

Gods and Markets

New Materialism, Divine-Human Economies, and the Letter to the Philippians

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After a wide-ranging consideration of everything from garbage dumps to power grids and engagement with an equally broad range of thinkers from Baruch Spinoza to Gilles Deleuze, Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* ends by echoing antiquity. Bennett, who has largely avoided the religious throughout, shares a *credo* for "would-be vital materialists," invoking the Nicene Creed: "I believe in one matter-energy, the maker of things seen and unseen. I believe that this pluraverse is traversed by heterogeneities that are continually *doing things*. I believe it is wrong to deny vitality to nonhuman bodies, forces, and forms, and that a careful course of anthropomorphization can help reveal that vitality, even though it resists full translation and exceeds my comprehensive grasp" (2010, 122).¹

I am interested in Bennett's turn to remix an ancient text, itself assembled and debated and shared, one among many texts, to inspire a vital *credo*. In many ways, Bennett's entire book models a careful course of anthropomorphization, which includes, among other attributes, attention paid to the small and even the microscopic, an interest in ordinary objects, and a focus on that which is discarded, thrown away, and ignored. "A touch of anthropomorphism, then, can catalyze a sensibility that finds a world filled not with ontologically distinct categories of beings (subjects and objects) but with variously composed materialities that form confederations" (2010, 99). The benefit of careful attention to aluminum, stem cells, or trash describes a more vibrant (and vital) world and the entanglements of its myriad materialities. By concluding with a *credo*, though, Bennett also frames her project epistemologically and ethically. Despite the ultimate impossibility of fully describing the vitality of nonhuman bodies, forces, and forms, it is ethically urgent to do so.²

What might it look like to take Bennett's challenge to a careful course of anthropomorphization as a historical methodology? How can a framework towards new materialism, and in particular Bennett's notion of vibrant materiality, help us to ask different questions of historical texts, particularly sacred texts? Do we see evidence in biblical texts that persons in antiquity understood certain nonhuman bodies, forces, and forms to have vibrant materiality? In this article, I contend that an eye towards the vitality of nonhuman bodies,

¹ One exception to the absence of religion is a brief use of John Paul II's *Evangelium Vitae* as a foil for considering stem cells and the "culture of life" (2010, 86).

² Bennett's inclination towards the religious has been echoed by scholars in religious studies and theology who have found new materialism helpful for thinking about religious experience (see, for example, Rieger and Waggoner 2016), and for theorizing the study of religion more broadly (see, for example, Vasquez 2010).

forces, and forms proves quite fruitful for biblical studies.³ Among other possibilities, a materialist framework helps to elucidate one area of entanglement that has largely been overlooked: the ancient economy as a site where gods, objects, and humans regularly transacted with one another. The gods as actants have vibrant materiality in ancient markets, and markets also have vibrant materiality in the theological imaginary.⁴ When we consider a range of ancient objects and texts, we notice evidence of deep entanglement between two fields which are often treated separately in modern scholarship: religious studies and economics.⁵

Paul's Letter to the Philippians is an especially useful site for considering such entanglements; this brief letter contains texts such as, "For me, living is Christ and dying is gain" (1:21); "I calculate all things as a loss...so that I might gain the profit Christ" (3:8); as well as "And my God will fulfill all your lack according to his riches in Christ Jesus" (4:19). Such language participates in the sorts of logics that a materialist framework helps us to consider: God, Christ, and humanity inter and trans-act in ordinary ways that would have been legible to early Christ followers. This legibility builds upon the divine involvement they would have seen and experienced the effects of both among others and in their own communities.

