

sung—as it originally was—in its entirety. Again, we are given parallels which link up the themes of the collects. Each explanation is preceded by the Latin and English texts of the passages considered.

It seems a pity that holidays of obligation have not been included in Dr Messenger's scheme. They would not have added greatly to the size of his books, and we may hope that a future edition may find room for them. A more serious criticism is suggested by the arrangement of these volumes. One admits that Dr Messenger's purpose is not to provide a commentary on the liturgical year such as those of Gueranger or Parsch; yet a treatment *pari passu*, including under the one Sunday all the various elements of the Proper, might have been simpler and more practical than the restriction of each volume to a particular stage in the Mass. This would avoid such repetition as inevitably occurs, for instance, in his treatment of the introit and the epistle for the fourth Sunday in Lent. The meaning of *Latare Jerusalem* is to be seen in the Mass as a whole, and details of the stationary church, and of the idea of the new Jerusalem, have to be repeated to make this plain.

But it would be ungenerous to criticise details when so much is excellent. Dr Messenger's books should be especially useful for teachers, who may find in the commentary on the Sunday Masses a valuable supplement to the catechism. In the liturgy the truths of faith have their proper setting, and children who have learned to pray the Mass will have bridged the gap between 'Christian Doctrine' and 'Prayers'.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

MARGERY KEMPE: GENIUS AND MYSTIC. By Katherine Cholmeley. (Longmans; 6s.)

It is surprising that this book has not been written before. Well over ten years ago the full story of Margery Kempe was discovered after centuries of obscurity. The event was hailed by a scholarly edition of the 14th century MS. by Miss Emily Hope Allen, the expert on medieval mystical writings, and by a modernised version for the general public. But no one has so far dared to assess Margery Kempe's real value as a spiritual writer nor to judge the validity of her revelations and mystical phenomena. A few articles have appeared in learned periodicals but an understandable hesitancy seems to have prevented the students of mystical writings from pronouncing for or against this strange medieval woman. As an historical document the book of Margery Kempe contains many priceless treasures of information on daily life in the 14th century, but the difficulty is to determine whether Margery's spiritual treasures are real or merely the painted glass of hysteria. Miss Cholmeley began by condemning the wife of King's Lynne, but on the word of two Dominicans, Fr Vincent McNabb and Fr Walter Gumbley, she reconsidered the book, and concluded that it contained the story of a true lover of Jesus Christ, so she comes here to

defend the 'Genius and Mystic'. She sets Margery comfortably in her medieval surroundings and without difficulty shows her value for those who would have a reliable and wholesome witness to the state of religion at that time. Margery was undoubtedly a genius to have painted such a picture. But the task of setting Margery comfortably among the mystics is far more difficult. It is easy to describe 'The Penitent' with her great stress on sexuality, easy too to see 'The Pilgrim' with an insatiable desire to go to holy places. But we may perhaps suspect some truth in Miss Cholmely's description of the other pilgrims' judgment:

'They remembered only too well the extravagant and haughty young woman who had flaunted through their town. Now it might seem to them that vanity had but taken another form; she was itching for notoriety, and affecting to be better than other folk' (p. 56).

And when we come to the heights of the love of God in poor Margery we may be justified in harbouring doubts. The author of this sketch suggests that the strong passions of the young married woman were purified and transposed to a supernatural plane, where she could pour out all her energies upon Jesus Christ. Fr McNabb considered Margery's account of her mystical marriage to be authentic. But the reader will not be easily convinced, for the whole incident is bound up with very sensible emotions of smell and sound, and only a few lines before occurs this extraordinary experience:

'She had so much affection for the manhood of Christ, that when she saw women in Rome bearing children in their arms, if she could ascertain that any were men children, she would then cry, roar and weep, as if she had seen Christ in his childhood' (Butler-Bowden, p. 352).

We will not however judge Margery. She was tried and acquitted in her own life time, but it was for Lollardy rather than a false mysticism. We hope that Miss Cholmeley is correct in her judgment, but we hope also that she or someone inspired by her wide sympathy will study the case in greater detail, analysing the nature of the experiences and comparing Margery's doctrines with the ascetical and mystical teaching of the Church. In welcoming this book we look forward to that further study.

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

VINGT ET UNE LETTRES DE SAINT CATHERINE DE SIENNE: Traduction de Louis-Paul Guigues. (Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars Publications; 4s.)

A French translation of St Catherine's letters should be welcome in France, where the two volume collection translated by Père Cartier, O.P. is now probably a rare work. It should be welcome also in England where Vida Scudder's *Saint Catherine of Siena as seen in her Letters*, published in 1905, is the last English collection of any size, and among its sixty-three letters contains only three of those given in the *Vingt et une Lettres*. The present volume is the