

“connecting good intentions with sound economics”

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President's Message

"They thrive by virtue of God's plan, not a government plan."

There is a passage from the sixth chapter of St. Matthew in which Jesus says: "And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these."

An interpretation would suggest that Jesus is only saying that we should not concern ourselves with material possession. That is partially true but there is a deeper point. We have to concern ourselves with material provision at some level or else we do not stay alive or thrive as human beings. A more fundamental point is that we should not let our concern for material possession consume our lives to the exclusion of fundamental moral and spiritual truths.

One of those truths concerns human freedom. Many people want to erect social systems that deny human freedom in the name of providing for all. In history, we've seen states from the ancient times to the present that take on god-like powers in the name of providing for our needs. The irony of these attempts is that they have produced opposite results from what people intend. It typically leads to material deprivation and demoralization of the population. It certainly ends in denying people fundamental freedoms.

How do we answer such concerns? We can point to the myriad ways in which the free economy does in fact provide even without a central planner or a large state. We can point out that the more government does, the more the government crowds out private solutions to our social problems. We can cite thousands of technical studies showing how the free economy is indeed the best means to assure that society thrives and grows and that people's needs are met.

In the end, however, I suspect that the person who doesn't trust in freedom will not accept this rationale. There is a reason that Jesus drew attention to the birds and the lilies. They thrive by virtue of God's plan, not a government plan. It is the same with the human person. This is a point that the Acton Institute, in every aspect of its work, is making part of the debate about our future. Thank you for your support of our work.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Robert Sirico". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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.

ACTON INSTITUTE

161 Ottawa Avenue NW, Suite 301 • Grand Rapids, MI 49503 • USA • www.acton.org

Acton Purchases Grand Rapids Building

The Acton Institute has purchased a building at 98 E. Fulton Street in downtown Grand Rapids to serve as the future headquarters for the institute. A new building was needed because of current expansion in programs, staff, outreach, and operations. Because of the vast amount of space the new headquarters provides, it will also sustain many years of growth.

A generous local supporter purchased the building for Acton. We now have a task to go to the broader community to raise support for the necessary renovations.

One of the benefits of the new building is that it will raise awareness of Acton in the Grand Rapids community. Acton's Executive Director Kris Mauren expanded upon this in the recent issue of *Religion & Liberty*:

We look forward to being a significant part of the continued economic growth of downtown Grand Rapids, a vibrant city center that has benefited from tremendous private investment in recent decades. The early press reports on our move are already linking Acton to the ongoing revitalization of the downtown area.

Acton's Communications Director recently told the *Grand Rapids Press*, "We're the only public policy think tank in Grand Rapids, but we're probably better known internationally than in Grand Rapids." That will certainly change with the new building purchase. The excitement was palpable among the staff. They have already toured the building and contributed financially to help complete the moving process.

The new space will allow Acton to revitalize and expand its research library. There will be room for seating for close to 200 for in-house events, lectures, and discussion. It will allow Acton to harness and better utilize state of the art media technology to enhance events for our guests and friends.

The Acton Institute would like to thank all of our friends and supporters over the years for bringing us to this place where we can seize upon this unique opportunity. We look forward to the capital campaign ahead and welcome the participation of all as we move forward with our new facility.



Watson Building 1929



Watson Building 2012

From Our Conference Participants

Every year I attend Acton University, the teaching is a rich and fulfilling experience where I can learn and interact with a variety of interesting people.

—Rev. Dean B. Nelson
Montgomery Village, Maryland

I'd like to say thank you to the Acton Institute staff. I left Grand Rapids with new people to pray for and work with and, of course, a lot to think about.

—Kevin E. Stuart
New Orleans, Louisiana

Rev. Sirico Publishes New Book

Defending the Free Market: The Moral Case for a Free Economy, due out May 22, is a new book penned by Rev. Robert A. Sirico. The book is being published by Regnery. The title offers a clear description of Robert Sirico's solid commitment to the power of a free economy to uplift freedom and morality, and to relieve poverty.

