

# ACTON notes

The Newsletter  
of the  
Acton Institute

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Volume 16 Number 2

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- New Scholarships Announced
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*Connecting good intentions to sound economics*

# President's Message

Dear Friends,

The news is once again filled with political scandals. Bribe making and taking, graft, payoffs have been alleged (and proven!) that extend from the outreaches of the lobbying world to the highest levels of government. It seems to be almost a seasonal discovery, and yet everyone affects a kind of stunned shock to learn that the highest ideals of good government are not always practiced in Washington, D.C..

Is good government possible? I think so. But it becomes less and less possible the more money, favors, and power that government has to pass out to those who lobby for special interests. And cynics often develop a suspicion that even the most egregious scandals are only the tip of the iceberg, and that if we saw what really went on inside public policy, we would never trust a public official again.

The problem is that big government represents an occasion of sin, as Jennifer Roback Morse has argued. The money and power is there to be used, and it tempts people who live and breathe in that environment. It also tempts people on the outside to take what they can when they can. What government has to offer seems "free" and much easier to acquire than remuneration through productive work in the private sector.

Of course the private sector is not barren of sin. But large-scale scandal is checked by market forces. It was Wall Street, not Washington, that discovered the accounting scandals of a few years ago. It was stockholders, not regulators, who delivered the most severe punishment. No, the free economy is not scandal-free, but it offers a good environment for discovering bad behavior and rewarding goodness and honesty. So long as we focus on the scandals and not the larger picture, we can miss these lessons.

At the Acton Institute, we often speak of the unity of justice and freedom, of virtue and liberty, of morality and prosperity. To us, these concepts that many people find to be antithetical are really part of the same whole we call the good society. Thank you for supporting this idea, as ancient as it is new, with your support of our work.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Robert A. Sirico". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rev. Robert A. Sirico, President

It was Wall Street, not Washington, that discovered the accounting scandals of a few years ago.

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

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

# The Acton Institute Thanks You

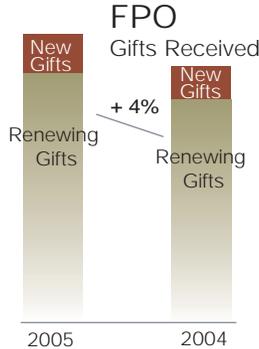
Acton Institute closed the doors on 2005 with a balanced budget thanks to our generous supporters.

The 2006 doors are open and the plan is aggressive. In fact, as many of you read in Father Sirico's year-end appeal message, we are widening our reach.

We are taking our message of a free and virtuous society deeper into society via multi-media initiatives. Your contributions supporting this goal were tremendous.

Thank you. Thank you for your belief in us. Your gifts, including the \$50,000 matching gift from Dick and Betsy DeVos totaled \$239,243 from 325 of you. Your generosity has given us the boost of adrenaline we need to eagerly pursue our 2006 plan. From the single US dollar contributions, to the international replies and, of course, to the major donors who provide the powerful base we need, we are grateful. Every dollar counts and every dollar is appreciated.

Here's how your year-end gifts are already at work.



- We will bring more students to our very successful summer university.

- We will hold high-level lecturers in Rome as part of the *Centesimus Annus* series and offer scholarships to outstanding future leaders of faith.

- Multi-media and mini documentary prototypes are in development.

- We are preparing to host our Toward a Free and Virtuous Society conferences.

Each item is a small step. Each step is possible because of you.

The most rewarding portion of an appeal is not the money, though that certainly is critical. It's the notes. The hand written "keep up the good work" comments that Father Sirico receives are shared amongst Acton staff so we all remember why we do what we do, and who makes it possible. That's you. Thank you.

Our funding needs are on-going. If you'd like to contribute, please visit [www.acton.org](http://www.acton.org). Thank you.



EACH STEP IS  
POSSIBLE  
BECAUSE OF  
YOU



## From Our Conference Participants

Most of us grow up with the assumption that the government should be helping the poor. One aspect of the Toward a Free and Virtuous Society conference that I found particularly helpful was that surrounding the principle of subsidiarity. I was very impressed with the institute's explanation of this topic.... The contribution to my formation as a member of society is invaluable, and it will last my whole life.

*Matthew Marney, Mount Saint Mary's Seminary  
Emmitsburg, Maryland*

Acton showed me how the study of economics and government intersect at crucial points with the study of theology and moral philosophy, and how a consideration of all of these fields together promote greater overall understanding of how Christians should interact with the world.

*Arvind Balaram, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Louisville, Kentucky*

## Nine Lectures Focus on Sound Social Thought

To commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the late John Paul II's social encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, the Acton Institute is sponsoring a series of nine lectures, eight of which will be in Rome and one in Lublin, Poland. These lectures will highlight the contributions of *Centesimus Annus* to Christian social thought, and to the political, economic, and cultural dilemmas confronting the modern world.

