

# Lord Acton Quotes

*Men, Government, Political, People, Liberty, History, Mean, Democracy,  
Country, Class, Evil, Law, Doe, Past, Passion, Character, Freedom, Minorities,  
Ideas, Spiritual*

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

~Lord Acton

The one pervading evil of democracy is the tyranny of the majority, or rather of that party, not always the majority, that succeeds, by force or fraud, in carrying elections.

~Lord Acton

Federalism is the best curb on democracy. [It] assigns limited powers to the central government. Thereby all power is limited. It excludes absolute power of the majority.

~Lord Acton

Liberty is not a means to a higher political end. It is itself the highest political end.

~Lord Acton

The most certain test by which we judge whether a country is really free is the amount of security enjoyed by minorities.

~Lord Acton

Socialism means slavery.

~Lord Acton

Men cannot be made good by the state, but they can easily be made bad. Morality depends on liberty.

~Lord Acton

The danger is not that a particular class is unfit to govern: every class is unfit to govern.

~Lord Acton

It is bad to be oppressed by a minority, but it is worse to be oppressed by a majority.

~Lord Acton

The issue which has swept down the centuries and which will have to be fought sooner or later is the people versus the banks.

~Lord Acton

Feudalism made land the measure and the master of all things.

~Lord Acton

It is easier to find people fit to govern themselves than people fit to govern others.

~Lord Acton

A wise person does at once, what a fool does at last. Both do the same thing; only at different times.

~Lord Acton

Authority that does not exist for Liberty is not authority but force.

~Lord Acton

Great men are almost always bad men.

~Lord Acton

There is not a soul who does not have to beg alms of another, either a smile, a handshake, or a fond eye.

~Lord Acton

History is not a burden on the memory but an illumination of the soul.

~Lord Acton

Limitation is essential to authority. A government is legitimate only if it is effectively limited.

~Lord Acton

If the past has been an obstacle and a burden, knowledge of the past is the safest and the surest emancipation.

~Lord Acton

The one pervading evil of democracy is the tyranny of the majority.

~Lord Acton

There is no error so monstrous that it fails to find defenders among the ablest men.

~Lord Acton

And remember, where you have a concentration of power in a few hands, all too frequently men with the mentality of gangsters get control. History has proven that.

~Lord Acton

The possession of unlimited power corrodes the conscience, hardens the heart, and confounds the understanding.

~Lord Acton

The mills of God grind slowly.

~Lord Acton

Liberty has not only enemies which it conquers, but perfidious friends, who rob the fruits of its victories: Absolute democracy, socialism.

~Lord Acton

Liberty is not the power of doing what we like, but the right of being able to do what we ought.

~Lord Acton

Every thing secret degenerates, even the administration of justice; nothing is safe that does not show how it can bear discussion and publicity.

~Lord Acton

No public character has ever stood the revelation of private utterance and correspondence.

~Lord Acton

Official truth is not actual truth.

~Lord Acton

There are two things which cannot be attacked in front: ignorance and narrow-mindedness. They can only be shaken by the simple development of the contrary qualities. They will not bear discussion.

~Lord Acton

Socialism easily accepts despotism. It requires the strongest execution of power -- power sufficient to interfere with property.

~Lord Acton

I'm not a driven businessman, but a driven artist. I never think about money. Beautiful things make money.

~Lord Acton

The will of the people cannot make just that which is unjust.

~Lord Acton

Judge talent at its best and character at its worst.

~Lord Acton

Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority...

~Lord Acton

The strong man with the dagger is followed by the weak man with the sponge.

~Lord Acton

Guard against the prestige of great names; see that your judgments are your own; and do not shrink from disagreement; no trusting without testing

~Lord Acton

By liberty I mean the assurance that every man shall be protected in doing what he believes to be his duty against the influences of authority and majorities, custom and opinion.

~Lord Acton

Learn as much by writing as by reading.

~Lord Acton

Fanaticism in religion is the alliance of the passions she condemns with the dogmas she professes.

~Lord Acton

Moral precepts are constant through the ages and not obedient to circumstances.

~Lord Acton

The common vice of democracy is disregard for morality.

~Lord Acton

In England Parliament is above the law. In America the law is above Congress.

~Lord Acton

Progress, the religion of those who have none.

~Lord Acton

History provides neither compensation for suffering nor penalties for

wrong.

~Lord Acton

Despotic power is always accompanied by corruption of morality.

~Lord Acton

Opinions alter, manners change, creeds rise and fall, but the moral law is written on the tablets of eternity.

~Lord Acton

Liberty, next to religion has been the motive of good deeds and the common pretext of crime.

~Lord Acton

A generous spirit prefers that his country should be poor, and weak, and of no account, but free, rather than powerful, prosperous, and enslaved.

