Review Essay

Economics and Early Christianity

CORINTHIAN WISDOM, STOIC PHILOSOPHY, AND THE ANCIENT ECONOMY

By Timothy A. Brookins
Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 159
New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014
Pp. xv + 264. Hardcover, $102.00.

WAGES OF CROSS-BEARING AND DEBT OF SIN: THE ECONOMY OF HEAVEN IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

By Nathan Eubank
Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 196
Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013
Pp. xi + 235. Hardcover, $140.00.

CHRISTIAN ORIGINS AND THE ANCIENT ECONOMY

By David A. Fiensy
Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014
Pp. xvi + 231. Paperback, $30.00.

THE GALILEAN ECONOMY IN THE TIME OF JESUS

Edited by David A. Fiensy and Ralph K. Hawkins
Early Christianity and Its Literature 11
Atlanta: SBL Press, 2013
Pp. ix + 197. Paperback, $24.95.

THE PAULINE CHURCH AND THE CORINTHIAN EKKLESIA: GRECO-ROMAN ASSOCIATIONS IN COMPARATIVE CONTEXT

By Richard Last
Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 164
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016
Pp. xxi + 258. Hardcover, $99.99.

THE ORIGINS OF NEOLIBERALISM: MODELING THE ECONOMY FROM JESUS TO FOUCAULT

By Dotan Leshem
New York: Columbia University Press, 2016
Pp. x + 230. Hardcover, $60.00, Paperback, $27.00.

JESUS, DEBT, AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

By Douglas E. Oakman
Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014
Pp. xix + 144. Paperback, $21.00.

PAUL'S KOINONIA WITH THE PHILIPPIANS

By Julien Ogereau
Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament II/377
Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014
Pp. xiv + 592. Hardcover, $150.

LOVING THE POOR, SAVING THE RICH: WEALTH, POVERTY, AND EARLY CHRISTIAN FORMATION

by Helen Rhee
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012
Pp. xx + 279. Paperback, $30.00.

#OCCUPYTHEBIBLE: WHAT JESUS REALLY SAID (AND DID) ABOUT MONEY AND POWER

By Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite
New York: Astor + Blue, 2012
Pp. xx + 132. Paperback, $20.00.

PAUL AND MONEY: A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE APOSTLE'S TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES

By Verlyn Verbrugge and Keith R. Krell
Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015
Pp. 312. Paperback, $27.99.

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Although in 2004 Steven Friesen could claim that poverty was an overlooked topic in studies of the Pauline epistles (Friesen 2004), more recently economic issues have become a central focus in studies of early Christianity. This is due at least in part to the global Great Recession of the late 2000s through the early 2010s, to increased income inequality, and to the increasing influence of neoliberal economic policies, as several of the books presently under review indicate. This review article discusses a sampling of works published between 2012 and 2016 that are indicative of the present state of the discussion.

The hashtag sign at the beginning of the book title *#OccupytheBible: What Jesus Really Said (and Did) about Money and Power*, by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, is indicative of the theme of the book: religious and parareligious organizations, particularly those that claim biblical texts such as Jesus's Sermon on the Mount as their charters, ought to organize and agitate for policies that promote economic justice in a manner analogous to the Occupy Wall Street movement, which utilized the hashtag symbol on social media platforms. In an age in which "corporate interests" and "free market capitalism" (i.e., neoliberalism) have an increasing influence over the global distribution of resources, Thistlethwaite enjoins people to "get out on the street" to discuss and to agitate for legislative reforms to "regulate banking practices, reduce corporate influence in politics, raise the minimum wage, reform lending to students, provide for universal healthcare, establish incentives for creating and keeping jobs in the United States" and to make social connections across lines of "class, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, and national origins" (15–16). This advice may be seen as more urgent with the recent election as President of the United States of a billionaire whose cabinet includes former CEOs of huge multinational corporations and whose insistence on building a border wall suggests an apt emblem of his early presidency: an image of separation between "us," understood to include white Anglo Christians, and "them," understood to include African Americans, Latinxs, Muslims, and transgender people, to name some of the groups who have already been targeted by his rhetoric and policies.