This article begins by describing the vibrant materiality of the gods in the ancient economy through the consideration of three objects: a table used for measuring goods, a statue base, and a weight standard.⁶ All three are objects of the market, and all three also reveal the presence of divine and semi-divine beings as actant in the day-to-day transactions in which persons in antiquity would have participated. These objects do not comprehensively cover the myriad ways in which one transacted with the gods. We have evidence that gods could take or offer loans, own goods, hold bank accounts, and produce wealth through the mediation of complex, non-standardized systems of religious and civic officials (Dignas 2003, 13-35). The gods permeated nearly every area of the economic sphere in antiquity over wide geographic

³ A focus on nonhuman bodies, forces, and forms has received increasing attention in biblical studies, especially in the work of Denise Kimber Buell (2010); much of this scholarly attention has engaged with theories of posthumanism, and therefore often with humans and other animals (Koosed 2014; Koosed and Seesengood 2014). Buell's work has called for expansive descriptions of what Avery Gordon calls "complex personhood" (Buell 2010 37, citing Gordon 1997, 5) while keeping at the fore the "axes of power and identification that produce intrahuman difference in particular contexts" (2010, 39). I find Bennett's work helpful for adding to this conversation a focus on objects with similar ethical urgency.

⁴ Devin Singh has also written about the expansive idea of Christ as currency in late antiquity (2018). More broadly in religious studies, Kathryn Lofton has recently considered a variety of contemporary practices, objects, and spaces to argue for thinking about the "marketplace as the primary archive of religion" (2017, 6-7). Kevin Minister has also considered the political and economic entanglements of religious conversion using new materialism to "reorient the discussion to the social organization of bodies" (2015, 74).

⁵ I use the idea of a "theological imaginary," realizing that no term would be perfect to describe ancient phenomena of what we modern scholars call religion because of scholars such as Carlin Barton and Daniel Boyarin, who have argued that "religion" is largely an anachronistic term for antiquity (2016).

⁶ These objects are described more fulsomely in Quigley (forthcoming June 2021).

and chronological periods, well before and well after the first followers of Christ.⁷ These vibrant entanglements are not neutral, and theological and financial power are often at stake in these divine-human financial transactions; persons with cultural, political, and economic authority often seek to serve as intercessors and regulators of the divine. These three examples all date within a hundred years or so of the Letter to the Philippians, and two come from Philippi and its environs. The vibrant materiality of these objects helps us to take more seriously the transaction of Phil 3:7-11, in which Paul exchanges various status markers in order to “gain the profit Christ” (ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω). In this transaction, which entangles Paul and Christ, Christ is an object of investment for whom Paul will exchange everything. This does not mean, however, that a commodified Christ, to return to Bennett’s *credo* lacks “vitality, even though it resists full translation and exceeds...comprehensive grasp” (2010, 122).

A Statue, a Weight, and a Table

While we could think about the economic activities of cultic sites in antiquity, where gods and goddesses owned significant property and frequently ran banking systems which were managed by networks of cultic personnel, the objects under consideration find the economic vitality of the gods far beyond the borders of cultic sites.⁸ The gods could also be found in commercial sites, whether in governmental or market *agorai*, or *makella*, which is where fish and sacrificial meat were sold (Nasrallah 2019). *Makella* often had space dedicated to cult, frequently for Mercury/Hermes. The gods were also invoked when regulating the transactions that occurred within commercial spaces. One example comes from a limestone base (65 x 44 x 30cm) which held a votive statue in Philippi, the site of the ancient *makellon*. This Latin inscription dates to the first century BCE:

Mercurio
Aug(usto). sacr (um).
Sex(tus).Satruius. C(aii). f(ilius).

⁷ Examples range from fifth-century BCE governmental records inscribed on the Athenian acropolis recording the annual reports of the epistatai, financial and property managers for the city’s sanctuaries, to the minting of Roman imperial coins under Septimius Severus in the early third century CE (Eleftheratou 2015, 278). For an extended treatment of the sacred financial bureaucracies of ancient Athens, including additional examples, see Bubelis (2016). For examples of divine-human imagery on coins as part of broader imperial ideology, see Norena (2011, 192, RIC 4.1, Septimius Severus 24a). This coin features an eagle on the reverse to signify the emperor’s flight to the heavens, and an imperial portrait of Pertinax on the obverse, with the inscription CONSECRATIO above.

