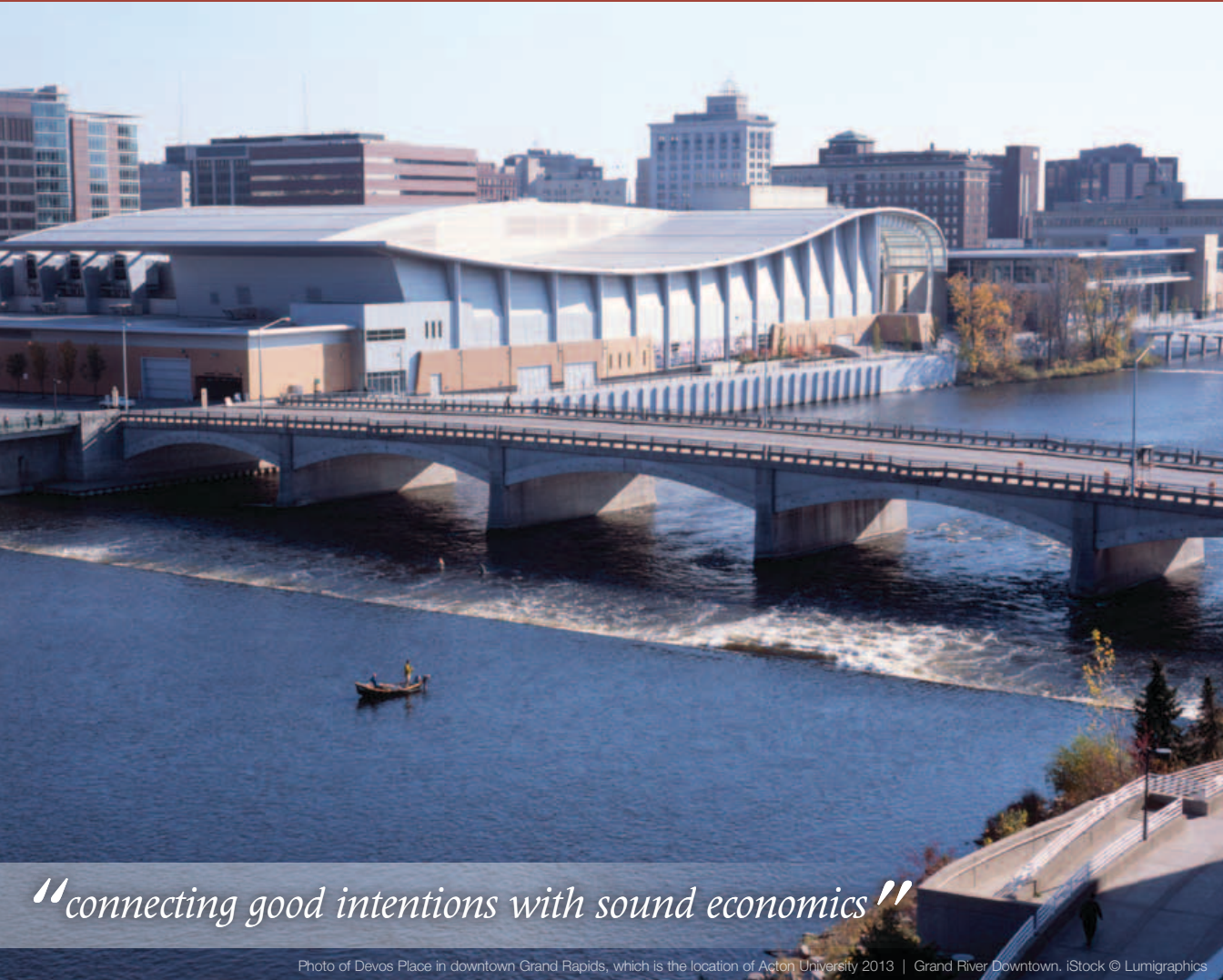


# ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

March / April 2013, Volume 23, Number 2



*“connecting good intentions with sound economics”*

Photo of Devos Place in downtown Grand Rapids, which is the location of Acton University 2013 | Grand River Downtown. iStock © Lumigraphics

## In This Issue

- Evening Speakers Announced for Acton University • CLP Publishes Holistic Stewardship Book
- AU 2012 Lecture Capsule: Cultural Critiques of Capitalism • *Becoming Europe* Garnering National Media Attention

# President's Message

"The best way to help people is to actually help people."