The chapters of *#OccupytheBible* attempt to discern the significance of Jesus's statements, particularly in the Sermon on the Mount, for contemporary groups. Matthew 4:1–11, which narrates Jesus's temptation by Satan, is taken as an image of the abuse of power and indicates the possibility of effective nonviolent resistance by a mobilized populace (chap. 2). Jesus's action of driving money-changers out of the Jerusalem temple (Matt 21:12–13) is taken as indicative of banking practices that include high interest rates on loans and foreclosures on homes and property (chap. 3). The fact that Jesus called the fishermen James and John (Mark 1:16–20) to be his disciples is taken as indicative of support for unionization and labor reform (chap. 4). The parable of the talents in Matt 25:14–30 is taken to indicate opposition to "free-market capitalism" (chap. 5). Jesus's citation of Isa 61:1–2 in Luke 4:16–19, indicating the God had sent him to "bring good news to the poor . . . and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" is taken to indicate an interest in debt relief (chap. 6). Chapters 7–9 deal with issues of women's "economic power and equality" and the unjust use of state power, particularly against nonviolent citizen demonstrators. The book closes with a call for Christians to practice a costly discipleship by "occupying" Biblical texts and by creating communities that both embody and call for increased economic justice.

Thistlethwaite's book will be useful and accessible to both religious and secular groups interested in promoting economic policies that counter the unequal distribution and accumulation of resources that has accelerated in the United States since the 1980s (as argued by Piketty 2014). Thistlethwaite's robust program of "occupying" the Bible, however, glosses over the significant differences between the economic system that governed Jesus's first-century Judea and the one that governs twenty-first century America. It is community organizing, and not historical criticism, that constitutes Thistlethwaite's primary concern (107).

Like Thistlethwaite's book, Douglas Oakman's *Jesus, Debt, and the Lord's Prayer* is motived by a concern with contemporary economic imbalances. Oakman notes that as of April 2014 Americans owed $11.68 trillion in debt, including $854.2 billion in credit card debt, and $1,115.3 billion in student loans; almost half of total global wealth was owned by one percent of the population; and that 95 percent of the total economic growth since 2009 was captured by the wealthiest one percent of Americans, while the bottom 90 percent of Americans became poorer during the same period (xii–xiii). In his conclusion, Oakman suggests that "Jesus' economic concerns and values may help Christian cultures to redefine economic ends in an age of greed and global capitalism" (121). Unlike Thistlethwaite, however, Oakman is deeply concerned to situate Jesus's economic practices within the context of the first-century Galilean economic situation.

Oakman adduces data from Josephus (*War* 2.427) to the effect that Judean insurgents in 66 CE burned the public archives in Jerusalem, and data from the Mishnah (*Sheb*. 10:3) interpreted to mean that, following a ruling of Hillel, creditors were able to confiscate debtors' property without recourse to the court system. He takes these data, in addition to reports that Judeans sent embassies to Rome to request tax relief, to indicate that indebtedness was increasingly a problem in first-century Judea. Oakman infers that similar problems existed in Galilee, and argues that several parables (e.g., Matt 18:23–35; Luke 7:41–42; 16:1–8) indicate an interest in debt forgiveness. Jesus's teachings are to be classified, in Oakman's view, along with those of other revolutionaries in antiquity who advocated debt forgiveness. Oakman develops the argument by distinguishing three redactional layers of the Lord's Prayer: the earliest stratum (Q^1), which probably stemmed from Jesus, was concerned with immediate needs ("give us this day our daily bread") and debt forgiveness ("forgive us our debts"), while later strata incorporated elements of piety ("let your name be sanctified") and apocalypticism ("let your kingdom come"). The attempt to distinguish strata based on immediate physical needs from those concerned with piety and apocalypticism seems strained, however, as contemporary documents from the Dead Sea Scrolls likewise incorporate "wisdom" elements, including concerns about debt, with piety and apocalypticism, as 4QInstruction indicates.

Inspired by James Scott's work on peasant resistance to taxation, Oakman takes the injunction "release us from debt, as we release us from those in debt to us" (as well as, e.g., Matt 5:41; Luke 6:29–30, 31–36) to be directed toward local tax collectors with whom Jesus was known to associate; Jesus is viewed as facilitating "the 'eminent domain of God' by brokering the remission of debts and taxes through subversive resistance measures" (94). Not all of Oakman's arguments are equally convincing. For example, he glosses Luke 12:2–3 ("nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not be known") to mean that "all tax records will be open books: who has paid, who has not, and who has been abusive in confiscation" (110). But is not the disclosure of debt records exactly the opposite of what would be expected of a tax resister? The more common strategy was to burn such records so that debts could *not* be disclosed! Overall, however, the book offers a wealth of insights into discussions of debt in the synoptic gospels.

