

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

March / April 2010, Volume 20, Number 2



“Connecting good intentions with sound economics”

In This Issue

- American Thought & The Acton Lecture Series • Acton on Tap
- Acton Luncheon with Rev. Sirico • Liberating Black Theology

President's Message

“What American health care needs are more market-based incentives and signals...”

Those who hoped that socialism would come to America with the election of President Obama are seeing their ambitions fulfilled to a degree. But the massive government takeover of private sectors of the economy has produced a counter-movement that has formed in many sectors of American life. Not all of them have taken a form I like but they have managed to push back against the attempt to centralize the economy and impose a culturally left-wing agenda from the heights of power.

Consider the health-care initiative that was rammed through Congress. The new law forces Americans to buy government approved insurance. Most Americans understand that the wrong kind of legislation in this sector will rob people of the right to choose quality health care, and this takeover will effectively nationalize the sector of health providers in the same way the government has gained control over major insurance providers and car manufacturers. It should be no surprise that the attempt has spawned public protests all over the country.

The controversy has helped fuel a more thoughtful movement to consider the way in which health care can be reformed. Unfortunately the partisan bill ignored attempts to open up markets and competition across state lines, and many other suggestions that would have helped contain costs and vastly improve quality and access. What American health care needs are more market-based incentives and signals, not fewer. One can hope that when this period ends, we'll have discovered truly productive ways in which the system can be reformed toward markets and away from the existing socialist structures.

Socialism of all sorts makes every system worse, no matter how overdue reform was in this sector. It is a lesson that religious opinion-makers need to learn and apply in many areas. The Acton Institute has been the font of new and genuinely helpful ideas to make real progress. Thank you for your assistance with this mission.

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



Sincerely,

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

Rev. Robert A. Sirico, President

ACTONINSTITUTE

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

American Thought & The Acton Lecture Series

Dr. John Pinhiero and Mr. Michael Miller delivered Acton Lecture Series addresses in downtown Grand Rapids in January and February. On January 21, Dr. Pinhiero spoke on “Virtue and Liberty in the American Founding.” Dr. Pinhiero is associate professor of history and director of Catholic Studies at Aquinas College in Michigan.

He quoted Lord Acton who said, “Liberty is not the power of doing what we like, but the right of being able to do what we ought.” He said Lord Acton’s thought is keeping in the tradition of Augustine, who stressed the freedom to incorporate morality in our decisions. Dr. Pinhiero discussed the political philosophy of those who founded this nation. “In the eighteenth century most every founder believed liberty was a gift from God. They believed we possess liberty simply by being human,” he said. He also talked about the founders views on the French Revolution and the thinking of George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison.

“The Acton Lecture Series began in 1991 as a service to the local community.”

Dr. Pinhiero declared, “All the founders believed virtue was critical to government.”

Michael Miller’s lecture “Does Capitalism Destroy Culture?” discussed the positive and negative impact of capitalism in society today. Miller pointed out that it’s not just Christians that are worried about culture and that it is just not a right or left issue. Many are also worried about rampant consumerism and the perceived danger of technology. Miller also addressed the Southern Agrarians and their conservative critique of industrialization.

Miller noted that it was much easier to blame capitalism for our woes, “because it is much easier to see and things like unemployment are very measurable.” Miller said that we have something much worse than capitalism, “We have a managerial capitalist economy, with a secular progressive culture and political centralization, which is a potent and dangerous mix for society, culture, and human flourishing.”



Dr. John Pinhiero speaks on the American Founding



Acton's Michael Miller speaks on Capitalism

From Our Conference Participants

The Acton Institute conference is something I will never forget. I thank you for supporting such a valuable ministry and for providing me with this enriching and exciting experience.

—Lauren Hug
Austin, Texas

As I prepare to enter graduate studies in economic policy this coming fall, I am grateful for my experience with the Acton Institute because it has, through your generosity, provided me with a focus and motivation for the future.

—Zachary Foreman
Seattle, Washington

Acton on Tap

A large and engaged crowd enjoyed the launch of a new event sponsored by the Acton Institute in February. Conceived as a way to encourage fellowship and discussion in a casual atmosphere, Acton on Tap features a speaker who briefly introduces a theme for the evening and leads some group discussion. These aspects complement ongoing informal and casual discussion throughout the evening.

