

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

October 2008, Volume 18, Number 10



THE BIRTH OF
FREEDOM

“Connecting good intentions with sound economics”

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- *Birth of Freedom* Lecture • Acton Interns Publish "Don't Ban the Bottle"

President's Message

"There is really no excuse for the media to so seriously neglect the role that religion plays in public life."

This election year, religion is playing a very important role in how people will vote. Many of the debates are all about taxes, regulations, health care, education, foreign policy, and the like—all very important issues—but around the dinner table, people talk about the religious styles and commitments of the candidates. It's as if the topic has been tabooed in public life even as its importance is sustained in private life.

We would be foolish not to think that religion plays an important part in the way people conduct themselves as public officials. We turn to faith to provide guidance in the big questions, and we should in the small questions as well.

This is why it is such a mistake for religious people to neglect topics such as taxes, regulations, health care, and the like. I don't mean that people should merely emote about these issues or dream about the utopias they would like to create—which is the usual model that takes shape when religious people speak about these issues. I mean that people of faith have an obligation to become seriously informed about these issues, studying them from the broadest possible perspective and making judgments informed by doctrine, morality, and science.

There is really no excuse for the media to so seriously neglect the role that religion plays in public life. But neither is there an excuse for religious people to neglect their own education in the issues that politics deal with day in and day out. We can begin to heal the disconnect between our public life and our prayer life by taking our responsibilities in both areas more seriously. The city of God and the city of man are distinct realms, but there is enough overlap to prompt serious examination and reflection.

At the Acton Institute, we seek to create a forum for serious discussion of economic issues in light of religious concerns. It's my view that the work of the Acton Institute has made a huge contribution in this respect. Thank you so much for making this possible with your support of our work.

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

Rev. Robert A. Sirico, President

ACTONINSTITUTE

Chicago *Birth of Freedom* Premiere Receives Praise

The Birth of Freedom documentary received generous praise at the film premiere in Chicago on September 4. *The Birth of Freedom* appeals to the evidence of history to show that the roots of political and economic freedom are found in the Judeo-Christian tradition. All surveys from the attendees ranked the film as excellent or good. The premiere was located at the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art. There were just over 200 attendees present. Acton's director of media Dr. Jay Richards discussed the significance premieres provide for documentaries by noting, "Premieres like these greatly increase the visibility of the film and allow community leaders to see it before it's released."

Following the premiere in Chicago, there was an increase in demand for further pre-release screenings. Dr. Richards noted that he was encouraged that several prominent pastoral and church leaders in the Chicago area attended the premiere.

"All surveys from the attendees ranked the film as excellent or good."

Rev. Robert Sirico and Dr. Richards served on the panel for the question and answer session that followed the screening. The national director of Americans for Limited Government, Mr. Robert Costello, served as the moderator. The surveys, which provided valuable feedback, overwhelmingly noted the exceptional nature of the production quality of *The Birth of Freedom*. Several of the comments on surveys also lauded the way the film compared the American and French revolutions, and additionally noted that the topic was worth further study.

If you would like to host a screening please visit www.thebirthoffreedom.com/host-a-screening. The next premiere for *The Birth of Freedom* is slated for November 5 in Colorado Springs, Colorado, at the city's fine arts center. You can also visit Acton's PowerBlog for video shorts of the film, which will be released each Monday. The Acton Institute would like to thank all the attendees at our premieres.



Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art

From Our Conference Participants

Thank you for your generosity expressed so outstandingly by the number of scholarships you provide to students attending the Acton Institute conferences.

—Antoinette K. Kankindil
Nairobi, Kenya

While my undergraduate work was in economics, attendance at Acton University provides me with the intellectual tools and spiritual discernment necessary to address these matters in a theological context.

