

The Political Dialogue of Nature and Grace: Toward a Phenomenology of Chaste Anarchism. By Caitlin Smith Gilson. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015. xviii + 306 pages. \$120.00.

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This book is intended as a defense of Christian philosophy. Through four long and quite dense chapters, Gilson maintains that Christ is the solution to the aporias of metaphysics as well as the only hope for humanity (unrelentingly referred to as “man” throughout this text!) and so for society.

The first two chapters were of most interest to this reader. Gilson begins by engaging classical Greek philosophy and the thought of Thomas Aquinas to support her rejection of a “pure nature” and to develop her contention that the aporias recognized especially by Aristotle are productively resolved by Christ—and only by Christ. To the extent that there is genuine argument in this book, it appears in this first chapter’s efforts to show that Aquinas’ Christian faith resolves and completes the thought of Aristotle.

The second chapter introduces the concept of chaste anarchism through an exploration of *The Mighty Magician*, a play by seventeenth-century Spanish playwright Pedro Calderón de la Barca. Gilson provides no clear definition of what she means by chaste anarchism; indeed, her approach throughout this book favors descriptive assertions rather than argumentative precision. Nevertheless, it seems fairly clear that what Gilson has in mind is the graced personal regeneration into the image of Christ that exceeds any laws or patterns. More simply put, this would be the love beyond justice that (as Reinhold Niebuhr argued so well) is essential to justice.

A reader might expect the third and fourth chapters to develop the political implications promised in the title and hinted at throughout the book. In fact, the engagement remains focused on the functioning of metaphysics, with some general claims about the importance of this Christian philosophy for society. The third chapter unfolds as a rejection of Hegel on the grounds that the goal of human life and desire appears in history nonchronologically and by grace. For this reason, while Gilson advocates chaste anarchism as the Christian alternative to both progressivism and conservatism, she most forcefully rejects progressivism. In her view, conservatism at least manages to recognize that human desire is not to be fulfilled in history. Besides, Gilson would have us revere tradition, since it forms people in awareness of grace. And so she dedicates her fourth chapter to a retrieval of the thinking of Lev Shestov as the basis for a metaphysics open to revelation.

The strength of this book is its affirmation of some key (and one would hope common) theological points: there is no ungraced or pure nature;

human nature is oriented to and fulfilled (only) in a graced communion with the divine; and social progress will never achieve full justice or satisfy the human desire for transcendence. To the extent that there is a need to defend these positions as central to Christian thought, Gilson has made a worthwhile contribution.

There is also, at least in places, some compelling beauty in Gilson's descriptions of grace reforming the fallen human into the body of Christ. This will be most helpful to those who are content with a perspective that persuades through descriptive power or, perhaps more in tune with our contemporary age, provides a confident defense of what one already believes.

This reader has major reservations about a project that makes such strong claims about the failure of any non-Christian civilization on the basis of an entirely Western-centric approach. The triumphalist Christian universalism here begs for some awareness of the parochial base on which it is built.

Moreover, for a project that intends to be political, this book takes a decidedly individualistic approach. The focus on personal rejuvenation comes at the expense of a more subtle—and more traditional—recognition that personal, communal, and institutional reform are mutually implicated. Gilson's chaste anarchism would undermine the nuanced tradition of Christian social thought, while remaining (willfully?) blind to the outrageous injustices that can be remedied without falling into the errors of a fully immanent hope.

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Kierkegaard and the Paradox of Religious Diversity. By George B. Connell. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016. xiii + 188 pages. \$30.00 (paper).
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Søren Kierkegaard lived in a small, religiously homogeneous country. In an age when Romantics on both sides of the Atlantic were exploring non-Western religions, Kierkegaard focused intently on "Christendom," the union of nominal Christianity with bourgeois culture and political power. He exhibited little interest in religious diversity. For him, Europe's Christians had lost their passion—a problem that couldn't be solved by reading the Bhagavad Gita.

Now, Kierkegaard's native Denmark faces a different challenge. Most Danes are dragged to church only over their dead bodies, as weekly church attendance is minimal, but 83 percent of the country's deceased have Lutheran funerals. Meanwhile, religious minorities are growing more