In *Christian Origins and the Ancient Economy*, David Fiensy reaches conclusions that are in some respects directly opposed to those of Oakman. Fiensy takes issue with the use of NT passages to establish widespread indebtedness by peasants. Noting that the exorbitant sums mentioned in Matt 18:3–34 (the parable of the unforgiving servant) and Luke 16:1–9 (the parable of the unjust steward) are more appropriate to large landowners than to peasant small farmers, Fiensy opines that such passages do not provide support for the thesis of widespread peasant indebtedness. Fiensy also points out that the passage about forgiveness of debts in the Lord's prayer may be interpreted metaphorically: "sin" and "debt" were synonymous both in Aramaic and in Greek. Luke clearly understands the prayer in this way (Luke 11:4: "forgive us our *sins*"). Fiensy also notes that is difficult to establish widespread indebtedness in Judea based on the sparse evidence; he grants, however, that the burning of the record office in Jerusalem in 66 CE probably came as a response to a widespread problem. "Was indebtedness also a problem forty years prior to this event, when Jesus was teaching and preaching?" he asks, concluding that there is no way to answer the question based on the evidence. For that reason, Fiensy rejects arguments that posit widespread indebtedness as a "backdrop to the ministry of Jesus" (66). Also of interest in *Christian Origins and the Ancient Economy* are Fiensy's development of a model for understanding the ancient Galilean economy (chaps. 4, 5, and 7), his cautionary comments about assuming that house size alone indicates the wealth of a family (chap. 8), and his discussions of poverty, wealth, and the socioeconomic composition of the Jerusalem church (chaps. 9–11).

Treating a similar topic, *The Galilean Economy in the Time of Jesus*, edited by David Fiensy and Ralph Hawkins, consists of a series of five articles, each of which assesses the relative economic prosperity of Galilee during the first century CE. The first essay, by Mordechai Aviam, adduces a wealth of archaeological data to argue that Galilee experienced significant economic prosperity in the Second Temple period. This was fueled by the Hasmonean development of a fortress, an olive press, a citadel, and a harbor after the Hasmonean conquest in the late second century BCE. Such projects, Aviam reasons, "provided employment, stimulated trade, and in general raised the level of prosperity" (20). Evidence of richly decorated mansions with various luxury items indicate residents of some affluence in Yodefat, while an olive press and a potters' quarter indicate economic productivity. Similarly, the presence in Gamla of a large olive press and two or three large flour mills indicate "vigorous trade with other villages and with nearby cities" (28–29). Evidence from both sites indicates that the view that villages were inhabited (only) by poor peasants cannot be sustained. The presence of synagogues at Gamla and Migdal, and the presence of an elaborately carved stone table in the Migdal synagogue, indicate that residents collectively commanded a surplus of resources.

Thomas McCollough argues in the second essay that building projects begun in Sepphoris early in the first century CE and later accelerated under Herod Antipas after the First Jewish Revolt of 66–70 CE exerted differential economic effects on nearby villages. Nearby Khirbet Qana, for example, was apparently prosperous in the early first century. After the First Revolt, however, the construction of a Roman road linking Acco and Tiberias left Qana off the main route. This resulted, McCollough reasons, in a "shift in trading patterns to towns and villages closer to the road" (Fiensy and Hawkins, 68). Perhaps as a result, Qana fell into decline by the end of the second century CE. Thus, we must "differentiate as carefully as possible the data relevant to the period before and after the First Revolt." The Roman military presence increased after the First Revolt, and "this transformation ... would certainly change the economic climate and perhaps impact the Gospel writers, but it would be a mistake to push such a context onto earlier decades" (McCollough in Fiensy and Hawkins, 71).

In subsequent chapters, Sharon Lea Mattila argues that the typical description of Capernaum in the first century CE as composed of poor residents living at subsistence level is contradicted by archaeological evidence and that at least some of Capernaum's inhabitants must have "enjoyed wealth beyond subsistence" (Fiensy and Hawkins, 130). Douglas Oakman defends the use of the social scientific construct of the peasant, defined as an agricultural worker functioning as part of a household unit of production whose labor is exploited by landholders to whom he must pay rent. And in the concluding essay, David Fiensy attempts to mediate between archaeological and social-scientific approaches, arguing that since all researchers implicitly or explicitly work with models, "the best way to think about a social science model is to regard it as a working hypothesis" subject to revision or rejection based on the data (Fiensy and Hawkins, 179).

