

Meier notes that the belief in historical consciousness strengthened the acceptance of prevailing opinion. Plato had famously observed that most people accepted prevailing opinions and, therefore, lived in a cave, the liberation from which was very difficult. Liberation from erroneous opinions is even more difficult today because of the second cave created by historicist thinking. Strauss saw his studies in the history of philosophy as a way of overcoming the unnatural ignorance produced by historicism. Unlike in the time of the ancient Greeks, book learning is now necessary to rise from the second cave into the Platonic cave. Strauss's brilliant studies of the ancient and modern philosophers revived the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns by showing how modern philosophy was a decisive break with Greek philosophy and the Bible. He showed how philosophers wrote esoterically to protect themselves from society and the nonphilosophers from philosophy, and he described the waves of modernity that led to the present impasse of historicism. After reading Strauss, one is likely to see the wisdom in the following statement from his 1940 lecture: "It is after all *possible* that the truth, or the right approach to the truth, has been found in a remote past and *forgotten* for centuries" (125).

Chapters 3 and 4 are entitled respectively "What Is Political Theology?" and "Why Political Philosophy?" Chapter 3 discusses the concept of political theology in the light of reflections on the subject by the German political theorist Carl Schmitt. Meier previously published a book on what he called the hidden dialogue between Schmitt and Strauss, who had written a review essay in 1932 on Schmitt's work, *The Concept of the Political*. This chapter does not directly complement the other three. Meier rightly says that chapter 4 "identifies the place accorded to the confrontation with the theologico-political problem in the inner structure of political philosophy" (xiv–xv), and thus fits in well with chapter 1.

Professor Meier, who is editing the collected works of Leo Strauss in German, reveals his profound knowledge of Strauss's thought in his brief book. One would, therefore, hope that he would write more extensively on other Strauss themes developed in his historical studies.

—J. Brian Benestad (e-mail: benestadj1@scranton.edu)
University of Scranton, Scranton, Pennsylvania

Economy of Grace

Kathryn Tanner

Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Press, 2005 (158 pages)

Kathryn Tanner sees structural similarities between Christian theology and economics. Both circulate goods. Whereas God circulates the greatest good via a gift, capitalism circulates economic goods via competitive exchange. Her goal in this book is to challenge and change the current economic system of exchange with the vision and practice of an economy of grace.

One common strategy for dialoguing between economics and theology is to highlight common values between the two. Another is to show that religious beliefs can relativize the importance of economic matters by framing economic life in broader terms. Tanner finds that both of these approaches relate economics and theology only indirectly or inferentially. Instead, Tanner urges that we ask what the basic meaning of grace and of money is. Using the structural analysis of anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu, Tanner sees the two in the same analytic space as “goods.” The good in theology is salvation; in economics, wealth.

The search for grace is noncompetitive; for wealth, competitive. Grace is distributed indiscriminately by God regardless of our status. “The whole Christian story, from top to bottom, can be viewed as an account of the production of value and the distribution of goods, following this peculiar noncompetitive shape” (27).

For Tanner, private property rights as currently conceived in the West offer a clear contrast to an economy of grace. These rights, even when used within a Lockean format, yield exclusivity and obligation. God is seen as the principal owner who distributes goods to people who work for them. These people are then indebted to God. The same process then occurs between humans—what we own is distributed to others if they earn it; they are in turn indebted to us. Tanner sees this practice as antithetical to grace.

Tanner now focuses on the nature of gift. Some gifts, she notes, imply obligation on the part of the recipient. Others show off the social status of the giver. Undesirable or useless gifts can nevertheless be good, many believe, if the motivation of the giver is pure. Rejecting these views of gift, Tanner sees true gift as reflective of God’s own giving: a genuinely beneficial gift, provided without consideration of either prior performance or future return. With God, creation and salvation are both such gifts. In salvation, grace is not payment for the debt of sin but the cancellation of that debt. The debt of sin is forgiven, not paid. Christ is the singular model of the way in which God gives. We cannot repay God because God already has all that we might wish to give back.

Having shown that true grace is God’s method of distribution, Tanner argues that this implies that all have rights to God’s goods on the basis of their need. Property should not exclude others but invite all to enjoy what you do. Property should become part of a noncompetitive community that is dedicated to the growth and well-being of all its members. The Trinity illustrates this: It is possible to be individuals, have things in and of ourselves, and yet share all.

Such a view of economy, Tanner urges, needs to break into the current competitive and individualistic economic system. It seems apparent that dedication to the well-being of all is not the primary motivator in competitive capitalism. For example, the First World does not give gifts to the Third World; it makes loans to them with stringent guidelines for structural adjustments and repayment. Tanner sees the current system as self-destructive; market equilibrium will not bring about well-being for the poor. In fact, as is seen in the United States today, market-financial speculation, outsourcing,

and the resultant unemployment can bring about a “spiral of decline.” A competitive economy creates winners and losers. We need a win-win system.

