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Illuminating the Word

An Interview with Makoto Fujimura

A Journal of Religion, Economics, and Culture

Editor's Note



In a 2013 commencement address at Messiah College in Pennsylvania, Makoto Fujimura told the graduating class, “We are to rise above the darkened realities, the confounding problems of our time.” A tall order for any age, but one God has decisively overcome in Jesus Christ. Fujimura uses his talent to connect beauty with the truth of the Gospel in a culture that has largely forgotten its religious tradition and history. He makes those things fresh and visible again. With works like “Walking on Water,” and the “Four Holy Gospels,” Fujimura is illuminating God’s Word to a culture that is mostly inward looking and mired in the self. His art is world

renowned, and he provides stunning imagination and beauty for the text that restores the world.

For this issue, I contribute a column on the dangers of state religion. Secularism, now thriving as the state religion, has the potential to unleash a new kind of religious persecution in America.

David Deavel reviews *Infiltrated: How to Stop the Insiders and Activists Who are Exploiting the Financial Crisis to Control Our Lives and our Fortunes* by Jay Richards. Samuel Gregg reviews *Missionaries of Republicanism: A Religious History of the Mexican-American War* by John C. Pinheiro.

Bruce Edward Walker reviews *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea*. The author, Edmund Fawcett, provide a comprehensive overview of the life and rise of political liberalism.

Abigail Adams is profiled for “In the Liberal Tradition.” Her contribution to liberty of course is exceptional as a wife and mother but doesn’t end there. Adams’s recognition of the necessity of

morality and virtue in order to sustain liberty is clearly visible in her many letters. John and Abigail Adams wrote over 1,000 letters to each other that are still widely read and studied today. She wrote to her son John Quincy Adams saying, “The only sure and permanent foundation of virtue is religion. Let this important truth be engraven upon your heart.”

In his *R&L* column, Rev. Robert Sirico addresses the crisis of the many young people today leaving their faith. One of the positives he cites are the many excellent interns we’ve had pass through Acton over the years. One of the most enjoyable aspects of working at Acton is seeing the tremendous impact this organization is having on young people who cross our path. It’s exciting to see our reach expanding rapidly through our materials and program, especially with our amazing new film “For the Life of the World.”

Ray Nothstine

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Cover Photo: Makoto Fujimura at the Acton headquarters and in front of his ArtPrize 2014 entry, *Walking on Water* – Azurite.

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Illuminating the Word

An Interview with Makoto Fujimura

Makoto Fujimura is an artist, writer, and speaker who is recognized worldwide as somebody who promotes a Christian worldview. A Presidential appointee to the National Council on the Arts from 2003-2009, Fujimura served as an international advocate for the arts, speaking with decision makers and advising governmental policies on the arts.

Fujimura's work is exhibited at galleries around the world, including Dillon Gallery in New York, Sato Museum in Tokyo, The Contemporary Museum of Tokyo, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts Museum. He is one of the first artists to paint live on stage at New York City's legendary Carnegie Hall as part of an ongoing collaboration with composer and percussionist Susie Ibarra.

Fujimura's second book, Refractions: A Journey of Faith, Art and Culture, is a collection of essays bringing together people of all backgrounds in a conversation and meditation on culture, art, and humanity. In celebration of the 400th Anniversary of the King James Bible, Crossway Publishing commissioned and published The Four Holy Gospels, featuring Fujimura's illuminations of the sacred texts. His latest project, The Golden Sea, takes its name from a series of paintings by the artist. Fujimura is the recipient of the 2014 Arts and Religion Award given by the American Academy of Religion. He recently spoke with Acton intern Cait Hilton and managing editor Ray Nothstine.

R&L: *You've focused a lot of your work and ideas on what you call Culture Care. What does that mean?*

Makoto Fujimura: Culture Care is a vision to see the culture as an ecosystem and to steward rather than to fight over culture territories. We need to change the metaphor from a culture war mindset to culture care. We need to make progress towards changing minds. If you're conservative or liberal, a culture war mindset

"culture wars" in the late 80s or early 90s, he predicted the protracted conflict like we are seeing today. The nature of discourse right now is flawed.

When I was on the National Council for the Arts serving with then chairman, Dana Gioia, who is a remarkable poet himself and a business executive, I noticed him crafting this way of navigating Washington, D.C. He was amazing at working with both sides of the aisle, and he started his conversations with those of different ideologies by talking about the art and literature they loved. The senators and house members and President George W. Bush would end up talking about things that really mattered to them and were related to why they were politically active.

When Dana was speaking before the Senate hearings or private luncheons with the First Lady, he would often

begin with a Longfellow poem. He also borrowed from T. S. Eliot and Eliot's view of shaping culture. Stressing the emphasis of driving humanity and how the Christian faith is central to that. So Culture Care comes from that stream and Dana was able to actually implement that as the chairman of the NEA.

That was during the height of the culture wars and the beginning of what are seeing now, which is total polarization and ineffective government, yet he successfully managed to create a coalition of people

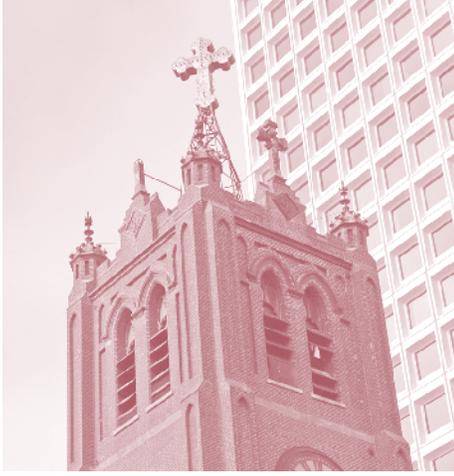
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Fujimura's Walking on Water - Azurite on display at Acton's headquarters during the 2014 Artprize in downtown Grand Rapids, Mich.

is detrimental to your position. You're always losing; you're always compromising. It just doesn't make sense from the standpoint of responsible social discourse.

It's essential to talk to both ideological sides and some people think, "I can't believe I have to defend this sacred position." For conservatives it could be marriage. For liberals it could be rights of expression. Both sides see their positions eroding. But when you look at the arguments of James Davison Hunter, who coined the term



State Religion and the American Remnant

By Ray Nothstine

Secularization and moral relativism are rapidly transforming a nation that once embodied the best ideals of Western freedom based on a Biblical worldview. And while secularization of society has reached new heights in America, we will always have religion and faith as strong components. An important question is how healthy of a role will faith play in the public square and who is given a seat at the table?

