

Father Antonio Spadaro SJ
Editor-in-Chief
La Civiltà Cattolica
Via di Porta Pinciana
1 – 00187 Roma
Italy

Reverend Pastor Marcelo Figueroa
Editor
Edición Argentina en *L'Osservatore Romano*
Buenos Aires
Argentina

July 21, 2017

Dear Fr. Spadaro and Rev. Figueroa,

I am writing to you to see if you would be interested in participating in a public conversation around the topic of the July 13 article which you recently co-authored in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, “Evangelical Fundamentalism and Catholic Integralism in the USA: A Surprising Ecumenism”.

As you know, your article has been the subject of considerable commentary in the United States in Catholic, Evangelical, and secular circles. It clearly touches on issues to do with the character of religion in the United States, the position of Catholics in the context of American religion and politics, as well as the manner in which Americans and non-Americans view the United States and its place in the world. All these are areas of great interest to the mission of the Acton Institute. I think that a public conversation around the topic would be very fruitful and illuminating.

The forum at which I would like to invite you to discuss the article and related themes is Acton University. The dates for Acton University for 2018 are 19-22 June, with the proposed panel being held on either Wednesday 20 June or Thursday 21 June.

As the name suggests, Acton University is an annual event held by the Acton Institute. As well as having offices in Rome and Buenos Aires, the Acton Institute is based in Grand Rapids in the State of Michigan. You can learn more about Acton and its work at www.acton.org

Acton University is somewhat similar to the type of summer university which is very common in Europe. Each year, Acton University brings together over 1000 participants from around the world and from many Christian confessions (as well as some non-Christians) to hear lectures and participate in discussions which address theological, philosophical, political, economic, social,

Catholics, Evangelicals, Eastern Orthodox Christians and members of other faiths on the intersection of theology, politics, and economics.

Each of the four evenings of Acton University concludes with a plenary session. Past speakers at these plenary sessions have included Nobel Prize winners in Economics as well as senior European and American political leaders.

One of these plenary sessions is a panel which engages in a guided and civil discussion of a political and/or economic theme about which faithful Christians often disagree. Last year, for instance, the theme of this panel (which you can view at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8aD7ife7l8E>) was “What does Christianity have to offer the poor?” The participants consisted of two Catholics and two Evangelical Christians representing what would be conventionally described as “center-left” positions and “center-right” positions. The subsequent 90 minute discussion was rigorous but civil. I wish to assure you that this would be a fair, open and vigorous dialogue on the important matters you raised in your article.

If you are, in principle, open to participating in such a discussion which focuses on themes addressed by your article, I would be very glad to hear from you. The Acton Institute would of course cover the full costs of your flights and accommodation and provide you with a suitable honorarium for your time and involvement. If translation is needed for any of the participants, this will be provided as well.

Your article has raised some important matters that believers from across various theological traditions and countries would do well to consider in an honest and open dialogue. For this reason, I want to make sure that others interested in this subject and your contributions to the debate are aware of this invitation and the opportunity that I believes it represents for understanding questions of significance for religious believers in America and elsewhere.

For planning purposes, we would be grateful for a response to this invitation by August 1, 2017.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours in Christ,



(Rev.) Robert A. Sirico
President and Co-Founder
Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty