

# Notes

January/February Vol. 30 No. 1

*Lord Acton with Ignaz von Döllinger and William Gladstone, 1879.*

Photo Credit: Allen & Co. [Public domain] Wikimedia Commons; Letters of Lord Acton to Mary Gladstone; Lord Acton in a Group Portrait at Tegernsee



# A message from our president


Rev. Robert A. Sirico

All of creation is ruled by its creator and preserver: the Lord our God. All legitimate authority on earth is derived from this reality, and for this reason St. Paul teaches us to “Let every person be subject to governing authorities” (Rom 13:1). The authority of human government must respect its source by exercising its authority within the moral order to promote the common good of all. To promote the common good of all, the state must be limited, respecting and promoting each person’s freedom and sense of responsibility.

God delegates his authority not only to the state but to human persons, families, churches and institutions of civil society. The state’s authority is legitimate only when it is exercised responsibly according to the principle of subsidiarity, allowing all to contribute to the common good through their various gifts, duties and vocations.

It is this broad understanding of the common good, rooted in God’s moral order, that Acton has sought to promote for nearly thirty years, advancing a free and virtuous society characterized by individual liberty and sustained by religious principles. In this issue you will find a story outlining, Acton’s thirty-year history defending the free market.

You will also learn a little about Amanda Oetting: her life, gifts and vocation at Acton. Lastly, there is an explanation of the recent update to Acton’s website, which makes more accessible some of the thirty years’ worth of resources and scholarship.

The Acton Institute could not explore these vital questions of what constitutes the common good and equip leaders in all realms of life with the tools necessary to bring about a free and virtuous society without the generous support of our donors. Thank you! If you are just learning about Acton, be sure to check out our newly redesigned website, and please prayerfully consider supporting us in our mission. 

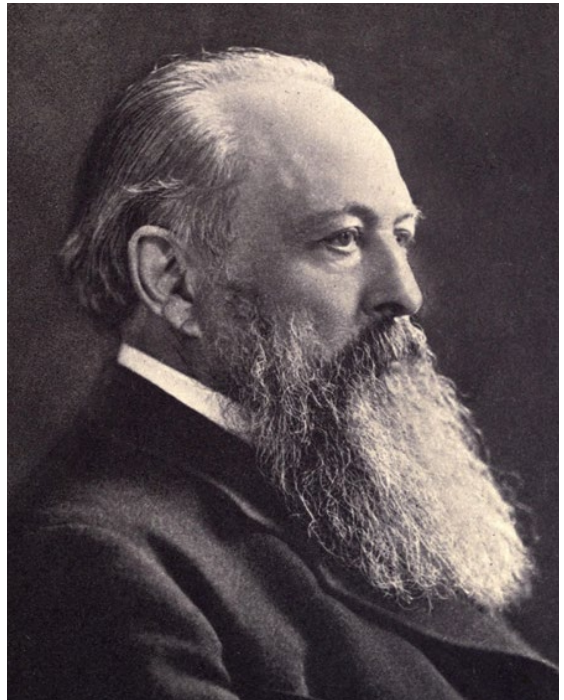
Acton Events			REGISTER AT <a href="https://acton.org/events">ACTON.ORG/EVENTS</a>
DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	
FEB 20	<b>Acton Lecture Series</b> Faith, Freedom and the Cold War Architect	Grand Rapids, MI	
FEB 29	<b>Acton Conference Series</b> From Thinking to Thriving: Economics, Work & Human Flourishing	Huntington Beach, CA	
MAR 12	<b>Acton Lecture Series</b> Poverty Relief: the Rise and Fall of the Voluntary Principle	Grand Rapids, MI	
MAY 14	<b>Acton Lecture Series</b> From Logos to Enlightenment ... And Back Again	Grand Rapids, MI	
AUG 20	<b>Acton Lecture Series</b> Janus v. AFSCME: A Conversation with Mark Janus	Grand Rapids, MI	



# Happy Birthday, Lord Acton

January 10, 2020, Lord Acton would have celebrated his 186th birthday. So, in honor of the man who inspired our namesake, here are ten facts you should know about the amazing politician, historian and writer.