At the 2014 Evangelical Leadership summit sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute, Russell Moore declared: “If we do not have religious liberty, it does not mean we have a purely secular state, but it means we have a more religious state.” Moore, who was interviewed in the Fall 2013 issue of *Religion & Liberty*, explained that we are headed to “a state that is dictating religious terms.”

“ The American framers warned against government compulsion of religion and set up a republic intent on protecting the free exercise of religion.”

Language like “freedom of worship,” only further ghettoizes religious liberty by

walling it off inside churches and other houses of worship so as not to interfere with cultural relativism – today’s dominant state religion. The American framers warned against government compulsion of religion and set up a republic intent on protecting its free exercise. However, a repaganizing of the West demands that the Church be removed as a buffer between the individual and the state. We’ve come a long way since Martin Luther King, Jr., declared the Church the “conscience of the state.”

Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia summed up what the future holds when he wrote in his dissent in the striking down of the Defense of Marriage Act: that the court is now saying opposition to moral relativism equals “enemies to the human race.” During the 1st Century reign of Nero, the Roman historian Tacitus noted that Christians were persecuted and killed for their “hatred against mankind.”

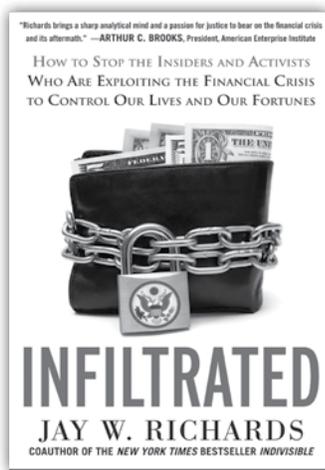
That the new state religion is being pushed with missionary zeal is clearly an ominous sign for dissenters. In 2014, the public university system of California, which consists of 23 schools, is banning all InterVarsity Christian ministries from recognition as a student organization. Other schools are following California’s lead. The crime of the dissenters is creedal Christianity. The same crime outlawed under paganism and the 20th Century rise of totalitarianism. An ironic twist since many University mottos proclaim the motto *Veritas*, which means “truth,” reflected in Christ’s *I am*

statement: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” Universities, an invention of European Christendom, now demand its persecution.

Those calling for political change in the country often don’t realize the culture has largely passed them by. America has largely been a source for good, prosperity, and peace, but its current economic and cultural trajectory is one of decline, even if is not yet catastrophic.

It’s likely that dark days are ahead for American Christians, but those who are true to their conscience and the Word may be able to reclaim a more powerful and magnified witness. Some of the methods of the American Civil Rights Movement serve as a model of dissent and peaceful disobedience. “One word of truth outweighs the world,” declared Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

The church of the relativistic government is proving itself bankrupt. It has largely become bankrupt of protecting the very purpose of government, to protect natural rights. It’s essential that the Church, which has the answers for what ails the culture, speaks up. The decline of America and the West has long been predicted and prophesied but it’s wise to echo the Protestant minister J. Vernon McGee, who told his listening audience at the height of the Red Menace: “It is dark in the world just now – never too dark for [a] child of God.”



It Wasn't *Free* Markets That Did It

Review by David Paul Deavel

Review of *Infiltrated* by Jay W. Richards (McGraw Hill Education, 2013) 299 pages; \$25.00.

Six years have passed since the meltdown of markets in 2008. Like many things “we all know,” the putative reasons for this meltdown have now passed into the national consciousness: greedy bankers, deregulation, and an unregulated market for derivatives, credit default swaps, and other complex financial instruments. Jay Richards’ *Infiltrated*, released in the summer of 2013, is a very handy volume to give to people who are open to hearing an alternative explanation of the crisis.

That it needs to be put in the hands of those open to its message must be said. The dramatic dust jacket and the title are both a little too Ann-Coulter-like for giving to people not already inclined to its message. But Richards, a former Acton staffer and current senior fellow at the Discovery Institute, has penned a book that will help those who read it explain how the accepted narrative is mistaken.

Richards assigns blame for the meltdown and, by extension, for the years of economic sluggishness that have followed to, as the subtitle has it, “the insiders and activists who are exploiting the financial crisis to control our lives and fortunes.” They have “infiltrated” the halls of government and even helped expand its unaccountable bureaucracy not in order to eliminate competition from the various markets in which they work (though this

seems to happen anyway), but in order to “hand over the consumer finance system in America to noble overseers like themselves.” This happened in the case of the mortgage loan industry and continues to happen in other sectors now, especially the one dealing with small-dollar loans (“payday loans” in the common, though imprecise, jargon). The root cause of this crisis was not simple greed but instead an unfortunate mix of high ideals and bad economics that led to faulty policy.

But what about deregulation and the exotic financial stuff? Retailers of the conventional wisdom who are challenged to identify which deregulation it was that caused all this mess will inevitably bring up the repeal of the depression-era Glass-Steagall Act. Richards observes that the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act of 1999, signed into law by President Clinton, only repealed parts of the former law, allowing, for instance, financial firms to diversify and commercial banks to affiliate with investment banks. But this deregulation, if it had any effect on the crisis, says Richards, “almost surely made the crisis *less severe*. If all of Glass-Steagall had been in place in 2008, JPMorgan Chase (a commercial bank) could not have bought Bear Stearns (an investment bank), and Bank of America could not have bought Merrill Lynch—purchases that helped to slow the snowball of panic.”

The same goes with the exotic financial instruments like the demonized credit default swaps (CDSs), which are really

insurance against the risk of investments. One of the benefits of this book is that, unlike many more technical accounts of the crisis, Richards provides ordinary-language explanations of how these instruments work along with an account of their



Wall Street sign. © stu199; istockphoto.com

place in the crisis. There is little evidence that institutions failed because of CDSs. The institutions collapsed because they made a lot of bad investment bets.