For the inaugural Acton on Tap, associate editor Jordan Ballor introduced the theme, “The End of Liberty.” This topic, focusing on the idea of “end” as “purpose” or “goal,” was inspired by the comments of Lord Acton: “Liberty and good government do not exclude each other, and there are excellent reasons why they should go together. Liberty is not a means to a higher political end. It is itself the highest political end.” For Lord Acton, liberty serves the purpose of allowing the realization of other ends, the goals and purposes of civil society. “It is not for the sake of a good public administration” that liberty is necessary, says Acton, “but for security in the pursuit of the highest objects of civil society,

tions, clubs, and schools, to “play the game” of life and human flourishing.

Follow-up discussion included reference to the difference between the view of the civil magistrate in a Christendom and post-Christendom context, with special comparison between the views of Lord Acton and John Calvin on political authority. A group of over fifty attendees came from as far as Ann Arbor on Michigan’s southeast side to Derby Station in East Grand Rapids. The next Acton on Tap is scheduled for Tuesday, March 31, and will be hosted by Rudy Carrasco. Rudy is an associate director at Partners Worldwide, a Christian non-profit focused on eliminating poverty through job creation. Discussion will be around the question, “Must social justice and capitalism be mutually exclusive?”

Acton Luncheon with Rev. Sirico

Rev. Robert Sirico will give an address at the Newberry Library in Chicago on April 29. The title of the address for the event is “Does Social Justice Require Socialism?” Rev. Sirico will discuss the increasing calls for government intervention in

ACTON News



Jordan Ballor leading the discussion



Acton on Tap crowd enjoying the evening

and of private life.” Foremost among these objects is the goal of religion, or as the Westminster divines put it, the chief end of humankind to “glorify God and enjoy him forever.”

Ballor likened the role of government in Acton’s conception to the role of a good referee in sports. “The best games are usually the ones in which you do not notice the referees,” said Ballor. The referees are there, doing their jobs, but they are not the center of attention; the game itself is. In the same way a government that promotes liberty opens up and protects space for other institutions, like the family, the church, charities, voluntary organiza-

financial market regulation, health care, education reform, and economic stimulus in the name of “social justice.”

Mr. Joseph A. Morris, who is the chief executive officer of the Lincoln Legal Foundation, has agreed to serve as emcee for the event. Mr. Morris served under President Reagan as assistant attorney general of the United States.

If you would like to attend the Chicago luncheon or find out more about this event please contact Kim Brink in the Acton office at 616.454.3080 or kbrink@acton.org.

Liberating Black Theology

Liberating Black Theology, the new book from Acton research fellow Dr. Anthony Bradley, was recently published by Crossway Books. In addition to his work as an Acton research fellow, Bradley is also a professor at King's College in New York.

Bradley, whose Ph.D. dissertation was titled *Victimology in Black Liberation Theology*, was interviewed about his book in February for *World Magazine*. Bradley told *World*:

If theology emphasizes “victim status” and not something more ontological, the remedy is often short-sighted: When your theology is nothing but politics and sociology, it doesn't help you when you get cancer or your husband leaves you. If your theology of liberation is grounded in the Imago Dei, you're much more open to looking at the multiple ways in which the Fall affects human life.

Bradley has provided valuable work for Acton because of his extensive research on black liberation theology. During the 2008 election he was a host on several cable news shows discussing the

theology of Jeremiah Wright. Wright was President Barack Obama's pastor at Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago. Bradley penned a series of essays on Black Liberation Theology for the newsletter published by Glenn Beck and was also a guest on Beck's 2008 CNN show. In his work he has also been a guest on Fox News, CourtTV Radio, and has had a constant presence on National Public Radio.

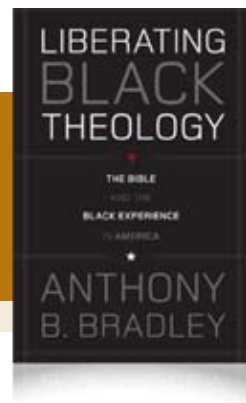
He is a frequent contributor of commentary for the Acton Institute where his research focuses on the ties between culture, theology, and economics.

In a video promoting his book Bradley says, “I wrote *Liberating Black Theology* because these theological pioneers veered off course. In the book I suggest a way forward that maintains the voice of historical Christianity to both personal sin and structural sin.”

