Review of Jennifer A. Quigley, *Divine Accounting: Theo-Economics in Early Christianity*, Yale University Press, 2021, 192 pp.

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Pierre Bourdieu makes two salient observations concerning the topic of "religion" (or theology) and the "economy." First, from the side of "religion": "For obvious reasons, symbolic goods are spontaneously located by ordinary dichotomies (material/spiritual, body/spirit, etc.) on the side of the spiritual, and are thus often considered beyond the grasp of scientific [e.g., economic] analysis. For this reason, they represent a challenge…" (Bourdieu 1998, 92). Second, from the side of "economics": "The science called 'economics' is based on an initial act of abstraction that consists in dissociating a particular category of practices, or a particular dimension of all practice, from the social order in which all human practice is immersed. This immersion … obliges us … to conceive every practice, beginning with the practice which represents itself, most obviously and in the strictest sense, as 'economic,' as a 'total social fact' in Marcel Mauss's sense" (Bourdieu 2014, 1). In *Divine Accounting: Theo-Economics in Early Christianity*, Jennifer Quigley takes up the challenge identified by Bourdieu; that is, to describe the ways in which the "symbolic goods" of religion and theology are immersed within broader fields of social practice that can aptly be characterized as "economic." In Quigley's terms, "Our modern scholarly categories of theology and economics were not so clearly delineated and separated in antiquity. Many texts, documents, and objects instead demonstrate what I call theo-economics, or an intertwined theological and economic logic in which divine and human beings regularly enter into transactions with one another" (3). Drawing on Jane Bennett's notion of "vibrant materiality," in which not only humans but also material objects and assemblages are granted "agentic capacity" (4, citing Bennett 2010, 3), Quigley seeks to develop an interpretative framework in which "the gods [are understood] as actant" and that "take(s) seriously the ancient worldview that divine activity in the economy is not only possible but quite normal" (4–5). Quigley's objective: "By taking seriously the ways in which persons in antiquity understood themselves to be participating in transactions with the divine, we can begin to break down some of the scholarly categories that separate theology from economics" (15).

As a prolegomenon to her more extended examination to Paul of Tarsus's letter to the early Christian assembly at Philippi, in chapter 1 Quigley "explore(s) some of the contexts in which the gods and humans transacted in antiquity" (19). These include an inscription of the late second or early first century BCE from the Asclepieion in Kos in which monies and assets dedicated to the goddess Aphrodite Pontia are secured in a *thēsauros* (storage container or room); some of the funds are for the benefit of the local priestess, others for the upkeep and maintenance of the sanctuary. A fourth-century BCE inscription from a Judean synagogue mentions one Theodorus, an *archisynagōgos* (synagogue leader) who renovated the structure, using funds derived partly from a special subscription for the project and partly "from the gifts of God" (*ek tōn tou the[ou] doreōn*). Although Quigley (25) apparently understands the genitive phrase to indicate that God was the *source* of the funding (subjective genitive), it is more likely that the "gifts" mentioned were regular donations offered *to* God (objective genitive). Jean Baptiste Frey rightly translates the relevant phrase "les dons faits à dieu" ("the gifts given to God"; 1936, 1:722). Additional examples include a *paramonē*, or "conditional release," inscription in which an enslaved person is manumitted when he is sold to the god Apollo in Delphi, and an inscription from the *makellon* (market) in Philippi in which Mercury Augustus is understood as the guarantor of fair measures. The examples justify the conclusion that "the gods pervaded the economic sphere in antiquity," whether participating in or overseeing transactions (33).

In chapter 2, Quigley turns her attention to Paul's letter to the Philippians. Building on Julien Ogereau's (2014) detailed study of the Greek term *koinōnia* and cognates used in reference to business partnerships in ancient papyri and inscriptions, Quigley notes, "With the term *koinōnia*, Paul describes a business relationship in the gospel, a venture in which both liability and potential reward are shared" (40). Pointing to Philippians 1:6 (God, "who began a good work in you [Philippians], will complete it"), Quigley notes that Paul stretches the boundaries of normal *koinōnia* arrangements: "The Philippians, then, not only have a shareholding arrangement with Paul in the gospel but also are, to some extent, the worksite of that venture" (42); that is, they both contribute to Paul's evangelistic project and are the fruit of it. Moreover, Quigley proposes to read the term *bebaiōsis* (confirmation or guarantee) in Philippians 1:7 in an economic sense. Reasoning that since Paul's imprisonment in Philippi could have been viewed as damaging to the *koinōnia* for the advancement of the gospel message, he seeks to reassure his addressees that his detainment is not a hindrance but rather serves as a "guarantee" that Christ will "be magnified" or "exponentially grow" (*megalynthēsetai*; Philippians 1:20; Quigley: 58). He depicts his imprisoned body as a sort of living "deposit" (*keimai*; Philippians 1:16) to guarantee that increase (48–68). Two problems, however, attend this reading of Philippians 1:7. First, the guarantor is generally "on the hook" for fiscal liabilities if the business venture should result in a loss, an implication that Paul is at pains to avoid (cf. 66; see further below). Second, Paul does not describe his body as a deposit; rather, like the term *apologia* that parallels it, "confirmation" connotes Paul's verbal action of proclamation (rather than his deposition in prison), whose result is that Christ "has become known throughout the whole imperial guard" (Philippians 1:13), and other evangelists are emboldened to speak more openly (Philippians 1:14–8).[1] Christ is thus "magnified" by proclamation.

