



Bible Study on Economic Justice:

Luke 19:11–28

Introduction¹

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What kind of system of economic relations is just? How can wealth (in the broadest sense) be produced, used, and transferred/shared? That is, in a nutshell, the question of economic justice. The church has a very long tradition of answering that question by denying it: we are told that it is not our business to interfere with the way things are; in effect, all we must do is to give alms—that is, give a bit of money to the poor. Sometimes we do not even manage that much, at least at an institutional level, since we are too busy building a new, grand church building, or purchasing a new luxury 4x4 vehicle for our minister, or whatever else we think is important.

There are exceptions in the history of the church, of course, though many of us are perhaps not aware of them, even if we have had some formal theological education. Church History courses at theological colleges, for example, often do not tell us about these exceptions. We usually do not hear about the great church fathers in the ancient church who attacked the rich, such as Basil the Great (4th century). We rarely hear how Martin Luther harshly criticised exploitative business practices in the 16th century. Courses on John Wesley frequently omit to discuss his sharp analysis of an economic system in the 18th century which impoverished the majority of the people. And we rarely talk about liberation theology anymore ("that is so 1980s", and therefore supposedly no longer important, I was once told)—no, let's talk about 'public theology' instead, because that could mean anything. Much more neutral. Much safer. Don't rock the boat.

Perhaps this should not surprise us, because what those moments in the history (and present) of the church remind us of is that those who keep telling us that a bit of sharing and alms-giving is all that the church needs

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to do about economic injustice are plainly wrong—and, as I will try to show in this brief exploration of one text from the Scriptures, that those exceptional people and movements in the history of Christianity had good reasons to do and say what they did, on the basis of the Scriptures.

Alms and Communal Sharing

It is often claimed in public church discourse that the Scriptures do not foresee the possibility of making fundamental changes to a social or economic system. Slavery, for example, which is both a social and an economic system in antiquity, is taken for granted. There are occasional hints that point towards mitigation (e.g., Lev 25) or fundamental, albeit indirect questioning (e.g., Phlm), but there does not seem to be an overt attempt to change the system.

There is some truth in this, and in some ways, it is hardly surprising: if we consider the small size of early Christian communities, for example, how could they possibly think of overthrowing powerful kingdoms and empires and their social and economic systems, together with the powerful ideological apparatus that undergirded their practices?

No wonder, then, that alms-giving is in fact a fundamental part of the way of life that the Scriptures speak of. In the Sermon on the Mount, for example, this is so much taken for granted that only the way in which alms are supposed to be given is discussed (Mt 6:1–4). Still, people needed reminders never the less then as now: when someone is in need, we are not supposed to send them home (if they have one) with a nice prayer and a warm and self-satisfied feeling in our hearts: no, we are supposed to feed them (Jam 2:14–17).

Connected with this, but also moving to another level, is the practice of sharing among people. In the New Testament, we have at least two examples of such organised attempts at communal sharing—sharing, I might add, which was not based on ethnic, clan, or kinship relations (most cultures and societies advocate this, one way or another). No, the practice of sharing envisaged in the Acts of the Apostles and in Paul's major letters is based on being part of the family of God: both in the community in Jerusalem (Acts 2; Acts 4–5), and in Paul's so-called 'collection for Jerusalem' (Rom 15; Gal 2; 1 Cor 16; 2 Cor 8–9). Attempts at poverty mitigation, whether through alms-giving, communitarian sharing, or whatever other means, will continue to be fundamental to the work of the church, simply because we live in economic, political and social systems that produce poverty and marginalization right now.

Refusal, Subversion, Structural Change

However, although we must continue to practice this (and explore ever-new possibilities of doing it responsibly, effectively, and in line with the gospel), it is not true that the Scriptures do not envisage changing the very system that creates poverty and marginalisation. For example, what is often ignored is that ancient Israel did in fact try to develop a system that attempted to an alternative within its own (ancient Near Eastern)

context. Fundamental to the Torah (Genesis to Deuteronomy), that is, the way of life that the covenant with God demanded from Israel, fundamental to the Torah was the protection of the most vulnerable. It is not just idle talk when Deuteronomy says that “there shall be / should be no poor among you” (15:4): the point is that if Israel were truly to keep its covenant obligations, nobody would have to be poor. That sounds pretty radical to me.²

Furthermore, the Scriptures also show that attempts were made to refuse to participate in, and to subvert structures of exploitation—if only we have the patience to look carefully. Some of these texts have been ignored; others have been buried under centuries of misunderstanding. Christians are, like all human beings, often too scared, or too self-satisfied, or simply too exhausted to envisage alternatives; sometimes, the only thing people can do is dream and have visions. But those dreams, those visions, are important. The Apocalypse of John, for example, is one such dream: it is not, as often thought, a kind of weather forecast that foretells the future, rather like a cheap fortune-cookie; no, Revelation is a vision that serves to encourage the faithful in the first century to resist the temptation of falling for the seductive ideology of the Roman empire and its structural violence and exploitation.³ The Scriptures contain many such dreams and visions, in addition to experiments with practical steps to mitigate poverty or exploitation.

Of course, no practical attempts at addressing these matters that we can see in the Scriptures can simply be copied into our context, as if they were a blue-print we could simply transport across 2,000 to 3,000 years. This needs restating since, sadly, many adult Christians are still being taught, Sunday-school style, that the Bible is a simple ‘book of answers’: “just find the right half-verse somewhere, and you have your answer”. This is, at best, a misunderstanding of the nature of the Scriptures; at worst, it is a dangerous deception.

So: Alongside our attempts to minimize the effect of poverty and marginalization in our societies (locally, regionally, and globally), we must therefore also tackle structural issues. In other words, we must ask why it is that our social, political, and economic systems produce economic injustice on such a massive scale. How can we change this?

Refusing to Participate in Practices of Exploitation: The Parable of the Pounds (Luke 19:11–28)

Perhaps we can gain some insight and inspiration, even if it is from a single text. I would like to focus on a text which, to my mind, indicates a refusal to participate in systems of economic exploitation. It is a text which has been buried under centuries of misinterpretation, both in mainstream scholarship, but also in much popular interpretation: Luke’s so-called ‘Parable of the Pounds’ (Lk 19:11–28).⁴

In fact, many Bible readers do not know this story very well. Of course, most of us remember having heard sermons about Matthew’s version of the story (Mt 25:14–30). In fact, Matthew’s version is fairly well known even outside of the church; even people



who know very little about the Bible have heard of it. Politicians like Margaret Thatcher⁵ and John Howard⁶ have therefore been able to refer to it to justify the basic principles of the kind of rapacious capitalism that they promoted. Of course, Matthew's version of the story is usually spiritualised along the following lines (and I am sure we have all heard sermons of this type): "do something with whatever you have during the time that you have on earth—not just money, but whatever you have". In fact, this way of interpreting Matthew's version of the story has even influenced the English language: when Matthew speaks of a 'talent' (Greek: *talanton*), he means a certain amount of money, but the English word 'talent' is now used to refer to some sort of skill or aptitude.

So: what about Luke's version of this story? Hardly anyone I have ever spoken to about this can recollect hearing a sermon about this story in Luke's gospel. In churches that use the Revised Common Lectionary, the Lukan text will not come up in the Sunday readings, because the RCL does not use it.⁷ So—let's take a look, let's actually read this story for once (Luke 19:11-28).

The story we have here is a little more complex than its parallel in Matthew. There are two interwoven strands in Luke's story: a man who leaves slaves in charge of a certain amount of money (which is the strand that Matthew has), but in Luke, the very same man has broader political ambitions. Both these strands are essential to Luke's story.

In Luke, the rich man who goes away is an aristocrat. He leaves because he is going to the centre of the empire in order to get himself confirmed as king in the area he wants to rule. That may sound a little strange to us, but it would not have been odd for first-century listeners and readers of Luke's gospel. For example, both Herod and his son, Herod Antipas (both mentioned in the gospels), did precisely that.

Before he leaves, the aristocrat orders that several slaves are to be given a fairly large amount of money, one Roman 'pound' (*mna* in Greek): that is much less than the *talanton* given in Matthew, but still a lot of money—it is difficult to be precise here, but a *mna* is perhaps about three to four months' income for a day-labourer.⁸

At this point the story returns to the reason for the aristocrat's departure: for not everyone is happy with his claim to the throne. 'The citizens' (probably other members of the political elite) send a delegation after him to plead with the emperor not to appoint this man.

