

# ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

*November / December 2009, Volume 19, Number 9*



*“Connecting good intentions with sound economics”*

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# President's Message

"...when people feel they can't afford charitable contributions, it is precisely when they are needed most."

One of the great struggles of this long-lasting recession has been raising money for charities that are more in need than ever before. As I've long pointed out, charity thrives in proportion to the rise of prosperity and declines with the onset of recession. The paradox is very intense here: when people feel they can't afford charitable contributions, it is precisely when they are needed most.

Some people say that the solution is effectively to nationalize all charitable endeavors. They say that this would remove the problem of uncertainty. The problem here is that this is not really a solution but a prescription for social stagnation and the elimination of charity altogether. Forced charity is not charity at all but merely coercion.

A much better remedy, it seems to me, is a vibrant, healthy, growing economy that enables charities to do the same in all times. We all have an interest in making this possible through the only means ever known of making prosperity possible: free enterprise within a juridical framework of law.

What this requires is the elimination of vast swaths of the modern public policy project that treats people as cogs in a machine, regulating lives and property as if it all belonged to the scientific planners to do with what they want.

The free economy and free society have nothing to do with such political ambitions. Freedom means something at once more mundane and more beautiful: billions of people around the world improving their lives in small ways through ownership, trade, charity, cooperation, work, and the exercise of creative volition.

The work of the Acton Institute is more in demand than ever. Thank you for your wonderful support in good times and bad.

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



Sincerely,

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

Rev. Robert A. Sirico, President

## ACTON INSTITUTE

161 Ottawa Avenue NW, Suite 301 • Grand Rapids, MI 49503 • USA • [www.acton.org](http://www.acton.org)

# Dr. Arthur Brooks Headlines Annual Dinner

Dr. Arthur C. Brooks delivered the keynote address at the nineteenth annual Acton Dinner in Grand Rapids on October 29. He is the president of the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C. Until January 1, 2009, he was the Louis A. Bantle Professor of Business and Government Policy at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs.

Dr. Brooks focused his remarks around happiness in America, the free society, and the importance of the free enterprise system. "We are engaged in a struggle for the future of the free enterprise system and simple happiness is one of the biggest reasons why it matters how this struggle turns out," he said. Dr. Brooks posed a question, asking, "Does the economic system and economic policy system matter?" He noted that 80 percent of our baseline happiness is inherited. He added that it was important that "we get the other 20 percent right." Dr. Brooks asked another question: "What would make you happier today? A surprising number of

**"The average level of happiness has remained unchanged."**

people said money. Money seemed to be one of the most salient things people brought up." He continued by noting that since the 1970s the average per capita income has risen by 50 percent. "So if we look at the United States and say we have grown tremendously in prosperity since the early 1970s, how much happier are we? The average level of happiness has however remained unchanged," he said.

Dr. Brooks noted that the current administration in Washington believes that income redistribution will result in greater happiness. "The best system for a happy population indisputably is one that facilitates earned success among its citizens and does not create disincentives to achieve or squash ambition," Dr. Brooks said. He restated that this system was under attack. He closed by noting that those who are struggling financially will not find happiness under a leftist economic system. Dr. Brooks said this was the opposite of social justice, and the Acton Institute understands that well.



Dr. Arthur Brooks speaking at the Acton Annual Dinner

## From Our Conference Participants

Your kindness and generosity has not only impacted me but will influence those I will be able to impact in the future because of what I learned at Acton University.

—Blakely Spillar  
Colorado Springs, Colorado

I want to extend my sincere gratitude to you for sponsoring my attendance at the conference this past June. Acton puts on a first rate conference. They were willing to take questions and tackle them with thoughtful vigor.

—Anna Knier  
Silver Spring, Maryland

## Is Capitalism Worth Saving?

The American Enterprise Institute and the Acton Institute held a cosponsored event at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids on October 30. The discussion was titled “Is Capitalism Worth Saving?” American Enterprise Institute president Dr. Arthur Brooks and Acton president Rev. Robert Sirico headlined the discussion. Dr. Kevin Hassett of the American Enterprise Institute, Dr. Stephen Grabill of the Acton Institute, and Mr. Rudy Carrasco, a writer and minister, also offered remarks at the event.

When Dr. Brooks asked Rev. Robert Sirico if capitalism was worth saving, Sirico answered “No, not if by capitalism we mean what we have seen over the last forty or fifty years in this country.” Rev. Sirico referenced the deep problems of state capitalism: “If what we want is more bailouts and managed capitalism, it is not worth saving.” He mentioned that a capitalism worth saving needs a moral framework. Pointing to the importance of morality in the market he noted, “In the economic sphere this is the way human beings work out

from people having the same amount of stuff. Redistribution is the paramount goal of domestic policy in this administration,” he said.