Moreover, these bad bets were all centered around the mortgage industry, which brings us to the infiltration. Richards’ account of the home mortgage meltdown goes back to the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977, designed to encourage more lending to the poor and minorities. The practical effect was to encourage lenders to weaken their standards. This trend was exacerbated by the 1992 Federal Housing Enterprises Financial Safety and Soundness Act, originally proposed as a way to

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provide sensible rules for mortgage loans, but turned into a quota system mandating a certain percentage of loans to low- and moderate-income families for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the two government-sponsored entities in the mortgage industry. Other government initiatives from players like HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development) as well as activism from groups like ACORN were able to pressure lenders into making more subprime loans—“subprime” designating the low credit rating of the borrowers as well as the type of loans given. Since Fannie and Freddie were required to have a certain number of these loans on the books, other lenders were able to off-load them on Fannie and Freddie as well as other secondary market actors. At the time of the crash, there were 27 million of these subprime loans, almost half of all mortgage loans, in the system. The *sine qua non* for the crash, as Richards alleges, following Peter Wallison of the American Enterprise Institute, was all of this government policy pushing weaker lending standards on the industry. Playing an additional role in the mess was the moral hazard created by promises to Fannie, Freddie, and others that the U. S. Government would serve as a backstop to institutions “too big to fail.” In other words, it wasn’t free markets that caused this crash; it was markets jammed up by bad incentives, government pressure, and scrambled economic indicators.

The actual accounting for the meltdown itself begins with chapter seven. The first six chapters are an exciting narrative of the many players who were attempting to drive policy before the crash and still attempting to drive it afterward. Richards focuses on Herb and Marion Sandler of Golden West Financial/World Savings in California and Martin Eakes of Self-Help

Loans in North Carolina. Both did business and influenced policy under the aegis of helping the poor. (I would have preferred the account of the crash come first, then an account of how these background players were involved, but the ordering does provide something of the flavor of a whodunit.)

Both the Sandlers and Eakes were players in the field of home-loans. The Sandlers were pioneers of adjustable-rate-mortgages (ARMs) issued with little verification of the lender’s credit-worthiness, meanwhile demonizing others with similar practices. They sold World Savings at the housing bubble’s peak for over \$24 billion to Wachovia, which then suffered immediate buyer’s remorse. Wachovia was eventually

of disrupting merger plans. They were thus a force causing the meltdown. But the CRL lost no esteem since the conventional narrative blamed greedy bankers. They provided advocacy in the wake of the meltdown in favor of the new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) and the Dodd–Frank law.

Richards summarizes why Dodd-Frank exacerbates “too big to fail” by designating an entire category of such institutions, making likely the disappearance of small banks and a repeat of bad investments by big ones. The result is a financial system in which survival is predicated on government connections. The CFPB’s authority is outside of Congressional funding or oversight, and it exercises a power to issue cease-and-desist orders to businesses because of anything it designates as “abusive” behavior.

In the end, Richards argues that real ideological fervor is to blame for our current situation, not greedy economic masterminds. People who want to make things better will make them worse without sound economic understanding. The current drive by Eakes and

those like-minded is to label all payday lenders as usurious and force them out of most states, despite abundant evidence that such lending is a boon to the poor. Like the high-minded attempts to help the poor get houses, this new drive to save them from “abusive” practices has consequences that will only be seen in the long-run. And those consequences, like those of the push to help the poor get home loans even when not feasible, will probably not be pretty.

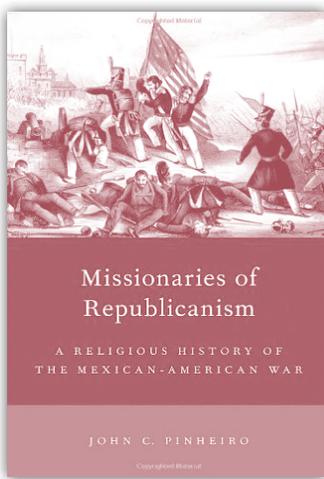
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sold to Wells Fargo for pennies on the dollar. North Carolinian Eakes made his name with Self-Help Loans, a credit union that targeted the poor, and with his advocacy work to change the way lenders operated. Eakes pushed laws to limit fees and prepayment penalties in North Carolina, as well as goading the Federal Trade Commission into suing CitiGroup for some of its practices in this regard.

Because of his activism Eakes was noticed by Herb Sandler, who bankrolled Eakes’ Center for Responsible Lending (CRL), an advocacy group that, along with many others, helped push large lenders into making more subprime loans with the subtle threat

Government bailout. © MCCAIG; istockphoto.com



Reading History Religiously

Review by Samuel Gregg

Review of *Missionaries of Republicanism: A Religious History of the Mexican-American War* by John C. Piheiro. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) 256 pages; \$45.00.

Among the many regrettable trends in the academy today is that of reading history through decidedly secularist lens. By that I don't necessarily mean looking at the past with a hostile view of religion (save of the fluffy sort), though that can be part of the problem. What I have in mind is the tendency to look at events and social, political, and economic developments in a religious void.

This is the error that John C. Pinheiro, a widely-respected historian of the antebellum United States and professor of history and Director of Catholic Studies at Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, Mich., addresses and masterfully overcomes in his new book on the Mexican-American War. This war, which resulted in one of the fastest and most expansive acquisitions of territory by the United States, tends to be overshadowed by other early American conflicts. Pinheiro's thesis is that much of the language and context of the Mexican-American War cannot be understood without appreciation of the manner in which the war came to be immersed in anti-Catholic rhetoric, and how Protestantism and Catholicism shaped the manner in which Americans understood their Mexican opponents and why they were fighting them.

During the Revolutionary War, Catholics

in the North American colonies has been overwhelming on the side of the Revolutionary cause, not least because people such as Charles Carroll of Carrollton (the only Catholic to sign the Declaration of Independence) saw the Revolution as a unique opportunity to secure religious liberty for themselves in an overwhelmingly Protestant society. By the 1810s, however, a number of events aligned themselves in ways, Pinheiro argues, which mean that "anti-Catholicism emerged as integral to Americans' understanding of how best to preserve their liberties in a more diverse country."

One factor was an increase in Catholic immigration to the United States. The second was the Second Great Awakening that swept through Protestant America. The third was the further expansion into the West by the United States in the wake of the Louisiana Purchase. Taken together, Pinheiro suggests, this produced a potent mixture of ideas that helped drive the growth of the United States throughout North America, but also a sense that certain religious groups—not just Catholics but also Mormons—represented a type of danger to the ordered liberty embodied by the still young American Republic.