⁸ E.g., the Delian inventories, which offer significant details about temple accounts, including leases and loans; see Dignas (2003, 17). Temple land leases are understood by the grammarian Harpocration in the third century CE to be the primary source of income to support the bulk of costs for sacrifices (97). For more on temple land leases at Mylasa, which has a significant epigraphic record for these transactions, see Dignas (2000). Leases at Mylasa show an average of 4% of purchase price as a leasing rate. For more on the costs and income of animal sacrifices at temples, see Ekroth (2014). While income could be produced from the sale of animals for sacrifice, the costs of public sacrificial animals are listed as expenses in the Delian records for the temple to Apollo. For more on temple banking, see Bogaert (1968, 279). For more on the administration of temple loans, see Thompson (1988, 831-33).

Vol(tinia). Pudens.
[aed(ilis)] [.] Philipp(is).
[ex mensu]ris. ini-
[quis aeris p(ondo)][...]

Consecrated to Mercury Augustus.
Sextus Satrius Pudens, son of Caius,
of the tribe Voltinia,
aedile (?) for the Philippians,
(erected this altar) out of false measures for the bronze weights.⁹

At the site of commercial activity for Philippi, a Roman magistrate sets up a votive to Mercury Augustus as a site for confiscation of false measures. This base likely held a bronze statue representing Aequitas, a personification of equity. The bronze statues were made from the melted down false measures themselves.¹⁰

As a shopper moved through the *makellon* in Philippi to make purchases, she walked past the watchful eye of the figure of Aequitas. If she paused to read the inscription or had seen enforcement of transactions, she might know that the statue itself was an assemblage, melted down and cast from confiscated items. She would know that the business she conducted in that space was regulated by the gods, by government, and by the presence of this statue. She might put more trust in the vendors she conducted business with in that space. Or, she might keep her own watchful eye on measures of oil, grain, or other goods; on the weights on the scales used to measure her purchases; on the feel of her coins, themselves likely stamped with imperial and divine imagery, as she handed them over.

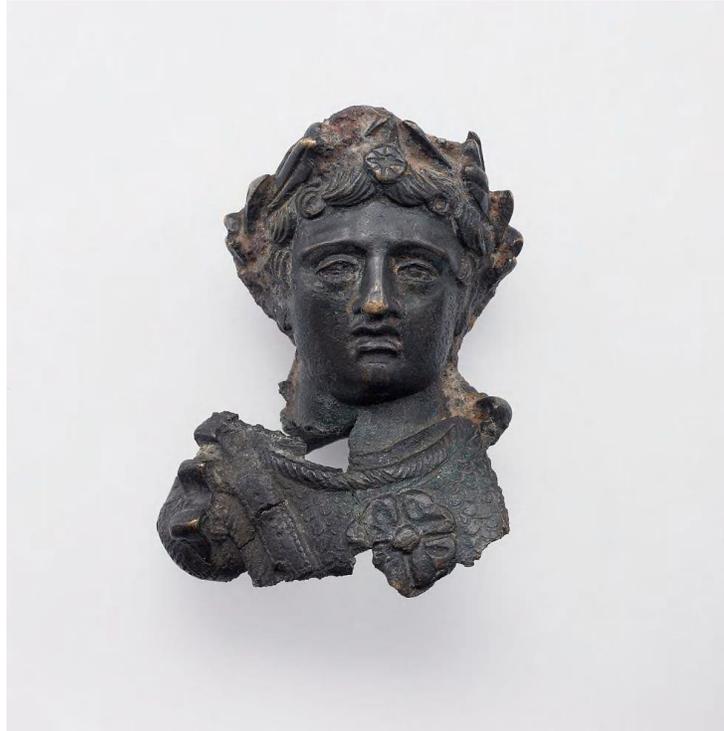
This votive provides evidence of the overlap of bureaucracy, imperial cult, and a divinity associated with commercial activity. The invocation of Mercury-Augustus celebrating the confiscation of false measures suggests that Mercury-Augustus oversees the commercial activities that go on in the *makellon*. Mercury-Augustus also serves as a divine warranty that the transactions which occur within the space will be equitably measured. The dedication of a statue of the emperor's equity literally re-forms any false measurements confiscated in the *makellon*. In this center of commercial activity, deities and imperial authorities appear on objects which commemorate and are used to oversee economic activity as human economic actors intermingle. The gods are understood as active not only within the context of temple economies, but also as participating in the larger economy even in spaces which we moderns might understand as solely commercial.

