

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

March / April 2016, Volume 26, Number 2



“connecting good intentions with sound economics”

In This Issue

- Global think tank ranking features Acton Institute and Instituto Acton
- New books from Acton scholars • Acton hosts debate on distributism versus the free market

President's Message

Oftentimes, the most prudent method of moving forward is to look to the past as a road map. As Christians, we sometimes forget we stand on the shoulders of giants who have provided us with a strong spiritual and intellectual framework. I personally recognize great minds through the centuries who have structured our thoughts and principles here at the Acton Institute for the past 25 years.

“...Acton recently was recognized in the top 10 of Top Social Policy Think Tanks worldwide...”

Fortunately, our American founders laid the groundwork of religious liberty so that organizations such as Acton could flourish. In fact, Acton recently was recognized in the top 10 of Top Social Policy Think Tanks worldwide, named in the top 30 of Top Think Tanks in the United States and ranked as one of the Top Think Tanks Worldwide by the University of Pennsylvania's Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program's 2015 Global Go To Think Tanks Index Report.

We are proud of these accomplishments but recognize that none of this would be possible without the liberties granted us to pursue our mission. However, religious freedom can never be considered a *fait accompli*. Just as John Adams once declared that “Nothing is more dreaded than the national government meddling with religion,” we must strive on a daily basis to preserve our religious freedoms while advocating for those whose liberties to exercise their respective faiths are abrogated.”

Even our own country recognizes continuous peril to exercising religious liberties. In the wake of such U.S. Supreme Court cases as *Obergefell v. Hodges* and *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*, we witnessed that erosions of religious liberty are never further away than often a single justice's determination. This year will be no different as the Supreme Court is expected to rule on *Zubik v. Burwell*, which takes up the Obamacare birth-control mandate for religious nonprofits.

We've been here before. In 1965, the Second Vatican Council recognized such threats when it issued *Dignitatis Humanae*. “This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits.” Declaring religious freedom a civil right: “The council further declares that the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person.”

The dignity of the human person recognized through the revealed word of God and reason—I can think of no better description of the Acton Institute's mission.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Rev. Robert Sirico". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rev." written in a smaller, more formal script than the last name "Sirico".

Rev. Robert 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.

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Argentina subsidiary joins Acton in think tank ranking

Every year the University of Pennsylvania's Think Tank and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) releases the Global Go To Think Tanks Index Report. This program maintains data on nearly 7,000 organizations worldwide and releases a report in late January ranking them in nearly 50 categories. The Acton Institute and its Argentine subsidiary, Instituto Acton, were named in the 2015 report.

Acton was ranked in five categories and Instituto Acton in one for 2015:

- Acton Institute is 9th (out of 90) in the Top Social Policy Think Tanks ranking (9th in 2014).
- Acton Institute is 29th (out of 75) in the Top Think Tanks in the United States (29th in 2014).
- In Top Think Tanks Worldwide, Acton ranks 155th (out of 175) (previously unranked).
- 10th (out of 90) in Best Advocacy Campaign (11th in 2014) for PovertyCure.
- 17th (out of 61) in Best Think Tank Conference for

Acton University (17th in 2014).

- Instituto Acton was ranked 100th (out of 144) Best Independent Think Tanks.

“Instituto Acton became a subsidiary of the Acton Institute in spring 2015.”

Instituto Acton became a subsidiary of the Acton Institute in spring 2015; this is the first year the organization has been named in the TTCSP ranking. Also for the first time, Acton was named

a top think tank worldwide and broke the top 10 for the “Best Advocacy Campaign.”

TTCSP states its goal as “helping to bridge the gap between knowledge and policy.” The group researches trends and challenges facing both think tanks and policy makers. The criteria for their yearly rankings is very rigorous. It includes the “quality and commitment of the think tank’s leadership;” the “quality, number and reach of its publications;” the think tank’s “reputation with policymakers;” its “media reputation;” its “ability to produce new knowledge;” “financial stewardship;” and the organization’s “impact on society.”



