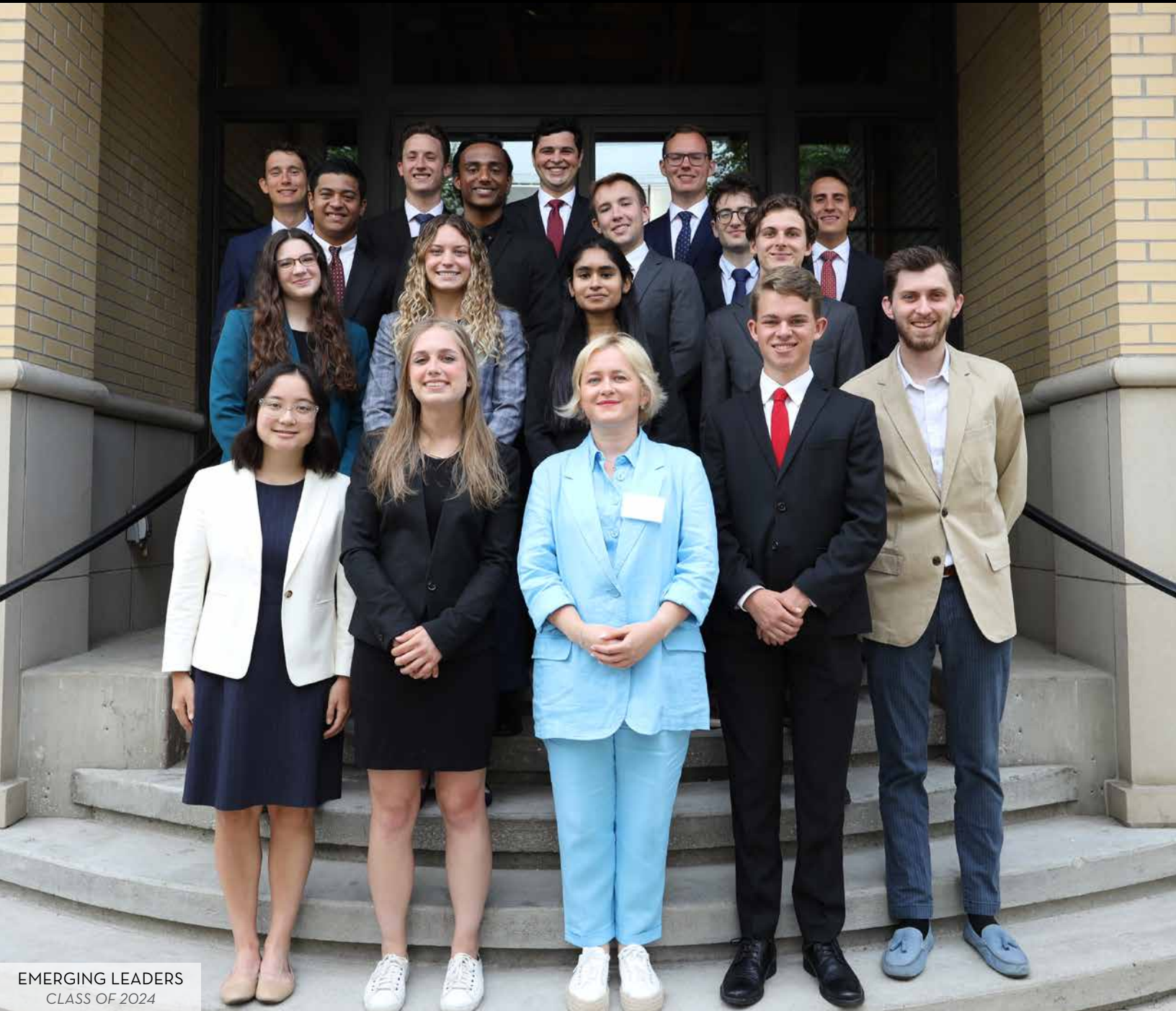


# ACTON INSTITUTE



EMERGING LEADERS  
CLASS OF 2024

## 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

“LIBERTY IS NOT...  
THE POWER OF  
DOING WHAT WE  
LIKE, **BUT THE**  
**RIGHT OF BEING**  
**ABLE TO DO**  
**WHAT WE OUGHT.”**

—LORD ACTON

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

As I reflect on the past year, I am deeply encouraged by the growing global impact of the Acton Institute's mission to advance a free and virtuous society, one rooted in faith and ordered liberty. In an age marked by ideological confusion, cultural fragmentation, and renewed threats to religious and economic freedom, Acton's work has never been more vital—or more urgently needed.

In 2024, we saw remarkable growth across every area of our work. From the launch of new academic initiatives and global partnerships to the continued expansion of our digital outreach, Acton is reaching more people in more places with the foundational truths that uphold human dignity, the rule of law, and economic freedom. Our educational programs, including Acton University, the Emerging Leaders Program, and international events, formed thousands of leaders across 159 countries. Our research scholars and affiliate network deepened the intellectual conversations on pressing moral and economic issues. And our media initiatives, publications, and translations carried our message into classrooms, boardrooms, and sanctuaries around the world.

None of this would have been possible without you. Your generosity sustains our mission, empowers our scholars and students, and ensures that the principles we defend—freedom, virtue, and truth—continue to shape the institutions and leaders of tomorrow.

Thank you for standing with us. As you read through this report, I hope you are as inspired as I am by the extraordinary scope and depth of what we have accomplished together in 2024. May God continue to bless you for your faith in our work and your commitment to liberty grounded in moral order.

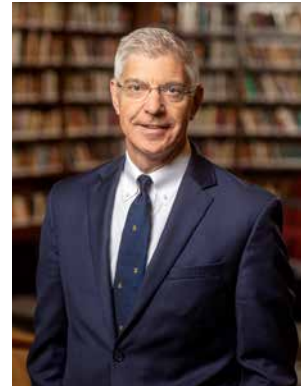
Very Truly Yours,



**Kris Alan Mauren**

Cofounder & President

Acton Institute







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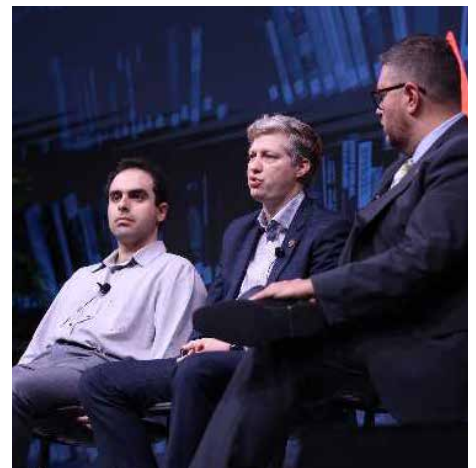
# EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

The Acton Institute delivers impactful educational programming designed to equip leaders with the intellectual tools and moral clarity needed to advance a free and virtuous society. Our conferences, seminars, and leadership-formation programs offer carefully curated experiences, bringing together emerging and established leaders to explore the essential connection between markets and morality. Participants engage with world-class scholars, integrating insights from theology, philosophy, economics, and history, and return to their communities empowered to lead with principle and purpose.

## ACTON UNIVERSITY

Acton University remains Acton's flagship event, offering a four-day immersive experience in Grand Rapids, Michigan. *Now in its 20<sup>th</sup> year*, this globally recognized conference continues to draw students, pastors, academics, and professionals committed to human flourishing through liberty and virtue. With an interdisciplinary curriculum and lectures from a distinguished international faculty, Acton University deepens participants' understanding of the intellectual foundations of a free society.

*In 2024, Acton University welcomed 961 attendees from 77 countries*, selected from over 2,000 applicants. Among them were seminarians, students, educators, clergy, and policy leaders—each hand-selected to maximize the impact of the event. The reach of these attendees is substantial: 96 participants influence more than 1,000 people each, and six attendees reach over 1 million. This speaks not only to the diversity of participants but also to the multiplier effect of Acton's formation efforts.





## **Student Engagement**

Over 200 students from universities in Spain, Italy, Brazil, and the United States attended Acton University in 2024, many through partnerships with Acton alumni who now serve as faculty and administrators. These students engaged in challenging lectures that reinforced and expanded upon the principles they encountered in their academic studies.

## **Curriculum & Programming**

Acton University stands at the heart of our mission, providing a world-class curriculum that equips leaders with the knowledge and ethical framework to champion the principles of a free and virtuous society. Through an interdisciplinary approach that integrates theology, economics, philosophy, and history, participants gain a deeper understanding of the moral foundations of free markets and their role in human flourishing.