Imperial figures and divinities are also regularly represented on weights used to regulate financial transactions. Emperors, empresses, or deities such as Hermes/Mercury were used as standards for weights, and their use continues well into the Byzantine period. A

⁹ CIPh 2, 132.

¹⁰ CIPh 2, 117. See also CIPh 2,158, a table of measuring tables dedicated to the Thracian rider found in nearby Kypia (possibly an aedile with oversight of public buildings), which will be discussed in a moment.

second object is this leaded bronze bust (8 x 6 x 4.7cm), likely of Nero, which dates from the first century CE.¹¹



Leaded bronze weight bust, first century CE, Image: Harvard University Art Museums.

Busts such as this one would have hung from a steelyard, a marked bar, to help measure the proper amount of bulk goods. The woman who went to the *makellon* to make a purchase might have watched as a small bronze emperor or deity was slid along the steelyard, stopping at a point to let her know when the exchange rate was perfectly calibrated. A small chip or long-term wear in the bust might have a small but tangible effect on her purchasing power. Both buyers and sellers would rely upon a physical representation of a deity or a semi-divine imperial figure to guarantee the accuracy and proper measurement of the transaction occurring. These types of weights, when counterfeited by unscrupulous merchants, might have comprised some of those melted down in the *makellon* in Philippi to form a statue of Aequitas. Imperial figures and divinities are not only represented on the currency of the Roman Empire, but they also shape the objects that are used to measure transactions.

Some fifteen kilometers southwest of Philippi, in Kipia, a broken limestone measuring table was found.¹² This table top, with its two pierced circular cavities, was used to regulate measuring standards. The table was inscribed with three brief lines of Latin.

¹¹ Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Gift of Walter C. Baker, 1949.82. Image copyright Harvard University Art Museums: <https://www.harvardartmuseums.org/collections/object/304018>.

¹² CIPh 2, 158.

[...I]I . uir . s(ua) . p(ecunia) . f(aciendum) c (urauit).
Pro [sal]ute . col(oniae) . Iul(iae) . Aug(ustae) . Philippians(ium) .
Heroi . A[ulo]nite . sacr(um).

(an unknown) *duumvir* erected (this table) at his own expense.
For the wellbeing of the colony Julia Augusta of the Philippiens.
Consecrated to the Thracian Horseman.¹³

The woman who has entered the *makellon* at Philippi might have watched or participated in a transaction conducted on a table similar to this one. A measure of grain or oil would be poured into a cavity carved precisely for the task, and a small lid at the bottom would be moved to drain the cavity to be used to measure again. Her hand might have run over an inscription like this one as she waited for the transaction to be completed and her mind might have run to her purchase, the space she was in, and its location in the colony of Philippi. Here in Kipia, an official, a *duumvir*, offers a limestone table for the wellbeing of the colony at Philippi. This table had a functional use, measuring merchandise to ensure that transactions were fair and equitable. The *duumvir* consecrates this table and its work to an important local deity. This offering of a measuring table is similar to the previously-discussed statue base offered by aediles to imperial equity which were found in the *makellon* at Philippi.