Before his passing, Chuck Colson had a chance to endorse the work. Colson wrote of *Defending the Free Market*:

Robert Sirico is a voice who must be heard. *Defending the Free Market* provides a solidly Christian perspective on capitalism and free markets—and makes the compelling case that we cannot possibly understand economics and how markets function without understanding the true nature of man.

Former Managing Director of the World Bank and former Minister of Finance of El Salvador, Dr. Juan Jose Daboub added:

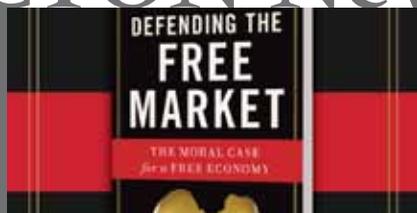
Rev. Robert Sirico has a clear, pragmatic and easy-to-follow explanation to most of today's major arguments against people's ability to take destiny

and discuss essential topics related to faith and the free society. In March, Acton research fellow Dr. Jordan Ballor discussed the deeper meaning of social justice. Dr. Ballor highlighted the organizations of institutions and their uniqueness to society. He touched on Business & Culture, Church, Family, and Government. His central theme noted that "when each of these fulfills its purposes, social justice is achieved."

Dr. Victor Claar, an economics professor at Henderson State University in Arkansas, spoke on the topic, "Envy: Socialism's Deadly Sin." Dr. Claar reminded listeners to the seriousness of envy as sinful and how it is often one of the least talked about among the deadly sins. Dr. Claar added that envy has the ability to slow down the rate of long term economic growth.

Ray Nothstine, managing editor of *Religion & Liberty* at Acton, will speak on the topic of "Calvin Coolidge and the Spirit of Federalism" on May 10. Nothstine says, "Coolidge believed in a free economy but always with the caveat of idealism over materialism." Coolidge, who had strong views about federalism and limited government, is often forgotten today. However, his stock is rising as many of the problems he predicted

ACTON News



Robert Sirico's new book due out May 22



Calvin Coolidge, Public Domain, Wikimedia Commons © Notman Photo Co., Boston, Mass.

Calvin Coolidge

into their own hands. Faith and reason are different sides of the same coin after all. *Defending the Free Market* should be required reading for the current and next generation of leaders.

You can read an excerpt from the book in the latest issue of *Religion & Liberty*. The excerpt is also available on the Acton Website under publications and *Religion & Liberty*. Order online at Amazon.com.

Acton On Tap 2012

Acton on Tap has kicked off with three events in 2012. This is an informal gathering to hear about

because of centralization of government manifests itself more and more. Nothstine added that Coolidge's presidency was unusual simply because the federal government actually shrank by the time he left office.

Acton on Tap launched in Grand Rapids in 2010 to reach a broader community audience. It's characterized by a short lecture on a topic, then the floor is opened up for questions and further audience discussion. Some of the titles and topics of past events have been "Putting Politics in its Place," "American Exceptionalism," and "The End of Liberty." Acton on Tap takes place at Derby Station in East Grand Rapids.

Acton Remembers Charles W. Colson

Charles W. Colson (1931-2012) was a very good friend of the Acton Institute from its earliest days. Many supporters and friends of Acton have been touched by Colson through the years with his presence and words at our events. But more likely, they were already inspired and moved by Colson long before that because of his testimony and conversion.

Upon learning about Colson's passing, Rev. Robert Sirico declared:

Others will write extensive biographies of Chuck Colson delineating his numerous accomplishments, and deservedly so. I simply would like to express my admiration for a man whose witness to the reality of Jesus Christ and his redemptive power was an inspiration for me to be a better priest and a better Christian. The authenticity of Chuck Colson's conversion and the integrity of his life were evident to any honest observer.

Colson, who was once infamous as Richard Nixon's political hatchet man, is best known for his evangelical conversion and founding and leadership of Prison Fellowship. Colson said of life

on earth:

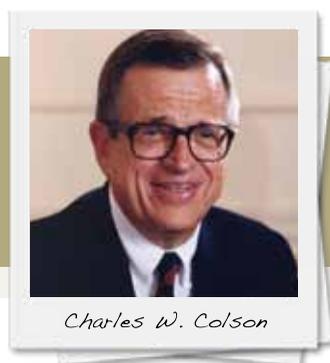
One of the most wonderful things about being a Christian is that I don't ever get up in the morning and wonder if what I do matters. I live every day to the fullest because I can live it through Christ and I know no matter what I do today, I'm going to do something to advance the Kingdom of God.

