

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

September / October 2016, Volume 26, Number 5



“connecting good intentions with sound economics”

Nobel Laureate in Economics, Vernon Smith (on right), answers questions following his plenary lecture at Acton University 2016.

In This Issue

- Acton Institute gets top ratings on Charity Navigator • Acton updating and redesigning website
- Former interns share their experience at Acton • New Acton Alumni Program launching

President's Message

Spring and autumn have served as poetic inspiration since time immemorial. Spring because of its promises of growth and productivity, and autumn because of the reaping of the harvest in preparation for the fallow months of winter. Perhaps that's why I see the scheduling of Acton's Annual Dinner every October as a coincidence that is both happy and possessing poetic and spiritual significance.

"Lawmakers often—too often—get it wrong, whether administering charity or health care."

Our happiness derives from taking a break to recognize the hard work and accomplishments of Acton staff, as well from the opportunity to reassess and reaffirm our goals and recommit ourselves to the tasks that lie ahead. We do this while gathered together in the spirit of camaraderie—and in this sense, we elevate our aspirations into the poetic and spiritual realms.

The Acton community is ecumenical and diverse. What draws us together is a desire to witness human thriving and promote programs and policies that assist in that result. Conversely, we are tasked with the responsibility of identifying those insidious elements that hinder liberty and stifle the realization of the panoply of human flourishing. As readers well know, much of those efforts promoted as cultivating prosperity or assisting in the establishment of some Earth-bound utopia result in a myriad of negative unforeseen consequences.

One need only to look at the fallout from such ill-conceived government programs as the War on Poverty and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to understand the negative repercussions of hastily considered initiatives, however much they're promoted as well intentioned. Lawmakers often—too often—get it wrong, whether administering charity or health care.

I'll leave it to readers to discern whether it's by design or happenstance that massive government growth and concomitant incursions into nearly every aspect of business and personal life proceed apace. But I do invite these same readers to join Acton and its network of staff and supporters in its efforts to curtail Leviathan.

There will never be an earthly heaven even if all our efforts succeed, but there will certainly be less of the hell many of us have come to accept as a reasonable trade-off for inherently flawed programs that emanate from humanity's hubris rather than from the infinite wisdom of God and his spiritual followers.

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 dark ink, appearing to read 'Rev. Sirico'.

Rev. Robert Sirico, President

ACTONINSTITUTE

98 E. Fulton Street • Grand Rapids, MI 49503 • USA • www.acton.org

Acton highly ranked on Charity Navigator

One of America's most significant charity evaluators, Charity Navigator, recently gave the Acton Institute a highly favorable ranking. From its June 2016 report, see the ranking breakdown:

- *Financial Health*: 99.97
- *Accountability/Transparency*: 100
- *Overall*: 99.97

The organization gave Acton 4 stars, its highest rating, meaning that the institute "[e]xceeds industry standards and outperforms most charities in its cause." Acton is leading the free-market movement in terms of Charity Navigator metrics.

Charity Navigator is an independent, nonprofit organization that helps donors evaluate whether their gifts to charities and nonprofits are being used effectively and appropriately. From its website:

"Founded in 2001, Charity Navigator has become

the nation's largest and most-utilized evaluator of charities. In our quest to help donors, our team of professional analysts has examined tens of thousands of non-profit financial documents. We've used this knowledge to develop an unbiased, objective, numbers-based rating system to assess over 8,000 of America's best-known and some lesser known, but worthy, charities."

"The organization gave Acton 4 stars, its highest rating, meaning that the institute "[e]xceeds industry standards and outperforms most charities in its cause."

Charity Navigator receives no funds or support from the organizations it evaluates, ensuring that the data are unbiased. Rather than relying on self-reporting from organizations, Charity Navigator collects data

from the organization's website and IRS form 990. While evaluating all nonprofit organizations, Charity Navigator asks two important questions, "Does the charity follow good governance and ethical best practices?" and "Does the charity make it easy for donors to find critical information about the organization?"



Charity Navigator is the nation's largest evaluator of charities.



Acton is leading the free-market movement.

From Our Conference Participants

The University surpassed all of my expectations. I am talking about my experience to anyone who will listen. It was professional, friendly, informative and challenging. The staff went above and beyond to see that my time there was well spent.

