

# ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

May / June 2015, Volume 25, Number 3



Pictured left to right: McKenna Tue, Chris Kohane, Matthew Urbik, and Paul Babkowski

## In This Issue

- "Acton Club" Founded at West Michigan High School
- Instituto Acton Reaches Out to Latin American Audience • Acton Participates in Liberty@Work

# President's Message

This year, we are celebrating 10 years of Acton University and 25 years of the Acton Institute.

“We must shield not only ourselves but also the weakest and most vulnerable around us.”

Should you look up traditional gifts for wedding anniversaries, you will find that couples celebrating 10 years of marriage traditionally give one another gifts of tin, and for 25 years, silver. As far as I know, there are no lists for the proper gifts for think tank anniversaries, so I will use these traditional wedding gifts to make my point.

Tin does not sound like a very exciting gift. We tend to think of things made of tin as cheap and not durable. Yet if you look at the chemical characteristics of tin, you find that it withstands corrosion very well. Acids and salts have very little effect on it.

One of the reasons we started Acton University was to not only promote a free and virtuous society but also equip others to help build such a society. We live in corrosive times. We are assaulted daily with the “acids” of hatred, misunderstanding, vice, poverty, and crime. We must shield not only ourselves but also the weakest and most vulnerable around us. Furthermore, we must do all we can to promote freedom and virtue. Knowing the characteristics of tin, it may just be the right “gift” to associate with Acton University.

Silver seems to be a much richer gift, as it should be. Making anything work well for 25 years takes both perseverance and grace. That is true for a marriage as well a business or any organization. While most of us tend to think of silver for its use in jewelry and decorative items, silver—better than any other element—conducts electricity. With electricity comes light, and with light, illumination.

My hope (and I know I share this hope with Kris Mauren, Acton’s executive director and cofounder) is that the Acton Institute illuminates for you the world in which we live. Acton endeavors daily to enlighten you regarding religious liberty, economics, faith, work, and culture. Our goal is to help you make sense of this world and bring the light that only faith can give.

Tin and silver: two elements, two traditional gifts. We hope to continue to be an elemental part of your life and even a gift to you in your journey of building a free and virtuous society.



Sincerely,



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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## “Acton Club” Concludes for School Year

In spring 2014, a group of students from West Catholic High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan, visited Acton and were given a tour of the building. After they were done, they asked Mike Cook, Acton’s director of programs and educational impact (and West Catholic alumnus), how they could go about starting an “Acton Club” at their school. This grassroots effort blossomed from a vague idea into a fully-functioning student organization.

The group was founded by five students: Jack Pacific, McKenna Tue, Chris Kohane, Paul Babkowski, and Matthew Urbik, who was the first president of the club. In 2012, these students actively followed the political turmoil that was often prevalent in the news and would informally meet and discuss these events. They realized that they had an interest in politics, business, and economics and wanted to show other people how these important concepts are directly related to faith. The group went to Cynthia Kneibel, principal of West Catholic High School, who introduced them to the Acton Institute.

The club officially started last fall with just a handful

of students, but as the school year continued, more and more students became interested and started attending. The club met every Tuesday at lunchtime, which meant students gave up precious free time in order to study and discuss Acton Institute resources. They would discuss these resources in light of current events under the leadership of Sean Nolan, a member of the theology department and their faculty advisor.

During the end-of-the-year award ceremony at West Catholic, Acton Club founders were recognized for their achievements and presented with “Free and Virtuous Society” awards from the Acton Institute. Although the founding members have now graduated, they put together a two-year plan to ensure that the club will continue at West Catholic. Anyone interested in starting their own Acton Club is encouraged to get in touch with Acton and visit the Book Shop ([shop.acton.org](http://shop.acton.org)) for resources. To listen to these young men describe their experience, visit <http://www.acton.org/media/radio-free-acton> and find the podcast titled, “Faith and Freedom in High School,” or visit the Acton PowerBlog for more stories about them.



The Acton Club at West Catholic High School.



Awards and gifts given to the founding members.

