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How to Understand Carl Schmitt?

Book Review: Adam Wielomski, *W poszukiwaniu Katechona: Teologia polityczna Carla Schmitta*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Von Borowiecky 2016 (pp. 472).

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At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, German *Weltanschauung* was dis-theologized, engulfed in nihilism and relativism. Religion ceased affecting science and became the object of research on the influence of religious issues on past social, political, and legal theories. It was neither proper time nor place to Carl Schmitt to be a theologian dealing with politics, but a jurist interested in how theology shaped political and legal doctrines found his niche then. The volume describes Schmittian political theology to demonstrate that the katechon is the core of his non-Catholic conservatism cleverly styled as Catholic.

The first part of the book critically scrutinizes substantive literature on political theology. Wielomski accurately detects flaws in the current studies on the roots of Schmitt's theoretical framework, e.g. the would-be role of Mikhail Bakunin. The author plausibly resists the depreciation of political theology which consists in using the term to name relations between politics and religion and broadening its meaning. As Wielomski maintains, political theology is when we can observe an impact of theological ideas on legal and state structural concepts, that is, when we can point out analogies between theology and the study of the state (p. 61). Nevertheless, according to the very nature of "an impact," a subject may be unaware of having it on anything. Whereas the definition extends the semantic field of political theology, the author narrows its scope after there by claiming that an ideological character of conception does not typify political theology (p. 73). Though Wielomski contends that political religion cannot be political theology, its types, such as modern political

gnosis, meet the defining criteria for political theology due to the signification of “an impact.”

The second part concentrates on Schmitt's first political theology and ecclesiology from the first half of the 1920s. It introduces the theory of Schmitt's political ecclesiology which embraces six dyads of the ecclesiological and the post-secularization legal and political theses: (i) the universal church and the sovereign modern state, (ii) the omnipotent Roman Catholic bishop that represents the almighty God and the sovereign state with the absolute sovereign that represents the God, (iii) the visible Christ represented by the pope and the visible state represented by the sovereign, (iv) the invisible Protestant Church and the liberal state being “night watchman,” (v) the primacy of the people in puritanical ecclesiology and the counter-current theory of liberal law, and (vi) the Calvinist individualism and capitalism and the liberal and democratic republic (p. 259). Wielomski contributes to the field by defining and applying to the analysis the category of political ecclesiology. The phenomenon is the emergence of analogies between ecclesiological, legal, and political notions. It appears when the ideas originally canonical occur chronologically as the first and the occurrence, as a result of laicization and reception to the states' legal thought, is followed by legal and political terminology characteristic of the modern state. The author uses the category to identify the analogies between the chronologically first totality of theological and ecclesiological notions and the legal narration employed to describe the newly-arising modern nation states.

The third part addresses Schmitt's second political theology dating back to 1945–1951. Wielomski argues that the analogy between St. Paul's *Katechon* that protects the world from the Antichrist and the political *katechon* that safeguards the world against the revolution is the essence of Schmitt's political theology. If the instituted power defends any firm order, it is of *katechonic* nature regardless of its genesis, moral character, and methods of political combat. The *katechon* has conservative content, refers to non-rational legitimation, mounts space, guarantees the maintenance of politics, and thus embodies the features fascinating to Schmitt.

The volume makes a considerable contribution to the growing body of work on Schmitt by fortifying its conceptual framework with political ecclesiology and providing the first comprehensive discussion on the *katechon* in political theology. If Wielomski had introduced the research process, including methodological assumptions such as the criteria for the sources selection, the less experienced researchers would have substantially benefited from studying his research design.

References:

Wielomski, A. (2016). *W poszukiwaniu Katechona: Teologia polityczna Carla Schmitta*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Von Borowiecky.

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