—Matthew Hisrich
Richmond, Indiana

Help Continue Acton's Mission

Since 1990, the Acton Institute's thoughtful academic research and publications, made possible by your support, have clarified the foundations of a free and humane society. By leveraging this intellectual capital through the celebrated educational programs and by translating the message through popular media, your support allowed Acton to accomplish much in these last eighteen years. And Acton needs your thoughtful, planned support to ensure that trend continues for the coming decades.

In addition to your current support, there are many creative ways to support the Acton Institute that will secure the future and guarantee the continuation of much needed work. Below are just a few:

- *You can make Acton a beneficiary in your will or living trust.*
- *Beneficiary designations on your bank accounts, life insurance policies, and retirement accounts allow you to designate portions of the account to support our work.*

The Acton Institute also strongly encourages long term financial supporters to seek advice from your attorney or other advisor as laws governing estate planning and wills vary from state to state.

Birth of Freedom Lecture

Dr. Jay Richards discussed the themes of Acton's new documentary *The Birth of Freedom* for the Acton Lecture Series, which took place on August 14, 2008. Dr. Richards spent much of his lecture discussing the relationship between religion and science. He offered valuable insight into the theological claims of the American Declaration of Independence. "[The American Founders] grounded equality and our fundamental rights in theology. If that seems peculiar, you have to ask yourself where else would you ground the claim of equality?" says Dr. Richards.

He also noted that the two most important theological propositions for the institutions of

ACTON News



DR. JAY RICHARDS

- *Making a gift of stock or other security can save you from paying capital gains tax.*

If you have already included Acton in your estate planning or intend to, please contact the Acton Institute, so there is proper acknowledgement and thanks for your generosity. Also, should you have any questions or are interested in further information about the many different ways you can support the Acton Institute, please call Charles Roelofs at 616-454-3080 or e-mail him at croelofs@acton.org.

liberty are the focus on the dignity of the person and that man is made sinful and should never have too much power. "It's those two ideas held in tension that are crucial in building institutions of freedom," said Dr. Richards.

If you missed the lecture and would like to listen to it you can visit the website www.acton.org/media/2008-08-14-birth-of-freedom.php.

Acton Interns Publish “Don’t Ban the Bottle”

Acton summer interns Tom Sundaram and Noah Meek published a commentary in the *Holland Sentinel* on August 21 titled “Don’t Ban the Bottle.” The young authors declared:

The logic that dictates bottled water is always a taxable luxury is flawed. As even the tap-over-bottle groups will admit, there are situations where tap water is not available or not trustworthy. Everyone agrees that it is important that drinking water keep to high levels of safety and portability, and bottled water reliably maintains these standards as part of the market process, even when we cannot always trust tap water.

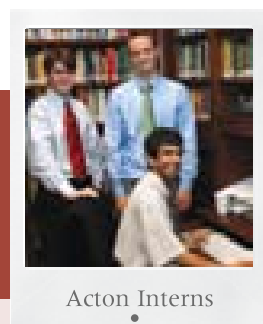
The two interns did a skillful job of summarizing the philosophical and theological arguments of groups like the National Council of Churches and their push for a ban on the selling of water for profit. Another important part of their commentary was highlighting specific legislation

“The logic that dictates bottled water is always a taxable luxury is flawed.”

and action across the country by local governments to regulate bottled water heavily. “Mayor Gavin Newsom of San Francisco signed an executive order banning the use of city funds for purchasing water bottles. Mayor Rocky Anderson of Salt Lake City ordered firefighters to stop bringing bottled refreshments with them in fire trucks,” noted Sundaram and Meek.

Sundaram and Meek concluded by noting that “although there may be good intentions behind the push to tax and regulate bottled water, such a ban would certainly do more harm than good.”

Tom Sundaram is a student at Thomas Aquinas College in Santa Paula, California, and Noah Meek is a student at St. John’s College in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Intern Robert Holmes contributed important research for the commentary.



L-Tom Sundaram, C-Robert Holmes, R-Noah Meek

ACTON in the News

One would think that America’s public school system would not wish to cultivate bling-bling ideology.