## Highest Rated Lectures (2024)

COURSE NAME	SPEAKER
Christian Vision of the Human Person	Michael Matheson Miller
The Fertility Gap: Barriers to Fertility Around the World	Clara Piano, Ph.D.
Like a Tree Planted by Still Water: Navigating the Rising Tide of Political Polarization	Rachel Ferguson, Ph.D.
Africa and Foreign Aid	Denis Foretia, M.D.
Alexis de Tocqueville: The Man and His Times	Jeff Polet, Ph.D.
Theology of Work	Scott Rae, Ph.D.

## Plenary Lectures



**DAY 1:** John Tomasi, D.Phil.

Free Universities for a Free Society: A Heterodox Approach

**DAY 2:** Umi Waheeda

The Transformative Power of Entrepreneurship and Education



**DAY 3:** Anthony B. Bradley, Ph.D.

The Trauma of Poverty: Why Economic Empowerment Matters

**DAY 4:** Rob and Berni Neal

The Complementarity of Business and Philanthropy



## Renato Moicano at Acton University

On Day 3, UFC fighter Renato Moicano joined Fr. Robert Sirico for a conversation on the power of free market ideas. Moicano, known for his viral post-fight speech citing Ludwig von Mises, shared how economic liberty informs his personal growth, career, and advocacy. This unexpected voice for freedom sparked dialogue across generations and backgrounds, highlighting the universality of Acton's message.



Scan or click the QR code to watch the full interview:





## **Acton Alumni Network**

Every Acton University attendee joins a *growing global network of more than 12,000 alumni across 159 countries*. In 2024, Acton welcomed 482 new alumni. This community of leaders is actively engaged in academia, public service, ministry, and the private sector. Alumni frequently collaborate with Acton, host events, and introduce new leaders to our work, serving as vital multipliers of Acton's mission.



## **ALUMNI VOICES**

“I am liberated from my infatuation with Marxism.”

– **Yesu K., Priest, India**

“Acton was a milestone in my life. ... I realized that we need to change some of our guidelines.”

– **Carlos F., Nonprofit Leader, Brazil**

“I am leaving Acton University reinvigorated. ...

This is the best conference I have attended.”

– **Jonathan K., Associate Dean & Professor, South Carolina**

“It was a revitalizing, humbling, and mind-opening experience.”

– **Mariana G., Think Tank Director, Guatemala**

“The Acton University 2024 conference provided me with a wealth of knowledge and inspiration on how to integrate my Christian worldview with topics such as economics, entrepreneurship, dignity of work, faith, and human flourishing.”

– **Emilyn C., United States**

## FREE AND VIRTUOUS SOCIETY CONFERENCES

The Free and Virtuous Society (FAVS) Conferences are intensive seminar experiences designed for religious and business leaders seeking to understand the foundational role of faith in promoting both personal and economic liberty. Rooted in Acton's commitment to the integration of theology and sound economics, these conferences invite participants to engage deeply with the moral and institutional conditions necessary for a flourishing society.

In 2024, the Acton Institute hosted a FAVS conference in Spokane, Washington, with the theme "Civility in Public Life." Participants explored urgent questions in our increasingly polarized world: How can we live well with others despite deep disagreements? Is civility essential to a free and flourishing society? And what roles do our social and economic institutions play in cultivating civic virtue?



The conference featured lectures on civility across several key sectors—the Church, the marketplace, local politics, and education—all framed by theological reflection and economic insight. Participants prepared by completing advanced readings and engaged in rigorous discussion and debate, defending their perspectives during extended Q&A sessions.

### Acton in the Pacific Northwest

In partnership with the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, Acton expanded its presence in the Pacific Northwest in 2024 through a coordinated series of programs that reinforced the themes of the Spokane FAVS conference.



#### These included:

- A Pacific Northwest Pastors Breakfast led by Dr. Anthony B. Bradley, addressing leadership in polarized times
- A screening of *Poverty, Inc.* at Corban University, sparking conversation on aid, development, and dignity
- A lecture on the intersection of faith and human flourishing by Dan Churchwell

These events reached a diverse range of participants—pastors, nonprofit leaders, scholars, and students—and provided actionable insights grounded in the belief that free institutions and virtuous citizens are essential for societal renewal.

# BUSINESS MATTERS CONFERENCE

The Business Matters conference is Acton’s premier hybrid event with a digital-first focus exploring the essential role of business in advancing human flourishing. Now in its sixth year, the 2024 conference convened 1,194 registrants from around the globe—entrepreneurs, business leaders, professors, and students—for a powerful exchange of ideas on how markets, morality, and enterprise intersect in a free society.

This year’s program featured engaging panels and keynote addresses that challenged conventional thinking and equipped attendees with practical tools to lead with integrity. One participant noted: “Dr. James Otteson’s presentation was the best I’ve ever seen on the religious view of business. The AI panel was timely and insightful, and the closing session sparked important dialogue on business and community impact.”

## 2024 IMPACT AT A GLANCE

1,194  
registrants  
(85 countries)

407  
first-time  
attendees

58  
multilingual viewers  
engaged through  
translated sessions

95%  
reported  
learning ideas  
that challenged  
their thinking

94%  
rated  
the event  
as excellent

To expand its global reach, Acton partnered with 21 organizations across four continents to host watch parties—bringing the conference experience to new audiences and catalyzing discussions on entrepreneurship, virtue, and the moral responsibility of enterprise. This growing international engagement reflects the resonance of Acton’s message: that business, when grounded in virtue and moral responsibility, is a powerful force for good in society.





## LIBERTY & MARKETS SEMINAR

In April 2024, the Acton Institute hosted a Liberty & Markets Seminar in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in collaboration with Liberty Fund, Inc. These seminars provide graduate-level Acton alumni and select leaders the opportunity to explore the philosophical and economic foundations of a free society through Socratic, text-based discussions.

The theme of the 2024 seminar—“Virtue and Economic Thinking”—examined the moral conditions necessary for markets to function and flourish. Drawing from classical and modern sources, participants discussed how economic systems are shaped not only by institutions but also by the character of individuals within them.

This year’s cohort reflected the global and interdisciplinary nature of Acton’s network, bringing together participants from four countries and 13 religious traditions. Attendees included academics, nonprofit leaders, students, and professionals, with training across 14 disciplines, ranging from philosophy and law to chemistry and theology. The result was a rich and intellectually rigorous dialogue on how virtue sustains liberty and promotes human flourishing.

*Left images from Liberty & Markets Seminar*



*Right images from Acton Lecture Series*

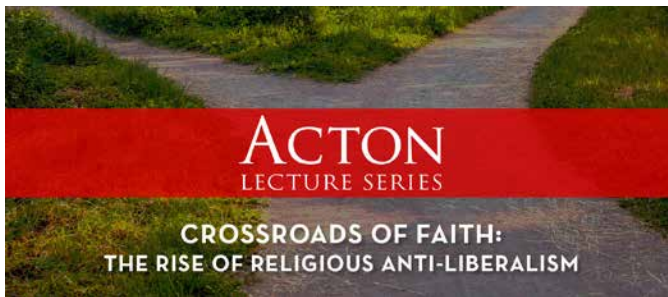


## ACTON LECTURE SERIES

The Acton Lecture Series is one of the Institute's longest-running educational programs, launched in 1990 to engage the Grand Rapids community in thoughtful dialogue on the intersection of faith, economics, and public life. Held bimonthly at Acton's headquarters, these events bring together local leaders, students, professors, clergy, and homeschool groups for lectures that illuminate the moral and institutional foundations of a free society.

Each lecture features expert insights on pressing issues, followed by engaging Q&A and meaningful discussion. To extend its reach, all lectures are livestreamed and archived on Acton On-Demand, drawing audiences from around the world in real time.

**In 2024, two of the most popular lectures were:**



with Kevin Vallier, Ph.D.



with Trevor Sutton, Ph.D.

These events drew strong local and online attendance and reinforced the Acton Lecture Series as a key platform for exploring the relationship between religion, liberty, and contemporary culture.

### **2024 Lecture Topics Included:**

- Crossroads of Faith: The Rise of Religious Anti-Liberalism
- Church in a Digital Age: Must We Worship Bodily to Worship at All?
- C.S. Lewis on Modern Social Thought: The Church Should Give Us a Lead
- Beyond Material Progress: Markets and Dignity in the Fight Against Global Poverty
- Fragile Neighborhoods: Repairing American Society, One Zip Code at a Time



To watch past Acton Lectures, scan or click the QR code for Acton On-Demand.

# EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM

The Emerging Leaders Program is one of the Acton Institute's most prestigious leadership-formation initiatives, designed to equip the next generation of principled leaders with a robust understanding of the moral and economic foundations of a free and virtuous society. This highly selective eight-week summer residency blends rigorous academic study with real-world professional experience.