Meanwhile, during the absence of the future king, the slaves are supposed to "do business" (Greek: *pragmateuomai*) with the money they were entrusted with. Just what the aristocrat expected them to do is a bit ambiguous at this point, but it gets a little clearer later on, when the aristocrat (now appointed king) returns and demands to hear from his slaves what they had "gained by trading" (Greek: *diapragmateuomai*). One slave has made a profit of a 1,000%: he returns not one, but another ten 'pounds' to his master.

Another has brought in a profit of 500%: five more ‘pounds’.

Now, what most of us do not know is that such profits are unrealistic in the context of ancient economy: that kind of profit margin is simply impossible. A profit of perhaps 30% per year would have been considered exceptionally good.⁹ This is the first point in this story where the first-century listeners are given a signal that something unusual is going on here.

The slaves who have brought in this vast profit are hugely rewarded: they are to ‘have authority’ over a number of ‘cities’ (Greek: *polis*; in the first century context, that would be a large village, or a small town by our standards). Since they are slaves, this is not a political appointment, but an administrative one—but nevertheless, it is a lucrative reward, since such administrative appointments would still create opportunities for these slaves to make a lot of money for themselves (e.g., through gifts and bribes). In addition, it would appear that they get to keep the profit they had made (19:24–25).

The Third Slave

So far, the story is fairly ordinary stuff for a first-century audience: everything seems to fits expectations (apart from the high profits, that is). But then comes another slave, the last slave, who proceeds to do something unthinkable. He returns the money the master had given him, and launches into a speech that criticizes his master—in front of everyone:

I was afraid of you, because you are a harsh man; you take what you did not deposit (or: what you did not put down), and reap what you did not sow. (Lk 19:21)

The slave calls his master ‘harsh’ (*austeros*), and then goes on to qualify how this harshness manifests itself: “you take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow”. Actually, this is an excellent summary of what the very, very rich in the first century actually did. Somewhat simplistically put: they prided themselves on not having to work; they expected others to work for them instead.¹⁰

At this point, I suppose that the listeners to this story in the first century would be aghast: shocked, horrified perhaps. What is this slave doing? To throw this truth in the face of his master was extremely risky: the master could do anything he wanted to him, including having him killed.

At the same time, we also need to realise that the slave was actually doing ‘the right thing’ from the perspective of ordinary people. The other slaves had made huge profits. That would only have been possible through extremely ruthless exploitation of others: there was no other way of making that much profit in the first century. This slave, however, refused to do so. Instead, he kept the money safe, and returned it to his master.

The master’s response to last slave reinforces the picture of the master as a rapacious aristocrat. To paraphrase a little: ‘If you knew all that about me, you worthless slave,



why did you not take the money to the money-changers (i.e., the banks), so that I could have taken it back with interest?"

For those listeners who knew their Scriptures well, the master's speech would have further increased their appreciation of the brutality of this master. In the Torah, taking interest is illegal; it contradicts the will of God.

If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them. If you take your neighbor's cloak in pawn, you shall restore it before the sun goes down; for it may be your neighbor's only clothing to use as cover; in what else shall that person sleep? And if your neighbor cries out to me, I will listen, for I am compassionate. (Ex 22:25-27)

The reason for the prohibition of interest in the Torah is that loans did not primarily function as business investments in antiquity, as they often do in today's business world: in the ancient world, loans are requested in order to survive a bad harvest, or some other disaster. Demanding interest in that context effectively meant that the serious problems of the person requesting the loan would be made worse by the loan-giver.

So: the master expects his slave to do what he is not supposed to—taking the money to the bank would have been just as exploitative as making huge profits with it, as the other slaves had done.

For listeners in a first-century context, the story now stands on a knife's edge: they have heard of a very rich aristocrat, one who is about to be made king, who expects his slaves to make huge profits for him. He is a harsh man, one who takes what he did not put down, who reaps the harvest of crops he has not sown. So: what is this rich and powerful man going to do?