A statue, a weight, and a table, all dating from a hundred years or so of Paul's letter to Christ followers in Philippi, help us to notice the entanglements of gods and markets. "A careful course of anthropomorphization" as Bennett encourages, reveals the activity of these transactional objects: a statue base, a weight bust, and a table. Some of these objects lend themselves to anthropomorphic legibility more easily than others; confiscated bronze measures were physically transformed into an anthropomorphized virtue/imperial figure of equity. The measuring table may seem less easily anthropomorphized, but its invocation of a semi-divine figure for protection upon the object on which transactions occur reveal the entanglements of gods, markets, and humans that shape the reality of daily life in antiquity. All of these objects would have had real effects in the transactions that would have occurred in the marketplace and beyond.

A Profitable Christ in Phil 3

This broader ontological spectrum which a new materialist framework encourages helps to open the interpretive possibilities for biblical texts, including Paul's Letter to the Philippians. This text includes a significant concentration of financial/theological language, which makes sense given the letter's financial themes. Paul, after all, writes from prison after having received financial and in-person support from the Philippian communities in Christ. This occasion has focused scholarly attention to certain portions of the letter, leading to others

¹³ The image and invocation of a heroized figure on horseback was widespread in antiquity, including in the area around Philippi. For more on this figure, see Boteva (2011).

being largely overlooked. One place where a statue base, a weight, and a table might prove helpful is in paying closer attention to notice the exchange described in Phil 3:7-11.¹⁴

[Ἄλλ] ἄτινα ἦν μοι κέρδη, ταῦτα ἤγημαι διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν ζημίαν. ἀλλὰ μένουγγε καὶ ἠγοῦμαι πάντα ζημίαν εἶναι διὰ τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ Κυρίου μου, δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα ἐζημιώθην, καὶ ἠγοῦμαι σκύβαλα ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω καὶ εὐρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ, μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου, ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ Θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει, τοῦ γνῶναι αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ [τὴν] κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ, εἴ πως καταστήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν.

But whatever was for me a gain, these things I calculated as a loss on account of Christ. But even more I calculate that all things are a loss on account of the better value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on whose account I counted all things as a loss, and I considered them dung, so that I might gain the profit Christ and be wealthy in him, not having my righteousness which is from the law but which is through faith in/of Christ, which is a righteousness from God in faith, in order to know him and the power of his resurrection and the share in his sufferings, being conformed to his death, if somehow I might attain resurrection from the dead (Author's translation).

In this brief passage, cognates of five different accounting terms appear, some of them more than once: *kerdos* (gain), *zēmia* (loss), *huperexō* (to exceed), *heuriskō* (to acquire wealth, fetch or earn money),¹⁵ and *koinōnia*. While a few of these terms have a range of meanings, *kerdos* (gain) and *zēmia* (loss), the core terminology of the logic in these verses, has no meaning apart from the financial. It is therefore unnecessary to turn to documentary and epigraphic evidence of *kerdos* and *zēmia* to explore their financial connotations. This cluster of up to eight financial terms within a brief four verses describes a theological exchange. Paul highlights two resources which he possesses in abundance: markers of Jewish status and knowledge of Christ. Phil 3:7–11 tally these resources on a sheet of divine accounting, in which Paul sets the exchange rate for the knowledge of Christ; at the high rate he sets, only he seems to have enough on hand to make that exchange.

How is this theological exchange calculated? Paul tallies all of his reasons for confidence in the flesh into a single gains column. In Phil 3:7, he moves these gains to a loss column; Paul reckons all assets as losses (ἠγοῦμαι πάντα ζημίαν εἶναι) because of the surpassing value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus (τὸ ὑπερέχον τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ).

¹⁴ This section develops upon and excerpts a portion of Quigley (forthcoming, chapter 3).