Do you remember Occupy Wall Street? A huge split has occurred within the Occupy movement. Some of the main players wisely saw that they were getting nowhere by camping out in front of skyscrapers and decided to take the cause of social justice into their own hands. They pushed for Occupy members to start doing social projects. They would show up after various calamities such as Hurricane Sandy and help with the clean-up, alongside church groups who are usually among the first responders. Instead of merely demanding social justice, they decided to take real action.

But this tendency has seriously annoyed a faction of people within Occupy too. The more activists element says that helping people with their real problem amounts to giving up the political vision. The point of Occupy, they say, is not to do charity work but to change the system.

I'm intrigued by this split because it highlights a long-time tension in the movement for redistribution and the welfare state. After all, if your goal is to really help people—and that is a goal we should all have—there are more effective ways of doing this than going to the government and demanding that it put in place new taxes, administer new programs, and transfer money from sector to sector. The best way to help people is to actually help people.

But for some members of the hard left, this is not a good approach at all. As incredible as it seems, even the charitable work of Mother Theresa and her order of nuns came under fire for providing direct charitable services rather than being politically active in demanding socialism. But they stuck to their mission, believing that the best way to make the world a more just and beautiful place is to minister to people's needs directly.

Voluntary charity and voluntary good works is the path toward authentic social improvement. This is the path that the Action Institute has long counseled, and we take it a step further and actually highlight and celebrate those individuals and institutions and faith groups that choose this road. Thank you for supporting our important work.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Rev. Robert Sirico". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

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

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# Evening Speakers Announced for Acton University

Acton University will take place over June 18 – 21, 2013 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The evening speakers for the conference are Acton President Rev. Robert Sirico, Marina Nemat, William McGurn, and William B. Allen.

Marina Nemat was born in 1965 in Tehran, Iran. After the Islamic Revolution of 1979, she was arrested at the age of sixteen and spent more than two years at a political prison in Tehran, where she was tortured and came very close to execution. Her memoir of her life in Iran, *Prisoner of Tehran*, was published in Canada by Penguin Canada in 2007. In 2007, Marina received the inaugural Human Dignity Award by the European Parliament.

William McGurn is the editorial page editor of *The New York Post*. Previously he was a Vice President for News Corporation and a columnist for *The Wall Street Journal*. From 2005 to 2008, he

served as chief speechwriter for President George W. Bush. Prior to his work at the White House, he was the chief editorial writer for *The Wall Street Journal*, and spent more than 10 years overseas – in Europe and in Asia – for Dow Jones.

“...she was arrested at the age of sixteen and spent more than two years at a political prison in Tehran...”

William B. Allen is Emeritus Professor of Political Philosophy in the Department of Political Science and Emeritus Dean of James Madison College, at Michigan State University. He served previ-

ously on the United States National Council for the Humanities and as Chairman of the United States Commission on Civil Rights. Currently he serves as Visiting Senior Professor in the Matthew J. Ryan Center for the Study of Free Institutions and the Public Good at Villanova University.

For a more in-depth bio of these speakers and other lecturers at Acton University, please visit [university.acton.org](http://university.acton.org). You can also access more general information about the conference at the website.



From left to right: Ms. Marina Nemat, Rev. Robert A. Sirico, Dr. William Allen, and William McGurn.



If you can't make it to Acton University, check out AU Online.

## 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  
Ecuador

Thank you so much for the Acton Conference, and for your financial assistance to attend. Thank you for working to change our culture and people's lives for the sake of goodness, truth, freedom, and the Gospel.

—Tom Galpin  
St. Louis, Missouri

## CLP Publishes Holistic Stewardship Book

The Acton Institute and Christian's Library Press have published *Faithful In All God's House: Stewardship and the Christian Life* by Gerard Berghoef and Lester DeKoster. The book was edited by Acton's director of collaborative initiatives, Brett Elder. The title references Numbers 12:7 and Hebrews 3:5, which declares the holistic faithfulness of Moses before the Lord. *Faithful In All God's House* is a revision of *God's Yardstick* which was originally published in 1982.