Participants engage in seminars, discussions, and mentorship with leading scholars and industry professionals. The curriculum integrates classical liberal economic thought, theology, moral philosophy, and leadership development, creating a comprehensive formation experience. Notable speakers in 2024 included Nobel laureate Vernon Smith; economist Anne Bradley; business leader Hank Meijer; and etiquette expert Candace Smith, who led a session on professional and social decorum.

In 2024, Acton welcomed 17 students from eight countries, each committed to developing as virtuous leaders in their respective fields. The program fosters not only intellectual growth but also enduring friendships and professional connections—many of which continue through Acton's global alumni network.



## **Long-Term Impact**

Graduates of the Emerging Leaders Program go on to lead in think tanks, law firms, universities, ministries, international organizations, and public policy institutes. Acton continues to mentor these leaders beyond the summer, ensuring that the principles of liberty and virtue inform their careers and influence their communities for years to come.



## STUDENT REFLECTIONS



“This program revitalized my dreams for academic work, social entrepreneurship, and faith-based nonprofit leadership. Acton is the best think tank in America—possibly the world.”

**—Thomas D., University at Buffalo**

“It has transformed how I view poverty. True change requires personal connection, not just charity.”

**—Terrance B., Clemson University**



“I now feel equipped to articulate the need for a free and virtuous society from both philosophical and practical perspectives.”

**—Gianna D., Hillsdale College**

“The professionalism and intellectual depth at Acton are unmatched. This experience has prepared me for graduate study and future service in my home country.”

**—Mariano S., University of Navarra**



# CENTER FOR SOCIAL FLOURISHING

The Center for Social Flourishing is an Acton Institute initiative led by Michael Matheson Miller, director of *Poverty, Inc.* and founder of the PovertyCure initiative. The Center is dedicated to refocusing conversations about poverty and civil society, emphasizing the moral and institutional frameworks necessary for long-term human development and community strength.



Through film, research, conferences, and partnerships, the Center works to empower local institutions, faith-based organizations, and community leaders to address poverty and social fragmentation in ways that uphold human dignity and that promote liberty. In 2024, the Center advanced this mission through several major initiatives.

## DOCUMENTARY IN PRODUCTION

The Center's flagship project in 2024 was producing a new feature-length documentary on poverty in the United States. From the creators of *Poverty, Inc.*, the new film explores the challenges faced by Americans in poverty and some of the well-intentioned but destructive ways that governments, nonprofits, and businesses have tried to help them.

The producers have filmed more than 100 interviews across the country in places like Hazard, Ky.; Detroit, Mich.; Joplin, Mo.; South Dallas, Tex.; and Los Angeles, Calif. They have captured stories about family breakdown, drug addiction, crime, homelessness, job loss, broken policies—and the individuals and organizations finding new ways to heal their communities and create prosperity.

Slated for completion in 2025, the film will begin a private screening and film festival tour in 2026, followed by public release in 2027. It aims to challenge assumptions of both the political left and right and to inspire new thinking among scholars, policymakers, faith leaders, and practitioners.

## BEHIND THE SCENES





## POVERTYCURE SUMMIT

The 2024 PovertyCure Summit, our biennial virtual conference on global poverty, was held in November. More than 5,000 people from 94 different countries registered to attend the event virtually. More than 300 people, including many local Grand Rapids nonprofit leaders and social service providers, attended the Summit's various in-person events.



The Summit's keynote speaker was Dr. William Easterly, professor of economics at New York University and author of *The Tyranny of Experts*, who spoke on "Beyond Material Progress: Markets and Dignity in the Fight Against Global Poverty."



Other speakers and panelists included Dr. Martin Burt (Poverty Stoplight), James Burling (Pacific Legal Foundation), Chuck Marohn (Strong Towns), and Dr. Seth Kaplan (author of *Fragile Neighborhoods*). They covered such themes as empowering impoverished households, the national housing shortage, and place-based solutions to social breakdown. The Summit also included panels with PovertyCure partners in South America, Africa, and India.



## SOCIAL FLOURISHING FAVS CONFERENCES

Acton hosted two Free and Virtuous Society (FAVS) Conferences in 2024, curated for religious leaders, academics, and nonprofit professionals seeking to explore the complex challenges of poverty and human development.



### “The Vital Family” – NYC

This conference focused on family breakdown, the decline in marriage, and the rise of fatherlessness, with particular attention to how these trends sow the seeds of social and material poverty. Speakers included Michael Matheson Miller, Dr. Anthony B. Bradley, Dr. Catherine Pakaluk, and Dr. Bradford Wilcox, all of whom examined the state of the American family from the perspectives of philosophy, theology, economics, and sociology.

### “The Person and Technological Society” – San Diego

Focusing on artificial intelligence and digital life, this conference included presentations by scholars Dr. Jean Twenge, Dr. Jordan Wales, Dan Churchwell, and Michael Matheson Miller. The discussion centered on how technology impacts human dignity, the soul, generational divides, and community life, and explored principles for using digital tools without undermining human and social flourishing.



“This conference has been invaluable. The topics were substantive and will directly inform my work on legislation and public policy.”

—2024 FAVS Participant



## LISTENING SESSIONS – GRAND RAPIDS

To deepen local engagement, the Center hosts monthly Listening Sessions with nonprofit leaders and community stakeholders in Grand Rapids. These sessions inform Acton’s work by grounding it in the practical experience of nonprofit professionals. The insights shared have helped shape Acton’s programming and ensure that its messaging will reach practitioners “in the trenches.”



Center  
for Social  
Flourishing





**“LIBERTY IS NOT  
A MEANS TO A  
HIGHER POLITICAL  
END. IT IS ITSELF  
THE HIGHEST  
POLITICAL END.”**

**—LORD ACTON**

# THE COLLINS CENTER FOR ABRAHAMIC HERITAGE

Now in its second full year, the Collins Center for Abrahamic Heritage continues to reach new audiences of Christians, Jews, and Muslims with Acton's principles of liberty and virtue. By bringing together leaders from these Abrahamic traditions to discuss Acton's mission, the Center also creates direly needed opportunities for leaders of different faiths to work together toward goals like religious liberty, economic freedom, and peace.



The Center provides a unique platform for exploring the moral, theological, and economic dimensions shared across the Abrahamic faiths while respecting the crucial differences between each tradition.

Throughout 2024, the Collins Center hosted a series of debates, public discussions, and private seminars that deepened engagement on topics ranging from the role of religion in public life to the ethical underpinnings of liberty and human dignity.

## **New Logo**

The Collins Center unveiled a new logo in 2024, symbolizing the parting of the Red Sea—a miracle affirmed in the Torah, the New Testament, and the Qur'an. This shared symbol reflects the Center's mission to pursue a path to liberty rooted in faith and to affirm the dignity of the human person across all Abrahamic traditions.



**COLLINS CENTER**  
FOR ABRAHAMIC HERITAGE

By creating a space for honest dialogue, rigorous scholarship, and shared values, the Collins Center plays a vital role in building bridges across religious divides while reinforcing Acton's broader vision of a society ordered toward freedom and moral truth.

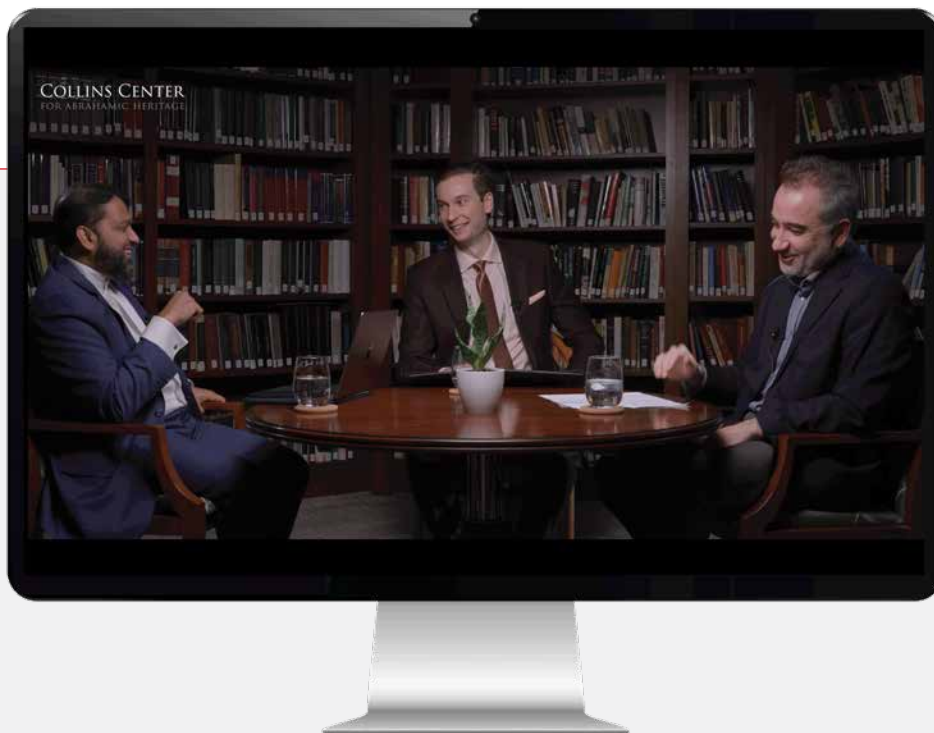
## DEBATES

Two high-profile debates in 2024 explored the complex relationship between religion and the state. They were hosted on Acton's YouTube platform and drew significant viewership.

