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## Divine Economy: Theology and the Market

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## The Journal of Religion

between divine and human action is not a zero-sum game: from the fact that everything we might offer God, and the offering itself, can only be a gift from God, we have no grounds to conclude that a return of gift is anything less than what the Anglican liturgy calls “our bounden duty.”

Tanner’s final chapter concerns the last things and, in particular, the question of how there can be an imperative to lead the sort of gift-giving life she commends in chapter 3 when, as science now tells us, it all comes to nothing: the universe will end as a frozen, lifeless void. Subtly argued, this chapter is also a bit puzzling. It begins by proposing an eschatology “for a world without a future . . . absent a vision of [the] world to come, absent expectation of final success” (p. 103) and ends by saying that “in God, after its death, the world and everything it has ever contained may really receive as their own, intrinsic properties the blessings of life in God” (p. 119). It seems that she wants to combine these two claims by working out a “spatialized” eschatology in which eternal life is not so much a future event as a present possession, not fully grasped as such. Though by itself this does less than complete justice to some of the biblical passages to which she appeals (in particular, 1 Corinthians 15), the thought that (as Martin Luther puts it) we already live with one foot beyond the grave surely has a long lineage in Christian theology. What so far remains unclear is whether, for Tanner, we end up with both feet beyond the grave or both feet in it.

Other readers will have other questions. But Tanner has already promised a “much larger book” (p. xi) on the matters swiftly treated here, and we may be confident that it will include thoughtful answers to the questions posed by this exceptionally thought-provoking book.

BRUCE D. MARSHALL, *Southern Methodist University*.

LONG, D. STEPHEN. *Divine Economy: Theology and the Market*. Radical Orthodoxy. London: Routledge, 2000. xii+321 pp. \$85.00 (cloth); \$25.99 (paper).

With theological debts and methodological affinities to John Milbank (extending even to the cover photo credits), D. Stephen Long engages principal interlocutors from contemporary conversations on the theological import for economics in his polemical *Divine Economy: Theology and the Market*. Long contends that the Weberian fact-value distinction and dependence on autonomous social sciences malign this import and disqualify theological language; consequently, he adheres to Milbank’s critique of modernity and the retrieval of the centrality of ecclesiology and Christology, Alasdair MacIntyre’s recovery of tradition, and Catholic social teaching’s reconceptualization of modern economic practices (e.g., usury) and motivations (e.g., the accumulation of wealth) in light of the Christian metanarrative.

Long identifies three schematic foci that orient the book’s framework: the dominant tradition, the emergent tradition, and the residual tradition. The dominant tradition, which includes Max Stackhouse, Michael Novak, and Ronald Preston, vexes Long because its postconfessional sensibilities and commitment to a Weberian model of instrumentality subordinate particular tradition, ecclesiology, and Christology. Guided by the realism of Reinhold Niebuhr, whom Long curiously identifies as “not a theologian” (p. 39), these theologians analyze economics through the lenses of anthropology and creation and primarily underscore the maximization of liberty; the result is a “theology in service to the modernist project” (p. 78). The emergent tradition, comprised principally of liberation theo-

gians James Cone, Gustavo Gutiérrez, Jon Sobrino, and Rosemary Radford Ruether, censures institutional disparities and attends to the particular, yet, according to Long, it remains fettered by the emancipatory discourse of Weberian modernity. Long argues that these two models elevate utility over truth and naturalize the supernatural. He prefers a third option, the residual tradition, which he extrapolates from Jesuit Bernard Dempsey's "functional economy" (p. 195), MacIntyre's narrative unity of life, and Milbank's aesthetic vision—via appeal to Hans Urs von Balthasar and Henri de Lubac—that supernaturalizes the natural. Long denominates the church as "the pattern for economic life" (p. 250) because it is the site of the new community and the catalyst for Christian virtues, practices, and narrative.

Long's most valuable contribution derives from his capacious reading; too many theologians advocate economic reform without engaging economists' writings. Addressing not only thinkers in the three aforementioned traditions and their theological antecedents, Long also draws on the work of such economists as Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and Thomas Malthus to adumbrate the discipline's historical development, which, as Long rightly notes, economists themselves often neglect. Long's overview of economic literature enables him to gain purchase on the severity of the fact-value distinction and the limitations of a purely rational, self-interested economic model.

Long's methodological assumptions, however, warrant more critical examination. He undertakes a hermeneutical approach that critiques the social sciences and market mechanisms for relentlessly imposing their agendas over and above Christian charity. Nevertheless, Long's project is compromised by his uncritical treatment of tradition: "Re-reading tradition constitutes no theological problem" (p. 150). Rereading tradition always presents theological and hermeneutical obstacles that impel Christians to think critically and reflexively on their own tradition and their contemporary situation. This burden is not merely a symptom of modernity; for example, careful analysis of the Christological or Trinitarian patristic debates illuminates the complexities of internal discussions regarding the formation of Christian doctrine—which thus also problematizes Long's overly dichotomous notions of heresy and orthodoxy—as well as the necessity of confrontation with external realities.

The managerial society that envelops our lives does present significant challenges, but Long's privileging of theological language ("As absurd as it sounds, theologians must maintain the priority of their language over that of the economists" [p. 270]) collapses the solution to disparate, public problems into a monolithic theological answer. Long repudiates those advocating alternatives to his theological vision such as Paul Tillich because Tillich "renders theology *asocial* and *ahistorical*" (p. 122). On the contrary, Tillich's careful attention to history and his affirmation of religion as the substance of culture and culture as the form of religion provide powerful rejoinders. Long misconstrues as ahistorical any theological discourse that does not function as a metanarrative proclaiming the centrality of the church as that which "re-presents in history a form of life that is good, true, and beautiful" (p. 136). Similar to Milbank, Long contends that the Christian *mythos* alone protects virtue and beauty, that is, the gift, from deconstruction and the ontology of violence. This insulation reduces the intersubjective encounters of life, neglects the real conflict of goods and ideologies, and amounts to a hegemonic language that precludes genuine conversation between theology and economics.

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