

theology and fact, the world of faith that is given before the knowledge of events.

Now, recently this distinction has been hotly debated among Bible scholars, especially since Eichrodt's and Von Rad's became the two leading and contrasting Theologies of the Old Testament. It is an ideal topic for a thesis, which D. G. Spriggs now presents to the public. To indulge in speculation while writing a thesis is asking for trouble, and Spriggs therefore wisely stays with the actual citations from the two Theologies and the comments made by others.

For Eichrodt the seed of Israel's religion was planted when Yahweh revealed himself to Moses on Mount Sinai. From there it grew, although during this process it was expressed in various ways, depending on historical situations and Israel's temptation to syncretism, the lures of Canaanite religion. Israel's faith stems from the Mosaic Covenant, sealed in the remoteness of the desert, and this is the one and only source from which Eichrodt evaluates and unifies the various expressions of Yahwism. Spriggs points out that the concept 'covenant' itself is not so important, in spite of the prominence given to it by Eichrodt, for it functions merely as a 'cipher' signifying Israel's unique relationship with God. Thus Eichrodt's approach cannot be criticised on the grounds that he has a wrong or limited understanding of Covenant, and it is not impossible to integrate the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants in his version of the Mosaic one. In this way Spriggs seems to underline that the basis of Israel's faith can be detached from its history.

Von Rad, on the other hand, wants to break with this kind of theology that would have its source in a direct divine communication from above. The OT is in the first place an interpretation and proclamation of Israel's history as redemption. Spriggs acknowledges the freshness of this approach, but is nevertheless not very impressed by it as he feels Von Rad fails to bring clarity into what exactly is meant by Salvation History. Not only is the idea of *Heils-*

*geschichte* a confused one (or more kindly put, 'Von Rad is a poet'); it also cannot be applied to many parts of the OT, for which an Eichrodt-like approach is needed. Now, this seems to me a rather inconsistent criticism, for if the vision is not clear how can we decide whether or not it is complete? Comparing detailed topics in the two works Spriggs reaches the conclusion that they have more in common than Von Rad cares to admit, but this is probably because he finds Eichrodt easier to understand.

After these two volumes we may relax with a more lightweight Theology of the Old Testament, presented by McKenzie, who says more or less openly that he wrote the book only because many years ago, in an unguarded moment, he had signed a contract to this effect with the publishers. This rather prosaic motivation has something to recommend itself, for although the principles behind OT Theology are important, they should perhaps emerge from the work in progress and be discussed as it proceeds, instead of forming some metaphysical basis on which the whole edifice is constructed. McKenzie is particularly anxious not to be bound by any epistemological doctrines before the work has begun. Of course he is a Christian who inevitably will ask the questions from within the perspective of his faith, but that does not mean that this perspective has to be the determining factor in OT Theology. On the contrary, the theologian tries to decide what answers are given by Israelites to the questions he is asking. Although the NT sees itself as the fulfilment of the OT this does not mean that, looking from within the OT, the Christian faith lies necessarily within that perspective.

However, McKenzie is perhaps a little too willing to accept the gap between himself and the Israelite consciousness, and instead of imaginatively re-creating the beliefs and institutions of the OT he writes about them as a journalist reporting on some far-away community, virtually inaccessible to present-day understanding.

ROB VAN DER HART OP

**THEOLOGY IN AN INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY**, by Margaret Kane. *SCM Press*, London, 1975. 151 pp. Paperback. £1.95.

We have grown accustomed to theology as a discipline in which academics, mostly clerical, reflect on their own experience. This has removed

theology far from the normal experience of industrial society—far, that is, from reflecting on the experience of the majority of people in our society. At

the same time, and not wholly unconnected with this, a fairly sharp division has developed for many Christians between their Christian life and their secular life. If one takes someone's concern for church duties, family and neighbourhood and their participation in economic and political life as a kind of continuum, then the concern of the Church is often supposed to stop at neighbourhood responsibilities, if not sooner.

As theological consultant to the Bishop of Durham, Margaret Kane is acutely aware of this. The north-east is a predominantly working class area traditionally relying on heavy industry (now in decline). It is an area too where the main churches (Methodist, Catholic, Anglican) are trapped by the not particularly adequate responses they made to past situations.

What she wants in this situation is a shift of the Church's centre of interest from itself to the world and a corresponding 'revolution of the laity'. Since God makes himself known in other people and ordinary events (but especially in the 'disturbances of life') then theology is in principle the concern of everyone and should learn from all kinds of experience. This means that it is a joint activity and the experience is primarily lay experience. Just so; the Church's prophetic mission to the world should be primarily exercised by lay people.

So far so good. But the aim of the book is to put all this together and make something of it. Margaret Kane is however having it both ways and the result is rather confusing—there is a way of talking in which everything is mentioned but it is not particularly clear what is to be considered significant.

For instance, she mentions class and power but, since she eschews such questions as who has the power and for whose benefit it is exercised, it is unclear what place they have in her thinking. The kind of analysis here ('Technology and industry are shaping the lives of us all') leaves it uncertain whether we are to take technology and industry as having lives of their own or as things we might control. Similarly parishes seem to appear both as structures of the past which are no longer useful and at the same time as structures which should be revived through liturgy, parish councils and so on. Again, when we are told of trade union leaders, iron workers, managers who get promotion and (almost in passing) of one courageous manager who lost his

job for consulting the men, no particular side is taken.

This is the problem for industrial chaplains, the Bishop of Durham, his theological consultant and the rest of us—you can't be all things to all men in any simple sense. A deeper analysis is required and the Christian perspective points to particular options. You can't get away with the cliché that prophecy means concern for the world. It has to be concern for a particular kind of world.

There is confusion too about how theology works. The Christian contribution to (say) dealing with unemployment must surely be measured by human standards. Margaret Kane refers to a group of experts who met for two days to discuss the 'economic and technological' issues of the region. 'I was a member of this consultation and I could see that there was a job here for a theologian'. But was there? Surely only in the sense that Christians might be expected to have a particular stance on human affairs, a populist approach, a long-term view and so on.

Perhaps the most interesting statement in the book is the author's finding that people do want to reflect on their dilemmas in the light of the gospel and in their own language. But what are they producing? If people are discovering new ways of understanding and speaking of God, what are they? We are not told. Admittedly it will be very difficult for the professionals to discover how non-professionals see their Christianity and how they see it being of use in the future. But surely the point of the author's theological approach is to deliver these insights. Maybe her project has not yet developed that far. Or maybe, again, there is too much emphasis here on the 'resource people' and what they have to offer, and not enough on the Christians actually in industrial situations.

If pointing all this out seems critical, this is partly a product of our situation. The churches, stirred by no challenge other than the internal one of falling numbers, may well have to go through a long period of muddle and confusion. The usefulness of this book is to make it quite clear we must start with people on the ground and at least Margaret Kane has a programme which she has started on. The various discussion and study groups she describes in some detail will be one of the ways of beginning to discover what form Christianity in this country will take.

ANTHONY ARCHER OP