## From Our Conference Participants

I honestly felt invigorated after Acton University—probably more energized, more inspired—than I’ve been in a long time. I think I have begun to dream big again.

—Keegan  
Dallas, Texas

Thank you for the opportunity to attend Acton University. I woke up thanking God every day that I had the opportunity to be in the midst of so many great thinkers and like-minded individuals . . .

—Kamilah  
Charlotte, North Carolina

## Instituto Acton Reaches Out to Latin American Audience

On March 18, 2015, leaders in economics and religion from all over the world came together in Buenos Aires, Argentina, to study and discuss freedom. As part of the One and Indivisible: The Relationship between Religious and Economic Freedom Conference Series, the Acton Institute and Instituto Acton hosted this conference titled, "Christianity and the Foundations of a Free Society."

Keynote speakers at the Foundations of a Free Society conference were Samuel Gregg, Acton's director of research, Anielka Olson, coproducer of *Poverty, Inc.*, Mario Silar, senior researcher at Instituto Acton, and Gabriel Zanotti, academic director of Instituto Acton and professor at the Universidad Austral. Rev. Robert Sirico, president and cofounder of the Acton Institute, and Gustavo Hasperue, academic secretary at Instituto Acton, moderated the event. Gregg gave the first address to a crowd of more than 250 people on "God, Reason, and our Civilizational Crisis," followed by Silar's comments on

objectives and goals with Acton. Led by executive director Cecilia G. de Vázquez Ger, Instituto Acton "*integra las verdades Judeocristianas con los principios de la Economía de Mercado.*" Its mission is to promote a free and virtuous society, characterized by the validity of personal rights and the market economy in harmony with the principles of the Judeo-Christian faith.

The core of the Instituto's work consists of academic activities, such as conferences and research, and also sharing work and events through digital communication and institutional relations. Programs include: *Acton Joven*, *cursos online*, *presentaciones de PovertyCure*, and *seminarios*. *Acton Joven* (Young Acton) is a program designed specifically for young people interested in a free and virtuous society. They meet monthly to learn about, discuss, and debate important topics. *Cursos Online* are virtual classrooms allowing students of all ages to learn from leaders in real time using webpages, live videos, and the opportunity to live chat with the course teachers. For their *Presentaciones de PovertyCure* (PovertyCure presentations), the Instituto works with PovertyCure resources and team members to explain how to rethink aid and poverty alleviation. The Instituto holds several

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Gabriel Zanotti speaking at the Acton hosted conference in Argentina.

"Christianity's Contribution to Limited Government." During the afternoon session, the audience heard from Zanotti on "Classical Liberalism: Guarantor of Religious Freedom" and later Olson on "Faith and Liberty as the Solution to Poverty." The conference was live-streamed with more than 740 participants tuning in from 52 different countries. The lectures were given in both English and Spanish with simultaneous interpretation provided.

In March 2015, Instituto Acton (formerly Instituto Acton Argentina) became a subsidiary of the Acton Institute. Instituto Acton, while organizationally independent for the time being, will share common



Kris Mauren, Cecilia G. de Vázquez Ger, Rev. Robert Sirico

seminarios (lectures and seminars) throughout the year on various topics. Its impressive program lineup is complemented by Instituto Acton's successful outreach. In 2014, the Instituto became Latin America's top think tank in terms of the numerous social media profiles managed by the organization, especially on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

The next conference in the One and Indivisible Series is titled "Judaism, Christianity, and the West: Building and Preserving the Institutions of Freedom." It will be held on September 9, 2015, at the Pontifical Institute Notre Dame of Jerusalem Center in Israel. This will be Acton's first conference held in the Middle East.

# Acton Partners with the Charles Koch Institute

While Acton has hosted Charles Koch Institute Fellows as part of Acton's summer internship program and through the Koch Associate Program for nearly a decade, last fall was the first time Acton partnered with Koch's Liberty@Work program. This nine-month program that runs from August until April promises real work experience and networking opportunities. It is open to recent graduates as well as individuals who are more established in their careers. Participants are placed in state-based non-profit organizations throughout the country where they work in a full-time, paid position. From the Liberty@Work website:

Liberty@Work is an interactive web-based professional education and training program for individuals interested in improving well-being by advancing liberty. As a participant, you will have the chance to undergo management training for four hours every Wednesday and further develop your skills and expand your network . . . Additionally, participants travel to Washington, DC, for the first week of the program and meet in person for three other professional education summits.