This meant that, with regard to the Mexican-American war, the identity of the United States, according to Pinheiro, was one of "all those things that Mexico was not: free, Protestant, republican and prosperous." For many Americans, Protestantism was the equivalent of freedom, while

Catholicism was seen as naturally inclined to despotism.

One of the many strengths of this book is that Pinheiro is very careful to define precisely what he means by phrases such as "anti-Catholic," "anti-Catholicism," "Evangelicals," and "nativism." He also separates out perennial Protestant-Catholic theological disputes from those arguments that were more properly concerned with the *antebellum* political world of 1830s and 1840s. Obviously there was some overlap, but Pinheiro is interested in elucidating how religious questions interplayed with the Mexican-American war. Without this context, he maintains, it is not possible to understand why Irish Catholic deserters (few of whom were American citizens) from the U.S. Army ended up forming a battalion (the *San Patricos*—dramatized in the 1999 film *One Man's Hero*) who would end up being captured by General Winfield Scott's army near Mexico City. But the war's religious dimension goes beyond this particular occurrence. For many Americans in the army, for instance, the invasion of Mexico was the first time most of them had encountered a mass (no pun intended) Catholic culture: an encounter that resulted in mostly negative reactions.

Having provided the general context, Pinheiro takes his readers through the background of anti-Catholicism in the United States in the 1830s and 1840s, the impact of the Texas Revolution of 1836, the religious dimension of elections held prior to the war, the role played by reli-

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gion in recruiting soldiers, the manner in which the war played out in U.S. domestic politics, and the effect upon American soldiers of being in Mexico and among Mexican Catholics. Many American soldiers were, for instance, impressed by Mexican piety. Others were fascinated by Catholic liturgy, though this did not stop American soldiers from disobeying orders and using churches and shrines as stables, barracks, depots, and hospitals.

The last chapters consider the way that Protestant leaders (clergy and laity) in America thought about the war and the way it affected their view of politics and Catholics in the United States. Many Protestant leaders, for instance, enveloped the war in the rhetoric of displays of God's sovereignty, and saw it as a spur for Protestant missionary activities in America and Mexico alike. Other Protestant pastors, however, were initially opposed to the war because of commitments to peace, but found themselves swept away—and, in many cases, absorbed by—a type of millennialism that underscored an ascendancy of republicanism over decadent forms of political life and social organization.

For those interested in the interplay of politics and religion within the context of American history, Pinheiro's book sets a new standard for sophistication of analysis. His point is not to engage in reviving and refighting sectarian battles but rather to bring to light and contextualize religion's influence, for better and worse, upon the formation of American political culture. The fact that he writes in an accessible way, but without over-simplifying matters, means that the audience for this book goes far beyond the academy. For anyone interested in the religious history of the United States and the way this has impacted America's relations with its neighbors, this book would be a welcome addition to their library.

Samuel Gregg is Research Director of the Acton Institute.

Double-Edged Sword: *The Power of the Word*

Isaiah 40:26

Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

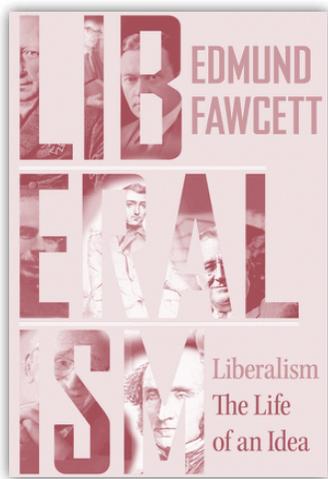
There is comfort in knowing that God counts the stars and calls them each by name. Our little corner of the observable universe only has about 400 billion stars while some galaxies easily have over 1 trillion. If God can number the hairs on each of our heads, He has little trouble in remembering the constellations.

Stars instinctively make us to look up towards the sky and to creation. While the smart phone craze is creating a dynamic in which more and more people are looking down, ironically, technology at the same time allows us to see deeper and deeper into space. Thanks to tools like the Hubble Telescope, astronomers are able to estimate that there are between 100 to 200 billion galaxies.

Given the speck of space we take up, it's amazing to think how much God is mindful of us and pays such close attention to us. The answer of course to the deep wondering lies in Jesus Christ.

Christ was chosen for us before the creation of the world for our sake (1 Peter: 1:20). He is the truth that predates creation itself. Revelation proclaims that one day the sun will stop shining because Christ will be the only light we need (Rev. 21:23). That's pretty amazing to fathom, but everything in creation points to Christ. As Creator, Christ upholds the sun, as it merely reflects the glory of His light. And through the incarnation and the work of Christ, He is able to uplift mankind to his rightful place in creation. Christ makes the universe truly a man-centered universe through His incarnation. "Humanity and its position in the universe, or its relation to the universe, has been specified by the Incarnate God and Creator, Jesus Christ," declares Greek Orthodox theologian George Dragas.

It's amazing what has been accomplished in Jesus Christ. When we retire and sleep for the night, it is a rehearsal for our day of resurrection, which is secured by Christ. When He ascended to the Father, He exalted all of humanity. Christ has woven humanity into His divinity. Knowing Christ personally and trusting in His power is a great assurance as we look out into the heavens and beyond.



An Epic of Ideas

By Bruce Edward Walker

Review of *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea* by Edmund Fawcett (Princeton University Press, 2014) 468 pages; \$35.00.

Russell Kirk published *The Conservative Mind* in 1953, which provided the history of modern conservative thought from Irish statesman and philosopher Edmund Burke to George Santayana. Later updated to include T. S. Eliot, Kirk's study was a long overdue examination of conservatism's history; first principles; prominent and less-so great thinkers; theoretical, theological and philosophical underpinnings; and practice. When it was published, *The Conservative Mind* served as a tonic for the tidal wave of post-World War II liberalism threatening to render conservatism a historical footnote.

By its very nature, the principles of conservatism evolve slowly if, indeed, at all. Kirk eventually devised his 10 Conservative Principles for his 1993 *Politics of Prudence* based on his examination of the record, but in truth they could've been written at any time after the French Revolution. Kirk prefaced these principles with the caveat: "Being neither a religion nor an ideology, the body of opinion termed *conservatism* possesses no Holy Writ and no *Das Kapital* to provide dogmata." And this: "there exists no Model Conservative, and conservatism is the negation of ideology: it is a state of mind, a type of character, a way of looking at the civil social order." Yet, Kirk's mind ably discerns a distinct plumb line from Burke to Eliot.