Moving from archaeological to textual analysis, we consider the revision of Nathan's Eubank's Duke University dissertation, *Wages of Cross-Bearing and Debt of Sin*, which consists of an analysis of the use of debt terminology in the Gospel of Matthew. Eubank shows that early Jewish and Christian texts frequently describe sin as a form of debt owed to Israel's God. This debt could be "paid off" in part by accruing "wages" in the form of good deeds, including almsgiving. Accomplishing good deeds was widely viewed as resulting in the accrual of "heavenly treasure," which could be utilized to "pay off" the debt incurred as the result of sin. In wisdom contexts such as Proverbs, heavenly treasure is described as effectively delivering the individual from (premature) death, whereas in apocalyptic contexts heavenly treasure is associated with acquittal at the last judgment and the reception of eternal life (chap. 1). Eubank finds continuity between Matthew and the other early Jewish and Christian texts he surveys. Matthew, too, uses the language of debt, treasure, and reward when speaking of the relations between Israel's God and human beings. For that reason, Eubank convincingly argues in chapter 2, "the claims . . . that the Matthean Jesus wanted the disciples to forsake any thought of recompense are entirely untenable" (105). Matthew depicts Jesus as coming in apocalyptic glory to "settle accounts," "repaying" each in accordance with his or her deeds (Matt 16:27). However, God's rewards may appear to exceed the value associated with one's "work" or deeds (Matt 19:28–29).

In chapter 3, Eubank argues that Jesus's performance of righteous deeds, including his baptism and crucifixion, thereby "stores up treasure in heaven that overflows to those under the debt of sin" (129). This effectively brings about an end to exile, which itself resulted from ancestors who had accrued a debt as the result of their sin. In chapter 4, Eubank argues that Jesus's death as a "ransom-price [*lytron*] for many" (Matt 20:28) saves people from their sins by accruing a credit of heavenly treasure that may be transferred to the accounts of sinners, redeeming them from debt bondage. The economic interpretation of Matt 20:28 is compelling, but in my view one must be wary of concluding on that basis that Jesus's death *alone* saves people from their sins: Matthew's Jesus teaches people to avoid sinning by following the Torah (Blanton 2013). The debt metaphor ought not be pressed to the exclusion of Matthew's clear legal paradigm. "Sin" and "righteousness" are both legal constructs. Demonstrating as it does the importance of debt and debt repayment as metaphors for sin and redemption in the Gospel of Matthew, Eubank's study makes an important contribution to the study of economic issues in early Christianity.

Moving from the canonical gospels to the Pauline epistles, we consider some of the arguments advanced in *Paul and Money*, by Verlyn Verbrugge and Keith Krell. Verbrugge and Krell argue that, based on the view that Paul studied with Gamaliel in Jerusalem during his youth (Acts 22:3), he must have come from a family that "lived at a somewhat comfortable [middle class] level" (38). Noting that although Paul claimed a "right" to the economic support of Christian communities, yet declined to take advantage of that right (1 Cor 9), and preferred instead to work for a living with the result that he sometimes found himself in poverty, Verbrugge and Krell argue that Paul "deliberately downgraded" himself economically, perhaps because he suffered from a "guilt complex" due to his former activity as a persecutor of the church (75–80). All of this, however, relies too heavily on the historically questionable Acts narrative to be easily accepted, and nowhere does Paul connect his early persecution of Christian assemblies to his later financial situation.

Verbrugge and Krell argue that Paul's collection for Jerusalem (Rom 15:25–28; 2 Cor 8–9) represented an attempt to heal a "growing rift" between Jewish Christian and Gentile Christian segments of the early Christian churches (141, 144–46). This view, however, assumes an outmoded view of the "parting of the ways" between Judaism and Christianity. Paul's troubled relations with the Jerusalem assembly (Rom 15:30–33) cannot simply be mapped onto a posited Jewish Christian/Gentile Christian divide. On the other hand, in chapter 7 Verbrugge and Krell rightly point to motifs of reciprocity and gift exchange that dominate the narrative in 2 Cor 8–9. The book also explores what is taken to be a case of class conflict at the Lord's Supper in Corinth (1 Cor 11:22–34), criticism of the pursuit of wealth in the deutero-Pauline epistles (epistles that Verbrugge and Krell take to be authentically Pauline), and attempts to construct a model for contemporary church tithing and giving based on Paul's collection for the Jerusalem assembly.

