

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

May / June 2012, Volume 22, Number 3



“connecting good intentions with sound economics”

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President's Message

"We were all there to discuss economic freedom and its incredible contribution to human flourishing."

The last day at Acton University was one of those once-in-a-life-time-moments when beautiful things come together to show us the possibilities of a world where faith and liberty are both cherished. It was a larger event than ever before (close to 800 attendees) and also more diverse.

We were all there to discuss the free and virtuous society and its incredible contribution to human flourishing. That's a huge topic. Rather than attempt to codify one approach, Acton University allows the faculty and students to explore many different approaches. There is a way in which the whole subject of human freedom covers much of what we call life itself in the entirety of the material realm. Therefore, it makes sense that we would never finish exploring all its ramifications.

The goal, then, is not to force some predetermined method of thinking. We take a different route of exploring the full range of thought within what we call the liberal tradition (liberal in the older sense of that term). It has universal implications, because it is undeniably true that human freedom is the essential condition for rising prosperity, invention, improved living standards, and a reduction of suffering in this world. There is a holiness to this work as we come together as a community to uplift the poor, walk in the light of the truth, and increase our own knowledge of God in the world.

This kind of exchange is essential if we are to move forward. Human liberty is a universal human right. This right is slipping away in the United States in so many ways, even as we are seeing this right expand in other nations of the world. We need to learn to celebrate the victories of others over despotism even as we develop courage to stand up for our own freedoms here at home.

I was also very pleased that my new book *Defending The Free Market* was released at this event. I've been deeply touched by the positive response that I've received, and invigorated in my work going forward. Thank you for everything you have done to encourage me over the years, and all that you have done to support the hugely important work of the Acton Institute.

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 Sirico". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rev. Robert Sirico, President

ACTON INSTITUTE

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

Largest Ever Acton University

AU 2012, the largest Acton University in the history of the institute, was a booming success. Just over 70 countries were represented and nearly 800 participants attended the June 12-15 conference in Grand Rapids, Mich. Fifty faculty members of Acton University taught courses at the conference. Over 70 lectures from the conference are now available for download at www.acton.org for only 99 cents for each lecture. The 99-cent price is available for a limited time.

Keynote speakers included Mr. Michael Novak, AEI president Dr. Arthur Brooks, Mr. Eric Metaxas, and Rev. Robert Sirico. In his Friday the 15th keynote lecture, Father Sirico declared, “When freedom is divorced from faith, both freedom & faith suffer.” He also stressed that markets and poverty are not in opposition, saying, “It’s not the market or the poor, it’s the market for the poor.”

Dave Doty, the author of *Eden’s Bridge: The Marketplace in Creation and Mission*, offered this endorsement of Acton University:

“One word of truth outweighs the world.”

I would suggest that anyone interested in the integration of their faith and economic issues, especially marketplace vocation and/or ministry, should check out the Acton website and seriously consider attending Acton University next summer. The seminars are diverse and insightful, the food and facilities are wonderful, and the people are intentional about advancing the Kingdom of God through marketplace and government relationships.

Religion & Liberty’s managing editor Ray Nothstine summed up the conference on the PowerBlog: “While there are certainly theological differences, we are all united and invigorated by the truth. And as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn himself declared, “One word of truth outweighs the world.”

Acton University is a unique, four-day exploration of the intellectual foundations of a free society. Guided by a distinguished, international faculty, Acton University is an opportunity to deepen your knowledge and integrate rigorous philosophy, Christian theology and sound economics.



Participants from Ethiopia pose at AU

From Our Conference Participants

The opportunity to attend this conference was a great blessing to me, and I’m certain that it will prove to have been a formative and significant aspect of my education.

—Lorraine Krall
Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

Acton’s clear teachings on the importance of a free market economy and the abuse of state power has helped me to think critically about my local situation, giving me ideas for practical application.

—Peter Park
Holy Apostles College and Seminary, Cromwell, CT

Ballor Publishes Book

The Acton Institute is a member of the Refo500 network, an international platform promoting the importance of the Protestant and Roman Catholic reformations of the 16th and 17th centuries. At the second Reformation Research Consortium (RefoRC) meeting held in Oslo in May, Acton Institute research fellow Jordan Ballor was presented with his newly published book, which appeared in the Refo500 Academic Series (R5AS) from the German publishers Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. At the event, Dr. Herman Selderhuis, director of Refo500 and editor of the series, noted the publication of Ballor's work, *Covenant, Causality, and Law: A Study in the Theology of Wolfgang Musculus*, which was the published version of his dissertation from the University of Zurich. Musculus (1497-1563) was an older contemporary of the reformer John Calvin, and was significant for his biblical commentaries as well as his Common Places (*Loci communes*). Ballor's study focuses on Musculus in his broader intellectual context and his importance for the development of the doctrine of covenant, divine and human causality, and natural as well as civil law. "Part of the theme

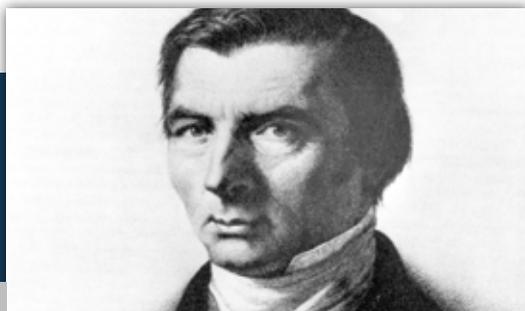
French economist and statesman, and emphasized Bastiat's relevance to many of the political and economic difficulties faced by the United States and the world today.