The above might explain why a similar book on liberalism hasn't been attempted before Edmund Fawcett's *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea*. Since its inception more than 200 years ago, liberalism has witnessed more twists and turns than a roller coaster catapulted onto gelatin rails positioned over the San Andreas Fault. Pinning the myriad strands of liberalism to any fixed system of thought, then, is impossible. All that's left is tracing liberal DNA from Wilhelm von Humboldt and Benjamin Constant to Friedrich Hayek and Karl Popper, and Fawcett performs this delicate genetic task magnificently—albeit with some reservations.

Fawcett, a former *Economist* reporter, stresses the European branding of liberalism rather than employing the word as the more recent epithet applied to progressivism. This approach grants him wide berth to examine many who would not be considered "liberal" by current political U.S. standards. Fawcett identifies liberal antecedents in Renaissance Europe "through the Church doctors to the ancient Greeks and Romans." Compare Kirk's caveat with that written by Fawcett: "Liberalism had no accredited doctrinalists, no Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, no Marx-Engels Standard Edition." While confessing liberalism is indefinable, Fawcett forces himself to land his definition in a somewhat overgrown meadow:

Liberalism as I take it here was a search for an ethically acceptable

order of human progress among civic equals without recourse to undue power.... Liberalism on this telling has an outlook, and 'liberal' means someone who shares that outlook with a degree of enthusiasm and commitment. None of that defines 'liberalism.'

And this:

Liberals hoped for *ethical* order without appeal to divine authority, established tradition or parochial custom. They hoped for *social* order without legally fixed hierarchies or privileged classes. They hoped for an *economic* order free of crown or state interference, monopoly privileges, and local obstacles to national markets. They hoped for an *international* order where trade prevailed over war and treaty over force. They hoped last for a *political* order without absolute authorities or undivided powers that all citizens might understand and accept under lawful arrangements honoring and fostering those other hopes.

Those operating under this rubric, writes Fawcett, abjured utopianism both temporal and eternal. Man's laws, wisely written and enforced with a healthy dollop of luck, would result in a degree of peace and prosperity. He confesses this approach involved tremendous trial and error, and the experiment caromed "politically from overconfidence to undue disappointment

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and intellectually from horizonless universalism to worldly-wise damage limitation.”

The advent of fascism and communism in the 20th century cast liberalism in favorable relief, and the fall of the former in 1945 and the latter in 1989 seemingly assured liberalism’s ascendancy to a permanent perch in the West thereafter. However, competition from newly invigorated conservatism and a host of other -isms stemmed the tide of liberalism. Additionally, as noted by Fawcett, liberalism unmoored itself from its centrist beginnings by divorcing itself from its more right-leaning component. It eventually came to embrace obsessive secularism, moral relativism and other violations of Natural Law it previously endorsed unacknowledged in its search for, in Burke’s words, ordered liberty. The result was even more government, state-enforced coercion and exponential growth of social programs on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the beginning, so to speak, it was much different. The genesis of liberalism, Fawcett asserts, sprang from the pens of Constant and Humboldt. According to the author, the former declared representative democracy a tradeoff in which “citizens gave up direct power over their lives; the state compensated them by letting them alone.” Constant also championed the freedom of an individual to pursue whatever their respective talents afforded. France’s Francois Guizot soon enters liberalism’s early mosaic in his opposition to absolute power, described by Fawcett as “despotism or tyranny. Such unchecked power could be, and often was, arbitrary, unresponsive, and oppressive” rather than “enlightened, beneficial, and benign.”

Fawcett is unclear, however, on a distinction he draws but does not define between Burke and Guizot – admittedly a fitting topic for a book-length thesis or dissertation. How is Burke’s *Reflections on the French Revolution*, in which he “stressed the perils of abandoning established custom and disregarding the wisdom of tradition without adequately netting those perils against the benefits of change for the sagacity of its

advocates,” in Fawcett’s words, less supple than Guizot’s beliefs in “representative government by consent on a narrow, property-based franchise and in a constitutional division of powers under a monarch who reigned but did not rule”? Fawcett asserts a few pages later:

To schematize, conservatives revered traditional or established power. Authority was to be obeyed and orders followed without question. To the conservative mind, the very idea of limited power or divided sovereignty involved a confusion. For sovereignty was no more or less than supreme power of command without having to answer ‘why.’

By this description, it’s clear Burke – in Fawcett’s view – rests on the liberal continuum rather than the starting point for modern conservatism where Kirk (more convincingly, in this writer’s opinion) placed him. It would seem Kirk trumps Fawcett as well in characterizing Alexis de Tocqueville, particularly when it applies to religion. Fawcett writes that Tocqueville believed religion “absurd on the whole, but – another echo of Constant – he took some unquestioned faith or other as necessary to serve as society’s ethical glue. Since it was familiar and available, Roman Catholicism, Tocqueville believed, met that purpose well.” Rather than present examples of where Kirk and the subject in question upend Fawcett’s conclusion, I instead direct readers to Chapter VI of *The Conservative Mind* and the writings of Tocqueville.

Where Fawcett shines, however, it’s with Klieg light intensity. Without losing the strands of his narrative in a tangle of names, dates, philosophies, historical events and influences, the author corrals each thread into one compelling compendium of diverse characters and schools of thought from Germany, France, Great Britain and the United States. Readers adhering to the principles advocated by the Acton Institute will be thrilled to read about 19th century politician Richard Cob-

den – who convinced English Christians that wages are fixed by supply and demand and free trade is virtuous: “In his maiden speech to parliament in 1841, he argued movingly that relieving hardship in factory towns by lowering tariffs was an obligation for any good Christian.”

One difference Fawcett recognizes between 19th century liberals and those of the 20th century and today is an emphasis on character. As late as 1873, John Stuart Mill hoped to nudge the needle of liberalism forward by emphasizing a “change of character ... in the uncultivated herd who now compose the labouring masses, and in the immense majority of their employers.” Mills was joined in this goal by British Samuel Smiles and the American Unitarian preacher William Emery Channing.