The debate between Yasir Qadhi and Mustafa Akyol on "Islam and the State," for example, was Acton's most viewed production of 2024, attracting over 116,000 direct views and many more across other platforms. It was also praised by viewers as:

"One of the most **informative and respectful** debates I've ever seen."

"A model of how **deep disagreement** can be addressed through **civil dialogue**."



These public events illustrate the Center's commitment to principled engagement across traditions, encouraging both scholarship and practical cooperation.

**To watch the debates, scan or click the QR code.**



## THE MAJLIS NETWORK

The Majlis is a prestigious leadership network of over 140 foremost Muslim scholars from nearly 20 countries, organized by the Collins Center. It hosts bimonthly private seminars that foster scholarly dialogue focused on contemporary issues in Islamic thought, as well as research collaboration to promote liberty and democracy in the Muslim world.



Since its launch in 2020, the Majlis has held more than 30 exclusive sessions, offering a confidential space for deep intellectual exchange among some of the most influential voices in the Muslim world.

## COLLINS CENTER ANNUAL CALENDAR

In 2024, the Collins Center produced the first ever Abrahamic faith calendar that combines Gregorian, Hebrew, and Hijri calendars featuring quotes from Abrahamic traditions each month.

Reach out to [collinscenter@acton.org](mailto:collinscenter@acton.org) to request a calendar.

“IF THE PAST HAS  
BEEN AN OBSTACLE  
AND A BURDEN,  
**KNOWLEDGE  
OF THE PAST  
IS THE SAFEST  
AND THE SUREST  
EMANCIPATION.”**

—LORD ACTON

# — MASS MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS —

The Acton Institute's communications strategy in 2024 focused on expanding the reach and impact of our core message through print, digital, audio, and video platforms. By leveraging mass media and modern technology, Acton continues to shape public discourse around the world—making the case for a society that upholds religious liberty, human dignity, and economic freedom.

## RELIGION & LIBERTY MAGAZINE

Acton's flagship quarterly magazine, *Religion & Liberty*, saw significant growth in both distribution and readership in 2024. ***The magazine is now carried in 240 Barnes & Noble stores across the United States, with a sell-through rate consistently exceeding industry averages by more than 50%.*** This commercial success reflects the increasing demand for thoughtful, principled commentary on faith and freedom.

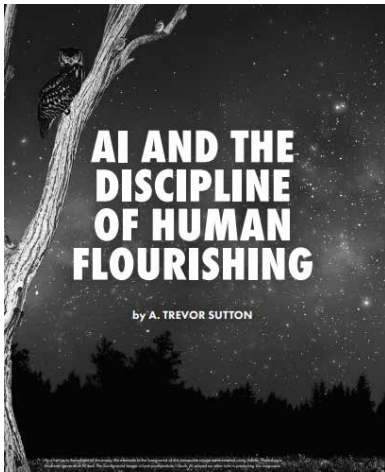


Its content has also been the subject of discussion on such podcasts as *Issues Etc.* and the *Paleo Protestant Podcast*.



Due to this strong performance, our bookstore-distribution representative is exploring international distribution in markets such as Canada, the U.K., Australia, and New Zealand—broadening the global influence of Acton's ideas.





### Most Popular Articles in 2024

- “AI and the Discipline of Human Flourishing”
- “No, Socialism Is Not Neighborliness”
- “How the Most Influential Novel Ever Written Has Been Misunderstood”

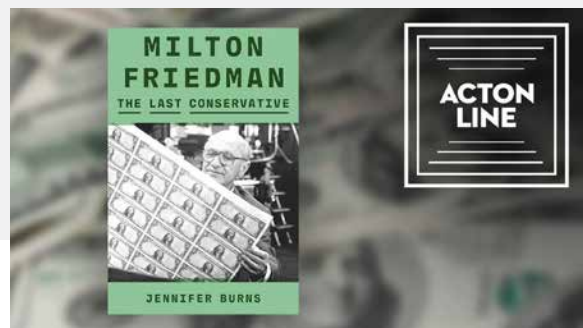
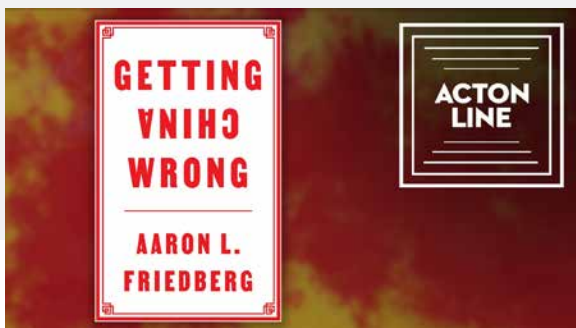
## ACTON LINE PODCAST

The *Acton Line* podcast remains a key part of Acton’s educational outreach, offering in-depth interviews and analysis on topics at the intersection of theology, economics, and culture. With podcasting continuing to grow as a dynamic and accessible medium, *Acton Line* equips listeners to think critically about the ideas that shape society.



**In 2024, the podcast featured high-performing episodes such as:**

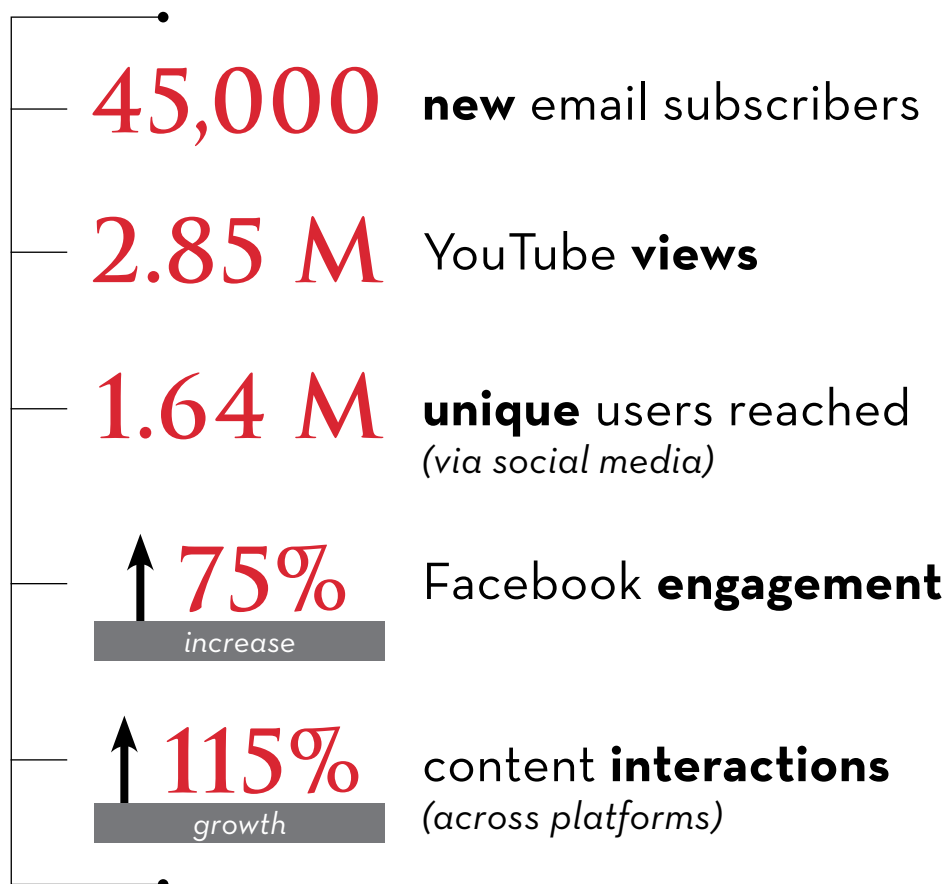
- “Misconceptions About China”
- “The Rise of Religious Anti-Liberalism”
- “Milton Friedman: The Last Conservative”



*Acton Line* extends the Institute’s mission into homes, cars, classrooms, and offices, reaching a global audience with the principles of a free and virtuous society—anytime, anywhere.