- Acton (January, 10, 1834 – June 19, 1902) was born in Naples, Italy, and given the full-name John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton.
- Raised a Roman Catholic, Acton was first educated at Oscott College, then studied privately at Edinburgh. Eventually, he applied to the University of Cambridge but was denied because of his Catholic faith. And so, Acton moved to Munich, where he studied at the University and lived in the home of the theologian and priest, Johann Joseph Ignaz von Döllinger.
- In 1865, at 31, Acton married and eventually had six children.
- An avid linguist, Acton spoke German with his wife during dinner, Italian with his mother-in-law, French with his sister-in-law and English with his children.
- As a dedicated historian, Acton loved the written word. His estate at Cannes, France, had more than 3,000 books and manuscripts, while his estate at Tegernsee, Bavaria, had over 4,000, and Aldenham, England, nearly 60,000.
- Acton always wanted to write a manifesto he referred to as “history of liberty,” but he never started the project, and his voluminous papers don’t include an outline.
- Witnessing much oppression and government corruption, Acton declared that political power was a source of evil, not redemption. And he declared socialism “the worst enemy freedom has ever had to encounter.”
- Despite being rejected as an undergraduate, Acton spent his last years as Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge University.
- In 1902, after suffering a stroke, Lord Acton passed away while a priest administered last rites.
- After Acton’s death, Andrew Carnegie (who had purchased Acton’s 60,000-volume collection) gave the books to John Morley to donate to an institution of historical significance. Because of Acton’s association, Morley chose Cambridge University Library, where the collection still resides. N



John Dalberg-Acton, Allen & Co. - Letters of Lord Acton: <http://commons.wikimedia.org>

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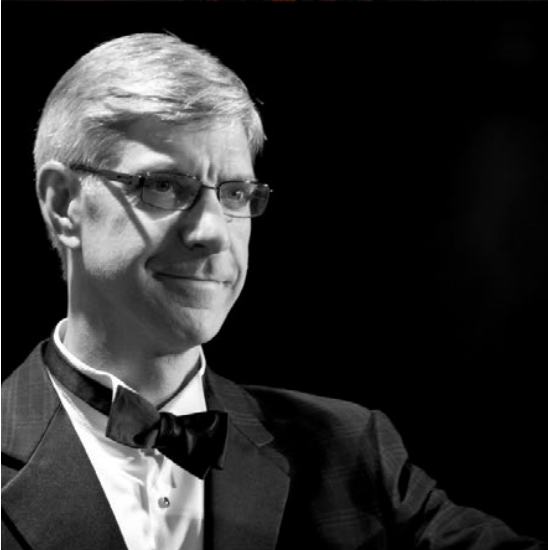
FEATURED STORY

# Acton's 30-year history defending the free market

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**T**his year will mark Acton Institute's 30th anniversary. We have several exciting events planned that we'll be unveiling in the upcoming months, and while we are all excited for the future, it's important to reflect on the past and remember how we began.

The Acton Institute was founded in May 1990, named in honor of John Emerich Edward Dalberg Acton (1834-1902), 1st Baron Acton of Aldenham. Lord Acton made the history of liberty his life's work. Upon Acton Institute's founding, it was a time of triumph. The Berlin Wall had fallen the year before. The Warsaw Pact was beginning to unravel, and the full collapse of the Soviet Union was barely a year away. Communism was dying around the globe, and people began to realize that the socialist ideas that had served as the foundation of these countries was the cause of the human suffering that had led to their collapse. While some thought socialism was vanquished from the world, never to rise again, unfortunately, these collectivist ideas made their way from Europe and took up residence in the offices of bureaucrats, in the halls of universities and on the altars of seminaries. Socialism was not dead. It had slowly begun to infect every aspect of life in America. Rev. Robert Sirico




and Kris Alan Mauren, the co-founders of the Acton Institute, knew better. They understood that ideas are powerful and the only way socialist ideas could be combated was through an even greater articulation of human dignity, free markets and faith. And so, Fr. Sirico and Mr. Mauren began the monumental task of convincing the world of the evils of socialism and since 1990 have gained invaluable knowledge in how these malevolent ideas are best refuted. They have been personally supported and encouraged in their defense of freedom and human justice by world leaders like John Paul II and Ronald Reagan, eminent intellectuals like Russell Kirk and William F. Buckley, and Nobel Laureates like Milton Friedman and Vernon Smith. These prominent figures passed the torch to a new generation of defenders of liberty.

