

MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE. By George Kane. (Methuen; 12s. 6d.)

The LIFE OF THE SPIRIT frequently carries studies and texts of earlier English spiritual writings. Some of the work is modernised to make it readable, but with the archaic often present as an incentive to return to some of the sturdier spiritual language of an earlier age. Those who would wish to taste more of the original literary charm of some of these works by such men as Richard Rolle should turn to this book, which deals specifically, not only with the Metrical Romances, but with the Religious Lyrics and *Piers Plowman* of the middle English period, and does so on purpose to reveal the peculiar beauties of these writings as well as the special characteristics of the authors. The author shows how difficult it is to recapture the full bearing of this religious writing and therefore its full beauty as skilled work, because, as he says of the medieval Englishman, 'his moral sense was close to his imagination, excited it, and was in turn sharpened or at least made more lively by the pictures . . . his state of mind was then vastly more receptive to this moral lyrics than is that of the common reader of today'. (p. 110.) This perceptive remark indicates the value of the book, whose pages are constantly refreshed with delightful excerpts from the writings in question.

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORSHIP. By Gerald Ellard, S.J. (Bruce; \$4.50.)

The first edition of this classic appeared in 1933, when the liturgical movement was still the concern of a few specialists and before the breezes of worshipful enthusiasm had swept France, or any other country; before also Pius XII had thought of his two great encyclicals on the Mystical Body and on Divine Worship. Fr Ellard was then a pioneer and his book stands as a kind of prophecy of the future liturgical missions and retreats which are now having such great effect in many countries. But just as the author fitted the liturgy into the life and doctrine of the Christian, so his own work was never allowed to be a fossilised statement of fact. It has evidently been living with him for all these years, so that in this third edition, revised and enlarged, it is as fresh and modern as though it were seeing the light for the first time. Pius XII's encyclicals are quoted *in extenso*; major works of recent date, such as Gregory Dix's *Shape of the Liturgy*, have been taken into account; and there is nothing in the book that is out of date. The worship of the Church, in Mass and the Sacraments, is shown to grow from the reality of the Mystical Body, and active sharing in this worship is applied to the Christian as a *member*. And all is supported by history and texts which make an excellent introduction to the study of the