

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

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“Connecting good intentions with sound economics”

In This Issue

- “Davos Capitalism” replaces Free Markets • Profile: Rev. Uchechukwu Aladi
- R&L Interviews Governor Mark Sanford • Acton University: A Closer Look

President's Message

"I know of no way of stopping these trends that is more effective than genuine spiritual renewal."

Many thinkers through the ages have noted that we face a choice between holding a robust faith in God or putting faith in man and institutions such as the state.

I was particularly struck by this when President Barack Obama gave a speech on how to restructure the automotive industry in the United States. He denied that the government wanted to run General Motors, but he fired its CEO, dictated the salary of the new CEO, and gave a series of specific instructions concerning its operations. Why should anyone believe that a government official with no business experience at all knows how to run a company that employs a quarter of a million people with distribution outlets in 140 countries?

In 1974, F.A. Hayek gave his lecture on the occasion of his Nobel Prize, in which he zeroed in on the tendency of statesmen and scientists to believe that they can gather and process enough information about human and economic affairs to presume that they can manage complex structures as well as those with a direct knowledge of the particulars. He called such pretense of knowledge the major superstition of our time.

He concluded his speech with an ominous warning: The student of society needs a lesson in humility which should guard him against becoming an accomplice in men's fatal striving to control society. This striving which makes him not only a tyrant over his fellows, may also make him the destroyer of a civilization which no brain has designed but which has grown from the free efforts of millions of individuals.

We live in another age of faith, but it is a false faith, one that trusts powerful people in government to accomplish what they cannot and will not accomplish. I know of no way of stopping these trends that is more effective than genuine spiritual renewal. Helping the work of the Acton Institute is a way of shoring up authentic faith in a way that protects us against the false faith of statism.

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

“Davos Capitalism” replaces Free Markets

Coining the phrase “Davos Capitalism,” Acton’s director of programs Mr. Michael Miller spoke at the April 2 Acton Lecture Series in downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Defending the strength of free markets, Miller explained the meaning behind “Davos Capitalism”:

We haven’t had free-market capitalism—we’ve had Davos capitalism, a managerial capitalism run by self proclaimed enlightened elite politicians, business leaders, technology gurus, bureaucrats, academics, and celebrities—all gathered at a posh resort in Davos, Switzerland, for the World Economic Forum where each year they try to make capitalism smarter or more humane—or in Bill Gates’s words last year at Davos—more “creative.”

Miller called the financial crisis a “symptom of a larger and deeper moral and civilizational crisis.” He spoke about the need for spiritual renewal and a greater need to stand for liberty and responsibility. Quoting Lord Acton, Miller said “liberty is a delicate fruit of a mature civili-

zation.” His call for renewal included “the work of cultivating a moral culture—one committed to truth, responsibility and a spiritual depth that the Davos man and the secular elite cannot provide.”

“Liberty is a delicate fruit of a mature civilization.”

Miller’s lecture touched upon government intrusion into the life of the individual, overregulation, and cultural and societal critiques. Miller tied much of his critique to the famed French political thinker Alexis de Tocqueville. He said of Tocqueville:

Tocqueville worried that liberal individualism and democracy’s focus on equality could have dark and dangerous effects on society creating a type of man, society, and government that would become ripe for a new type of despotism—different than the old type of despotism—a softer despotism but one that enervates the life and vitality from man and reduces citizens to children and adolescents and ultimately destroys the potential for freedom.

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Mr. Michael Miller defends the free market

From Our Conference Participants

This conference gave greater shape to convictions I have long held. I have several friends who I plan to encourage to attend in the future.

—Rev. Steven Olson
Bellville, Texas

Indeed I was greatly impacted in numerous ways and I thank God for the ministry of the Acton Institute. May God bless your community.

—Rev. James Kwah, Jr.
Fort Worth, Texas

Profile:

Rev. Uchechukwu Aladi

Rev. Uchechukwu Aladi is a priest from the Diocese of Aba in southern Nigeria. Presently, with the help of Acton's Calihan fellowship program, Rev. Aladi is pursuing a doctoral degree in Catholic social doctrine at Rome's prestigious Pontifical Lateran University in order to become a dynamic and efficient instrument of God in the service of the church and humanity.

Father Aladi's Ph.D. thesis at the Lateran University is titled "The Notion of Human Capital: A Reflection on its Theological and Pastoral Perspectives," which aims to discover how Nigerians are participative and free when contributing to the growth of the economy.

Aladi discussed the benefits to his education and studies through his participation in Acton's Rome conference and seminars. He declared:

Participating in relevant conferences has enhanced my studies, particularly the Acton

R&L Interviews Governor

Mark Sanford

In a new edition of the Acton Institute's quarterly publication *Religion & Liberty*, South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford discusses his criticism of government stimulus plans, the risk of a "dollar crash," and his support for free market solutions to the economic crisis.

"We've been on a spending binge. And if you get ahead of yourself with regard to spending, you're going to have to deal with the other side of the binge," said the governor. He discussed the danger of out-of-control spending by state government that is only being further enabled by federal lawmakers. "It's not sustainable. The idea is that you can just throw some federal dollars into that unsustainable mix. But all you do is delay big structural reforms that are absolutely essential to California, for instance, being on firm financial footing," he said.