An example of such a win-win system is that of public goods. With public goods, one individual does not lose at the expense of another’s gain. All benefit in such a non-competitive process. This is illustrative of an economy of grace—a noncompetitive system in which all seek the good of the whole. Those of us who benefit from the current system must seek to challenge it with this gracious economy.

Tanner provides a rich challenge to the theological and economic status quo. She does so, for the most part, from the perspective of radical orthodoxy, and perhaps narrative theology. From these perspectives, the Christian story of grace is opposed to all other aspects of secular society. There is an antithesis between the graced and the ungraced at social and personal levels. Herein, I believe, lies the largest problem with Tanner’s basic argument.

The problem is that Tanner insists that the *means* used by God to save must become the same means used everywhere else in society. It is certainly true that God saves us by grace. In fact, Tanner is at her best when she elucidates the nature of that grace. However, does the fact that God acted to save us by means of a gift require that all future transactions, either divine-human or human-human, must also have the nature of gift? The salvific gift was unique. In it, God once cancelled the debt that estranged the creatures from the Creator. It is conceivable (e.g., under other theories of atonement) that God could have used some other means to reconcile us. Tanner nevertheless, sees gift as the only way in which the divine economy operates. Further, making gift exchange is the only way Tanner seems to think that those who have received that grace may evidence that grace. I believe this is a bridge, if not a causeway, too far. Surely we are recipients of a gift that saves, but it does not follow that we must mimic the method of our salvation in all other exchanges. In particular, it is not apparent to me that all human-human exchanges must mimic the one divine-human salvific gift.

Tanner recognizes that she may be accused of naiveté. Well that she does. A community in which all seek the well-being of the other is not likely this side of Eden. The sin I well know in myself and society is far too potent to make Tanner’s community much more than a passing fad. I almost wonder whether Tanner would have been a Digger, Shaker, or Leveler in days gone by.

One avenue not taken by Tanner was the option that exchanges of grace should or could operate within church—the community of the graced. It is interesting that she did not pursue this direction, as others in the narrative and radical orthodox camps do.

Tanner also makes a relatively weak case for distribution of this world’s goods on the basis of need. I agree that such an argument can be made, but Tanner moves quite facilely from the premise that God is giver to the conclusion that human distribution ought to be directed by need.

Tanner is quite correct when she argues that the current system is not likely to help those at the lowest ranks of poverty. As she notes, they are simply at too great a disad-

vantage in a competitive system and are likely to continue to lose. Tanner has many recommendations for change, most of which are not new to those who read in this field.

Finally, a stylistic note: This is a tough read. Tanner's writing can be complex and confusing. If unacquainted with radical orthodoxy or narrative theology, her entire approach may be difficult to capture.

—Kent Van Til
Hope College, Holland, Michigan

The New Globalization: Reclaiming the Lost Ground of Our Christian Social Tradition

Richard W. Gillett

Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2005 (219 pages)

Richard Gillett, a retired Anglican priest and activist, writes out of the Episcopal social tradition, which ends up sounding much like an attempt to reformulate the social gospel to apply to the global economy. He attempts to cover much ground and does so at the risk of oversimplifying very complex issues. For example, he presents brief sketches, which he admits are not exhaustive, of the history of poverty, the evolution of work, Christian social commitment, and church involvement in the economic order. The call to apply Christian ethics to economics and the admonition to the church's social mission are well taken and help provide a necessary check on the corrosive aspects of individualism. He approaches the global economy from the view of the working poor and clearly wants the reader to identify with them. Toward the end of the book, he outlines strategies for advocacy for the working poor around the world.

The book is a bit disjointed, though the thesis of using Christian ethics to moderate the harmful effects of globalization is clear throughout the book. It relies heavily on anecdotal evidence that comes from the stories of the author's involvement in social ethics as a parish priest. It has many references to the 1960s and 1970s and turn-of-the-century (twentieth) social gospel literature. In addition, its focus on labor and unions makes it seem a bit out of date.

Gillett is coming to the subject of globalization with a clear agenda that is critical of the market system (the medieval guild seems to be his ideal for work). He leaves the reader with the impression that there is no debate over the merits of globalization (for example, the work of unabashed globalization advocate Thomas Friedman is dismissed in a couple of paragraphs). In my judgment, he is overly market skeptical. He seems to have little appreciation for how the market has lifted masses out of poverty all over the world where it has been tried. He is also overly critical of the classic liberal tradition that emerged out of the Reformation. Though he is right to point out the corrosive effects of individualism, there is no sense of the other contributions of the Reformers to the explosion of economic growth and prosperity that followed the break from the static social order of the middle ages. Though he never comes out and admits it, he seems to