

In the recent past, and indeed in the remote past, much has depended on the presence of the village parson or priest, who has been a central figure, able to transcend the various village groups. As great as any change which has occurred during the past few decades has been the virtual exit of the local parson. In the 'golden age' of village life at the turn of the century, there were 25,000 Anglican clergy in England. Today there are just over 11,000. Country parishes have suffered far more from this general decline than have urban ones. Now on a Sunday, a priest rushes by car from one service to another, arriving just in time for the service and leaving during the last hymn so that he can conduct worship in four or five or more contiguous parishes. He is no longer the *persona* of the village and the village is the poorer for it. Team ministries, grouped parishes and other solutions have very limited merit. Russell does not take, however, a pessimistic position that the rural church, once the heart-land of the Church of England, will be dead within a generation. Admittedly, it has undergone radical changes but he sees new life emerging in what some might view as being of doubtful theological value, such as a general support for the upkeep of the church building. He tends to be pragmatic and does not advocate one particular solution to the problem but supports all which appear to work.

For any servant of God, be he or she Anglican, Free Church or Catholic, lay or ordained, who is working in rural England, Russell's book is to be strongly recommended. Full of rich historical and sociological facts and insights, it is likely to endure far longer than any official report of church life in the countryside or indeed the inner city.

W.S.F. PICKERING

**THE MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY** by Edmund Hill. *Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1965.*  
pp. 193. £8.95.

The author declares his intention to demonstrate the 'moorings' of the doctrine of the Trinity in common and basic christian experience; and he describes this basic experience as receiving revelation from God. Some might be led to think of Schillebeeckx and other modern makers of christian doctrine, and to expect that contemporary experience of Jesus' real presence as the focus of God's own continuing power and presence in this world will be made the source of a more accessible (and intelligible) account of God as Trinity than traditional formulae and theologies seem to have managed to provide. But the reader is quickly told that this common and basic experience of receiving revelation from God need not be an immediate one, and the realisation slowly dawns that the road to a modern recovery of the christian awareness of God as Trinity is the very long and tortuous one through ancient theologies, controversies and formulae, to their alleged Scriptural supports and their medieval and modern elaborations. For the revelation received from God is now to be thought of as the revelation received by the first followers of Jesus (or by the Hebrew prophets), and preserved in their own interpretations of it by the authors of Scripture; and although Fr. Hill clearly believes that what he is describing in the rest of the book is merely a developing understanding of this Scriptural material, others have recently concluded that the kind of thing he is doing here is really *eisegesis*, reading into Scripture ideas of three 'persons' in one God, constructs of later theologies of which Scripture is in fact innocent. Whatever the rights and wrongs of this difference of view may be, the way in which the author 'proves' the Trinity, by assembling New Testament texts to show that Father, Son, and Spirit are (a) divine, (b) distinct, (c) a unity, does not differ much from scholastic text-books of the fifties and somehow clashes with the promise of the series to which the book belongs of a thorough investigation of Scripture and of our history and fresh guidelines for studying and reflecting upon the christian message (those words from the Foreword by the general editor of the series). Hence many college and university students, for whom this series is intended, will find much in the author's approach which is out of joint with the modern exegetical and historical methods they may also meet in the

course of their studies.

But if one were to begin with the assumption that 5th century Trinitarian doctrine was itself what needed to be recovered and explained for our time, then Fr. Hill's book is a fine example of relatively uncritical appropriation of a central piece of traditional theology and of the doctrine in which it was then distilled. Hence the bulk of the book, following the chapters on Scripture and a brief account of Arius and his predecessors, is devoted to Augustine's *De Trinitate*, surely the most impressive piece of systematic theology to survive from the 5th century, and one of the most influential books in the long history of Western theology. I am not at all sure that many college or university students, other than those studying for a B.D. or for a church ministry, could be expected to follow the logical intricacies of Augustine's thought on relational predication or the psychological subtleties of his ancient views of our mental faculties. And I confess I was quite taken-aback at the suggestion, implicit in the very structure of the book, that such material might somehow find expression in catechisms, even 'adult' catechisms. For at the end of the book, where one might expect some account of modern theologies of the Trinity—and of these there is no mention—all the talk is of catechisms.

The Foreword by the general editor also promises that the books in the series will draw upon the contribution to the knowledge of God made by other religions. It is particularly important for students of theology to-day to be aware both of the powerful objections which Jews and Muslims, out of their knowledge of God, make to our Trinity, and equally to be aware of the alternative models of Divine Trinity which yet other religions offer out of their own experience of receiving God's revelation. For Trinitarian theologies are by no means the exclusive preserve of Christians. But I do not wish to criticise the book too much for such omissions: merely to inform the reader that what he or she will get in this book is a very readable, patient, step-by-step exposition of a Trinitarian theology largely attributable to a very great ancient theologian, and still of great interest and influence today.

JAMES P. MACKAY

**A GUIDE TO ISAIAH 1–39, by Jack Partain and Richard Deutsch. TEF Study Guide 21, SPCK, London, 1986.**

This volume is one of a series of study guides initiated by the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches. The books are prepared by and in consultation with theological teachers in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific, for use primarily in these particular parts of the world. Special attention is given to problems of interpretation and application arising in these areas and also to the needs of students using English as a second language.

The commentary on chapters 1–12 of Isaiah was prepared by Partain, that on chapters 13–39 by Deutsch; both writers have wide experience of teaching in cultural settings other than their own. The book is straightforward and clear in its presentation; the scholarly stance adopted is moderately critical (for example, chapters 24–27 are described as 'almost certainly put together by an unknown author long after the time of Isaiah'), but the style is not technical. Special notes are included on 'The Historical Context of the Book as a Whole', 'How and Why Isaiah 1–39 was Put Together' and 'Prophets and their Function'. Detailed references to secondary literature are avoided but a good basic bibliography is given.

As well as commentary, the book has a number of features particularly geared to its declared aim of being a text for bible study and theological education. There is question material, as well as suggestions for research and discussion and guidelines for bible reading. The book contains many arresting black-and-white photographs from a wide range of countries; these and the text frequently attempt to draw connections between the bible and the contemporary world; the authors aim to highlight Isaiah's 'urgent and