Governor Sanford addressed the role of religion in the public square. He was critical of those who

ACTON News



Rev. Uchechukwu Aladi



Governor Mark Sanford

Institute's "Philanthropy and Human Rights: Creating Space for Caritas in Civil Society" and "Finance, Globalization and Morality: Twenty-First Century Challenge," held last year in Rome. These conferences assured [us] that Christian love lives on in the market economy . . . and with particular consideration for the poor. The market is a sure means for global human development.

Rev. Aladi offers some valuable thoughts on the global economic crisis. "When greed, unbridled self-interest, and materialism coupled with mistaken governmental policies leave no room for Christian love in an economic system, a vacuum of morality ensues," says Aladi.

attempted to separate their own faith influence from their public position:

I would also say the Bible says in Revelation, "Be hot. Be cold. But don't be lukewarm" [Rev. 3:15]. And there's too many political candidates who walk around completely in the middle—completely in neutral. With regard not only to faith, but with regard to policy. And that's what people are sick of. Everything's gotten so watered down.

You can read the full interview in the current issue of *Religion & Liberty* or online at the Acton Institute website www.acton.org.

Acton University: A Closer Look

Mention the names Jim and Marie Gallagher to Acton University alumni, and you will see warm smiles come to their faces. The two Illinois residents are a staple of the conference, and have, in fact, attended every year of the program's existence. Even the most junior Acton staff members know the couple by name.

Jim and Marie are not theologians or economists. However, Acton University provides the couple with an opportunity to participate actively in an intense economic or theological conversation with a young Venezuelan activist one minute and a Texas mega church pastor the next.

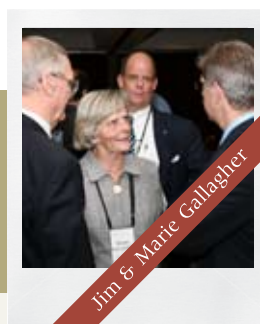
At the 2008 conference, Jim gave a luncheon invocation and spoke briefly about his own history. As a naval pilot turned businessman turned painter, Jim was asked to share his wisdom and experience in a more formal context with the students and seminarians who make up 50 percent of the conference.

The Gallaghers turn Acton University into a family retreat. Their son Kevin accompanies them to

the conference. They share and explore a worldview centered on the Christian faith expressed through ordered liberty, beliefs which connect morality with the working of free-market economics. "At this dark time what could the world need more?" they ask.

Four years ago, Jim sent Rev. Sirico a letter, after receiving a note from Rev. Sirico elaborating on the mission and the history of the Acton Institute. In it he wrote, "What a story you have to tell. Marie and I are proud to think of ourselves as part of that story." As donors, they have certainly been part of Acton's story. As friends and active participants in the fight for truth and freedom, they continue to help us write it.

This year's Acton University, which takes place between June 16-19, offers an expanded curriculum and faculty. If you would like to attend the conference or learn more about Acton University, please email Kara Eagle at keagle@acton.org or call her in the Grand Rapids office at 616-454-3080.



ACTON in the News

Economic freedom is necessary because it allows people to take risks and create material prosperity for a flourishing life.

—Excerpted from Michael Miller's article in *Real Clear Politics*.

Dr. Samuel Gregg

Title: The Problem With Government Mortgage Relief
Publisher: *The Bulletin*
Date: 3.30.09

Michael Miller

Title: Davos Capitalism: Adam Smith's Nightmare
Program: *Real Clear Politics*
Air Date: 3.28.09

Jordan Ballor

Title: The Appalling State of the Fourth Estate
Publisher: *The Bulletin*
Date: 3.19.09

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.



Register Now for the 2009 Conference June 16-19

Registration for Acton University is already filling up! If you or someone you know would like to learn about the foundations of a society sustained by freedom and virtue, apply today at www.acton.org/ActonU



ACTON UNIVERSITY

Grand Rapids, MI

- ✓ **Design** your own curriculum.
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- ✓ **Deepen** your understanding of the integration of sound economics, rigorous philosophy, and Judeo-Christian faith.

ACTON Book Shoppe



Soft Despotism: Populism, The Financial Crisis, and the Return of Big Government

by Michael Miller

Michael Miller has a master's degree from Nagoya University's Graduate School of International Development and a master's degree in philosophy from Franciscan University where he wrote "Karol Wojtyla/John Paul II & Karl Marx on Alienation & Self-Creation through Labor."

CD 60 mins Original Price \$11.95 Sale \$10.00



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Great Challenges: Greater Opportunities

by Rev. Robert A. Sirico

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Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
May 7	The Importance of Character in a Free Society Mr. Lawrence W. Reed to speak at Acton Lecture Series	Grand Rapids, MI
June 16-19	Acton University	Grand Rapids, MI

STAFF ACTIVITIES/DEADLINES

Date	Event	Location
May 14	Markets and Morality in Crisis Dr. Samuel Gregg to Lecture	Bratislava, Slovakia
May 15	Free Markets and Eastern Europe Panel Presentation with Dr. Samuel Gregg to speak	Bratislava, Slovakia
June 11	The Financial Crisis Dr. Samuel Gregg to Lecture	Vilnius, Lithuania
June 11-14	Liberty Fund Scholars Colloquium Dr. Samuel Gregg to be discussion leader	Vilnius, Lithuania

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