A number of internationally renowned scholars have agreed to lecture for the series. These include Professor Rocco Buttiglione, Italy's Minister for Culture; His Eminence Cardinal George Pell; His Eminence Cardinal Lopez Trujillo; American economist Jennifer Roback Morse; Manfred Spieker, one of Germany's leading Catholic social thinkers; George Weigel; Professor Mary Ann Glendon of Harvard University; Michael Novak; Bishop Salvatore Fisichella; and Lord Brian Griffiths, Vice-President of Goldman Sachs International and former senior advisor to Lady Margaret Thatcher.

Students and seminarians selected by the Acton Institute will receive up to \$3,000 for travel grants and up to \$5,000 for academic scholarships. To be considered for a given scholarship period, applications must be postmarked before the following deadlines: April 28, 2006, August 31, 2006, and December 31, 2006.

For more information contact Anthony Pienta at [apienta@acton.org](mailto:apienta@acton.org) or call 616/454.3080.

## "Wallis's Bible" Reviewed in *Touchstone Magazine*

In the October 2005 Issue of *Touchstone* magazine, Acton director of institutional relations Jay Richards took a look at Jim Wallis's best selling book *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It*. The book has been extremely popular in some mainstream media for consistently taking leftist positions while dropping a secular vocabulary and supplying a biblical one.

"Readers might imagine a persuasive argument for these conclusions," Dr. Richards writes, "but from Wallis they must make do with ham-fisted exegesis

# ACTON News

## *Centesimus Annus* Lectures



Buttiglioni



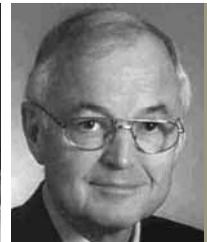
Glendon



Pell



Roback Morse



Spieker

Each of these lectures will be at one of the pontifical universities in Rome or academic establishments directly associated with the Holy See.

## Centesimus Annus Scholarships Announced

In the spirit of *Centesimus Annus*, Pope John Paul II's 1991 social encyclical, the Centesimus Annus Scholarships are given to seminarians and graduate students studying theology, philosophy, economics, or in related fields, and who advance understanding of the relationship between faith, principles of limited government, the free market, and the promise of commercial society.

yoked to economic fallacies ... For example, he often condemns the gap between rich and poor, as if gaps in wealth were self-evident indicators of economic injustice. But economically-literate readers will know that such gaps alone indicate nothing. Because the pool of wealth isn't fixed, a healthy market economy isn't a zero-sum game... Bill Gates' net worth is about a million times more than mine. This causes me no suffering. And even when one person (or nation) is poor, it is not at all self-evident that they are poor because someone else is rich."

For a copy of Dr. Richard's article published in *Touchstone* magazine please write Ben Sikma at [bsikma@acton.org](mailto:bsikma@acton.org).

# Tossing Textbooks

“I doubt whether we are sufficiently attentive to the importance of elementary text books,” began C. S. Lewis in the first lecture transcribed as “Men Without Chests,” to be found in his book *The Abolition of Man*. In this lecture Lewis criticizes the sophistry of a textbook intended for “children in the upper forms of schools.”

So when a supporter of Acton told us about the workbook “...*And Justice For All*,” being considered for adoption in her child’s Catholic elementary school in Sonoma County, California, her story caught our attention. Like Acton’s *Apostles and Markets*, a curriculum currently in review, the book was intended for use in high school courses such as government, economics, social justice, and social studies. Unlike *Apostles*, the book was also a religious propaganda piece defending socialism.

One of the exercises in the book included this one: “Circle the numbers for those statements that are unjust. Be able to explain your choices.”

The Forman Footwear Company keeps costs down by having their tennis shoes manufactured in Indonesia where they

only have to pay workers 62¢ per hour.

Acton research fellow Kevin Schmiesing wrote in a memo that exploring the question of justice in wages is certainly a worthy educational goal. Unfortunately, the book’s authors choose to discourage that exploration by steering students into ‘correct’ answers with the wording of the choices. This is a shoddy substitute for offering substantive moral principles or a simple explanation of the economics of wages.

The most discouraging aspect of the book was that it was a product of religious leaders. What happens when religious leadership teaches the young people of our society that markets are inherently unjust?

Acton depends on individual monetary generosity, but your information and prayers are also crucial. The institute hopes to hear frequently from supporters about where attention is needed. This story proved to us the continuing need for serious attention to religious high schools. We hope to continue to provide educators with sound information regarding economics, social justice, and Christian anthropology.



Curriculum considered in Sonoma County, California



## ACTON in the News

If we are only willing to buy from high-wage employers, we are making the rich richer. And the only way [the poor producers] can compete is by economizing on resources ... which means driving down its labor costs.

