

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

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Luba Markewycz speaking at a November Acton event.

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- Rev. Sirico Talks to Houston about Pope Francis and Media Misinformation
- “For the Life of the World” Wins Critical Acclaim • Recapping Acton’s Busy Event Schedule

President's Message

The Acton Building has been a blessing in so many ways. We have more room for our growing staff, we enjoy a highly-visible location in a flourishing part of Grand Rapids, and we're able to host more events.

"Some may ask what an economic think tank is doing dabbling in the arts."

To be honest, one area in which I did not expect to see such flourishing was Acton's participation in the arts. For two years, we have been an ArtPrize venue, hosting outstanding and varied works. We've enjoyed theatrical presentations on Hildegard of Bingen and G.K. Chesterton. Our lower level art gallery has showcased diverse art and artists, and screened documentaries. Looking ahead, we have more art to present and share.

Some may ask what an economic think tank is doing dabbling in the arts. The arts are at the very center of what the Acton Institute is about. Our core principles are grounded in the dignity of the human person, our social nature and the priority we must place on culture.

In 1999, St. John Paul II wrote an elegant and edifying letter to artists. In it, he reminds them that their gifts must be used for the good of all:

Within the vast cultural panorama of each nation, artists have their unique place. Obedient to their inspiration in creating works both worthwhile and beautiful, they not only enrich the cultural heritage of each nation and of all humanity, but they also render an exceptional social service in favour of the common good.

The particular vocation of individual artists decides the arena in which they serve and points as well to the tasks they must assume, the hard work they must endure and the responsibility they must accept. Artists who are conscious of all this know too that they must labour without allowing themselves to be driven by the search for empty glory or the craving for cheap popularity, and still less by the calculation of some possible profit for themselves. There is therefore an ethic, even a "spirituality" of artistic service, which contributes in its way to the life and renewal of a people.

The Acton Institute is not an art gallery. We are an institution that encourages human flourishing, and the arts are but one expression of that. While our mainstay continues to be economics and religious liberty, we will continue to encourage the expression of faith, liberty, and culture in a variety of artistic manners—and consider ourselves blessed to do so.

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



Sincerely,



Rev. Robert Sirico, President

ACTONINSTITUTE

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Rev. Sirico Discusses Media Misinformation at Luncheon

Is the People's Pope against Prosperity? Rev. Robert A. Sirico, president and co-founder of Acton discussed this question with 125 attendees at Acton's annual luncheon and lecture in Houston. Acton's co-founder and executive director, Kris Mauren, emceed the event; George W. Strake, Jr., former Secretary of State of Texas, made remarks prior to the keynote address and introductions, and Rev. Martin Nicholas, pastor of Sugar Land Methodist Church, gave the invocation.

Pope Francis has been bridging the divide between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals who have not historically worked well together because of theological and cultural differences. "Francis", states Sirico, "comes to the position of Pope with a great ecumenical sensibility." Much of what the media translates of Francis can be quite problematic. Rather than seeing him as ecumenical, members of the press argue he's watering down doctrine to make Catholicism more appealing to Evangelicals. Journalists have been infusing their own perspectives into their interpretations of his speeches. Sirico advises them to "read the documents first."

Francis' views on economics are often misunderstood. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis states that welfare projects, which meet certain urgent needs, should be continued merely as temporary responses to emergencies and not as long-term solutions to poverty. Francis states that "business is a vocation and a noble vocation, provided that it is seen by those who are engaged in it themselves, as challenged by a greater reason for life. There are values that are higher than economic values. This will enable them to serve the common good by increasing the goods of this world." He wants to end the exclusiveness of monopolized markets (which are rampant in Argentina) so that the poorest may flourish unimpeded and move beyond a welfare mentality, Sirico says.

"I think," muses Sirico, "that we have a friend here—not an enemy." Pope Francis helps to begin a dialogue about poverty and we can learn from him, about what is needed to embrace the poor and the alienated who so desperately need to hear the healing words of Christ, "Go and sin no more." If we drop any part of that equation, either the love or the justice, then we drop the model of Jesus himself.



Pope Francis in St Peter's square - Vatican 2014; Credit: Wiki Commons © Alfredo Borba.



Rev. Robert Sirico speaking with guests.

From Our Conference Participants

After 20 years in the pastoral ministry in the UK and USA, I learned fresh, invigorating, and intelligent approaches to public ministry. It was a delight to see God's work through others in an atmosphere of family.

—Andrew K. Fox
Leander, Texas

"[Thriving Churches: Flourishing Communities] had a profound impact on me as well as the other attendees. The conference has specifically given me the tools I need to continue to affect change in the impoverished neighborhoods of Brooklyn, NY.

—Richard N. Williams
Queen's Village, New York

“For the Life of the World” Wins Critical Acclaim

“For the Life of the World: Letters to the Exiles” is a film series of seven episodes, woven together into a feature length cut, that gives the big picture overview of a compelling vision of Christianity’s relationship to culture and the various economies of life: family, creative service, ordering institutions, education and wisdom institutions, wonder and the fine arts, and then the church itself. Theological and Biblical concepts are simplified by engaging storytelling and use of many different types of media, including puppets, a Rube Goldberg machine, and original songs by Jars of Clay.