Dr. Stephen Grabill also offered important thoughts, posing his own question. He asked, “Does the market inspire people to greater practical virtue, or does it eviscerate what little virtue any of us have?” He continued:

Rather than elevating greed and self-sufficiency, the market fosters interdependence and cooperation. Its rewards do not go to those who are the most isolated, self-absorbed, or cut off from society, but to those who sustain mutually prosperous relationships with others.

## Liberty Weekend in Poland

Acton’s executive director Kris Mauren delivered a lecture and hosted a premiere screening of Acton film, *The Birth of Freedom* (with Polish subtitles) recently in Warsaw, Poland, as part of a conference on the life and thought of Frederic Bastiat sponsored by the Polish-American Foundation for Economic Research and Education. The events

## ACTON News



who they are, how they discover their vocations and provide for their families.” Speaking of even larger truths Rev. Sirico declared, “What is the end of freedom? Lord Acton said liberty is the political end of man, and the total end of man is union with God. The embrace of the good.”

Dr. Brooks called on the attendees “to make the ethical case for the system that had led to the greatest flourishing of any country in the history of the world.” He also offered some thoughts on the thinking of the current administration in Washington. “Ideologically administration officials believe that the greatest possible good comes



Mr. Kris Mauren (center) at Liberty Weekend in Poland

took place September 19-20. Sheldon Richman, editor of *The Freeman*, said in his article titled “Bastiat in Poland:”

A high point of the conference was the screening of the Acton Institute’s latest film, *The Birth of Freedom*, a sweeping and stirring look at the historical evolution of individual liberty. Kris Mauren led an energetic discussion at its conclusion.

The Acton Institute is the original publisher of Bastiat’s *Providence and Liberty* in English. Mr. Mauren was also interviewed by several television, radio and print media outlets.



# Rev. Robert Sirico Praises the Free Society

Acton president Rev. Robert Sirico delivered an address at the nineteenth annual Acton dinner on October 29, which was a very moving tribute to human freedom and the virtuous society. Sirico warned about the dangers of the planned economy and collectivism in his address to the packed hall of 500 attendees. Speaking of his days in seminary, Rev. Sirico declared:

I was largely surrounded by men (students and professors) who were advocating policies that would have exactly the opposite effect that they intended—not cultural renewal but spiritual dissipation, an elixir for the poor that already was proving a poison to the poor.

In light of the anniversaries this year related to the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, Rev. Sirico touched on the dangers of the socialist planners and the universal value of human freedom. He paid tribute to leaders who recognized the threat to freedom:

A former Hollywood actor, undaunted by ridicule and the compromising lethargy of his own party;

a Soviet prisoner reaching from the Gulags of the Soviet Empire and wounding the omnivorous bear with a simple pen;

an iron lady in England who didn't get the memo about the demise of capitalism and the rise of the Marxist dialectic;

a Polish shipyard worker, Lech Walesa, who led a worker's revolt against the Worker's Paradise, encouraged by another Pole, who bade the world to throw open the doors to Christ, and who, without tanks or military resources, stood face-to-face with Soviet puppets who literally trembled at his calm articulation of the Truth.

Rev. Sirico received a rousing ovation for his remarks. He powerfully made the connection between freedom and eternal truths:

Because we know that we are beings with a destiny beyond this world—a destiny which can only be worked out in human freedom, we cannot acquiesce to the softer, more insidious tyranny of our own time.



Rev. Sirico giving a moving tribute on human freedom and the virtuous society



## ACTON in the News

As we turn our lives over to government control, our capacity for independent thought and action are compromised.

—Excerpted from Dr. Anthony Bradley's article in *Catholic Exchange*.

### Dr. Anthony Bradley

Title: Faith Schools Could Prove Virtuous for Black Students

Publisher: *The Detroit News*

Date: 11.03.09

### Dr. Samuel Gregg

Title: Catholics do not Deserve Healthcare Stereotypes

Publisher: *The Detroit News*

Date: 10.13.09

### Dr. Anthony Bradley

Title: Less Religion Means More Government

Publisher: *Catholic Exchange*

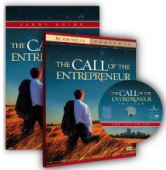
Date: 10.10.09

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## Christmas Sale

Place your order online at our webstore by December 18th for 10% off your entire order and to ensure delivery by Christmas. Use Promo code XMAS10 at checkout ✦ [www.acton.org/bookshoppe](http://www.acton.org/bookshoppe)



### Call of the Entrepreneur DVD and study guide

*Produced by Acton Media*

Examining several core themes including the pernicious effects of zero-sum-game thinking, the role of entrepreneurs in creating new wealth, the risk-taking element of enterprise, and the role of limited government, property rights, rule of law, and free markets.