Lester DeKoster and Gerard Berghoef define stewardship as "willed acts of service that not only make and sustain the fabric of civilization and culture, but also develop the soul."

In the introduction, Jim Liske, who is CEO of Prison Fellowship Ministries, notes that "Stewardship is the primary human activity that reveals God's image within us. Stewardship is an activity that leads us to an identity. We do what God wants us to do *so that* we can become who he wants us to be."

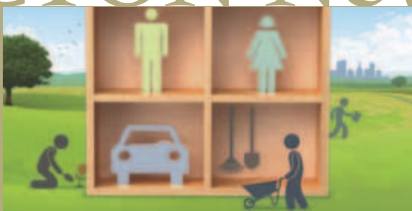
## AU 2012 Lecture Capsule: Cultural Critiques of Capitalism

Michael Miller, a research fellow at the Acton Institute, delivered a lecture on June 15 at Acton University last year that addressed different cultural critiques of capitalism. Global capitalism and globalization have been praised or criticized in many areas, including politics, social concerns, economics, and culture. Heavily attended, the course is one of the most popular lectures at Acton University.

Miller examined the question whether "capitalism destroys culture." He argued that while the market can play a role, it does not play a primary role in cultural breakdown or erosion. "We have a secular socialist culture not a capitalist culture," declared Miller. He noted that we don't have a free market culture or capitalist culture in America, but one that is at best a managerial or corporatist culture. "We actually blame capitalism when there are a host of other factors at stake," added Miller.

Miller said the only solution is to reawaken the moral order and he said it was incumbent upon

## ACTON News



Acton and CLP release the new book *Faithful in All God's House*.



Michael Miller

Gerard Berghoef (1926-2007) was a furniture manufacturing executive and also served as an elder in the Christian Reformed Church. Lester DeKoster (1916-2009) received his doctorate from University of Michigan and he was a tenured professor at Calvin College as well as director of the library at Calvin College and Seminary.

This book is just over 100 pages and is excellent for personal use, church groups, or Bible studies. It is available as a soft cover for \$8.00 or as an eBook for \$5.99. You can order it from the Christian's Library Press site at [www.clpress.com/publications/faithful-all-gods-house](http://www.clpress.com/publications/faithful-all-gods-house).

all of us to reform the culture. He noted it is not enough to hand over trust to a secular state to regulate society and decide what is and what is not appropriate.

He also discussed some of the benefits of globalization and offered examples of baskets from Africa that are sold at Macy's department stores. "You can now buy these traditional baskets at Macy's and it's creating a new industry in the region that is lifting people out of poverty." Miller will instruct the course again at Acton University in June of this year.



# Becoming Europe Garnering National Media Attention

In January, Encounter Books published Samuel Gregg's latest work *Becoming Europe: Economic Decline, Culture, and How America Can Avoid a European Future*. Gregg examines economic culture to explain how European economic life has drifted in the direction of what Alexis de Tocqueville called "soft despotism," and the ways in which similar trends are manifesting themselves in the United States.

Gregg has discussed the book on several radio and TV shows, including Dennis Miller's radio show, Glenn Beck's *The Blaze TV*, and Ave Maria's *Kresta in the Afternoon*. If you want to watch or listen to any of these, most are available on Acton's PowerBlog. Matthew Feeney, assistant editor at *Reason Magazine's* 24/7 blog says that "Gregg's book is a healthy reminder that the United States has indeed been moving toward a more European economic culture... But thanks to Gregg's book, they cannot claim to have not been warned." Fr C. John McCloskey, a Church historian and research fellow at the Faith and Reason Institute in

Washington, says that *Becoming Europe* is

A very timely book, given the concerning state of our economy and, more importantly, our ever-declining moral life... If we do not want to become like current-day Europe, we need to chart a different course. Perhaps only an unadulterated and evangelizing Catholicism may over time help our country survive in recognizable form and reinvigorate us to in turn re-evangelize with gratitude what is left of Europe, the incubator of our culture.

Michael Sean Winters, a writer for the *National Catholic Reporter* wrote a critique calling Gregg "Europhobic," and arguing that America becoming more European is not necessarily a bad thing. Gregg responds to this article with "Think (and Read) before You Blog: A Response to Michael Sean Winters" on the Acton PowerBlog.