In chapter 3, Quigley engagingly explains the cluster of economic terms in Philippians 3:7–11: "Paul tallies all of his reasons for confidence in the flesh into a single gains column. In Philippians 3:7, he moves these gains to a loss column; Paul reckons all assets as losses because of the surpassing value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Paul says he counts these former gains as worthless excrement (*skubala*) so that he might gain the profit Christ (*Christon kerdēsō*). *Kerdēsō* implies turning a profit, and Christ as the object of the verb is the profit that Paul acquires" (72). While the "economic" analysis appears to be sound, we must not forget that the "reasons for confidence in the flesh" that Paul adduces in Philippians 3:2–6 include his circumcision, his status as an "Israelite" and "Hebrew," and his assertion that he was "blameless" in following the Torah. As Jennifer Eyl (2017) has argued, these are all understood as prestigious and even boastworthy traits. Paul uses hyperbole to achieve his rhetorical goal of placing a premium on the "knowledge of Christ"; his "Judaic" credentials are not without value, but their value recedes significantly in comparison with his valuation of Christ. In our analyses, we must take care that the second partner in the theo-economic dyad does not wholly eclipse the first (and I hasten to add that Quigley is generally very careful in this regard). Quigley interestingly "economizes" Paul's language pertaining to suffering and death: Jesus's death on a Roman cross (Philippians 2:8) is metaphorically recapitulated by Paul's suffering and the specter of death raised by his imprisonment (Philippians 1:20–5; 2:17), and the bodies of both figures are commodified when the language of enslavement is applied to them (Philippians 1:1; 2:7). Paul's "divine accounting system describes a venture in suffering that is worth investment, even if it means death, because it offers access to the benefit of resurrection from the dead" (91).

Chapter 4 develops the argument that Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians* takes up and develops Paul's notion that "Christ and suffering are commodified" (94). Polycarp's *Philippians* 8:1 is adduced in support, which mentions "the down payment [*arrabōn*] of our righteousness, which is Christ Jesus, who bore our sins in his own body upon the tree" (trans. Ehrman). Quigley cites other instances in which the term *arrabōn* is used to indicate a "pledge" or "down payment" for goods to be purchased or fees to be paid (98–104), arguing that "for Polycarp, that suffering

[1] Translations of biblical passages are those of the NRSV.

Christ-body on the cross is now a commodity that has the value level of a down payment for humanity's sins" (98). Here, however, there is some slippage in the economic analysis: if we define a "commodity" as something that may be bought, sold, or traded, it becomes clear that if coded as a "down payment," Christ himself cannot be the sought-after commodity in Polycarp's economic logic. Rather, as Polycarp states and as Quigley rightly points out twice (98, 103), "righteousness" is the commodity that Christ paid in part for humans to acquire. As the "down payment," Christ functions as a form of currency that facilitates the purchase. Moreover, Polycarp seems to rely on the standard Jewish theo-economic trope that views sin as a debt (the words are interchangeable in Aramaic: *ḥobaʾ*; cf. Matthew 6:12 // Luke 11:4; Fiensy 2014, 61; Eubank 2013; cf. Polycarp, *Phillipians* 10:2). If so, in Polycarp's *Phillipians* 8:1, two distinct economic logics are conflated: that of a down payment for a purchase (righteousness) and that of the erasure of a debt (sin). Although in my view the theo-economic logic in Polycarp's letter operates differently than Quigley portrays it, nevertheless her conclusion is justified: "Polycarp deploys the down payment of Christ's suffering body to marshal authority for particular ecclesial roles ..., to regulate beliefs in a polemical mode, and to forward his interpretation of Paul's teaching as correct for encouraging testimony that will earn divine reward and avoid divine punishment" (110).

In the concluding chapter, Quigley summarizes the results attained and suggests avenues for further research, including extending the analysis of theo-economic discourse: "Expanding [the purview] to a broader range of early Christian literature will provide additional data for understanding the theological and economic entanglements of early Christianity... There are multiple ways in which early Christ followers and the generations that came after them understood their own financial practices, their transactions with God, and their use of financial language in their theological imaginaries" (120).

