

Notes

September/October Vol. 31 No. 5



A message from our president

Rev. Robert A. Sirico

The Acton Institute was founded to promote a free and virtuous society. The mission remains unique, but there are many think tanks dedicated to myriad ideas, principles, and goals. Few of these endure and fewer still stay rooted to their founding principles as has Acton, which will soon celebrate its 31st Annual Dinner.

This event is always special, but this year's dinner will occasion my moving into an emeritus role and the Acton Institute's co-founder, Kris Alan Mauren, assuming the office of president. As featured speaker, I will be delivering an address on my life and career and the

success and work of the Acton Institute, a work that continues to flourish as it faces new challenges with enduring religious principles.

In this issue, you will learn about a recent op-ed by Stephen Barrows, managing director of programs at the Acton Institute, in *The Detroit News* about the failure of the United States to secure a free and flourishing society in Afghanistan. Barrows' perspective on this tragedy as both an economist and a veteran of the war in Afghanistan is sobering and enlightening.

Also included is a recap of a recent Acton Lecture Series featuring Kristopher Bex of The Remnant Trust. The subject was the enduring importance and legacy of the printed word. The presentation, which Acton

was honored to host, included a public exhibition of early and rare manuscripts and book editions dealing with topics of individual liberty and human dignity.

I would like to personally congratulate Dr. Orlando Samões on winning the 2021 Novak Award. There is a brief included that highlights the many accomplishments of this young, dynamic scholar and his important work.

None of this would be possible without the generous support of our donors. Thank you! Your support is more important than ever as we work to spread the ideas that animate a free and virtuous society. If you are just learning about Acton, be sure to check out our website, and please prayerfully consider supporting us in our mission. N

Acton Events REGISTER AT ACTON.ORG/EVENTS • WATCH ONLINE AT ACTON.ORG/LIVE		
DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
OCT 20	Houston Luncheon featuring Samuel Gregg <i>Join us at the JW Marriott Houston by the Galleria for lunch and a keynote by Dr. Gregg on "China: Enigma and Challenge for the World"</i>	Houston, TX
OCT 21	Dallas Luncheon featuring Rev. Robert Sirico <i>Join us at the Dallas Country Club for lunch and a keynote by Rev. Sirico on "A World Gone Mad and Where We Can Go from Here"</i>	Dallas, TX
OCT 28	The Future of Religious Liberty in America <i>John Bursch, Alliance Defending Freedom, discusses where we've been and where we might be going when it comes to America's "first freedom": religious liberty</i>	Grand Rapids, MI
NOV 17	Annual Dinner honoring Rev. Robert A. Sirico <i>At the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, Rev. Sirico will offer a special keynote to commemorate his last Annual Dinner as president of the Acton Institute</i>	Grand Rapids, MI

Stephen Barrows writes article on Afghanistan for *The Detroit News*

The Acton Institute recently expanded its reach by partnering with *The Detroit News*. Acton's unique commentary will now be featured in a bimonthly publication slot. To begin this partnership, Stephen Barrows, Acton Institute's managing director of programs, wrote a timely piece on his experience in Afghanistan while serving in the United States Air Force.

"I deployed to Afghanistan in 2010. Eleven years later, I watched the Taliban devastate all the progress we fought for," writes Barrows in his article. The "Afghanistan I fought for lacks [a] foundation for freedom."

Barrows explains how heartbreaking and upsetting it is to witness Afghanistan's chaos and the Taliban's return to power. "Like other veterans who deployed to Afghanistan, my astonishment at what is transpiring is limited only to the speed of the collapse."

Barrows notes that historians and political scientists will surely debate the countless missteps during America's 20-year presence in Afghanistan. But "at least one thing is clear: When the preconditions necessary to secure a free and flourishing society are absent, it is extraordinarily difficult for another nation to impose them, and it is the ordinary citizens of that society who suffer as a consequence."

The people of Afghanistan have had to endure decades of violence, where torture, death, and destruction were routine. This

type of environment "inevitably undermines the value of a person's humanity," writes Barrows. "For a civilization to thrive, a civilization must recognize the inherent dignity of the human person." This, Barrows explains, is a fundamental precondition not only for a flourishing society but also for the rule of law, market commerce, creative entrepreneurial activity, property rights, and, because humans are social in nature, the need for institutions.

To conclude, Barrows emphasizes how important the right conditions are for a sustainable government and a flourishing society. "Acknowledging the dignity of the human person, the importance of subsidiary social institutions, a commitment to the rule of law and an embrace of the commercial society are necessary, but they were absent in Afghanistan, largely because of Afghanistan's violent modern history."

To read this article in its entirety, please visit acton.is/barrows. 