Since its February 2014 national premiere at Jubilee Professional in Pittsburgh, Acton has been blown away by the response to the series. Acton has screened it in its entirety or as a few episodes for audiences of all sizes all over the world. Acton has received unsolicited critical acclaim from many including Andy Crouch, executive editor of *Christianity Today* who says “‘For the Life of the World’ is the best treatment of faith & culture ever

Audiences of various ages, denominations, and backgrounds have experienced this film series. Small groups, Bible studies, work teams of all kinds, inmates, church planters, youth groups, churches, and seminary classrooms are all convening around the film series and it is being used in ways that Acton never would have envisioned.

Among the subjects explored in this series is that of the economy of wonder. Makoto Fujimura, founder of the International Arts Movement and featured in episode six, laments that “beauty has been exiled from the conversation.” The viewer is then invited to consider the common, but often overlooked, Biblical exhortation to “behold.” After watching this compelling scene at a recent screening in Pittsburgh, Courtney Christine Shingle reflects, “Over the last few days, the word behold has echoed in my mind, a spark ready to become a wildfire. What does it mean to behold? To behold is to see the intrinsic value of the created world, to see the value of things beyond their usefulness.” Shingle closes her blog by summarizing, “Beauty can transform us if we just take a moment to behold.”

Almost 2,000 copies of the physical DVD/Blu Ray

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Actor Evan Koons signs a tshirt for a fan at the film's premiere.



put on screen. Just outstanding.” In a *Christianity Today* review, Crouch says that:

The series makes the best case I have seen for the essential coherence of the Great Tradition’s view of the world—and the creativity, beauty, and service that flow from that view... Very rarely do artists emerge who have the talent and training to present deeply Christian themes in widely accessible ways.

Byron Borger of Hearts & Minds Books says, “This is the film for which some of us have been waiting for 40 years!” These are two examples of the kind of feedback Acton receives on a daily basis; a response that has certainly exceeded expectations.

Combo Pack have been sold and the trailer has been viewed more than half a million times on YouTube. “For the Life of the World” has had quite an impact on social media, with more than 2,500 Facebook likes, reaching more than 150,000 Facebook users, and almost 900 Twitter followers.

Produced for the church at large, Acton has worked hard to provide the series in formats to engage individually and in group settings. Additionally, Acton has worked hard to ensure there is a price point that is affordable for every need. Check out the website (www.letterstotheexiles.com) for the series to learn more.

Busy slate of public events underway at Acton

Since moving into its own downtown Grand Rapids building last year, the Acton Institute has developed a broad community enrichment program for local residents—with a little bit of something for everyone. The focal point for the diverse public offerings on culture, public affairs, and arts is the auditorium at Acton. This auditorium—along with an expanded library—is the centerpiece of the Acton headquarters.

On Nov. 6, Luba Markewycz and Acton Research Director Samuel Gregg spoke on, “The Famine Remembered: Lessons from Ukraine’s Holodomor and Soviet Communism.” The focus of the event was a collection of art created by Ukrainian children on the Holodomor (which means “death by hunger”), a man-made famine imposed on Ukraine by Stalin’s Communist regime.

During ArtPrize 2014, Acton hosted renowned artist, writer, and speaker Makoto Fujimura who exhibited, “Walking on Water.” This painting was done in the ancient Japanese fine art tradition of

Nihonga. Fujimura also lectured and led listeners through his journey toward the integration of his art with his faith.

“Besides art, Acton has expanded its events to include drama ...”

Besides art, Acton has expanded its events to include drama, the last being “An Evening with G.K. Chesterton,” featuring Chuck Chalberg, and film screenings. On Nov. 20, Acton screened “Rockin’ the Wall” which

documents rock and roll’s part in bringing down the Berlin Wall and smashing the Iron Curtain.

Acton hosted several lectures this fall such as “The Importance of Sound Money,” with Robert Murphy and “The Once and Future King,” with F. H. Buckley. Upcoming lectures include: “American National Character and the Future of Liberty,” with William Allen, “Capitalism and the Economy of Love,” with Jeffrey Tucker, and a lecture by author Os Guinness on his book *Renaissance: The Power of the Gospel However Dark the Times*.

To learn more about upcoming events, visit www.acton.org/events.



Guests at Acton's headquarters viewing Fujimura's *Walking on Water* painting.



ACTON in the News

“Often times our “help” ends up crowding out local businesses—we help them stay poor. We turn people into the objects of our charity.”

—Excerpted from Michael Miller’s appearance on *Fox Business*.

