

methods and motives of medieval editors: perhaps the most valuable part of the present Introduction is the analysis of the latest, 'Christocentric', additions to the text, and the editor's relating of these to the needs of late fourteenth-century English piety. She is content to accept the contemporary ascription of this English recension to Walter Hilton; and, though it will be illuminating to have in due course the opinion of other scholars upon linguistic and historical criteria, it is doubtful whether Hilton's authorship will ever be conclusively proved or disproved.

In the *Stimulus* we have the plain man's guide to contemplation, firmly based upon the Church's traditions of catechism and instruction, moderate, balanced and sound. It is embellished, according to the taste of the time, with many highly-coloured appeals to the emotions, calculated to provoke *pitié*, to bring men to tears of compassion and love for the Passion of their Saviour; and even if Margery Kempe had not told us so herself, we might have guessed that she knew these parts of it well; but there is much else in it which she might have pondered to her profit.

All those who are attracted by the devotional literature of the Middle Ages will be indebted to Miss Kirchberger for her edition. It is only regrettable that she, in her own devotion to her Middle English text, has in a publication destined for the general reader retained so many of the difficulties which are presented by the vocabulary and syntax of the original.

ERIC COLLEDGE

THE FRUIT IN THE SEED. Chapters of Autobiography. By Margaret Leigh. (Phoenix House; 9s. 6d.)

Solitude, prayer and manual work are the oldest traditional approach to sanctity in these islands. It was, on and off, as an 'enablement of vision' that Margaret Leigh saw the lonely ventures in farming and crofting which are the themes of her best-known books. Her spiritual autobiography leaves her on the threshold of a Carmelite cell; yet the book itself recalls the vocations pursued in Rotha Clay's *Lives of the English Anchorites*.

She has written of her long resistance to a call, but half understood, received as a young girl. It is important to note—for the book was designed to help others—that, until she met a few books, mostly by studious converts like herself, on the eve of her reception into the Church, she never found anything enduringly helpful in any visible form of Christianity. She was a typical child of Oxford; and, on her own showing, an intellectual snob. Incidentally, her book is invaluable for its criticism of the results of women's education. In 1919 she became a Lecturer in Classics at Reading University. She was then twenty-four and had just broken with Quakerism to which she had been drawn by its witness to peace and its spirit of silent prayer.

She was five years at Reading. During vacations she rented a

solitary cottage in what had been the Cornwall of Katharine Mansfield and D. H. Lawrence. Here she began to work with her hands, write and keep a door ajar for the supernatural.

She left Reading for the life that is outwardly portrayed in her books. This book, although it goes over the same ground, is another story, in which criticism of herself is offset by criticism of the world which affords so little help towards the discovery of the one thing needful. In this light it should be read and re-read.

HELEN PARRY EDEN

DE LA SALLE: *LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS*. Edited by W. J. Battersby, PH.D. (Longmans, Green; 25s.)

Dr Battersby now supplements his two volumes on St John Baptist De la Salle, as an educational pioneer and as saint and spiritual writer, with a third, containing all the extant letters and other papers of De la Salle: for the most part the translations are accompanied by the original French text, and the whole collection is most ably annotated by the editor in the light of his researches.

The collection is not a large one: ninety-five letters, and six documents of no great length, are all that have survived from what must have been, as Dr Battersby says, an 'enormous mass'. Nor can we comfort ourselves with the thought that we have all that was most important. On the contrary: the letters, for example, 'reflecting the Jansenist controversy . . . have all disappeared', though J. B. Blain in his biography of De la Salle has preserved the text of the one in which the saint protests against the Dean of Calais having put his name on the list of Appellants. And the nearest thing there is to a complete series are twenty letters addressed to Brother Gabriel Drolin in Rome between 1702 and 1716; but these are of special interest and value.

In addition to the light they throw on the personality and methods of De la Salle and the early history of the institute he founded, these letters are interesting to the general reader as plain straightforward glimpses into another age and another country, even though from the specialised angle of a religious superior writing to his subjects. Apart from Drolin, the Brothers 'who have most letters to their credit were not high-calibre souls, and the saint is reduced to giving advice on the most elementary points'. He was strict and outspoken in rebuke, but always out of solicitude for his brethren. He writes to Brother Matthias: 'It appears that Brother Sebastian's shoes were too small for him, but that they fit you. Take them, and do not wait to be told twice. We shall have to have a pair of breeches made for you if you need them. I shall take care that you are provided with what is necessary.' On the personal side, that last sentence, in a wide sense, is the keynote of this correspondence. D.A.