Timothy Brookins's *Corinthian Wisdom, Stoic Philosophy, and the Ancient Economy* argues that Paul's references to "wisdom" and "wise" persons in 1 Cor 2:1–5 and throughout the letter do not refer to eloquence and rhetorical accomplishments, as is commonly suggested. Rather, Brookins argues, "we have definitive lexicographical evidence that by the first century the wider public had indeed yielded the rights of 'wisdom'—at least in name—to the sole proprietorship of Philosophy" (33). This claim is based on an examination of words related to *sophos* and *sophia* (and Latin equivalents) in texts and authors contemporary with Paul such as Seneca, Quintilian, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, and Theon. Brookins argues that it is not sophistic rhetorical argumentation that Paul opposes in 1 Cor 2:1–5, but a form of philosophy that constitutes the "wisdom" that Paul belittles (chap. 2). Brookins notes close correspondences between Stoic terms and ideas and those at issue in Corinth, including the following two: "Only the [Stoic] wise man is ... rich and king" (*SVF* 3.655; cf. 1 Cor 4:8: "Already you have become rich! Quite apart from us you have become kings!"); and "all things are the wise man's" (*SVF* 3.590; cf. 1 Cor 3:21: "all things are yours"). Brookins posits that Stoicism shaped the conceptual background of some of the Corinthaians. He also attempts to ground the contentious issues addressed in 1 Corinthians in Stoic doctrines and anthropology, including but not limited to the case of sexual immorality in 1 Cor 5:1–13 and 6:12–20 and the freedom to eat meat sacrificed to Greco-Roman deities (both on the grounds that "all things are lawful" to the Stoic wise man), Paul's relatively ascetic views on sexuality in 1 Cor 7:1–40 (based on parallels in Musonius Rufus, *Diatribe* 12), the issue of head covering (1 Cor 11:2–16; 14:34–36), and divisions at the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17–34).

Whether or not one accepts Brookins's arguments for positing a thoroughly Stoic background for the terminology and issues addressed in 1 Corinthians, his discussion of socioeconomic profiling of members of the Corinthian assembly and his estimate, based on information pertaining to the Athenian ephebate from 119 BCE to 200 CE, that as much as ten percent of the urban population in "cities like Athens" may have received an education in the gymnasium (chap. 4) are instructive. Brookins concludes that not only the "elites" were able to afford a gymnasial education, but also those who possessed "moderate surplus resources" or were near but slightly above subsistence level. Brookins posits that members of the early Christian assembly in Corinth such as Gaius, Stephanus, and Erastus may have received such an education. The gymnasium, he opines, was where members of the Corinthian assembly were exposed to Stoicism, thus linking the philosophical, rhetorical, and economic aspects of his study.

In a revision of his University of Toronto dissertation, *The Pauline Church and the Corinthian Ekklesia*, Richard Last builds on a paradigm whose foundations have been laid by Philip Harland, Richard Ascough, and his dissertation advisor, John Kloppenborg. Last understands the early Christian *ekklēsia* in Corinth as a type of Greco-Roman association (Greek *thiasos*; Latin *collegium*). He argues that the standard "practice of situating the early Jesus movement in family and house-based settings is a strategy for articulating the idea that the home is a particularly Christian and moral space that was . . . distinguishable from the settings of morally deprived heathenism" (47). The association model, Last argues, provides a more suitable point of reference than the model of the private home and its guests for understanding early Christian assemblies. Last argues (along with others such as Adams 2013 and Weissenrieder 2017) that the Corinthian assembly may have met in rented spaces, as other associations often did, and also makes a compelling case that Gaius (mentioned in Rom 16:23) was a "guest" of Paul and of the whole assembly in Corinth rather than a host, as the passage is generally understood. He shows that it was important for ancient associations to invite guests to meetings since it was often difficult to cover the costs of assembly meals, and guests paid fees to join the meeting. The presence of one or more guests thus helped associations to "balance their books."