Acton's first Liberty@Work Fellow, Patrick Oetting, now a full-time associate for the Acton Institute, said the program has been the most rewarding experience of his professional life. He said that the time he spent in this program will significantly impact his future career:

Top notch lectures on classical liberalism combined with "Market-Based-Management" and leadership training provided a fundamental understanding of how applying free market principles in the workplace allow for the greatest amount of value creation. Implementing these principles in my work with PovertyCure has allowed me to become more effective and efficient in the way I operate on a daily basis. While I found great value in the professional development training, I believe the greatest value of Liberty@Work came through the connections I made with others fighting for liberty across the country. Whether it came through group projects focused on societal well-being or the occasional happy hour, Liberty@Work provided a great platform to network in a way that will mobilize the liberty-advancing network for years to come.



Acton summer interns

Charles Koch  
INSTITUTE

## ACTON in the News

"People ought to be free to patronize establishments that accord with their values and to decide to what extent such concord is even necessary."

—Excerpted from Jordan Ballor's article in *The Federalist*.

Rev. Robert Sirico

Title: Is Christianity on the Decline?

Program: Your World with Neil Cavuto

Air Date: 4.3.15

Jordan Ballor

Title: The Logic of Economic Discrimination

Publication: The Federalist

Date: 4.9.15

Samuel Gregg

Title: Cardinal Kasper Could Learn from this African Bishop

Publication: Crisis Magazine

Date: 4.13.15

## 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 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!

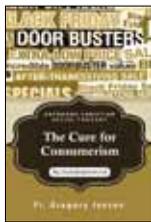
Visit: [www.acton.org/refer](http://www.acton.org/refer)



## ACTON THROUGH THE YEARS



# ACTON Book Shop



## THE CURE FOR CONSUMERISM

By Fr. Gregory Jensen

*The Cure for Consumerism* examines popular prescriptions for addressing consumerism that range from simply consuming less to completely overhauling our economic system. Jensen synthesizes insights from the spiritual tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church with modern social science.

**Softcover 154 pages Sale \$6.00**

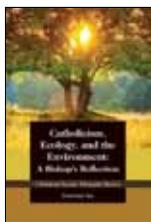


## CREATION AND THE HEART OF MAN

By Fr. Michael Butler and Prof. Andrew Morriss

Rooted in the tradition of the Orthodox Church and its teaching on the relationship between God, humanity, and all creation, Fr. Michael Butler and Prof. Andrew Morriss offer a new contribution to Orthodox environmental theology.

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## CATHOLICISM, ECOLOGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

By Dominique Rey

Is modern environmentalism compatible with Christianity? Bishop Dominique Rey provides answers to this critical question in this theological reflection on the relationships among God, man, and nature. Rey's primary purpose is to show Catholics and other Christians how they can view the environment.

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## ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP IN THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Foreword by Rev. Robert Sirico

A fair and honest debate about religious responses to environmental issues should always distinguish theological principles from prudential judgments. The Cornwall Declaration and the accompanying essays in this volume were written to do just that.

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## ACTON notes

### Calendar of Events

#### ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
Jul 14	<b>Acton on Tap</b> Anielka Olson to speak	Grand Rapids, MI
Jul 29	<b>Acton on Tap</b> How Washington is Betraying America's Young: Jared Meyer to speak	Grand Rapids, MI
Sep 9	<b>Judaism, Christianity, and the West: Building and Preserving the Institutions of Freedom</b>	Jerusalem, Israel
Sep 14	<b>Acton on Tap</b> Elise Hilton to speak	Grand Rapids, MI
Sep 24-26	<b>Thriving Churches: Flourishing Communities Conference</b>	Weehawken, NJ