As reports continue to emerge which note the growing popularity of socialism, especially among the millennial generation, it's clear that our work is needed now more than ever.

To quote Rev. Sirico, Acton will “continue to do its part in articulating this important historical truth. This is the truth that is made so clear when we watch news clips recounting the fall of the Berlin wall or see images of Hong Kong police firing tear gas into crowds of peaceful student protestors: socialism has never provided a nation peace, prosperity or equality.”

And so, Acton will work diligently this year and the years ahead, but we rely on the partnership of many like-minded individuals. If our mission, building a free and virtuous society, resonates with you, we ask that you would support our work to ensure 2020, our 30th anniversary, is our best year yet.

“Liberty is the delicate fruit of a mature civilization.” –Lord Acton 

The graphic features a blue background with a microphone and a stylized orange and yellow spiral logo. The text "ACTON LINE" is prominently displayed in white.

*Acton Line is the  
official podcast of the  
Acton Institute*

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The graphic has a dark red background with a geometric pattern of triangles in shades of red and orange. The text "Save the Date!" and "June 16-19, 2020" is in white.

**Save the Date!**  
**June 16-19, 2020**

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**BRIEF**

## Get to Know: Amanda Oetting

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Over 40 dedicated team members work at the Acton Institute, and each has a unique story. Amanda Oetting has worked at the Acton Institute for three years as an external relations officer. Growing up, her homeschool

education was built upon a foundation of moral absolutes.

While studying political science at Hillsdale College, she was captivated by studying the rise and fall of ancient civilizations and quickly began to understand the anthropological link to their successes and failures. After a cross-country teammate told her about Acton, she discovered Jay Richard's lecture, *Why Libertarians Need God*, and everything started to click as she began understanding the unmistakable connection between moral absolutes, true liberty and human flourishing.

"An empire's success was not simply linked to time, place or natural resources," Oetting explained. "If that were the case, America wouldn't be a land of abundance. Rather, a flourishing civilization flows from a limited government that respects the inherent dignity (*imago dei*) and unimaginable ingenuity of the human person, allowing citizens to use their comparative advantage to engage in a robust division of labor."

Wise words from a dedicated team member. Thank you, Amanda Oetting. 


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**BRIEF**

## Rediscover Acton.org

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The newest and greatest improvement on Acton's website since it launched in 2017 is here: Discover Acton Search Bar. This new feature allows you to search the entire Acton site – not just the PowerBlog – by specific keywords. This includes information from the *Journal of Markets and Morality*, *Religion and Liberty*, and even Acton's bookshop. Looking for a specific Acton topic? No problem. The custom search function allows you to find information by topics you care about. Featured topics include religion, economics, social issues, poverty, education and environment. There is also a host of subtopics if you would like to be even more specific. The new Discover Acton Search Bar even allows you to filter by specific authors. No more scrolling through Acton's PowerBlog history. Simply search and find. With over 17,000 articles (and counting) published on Acton's PowerBlog, as well as several thousand more from other Acton outlets, the Discover Acton Search Bar will be a welcome addition for Acton.org users like you.

We are thankful for the team members here at Acton who have spent the last six months working hard to make Acton's high-quality content more accessible to our readers. If you haven't already, we sincerely hope you get the chance to enjoy the redesigned website to find world-class articles and content. Simply go to [search.acton.org](https://search.acton.org) to filter, search, read, listen and watch to your heart's content. 

INTRODUCTION BY STEFAN KOLEV

# The Humane Economist

A WILHELM RÖPKE READER

PAPERBACK

\$14<sup>95</sup>

EDITED BY  
DANIEL J. HUGGER

## THE HUMANE ECONOMIST: A WILHELM RÖPKE READER

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DANIEL J. HUGGER

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STEFAN KOLEV

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*– Peter Boettke, GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY*

Nobel laureate Friedrich Hayek once warned that "the economist who is only an economist is likely to become a nuisance if not a positive danger." As an economist and theorist of liberalism, Wilhelm Röpke was acutely aware of this danger. His combined commitments to sound economic analysis, the importance of social institutions,

and the moral and religious framework of the Christian tradition make him a unique figure in the history of economic and social thought. This anthology, through carefully chosen selections from Röpke's writings, introduces the contemporary reader to this most humane economist and theorist of the free and virtuous society.

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