¹⁵ Although εὐρίσκω is often translated more generally here, it is also often deployed in the financial sense I have chosen here, both in regard to persons (Christ) and objects (Christ as commodity). See LSJ, “εὐρίσκω.” One notable example is found in the LXX in Lev 25:47, in which the passive form is used to describe the acquisition of wealth in discussion of jubilee practices. Given the preponderance of financial terminology in the rest of these verses, and the close pairing with the Christ profit on the other side of the “καὶ” with which it parallels, I think the financial sense best fits here.

Paul says he counts these former gains as worth-less excrement (*skubala*) so that he might gain the profit Christ (ἵνα Χριστὸν κερδήσω).¹⁶ *Kerdēsō* implies turning a profit, and Christ as the object of the verb is the profit which Paul acquires. For Paul, acquiring Christ is profitable, even if the assets that must be exchanged amount to everything that might be considered valuable. Christ is figured as an object of investment for whom Paul will exchange everything. The Christ commodity allows Paul to participate in a *koinōnia* with Christ in suffering and to attain resurrection from the dead.

The exchange that Paul describes is a theo-economic accounting system in which you only have/gain what you are willing to lose/devalue. This upends several expectations of good commercial practices. First, in this theo-economic accounting system, profits are really losses and losses are profitable. While accounting language is used, this accounting system is topsy-turvy. Second, in this system, the radical exchange that counts all things as a loss inflates the value of Christ. The exchange pushes the value of knowledge of Christ, and Christ himself, higher. Because Paul begins this accounting with his own reasons for confidence, and because the accounting rules set forth only allow you to gain what you devalue, only Paul has the right kinds of statuses on hand to devalue. Philippians 3, which contains polemical language at its outset, combined with Paul's list of reasons for confidence that he is willing to set aside, creates a theo-economic exchange in which Paul has the most status currency to hand over for Christ. Knowledge of Christ requires so much devaluation that only Paul seems to have enough on hand to complete the transaction. Third, the use of *skubala* indicates how much Paul devalues all of his reasons for confidence. This extreme self-devaluation makes possible his acquisition of Christ as the ultimate profit.

The use of financial terminology clustered in Phil 3:7–11 has not drawn scholarly attention, and analyses have often focused on tying these verses to the broader project of filling in details of Paul's biography and connecting the passage to the conversion story of Acts 9. The use of *termini technici* from the commercial world is often passed over as vaguely metaphorical, and the complex logics and implications of the proposed exchange have not been fully disentangled. F. F. Bruce serves as an example: "To know Christ and to gain Christ are two ways of expressing the same ambition. If Christ is the one 'in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3)' to know him means to have access to those treasures, but to know him for his own sake is what matters to Paul most of all...To gain Christ means to be found in him, to enjoy faith-union with him" (2011, 113). Bruce, mixing metaphors, turns to theo-economic language elsewhere in the Pauline tradition in his own description of these verses but chooses a *comparandum* that does not quite match up. As a result, he ignores the commodification of Christ found in Philippians 3 and spiritualizes the

¹⁶ Karen Bray's recent call to "recognize the animacy of shit and so the animacy of 'kinds' linguistically associated with the nonproductivity of fecal matter" is a reminder that Paul's scatological turn here is as vitally material as his accounting ledger. "Feces can be rethought as a site from which we find new ways of thinking our very beings and our energetic responsibilities to become along with all other actants in our assemblages" (2015, 111).

exchange described here in a way that focuses on knowledge of Christ (Phil 3:8) and faith in Christ (Phil 3:9) without full treatment of what it means to gain Christ as a profit.¹⁷