Acton Lecture Series returns in person with The Remnant Trust rare book event

Dan Hugger

The Remnant Trust

The Wisdom of the
Ages Athenaeum

OPEN HOUSE
DATES AND TIMES

Wednesday, October 6
4pm - 8pm

Thursday, November 4
4pm - 8pm

For more information, visit
acton.org/greatworks

Our most recent Acton Lecture Series (ALS), “Time Machines from the Past: Old Books Are Still Cool,” focused on how books connect us to both the people and ideas of the past. The event marked the return of in-person ALS events, and the featured speaker was Kristopher Bex, president of The Remnant Trust. The mission of the Remnant Trust, a public educational foundation, is to share an actively growing collection of manuscripts—first editions and early works—dealing with the topics of individual liberty and human dignity. The Remnant Trust advances that mission in a unique way by bringing people into contact with the world’s great ideas in their concrete historical form: books.

Mr. Bex’s talk was grounded in his own passion for literature as a gateway to understanding across a variety of disciplines. It is through his abiding interest and wide reading that Bex came to discover the interdependence of dignity and freedom. Literature serves not only as a gateway to understanding but also as a platform for the imagination, as in science fiction, for conceiving of possible futures for human civilization.


The future, according to Bex, is forever ground in the past and particularly in the medium that has served as the most extraordinary channel of human knowledge for the past two thousand years: the book.

When he first encountered antiquarian texts as a young man at the University of Oxford, Bex found the experience of being able to hold, touch, and read books from an earlier era to be transformative. It made his own knowledge of history real and concrete.

Not content to merely talk about this experience, Bex demonstrated this effect by inviting our audience to take and read books from a specially curated collection of The Remnant Trust's books and manuscripts, which he brought to the Acton Institute. This special collection included first editions of works by Lord Acton, President John Adams, and the French economist Frédéric Bastiat. Medieval and early modern manuscripts of portions of the Bible, St. Thomas' *Summa Theologica*, and Boethius' *The Consolation of Philosophy* were also included in this remarkable collection.

This truly was a singular event in which great ideas and the medium through which they were transmitted took center stage, illustrating how books themselves can serve as catalysts for conversation and contemplation. There are many collections of fine and rare books and manuscripts all over the world, but The Remnant Trust's collection is unique in its tactile accessibility. This accessibility—the invitation to touch, handle, and read for ourselves—makes books more than just vehicles for ideas; they affect the way we grasp them and the way they shape our shared history. Those ideas enter our world in the same way we do, embodied, and the degree to which they shape our history and touch our hearts is the degree to which we take them into our hands. ■

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ACTON INSTITUTE

YouTube

Check out the Acton Institute's official YouTube page to watch videos from the Acton Lecture Series.

ACTON INSTITUTE	ACTON INSTITUTE	ACTON INSTITUTE	ACTON INSTITUTE
 <p>O. CARTER SNEAD What It Means to Be Human 1:05:48</p>	 <p>NICHOLAS EBERSTADT Men Without Work with Dr. Nicholas Eberstadt (Acton... 59:59</p>	 <p>CARL TRUEMAN The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self 1:01:57</p>	 <p>Jessica Hooten Wilson Solzhenitsyn again</p>

youtube.com/actoninstitute

BRIEF


Dr. Orlando Samões wins 2021 Novak Award

Dan Hugger

In recognition of Dr. Orlando Samões' outstanding research in the fields of ethics, politics, and economics, the Acton Institute will be awarding him the 2021 Novak Award.

Named after the distinguished American theologian Michael Novak (1933–2017), this \$15,000 award rewards new outstanding scholarly research concerning the relationship between religion, economic freedom, and the free and virtuous society. The Novak award recognizes scholars who early in their academic career demonstrate outstanding intellectual merit in advancing the understanding of religion's connection to human dignity, the rule of law, limited government, religious liberty, and freedom in economic life.

Dr. Orlando Samões is the head of the undergraduate degree program in political science and international relations at the Institute for Political Studies at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa (IEP-UCP), as well as the editor-in-chief of *Nova Cidania Quarterly Journal*. At IEP-UCP he teaches, as part of a Great Books curriculum, on figures such as Adam Smith, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. Dr. Samões also teaches political science at the Católica Lisbon School of Business and Economics.

Samões received his Ph.D. in political science from the Universidade Católica Portuguesa with a thesis entitled "Natural Liberty and Virtue: A Study on the Ideas of Self-Love and Benevolence in Adam Smith's Thought." His current research concerns political economy and political theory, with an emphasis on the intersection of political, moral, and economic principles. 