In closing, I reflect on Quigley's book both methodologically and exegetically. First, in terms of methodology, the volume quite helpfully analyzes the economic motifs developed in Paul's letter to the Philippians, building on earlier work that focused largely on gift exchange (Barclay 2017; Briones 2013; Blanton 2017) and the language of business partnership (Ogereau 2014). Quigley's focus on an expanded palette of economic aspects of early Christian literature is most welcome, and for my part, I can only hope to see more studies like this in the future. On a more critical note, however, although I am fully supportive of attending to "vibrant materiality" and the agency of things, an important elision occurs when this method is applied directly to the gods and goddesses of the ancient Mediterranean. In depicting the gods as "actants," as Quigley does, what is elided is the fact that within the framework of a historical methodology, deities and similar entities are only capable of acting "through" the agency of human beings; that is, they are always and only present as mediated through the art and artifice of human intermediaries, in representations artistic, statuesque, textual, or otherwise discursive (cp. Rüpke 2018, 1–23). This implies that, as Bruce Lincoln has cogently and repeatedly demonstrated, discourses about the gods—theo-economic discourses included—are not disinterested, but are always crafted within social, economic, religious, and political fields in which something is at stake. For that reason, the critic should "try to draw reasonable inferences about the interests that are advanced, defended, or negotiated through each text" or representation (Lincoln 2012, 9). We cannot be content to demonstrate that deities and humans are understood as interacting with each other in economic transactions, as welcome a reminder as that might be given contemporary academic divisions of labor. Rather, we ought to begin asking how each transaction is represented and for what purposes. To her credit, Quigley often does take that step, noting, for example, that Paul not infrequently posits himself as an intermediary or "broker" in others' theo-economic interactions (e.g., 64, 67, 113).

This leads me to offer an exegetical observation that continues the dialogue that Quigley has initiated with Ogereau. If, as Ogereau has demonstrated and Quigley has elaborated, Paul sometimes uses metaphors of business and payment, why in other cases does he prefer to deploy the language of gift exchange and sacrifice? Can we draw reasonable inferences to account for such shifts in Paul's theo-economic register? I submit that in Paul's letter to the Philippians—to take but one example—Paul very strategically uses the language of business and market transactions, on the one hand, and the language of gift exchange and sacrifice, on the other, in order *to discursively construct or dissolve notions of (legal or moral) obligation, liability, and accountability*. Thus in Phillipians 4:15–20, Paul acknowledges that he received material aid from the Philippian assembly on more than one occasion. He then promptly denies that he seeks gifts, but avers that he does seek "the profit that accrues to your account." Donations given to Paul are recoded as "profits" accruing to the heavenly ledger *of the Philippians*, implying that it is they, not he, who are the beneficiaries. Paul continues in a mercantile mode: "I have been paid in full," invoking the idea that he has been paid for services rendered and so owes nothing in return (not even a polite "thank you"). Within the same sentence, he again shifts registers, depicting the donations as "the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God." The "gifts" are directed not to Paul, he suggests, but to God, using the priestly language of the sacrificial cultus. Again Paul evades any hint of responsibility for "repayment" in any form; it is God who will offer recompense out of the abundance of his heavenly treasury.

Paul's theo-economic twists and turns in Philippians 4 may plausibly be seen as attempts to escape any hint of obligation, be it fiscal, service-oriented, or verbal ("thank you"). At the same time, he evades any potential demotion in relative status that was a corollary of indebtedness in Mediterranean antiquity. As I have argued elsewhere, Paul similarly switches between the donative and mercantile registers in 1 Corinthians 9, although there to the opposite effect, suggesting that the Corinthians “owe” him, whether they construe what they owe as a countergift or as a payment for services rendered (Blanton 2017, 41–60). In Philippians, when he might be seen as owing, Paul dissolves the liability, while in 1 Corinthians, he imputes liability to his addressees, suggesting that they owe him. If Peter exercises the power to bind and loose sin (Matthew 16:19), Paul exercises an ability to bind and loose fiscal responsibility. This must have been a useful and perhaps even a necessary skill for a “freelance religious expert” (on the category, see Wendt 2016).

Future studies, I suggest, could benefit from combining Quigley’s emphasis on the theo-economic logic propounded in a given text with Lincon’s call to make inferences about the interests at work, in essence asking what “payoff” may be achieved by deploying a particular theo-economic logic within a given social, economic, and communicative context. Despite the criticisms registered above, Quigley’s book is “good to think with” and is recommended for researchers and students in graduate-level religion and seminary courses in the areas of Pauline studies, the ancient Mediterranean economy, and religious studies, particularly courses that consider the broad fields of social practice in which both “religion” and “economy” are immersed.

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