To take another example, L. Gregory Bloomquist highlights the *inclusio* bound by *kerdos* and *kerdēsō*, as well as the parallel phrasing using *zēmia*. Rather than explore the financial valences of these terms, he describes “Paul’s purpose [as] highlighting the term σκύβαλα...by leaving that term uncomfortably isolated and stark: any allegiance to σάρξ, as opposed to Χριστός, is simply useless garbage. Thus Phil 3:7–8 brings Paul to the conclusion of his argument inaugurated in 3:3, namely, to the ἐν Χριστῷ pole of the contrast” (1993, 134). Bloomquist highlights the contrast inherent in these verses without exploring the fact that the primary rhetorical vehicle for discussing in Christ identity in these verses is through financial language. Bloomquist is hardly alone in emphasizing anything but these terms in the passage. While some scholars such as Bloomquist and Bruce see these verses as a straightforward description of Paul’s “spiritual” conversion and Christology, the Christology implied by describing becoming a Christ follower using the language of a financial exchange is hardly straightforward.

Exploring another philological *comparandum* helps to describe the ways in which Phil 3:7–11 both plays with and upends the expectations of commercial transactions, accounting practices, and price-setting. Governmental authorities, from local governing bodies to the emperor, frequently intervened in the minutiae of markets, and these interventions are memorialized not only in the bureaucratic paperwork often preserved on papyrus, but also in public inscriptions. *Zēmia* and *kerdos* are frequently found in these types of documents to mark appropriate standards and boundaries for appropriate business interactions. One well-known intervention comes from the emperor Hadrian, preserved in an inscription found on two white marble fragments. Fragment A was found at the eastern end of the north portico in the lower market, a commercial center for the city, while Fragment B was reused as *spolia* in a Byzantine church (Macro 1976, 170).¹⁸ The inscription, dated to 130 CE, preserves an imperial letter which sets regulations for currency exchange at the Pergamene market and addresses other legal issues related to “default, distraint, and trial.” Hadrian sets both regulation and adjudication standards for Pergamene business transactions; here, imperial authority intervenes both in the minutiae of local markets and invokes imperial judicial frameworks for enforcement (169). The letter largely focuses on complaints that Hadrian has received about money changers in the city.

Line 24: [...]’Η(λ)έ(γ)χθησαν μετὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἕτερα ἅτινα συνεχωρηκότες ἑαυτοῖς κερδῶν ὀνόματα ἀσπρατούραν τε καὶ τὸ καλούμενην παρ’ αὐτοῖς προσφάγιον, δι’ ὧν ἐπηρέαζον μάλιστα τοὺς τὸν ἰχθὺν πιπράσκοντας. Καὶ ταῦτα οὖν ἐδοκιμάσαμεν διορθῶσθαι· πλεονεκτεῖσθαι γὰρ καὶ τοὺς ὀλίγους ὑπ’ αὐτῶν ἀνθρώπους (οὐ) δίκαιον ἦν, συνέβαινε δὲ πᾶσιν αἰσθητὴν γείνεσθαι τοῖς ὠνουμένοις τὴν ἄδικον τῶν πιπρασκόντων ζημίαν.

¹⁷ For a recent summary of objective/subjective genitive translation debates with *pistis*, see Morgan (2015).

¹⁸ The inscription as a whole measures .3 x .16m with varying widths, with letters of .008m height.

After this it was proved that they had agreed on profits under certain other names, the kickbacks,¹⁹ and the so-called fish-charge, with which they particularly harassed the fish-sellers. Therefore, we decided that these things should be corrected; for it is not right that a few people should be defrauded by them, and it happened that all the purchasers were affected by the unjust loss applied to the vendors.²⁰

It is expected that participants in markets (here money changers) should be able to exact some profit from exchanges, especially if they control the resources or hold a monopoly on the right to make that exchange. Money changers, Hadrian acknowledges, should largely be able to set the currency exchange rates in Pergamon. Hadrian intervenes, however, because the money changers are setting different exchange rates for other vendors who are permitted to transact in non-local currency, bypassing the money changers. Fish-sellers, who accept multiple forms of currency in their course of business, face extra markups when they go to money changers to convert currency. They complain that these markups cause them unjust loss. Hadrian reminds money changers that their profit margins cannot be set to such extremes as to cause unjust loss to other vendors. Those who control the currency exchanges in Pergamon are prohibited from creating unjust market conditions that disrupt other businesses.