Kris Mauren, Cecilia G. de Vázquez Ger, and Rev. Robert Sirico

From Our Conference Participants

It will be very difficult or rather impossible to put down in writing all the knowledge, exposure and benefits I acquired at [Acton University], as it will remain an indelible part of my life and career at large. Thank you, Acton, for widening my horizon.

—Theresa N
Nigeria

I met folks from all over the world and heard many viewpoints, both conservative and liberal. I have new friends. My mind has not ceased to spin with all of the ideas, teachings and exhortations that I experienced at Acton University ... All in all, these words describe my experience: *soul food and brain candy!*

—Deborah L
Portland, Oregon

New and upcoming books tackle finance, race in America and a crisis of democracy in Europe

What does it mean to be human? Once we place a person's race at the center of their identity, what have we done to them? A new book published by the Acton Institute and written by Ismael Hernandez deals with race in America. *Not Tragically Colored: Freedom, Personhood, and the Renewal of Black America* discusses premises we use to discuss race in America, the underlining mistakes we make in doing so and how to solve the crisis of family. We must stop merely transacting with the poor. We need to uphold their dignity.

"Ismael Hernandez shows us how the American experiment can succeed only through a renewal of inclusive monoculturalism," says Marvin Olasky, editor-in-chief of *WORLD Magazine*. "We need a melting pot, not just salad plate."

Todd Huizinga, Acton's director of international outreach, uses his two decades of experience as a U.S. diplomat to discuss the future of the

New from Crossroads Publishing Company, *For God and Profit: How Banking and Finance Can Serve the Common Good* by Acton's Samuel Gregg, discusses the tumultuous relationship between the church and financial institutions. Christian theologians, philosophers and financiers exerted considerable influence on the emergence and development of the international financial systems that helped unleash a revolution in the way the world thinks about and uses capital. In *For God and Profit*, Gregg underscores the different ways in which Christians have helped develop the financial and banking systems that have assisted millions in escaping poverty for hundreds of years. He also provides a critical lens through which to assess the workings—and failures—of modern finance and banking. Gregg illustrates how Christian faith and reason can restore integrity to our troubled financial systems.

Prefect of the secretariat for the economy in Vatican City, Cardinal George Pell says that Gregg's latest

is a formidable book, packed with interesting and regularly unacknowledged and unknown historical information, especially

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Todd Huizinga, author of *The New Totalitarian Temptation*.



European Union and the United States in *The New Totalitarian Temptation: Global Governance and the Crisis of Democracy in Europe*. This new title from Encounter Books shows how the EU's commitment to supranational governance, overriding the sovereignty of its member states, is killing democracy in Europe and putting the EU on a collision course with the United States. George Will says that "Huizinga demonstrates how the European Union's multiplying misadventures are reminding us of what EU elites want us to forget: the indissoluble link between rights-based self-government and the nation-state, which is not an anachronism after all."

about the contribution of Christian thinking to the development of banking, the rise of the markets and Western prosperity. It is also closely argued with Christian and natural law categories of right and wrong being used to evaluate the economies and financial systems of today and yesterday.

It can be preordered now on Amazon and will be available on April 1.

All these books are or will be available as hardcovers or ebooks and can be purchased at shop.acton.org.

Recent debate pitted the market against distributism

How does one best practice morality within the economy? On February 18, Acton invited Joseph Pearce and Jay Richards to attempt to answer this question during the debate “Distributism vs. Free markets.” The conversation attracted a full house of participants, including college professors, business executives and many college and high school students. Richards, executive editor of *The Stream* and assistant research professor in the School of Business and Economics at the Catholic University of America, defended the free market. He argued that the greatest increases in poverty reduction and human prosperity have been achieved by access to free, open markets. Pearce, director of the Center for Faith and Culture at Aquinas College in Nashville, argued for distributism. Thomas E. Woods Jr. explains the history and definition of this economic school of thought in *Beyond Distributism* (Acton Institute, 2008):

