

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

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(CNS photo/L'Osservatore Romano via Reuters)

“Connecting good intentions with sound economics”

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President's Message

"This document will bear fruit both in scholarship and in cultural and economic development."

A primary message of the Acton Institute has been the essential complementarity of freedom and virtue, each depending on the other and each reinforcing the other. It was thrilling to see these themes at the core of the new encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, by Pope Benedict XVI.

After many months of rumors about how this document would amount to a devastating attack on "neoliberal economics," the socialist left ended up less than thrilled by its contents. It is not a political document. There is a school of thought that believes the answer to all moral problems is institutional change. In some ways, this is the core belief of liberation theology: collectivizing ownership will lead to the perfection of humans. *Caritas* specifically rejects this view. The pope's answer to the modern moral crisis is not the overthrow of the market in favor of socialism. The answer is in spiritual conversion which puts the Gospel and the concern for the common good at the center of the culture.

The pope makes it clear that the market is not something against which society must protect itself. On the contrary, the free market has lifted billions of people out of poverty, and continued economic development is essential for promoting an ethic of life.

"The pope speaks eloquently about the world and responsibilities of business, and underscores the immense challenges facing business in a globalizing world. "Business activity," he writes, "has a human significance, prior to its professional one."

He writes that the market "is shaped by the cultural configurations which define it and give it direction. It is not the instrument that must be called to account, but individuals, their moral conscience and their personal and social responsibility."

This document will bear fruit both in scholarship and in cultural and economic development. Stay tuned to our work in this area, and please continue your support of our vital work.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Robert A. Sirico".

Rev. Robert A. 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.

ACTONINSTITUTE

161 Ottawa Avenue NW, Suite 301 • Grand Rapids, MI 49503 • USA • www.acton.org

Acton University Receives High Praise

The 2009 Acton University attracted nearly four hundred participants for the four-day conference in downtown Grand Rapids on June 16-19. One of the many highlights of Acton University this year was professor Robert P. George's keynote lecture on natural law. George is the McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence and director of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions at Princeton University. George's lecture is available on the Acton PowerBlog in its entirety.

Numerous writers on blogs and posters on social networking websites also praised the Acton Institute for the quality of the classes and lectures during Acton University. R.J. Moeller says on his "Voice in the Wilderness" blog:

Because of my admitted inability to thoroughly pay homage to all the things Acton does, I want to focus like a laser beam on what I believe to be the most important service they provide: an articulation and defense of traditional, Judeo-Christian, conservative values

and principles in the economic, political, and cultural realm.

At the heart of everything Acton does there is a convergence of faith, reason, ideas, facts, and the practicality of any ideology, belief system, or solution must display for it to even be considered as a legitimate option.

Fr. John Zuhlsdorf, who authors an extremely popular Catholic blog, said of Acton University:

This is perhaps the most authentically ecumenical gathering I have ever been to. There are many Protestant and Catholic clergy, including Bishop Rifam from Brazil. It promises to be a rich few days.

The Acton Institute provided 100 travel scholarships to students from across the country and overseas. In total, forty-six countries were represented at Acton University this year. A twenty-nine person faculty, drawn from academia, business, and a number of religious traditions, taught the courses.

"It promises to be a rich few days."



Professor Robert P. George gives the keynote lecture



From Our Conference Participants

I would like to express my gratitude for your generosity and kindness in supporting the work of Acton. It has allowed me to participate in this year's Acton University.

—Jorge Smith
Knox Theological Seminary

I just want to take this time to say thank you for giving me the chance to learn at Acton and engage in great dialogue with wonderful people.

—Jeffrey Choi
Westminster Theological Seminary

Building Networks at AU

Acton Institute together with the Kern Family Foundation brought thirty Protestant seminary professors together from all corners of the United States. The fellows met for a special reception to begin networking and discussing ideas at Acton University. The seminaries represented were Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Haggard School of Theology at Azusa Pacific University, Grand Rapids Theological Seminary at Cornerstone University, Calvin Seminary, Mid-America Reformed Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Bethel University, Northern Baptist Seminary, Ashland Theological Seminary, Denver Seminary, North Park Seminary, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Houston Baptist Seminary, and Grace College and Theological Seminary.

The Robert and Marie Hansen Foundation, with the Acton Institute, sponsored twenty-five Catholic High School Honor Roll teachers throughout the United States, allowing them to attend Acton University. The Hansen fellows were invited to a private luncheon on the Friday of the conference,

I take the occasion to pay special attention to Calvin's concern for articulating the antiquity, and therefore the catholicity, of the Reformation.

Among the factors that converts from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism very often cite as a major influence on their move is the novelty of the former compared with the antiquity of the latter. That is, undoubtedly, an important point that ought to be addressed by concerned Protestants.

But I argue, in continuity with the Reformers, I think, that this concern is best answered in the first place not by discounting the value or the importance of antiquity, but rather by doing justice to the claims of the Reformation itself to representing the ancient and catholic faith.

He also discussed the importance of Calvin's quincentenary and his piece in *First Things* on Al Kresta's radio program. Ballor is a Ph.D. candidate in historical theology at Calvin Theological Seminary and a Doktorand in reformation history at the University of Zurich.

ACTON News



Hansen Fellows at Acton University



John Calvin

followed by a special presentation by Dr. Stephen Haessler from the Hansen Foundation.

John Calvin's Quincentenary

Jordan Ballor, the associate editor of *The Journal of Markets and Morality*, published a noteworthy piece in *First Things* titled "Calvin, Conversions, and Catholicity." June 10, 2009, marked the five-hundred year anniversary of John Calvin's birth. The occasion was marked by significant celebration across the world in Reformed communities. Ballor said in his piece in *First Things*:

Acton Social Networking Surges

The Acton Institute has seen tremendous growth on the social networking sites Facebook and Twitter. One of the reasons for the surge is the timely and expert commentary Acton has provided on Pope Benedict XVI's new encyclical.

Acton has over one thousand fans on Facebook and over three hundred followers on Twitter. Intern Louie Glinzak, who has led much of the effort, said, "Social networks allow Acton to instantly inform our friends on publications, content, research, and news appearances by the Acton Institute."

Acton Shows Expertise on *Caritas in Veritate*

The Acton Institute has been a leading commentator on Pope Benedict XVI's new encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*. Whether it's media appearances or web content related to the encyclical, the number of Acton Catholic experts and their ability to discuss and offer expertise on the encyclical is proving to be extremely valuable, especially in the high-speed news cycle of today.

Rev. Robert Sirico, president of the Acton Institute wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*:

In his much anticipated third encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate* (Love in Truth), Pope Benedict XVI does not focus on specific systems of economics—he is not attempting to shore up anyone's political agenda. He is rather concerned with morality and the theological foundation of culture. The context is, of course, a global economic crisis—a crisis that's taken place in a moral vacuum, where the love of truth has been abandoned in favor of a crude materialism. The pope urges that this crisis become “an opportunity for discernment, in which to shape a new vision for the future.”

Furthermore, Acton has a Rome office that has

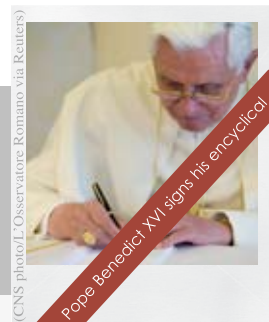
played a considerable role in its position to influence international media. Staff members from the Rome office were able to attend the official press conference on the encyclical at the Vatican. The Acton Institute has catalogued all their commentary, blogs, interviews, and information on *Caritas in Veritate* on a special resource page, which can be found on the Acton website.

Summer interns at the Acton Institute have been busy helping to provide analysis of the new encyclical. Matt Cavedon, a junior at Harvard University, has been invaluable at providing timely content and resources. Cavedon says of his work experience:

It has been a pleasure to work at Acton and have an opportunity to dig into the theological meaning of *Caritas in Veritate*. Contributing to the PowerBlog has allowed me to engage with questions like the proper role of international authority and how our dignity fits into theories of natural rights. Without the expertise and perspective provided by Acton's scholars, I never could have analyzed the encyclical in the ways that I did.



Rome, Italy, Home of Istitutio Acton



ACTON in the News

Simply put, to this pope's mind, there is no just or moral system without just and moral people.

—Excerpted from Rev. Robert Sirico article in *The Wall Street Journal*.

Rev. Robert Sirico

Title: The Pope on “Love in Truth”
Publisher: *The Wall Street Journal*
Date: 7.13.09

Ray Nothstine

Title: On Health Care Reform, Veterans First
Publisher: *Florence Morning News*
Date: 6.28.09

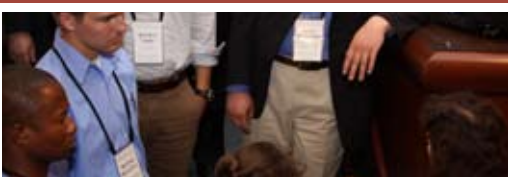
Rev. Robert Sirico

Title: Hate the Sin, Tax the Sinner?
Publisher: *The American*
Date: 5.20.09

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.



ACTON Book Shoppe



A Challenge to Freedom: The Financial Crisis and the Way Forward *produced by Acton Institute*

A majority of Americans are blaming the free market and running to the government to fix things. They fail to realize that we haven't had a free market. We've had a managed economy, and government intervention. This collection of speeches sets the record straight.

CD 6 pack Original Price \$40.00 Sale \$25.00

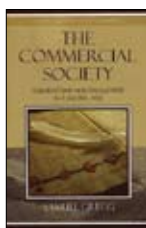


And Why Not? Morality and Business

by François Michelin

This book-length extended interview provides fascinating insights into the mind of François Michelin, the former managing partner of Michelin Group. He sat down with two journalists and discussed his management philosophy and his deeply felt Christian faith.

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The Commercial Society

by Samuel Gregg

Guided by the thoughts of Alexis de Tocqueville, Samuel Gregg's *The Commercial Society* identifies and explores the key foundational elements that must exist within a society for commercial order to take root and flourish.

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Pope Benedict XVI's Vision for Europe

by Samuel Gregg

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Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
Sept 17-19	Toward a Free and Virtuous City (City FAVS)	Weehawken, New Jersey
Sept 17-20	Toward a Free and Virtuous Society	Sonntagberg, Austria
Oct 15-18	Toward a Free and Virtuous Society	Ludlow, Washington
Oct 29	Acton Institute Annual Dinner	Grand Rapids, Michigan

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