—Pete S
Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania

[Acton University] was a most inspiring conference, which opened my mind to so many new avenues. I shall be blogging away and preaching with a renewed emphasis.

—Ed T., Pembury
United Kingdom

Acton updating and redesigning website

The past few years have represented a truly momentous period for the Acton Institute's online outreach, with record-high traffic of 2 million visitors in 2015 to the Acton website and a dramatic growth of virtually every aspect of the organization's digital presence. Because of this, Acton has been engaged in a major technical upgrade and redesign of its main site, Acton.org. Acton will upgrade the web publishing system—the actual tool that allows the organization to publish articles, videos and event registration—providing the latest data security for users.

Acton has seen its mobile traffic outpace even the tremendous growth of worldwide usage. In the last few years, mobile use has exploded around the globe—particularly in emerging economies, as devices are relatively easy to manufacture and cheap to purchase. The new website will be more mobile-responsive, allowing people to engage with Acton using their smartphones.

livestreaming of events so individuals outside West Michigan can enjoy our offerings in real time.

Summer 2016 intern program concludes

During the summer of 2016, twelve interns spent eight weeks at the institute, including two international students, two Koch fellows, one Koch intern, and one Liberty at Work associate. Every year interns provide invaluable service to Acton's mission. Blog readers were treated to several commentaries, analyses, and blog posts from interns. The tasks and odd jobs interns perform allow Acton's biggest event, Acton University, to run smoothly year after year.

The goal of the internship program is to help young men and women gain professional experience, absorb the environment of a think tank and increase their understanding of the relationship between religion and liberty. "I hope to be able to share the notions and concepts I learned [at Acton] with the members of Hungarian and European society," says intern Csongor Patai, a student at Corvinus

ACTON News



The new Acton website will be more mobile-responsive and simplified.



Summer 2016 interns

We began this process in mid-2015 with a deep study of how Acton.org users interact with the site, which now numbers more than 4,000 unique pages. When the site launches before the end of 2016, there will be a platform that showcases the content from Acton experts in a much more engaging, easy-to-use way. Navigation will be simplified, and the pages will have a brighter, more graphic look.

As a think tank, Acton relies on a robust and user-friendly digital capability. With a new and improved website, the organization will be able to get its work to an even larger global audience. With followers all over the world, Acton also seeks to introduce

University of Budapest, Hungary. "Although this internship came to an end quickly, this new knowledge will keep influencing the way I think about public policy, economics and my Christian faith," says Caroline Roberts, another summer intern and rising senior at Grove City College. She says that she was "not only trained in helpful software programs but also exposed to a professional environment that encouraged critical thinking through extensive reading and writing."

Acton is now accepting applications for fall 2016 and spring and summer 2017 interns. For details, visit www.acton.org/about/internship-opportunities.

New resources available for Acton Alumni

Acton is launching an Alumni Relations program to ensure we engage our alumni long after conferences end. To date, more than 6,000 men and women from more than 100 countries have attended one of our core conferences—Acton University, Toward a Free and Virtuous Society, Thriving Churches: Flourishing Communities, and Liberty & Markets.

Acton takes great pride in looking at some of the major accomplishments of our alumni. They include business leaders, bishops and other clergy, nonprofit leaders, U.S. representatives, foreign government representatives and many others who are all impacting their spheres of influence and applying the lessons they learned at Acton.

Without our group of talented alumni, Acton would surely not be able to achieve its mission. For years our alumni have given back to us, and now we want to return the favor.

Over the next year we will launch some exciting new tools, including:

- *Tailored resources and special discounts available exclusively to our alumni network;*
- *Regional alumni networking events and receptions;*
- *Regular alumni spotlights in Acton publications;*
- *Marketing assistance for published or soon-to-be published books and;*
- *Alumni representatives who are ready to speak with you at all times.*

Our goal is for these resources to provide a collaborative environment for alumni to interact more deeply with Acton staff and other alumni, ultimately advancing the world toward greater liberty undergirded by a strong moral foundation.

On September 25 the Alumni Relations Department will host a breakfast at the Liberty Forum in Miami, Florida, and on October 5 it will host a cocktail reception at the State Policy Network Annual Meeting. To sign up for any of the events or for more information, email Patrick Oetting at poetting@acton.org.



Executive director Kris Mauren meeting with guests at an Acton event.