**Original Price \$25.00    Sale \$20.00**

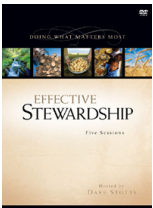


### Birth of Freedom DVD and study guide

*Produced by Acton Media*

Why would anyone believe that all men are created equal? That all should be free? That all deserve a voice in choosing their leaders? Why would any nation consider this a self-evident truth? How is freedom born?

**Original Price \$25.00    Sale \$20.00**

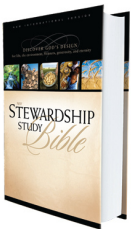


### Effective Stewardship DVD and study guide

*Produced by Acton Media*

Stewardship is everything we do after we say we believe. Join host Dave Stotts in this five session DVD study that challenges you to be a faithful steward of God's resources in every area of your life.

**Original Price \$35.00    Sale \$28.00**

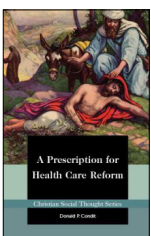


### Stewardship Bible

*Produced by Acton Institute*

The NIV Stewardship Study Bible's goal is to inspire Christians to discover the remarkable privilege we have as stewards of God's design for life through the study of Scripture.

**Original Price \$50.00    Sale \$40.00**



### A Prescription for Health Care Reform

*by Donald P. Condit*

Dr. Condit identifies the pitfalls of third-party payer systems and points the way to reform that preserves individual dignity, protects the vulnerable, and promotes the common good.

**Paperback 81 pages    Original Price \$6.50    Sale \$6.00**

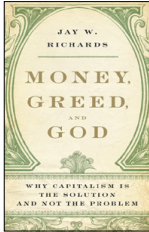


## Environmental Stewardship in the Judeo-Christian Tradition

by Jay Richards

A fair and honest debate about religious responses to environmental issues should always distinguish theological principles from prudential judgments.

**Paperback 119 pages    Original Price \$7.00    Sale \$6.00**

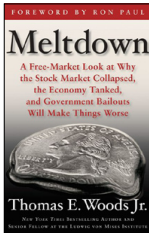


## Money, Greed, and God

by Jay Richards

Jay Richards presents a new approach to capitalism, revealing how it's fully consistent with Jesus's teachings and the Christian tradition, while also showing why this system is our best bet for renewed economic vigor.

**Hardcover 255 pages    Original Price \$28.00    Sale \$24.00**

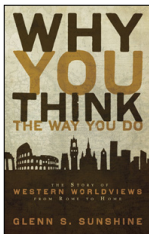


## Meltdown

by Thomas Woods

Foreword from Ron Paul. Meltdown is the free-market answer to the Fed-created economic crisis. In the face of calls for more regulation, Woods argues that the only way to rebuild our economy is by returning to the fundamentals of capitalism and letting the free market work.

**Hardcover 194 pages    Original Price \$27.00    Sale \$25.00**

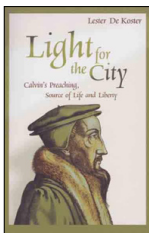


## Why You Think the Way You Do

by Glenn S. Sunshine

This authoritative, accessible survey traces the development of the worldviews that underpin the Western world. It demonstrates how Christianity transformed pagan Roman culture into one that established virtually all the positive aspects of Western civilization.

**Paperback 240 pages    Original Price \$16.50    Sale \$15.00**



## Light for the City

by Lester DeKoster

Light for the City introduces readers to a unique view of the life and thought of John Calvin, one that not only challenges past readings of Calvin but also seeks to reinvigorate the role of preaching as proclamation for modern civic life.

**Paperback 139 pages    Original Price \$8.50    Sale \$7.50**



## Lord Acton

by Roland Hill

A superb in-depth biography of Lord Acton, the Institute's namesake, that makes excellent and extensive use of archival materials. This biography describes Acton's extended family of European aristocrats, his cosmopolitan upbringing, and his disrupted education.

**Hardcover 548 pages    Original Price \$25.00    Sale \$22.50**



## T-Shirts

Acton Institute

100% cotton T-shirt featuring our Acton Institute logo on the front.

Please specify size: S M L XL or XXL. *Subject to availability.*

**Original Price \$12.00    Sale \$10.00**

## Calendar of Events

### ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
<b>Dec 10</b>	<b>Chicago Evening Reception &amp; Panel Discussion</b>	Chicago, Illinois
<b>Mar 18-21</b>	<b>Liberty Fund</b> Property Rights, Economic Growth, and the Environment	Miami, FL

### STAFF ACTIVITIES/DEADLINES

Date	Event	Location
<b>Jan 10</b>	<b>A Christian Case for Free Markets</b> Ray Nothstine to lecture	Grand Rapids, MI

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