## DIGITAL COMMUNITY GROWTH

Acton's digital presence experienced **record-breaking engagement** in 2024, enabling us to reach new audiences and deepen our impact online. In an increasingly digital world, cultivating a vibrant online community is essential to advancing Acton's mission.



These figures reflect more than numerical growth—they represent a broader movement of leaders, students, and citizens **seeking intellectual clarity, moral guidance, and principled solutions** to today's cultural and economic challenges.

### ACTON INSTITUTE ON SOCIAL



ActonInstitute



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@ActonInstitute



@actoninstitute



Acton Institute

“MEN CANNOT  
BE MADE GOOD  
BY THE STATE,  
BUT THEY CAN  
EASILY BE MADE  
BAD. **MORALITY  
DEPENDS ON  
LIBERTY.**”

—LORD ACTON



## THE HONG KONGER

The Acton Institute's documentary *The Hong Konger: Jimmy Lai's Extraordinary Fight for Freedom* continued to make a profound global impact in 2024. The film tells the story of Jimmy Lai, a courageous entrepreneur and outspoken advocate for democracy in Hong Kong, whose resistance to authoritarianism has made him a symbol of the struggle for human liberty.

Scan or click the QR code for additional information:



Since its release, *The Hong Konger* has been viewed over 5 million times and screened at more than 100 strategic locations, including universities, NGOs, businesses, and Capitol Hill. These showings have elevated the profile of Lai's case in international policy circles and among global human rights advocates.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

PERSONAL FINANCE | REVIEW & OUTLOOK [Follow](#)

### TikTok Suspends a Film on Jimmy Lai

Its CEO told Congress in March it doesn't do Communist bidding.



## NATIONAL REVIEW

TikTok Suspends Libertarian Think Tank  
That Posted about Hong Kong and Jimmy Lai

## THE TIMES

TikTok 'banned Jimmy Lai  
documentary to appease Beijing'

## Censorship and Global Attention

To reach younger audiences, Acton launched a promotional campaign on TikTok, which initially went viral—generating over 4 million views and 27,000 followers in five days. However, the account was suspended without warning, prompting coverage by major outlets including *The Wall Street Journal*, *Reuters*, *Fox News*, *National Review*, and *The Times of London*. After international attention and a formal appeal, the account was reinstated—demonstrating both the influence of the film and the sensitivities it exposed.



## Ongoing Advocacy for Jimmy Lai

Jimmy Lai remains imprisoned in Hong Kong, and his case continues to draw global concern. In January 2024, Fr. Robert Sirico attended Lai's trial in Hong Kong and later participated in a panel discussion with Mark Simon, Mary Kissel, and William McGurn, which received over 600,000 views. The panel reaffirmed Acton's commitment to religious liberty and free expression.

Lai's cause gained additional recognition in 2024 when the Cato Institute awarded him the Milton Friedman Prize for Advancing Liberty, further amplifying international support.



CONGRATULATIONS  
**JIMMY LAI**  
2025 BRADLEY PRIZE WINNER



**IN APRIL, LAI WAS NAMED AN  
HONORARY 2025 BRADLEY PRIZE WINNER**

As of May 2025, a verdict is expected in October 2025, with Acton remaining actively engaged in supporting Lai's legal defense and raising awareness of his ongoing persecution.

## RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS

The Acton Institute's Research Department serves as the intellectual engine of our mission—producing scholarship that affirms the compatibility of faith and freedom and advances the moral foundations of a free and virtuous society. Our scholars, both in-house and affiliated, represent a diverse range of faith traditions and academic disciplines, including theology, economics, law, history, and philosophy.

Acton's research draws deeply from the natural law tradition, Christian social ethics, and the historical insights of Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox thought. In 2024, the department produced books, monographs, articles, op-eds, and the peer-reviewed *Journal of Markets & Morality*, while also supporting emerging scholars through grants, awards, mentorship, and conferences.

By equipping academics and thought leaders with rigorous, values-based scholarship, Acton's research efforts ensure that our principles continue to influence public policy, higher education, and cultural renewal worldwide.

### AFFILIATE SCHOLARS

Acton's affiliate scholars are central to our mission. These experts—ranging from professors and policy analysts to theologians and business leaders—extend Acton's reach by lecturing at universities, think tanks, churches, and international conferences. In 2024, Acton scholars appeared at over 200 events around the globe, including in the U.S., Israel, England, Spain, Indonesia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Azerbaijan, and Italy.







Mustafa  
Akyol



Hunter  
Baker, J.D., Ph.D.



Anne Rathbone  
Bradley, Ph.D.



Victor V.  
Claar, Ph.D.



Rachel  
Ferguson



Dr. Yehonatan  
Givati



Samuel  
Goldman, Ph.D.



Samuel  
Gregg, D.Phil.



Manoj  
Mathew



Marvin  
Olasky



Rev. Dr. Johnson  
Rethinasamy



Stephanie  
Slade

In addition, Acton Research staff, fellows, and affiliates have published more than a hundred essays, reviews, and op-eds in over 30 outlets, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Telegraph*, *Foreign Policy*, *National Review*, *Spectator*, *World*, *First Things*, *Commonwealth*, *Christianity Today*, *World, Reason*, *City Journal*, *Law & Liberty*, *Public Discourse*, *The Dispatch*, as well as our own *Religion & Liberty* and *Religion & Liberty Online*.

Their work bridges the gap between theory and practice, translating timeless truths into real-world impact and expanding Acton's influence in academic, media, and public discourse.

## AFFILIATE HIGHLIGHT: DR. ANNE BRADLEY



Anne Bradley, Ph.D., is an affiliate scholar at the Acton Institute and a respected voice on the intersection of economics, theology, and human flourishing. She serves as the George and Sally Mayer Fellow for Economic Education and vice president of Academic Affairs at The Fund for American Studies, and has taught at institutions including George Mason University, Georgetown, and Charles University in Prague. At Acton University, she teaches the core

class The Economic Way of Thinking, which introduces participants to the foundational principles of economic reasoning. Dr. Bradley's research explores the moral basis of free markets, the role of women in society, and the political economy of terrorism. She is the coauthor or editor of several influential works, including *For the Least of These* and *Counting the Cost*, and remains a frequent contributor to Acton's educational programs and *Religion & Liberty* and *Religion & Liberty Online*.



## NEW AFFILIATE SCHOLARS



Kevin Vallier, Ph.D., is a professor of philosophy at Bowling Green State University, where he directs their program in Philosophy, Politics, Economics, and Law (PPEL). Dr. Vallier focuses on how diverse people can cooperate despite their differences. He is especially interested in philosophical, political, economic, and religious reconciliation. He is the author of four monographs, five edited volumes, and over 50 peer-reviewed book chapters and journal articles. His books include *Liberal Politics and Public Faith: Beyond Separation* (Routledge 2014), *Must Politics Be War?*

*Restoring Our Trust in the Open Society* (Oxford UP 2019), and *Trust in a Polarized Age* (Oxford UP 2020). His new book addresses Catholic integralism and other forms of religious nationalism: *All the Kingdoms of the World: On Radical Religious Alternatives to Liberalism* (Oxford UP 2023).



