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As Ward Blanton notes, Roland Boer's dazzlingly wide-ranging corpus is surely unique within an increasingly atomized discipline and academy. Boer exemplifies engaged critical scholarship that advances knowledge about areas of material concern to the humanities and biblical scholarship in particular. He writes with wit and humorous prose that clearly and consistently conveys the stakes of his projects. This book is much more (and also a bit less) than an analysis of ancient Israel's economy. Boer offers a new account of what Marx infamously christened the Asiatic mode of production. As is well known, Marx periodized history by referring to different, conflictual constellations of means, forces, and relations of production such as capitalism and feudalism. Prior to the emerging significance of slavery in the ancient mode of production that we broadly associate with Hellenization, Marx used the controversial notion of an Asiatic mode of production to characterize the political economy in southwest Asia. Boer offers a new term, the sacred economy, and a fresh analysis that promises to revitalize research into the economy of the ancient Near East.

All reviewers agree that Boer's analysis makes a landmark contribution to our understanding of ancient Israel's economy, and each offers constructive criticism aimed at advancing Boer's project in two directions. At times they push back on some of Boer's particular claims. At other times, they focus on

¹ These reviews were initially presented on 21 November 2015, at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in the Ideological Criticism program unit. I extend my gratitude to *HBTH* and Lewie Donelson for publishing these reviews of Roland Boer's recent book, to the participants for devoting their time and expertise to begin a critical conversation around this landmark study of ancient Israel's economy, and to Boer himself for his book and his thoughtful response to these reviews.
elements of Boer’s analysis that, in their judgment, were insufficiently treated or avoided. Regarding the latter, although Boer attends at length to the patriarchal family and household, several reviewers (e.g., Adams, Sharp, Keefe) indicate that his analysis would be improved by greater attention to the consequences of gender constructions for the division of labor and power dynamics in the sacred economy.

More than one reviewer (e.g., Erickson, Keefe) also voiced a general sense of dissatisfaction with the role of religion in Boer’s analysis. The concept of religion and the role of the sacred in the sacred economy seem to them inadequately specified or appreciated. Boer typically refers to modes of régulation—from the Marxist theoretical orientation known as Régulation theory—to refer to particular cultural and religious forms, beliefs, assumptions, and institutions that offer ideological support for any specific organization of the economy. More work could certainly be done to illuminate the various and inherently ambivalent consequences of different modes of régulation on the sacred economy.

Finally, multiple reviewers (e.g., Adams, Brueggemann) were not satisfied with Boer’s reticence to view—and suspicion of those who do so—the struggles and conflicts in the ancient socioeconomic conditions of the sacred economy as relevant resources for understanding and responding to contemporary experiences and conditions of global capitalism. While his final chapter does briefly consider what normative claims might be possible in light of his analysis of the sacred economy, Boer rejects attempts to make the Bible speak directly to contemporary conditions on the grounds that it was formed in such a different mode of production. Thus he is reticent to allow the prophets, for example, to voice contemporary grievances. If they complain about economic exploitation, it’s not the same kind of exploitation experienced in contemporary capitalism. Instead he hints at a more modest yet constructive proposal for reorganizing socioeconomic life in light of what worked best for human and nonhuman life in the subsistence regime of the sacred economy.

I appreciate Boer’s desire to be clear and explicit about the many historical differences between our capitalist political economy and the ancient sacred economy, but I think Boer draws too rigid a line between now and then with regard both to modes of production and the meanings of the biblical texts. As Boer notes, there are numerous, deeply significant features such as class conflict that are shared across modes of production. And, as Boer knows, each mode of production preserves and projects the sequence and vestiges of earlier modes of production out of which it emerges. This is not to say that history is “homogeneous, empty time,” as Walter Benjamin nicely puts it, history is