Colson received Acton's Faith & Freedom Award in 2006. He was interviewed by *Religion & Liberty* three times. He was the keynote speaker at the 1993 Acton Annual Dinner and spoke at many other Acton events.

His last interview was with the Acton Institute in September of 2011 for the curriculum titled, "Our Great Exchange: Discover the Fullness of What it Means to Be God's Steward" to be released in the Summer of 2012. You can view the video of Colson at <http://www.acton.org/press/about-chuck-colson-i-am-video>. In the film, Colson said of his prison experience, "I saw the miracle of how God works in the life of man."



Charles Colson with Rev. Robert Sirico



Charles W. Colson

ACTON in the News

"I don't believe that foreign aid is the solution—or even a solution."

—Excerpted from Michael Miller's article in *The American Spectator*.

Dr. Samuel Gregg

Title: Beyond Conservatism and Libertarianism
Publisher: *Public Discourse*
Date: 4.26.12

Rev. Robert Sirico

Title: On the Life and Legacy of Chuck Colson
Program: *Kresta in the Afternoon*
Air Date: 4.24.12

Michael Miller

Title: Here I Come to Save the World Bank
Publisher: *The American Spectator*
Date: 3.20.12

Reminder

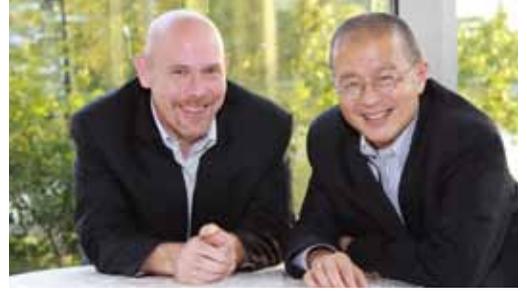
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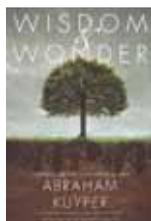


Judaism, Law & The Free Market

By Joseph Isaac Lifshitz

Judaism and Jewish religious, legal, and moral principles are often regarded as translating into support for broadly social democratic economic positions. Looking, however, at the Jewish treatment of themes such as property rights, social welfare, charity, generosity, competition, and concepts of order...

Softcover 142 pages Original Price \$8.00 Sale \$7.00

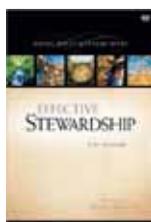


Wisdom and Wonder

By Abraham Kuyper

Wisdom & Wonder: Common Grace in Science & Art is a new and complete translation of two sections that the Dutch Reformed theologian and politician Abraham Kuyper intended for his larger three-volume work on common grace.

Softcover 182 pages Original Price \$16.99 Sale \$14.99

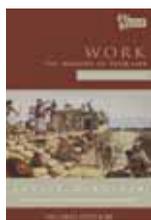


Effective Stewardship Curriculum DVD and Study Guide

Produced by Zondervan

Christian stewardship is about more than the money we drop into the collection plate. Stewardship is everything we do after we say we believe. In this five session video study, you will learn how to think critically and biblically about the areas of responsibility that have been entrusted to you by God.

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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."

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Effective Stewardship Curriculum DVD and Study Guide	\$28.00		
Work: The Meaning of Your Life	\$5.95		

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Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
May 31	19th c. Reflections on Liberty & their Meaning Today Michael Miller to speak	Grand Rapids, MI
Jun 12-15	Acton University	Grand Rapids, MI

STAFF ACTIVITIES/DEADLINES

Date	Event	Location
Jun 20	Catholicism, Subsidiarity and Government Dr. Samuel Gregg to speak	Vilnius, Lithuania
Jun 21	Benedict XVI and the Crisis of Europe Dr. Samuel Gregg to speak	Vilnius, Lithuania

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