David J. Hebert, Ph.D., is an affiliate scholar and the managing editor of the *Journal of Markets & Morality* at the Acton Institute. He's currently a senior research fellow at the American Institute for Economic Research and was previously an associate professor of economics and director of the Center for Markets, Ethics, and Entrepreneurship at Aquinas College. He graduated with a degree in economics from Hillsdale College in 2009 and then attended George Mason University, where he earned a masters in 2011 and Ph.D. in 2014. During graduate school, he was an F.A. Hayek Fellow

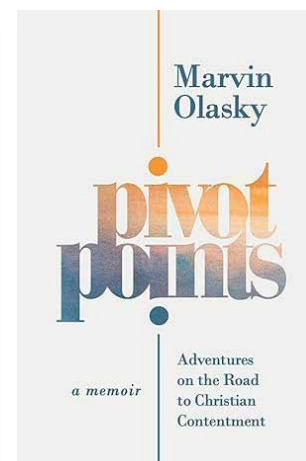
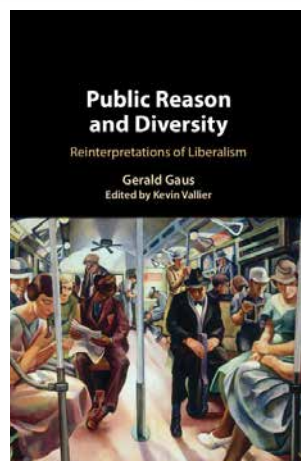
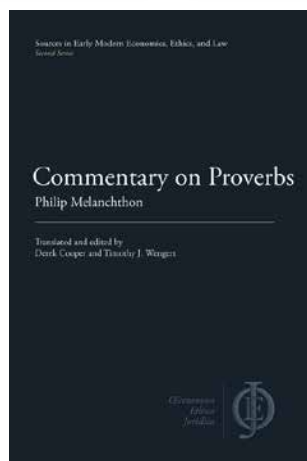
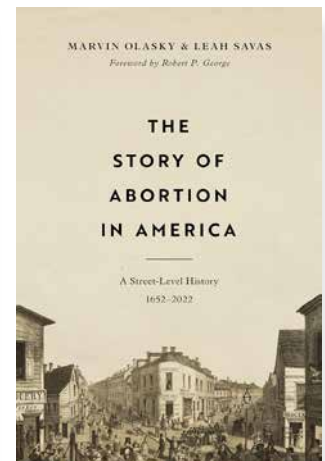
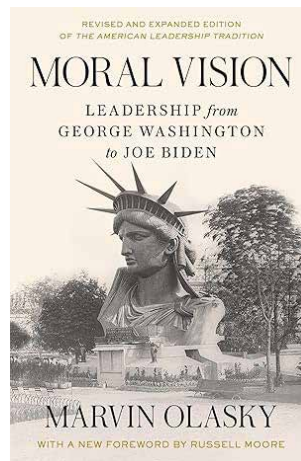
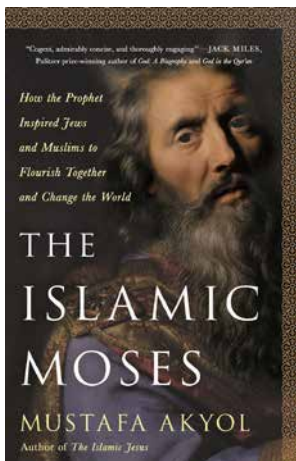
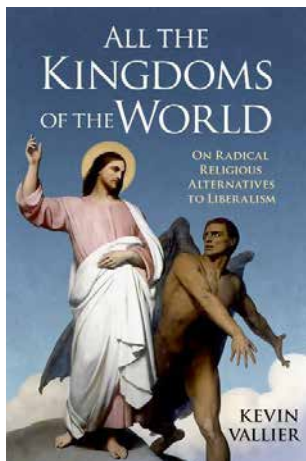
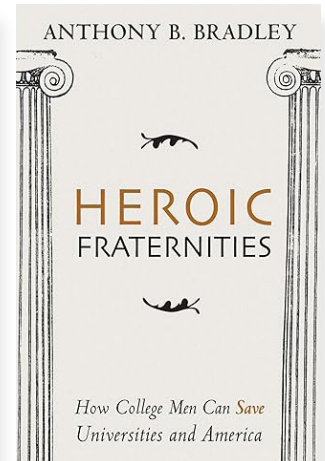
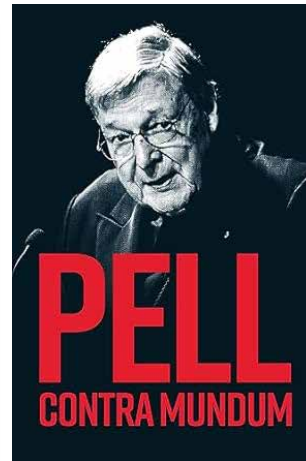
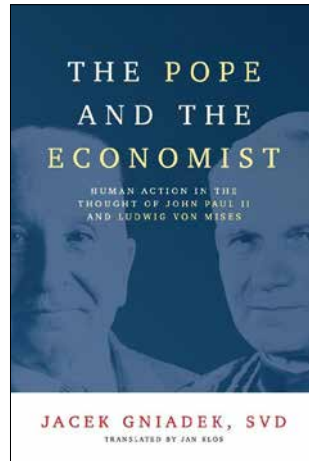
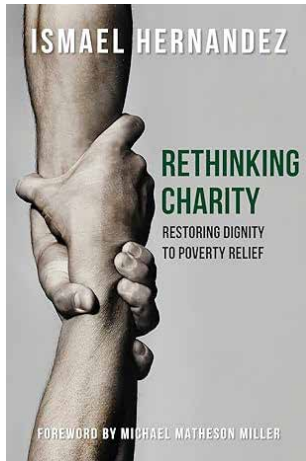
with the Mercatus Center and a fellow with the Department of Health Administration and Policy, also working with the Joint Economic Committee in the U.S. Congress. Since graduating, he has worked as an assistant professor at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Mich., and Troy University in Troy, Ala., and was also a fellow with the U.S. Senate Budget Committee, where he wrote a comprehensive report on federal budget process reform. His area of expertise lies in public choice and public finance. Specifically, his research aims to address the question of why democracies around the world and throughout history systematically produce tax codes that are long and complicated with numerous loopholes despite universal popular support for tax codes that are short and simple with few (if any) loopholes. His work has appeared in numerous academic forums as well as popular outlets such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *RealClearPolitics*, *The Hill*, *The Daily Caller*, *The Ripon Forum*, and *Investor's Business Daily*.



## BOOKS & PUBLICATIONS (2023-2024)

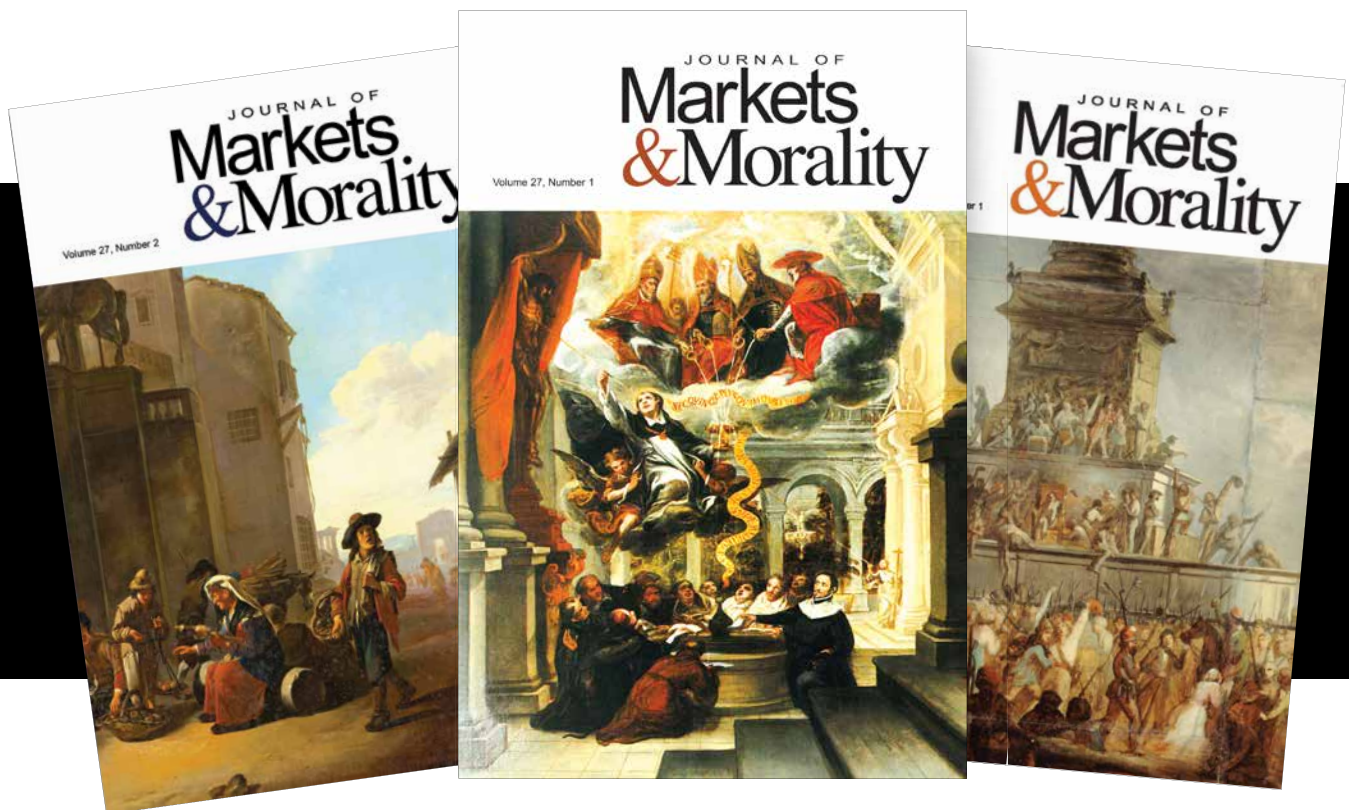
Acton and its affiliates published numerous titles this year, contributing fresh insights to the fields of economics, ethics, history, and theology.