—Excerpted from Rev. Robert Sirico’s article in *The Detroit News*

### Kishore Jayabalan

Title: Religious Liberty and the EU Constitution  
Publisher: *Relevant Radio*  
Publication Date: 1.04.2006

### Rev. Robert Sirico

Title: Politicizing Food Makes the Rich Richer  
Publisher: *Detroit News*  
Publication Date: 1.07.2006

### Jennifer Roback Morse

Title: Righting the Wrongs in Modern Sex and Marriage  
Publisher: *Zenit News Agency*  
Publication Date: 1.09.2005

# Acton and You

On January 6 Reverend Robert Sirico introduced his long time friend George Weigel at the dependably inspiring and informative Calvin College January Series in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Mr. Weigel most recently authored *God's Choice: Pope Benedict XVI and the Future of the Catholic Church* and also wrote the *New York Times* bestseller *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*. In his lecture "Revolutionary Papacies: John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and the Future of the Catholic Church," Mr. Weigel spanned these two subjects of his expertise, delivering a riveting talk, reflecting upon a momentous past and considering the outlook of the future. Rev. Sirico provided Mr. Weigel with invaluable assistance in the production of both books.

For more information on the January Series or to listen to any of the lectures presented, go to [www.calvin.edu/january](http://www.calvin.edu/january).



Rev. Robert Sirico introduces George Weigel



George Weigel

## Encouraging Notes From You

The thank you notes like the one below from a 104 year-old constituent are a wonderful example of the hand written messages of encouragement received during our appeals

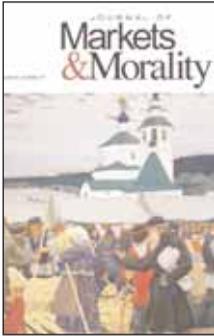
I MUST SAY THAT I HAVE READ MOST ALL  
OF YOUR MAILINGS AND I HAVE FOUND THEM  
VERY INTERESTING AND WELL WRITTEN AND VERY  
SOUND, IN MY MIND, FOR SOCIAL VALUES.  
I UNDERSTAND BY YOUR EARNEST SINCERITY  
THAT YOU WILL CARRY ON YOUR NOBLE WORK!  
YOU HAVE EARNED A TRIPLE "A" FOR YOUR  
ORGANIZED PROGRAM  
MOST SINCERELY  
E. David J. Foster

P.S. I HAVE NO  
IDEA HOW I WAS  
EVER FORTUNATE TO  
GET ON YOUR MAILING  
LIST!  
E.W.P.

# ACTON Book Shoppe

## Journal of Markets and Morality, Volume 8, Number 2

by Samuel Gregg



The latest journal articles include "The Universal Destination of Goods: The Ethics of Property in the Theory of a Christian Society" by Manfred Spieker, "Law, Revolution, and Religion: Harold Berman's Interpretation of the English Revolution" by Nicholas Aroney, "Natural Law and Modern Economic Theory" by Gerson Moreno-Riaño, and "Exchange Matters: Perspectives from Social Capital, Neighborhoods, and Modern Culture" by Francis X. Tannian and John E. Stapleford. This volume also includes a special controversy between Michael T. Dempsey and Robin Klay with John Lunn answering the question "What Bearing, If Any, Does the Christian Doctrine of Providence Have Upon the Operation of the Market Economy?"

**Paperback 241 pages**

**Price \$15.00**



## Highlights from the Acton Institutes 2nd Anniversary Dinner

by William Buckley

This compact disc features highlights from that evening's program, including the Cook Fellow address delivered by Seminarian Heather Parkinson, remarks by Rev. Robert A. Sirico and Dr. Russel Kirk, and the evening's keynote address, delivered by *National Review* founder and editor William F. Buckley.

**CD**

**Price \$10.00**

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TITLE	PRICE	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Journal of Markets and Morality	\$15.00		
Highlights from the 2nd Anniversary Dinner	\$10.00		

Make checks payable to "Acton Institute." For orders in the United States: orders up to \$10.00, add \$2.00 for shipping; orders from \$10.01 to \$25.00, add \$3.25 for shipping; orders from \$25.01 to \$50.00, add \$4.35 for shipping; for orders over \$50.00, add \$6.15 for shipping. Orders to Canada and Mexico (air mail): US \$7.00 for the first item, plus US \$3.00 for each additional item. Overseas orders: US \$3.75 for the first item, plus US \$1.75 for each additional item.

Subtotal \_\_\_\_\_  
 Michigan residents add 6% sales tax \_\_\_\_\_  
 (see below for rates at left) Shipping \_\_\_\_\_  
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Mastercard  Visa  Am Ex Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Calendar of Events

## ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
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Feb. 16-19	Toward a Free and Virtuous Society conference	San Juan Capistrano, California
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Mar. 16 or 23	Centisumus Annus Lecture	Rome or Lublin
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## STAFF ACTIVITIES

Date	Event	Location
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Mar. 7 or 8	Samaritan Award Reception Mrs. Karen Woods and Rev. Robert Sirico to speak	Washington D.C.
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Mar. 31-Apr. 2	Philadelphia Society national meeting Dr. Samuel Gregg to attend	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
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**ACTON**INSTITUTE

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