~Lord Acton

If some great catastrophe is not announced every morning, we feel a certain void. Nothing in the paper today, we sigh.

~Lord Acton

A liberal is only a bundle of prejudices until he has mastered, has understood, experienced the philosophy of Conservatism.

~Lord Acton

The finest opportunity ever given to the world was thrown away because the passion of equality made vain the hope for freedom.

~Lord Acton

The test of liberty is the position and security of minorities.

~Lord Acton

Be not content with the best book; seek sidelights from the others; have no favourites.

~Lord Acton

A convinced man differs from a prejudiced man as an honest man from a liar.

~Lord Acton

Save for the wild force of Nature, nothing moves in this world that is not Greek in its origin.

~Lord Acton

Machiavelli's teaching would hardly have stood the test of Parliamentary government, for public discussion demands at least the profession of good faith.

~Lord Acton

The man who prefers his country before any other duty shows the same spirit as the man who surrenders every right to the state. They both deny that right is superior to authority.

~Lord Acton

Absolute power demoralizes.

~Lord Acton

Live both in the future and the past. Who does not live in the past does not live in the future.

~Lord Acton

At all times sincere friends of freedom have been rare, and its triumphs have been due to minorities.

~Lord Acton

There is not a more perilous or immoral habit of mind than the



sanctifying of success.

~Lord Acton

There is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it.

~Lord Acton

A government does not desire its powers to be strictly defined, but the subjects require the line to be drawn with increasing precision.

~Lord Acton

I mourn for the stake which was lost at Richmond more deeply than I rejoice over that which was saved at Waterloo.

~Lord Acton

Truth is the only merit that gives dignity and worth to history.

~Lord Acton

Those who have more power are liable to sin more; no theorem in geometry is more certain than this.

~Lord Acton

Liberty is the prevention of control by others. This requires self-control and, therefore, religious and spiritual influences; education, knowledge, well-being.

~Lord Acton

Every class is unfit to govern.

~Lord Acton

The long term versus the short term argument is one used by losers.

~Lord Acton

Liberty is the harmony between the will and the law.

~Lord Acton

From the absolute will of an entire people there is no appeal, no redemption, no refuge but treason.

~Lord Acton

There should be a law to the People besides its own will.

~Lord Acton

Liberty is the prevention of control by others.

~Lord Acton

When you perceive a truth, look for the balancing truth.

~Lord Acton

The passion for power over others can never cease to threaten mankind, and is always sure of finding new and unforeseen allies in continuing its martyrology.

~Lord Acton

Ink was not invented to express our real feelings.

~Lord Acton

A people averse to the institution of private property is without the first elements of freedom

~Lord Acton

Democracy generally monopolizes and concentrates power.

~Lord Acton

Many things are better for silence than for speech: others are better for speech than for stationery.

~Lord Acton

Character is tested by true sentiments more than by conduct. A man is seldom better than his word.

~Lord Acton

Government rules the present. Literature rules the future.

~Lord Acton

Political differences essentially depend on disagreement in moral principles.

~Lord Acton

Be generous before you are just. Do not temper mercy with justice.

~Lord Acton

I have reached the end of my time, and have hardly come to the beginning of my task.

~Lord Acton

Good and evil lie close together. Seek no artistic unity in character.

~Lord Acton

Every error pronounces judgment on itself when it attempts to apply its rules to the standard of truth.

~Lord Acton

Before men can find peace and harmony within themselves they must first fall in love with their country.

~Lord Acton

Towns were the nursery of freedom.

~Lord Acton

A history that should pursue all the subtle threads from end to end might be eminently valuable, but not as a tribute to peace and conciliation.

~Lord Acton

History is the arbiter of controversy, the monarch of all she surveys.

~Lord Acton

The wisdom of divine rule appears not in the perfection but in the improvement of the world... History is the true demonstration of Religion.

~Lord Acton

Fanaticism displays itself in the masses; but the masses were rarely fanaticised; and the crimes ascribed to it were commonly due to the calculations of dispassionate politicians.

~Lord Acton

Government by idea tends to take in everything, to make the whole of society obedient to the idea. Spaces not so governed are unconquered, beyond the border, unconverted, a future danger.

~Lord Acton

Advice to Persons About to Write History - Don't.

~Lord Acton

It is dangerous, at any time, to multiply sources of weakness.

~Lord Acton

The form of government and the condition of society must always correspond. Social equality is therefore a postulate of pure democracy.

~Lord Acton

The reward of history is that it releases and relieves us from present strife.

~Lord Acton

The few have not strength to achieve great changes unaided; the many have not wisdom to be moved by truth unmixed.

~Lord Acton

A man can be trusted only up to low-water mark.

~Lord Acton

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