Bradley's book can be purchased through the Acton BookShoppe. Please check the BookShoppe page for information on how to place an order.



Dr. Anthony Bradley



ACTON in the News

Yet American cultural life is increasingly described by what Diane West called “the death of the grown-up.”

—Excerpted from Michael Miller's article in *The Detroit News*.

Michael Miller

Title: Olympics give fans moral agony of defeat
Publisher: *The Detroit News*
Date: 03.09.10

Kishore Jayabalan

Title: Italy Takes on Youtube over Google Bullying
Program: *Vatican Radio*
Air Date: 02.25.10

Rev. Robert A. Sirico

Title: Capitalism: A Love Story
Program: *BBC Nightwaves*
Air Date: 02.22.10

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.



SAVE THE DATE

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF PROMOTING FAITH AND FREEDOM

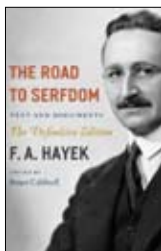
ACTON INSTITUTE ANNUAL DINNER

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2010

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

MR. RICHARD M. DEVOS TO RECEIVE THE FAITH & FREEDOM AWARD

ACTON Book Shoppe

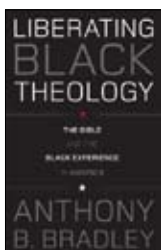


Road to Serfdom

by Friedrich von Hayek

This classic by one of the 20th century's leading libertarian thinkers has established itself beside the works of Orwell and others as a timeless meditation on the relationship between human freedom and government authority. Hayek argues that empowering government with increasing economic control leads not to utopia but to horrors such those seen in Nazi Germany.

Paperback 320 pages Original Price \$15.99 Sale \$13.00

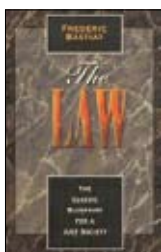


Liberating Black Theology: The Bible and the Black Experience in America

by Anthony B. Bradley

Anthony Bradley introduces audiences to black liberation theology and its spiritual and social impact. He starts with James Cone's proposition that the "victim" mind-set is inherent within black consciousness. Bradley then explores how such biblical misinterpretation has historically hindered black churches in addressing the diverse issues of their communities.

Paperback 208 pages Original Price \$18.99 Sale \$17.99



The Law

by Frederick Bastiat

In *The Law*, Bastiat states that "each of us has a natural right - from God - to defend his person, his liberty, and his property". The State is a "substitution of a common force for individual forces" to defend this right. Bastiat defines two forms of plunder: "stupid greed and false philanthropy".

Paperback 79 pages Original Price \$5.00 Sale \$4.50

**For our fastest service and a complete list of titles,
visit www.acton.org/bookshoppe.**

	PRICE	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Road to Serfdom	\$13.00		
Liberating Black Theology: The Bible and the Black Experience in America	\$17.99		
The Law	\$4.50		

Make checks payable to "Acton Institute." For orders in the United States, Canada, and Mexico: for the first item, add US \$6.75 for shipping; plus US \$1.00 for each additional item. Overseas orders: US \$8.75 for the first item, plus US \$1.75 for each additional item.

Michigan residents add 6% sales tax _____

(see below for rates at left) Shipping _____

(enclose check or credit card information) Total _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Country _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Credit Card Number _____ Security Code _____

Mastercard Visa Am Ex Signature _____ Expiration Date _____

Call 616-454-3080 **Fax** 616-454-9454 **Mail** Acton Institute 161 Ottawa NW, Suite 301, Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
Apr 29	Chicago Luncheon Rev. Robert Sirico to speak	Chicago, Illinois
May 6	Acton Lecture Series Mr. Joseph Morris to speak	Grand Rapids, Michigan
Jun 15-18	Acton University 2010	Grand Rapids, Michigan

STAFF ACTIVITIES/DEADLINES

Date	Event	Location
Apr 21	Legatus Dr. Samuel Gregg to speak	Ann Arbor, Michigan
May 19	Third Acton conference in the Poverty, Entrepreneurship and Integral Development series Rev. Robert Sirico, Dr. Samuel Gregg, and Mr. Michael Miller to attend	Krakow, Poland

Acton Institute • 161 Ottawa Avenue NW, Suite 301 • Grand Rapids, MI 49503 • USA

ACTON
notes