**Notable publications include:**



# JOURNAL OF Markets & Morality

The *Journal of Markets & Morality* continues to serve as one of the world's leading forums for interdisciplinary dialogue on the intersection of economics, ethics, and theology. Distributed to universities, seminaries, and scholars globally, the journal promotes academic engagement with the moral underpinnings of markets and liberty.



The Spring 2024 issue was themed “Thomism and Economics,” exploring how the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas informs contemporary economic thought and public policy.

## AWARDS & GRANTS

To support the development of high-impact scholarship aligned with its mission, the Acton Institute administers a series of academic awards, research grants, and scholarship initiatives. These programs recognize and invest in scholars who advance the understanding of freedom, virtue, faith, and economics in both academic and practical contexts.

By providing funding, mentorship, and institutional support, Acton ensures that emerging voices in theology, economics, law, and public policy are equipped to influence the next generation of leaders—within universities, think tanks, government, and civil society.

### Novak Award



Named in honor of theologian and longtime Acton collaborator Michael Novak, the Novak Award recognizes early-career scholars who demonstrate exceptional intellectual merit in advancing the moral foundations of a free society.

The 2024 recipient, **Clara Elizabeth Piano**, is assistant professor of economics at Austin Peay State University. Her research spans family economics, law and economics, and public choice, and has been published in both scholarly and popular outlets. A 2024 AU lecturer, Piano consistently produces work that exemplifies the integration of economic insight with moral and theological reflection.

### Freedom & Prosperity Academic Grants

In partnership with the Atlantic Council's Freedom and Prosperity Center, Acton awarded a 2024 academic grant to Instituto Fe y Libertad in Guatemala. The grant supports research using the Freedom and Prosperity Indexes to explore how corruption impacts prosperity.

The resulting book, *La Corrupción Bajo Una Nueva Lupa* ("Corruption Under a New Magnifying Glass"), was widely distributed, featured in local media, and incorporated into university curricula—demonstrating how data-driven analysis rooted in freedom-oriented principles can inform both policy and civic education.





## **Mini-Grants on Free Market Economics**

Acton's Mini-Grants program supports faculty at colleges, universities, and seminaries across North America in course development and scholarly research. The goal is to enhance academic engagement with the nature, morality, and purpose of free markets, especially in their relationship to Christian ethics and human flourishing.

### ***2024 Mini-Grant Recipients Included:***



**Allen Mendenhall**

*Reading group: "Business as an Agent of Betterment"*  
Troy University



**Erik Matson**

*A History of Christian Political Economy (2 vols.)*  
Mercatus Center



**Paul Hartog**

Economics component for education majors  
Faith Baptist Bible College



**Scott Niederjohn**

*Course development and operation: History of Economic Thought*  
Concordia University Wisconsin



**Walter Jay Moon**

*New course: Innovation and the Mission of the Church*  
Asbury Theological Seminary



**William Reddinger**

*New course: Economic Principles of the American Political Order*  
Regent University

These initiatives continue to expand Acton's impact across higher education, cultivating a new generation of scholars who understand and champion the moral case for markets and liberty.



## FOURTH ANNUAL ACADEMIC COLLOQUIUM – “MERE CHRISTIAN SOCIAL THOUGHT”

In October 2024, the Acton Institute hosted its 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Academic Conference at our Grand Rapids headquarters. This year’s theme, Mere Christian Social Thought, brought together scholars, educators, clergy, and students to explore how foundational Christian insights inform modern questions in political economy, ethics, and social order. The daylong event featured three interdisciplinary paper panels and a keynote lecture from Dr. Micah J. Watson, Director of the Henry Institute at Calvin University. In his plenary address, “The Church Should Give Us a Lead: C.S. Lewis on Modern Social Thought,” Watson examined the enduring relevance of Lewis’s Christian humanism in shaping moral discourse today.

Panelists presented on a wide range of topics, including the ethics of wealth, the role of natural law, Protestant and Catholic views on property and policy, and early Church perspectives on justice and society. Notable papers included explorations of Cicero’s influence on Christian social teaching, political economy in the Church Fathers, and real-world case studies like ServiceMaster’s corporate culture shaped by Christian principles. The conference reaffirmed Acton’s commitment to convening thoughtful Christian scholarship that bridges theology, philosophy, and economic understanding in pursuit of a free and virtuous society.



“LIMITATION IS  
ESSENTIAL TO  
AUTHORITY. A  
**GOVERNMENT  
IS LEGITIMATE  
ONLY IF IT IS  
EFFECTIVELY  
LIMITED.”**

—LORD ACTON

As one of the few think tanks operating in Rome—and the only one integrating free-market economics with religious thought—Istituto Acton plays a critical role in advancing the mission of the Acton Institute across Europe. The Rome office engages Catholic leaders, scholars, policymakers, and business professionals, promoting a vision of liberty rooted in faith and moral responsibility.

Through strategic partnerships with pontifical universities, international seminaries, Vatican officials, global media outlets, and NGOs, Istituto Acton serves as a key hub for intellectual and spiritual formation on issues at the intersection of economics, religion, and society.

## ANNUAL SPRING CONFERENCE — PONTIFICAL GREGORIAN UNIVERSITY

In 2024, Istituto Acton hosted its annual spring conference, “Truth, Justice, and Liberty in a Pluri-Anthropological World,” at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. The event drew an audience of over 500 students, faculty, journalists, and thought leaders from across the city’s pontifical institutions and beyond. Among the press in attendance were journalists from EWTN, Catholic News Agency (CNA), *National Catholic Register*, and Catholic News Service, underscoring the conference’s relevance to both academic and media circles.



Speakers included Fr. Robert Sirico, Michael Matheson Miller, Fr. João Vila-Chã (professor of philosophy at the Gregorian University), and Prof. Myroslav Marynovych (vice-rector of the Ukrainian Catholic University). Together they offered theological and cultural insights into the growing challenges posed by woke ideology, relativism, and the erosion of traditional anthropological and moral frameworks, emphasizing the enduring relevance of faith, reason, and liberty in the face of contemporary threats to human dignity.





## SEMINAR: ECONOMICS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP — FLORENCE, ITALY

This three-day seminar, “Economics and Entrepreneurship – Principles, Virtues, and Practices,” brought together 25 seminarians from the Legionaries of Christ, along with entrepreneurs and scholars, for an intensive formation experience. The curriculum explored the theological, historical, and ethical dimensions of entrepreneurship in both local and global contexts.

Participants from Latin America, Europe, and the U.S. engaged with 10 guest speakers, including five practicing entrepreneurs, illustrating the real-world application of Acton’s principles to business and vocational leadership.





## CAMPUS MARTIUS SEMINAR SERIES — ROME

The Campus Martius Seminar Series continued in 2024 as a cornerstone of Istituto Acton's local engagement, bringing together scholars, seminarians, diplomats, and lay professionals for candid, high-level conversations on cultural and political life.

- “Fruits from a Church Rich and Poor”: Dr. Philip Chavez explored Pope Francis's call for “a poor Church for the poor,” analyzing its theological and institutional implications.
- “November Revolution: Reflecting on the American ‘Soul of Liberty’”: Fr. Robert Sirico reflected on the outcome of the U.S. election and its impact on the future of liberty, joined by attendees from the British embassy, Italian government, and Roman academia.



## INTERNATIONAL LAUNCHES — LE BIEN QUE FONT LES AFFAIRES

Istituto Acton supported two major presentations of the French edition of Robert G. Kennedy's *The Good That Business Does* (*Le Bien Que Font Les Affaires*, Editions Boleine), led by Fr. Antoine de Padou.

- Burkina Faso — A three-day event celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Catholic Elementary School Sainte Thérèse De L'enfant-Jésus De Kampti-Bouti, attended by bishops, imams, traditional leaders, and educators.
- Rome — A formal presentation at L'Eau Vive Restaurant, with attendees including clergy, Acton staff, and the Moroccan ambassador to the Holy See.

These events emphasized business as a moral and cultural vocation, reinforcing Acton's message to diverse Francophone audiences.