Last argues in chapter 2 that the size of the Corinthian community was much lower than is often estimated, perhaps numbering only about nine or ten members. Like all Greco-Roman associations, he argues, assembly activities were financed by membership dues. Interacting with recent estimates of the economic locations of named members of the Corinthian assembly by Steven Friesen and Bruce Longenecker, who estimate that members possessed at best only a moderate surplus of resources, Last adduces papyri and inscriptions from Egypt and elsewhere to show that some associations consisted of members placed at similarly modest economic levels. Such groups had low membership fees, drank a grape drink (*tryx*) or beer rather than wine, ate cabbage and beans rather than meat, and honored their officers by presenting cheap crowns rather than more expensive gold crowns or marble honorific inscriptions. Clearly, the early Christian assembly in Corinth possessed greater resources than these modest groups, as members could afford meat and drank wine at their meetings (1 Cor 10:25; 11:25–27; 14:21). This implies that they, too, would have been able to afford modest membership dues.

Last also argues that early Christian associations would have needed to honor their officers with crowns and acclamations, as it was the desire to achieve some measure of honor and recognition that often attracted individuals to associations. Officers were often honored by providing them with larger portions of food and drink at banquets, and this, Last argues in chapter 7, is what engendered divisions at the Lord's Supper in Corinth. Last's arguments are in general compelling, and they offer the reader a glimpse of early Christian groups that operated on the basis of procedures known from other known Greco-Roman assemblies rather than operating as private household gatherings or private dinner parties. With this monograph, Last takes his place at the vanguard of a new way of evaluating early Christian assemblies that will likely revolutionize our understanding of early Christianity in its organizational and economic aspects.

Another recently revised dissertation dealing with economic aspects of Pauline assemblies is Julien Ogereau's *Paul's Koinonia with the Philippians*. Written at Macquarie University under the supervision of Larry Welborn, this work revives an earlier proposal of Jean Fleury and Paul Sampley that Paul's *koinōnia* with the Philippian assembly (Phil 1:5) did not constitute merely a relationship of social solidarity as is often thought. Instead, the term is used in a technical legal sense to indicate a partnership in which "the Philippians contributed the *pecunia* (financial capital) to cover the operational costs of Paul's missionary activities, while he supplied the *ars* and *opera* (skill and labor)" (50). In addition to a thorough examination of the papyrological and epigraphic evidence for the use of *koinōnia* and related terms used in Phil 4:10–20 and elsewhere in the letter (e.g., *doma* ["gift" or "payment"], *karpos* ["fruit" or "interest"], *logos* ["financial account"], *dosis* ["payment" or "gift"], *lēmpsis* ["receiving"], and *apechō* [to receive payment]), Ogereau includes an appendix of almost 150 pages containing excerpts of inscriptions and papyri that use the terms from the relevant semantic domains.

Taking issue with the previous interpretations of Peter Marshall, Gerald Peterman, and Peter Pilhofer, who have interpreted Paul's "giving and receiving" language in Philippians in light of Greco-Roman conventions of social reciprocity and gift exchange, Ogereau argues that Paul and the Philippians had joined in a venture analogous to the types of business partnership that his survey of papyri and inscriptions reveals in abundance. Ogereau further argues that the phrase *dosis kai lēmpsis* in Phil 4:15 denotes the account of a common fund that "Paul has established in partnership with the Philippians, in which contributions were made and from which they could be withdrawn to pay for some of his ministry expenditures" (288–89).

