

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

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“connecting good intentions with sound economics”

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President's Message

"It is a way to reflect the glory of God and His creation."

When I look at the sweep of intellectual history, I see several major problems in the characterization of free markets. Those problems are hurting the cause today. This is why I wrote my book *Defending the Free Market*.

Among many problems, people have come to believe that markets are about cold economic forces rather than human beings. This characterization does not match my understanding or my experience.

What are we talking about when we talk about markets? There are several features that are at the core. Private property is essential. This is about what people own and control. They own and control not for their own sake but in order to have the means to accomplish their life ends, which nearly always, by necessity, involve relationships and other people. These other people can be workers, consumers, service providers, creators, partners, or anything else.

The right to associate and exchange are essential to markets. The right to create and serve others is essential. The right to plan our futures and manage our lives in absence of arbitrary coercion is essential. To overcome the poverty and deprivation of the state of nature is a task given to all of us. We have to work together to make this happen.

Markets therefore speak to the issue of human cooperation. Markets aren't about selfishness, amassing wealth, and consuming. They are about getting along with others in mutually beneficial ways. They are about finding our way forward in a fallen world and striving to do good for others as they promote the common good. It is a way to reflect the glory of God and His creation.

Therefore, it is absurd to speak about anything in economics that does not involve and engage the human person in his or her activity in this world. Markets are an arena in which human decision-making takes place and human flourishing is possible. There is a science to understanding the relationships over material goods and services to which we must defer here. There is also a moral component that is absolutely impossible to wipe away.



Sincerely,

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

Rev. Robert Sirico, President

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

Acton and Eric Metaxas Defend Religious Liberty

Author and speaker Eric Metaxas was interviewed about threats to religious freedom in the latest issue of *Religion & Liberty* magazine. Metaxas, who was a lecturer and keynote speaker at Acton University, will keynote Acton's 22nd Annual Dinner in Grand Rapids on October 24.

The Acton Institute has taken a leading role in defending religious freedom and addressing the threat posed by the Health and Human Services mandate that requires employers to cover contraception in their insurance plan. Opponents of the mandate have argued the mandate violates religious conscience and the guaranteed protection of religious freedom in the First Amendment.

Metaxas participated in an Acton video short discussing why the HHS Mandate is not about the morality of contraception or even abortion. The mandate is an issue concerning religious liberty and maintaining the freedom of religion that our Founders realized was so important to a free society.

You can view the video on Acton's YouTube page. In the pages of *R&L*, Metaxas declared:

“If we do not stand as one, we will certainly hang separately, to quote the founders.”

In this case of the HHS Mandate, this is a minority that represents all of us, because this is one case where you may not agree, but what about the next thing that's going to come up? If we do not stand as one, we will certainly hang separately, to quote the founders.

Metaxas is the author of *The New York Times* #1 bestseller, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*, which was named “Book of the Year” by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association. He is also the author of *Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery*. Metaxas addressed the annual National Prayer Breakfast in Washington D.C. this year where he challenged the president directly on religious freedom and right to life. Metaxas will be available to sign copies of his new book at the Acton Annual Dinner.



The White House, Washington, DC



Eric Metaxas at Acton University

From Our Conference Participants

Many thanks for all your effort and for my participation with the Acton Institute.

It was an enriching experience and I enjoyed it all. The Acton Institute is very generous and I am sincerely grateful.

—John Lavorgna
Emmitsburg, Maryland

Thank you for providing me with this incomparable opportunity to attend one of the most exciting conferences I ever attended. The conference provided me with a new approach of liberty and economics.

—Antonio Alvarado
Caracas, Venezuela

Acton Expands Urban Ministry Reach

Acton held its first Thriving Churches: Flourishing Communities conference September 6-8 in Weehawken, New Jersey. Twenty-six pastors, urban educators, and practitioners attended the revised program, based on the Toward a Free and Virtuous City conference series.

Participants engaged in vibrant discussion on economic leadership in urban ministry throughout the sessions and long into the evening. Instead of looking to the government to create a fair society, conversation focused on individual responsibility, private action, and the dignity of the human person to alleviate social ills.

Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of the program's supporters, Acton was able to accommodate the most influential and intriguing groups of participants in the history of its work with urban ministries, representing a constituency of more than 70,000 congregants, students, and disciples each year.

In addition to a revised curriculum, Acton brought

Dr. Vincent Bacote also joined the faculty to lecture on "Sphere Sovereignty and Sustainable Human Development," focusing on Abraham Kuyper and the common good. Participants evaluated Bacote's lecture as "good theological framework," "intellectually provoking," "fantastic," and "relevant to the contemporary church".

Overall, Acton found this to be its most successful urban ministry conference to date. Diversity, participant demand, and fellowship were at an all-time high. One-hundred percent of conference participants would attend another Acton conference and recommend the conference to a friend or colleague. Additionally, all participants gained new perspectives about both the need for private action instead of government intervention, and the potential for entrepreneurial free enterprise to lift those in need out of poverty permanently.

Capsule of an Acton University Lecture: Hope for the Inner City

On June 15, 2012, Mr. Ismael Hernandez gave a talk on urban ministry at Acton University 2012,

ACTON News



Ismael Hernandez

in two new faculty members in 2012. Dr. Victor Claar is an economist and author who specializes in making complex economic concepts accessible to Christians at any level of prior knowledge. Shortly after his Fulbright year, Claar transitioned to teaching in a community college where more than 50 percent of the student body is comprised of first generation college students. He used this expertise to bring wisdom and economic understanding to participants, both on a general principle level, and in relation to one of the most significant challenges for urban ministers, how to address gentrification and displacement in neighborhoods.

held in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Mr. Hernandez discussed how welfare programs and private charities, in some cases, crush the human spirit in the inner city. He argued that merely concerning ourselves with providing material comforts to the poor puts us at risk of ignoring their moral and spiritual needs. Disassociating work and achievement from reward seriously threatens people's moral framework. "Our society's focus on providing material benefits is crushing the human spirit, and diminishes the ability of people to flourish," he declared. Mr. Ismael Hernandez is the founder of the Freedom & Virtue Institute.

Nothstine Discusses Faith and Presidential Campaigns

Religion has influenced presidential campaigns from the earliest elections in American history. On August 27, Ray Nothstine, who is the managing editor of *Religion & Liberty*, delivered the Shaftesbury Lecture at the John Locke Foundation in Raleigh, North Carolina. Nothstine warned about problems associated with political messianism and the problems it poses for a moral society and limited government. "People will look to man and government first in a godless world," he said. The lecture was an expansion of his Acton commentary, "As Secularism Advances, Political Messianism Draws More Believers."

Nothstine also stressed the importance of how religion serves as a buffer against state power and that the Church serves as the conscience of the state. He elaborated on some of the messianic themes in presidential campaigns including the recent 2008 election of President Barack Obama. "It may seem interesting that so many on the left, that often cherish the fully secular state and a secular worldview, put so many religious and messianic connotations into Obama. But this is consistent

with increases in secularism," declared Nothstine.

Nothstine also talked about the importance of faith in America today and throughout history:

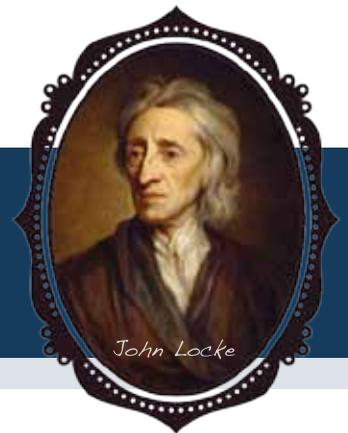
Religion raises the deeper issues and asks the great questions that mankind has asked throughout the ages. It makes us look up and calls us out of ourselves. And any society where religion and faith is strong then it will naturally extend to all aspects of that society including the political realm.

The John Locke Foundation was created in 1990 as an independent, nonprofit think tank that would work "for truth, for freedom, and for the future of North Carolina." The Foundation is named for John Locke (1632-1704), an English philosopher whose writings inspired Thomas Jefferson and the other American Founders.



credit: Wikimedia Commons

Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States.



ACTON in the News

"When one generation borrows what cannot be expected to be paid in the next generation, such a civilization is at a crossroads."

