

TIMOTHY J. MURRAY, *Restricted Generosity in the New Testament* (WUNT II 480: Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018). Pp. xiv + 273. Paperback: €79.00.

Timothy J. Murray's doctoral thesis addresses a little probed historical dimension of wealth ethics in antiquity and in the New Testament: the restriction of generosity. The result is an excellent piece of contextualised historical research which is applied exegetically to the New Testament documents with considerable skill and insight. The first part of the monograph (27–135) analyses the wealth ethics and ethos of the first-century CE social structures of the *oikos*, voluntary associations, and Jewish groups, whereas the second part is devoted to the implications of this comparanda for restricted generosity in the New Testament (139–222). After discussing “wealth ethics” as a subset of New Testament ethics (2–16), Murray argues that the reciprocal expectations of Roman *pietas*, which undergirded generosity as a first-century C.E. cultural norm, existed not only at Rome but also across Graeco-Roman and Jewish culture, despite local variations in understanding (18, 223). Consequently, a restriction in generosity occurred “where one party had failed to perform their obligations” (18, 47–48). Murray's thesis is that while the self-identification of the early Christians as a fictive family dictated a strong mutual material solidarity, restrictions in generosity were considered in the case of “outsiders,” those who refused to work, and the category of widow to be supported (18, 224–25). In implementing such restrictions, the early churches reflected the cultural norms of the *oikos*, voluntary associations, and Jewish groups.

The first section of Part A begins with an exploration of *pietas* in the household (30–48), drawing upon the evidence of the Hellenistic literature (30–32), Roman jurists (33–36), the inscription *Laudatio Turiae* (37–39), Cicero's *De Officiis* and the literary *declamations* (37–41), and the fraternal *pietas* associated with the *consortium* (41–42). Restrictions of generosity in the Roman family occurred in inheritances, gift-giving, and the *paterfamilias*' control of the *peculium* (44–47). Murray's discussion is strong, but some eastern Mediterranean epigraphic

examples of *pietas* would have been apposite (e.g. the bequest of Salutaris at Ephesus [IEph 1a.27; 104 CE]; the Lycian benefactor, Opramoas of Rhodiapolis [IGR 3.737, cf. 1524]). Surprising is the omission of the imperial context of *pietas*, being *household*-based (e.g., Augustus, Trajan, Hadrian), one of Augustus' four cardinal virtues (*Res Gestae* 34.2), and highly accessible through its numismatic imagery (Hoklotubbe, *Civilized Piety*, Baylor UP, 2017, 13–54.). In the second section, after an overview of the types of association (58–63), Murray discusses association finances including care of members (63–79), detailing restrictions on the uses of money by association benefactors, the imposition of fines upon rule-breakers, and solvency crises (68–75). Murray adeptly sets out the arguments and counterarguments from the literary and documentary evidence regarding the care of association members (75–88), concluding that “There is no evidence that associations provided assistance to members who were struggling to afford their basic maintenance” (89; cf. 78, 81, 82, 86). A close reading of the evidence-based discussions of the associations by Last and Harland (*Group Survival in the Ancient Mediterranean*, T&T Clark, 2020, 151–86) and Kloppenborg (*Christ's Associations*, Yale University Press, 2019, 209–77) on mutual aid in associations is now demanded. Did the associations care for the destitute (*ptôchoi*, Matt 25:34–36), people with disabilities (Luke 14:13–14, 21–23), and the enemy (Luke 6:35) in the same manner as the Christ associations? I suspect that Murray's conclusion still stands. The differences outweigh the very considerable similarities between the Christ and cultic associations. In the third section (92–135), Murray argues powerfully against the consensus that “there is no reliable evidence for an organised system of poor-care in the first-century with the exception of the scrolls-Qumran-Essenes evidence” (134), a conclusion also affirmed by Last and Last and Harland of the Egyptian Judean associations (*Group Survival*, 174).

In Part 2, Murray brings *oikos* language into dialogue with key New Testament texts on economic issues (143–55; Mark 10:28–31; Matt 25:31–46; Rom 12:9–13; Heb 13:1–6; Gal 6:10; 1 Thess 4:9–12; 1 Tim 5:3–16). Distinctions are made between “insiders”

and “outsiders” regarding beneficence (Gal 6:10; 1 Thess 5:15), the level of beneficence allocated depending on whether the recipient was member of God’s fictive family or not (158). The argument is solidly made, though one wonders how Murray integrates Synoptic and Pauline admonitions about beneficence to the outsider (Luke 6:35; cf. Rom 12:20–21), omitted in his discussion, with the prioritisation of the insider. It is, of course, beyond the purview of Murray’s monograph, but worthy of clarification nonetheless. Last, the charitable care of widows in 1 Timothy 5:3–16 is examined (196–222), with Murray carefully contextualising the pericope in the Thessalonian epistles (165–95), including their implicit ethics (1 Thess 4:9–12; 2 Thess 3:6–16). Murray posits that the disorderly faction of 2 Thess 3:6–15, refusing to work, were excluded for their failure in *pietas* in the same manner as other contemporary groups (194–95). Regarding widows, Murray argues that the Ephesian church offered material support, qualified by some restrictions, but concludes that there was no evidence for support of widows beyond the church (220). In a final rejoinder to Murray’s fine monograph, one wonders how Paul’s restrictions of beneficence to widows intersected with Jesus’ paradoxical commendation of an impoverished widow-benefactor (Mark 12:41–44), given the rarity of inscriptions honouring rich widow-benefactors in antiquity (Atalante [2nd century CE]: TAM III,1, 4; III.1. 62).

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