Michael Miller

Title: Foreign aid worse for global poverty?
Program: *Stossel – Fox Business*
Air Date: 10.10.14

Rev. Robert A. Sirico

Title: Beyond the Hype About a Vatican Upheaval
Publication: *The Wall Street Journal*
Date: 10.17.14

“For the Life of the World”

Title: Abraham Kuyper Goes Pop
Publication: *Christianity Today*
Date: 10.29.14



ACTON INSTITUTE BOOK SHOP *Sale*



For the Life of the World Exile Care Package

DVD/Blu-Ray & Digital Access Via Study Space, a Field Guide, choice of Primer

For the Life of the World is an entertaining film series that explores the deeper meaning of Salvation. Have you ever wondered, “What is my Salvation actually FOR?” Is it only about personal atonement, about getting to heaven, or something that comes later? Is it just to have a “friend in Jesus?”

DVD/Field guide/Primer Original Price \$89.89 Sale \$44.95



Poverty Cure Bundle

DVD Series, Demons of Poverty book

Join host Michael Matheson Miller on a journey around the world to explore the foundations of human flourishing, and learn how people are moving toward partnerships and pursuing entrepreneurial solutions to poverty rooted in the creative capacity of the human person made in the image of God.

DVD/Book Original Price \$72.95 Sale \$39.95



Common Grace Collected

Volumes 1.1, 1.2, 1.3

This work gives us a much-needed opportunity to absorb Kuyper’s insights about God’s marvelous designs for human cultural life and to realize afresh how God’s mercies are over all his works. In volume 1, Kuyper traces his historical argument: Noah–Adam (part 1), Temptation–Babel (part 2), and Abraham–Parousia (part 3).

Softcover Collection Original Price \$75.00 Sale \$49.95



Kuyper Bundle

Wisdom & Wonder, Scholarship, Rooted & Grounded

Collecting some of Kuyper’s greatest works and speeches, the Kuyper Bundle brings together a treasury of wisdom, and theological truths to your library. Collecting *Wisdom & Wonder*, *Rooted & Grounded*, and *Scholarship*, make great additions to your home.

Softcover Collection Original Price \$24.99 Sale \$19.95

Acton Ebook Flash Drive

Christian’s Library Press Collection

Own 22 eBooks published by Christian’s Library Press on a single flash drive. eBooks are included in Kindle format (.mobi), ePub, and PDF. The total value of this eBooks bundle is \$164.66 if each item was purchased individually.



Flash Drive Original Price \$29.95 Sale \$12.95

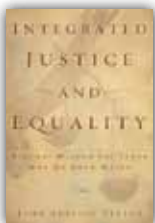


System Has a Soul

By *Hunter Baker*

What relevance does Christianity have in our societal system? What place does the church have in a system that so often seems to be ordered only by the ultra-complex machinery of state power and corporate strategy? The essays in this volume address these questions.

Softcover 168 pages Original Price \$14.95 Sale \$9.95



Integrated Justice and Equality

By *John Teevan*

Why write about social justice? Why investigate income inequality? This book discusses the topics of social justice and income inequality within an economic, philosophic, and biblical framework that leads to an understanding of integrated justice.

Softcover 177 pages Original Price \$14.95 Sale \$9.95



The Hobbit Party

By *Jonathan Witt and Jay Richards*

Several books ably explore how Tolkien's Catholic faith informed his fiction. None until now have centered on how his passion for liberty and limited government also shaped his work, or how this passion grew directly from his theological vision of man and creation. *The Hobbit Party* fills this void.

Softcover 232 pages Original Price \$21.99 Sale \$18.95



Becoming Europe

By *Samuel Gregg*

In *Becoming Europe*, Gregg examines economic culture - the values and institutions that inform our economic priorities - 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.

Softcover 384 pages Original Price \$25.00 Sale \$19.95

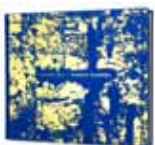


Acton University Ultimate Flash Drive

AU 2010-2013 Collection

Own all of the lectures from Acton University on a USB flash drive with this inexpensive bundle. Valued at \$179, these lectures were recorded from Acton University sessions from 2010 to 2013. The flash drive comes with lectures organized by year and each includes the lecturer and course title in the file name.

Flash Drive Original Price \$29.95 Sale \$24.95



Golden Sea

By *Makoto Fujimura*

The *Golden Sea* retrospective monograph is a beautiful cloth-bound book, embossed with gold detail reminiscent of Fujimura's Golden Sea painting. Collecting images of Makoto's works this is a stunning addition to any collection. Limited signed copies available.

Cloth-bound Monograph Original Price \$150.00 Sale \$99.95

For our fastest service, please order online at:

shop.acton.org/books/christmas.html



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Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
Jan 22	Capitalism is about Love Jeffrey Tucker to Speak	Grand Rapids, MI
Jan 29	Happiness Arthur Brooks to Speak	Grand Rapids, MI
Feb 12	Contrarian: The Life of Sir John Templeton Film Documentary (46 min.) and Lecture	Grand Rapids, MI
Feb 26	The (Actual) Protestant Ethic & the Spirit of Capitalism Gene Veith to Speak	Grand Rapids, MI
Mar 25	Uncle Sam Can't Count Burt Folsom to Speak	Grand Rapids, MI
Apr 9	The Renaissance: The Power of the Gospel However Dark the Times Os Guinness to Speak	Grand Rapids, MI