ACTON in the News

“The market economy is a creative engine that has enabled hundreds of millions of people around the world to lift themselves out of poverty. But to play the game you need property rights, and for all too many around the world, property rights are much harder to get than a ticket to the Olympics.”

—Excerpted from Michael Matheson Miller’s article
in *The Stream*

Samuel Gregg

Title: Adam Smith, Economic Nationalism & the Case for Free Trade
Publication: Public Discourse
Date: 7.20.16

Rev. Robert Sirico

Title: The Catholic Paths of Pence & Kaine
Publication: Wall Street Journal
Date: 7.28.16

Michael Matheson Miller

Title: The Global Poor Desperately Need a Thing You Can’t Taste or Touch: Property Rights
Publication: The Stream
Date: 8.22.16

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 of you 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.

INTRODUCE ACTON TO A FRIEND

KNOW SOMEONE WHO WOULD BE INTERESTED IN THE WORK OF THE ACTON INSTITUTE? USE OUR WEBSITE TO SEND THEM AN E-MAIL WITH INFORMATION ON OUR PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES. THANKS FOR PROMOTING FREEDOM AND VIRTUE!

Visit: www.acton.org/refer



ACTON@25 CAMPAIGN CLOSING RECEPTION



ACTON Book Shop



One and Indivisible: The Relationship Between Religious and Economic Freedom

Edited by Kevin Schmiesing

In this wide-ranging volume, an interfaith, international group of prominent scholars and religious leaders explore the relationship between economic and religious liberty. A sound understanding of this relationship, rooted in the natural law and the truth about the human person is indispensable.

Softcover 184 pages Sale \$14.95

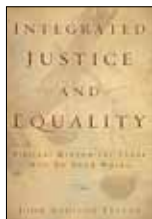


The System Has a Soul: Essays on Christianity, Liberty and Political Life

By Hunter Baker

The essays in this volume address the relationship of the church to liberty, government, commerce, and education. These reflections reveal that we cannot allow the system to run according to its own internal logic. Rather, it is important for the church to act as a conscience.

Softcover 168 pages Sale \$14.95

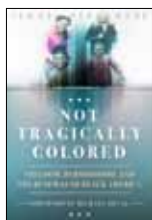


Integrated Justice and Equality: Biblical Wisdom for Those Who Do Good Works

By John Teevan

Why write about social justice? Why investigate income inequality? This book discusses the topics of social justice and income inequality within an economic, philosophic, and biblical framework that leads to an understanding of integrated justice. If we follow that path, we will pursue integrated justice.

Softcover 190 pages Sale \$14.95



Not Tragically Colored: Freedom, Personhood and the Renewal of Black America

By Ismael Hernandez

Despite a seemingly endless series of programs, discussions and analyses—and the election of the first African-American president—the problem of race continues to bedevil American society. Ismael Hernandez strikes at the root, even when that means plunging his ax deep into the hard soil of political correctness.

Softcover 300 pages Sale \$19.95

For our fastest service and a complete list of titles, visit store.acton.org

	PRICE	QUANTITY	TOTAL
One and Indivisible	\$14.95		
The System Has a Soul	\$14.95		
Integrated Justice	\$14.95		
Not Tragically Colored	\$19.95		

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 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 ☐Amex Signature _____ Expiration Date _____

Call 616-454-3080 **Fax** 616-454-9454 **Mail** Acton Institute, 98 E. Fulton St, Grand Rapids, MI 49503

ACTON notes

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
GRAND RAPIDS, MI
PERMIT 986

Acton Institute • 98 E. Fulton Street • Grand Rapids, MI 49503 • USA

ACTON notes

Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
Oct 3	Indispensable: How Philanthropy Fuels American Success Karl Zinsmeister to speak	Grand Rapids, MI
Oct 13	Pittsburgh Dinner Duquesne Club Rev. Robert Sirico to speak	Pittsburgh, PA
Oct 13	Acton Lecture Series The Rise of American Populism Benjamin Domenech to speak	Grand Rapids, MI
Oct 27	26th Annual Dinner Rev. Paul Scalia to speak	Grand Rapids, MI
Nov 16	Open Mic Night University Club of Chicago	Chicago, IL
Dec 1	The Crisis of Liberty in the West Various speakers	London, UK