A main lesson to be learned from Bastiat, said Dr. Flanders, is that with regard to economic and political decision-making, intuition or basic common sense is often incorrect. All economic or political policies are proposed because they appear to be beneficial. There are certain immediate, obvious benefits to a policy, and so common sense would dictate that such a policy should be adopted. The difference between a good economist and a bad one, says Bastiat, is that the bad economist looks only at the positive outcome intended by a policy, which is usually immediate and seen, while the good one can predict also any possible negative outcome that most likely will be less immediate and less obvious. Bastiat expounds this lesson most directly in his short but famous work *The Seen and the Unseen*, but he also touches on it in *Economic Sophisms*, in which he refutes the idea that tariffs and other measures to restrict international trade are beneficial to the country imposing them.

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Ballor and Selderhuis at RefoRC



Frederic Bastiat

of this RefoRC conference is *Remembering the Dead*," said Ballor, "and this is fitting because it was one of my motivations to pursue this research project on Wolfgang Musculus. He is often not remembered nowadays, even though he was quite important in his own time and still has much to teach us today."

Capsule AU Lecture: Bastiat

On June 14, 2012, Dr. Todd Flanders gave a talk on Frederic Bastiat at Acton University 2012, held in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Dr. Todd Flanders summarized the writings and thought of the 19th-century

The central reality undergirding all of Bastiat's writings, said Dr. Flanders, is the fact that there is an objective truth above and beyond what any ruler or lawmaker may decide. God has given man intrinsic rights and has ordained for human beings to be social. Thus any economic or political system that attempts to benefit one sector of society at the expense of another, or to supersede man's inherent rights is erroneous and bound to fail. Bastiat summarized his own line of thought succinctly when he said that, "the solution to the temporal problems of humanity is to be found in liberty."

Reactions to *Defending the Free Market*

Positive reviews and press are pouring in for Rev. Robert Sirico's new book *Defending the Free Market: The Moral Case for a Free Economy*. Rev. Sirico, interviewed by Fox News and dozens of other media outlets, calls his book a summary of the core beliefs and ideals of the Acton Institute.

Dr. James E. Bruce, assistant professor of philosophy at John Brown University, stated in a review at the Library of Law and Liberty site that "Sirico puts into words things I'd never thought of, but wish I had. I found myself, while reading the book, trying to take a mental note of some of his very best one-liners, turns of phrase, and examples, in an effort to store them for future use."

On Fr. Z's blog, Fr. John Zuhlsdorf heralded the book saying, "Sirico's great strength is his ability to write with clarity and concision which enables me, decidedly *not* an economist, to follow easily what he is talking about."

"Sirico's great strength is his ability to write with clarity and concision..."

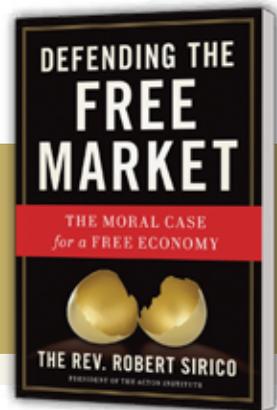
In a June interview with *Patheos*, Rev. Robert Sirico declared, "If we can achieve higher levels of morality, government can be easily limited. The paradox is that if we cannot achieve a higher level of moral culture, this is all the more reason to limit the government, because those who govern are not immaculately conceived."

On July 12, Rev. Robert Sirico will promote and discuss his book at the Heritage Foundation in Washington D.C. The event will be streamed live online from 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm.

Visit defendingthefreemarket.com for additional information about the book. All press mentions, reviews, and interviews of Rev. Sirico's new book are available at the website. The site also includes a free chapter available for download and a trailer about the book.



Rev. Robert Sirico



ACTON in the News

"Politics helps explain many governments' aversion to reform."

—Excerpted from Dr. Samuel Gregg's article in *The American Spectator*.

Dr. Samuel Gregg

Title: Unions and the Path to Irrelevancy
Publisher: *National Review Online*
Date: 6.11.12

Dr. Samuel Gregg

Title: Why Austerity Isn't Enough
Publisher: *American Spectator*
Date: 6.08.12

Rev. Robert Sirico

Title: Defending the Free Market
Program: *Your World with Neil Cavuto*
Air Date: 5.30.12

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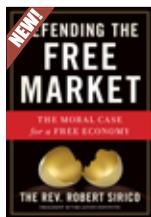
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Defending the Free Market: The Moral Case for a Free Economy

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?

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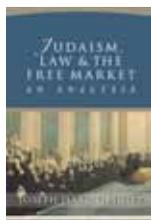


Trial by Fury: Restoring the Common Good in Tort Litigation

By Ronald J. Rychlak

American tort law has become the subject of public scrutiny in the last decades. The criticism cast against it is that its current state bears economic incentives for abuse. But the tort law system engenders an even greater evil: the perversion of the human person.

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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...

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A Prescription for Health Care Reform

By Donald P. Condit

Rising costs and demographic realities render the current American health care system unsustainable. The situation presents a particular challenge for Christians who recognize that access to health care is a basic requirement of a just social order.

Softcover 81 pages Original Price \$6.99 Sale \$6.00

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Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
Jul 24	Acton Lecture Series - The New Explorers Dwight Gibson to speak	Grand Rapids, MI
Sep 6-8	Thriving Churches; Flourishing Communities Economic Leadership in Urban Ministry	Weehawken, NJ
Sep 20	An Evening with Rev. Robert Sirico	Pittsburgh, PA
Oct 4	Houston Luncheon with Reverend Robert Sirico	Houston, TX
Oct 24	Acton Institute's 22nd Annual Dinner	Grand Rapids, MI

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