As for recognizing the dual roles played by morality and religion in maintaining ordered liberty in free societies, William Gladstone might’ve been liberalism’s last gasp. But, as last gasps go, Gladstone’s efforts resonate as a breath of fresh air for Western democracies increasingly puffing themselves up as secular entities:

Gladstone found religion and politics hard to pull apart. A tolerant nation could not impose faith or morals. Yet politics without moral vision was for Gladstone unintelligible, as was morals without religion. His vision combined the egalitarian dicta of the Sermon on the Mount with a Homeric devotion to unflinching and, when needed, ruthless nobility. The notion his faith might not be the faith of all humankind was foreign to him, and he remained unshaken in that characteristically liberal mix of Enlightenment and Christian universalism.... Gladstone’s ideal of a virtuous liberal commonwealth was a Christian state, not imposed by law but arisen in spirit, and peopled by latter-day Hectors.

Fawcett writes that Gladstone focused on the benefits wrought by the Industrial Revolution – all the while recognizing – as did Charles Dickens – members of the Victorian society in which he lived were slipping through the cracks.

The twentieth century was a marked change from modern liberalism’s inaugural century. Progressivism gained a toe-hold through such publications as *The New Republic*. The magazine featured a trio of far-left liberals – Herbert Croly, Walter Lippman and Walter Weyl – who impatiently crusaded for a greater role of government to alleviate poverty, income disparity and a host of progressive bug-bears. Croly, Fawcett writes, believed the “nation needed vigorous direction from Washington if it was to promote science, efficiency, personal fulfillment and social justice.” Muckrakers such as Upton Sinclair added fuel to the fire, and liberalism began its slide into the soft socialism witnessed in much of Europe today, and growing tendencies in the United States. As a nonobjective observer and chronicler, Fawcett seems unbothered by the expansion of governments into the lives of their governed. In fact, he leaves unexplained an off-the-cuff remark referring to “the rotten compromises of Philadelphia” in a discussion of the post-World War II government established in West Germany.

Despite the sometimes maddening editorial asides offered by the author, there’s much to recommend *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea*. Fawcett may be a bit of a liberal ideologue, but his encyclopedic grasp of the history and ideas of the last two and a half centuries, and the changes wrought by two world wars, the Cold War and a Great Depression make for a dizzying yet concise epic of ideas.

Bruce Edward Walker, a Michigan-based writer, writes frequently on the arts and other topics for the Acton Institute.

Why is ‘For The Life of the World’ such a valuable and popular film for expanding our audience at Acton?

“For the Life of the World: Letter to the Exiles,” a film series produced by the Acton Institute, is receiving a lot of attention for its crisp and entertaining visuals as well as rich content. Andy Crouch, the executive editor of *Christianity Today* said, “‘For the Life of the World’ is the best treatment of faith & culture ever put on a screen. Just outstanding.” I’m delighted that we succeeded in creating something so strong theologically as well as so thoroughly entertaining.

Our most important mission at Acton is to introduce a free and virtuous society to new audiences worldwide. We have done that with a number of recent projects including *PovertyCure* and *Poverty Inc*. As an organization, we have never been better equipped to reach people.

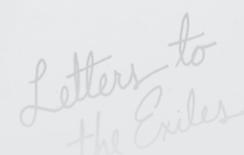
“For the Life of the World,” a seven-part series, seeks to examine the bigger picture of Christianity’s role in culture, society, and the world. Often think tanks and free-market organizations are really good at telling like-minded individuals and organizations what they want to hear but sometimes fail at casting a vision to draw people to our ideas. “For the Life of the World” specifically calls people to move beyond the self and to something greater than this world.

The series powerfully depicts the deeper meaning of the resources God gives us for a holistic understanding of economy. “For the Life of the World” stresses the virtue side of the equation when it comes to economy. Perhaps, more importantly, the film tells an entertaining and compelling story, and it completely moves away from the model of lecturing to those who may not agree with us. It is truly a media and missions model for what we need to be doing in the free-market and renewing culture movement.

Christians, especially those in business and the private sector, still compartmentalize too much of their faith life. A lot of young people are aimless or adrift when it comes to understanding truth and the need for a properly oriented society that promotes human flourishing. “For the Life of the World” amazingly does powerfully reintroduce rich and timeless ideas to new audiences. That it’s an amazing and entertaining story guarantees its success.



Kris Alan Mauren
Executive Director



who care about culture, and he moved the needle a little bit toward consensus.

How does an artist today help a society that is striving for truth?

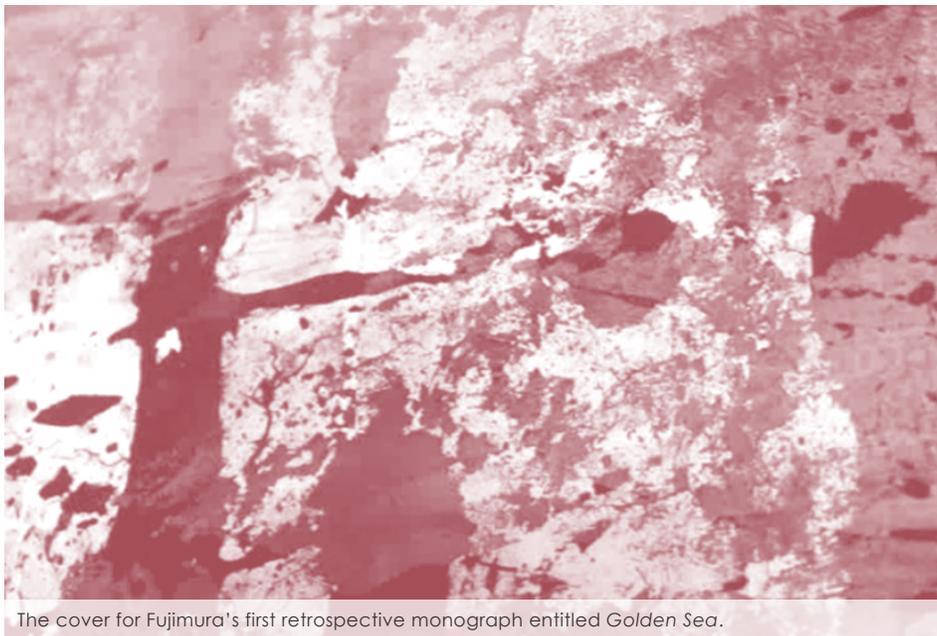
We have to connect truth, goodness, and beauty. Truth without beauty ends up as a black and white frame and is very dogmatic. Beauty without goodness will become sterilized and has no impact. And so beauty and truth have to work together and goodness holds everything together in a way that allows for a community to understand itself and an artist to be able to function in a particular setting as someone who can speak the truth. It's important for an artist to expose things we don't normally talk about in the public square.

