

The Rev. Jay Lawlor on the Bible and The Wealth of Nations in Context

In a new essay the Rev. Jay Lawlor discusses how both the Christian faith and economics are implicated in largely misreading their foundational texts.

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, US, February 12, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [The Rev. Jay Lawlor](#) has been an Episcopal priest for nearly fifteen years and an economist more than twenty years. As a student and practitioner of both theology and economics he notes how both the Christian faith and the economics profession are implicated in largely misreading their foundational texts. The

Rev. Lawlor writes in a new essay, titled [The Bible and The Wealth of Nations in Context](#), that both the biblical tradition and Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* argue against an economy of extraction because it does not benefit the common good. "The sacred texts of the Bible and Adam Smith's influential *Wealth of Nations* advocate for a just economic system that shows concern and care for the poor and most vulnerable," writes the Rev. Lawlor.

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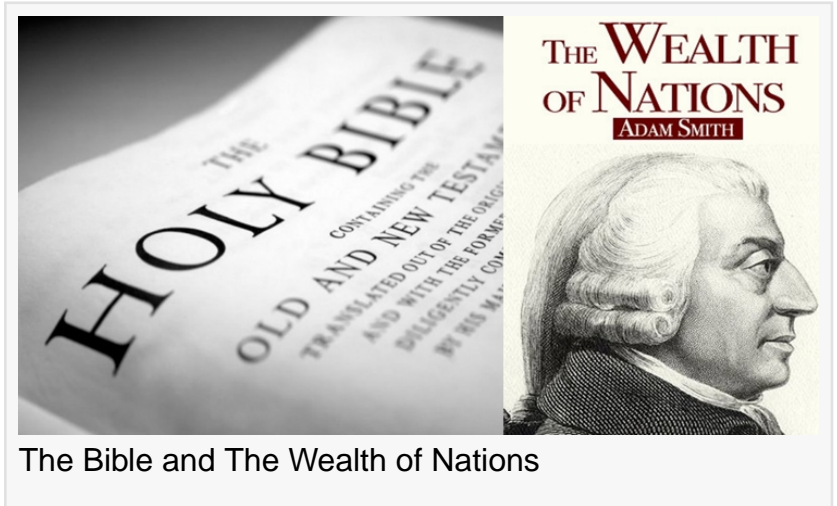
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The Rev. Jay Lawlor

He further states that economic justice is a central part of God's message in calling humanity to reconciliation. "Jesus impressed this upon his first disciples. In fact, his teachings and manner of life indicate resources must be shared more equitably," writes the Rev. Lawlor. He continues by recalling that the Early Church patterned their community life and ministry after an economic fellowship in stark contrast to economic disparity in the world.

After providing a summary analysis of the centrality of economic justice found in biblical texts, the Rev. Lawlor draws on his training as an economist. He explains that economics traces its emergence as a formal field of study to the publication of Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (or simply *The Wealth of Nations*). The Rev. Lawlor suggests that the "invisible hand" and "free market" references in *The Wealth of Nations* are cherry-picked by neo-classical economists and policy-makers in defense of unfettered capitalism.

"What is astonishing is how they are misreading what Adam Smith actually wrote," states the Rev. Lawlor. "Even more astonishing is that most other economists willingly give way to the misrepresentation of Smith's work," the Rev. Lawlor continues. He goes on to explain that Adam Smith was a moral philosopher and clearly stated in *The Wealth of Nations* that economic markets,



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and their division of labor, needed to produce not only wealth from market activity, but also justice and freedom — particularly for the poor.

The Rev. Lawlor offers an analysis of The Wealth of Nations and Adam Smith as a moral philosopher. He then concludes his article by suggesting both Christian faith and the economic profession need to take greater responsibility in recovering the centrality of economic justice concerns in both the Bible and The Wealth of nations, respectively. "Our reclaiming a fervent advocacy for economic justice that is found in these texts will require an informed rearticulation of what is presented in our society as Christian faith and economic understanding," concludes the Rev. Lawlor in his essay.

The entire essay is available at: <https://www.therevjaylawlor.com/bible-and-wealth-of-nations-in-context/>

The essay is part of the Rev. Lawlor's [Moral Economy series](#).

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