BRIEF

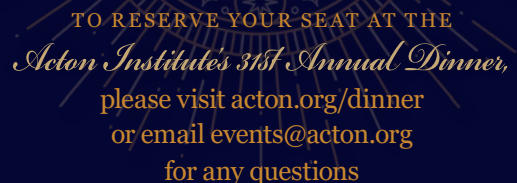
Acton Institute's 31st Annual Dinner to honor Rev. Robert A. Sirico

Ben Stoner

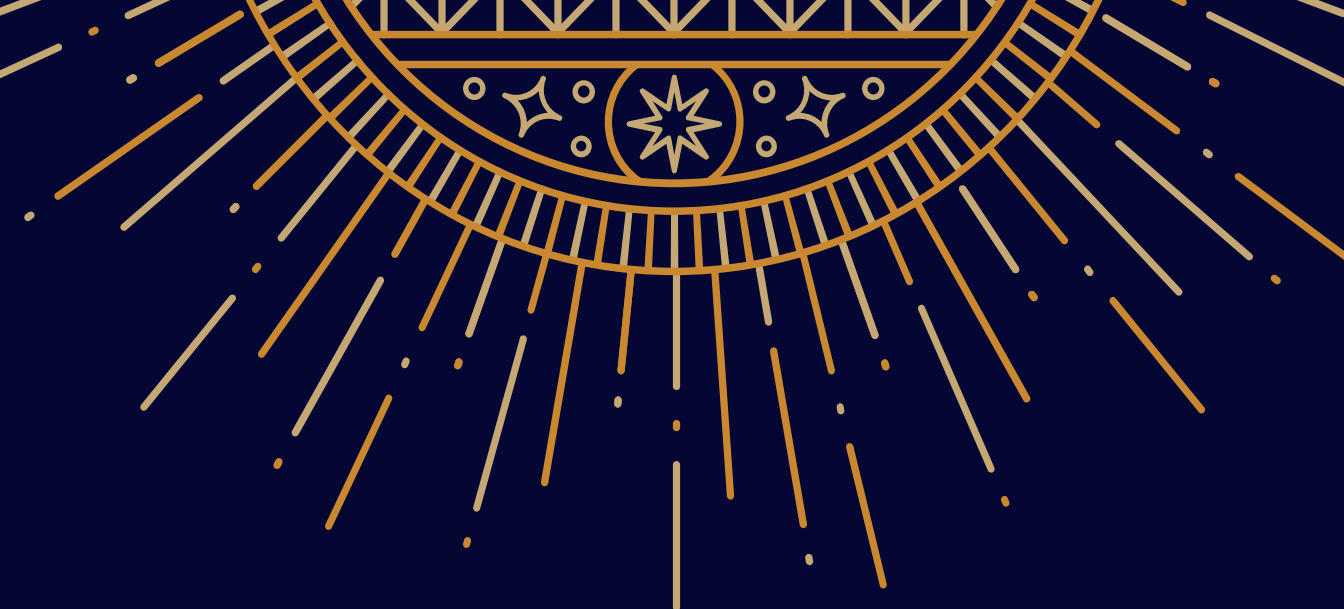
Please make sure to mark your calendars. The Acton Institute's 31st Annual Dinner will be held on Wednesday, November 17, at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in beautiful downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan. This year's Annual Dinner will be particularly meaningful. Not only will we celebrate in person once again, but we will also honor Acton's co-founder and president, Rev. Robert A. Sirico.

We encourage you join us to celebrate Rev. Sirico as he transitions into his new emeritus role and acknowledge Kris Alan Mauren as he moves from co-founder and executive director to Acton's new president. The event will highlight Rev. Sirico's many accomplishments throughout his fruitful career. It is also our pleasure to announce that Rev. Sirico will offer a special keynote address to commemorate his last Annual Dinner as president of the Acton Institute.

Tickets for the event are \$175 for each ticket. There are also table sponsorship options, which include 10 VIP seats, recognition in our program and on Acton's website, as well as marketing at the event and invitations to the receptions before and after the dinner.



TO RESERVE YOUR SEAT AT THE
Acton Institute's 31st Annual Dinner,
please visit acton.org/dinner
or email events@acton.org
for any questions



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Annual Dinner

HONORING REV. ROBERT A. SIRICO

NOVEMBER 17

AMWAY GRAND PLAZA HOTEL • GRAND RAPIDS, MI

RSVP: [ACTON.ORG/DINNER](https://acton.org/dinner)

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ACTON

LECTURE SERIES

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October 28, 2021 • 12:00p.m.



*John Bursch, Alliance Defending Freedom
Vice President of Appellate Advocacy*

THE FUTURE OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN AMERICA

Religious-liberty litigants have won 18 of their past 19 cases in the U.S. Supreme Court, 14 of them unanimously or by supermajority vote. But a number of those decisions have been on narrow legal grounds and have not resolved the continuing tension between secular culture and those trying to live their faith in the public square. Join us as John Bursch discusses where we've been and where we might be going when it comes to America's "first freedom": religious liberty.

LIVESTREAM @ [ACTON.ORG/LIVE](https://acton.org/live)

**Join us live & in person at Acton's Mark Murray Auditorium, or stream this event
free from the comfort of your home.**