A few caveats, however, may be noted with regard to Ogereau's thesis. First, although it is possible that Epaphroditus may have withdrawn funds from a joint account to be distributed to Paul in prison (Phil 4:18), there is nothing in the text to indicate that this was so. A bigger problem—how did Paul manage to access the account when he was traveling outside Macedonia?—is raised but not resolved (289). Ogereau's argument that *karpos* refers to the "profit" or "interest" that accrues to the Philippians' joint account with Paul (Phil 4:17) founders on the second person plural possessive pronoun: the profit accrues to "your" (i.e., the Philippians') account, and not "our" account as might be expected if a joint account were in view. Instead of an actual joint account located in Macedonia, Paul probably alludes to a posited heavenly bank account in which good deeds, including the Philippians' financial donation to Paul, generate "treasure in heaven"—a common theme in early Judaism and early Christianity, as documented by Eubank (see above). There is no reason to posit, with Ogereau, that Phil 4:15–18a treats a mundane financial account that excludes notions of reciprocity and gift exchange when, on the contrary, in 4:18b–19 Paul "then takes their eyes away from the earthly dimension . . . and draws their attention to the spiritual significance of their involvement" (300)—thus involving the reciprocity ideal based on the notion that God repays kindness for kindness. The logic earlier explicated by Peterman and others is more illuminating: a gift given by the Philippians to Paul is also a gift given to God (4:18: "a pleasing offering, an acceptable sacrifice"), and it is God who will repay the gift (Phil 4:19), as Paul is evidently not in a position to do so himself. There is thus no disjunction between Phil 4:15–18a and 4:18b–19, as the whole passage revolves around notions of gift exchange and reciprocity. Ogereau's study, however, richly documents the financial background and language on which Paul draws in his letter to the Philippians, and so makes an important contribution to Pauline studies.

Progressing chronologically to the patristic period, we now consider Helen Rhee's *Loving the Rich, Saving the Poor*, in which the author surveys the attitudes toward wealth and poverty espoused by ecclesiastical writers of the second to fourth centuries CE. The book's first chapter includes a brief but illuminating account of the economy and social structure of the Roman empire, focusing on the work of Moses Finley and more recent advances in the "post-Finley era" of classical studies. Rhee points to the importance of patronage in the Roman imperial period and interacts with the work of Steven Friesen and Bruce Longenecker on the economic stratification of Roman society. Rhee's brief survey of economic attitudes in the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple Judaism, and the NT prepares the way for the examination of themes of wealth and poverty that occupies subsequent chapters. In chapter 2, Rhee surveys texts such as the Didache, the Shepherd of Hermas, and Lactantius' *Divine Institutes* to show that the idea of future apocalyptic judgment and eschatological reversal—that is, the notion that the "wicked" rich will be punished and the "righteous" poor rewarded—encouraged the social ethic of almsgiving and disaster relief. Chapter 3 asks the question "How can the rich person be saved?" Patristic texts answered the question in part by developing the Judaic notion of "redemptive almsgiving." Almsgiving was viewed as a righteous deed that elicited God to forgive prior sins. This was particularly important after the Decian Persecution of 250–51 CE, when "lapsed" Christians who had offered sacrifice to the emperor needed to be readmitted to the church. Cyprian, for example, found the notion of redemptive almsgiving to be an effective response (100).

Rhee further explores aspects of hospitality, burial of the dead, care for imprisoned confessors, and "Christian patronage" as the church began to accumulate wealth and property in the third and fourth centuries CE. Christian writers also utilized discourses on wealth in strategies of identify formation, enjoining their co-religionists to distinguish themselves from non-Christians by refusing to participate in mercantile activity motivated by the desire to acquire inordinate wealth. "True" Christians were likewise enjoined to redistribute wealth by almsgiving to distinguish themselves from those branded heretics. The final chapter notes what Rhee describes as "the remarkable progress and positive contribution of wealth creation by democratic capitalism" and advocates "renunciation" and "simple living" as antidotes to materialism, and graduated tithing and charitable giving as antidotes to disparities in economic distribution (195). Rhee recognizes the role of governments in crafting policies effecting national and international resource redistribution, but views capitalism as the only lens through which the solutions to unequal wealth redistribution are to be envisioned. Capitalism can be "corrected" and "protected" by bringing it into a "synergistic relationship" with schemes of redistributive justice.

Constructive dialogue with Rhee might include the following observations. Rhee does not consider the typical Marxian critique that capitalism is fundamentally exploitative in nature or Thomas Piketty's insight that the rate of return on capital generally exceeds the rate of growth of the economy, resulting in capital's accumulation in smaller and smaller numbers of hands over time. Redistributive justice and capitalism thus entail opposed tendencies. Capitalism is not the only system by which goods may be effectively produced and transmitted: some aspects of production might increasingly be extricated from the marketplace as, for example, through local gardening and farming initiatives; and economic exchanges based on barter or gift exchange rather than the sale of goods could be promoted, either alongside or in lieu of exchange in the marketplace. The pursuit of redistributive justice ought not be construed as a goal to be pursued solely within the capitalist paradigm.