Look at the great writers—from Walt Whitman to Emily Dickinson and from F. Scott Fitzgerald to Ernest Hemingway—they all do that, they're kind of exposing some dissonance in culture, but, at the same time, their writing allows them to create this authentic place. And so art is a great way to see truth and beauty. It's a conduit. It allows you a particular position and standing so truth does not become dogmatic, but it becomes incarnated into our whole life. I speak to these issues in my upcoming book about culture care.

I was on a panel with Jesse Jackson once and he looked straight at me, and he said, "If you want to start a movement of any kind, civil rights included, you have to have artists." You can talk about injustice, oppression, and truth all day, but it's not until Marvin Gaye starts singing and jazz musicians start playing, that it becomes

real. Until a singer-songwriter writes a song that everybody's singing, including your enemy, the movement doesn't take off. Historically that's true of any kind of movement, and so in that sense, what the artist brings actually taps into the dream that we might have about a movement. Truth often works that way. It's important that artists can read an audience and tap into a pivotal event and bring a greater meaning and expression to what is unfolding.

So if God is the ultimate artist, in your work of the Four Holy Gospels, what were the challenges of depicting the Gospels through art?



The cover for Fujimura's first retrospective monograph entitled *Golden Sea*.

The challenge is getting out of the way and illuminating the Word without adding anything to it. So I first looked at discovering what is the function of an artist. And then I knew, even devoid of images, the Bible is a visual text. The artist is designing but illuminating the Word so that it is readable and beautiful. I was trying to listen to the Spirit, using my slice of expression to illuminate the Word. It's a fellowship with the Spirit to go deeper. That is a spiritual challenge and discipline.

I felt so unworthy doing this. And yet what kept on coming back to me was that

this invitation was to the feast. I wanted to contribute to an understanding of upholding and beholding the Word of God as the word of the feast. That is a great privilege. I would come out of my studio kind of staggering because I had spent a day meditating on one word and trying all I could do to compress that reality.

The folks at Crossway Publishing were so wonderful to work with because they took care of the details. One page went through six color corrections. They didn't complain; they knew that it was important. I was trying to do justice to the Word as it is written to us. How do we worship

through that? So when I talk about visual theology, I'm not talking about replacing the Word of God but finding a way to visualize it.

In the Golden Sea video, you explain that every theme and technique that you've tried to capture is captured. Could you elaborate on that?

I was working on the Four Holy Gospels, and I just needed to work on something else

because it was so intense and I ended up stretching the canvas. I didn't intend for it to be anything but a backdrop and I started putting layers and layers on it. I was working on the Four Holy Gospels for a year and a half, so throughout that time I was just working on the background. And so there's at least 80 days on there by the time I realized what it was, and my son came in to film for Crossway and he asked, "Dad, what is this painting?" And I said, "I don't know, it's just something I'm doing." And he said, "This is everything you've done." And I stepped back and I was like that's quite a state-

ment. And then my gallery owner, Valerie, came the next week and she said the same thing. So I thought, "This is amazing!" I guess I didn't realize maybe that's why it was so good because by virtue of letting this be something of leisure, I was out of the way completely. The work began to just take over. But intuitively that's what you want to see happen when you're creating or writing, that's what happened with this painting. And when I

"The cross is critical for the believer to understand and grasp art, and the art of life."

looked at it, I laughed, and I knew they were right. There's something to this that I've always wanted to do and I never felt like it was the right time and I was using a kind of silk and paper that's no longer available, so it's something that I can never do again in the same way. I can work in a series and create other pieces, but that particular piece is absolutely unique to that time and the ecosystem of art that is endangered and disappearing. So there is a little bit of sadness to it because there is a finality that can't ever be replicated with another piece.

And did you create 'Walking on Water' with the intent of entering it into the Grand Rapids Art Prize?

No. It was strictly a response to the earthquake and Tsunami in Japan. After 9/11, I worked for a decade dealing with fire. And now I had to deal with water and imaginatively try to work through this question, "Can you walk on water?" I was trying to answer that given the reality of the circumstance and devastation in Japan.

The Golden Sea video captures the process of this, so your readers can watch the process of the creation of the painting. And I used a similar azurite that was given to me by a pigment shop owner in Japan. She's in the film and she has recently saved a particular type of azurite that has a certain kind of impurity in them, so its fractions are a little different than the pure azurite.

But this azurite comes from the top of the mines that is retrieved by hand, similar to using dynamite in order to get copper faster. So the azurite that I use for that painting is very rare. My pigment shop finds these somehow. So in a way, this is a collaboration with the Japanese people.

I realized that's exactly the kind of expression that I wanted to do to honor the victims of 9/11 and other disasters. I showed it in New York to help my gallery recover from Hurricane Sandy. And then it went to Yale for mini-retrospective there. I've shown it in various places. I believe this piece is meaningful to those who have experienced great challenges.

How does sharing in Christ's suffering carry an artist to something greater?

Christ Himself is an artist. God is the Great Artist and Christ is the embodiment of humanity and divinity, fully human, fully divine, fully artist. William Blake said, "Jesus was the only artist who ever lived." I agree with that. I think His artistry was about salvation, but it doesn't end there, it begins there. His artistry not only brings us to a redeemed humanity and reconciled nature, but also to a new world and new Heaven. Christ completely changes the structure of the material universe that we know today. That's the grand work of an artist.

Artists really understand that there's suffering involved, there's sacrifice, and there's discipline that we need to develop. We don't expect people to get it. We almost expect everything that we create will be misunderstood. Often there is a feeling that people will take advantage of us and hijack our writings, our paintings, or our music. That's okay because Jesus walked a path of isolation and was misunderstood yet fulfilled His mission. Artists can see that clearly when we follow Christ. We don't have to have a bestseller or even praise from people. It's enough that we have our conviction, given by the Spirit to inhabit a unique niche.

