

God can move the will to choose for itself. That Matava is not suggests that whatever the merits of this fine book the view Matava puts forward is not that of Aquinas.

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**THEOLOGICAL RADICALISM AND TRADITION: 'THE LIMITS OF RADICALISM' WITH APPENDICES** by Howard E. Root, edited by Christopher R. Brewer, *Routledge*, London and New York, 2018, pp. xii + 165, £105.00, hbk

In 1972, the Oxford Bampton lectures were delivered by Howard E Root, then Professor of Theology at Southampton University. Under the terms of the Bampton bequest, lecturers are required to publish their material, but Root, who died in 2007, omitted to do so. The present volume finally makes the lectures available, and reading them at this historical distance inevitably inspires a certain frustration over what might have been, had they been in the public domain earlier. More positively, there may be something happily providential about their appearing now.

The lectures were given the intriguingly provocative title, the 'limits of radicalism', a notion which, for Root's original audience, will doubtless have drawn particular piquancy from the lecturer's own radical credentials developed during the previous decade. It has proved an enduring temptation to read these credentials in a somewhat superficially unilateral sense, in terms simply of an obdurate deafness to tradition, and it is a major and praiseworthy concern of his editor to set the record straight. This is clearly an act of justice to Root, which also enables a distinctive and valuable voice to be heard afresh in contemporary dialogue on the nature of theology.

Root was one of the instigators of, and a major contributor to, the symposium of Anglican theologians whose proceedings were published in 1963 as *Soundings*, under the editorship of Alec Vidler, then Dean of King's College, Cambridge, and identified, surely plausibly, in the introduction to the present work as 'probably the most influential volume of essays in British post-war Christianity'. That this influence, however, may on occasions have been in some degree of tension with the essayists's own academic and apologetic intentions is suggested forcefully by Root's pre-occupations in the Oxford lecture series, which, as Christopher Brewer makes clear in his wide-ranging and helpful introductory essay, represent not a volte-face from, but an organic development of, his earlier work.

Brewer shows how, for instance, in his contribution to *Soundings*, Root envisages not a dismantling but a reinvigoration of natural theology, and thus not a repudiation, but an admittedly significant reconfiguration of the conventional systematic theological map. The impetus thus to 'begin all over again' lies not in a desire to capitulate to some putative set of

epistemological canons derived uncritically from secular modernity and thus of at least dubious authority for Christian theology. Rather, Root is reacting here with a certain scepticism towards the specific, currently somewhat modish, neo-orthodox tendency to disdain the deliverances of human reason *per se*, itself a highly eccentric position, of course, vis-à-vis many more venerable statements of the nature of the theological task within Root's own Anglican communion as elsewhere. Root thus shows himself to be truly radical, perhaps, in the etymological sense of a will-*ingness* to return, albeit critically, to the roots of methodological practice, but scarcely in the more colloquial neophilic one (a paradox to which he draws attention in the course of his own exploration of the nature of tradition). What is newly required is a re-examination of the scope of natural theology which, for Root, centrally invites reflection on the arts as theological resource, a point which he notes repeatedly in the Bampton lectures, and which shows him, suggestively, prefiguring certain contemporary emphases on the role of aesthetic categories in theology.

Root's exploration of the relationship – symbiotic, he considers, rather than parasitic or simply oppositional – between tradition and radicalism as the latter is more conventionally conceived has lost nothing of its force since the lectures were delivered. Similarly, his treatment of the non-univocity of doctrinal statements, revealing striking points of connection between the hermeneutical presuppositions of those who would conventionally be labelled dichotomously as 'progressive and conservative' (or, indeed 'radical and traditional'), is of enduring significance. So, too, surely, is his suggestive evaluation of the celebrated question posed by Leonard Hodgson to theologians and biblical scholars at once convinced of, and perplexed by, the ineradicably historical character of Christianity: what must the truth be, and have been, if it appeared like that to men who thought and wrote as they did? To be assured that this question is strictly unanswerable, and that a proper sense of historical responsibility does not require us to 'spend most of our time trying to re-create within ourselves, a whole mentality foreign to our time' is not, of course, to foreclose the question of the possibility of genuinely diachronic theological conversation. Rather, it is to underline the urgency of continuing to ask what this might in practice mean.

A significant factor in Root's theological development is, as Brewer points out, his ecumenical commitment. An observer at two sessions of Vatican II, Root had, when he delivered the Bampton lectures, been for two years a participant in the first phase of the ARCIC dialogue. It would be interesting to know, therefore, whether his relatively muted treatment here of the notion of authority in theology was dictated at least in part by a tactful reticence about stressing what divides rather than what unites. It certainly should not be held against Root that he fails to provide a comprehensive answer to the issue of how far one might look to ecclesial agencies for guidance in doctrinal decision making. But it is certainly striking that he barely raises the question.

The retrieval of Root's 1972 Bampton lectures is perhaps in itself best seen as a small but significant exercise in Anglican *ressourcement*, and Brewer is to be congratulated on the meticulous way in which he has accomplished it. The inclusion in this volume of Root's 1967 Southampton Inaugural lecture, in which many of the same themes are rehearsed proleptically, and which would make a fine addition to an introductory reading list on fundamental theology, is particularly welcome. These are texts that deserve a far wider audience than that of specialists in the history of late 20<sup>th</sup>-century Anglophone academic theology, though they in particular will find much here to applaud.

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