—Excerpted from Anthony Bradley’s article in *The Roanoke Times*.

Anthony Bradley

Title: Paying for Grades Devalues Education
Publisher: *The Roanoke Times*
Date: 8.24.08

Tom Sundaram and Noah Meek

Title: Religion a Threat to Authority, Not Liberty
Publisher: *Holland Sentinel*
Date: 8.21.08

Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse

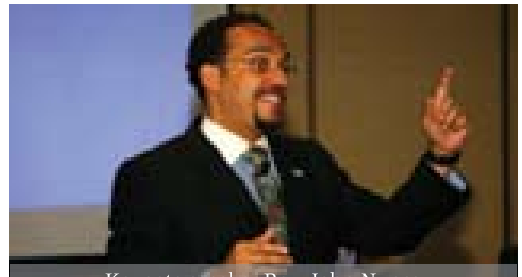
Title: Same Sex Marriage and the Persecution of Civil Society
Publisher: *Catholic.net*
Date: 7.08.08

*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.



Faith & Freedom Award winner William F. Buckley Jr.



Keynote speaker Rev. John Nunes

Acton and You

The Acton Annual Dinner, which takes place on October 30, will be located at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids, Michigan. There are still seats available to attend the dinner if you have not yet made reservations. Please visit the Acton website or call the Grand Rapids office for more information.

The keynote speaker this year is Rev. John Nunes. Rev. Nunes is the president and CEO of Lutheran World Relief.

Another momentous event for the dinner will be the presentation of the Faith & Freedom Award, which will be awarded to Mr. William F. Buckley, Jr.

Kate O'Beirne, *National Review's* Washington editor, will accept the award on Buckley's behalf. Buckley, who passed away in February, played an integral role in the rise of conservative thought and human liberty. His faith was the foundation of his beliefs and something he freely discussed and articulated well in the public square.

Other recipients of Acton's Faith & Freedom Award include business pioneer and philanthropist Sir John Marks Templeton, and Charles W. "Chuck" Colson, bestselling author and founder of Prison Fellowship Ministries.

Acton Institute's
Eighteenth Annual Dinner

Thursday, October 30

Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids, Michigan

For more information please call 800.345.2286

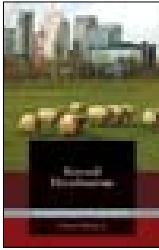
ACTON Book Shoppe



The Crisis of Europe *by Samuel Gregg*

Many European nations are characterized by faltering economies, collapsing birth-rates, an increasingly apparent tendency to historical denial, and a studied refusal to confront difficult problems. Samuel Gregg suggests that the roots of Europe's problems are both cultural and economic, and that nothing will change without courageous leadership on both fronts.

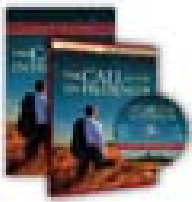
CD 60 mins Original Price \$11.95 Sale \$10.00



Beyond Distributism *by Thomas E Woods, Jr.*

Thomas Woods, drawing on a wealth of historical evidence and informed by Catholic social teaching and economic insight, argues that the distributist case is severely flawed. By its nature, distributism must invoke the power of the state, a dangerous move that ultimately undermines its own objectives.

Paperback 79 pages Original Price \$8.00 Sale \$6.00



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.

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Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
Oct 23-26	Toward a Free and Virtuous Society Conference	Seattle, Washington
Oct 30	Acton Annual Dinner	Grand Rapids, Michigan
Nov 5	<i>Blrth of Fræedom</i> Premiere	Colorado Springs, Colorado

STAFF ACTIVITIES/DEADLINES

Date	Event	Location
Sept 30	Heritage Foundation <i>First Principles</i> Dr. Jay Richards to speak on environment	Ann Arbor, Michigan
Oct 17	Centurions Program Rev. Robert Sirico to speak	Grand Rapids, Michigan

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