I call it my small slice of expression because when I was in art school in Japan for graduate school, there were a lot of people more gifted than I was. But I had this one particular way of painting, cap-

turing reality, and expressing something that only I could do. Even before I was a Christian, I knew that it was a gift because when I am tapped into that reality, something goes through me. I couldn't explain it. It was like magic and it created this deeper love, and so I cultivated that, and here I am, thirty years later, a successful artist that was just trying to be faithful to that small slice of expression.

It's a journey toward focusing on who you are, what you're created to do, and who you're not. Sometimes failure is more important than success. A lot of times we think that artists look for success but as Eliot says in *Four Quartets*, that "love would



be love of the wrong thing." We are often not ready for the very thing we crave. At the same time, Jesus shows the way, and he experienced suffering to give us a new image, a new definition of success. The cross is critical for the believer to understand and grasp art, and the art of life. ■■■■

Abigail Adams [1744 – 1818]

How difficult the task to quench the fire and the pride of private ambition, and to sacrifice ourselves and all our hopes and expectations to the public weal! How few have souls capable of so noble an undertaking.

In the precarious time of the American Revolution, members of the Continental Congress left their wives and children in order to establish a new American country.

During this time John and Abigail Adams begin writing letters to each other that by the end of their lives totaled more than 1,100. Abigail served as a confidante and advisor to the first vice president and second president of the United States.

Abigail was born in colonial Massachusetts in 1744 to a Congregationalist minister and his wife. Adams was never able to receive a formal education due to her poor health, however, she became self-educated by reading Shakespeare and John Milton while at home. Using this knowledge, she became known as one of the greatest letter writers of her time. During their long separations, Abigail used her letters to John to advocate for the equal protection under law for all people. Abigail wrote to John telling him, “I am more and more convinced that man is a dangerous creature; and that power, whether vested in many or a few, is ever grasping, and, like the grave, cries, “Give, give!”” She added in her letter to her husband in 1775, “You tell me of degrees of perfection to which human nature is capable of arriving, and I believe it, but at the same time lament that our admiration should arise from the scarcity of the instances.” Knowing that power can corrupt, Abigail believed that individuals should not be left in power for too long due to the temptation of avarice and falling into scandal.



Abigail Adams. Wikimedia Commons

During a time when women did not have large roles in politics, Abigail was appointed to the Massachusetts Colony General Court in 1775. Adams was the first First Lady to ever hold a political position in the newly formed country. She also handled many of the investments for the family and her competency of markets and land value increased the financial security and wealth of her family. While John was away, she managed the family farm at Braintree, where it was profitable under her guidance.

As a minister’s daughter, Abigail grew up in a devoutly religious family and she stayed close to her faith throughout her life. Frequently, she would reference God in her letters to various political individuals in America encouraging them to put their faith in the Lord. She stated in one letter to John, “The God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Trust in him at all times ye people pour out your hearts before him. God is refuge for us.”

Abigail Adams served as a defining woman of not only her generation, but of all the generations to come after her. She displayed a new understanding of the role of women in American politics and served as one of the most influential women ever as the wife of one president and the mother of another. Throughout her life, she advocated for greater education for women. She was a voice for the abolition of slavery noting, “I have sometimes been ready to think that the passion for liberty cannot be equally strong in the breasts of those who have been accustomed to deprive their fellow creatures of theirs.”

After the publication of her letters in 1848, she is the first wife of a president to have a book published. In a letter to her son John Quincy Adams, Abigail wrote, “The only sure and permanent foundation of virtue is religion. Let this important truth be engraven upon your heart.”



Our Prodigal Generation

As a pastor, parents often share with me the grief they have when a child of theirs leaves the faith. I won't bore you with statistics, but suffice it to say that many young adults today seem to leave their faith behind, shedding it as if it

were one more remnant of childhood to be boxed up and stored in Mom and Dad's attic.

I know a woman who understands this heartache. While she was a woman of great faith, her husband was not. He was violent and abusive. The woman tried to raise her three children well, but in such an atmosphere, it was difficult. And yet, two of her three children became exemplary Christians. Her other child, a son, was a brilliant young man who thought faith had no place in a reasonably lived life. All the woman could do was pray.

And pray she did, for years. She watched her son make terrible decisions: alcohol, sexual licentiousness, mistresses, fathering a child out-of-wedlock. She grieved, but she prayed. In the end, it was her son's reason, intellect and hunger for truth that led him to belief. It came at great cost to both him and his mother, but her faith did not waver even as she watched her son throw away the beliefs she had instilled in him as a child.

Today, we see the "Millennials" doing much the same. Many claim they are "spiritual but not religious," others say they believe but don't "get anything" out of organized religion. I have to say I understand these young people. I was a prodigal son myself, looking for truth in all the wrong places.

I wish to encourage any parents who find themselves in this situation. In the Catholic Church, we see the enormous response from young people at World Youth Days. Pastors from other faith traditions tell me about the young adults

who lead mission trips, Bible studies, youth groups. These young men and women bring a vitality and sense of hope to the church as a whole. We must continue to do more to reach out to young people in a culture that seems to almost literally drag them away from the faith, but there is hope.

Many believe that faith and reason cannot co-exist, and that is why many young adults struggle with the faith. They want reason and intellect; they want things to make sense. They do not want to settle for "it's the way we've always done things" or "it's tradition." They hunger for a full, well-reasoned, sound explanation for why they should believe.

The young man I spoke of above is, of course, St. Augustine. He is one of the greatest intellects of the church, yet nearly drove his mother to the brink by his wild ways. He brought to the faith his intellect and reason; he did not leave them at the door of the church when he was received into the faith. He knew that reason and faith could not only co-exist; they must co-exist. Our God is a God of reason, of pattern and method, of prudence and sense. Any faith that tries to divorce God from His very nature holds no truth.

Every summer at the Acton Institute, our office hums with the excitement of interns. They truly are among the best and brightest. They come from across the world, with various talents, an eagerness to learn and serve, and in most cases, a deep faith. I can say the same about the many young people who make great sacrifices to attend Acton University. I hope that their time with Acton helps them grow in both intellect and faith.

Christians must be a reasonable people. We must be a joyful people. We must be a faithful people. We serve a God who is all this and more.

Rev. Sirico is president and co-founder of the Acton Institute.

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