The Bank of England and the Royal Exchange.

iStock © fotoVoyager



## ACTON in the News

"But the Great Society programs from this period surely played a part as well, by disrupting the family."

—Excerpted from Dr. Jonathan Witt's article in *The American Spectator*.

**Dr. Jonathan Witt**

Title: Crime and the Nanny State  
Publication: *The American Spectator*  
Date: 4.10.13

**Dr. Samuel Gregg**

Title: Containing the Cyprus Crisis  
Program: *The Blaze TV*  
Air Date: 3.26.13

**Rev. Robert Sirico**

Title: Pope Francis  
Program: *BBC World News*  
Air Date: 3.14.13

## Reminder

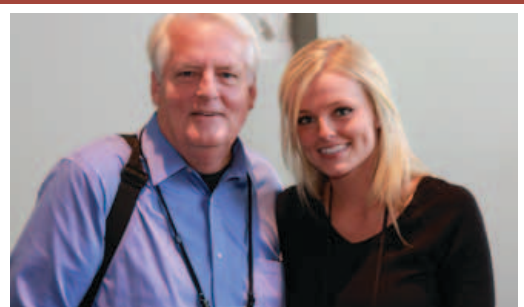
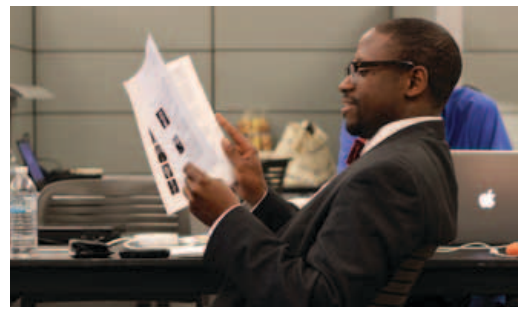
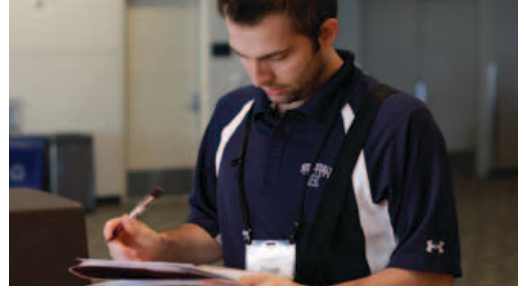
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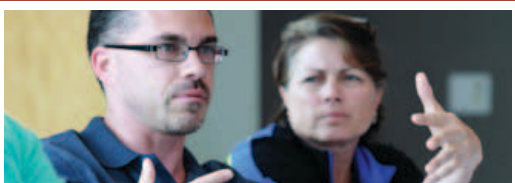
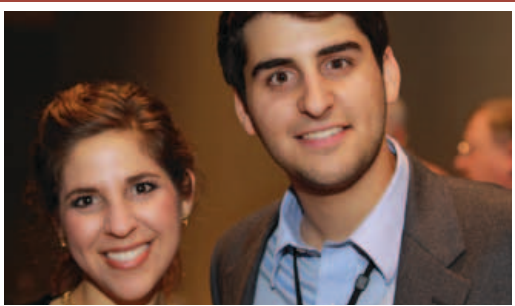
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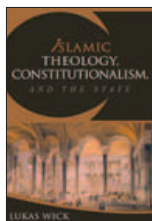
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## ACTON notes

### Calendar of Events

#### ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
<b>May 31</b>	<b>St. Vladimir's Poverty Conference</b> Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary Michael Miller to speak	Yonkers, NY
<b>Jun 18-21</b>	<b>Acton University</b>	Grand Rapids, MI
<b>Jun 27</b>	<b>Acton Lecture Series - Becoming Europe</b> Dr. Samuel Gregg to speak	Grand Rapids, MI
<b>Oct 17</b>	<b>Acton Institute's 23rd Annual Dinner</b>	Grand Rapids, MI

#### STAFF ACTIVITIES

Date	Event	Location
<b>May 21</b>	<b>Land Center Summer Institute</b> Richard Land Center at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Michael Miller to speak	Fort Worth, TX