Well, he does what the listeners would expect him to do, because that was their experience of life: he punishes the slave. He orders the money to be given to the slave who has made the largest profit—something that shocks even the other slaves: "Sir, he has ten pounds", that is, spoken in the sense of 'he has such a large amount of money already, and you want to add to that?' And the king utters words that should freeze our blood:

I tell you, to all those who have, more will be given; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. (Lk 19:26)

No wonder that capitalists and neoliberal ideologues remember this saying (albeit from Matthew's version): they listen to the first part in particular: to those who have, more will be given. Tough luck for the rest: 'from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away'. The poor will lose even the few bits and pieces they have. That, in a nutshell, is the experience of the poor within an economic system that is

geared to benefit the rich.

Once again, for a first-century audience, this story has confirmed the picture of a greedy, ruthless aristocrat. And to top it all off, the story then returns to an aspect that was left hanging from the beginning: whatever happened to the people mentioned at the start of the story, the people who did not want this man to become king?

Well, what happens to them is once again what, in a first-century context, one would expect:

But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and slaughter them in my presence. (19:27)

And that is the end, the conclusion of the story. The king cleans up in more than one way: he has confirmed which of his slaves are going to make more money for him in the future, in whatever ruthless and brutal way as they can, and he has taken care of his political enemies. (Again, not an unusual thing in the first century: Herod, for example, had a number of his potential rivals killed, including family members.)

The Point of the Story in Luke

So: where do we go with this story? We are used to hearing Matthew's version, and we are used to interpreting it, broadly speaking, as a story designed to ensure that we do not sit around idly while waiting for Jesus to return. And that is perhaps what Matthew's version of the story is meant to say. But does it mean that in Luke's Gospel?

Given the way I have told and interpreted Luke's story so far, I am sure that you can guess that I do not think that Luke's story means what Matthew's seems to do. But why can I say that? Don't we all know that this is a parable about the Kingdom of God? Don't we all know that the rich man somehow refers to God, or perhaps Christ?

Well, actually we don't know that: we assume it; we take it for granted. Let's take a careful look how Luke introduces the story. At this point in the narrative, Jesus and the disciples are still on their way to Jerusalem, a process that begins near the end of chapter 9. Close to the end of that journey, they encounter 'a certain ruler' (18:18), a powerful (and rich) man, who seems to be earnest in his search for God and truth: 'what must I do to inherit eternal life'? In the end, though, his wealth is more important to him than God: when Jesus tells him that he is to give his possessions to the poor before he can follow Jesus, he turns away. "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the Kingdom of God" (18:24).

As the group moves closer to Jericho, no more than a day or two on foot from Jerusalem now, they encounter a blind man who sits on the road, begging (18:35). Eventually a dialogue between Jesus and this man begins, and at the end of the process, the man is healed, and he joins the group of disciples. In other words, it is the poor, the marginalised, who see who Jesus is, and they are received in God's kingdom.

So far, this is not unusual: throughout Luke's gospel, there is strong sense of what schol-



ars call ‘eschatological reversal’. With the coming of Jesus as the Messiah, God’s reign, God’s will is beginning to break into the world at last. And with that, everything that is wrong with the world will be put to right. From the perspective of the poor, the injustice of this world will end. Remember the famous ‘Magnificat’, Mary’s Song (Lk 1:46–55)?

[God] has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. (1:51–53)

What we hear in Luke’s gospel up until the end of chapter 18 falls into this pattern. It is not that Luke regards all rich people as nasty brutes; in fact, he sometimes portrays them in a sympathetic light. But still: he does not break the pattern of eschatological reversal: the poor will be lifted up, the rich and powerful will be thrown down from their thrones.

And then we encounter Jesus and his disciples entering Jericho, where they meet Zacchaeus, a man who got rich by bringing in taxes for the very rich, who bought the right to bring in taxes from the Roman government;¹¹ taxes, I might add, that the Roman state used to fund the imperial apparatus of administrators, and of course the military. And out of the blue, the pattern breaks: with Zacchaeus, who gives half of his wealth away to the poor, and returns four-fold where he has defrauded people (far more than what the Torah demands). No wonder that Jesus pronounces ‘salvation’ upon him (Greek: *soteria*), as the translations usually have it, though I would prefer to render the Greek as ‘rescue’, or ‘liberation’.

I have no words to express the shock of this story; it is so utterly surprising, after all we have heard in Luke’s Gospel up until this point. Can it be true? Here is a man who is rich because of his collaboration with a system of ruthless exploitation—and he truly repents; he does what the other rich men in Luke’s Gospel would not do. This is truly the greatest miracle (in Biblical language: the greatest story of the power of God) in Luke.

