



# **Analogies of Transcendence: An Essay on Nature, Grace, and Modernity**

*Stephen M Fields SJ*

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# Analogies of Transcendence: An Essay on Nature, Grace, and Modernity

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The problem of nature and grace lies at the heart of Christian theology. No dimension of divine revelation can be addressed without implicitly drawing reference to this issue. *Analogies of Transcendence* focuses on the central role that the analogies of being and faith play in developing a solution to the problem. These link God, as self-manifesting transcendence, to the human person as both fallen and justified, and to the material cosmos. Although the proposed solution draws on the work of Maréchal, de Lubac, Balthasar, and Rahner, it criticizes their approach for its underdeveloped analogies that diminish nature in grace's engagement with it. In redressing this weakness, Fr. Fields adapts its solution to the intellectual struggle of our time. This volume examines the origins and structure of modernity, which, it asserts, has not been superseded and is therefore critical of 'postmodernism,' as well as of some ambiguous legacies of Thomism.

The first part of *Analogies of Transcendence* probes selected understandings of nature and grace since Aquinas. These yield clues for a viable model, while also manifesting the deficiency of the theory of 'pure nature,' which contributes to fideism and secularism. More clues emerge in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including Vatican II and recent papal thought. The second part of the book constructs the model on the basis of the clues. It conceives the orders of 'creation' and 'redemption' as a continuum, and it develops a theology of nature. The third part then applies the model to other problems. These include reimagining the role of Christian art, revising the Thomist doctrine of God, and defending Christianity's unique claim in relation to other religions.

Throughout, this argument, both historical and systemic, enters the dialogue with the tradition, from the Fathers, to Augustine and the medieval, to Trent and the Baroque. *Analogies of Transcendence* also brings into sympathetic conversation the two often estranged titans of contemporary Catholicism, Balthasar and Rahner.

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