While this second-century CE imperial letter does not directly parallel Philippians 3, this example demonstrates the regulatory context in which one might encounter the accounting language of gains and losses. Hadrian's more measured response also highlights the extremity of the theo-economic exchange Paul describes in Philippians 3. The extremity of this accounting system matches with the extremity of the rest of the chapter, in which Paul refers to "dogs" (*kuōn*) and "those who mutilate the flesh" (*katatomē*).²¹ This terminology, coupled with the already mentioned devaluation of all things as *skubala* or "excrement" sets up Christ as a vital and valuable object which has an exclusive exchange rate set by Paul. By setting up the terms of exchange, Paul is in control of the exchange rates for Christ and status. Christ is the object for which Paul trades rather than the arbiter of exchange. Christ is the profit which Paul gains. Christ as profit is not less vital or vibrant in an ancient world with expansive ontologies, including within its theological worldviews and economic systems. The logic of this exchange is legible within a world in which divine and human regularly transact with one another and in which the accounting language of Phil 3:7-11 maps onto the market realities of persons in antiquity, where the presence and vitality of the gods would have been unsurprising.

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¹⁹ The term here, *aspratura*, is the only known occurrence of the term. Macro tentatively translates this as "kickbacks" (172).

²⁰ Translation from Jones (1993, 392–93).

²¹ For more on the difficulty in identifying the opponents given the language he uses about them in Phil 3:2–3, see Holloway (2017, 148–53).

There is a growing interest in the intersections of economics and religion. These intersections have been explored frequently for contemporary topics and movements, following everything from the relationship between mass media and the prosperity gospel (Frederick 2016) to the striking threads connecting TV bingeing, meditation, and fundamentalism (Lofton 2017). There is more work to do for antiquity, where we find intersections among what scholars have always categorized as separate spheres, theology and the economy. Kathryn Lofton has described her recent work on such intersections in the contemporary world, “*Consuming Religion* thinks about the marketplace as the primary archive of religion” (2017, 6-7). It is impossible to imagine such an archive of antiquity unless it is an open-air space, capable of accounting for both the lofty divine heights and the mundane business of grain purchases, measured on a table or balanced against a weight. A new materialist framework might prove helpful for exploring the archive of antiquity precisely for its inclusion not only of texts but also a variety of objects which are imbued with vibrant materiality and can affect economic and theological lives.

When I think of the archive of what is anachronistically called religion in antiquity, I think of a space that contains objects like the statue base, the weight bust, and the table. I imagine people moving through spaces in which divine beings and imperial bureaucracy would have intertwined with their day-to-day actions, including even the purchase of a small measure of grain or oil. Whether or not the grain or oil were destined for an offering at an altar or consumption over a meal, both theological and economic practices led to trading, storing, and acquiring these commodities. From the divine being whose face stamped the coin making the purchase, to the imperial and theological authority of the imperial deity invoked upon the surface of this measuring table, to the looming bronze figure of a divine being nearby, gods and humans regularly transacted in a system that was at once theological and financial. The archive also includes the accounting of an imprisoned man, who reckons that all of the losses he might have accrued are worth it because of a profitable investment in Christ. This transaction, at once theological and financial, also would have had real effects not only on Paul, but on the people beside Paul.²² Building such an archive requires an accounting of not only human economic activity, but also divine.

Reference List

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²² One potential risk of Bennett’s call for anthropomorphization is anthropocentrism, which in Pauline studies has often coincided with a form of Paulocentrism. My intention in understanding gods and objects as having vibrant materiality within the economic sphere is to expand the range of scholarly possibilities for the Pauline corpus, which will prove useful not only for discussing Paul, but also refocus on the people and communities with whom he corresponded. See Marchal (2017).

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