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REVIEW

Christ, the Logos of Creation: An Essay in Analogical Metaphysics by John R. Betz, Emmaus Academic, Steubenville Ohio, 2023, 556 pages, hardcover, £49,32, ISBN: 978-1-945125-13-3

In his enlightening work, John Betz accomplishes a dual feat, skillfully emphasizing the profound ideas of Erich Przywara and their pivotal role in shaping Catholic theology during the 20th century, while concurrently executing a rich and constructive application of these foundational concepts. The book not only serves as a tribute to Przywara's intellectual legacy but also emerges as a compelling testament to Betz's ability continually to apply the ideas fruitfully, offering a fresh and insightful perspective on the intersections of metaphysics, theology, and the enduring relevance of Christ as the Logos of creation.

In part I, the book sets out to dispel false conceptions about analogy, specifically invalidating Barth's critique; in part II, Betz expounds on analogical metaphysics, to argue how that type of metaphysics is most apt in explaining Christian doctrine, and even how it serves as connective tissue that helps elucidate how the different Christian doctrines related to one another. In part III, the author sets out to apply analogy to some disputed questions (the list is not exhaustive), i.e., the relation of nature and grace (with specific attention to the debate between neo-Thomism and *Nouvelle theologie*), and a question in Trinitarian theology, the much debated *kenosis* originating in Hans-Urs von Balthasar, and how to integrate it more flawlessly into Catholic doctrine by the aid of Przywara's *analogia*-method. In part IV, which can be further subdivided into three section, Betz sets out to explain how analogical metaphysics serves Trinitarian theology, Christology, and anthropology, respectively, all culminating in the title given topic, how Christ is the Logos and Analogy of creation.

In delving into the profound implications of the term 'logos', Betz underscores the tendency to exclusively associate Christ with the Father's Word, neglecting his role as the Word of creation, encompassing its essence, foundation, pattern, goal, and inherent purpose (xvii). The concept of analogy, explored in its manifold meaning, rejects a univocal interpretation, opting instead to reveal the complementary nature of its various senses within a genuinely Catholic *analogia entis*, allowing for a harmonious interplay (xviii).

Throughout the book, Przywara emerges as a theological beacon, challenging the anti-metaphysical stance prevalent since Kant, as advocated by Heidegger and contemporaries such as Jean-Luc Marion (xxi). Betz's application of the *analogia entis* doctrine extends beyond theological discourse, offering a comprehensive lens through which Trinitarian theology, Christology, and anthropology are interconnected, elevating philosophical metaphysics into an 'ana-theo-logical' metaphysics, ultimately subsumed into a Christological metaphysics that takes precedence even over analogical metaphysics (xxiii).

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Commencing with a perceptive exploration of the standard translation of the term 'logos' and its associated pros and cons, the opening chapter navigates the comprehensive significance of the word, pointing towards a Trinitarian foundation of creation. In establishing that the *logos* serves as the manner in which the Father exists, it analogically mirrors the essence of our existence and trajectory toward our ultimate destiny. This assertion implies that Christ is not merely one avenue of being but, in fact, the fundamental Way to be (7). Betz contends that the *Denkform*, or form of thought, intrinsic to analogy extends far beyond Catholic doctrine, tracing its roots back to the pre-Socratics. The section in question provides a historical trajectory of the term 'logos' from Heraclitus to Przywara, underscoring its enduring significance (63 ff.). Furthermore, Betz elucidates the intrinsic connection between *analogia entis* and *analogia fidei*, emphasizing the proper understanding of Rom 12:6.

