

biblical theology—to the theologian properly speaking, who should be aware of how texts are associated in Hebrew liturgical tradition. Thus the Haphtarah Bereshith (Genesis 1–6 with Isaias 42, 5 to 43, 10) gives us the theme of God's creational activity. Theophany is the theme of Exodus 18–20 with Isaias 6–7, 6 and 8, 5, 6; this last culminates in a Messianism clear to the Christian, 'for a child is born unto us'. Such 'themes' serve to bring out the riches of the deposit of faith.

ROLAND POTTER, O.P.

THE WEST EUROPEAN CITY. By Robert E. Dickinson. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; £2 2s.)

If one may hold with Mr Bentley that biography is about chaps, geography today is about much more than maps, and it is the special value of Dr Dickinson's interpretation of the common features of the cities of Western Europe that it is based on the morphological approach. The geographer's great temptation is to treat a city merely in terms of dead patterns and as a mass of materials, but he remembers that it is a living organism in space and time which must be considered in its four chief functions as a place of habitation, work, recreation and transport. This method makes geography much more interesting, and though the author lacks Mr Mumford's captivating style, he has produced a useful work of reference not only for the student of geography, but also for the historian, the economist and modern planner.

The book is divided into two parts. Part I studies a number of towns in Central Sweden and Switzerland, and—in greater detail—the processes and character of urban growth in the historic small towns of France and Germany. Then follows a chapter on the medium-sized city—Basel, and a series of studies of Brussels, Amsterdam, Vienna, Budapest, Paris and Berlin. Part II deals in a comparative manner with the functions and organisation of West European towns in the light of their economic and social history and concludes with some aspects of modern urbanism.

The author traces three historic phases in urban development: the first and formative period around the year A.D. 1000 was marked by the appearance of a compact settlement with its focus in church, castle or market place. The cathedral cities of the Midi are contrasted with the essentially burgesses' cities of Flanders and Picardy, dominated by the trading element. In western Germany bishoprics were founded on the sites of Roman *castra* or Saxon *oppida*. The development of planned forms took place first in Eastern Germany, the main zone of German colonisation in the thirteenth century, with primary concern for secular buildings and defence works for self-governing communities. On the continent all urban settlements were walled towns; in England

the wall was confined to a few of the larger towns and soon fell into disuse, while the continental characteristics were more often retained in Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Changes in siege warfare by gunpowder and artillery were responsible for the conversion of the old towns in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. This was the time of beginning congestion, and Dr Dickinson corrects the widespread fallacy that medieval towns were lacking in open spaces. In fact the medieval towns contained a considerable agricultural element. In Poitiers, for instance, each house—and medieval houses were mostly one-family houses—had its orchard. The second or Industrial phase of urban expansion is marked by the greatest increases in population the Western world has experienced, and, above all, by the great concentration of people in towns on the advent of the railway and the steam engine during the nineteenth century. The third phase is the post-1919 period marked by the addition of the internal combustion engine.

Every continental city thus reveals a crust-like growth from its medieval centre, through Renaissance and Baroque extensions, expansions in the nineteenth century to the inter-war period of the twentieth; the last two phases being characteristic—in Professor Tout's words—of 'few builders of towns, but an infinite number of builders of individual houses and streets'. Dr Dickinson himself recognises that much of what he has written in 1939 is already past history, for only very few of the historic cities he describes have been spared by the bombs of the last war, but the reconstruction of these cities will have to be based on the existing pattern and its origins. The problem which the modern planner has to solve is how urban life, divorced as it is from soil and country, can be made dignified by satisfying elementary human needs of air, light, space and the requirements of modern social services. That town and regional planning should learn from the geographer, and that it must be constructive rather than permissive, as in the last fifty years, merely excluding industry from certain areas, confining it to others and separating residential from obnoxious non-residential uses, is, perhaps, the most important conclusion of a work well supplied with illustrations and diagrams, and an extensive bibliography.

ROLAND HILL

ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL ORGANISATION. By Raymond Firth. (Watts; 18s.)

Professor Raymond Firth in these lectures given in the University of Birmingham, the first of a series founded by the Rationalist Press Association, sets out to give, as the title of his book informs us, the elements of social organisation. As an anthropologist with field experience in the Pacific, he uses observations made on the material he collected there as the basis of an analysis of the factors which go to make up human society.