And at that very point we come to the sentence that introduces the story of the pounds (19:11):

As they were listening to this, he went on to tell a parable, because he was near Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.

What does this mean? In order to free us from the stranglehold of the traditional interpretation, we first have to take seriously what the word ‘parable’ means here. We are used to understanding this as a technical term for certain stories that Jesus told. Often, these stories are ‘kingdom parables’, that is, they are meant to be saying something about the Kingdom of God. And so it seems, at first sight, with this verse, too. But that is to misread Luke. In the Greek text, and not just in Luke, but also the other gospels that use the term, the Greek word *parabole* refers to any statement or story that is some-

what odd, mysterious, riddle-like: a statement or story that needs interpretation, that is not straightforward. In other words, the Greek category *parabole* is much broader than what we usually mean by the word ‘parable’. It seems to me that Luke does not use this story in the sense that we understand a ‘parable’ at all. Luke tells the story of the pound not as a ‘parable about the kingdom’, but as a warning story. At the very point where the disciples are getting excited, where this amazing thing in the Zacchaeus story has happened, they naturally expect that God’s reign is just about to break into the world: we have arrived at last. Just about as we are getting to Jerusalem!

But the story that Luke tells is a warning: we are not there just yet. The story of entrusted money is a story of what happens when we act the way God wants us to. The last slave, who has done the right thing, who is righteous, is punished by the powerful, just like they punish and ‘eliminate’ politically dangerous people. The point of the story is simply this: Be warned—if you refuse to participate in systems of oppression and exploitation, which is what the righteous are supposed to be doing, you should still expect to be persecuted. The reign of God has not fully broken into the world yet. The wicked will still punish and sometime kill the righteous, just as they get rid of any other enemy.

Conclusion

What I have tried to show in this Bible Study is that the Scriptures do not only speak of alms-giving and sharing to mitigate the worst. Yes, of course we must find ways of sharing what we have, because the poor are starving right now. But the Scriptures also know about refusing to co-operate with systems that exploit and oppress.

It is risky to do this; it can be very dangerous. Telling the truth to the powerful, refusing to do what they want us do: all that can and probably will get us into serious trouble; in some contexts, it can even get us killed. But it is must be done.

NOTES

¹ This paper is a revised version of a “Bible Study on Economic Justice” I was asked to deliver at the *First Colloquium on a New International Economic and Financial Architecture: an Economy of Life in the Pacific* (15–17 March 2017), hosted by the Council for World Mission, in collaboration with the World Council of Churches and the World Comunion of Reformed Churches. I am grateful to the organisers and facilitators of the colloquium (especially Drs Sudipta Singh, Athena Peralta, and Rogate Mshana) as well as the participants, for both the invitation to conduct the Bible Study, and for the discussions that followed. — I have kept the somewhat informal style of the text, but have added some basic references.

² For some challenging insights in this regard, see: Walter Brueggemann and Tod Linafelt, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2012); Gunther H. Wittenberg, *Re-*



sistance Theology in the Old Testament: Collected Essays (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2007); Franz Segbers, *Die Hausordnung der Tora: Biblische Impulse für eine theologische Wirtschaftsethik*, 3. Auflage (Luzern: Exodus, 2002); Frank Crüsemann, *The Torah: Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law*, translated by Allan W. Mahnke (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996).

³ See, for example: Pablo Richard, *Apocalypse: A People's Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995); Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999).