The exploration of Barth's criticism of analogy proves to be one of the most valuable and enlightening sections, as the author skillfully presents arguments both against and in favor of analogy. Barth's primary concern centers on the notion that any knowledge about God originating from nature rather than revelation raises a fundamental issue, as he contends that human nature is inherently 'self-relating' to God, even before the intervention of grace. Barth's critique hinges on the perceived risk of establishing a continuum between God and creation at the level of nature (90). In response, Betz aligns with Przywara on five key points: (1) emphasizing that creation itself stems from an 'incomprehensible, unmerited divine giving'; (2) discrediting attempts to reduce creation to a mere 'given' or '*datum*' as a misunderstanding of creaturehood; (3) asserting that the analogy of creation is precisely that – an analogy and therefore an unstable likeness; (4) clarifying that similitude does not imply 'continuity'; and (5) highlighting, within the Catholic theological framework, the compatibility of God's more intimate self-relating through grace with God's self-revelation in nature, rejecting the notion of competition between the two (90–91).

Following the establishment of the preliminary theological framework, Betz navigates specific theological issues, notably addressing the role of analogical metaphysics within Augustinian and Thomistic methods. He adeptly avoids the pitfalls of fideism and rationalism, advocating for a balanced approach that acknowledges the strengths of both methodologies without succumbing to extremes (202). Applying this nuanced method to the realm of Christology; Betz claims to reconcile the potential collapsing of differences in the approaches of Chalcedon and Maximus the Confessor. Instead, he proposes a 'union-in-difference' that allows for human 'deification' through an analogous union-in-difference, emphasizing the ever-greater love of God for creation (229). Betz also engages with the contentious question of Trinitarian Theology, particularly the concept of *Urkenosis*. Addressing Thomist opposition, he skillfully navigates the criticisms of inner Trinitarian kenosis, (a feature of Balthasar's theology that most eminently demonstrates the Hegelian legacy). Betz proposes a stance that aligns Aquinas's teachings on divine power and simplicity with Balthasar's emendations, suggesting that Thomas's own theology prompts a careful consideration of Balthasar's conclusion – that the Almighty, in accepting the economy of salvation, embodies humility.

Zooming in on the nuanced exploration of humility, particularly within Aquinas's framework and its relevance to the essence of God, Betz grapples with the seeming irreconcilability between Thomas and Balthasar. Acknowledging the depth of the theological divide, Betz asserts that the Catholic Church can accommodate both

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perspectives, emphasizing the richness of theology beyond reduction to either theologian. Viewing Przywara as a mediator between Thomas and Balthasar (being a student of the former and teacher of the latter), Betz draws on Przywara's analogy to distinguish two types of humility in Christ and unifying them within a broader vision (400–401). While Betz does not explicitly delve into the demonstration of how humility, as the central element of the nature of God, must lead to Balthasar's kenosis-speculation, he beautifully highlights the theologians' shared endeavor to reconcile God's transcendence and immanence. Betz's treatment is always careful and never seems to under- or over-value either position. He also avoids unnecessary polemics.

Betz posits analogy as a *Denkfigur*, a figure-of-thought, serving as the transcendental condition for contemplating Christian doctrine, especially in view of the enemies of metaphysics (Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger). Unlike an axiom, analogy emerges at the conclusion of theological or philosophical investigations. It is presented as the optimal tool for reconciling seemingly exclusive or even contradictory elements within Christian doctrine, preventing the slide into heresy when terms are overemphasized. The overarching theological journey guided by analogy leads to Christ, intertwining the nature of God, the Son of God, and creation in the 'circle of analogy'. A proper metaphysics paves the way for a fitting Christology, subsequently informing a proper anthropology. Christology, Betz argues, relies on an 'analogical unity-in-difference between God and creation', exemplified in the hypostatic union of God and creation in Christ. This union of opposites avoids an irreconcilable 'chimerical combination of dialectical antitheses' (440–441).

John Betz orchestrates a profound journey into the theological and metaphysical dimensions of Christ as the eternal Word and underscores his pivotal role as the Logos of creation. Consequently, his work not only advocates for the relevance of analogical metaphysics in navigating contemporary theological and philosophical challenges, but also aims to transcend specific denominational boundaries, resonating with Christian readers in general. Betz's compelling argument serves as a beacon, urging a reevaluation of the enduring importance of analogy in theological discourse, a clarion call for a nuanced and enriched understanding of the Christian faith in the 21st century and beyond.

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