## 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL MICHAEL NOVAK WRITERS RETREAT — CORTINA, ITALY

Held in the Italian Alps, this retreat brought together Catholic writers from across Europe to reflect on Michael Novak's *The Fire of Invention*. Through lectures, hiking, and communal meals, participants built a spirit of collaboration and intellectual exchange. Attendees included journalists, professors, doctoral students, and legal scholars—all committed to advancing Novak's legacy in faith and economic thought.

## CATHOLIC SHARK TANK & ROME OFFICE ANNIVERSARY

On October 14, Istituto Acton co-hosted a Catholic Shark Tank event with the European Fraternity, welcoming 10 Catholic entrepreneurs, investors, and venture capitalists from across Europe and the United States. The event, covered by EWTN, showcased faith-driven start-ups and encouraged collaboration between entrepreneurs and investors.

That evening, over 100 guests gathered to celebrate 20 years of Acton's presence in Rome, including Cardinals Kikuchi, Gracias, and Souraphiel, bishops, donors, and longtime collaborators. Fr. Robert Sirico delivered the keynote and presented the inaugural Lord Acton Prize to Fr. Antoine Pooda and Dr. Salvatore Rebecchini, honoring their excellence in advancing the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and economic liberty.

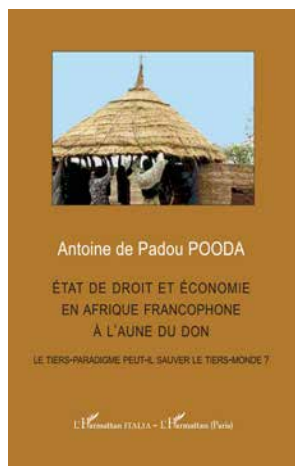
Proceeds from the anniversary dinner fund scholarships for doctoral students at pontifical universities, ensuring that future leaders are formed in truth, freedom, and virtue.



## TRANSLATIONS & PUBLICATIONS

With the support of professional translators and Catholic publishers, Istituto Acton has expanded Acton's international reach by translating key works into Italian, Spanish, French, and Portuguese.

**Notable titles include:**



These texts have been featured in sold-out book launches and university courses, and distributed widely among pontifical students, curial officials, and Catholic business leaders.

## MEDIA PRESENCE

Istituto Acton is now recognized as a leading voice in Catholic media across Europe. In 2024, it was featured prominently by EWTN News Nightly, EWTN Vaticano, La Nuova Bussola Quotidiana, and others, providing thoughtful commentary on issues such as religious liberty, economic justice, and the morality of responsible entrepreneurship. This growing media presence affirms Istituto Acton's role as a trusted and respected contributor to the global Catholic conversation.



**EWTN** | Global Catholic Network

LA NUOVA  
**BUSSOLA QUOTIDIANA**  
Direttore Riccardo Cascioli  
FATTO PER LA VERITÀ



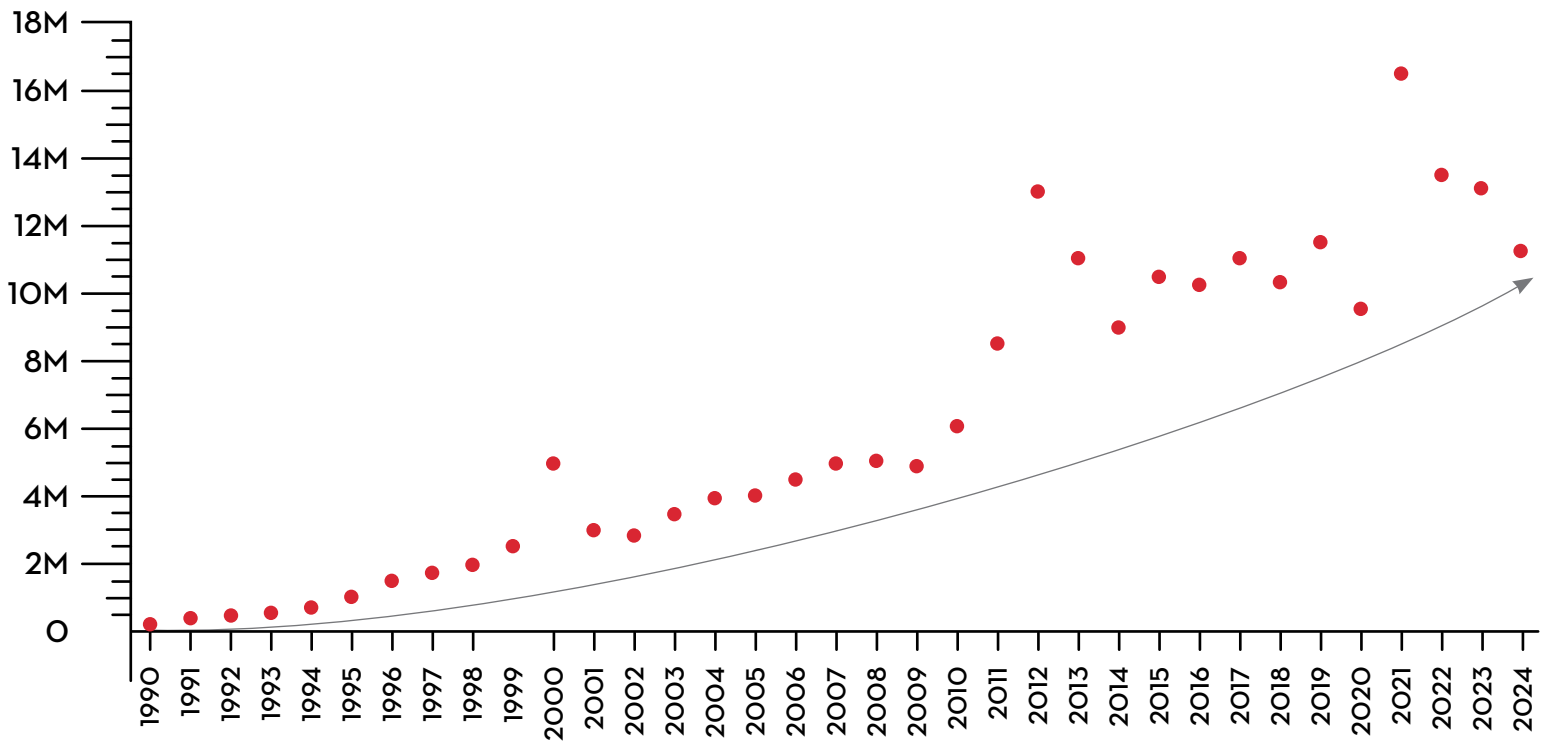






# FINANCIALS

## FUNDS RAISED: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



## REVENUE BY SOURCE, 2024

59.4%	Foundation Grants
24.2%	Individual Contributions
6.7%	Program Revenue
5.3%	Corporate Grants
4.4%	Other

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## CLOSING WORDS

Dear Friends,

As we close this remarkable year, I offer my deepest thanks for your continued support of the Acton Institute and for your dedication to the enduring principles that animate our mission—faith, freedom, and the dignity of the human person.



Although I have stepped back from day-to-day leadership, 2024 has been one of the most active years of my public ministry since cofounding Acton more than three decades ago. I've had the privilege of engaging with leaders, scholars, and laypeople around the world—sharing the moral and theological foundations of a free society in settings as varied as university classrooms, bishops' conferences, public lectures, and intimate gatherings of Acton's friends.

This year began with a series of talks and media interviews in Spain surrounding the release of the Spanish edition of my book *The Economics of the Parables*, with presentation events at CEU San Pablo University in Madrid and the University of Navarra in Pamplona. In Lisbon, I addressed bishops and educators at the International Federation for Family Development, and later in Rome I spoke at our spring conference at the Pontifical Gregorian University on the moral crises facing contemporary culture.

Throughout the year, I was honored to speak at Acton events and partner gatherings across the U.S.—from Boca Raton and Naples to Nashville, Philadelphia, and Grand Rapids. I offered remarks on business as a moral vocation, the life and imprisonment of Jimmy Lai, and the urgent need for renewed leadership grounded in truth. Highlights included receiving the Distinguished Fellow Award from the Philadelphia Society, delivering keynote addresses for Legatus and the Yager Free Market Celebration, and being presented with the Buckley Prize by the National Review Institute.

As the year concluded, I returned to Rome for Acton’s Campus Martius Seminar and a special 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner celebrating Acton’s ongoing work in Europe. These moments, both grand and quiet, remind me how far the Institute has come—and how much remains to be done.

Thank you for standing with us. You are an integral part of this work. As we look to the future, I pray that we may continue to grow together in wisdom and conviction, always seeking to bring the light of truth to bear on the great questions of our time.

With gratitude and hope,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rev. Sirico".

**Rev. Robert A. Sirico**

Cofounder & President Emeritus  
Acton Institute



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