The last book under review combines patristics with contemporary economic philosophy. Dotan Leshem, who has previously published excellent work on Aristotle's writings on *oikonomia*, or household management, ventures into the Church Fathers' writings on the same topic in *The Origins of Neoliberalism*. Leshem seeks to critique and extend the work of Giorgio Agamben, Michel Foucault, and Hannah Arendt, each of whom attempts to write a genealogy of neoliberal economic thought. Leshem argues that Agamben was wrong to locate the "key moment in the development of the neoliberal marketized economy" in the early development of Trinitarian theology in the second century CE. Rather, he submits, the key moment took place later, in fourth–fifth century "orthodox" Christian theologizing (6). Leshem is sympthetic to the work of Foucault, although he (like Agamben before him) faults Foucault for "failing to fully establish patristic *oikonomia* as the place where the formation of our late modern economy is crystallized" (6). In chapters 3 and 4, Leshem augments Foucault's work by explicating the theologies of Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostom that he takes to constitute missing links in Foucault's genealogy of the economy. Gregory is credited with the "discovery" of the notion of unlimited economic growth. Arendt is criticized for tracing back to classical Athens the distinction between political and economic spheres of life but failing to recognize that the expansion of the economy "beyond the boundaries of the oikos into all spheres of life" within the "society of believers in Christ's economy makes its debut on the world stage in the fourth century CE" (159).

Leshem's call to return to Aristotle's categorical imperative to rethink the category *economy* in order to ameliorate the human condition currently shaped in large part by neoliberal market patterns is worth heeding (181). However, it is questionable just how far his work advances us toward that goal, as substantive problems plague the book's methodology. Although Leshem concedes that a "philological history" reveals a series of "successive [divergent] semantic values that have been attributed to the word *oikonomia* by different authors and discourses," he undermines the insight by attempting to identify a "core invariant meaning" of *oikonomia*. It is redefined as that which expresses a "theoretical and practical disposition of prudence" by persons faced with a "condition of excess that transcends human rationality," a condition with which "rational engagement" generates a surplus that exists alongside the political and philosophical spheres (2–3). It is only this substantive redefinition that allows Leshem to draw a line between disparate uses of the term, including the following: Aristotelian *oikonomia* as the art of "household management" in a sphere existing *outside* of the marketplace; the *oikonomia* of the rhetoricians Hermagoras of Temnos and Dionysus of Halicarnassus, who used the term to refer to the organization and arrangement of thought into intelligible and convincing public speech; *oikonomia* as the "stewardship" of divine mysteries in the deutero-Pauline epistles; *oikonomia* as the relationship of Father to Son, theorized as two persons united indivisibly and without confusion in the Chalcedonian Creed; and the *oikonomia* instantiated in the operation of the neoliberal market economy, ostensibly capable of operating at its best when it avoids entanglement with the political and philosophical spheres. The appeal to a "core invariant meaning" linking these disparate usages seems strained. Moreover, even if one were to grant for the sake of argument that Leshem has correctly identified the Christian theology of the fourth century as point at which "the formation of our late modern economy is crystallized," it hardly follows that rectifying the theological genealogy of *oikonomia* provides us with a tool that is either necessary or sufficient to enable the present generation "to contend with the human condition that appears within [the neoliberal market economy], and to reorganize its relations with politics, philosophical life, and the boundaries set by law" (181). That task will require democratic participation and social action (as Thistlethwaite points out in *#OccupytheBible*), a reconfiguration of patterns of consumption (cf. Rhee's "renunciation" and "simple living"), and a reclamation of modes of production and transmission outside of the market economy.

The number of studies treating the topic of early Christianity's relationship with the ancient economy over the last five years is indicative of current interest in the subject—an interest that shows no signs of abating. Even in light of the fine studies surveyed here, much more work remains to be done to outline the basic mechanisms of the "extractive economy" of the Roman Empire and to clarify the place(s) of various early Christian assemblies within it. Comparative work of the sort begun by Richard Last is crucial in this area, as is the type of precise archaeological investigation evidenced in the essays of Aviam and McCollough. Scholars of early Christianity will also need to pay more attention to ongoing discussions of the ancient economy in the field of classics, as indeed Rhee, Ogereau, and Brookins have done. An increased use of archaeological data in conjunction with an awareness of the latest developments in classical studies will ideally facilitate the development of new research agendas that seek to understand and describe the economic systems of early Christianity with greater clarity and precision.

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