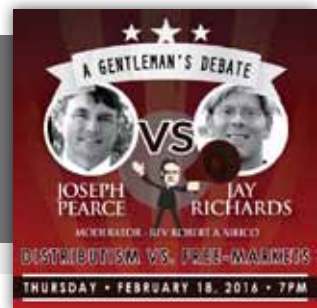
Distributism was a variant of corporatism, a system of pontifical economy born in the wake of the French Revolution that sought the resurrection of various corporate bodies,

such as the guilds, that the revolution had suppressed. Corporatists sought to manage economic competition, which they viewed as destructive and destabilizing, by grouping occupations into self-regulating trade associations and granted the central state a supervisory and coordinating role over business and labor ... According to distributists, this injustice might be redressed by a return to the less individualistic medieval economy. Then, productive property was widely distributed, guild kept competition in check, and the poor and vulnerable were better cared for. International trade was more limited, and production for local use predominated.

The formal debate included opening remarks, rebuttals, a question-and-answer session and closing remarks. The rigorous but friendly conversation ended with both sides amicably agreeing to disagree. Rev. Robert Sirico moderated. The evening event concluded with a book signing and reception.



From L to R: Joseph Pearce, Rev. Robert Sirico, Jay Richards



ACTON in the News

“What begins as a well-intentioned plan to provide for the needs of the people—education funding for example—very often becomes just another source of revenue for a voracious state treasury. Lotto revenue is often diverted for new purposes through legislative and bureaucratic chicanery.”

—Excerpted from Jordan Ballor’s article
in *The Christian Post*.

Jordan Ballor

Title: Powerball preys on the poor
Publication: *The Christian Post*
Date: 1.9.16

Kishore Jayabalan

Title: Business leaders move to strengthen Vatican ties
Publication: *The Wall Street Journal*
Date: 1.18.16

Kishore Jayabalan

Title: As others see the troubles in Flint
Publication: *The Detroit News*
Date: 2.5.16

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.

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THE NEW TOTALITARIAN TEMPTATION

By *Todd Huizinga*

The New Totalitarian Temptation: Global Governance and the Crisis of Democracy in Europe is a must-read if you want to understand how the European Union got to this point and what the European project fundamentally is. This is the first book to identify the essence of the EU in a utopian vision of a supranationally governed world.

Hardcover 280 pages Sale \$23.99

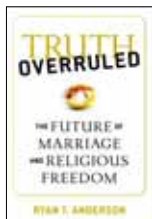


CHRIST AND CRISIS

By *Charles Malik*

Christ and Crisis is an invaluable guide for Christians who seek to engage our world and come to terms with the challenges unique to the era they find themselves in. Each life, each unique historical situation presents its own crisis or set of crises. What Malik would tell us is that these are all spiritual crises, first and foremost.

Softcover 134 pages Sale \$6.00



TRUTH OVERRULED

By *Ryan T. Anderson*

In the first book to respond to the Supreme Court's decision on same-sex marriage, Ryan Anderson draws on the best philosophy and social science to explain what marriage is, why it matters for public policy and the consequences of its legal redefinition.

Softcover 256 pages Sale \$16.99



THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Edited by *Jordan J. Ballor and Robert J. Houstra*

The evangelical church has a social responsibility. But what is that responsibility and what does it look like in practice? This collection explores the nature of the institutional church's responsibility, as well as the deeper questions related to the church's social witness.

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Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
Mar 30	Pope Francis, Poverty and the Economy Acton Lecture Series - Samuel Gregg to speak	Grand Rapids, MI
Apr 14	Acton Lecture Series Raymond Arroyo to speak	Grand Rapids, MI
Apr 21	Liberty & Markets Conference: Evaluating the Idea of Social Justice	Grand Rapids, MI
Apr 27	Chicago Luncheon Rev. Robert Sirico to speak	Chicago, IL
Apr 28	Screening of "An Inconvenient Tax"	Grand Rapids, MI