—Excerpted from Rev. Robert Sirico's interview in *The Washington Times*.

Dr. Samuel Gregg

Title: *Irony of Ironies: Vatican II Triumphs Over Moribund Modernity*
Publisher: *Crisis Magazine*
Date: 8.13.12

Michael Miller

Title: *Poverty*
Program: *Christ and the City*
Air Date: 8.13.12

Rev. Robert Sirico

Title: *5 Questions with Fr. Sirico*
Publisher: *The Washington Times*
Date: 8.7.12

*Reminder***Help Acton Promote Freedom and Virtue!**

The Acton Institute depends on the generosity of supporters like you. If you have not donated to Acton, but enjoy *Acton Notes*, please consider helping us meet our goals! Your help makes possible our mission to promote a free and virtuous society. You may choose to donate using the envelope provided, or you may visit the Acton website to make a secure donation online. We send our heartfelt thanks to those who have been so generous in the past with your strategic support as well as your prayers. You have a broad vision and a generous heart.



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Acton Institute

Twenty-Second Annual Dinner

October 24, 2012

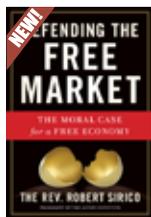
Featuring Eric Metaxas

New York Times Bestselling Author

Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids, MI

For more information, visit www.acton.org/dinner or call Kimberly at 616.454.3080

ACTON Book Shoppe



Defending the Free Market: The Moral Case for a Free Economy

By Rev. Robert Sirico

Socialism has been discredited. The totalitarian states of the twentieth century have collapsed. And we beneficiaries of the globalized world economy are grateful that we enjoy plentiful food, clothing, shelter and cheap electronics. But can any moral person really be for capitalism?

Hardcover 256 pages Sale \$25.00

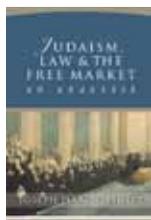


How then Should We Work?: Rediscovering the Biblical Doctrine of Work

By Hugh Whelchel

Many Christians struggle to make sense of their faith and work. Some are taught the only value in their work is evangelism among their coworkers and earning money to donate to the church and missions. With more than 25 years working in the business sector, Hugh Whelchel was just that guy.

Softcover 172 pages Sale \$14.00



Judaism, Law & The Free Market

By Joseph Isaac Lifshitz

Judaism and Jewish religious, legal, and moral principles are often regarded as translating into support for broadly social democratic economic positions. Looking, however, at the Jewish treatment of themes such as property rights, social welfare, charity, generosity, competition, and concepts of order...

Softcover 142 pages Original Price \$8.00 Sale \$7.00



The Poor Will Be Glad: Joining the Revolution to Lift the World Out of Poverty

By Peter Greer and Phil Smith

A compelling call to carry God's mercy and compassion to the hurting people of this world This eminently practical book by two leading experts in the field of poverty reduction offers a clear plan to help ordinary Christians translate their compassion into thoughtful action.

Hardcover 288 pages Original Price \$16.00 Sale \$14.00

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How then Should We Work?: Rediscovering the Biblical Doctrine of Work	\$14.00		
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The Poor Will Be Glad: Joining the Revolution to Lift the World Out of Poverty	\$14.00		

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Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
Oct 22-23	Free Markets with Solidarity and Sustainability Dr. Jordan Ballor and Mr. Kishore Jayabalan to present	Washington D.C.
Oct 24	Acton Institute's 22nd Annual Dinner	Grand Rapids, MI
Oct 25-27	Liberty and Markets Conference: Freedom and Responsibility in the Thought of Max Weber	Grand Rapids, MI
Nov 8	Chicago Open Mic Night	Chicago, IL
Nov 15	2013 Acton University Registration Opens university.acton.org	Grand Rapids, MI
Nov 15-17	Liberty and Markets Conference: Religion and Liberty: Acton and Tocqueville	Grand Rapids, MI
Nov 29	Calihan Lecture and Novak Award Presentation: Society, Economy and Culture: Challenges for the West <i>Giovanni Patriarca Novak Award winner</i>	Rome, Italy

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