⁴ While most mainstream scholars tend to disagree with my reading of this story in Luke (or Matthew, for that matter), there is a small but growing body of scholarship that supports it (although they usually focus on reading the text in the context of the scholarly construct of the 'historical Jesus', as supposed to its function in the Gospel according to Luke, or Matthew, for that matter). For example: Dietrich Schirmer, "Du Nimmst, wo Du nichts Hingelegt Hast" (Lk 19,21): Kritik ausbeuterischer Finanzpraxis", in "... So Lernen die Völker des Erdkreises Gerechtigkeit": Ein Arbeitsbuch zu Bibel und Ökonomie, edited by Kuno Füssel and Franz Segbers (Luzern: Edition Exodus, 1995), 179–86; Richard L. Rohrbaugh, "A Peasant Reading of the Parable of the Talents / Pounds: A Text of Terror?" *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 23, no. 1 (1993): 32–39; Alejandro Zorzin, "Reflexiones Sobre el Modelo Económico a la Luz de Lucas 19,11-27." *Revista Parroquial* 100, no. 11 (1995): 10–13; Merrill Kitchen, "Rereading the Parable of the Pounds: A Social and Narrative Analysis of Luke 19:11-28", in *Prophecy and Passion: Essays in Honour of Athol Gill*, edited by David J. Neville (Adelaide: Australian Theological Forum, 2003), 227–46; Elizabeth V. Dowling, *Taking Away the Pound: Women, Theology and the Parable of the Pounds in the Gospel of Luke* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007); Martin Ebner, "Face to Face-Widerstand im Sinn der Gottesherrschaft: Jesu Wahrnehmung seines sozialen Umfeldes im Spiegel seiner Beispielsgeschichten", *Early Christianity* 1, no. 3 (2010): 406–40; Adam F. Braun, "Reframing the Parable of the Pounds in Lukan Narrative and Economic Context: Luke 19:11–28." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 49, no. 6 (2012): 442–48; Justin S. Ukpong, "The Parable of the Talents (Matt 25:14-30): Commendation or Critique of Exploitation? A Social-Historical and Theological Reading." *Neotestamentica* 46, no. 1 (2012): 190–207.

⁵ Cf. Richard Griffiths, "Mrs. Thatcher's Bible." *Semeia* 82 (1998): 99–125.

⁶ Cf. Holly Randell-Moon, "Social Security with a Christian Twist in John Howard's Australia", in *Mediating Faiths: Religion and Socio-Cultural Change in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Michael Bailey and Guy Redden (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 203–15.

⁷ Consultation on Common Texts, *The Revised Common Lectionary* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1992). However, the text of Lk 19:11–27 does show up in the ‘Daily Readings’ of the RCL (Year C, Ordinary 31 / Proper 26). See also the material provided on the CCT website (accessed 16 March 2017): <http://www.commontexts.org>

⁸ One *talanton* equals 60 *mnai*; one *mna* is equivalent to 100 *drachmae* (or One *denarius*) is the agreed amount for a day’s work in Matthew’s parable of the workers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1–16). However, we do not know whether that amount in Mt 20 is a generous, unusually low, or a typical wage, let alone what exactly the ‘buying power’ of one *denarius* was for the first generation of readers and listeners of the gospels.

⁹ It is difficult to be precise in this area. After some stagnation since Moses Finley’s influential work, the scholarly debate on the ‘ancient economy’ has recently become lively again—perhaps we will see some new insights emerging from this in the future. Cf. M. I. Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973); Douglas E. Oakman, *Jesus and the Peasants* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008); Walter Scheidel and Sitta von Reden, eds., *The Ancient Economy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002); Neville Morley. *Trade in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Alan K. Bowman and Andrew Wilson, eds., *The Roman Agricultural Economy: Organisation, Investment, and Production* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁰ In addition to works on the ancient economy (listed above), see also: G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World: From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests*. 2nd impression, corrected ed. (London: Duckworth, 1983); Peter Garnsey and Richard P. Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture* (London: Duckworth, 1987); Detlev Dormeyer, Folker Siegert, and J. Cornelis de Vos, eds., *Arbeit in der Antike, in Judentum und Christentum* (Berlin: Lit, 2006); Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly, *Worthy Efforts: Attitudes to Work and Workers in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

¹¹ A system known as ‘tax farming’: the rich buy the right to levy taxes from the Roman government. In our context, we might call it privatisation of national infrastructure: a lucrative business for the wealthy, and a convenient one for governments. For details on Roman taxation, see: Brent D. Shaw, “Roman Taxation”, in *Civilization of the Ancient Mediterranean: Greece and Rome*, Vol. 2, edited by Michael Grant and Rachel Kitzinger (New York, NY: Scribner’s, 1988), 809–27; Werner Stenger, ‘*Geht dem Kaiser, was des Kaisers Ist...!*’ Eine Sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur Besteuerung Palästinas in Neutestamentlicher Zeit (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1988); Fabian E. Udoh, *To Caesar What Is Caesar’s: Tribute, Taxes and Imperial Administration in Early Roman Palestine* (63 B.C.E.–70 C.E.) (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2005).

