

only hope that the Apostles or their immediate followers had divined correctly the mind and purpose of the Master. A Catholic, while unable to go to the lengths of many of the form critics, may well admit the existence of such interpretations, but he holds their truth safeguarded by inspiration and sees in the interpretative activity of the Christian community within the pages of the New Testament the *ecclesia docens* already at work under the secure guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The many moderns who think as Bishop Neill does, in spite of the paradox of their deep and even passionate faith in Jesus Christ, have in fact left themselves no means by which the Word of God to men can be certainly known and distinguished from human accretion and error.

HENRY ST JOHN, O.P.

THE COASTS OF THE COUNTRY. An Anthology of Prayer drawn from the Early English Spiritual Writers. Edited by Clare Kirchberger; Introduction by Godfrey Anstruther, O.P. (The Harvill Press; 15s.)

In this book Miss Kirchberger has gathered together a number of passages from English medieval writers of which the majority—though not all—are concerned in one way or another with the practice of prayer. Naturally she draws heavily on the well-known writers whose works have been published, but she also quotes many passages from little-known and for the most part still unpublished sources, which her great knowledge of medieval English devotional manuscripts enables her to do.

It is unfortunate that fourteenth-century English appears quaint to us, and particularly, it must be said, when it is semi-modernised, for quaintness is not in itself a literary merit; indeed, if it is conscious, it is a defect. But, as Father Godfrey Anstruther usefully points out in his Introduction, these writers were not conscious of being quaint. They were using the language as they knew it, and it is a pity if we allow their seeming quaintness—as may easily happen—to blind us to the fact that they had always sound advice to give, and often profound theological truths to impart. In this connection, perhaps, it is a pity that Hilton's conception of contemplation as a 'lively feeling of grace' was not illustrated.

But the book is well calculated to give an idea of the serious pursuit of the life of prayer that was made in fourteenth-century England, a fact which can perhaps be too easily overlooked in considering other aspects of the religious history of the time. But these extracts may also, as I am sure their compiler intended, be of great practical use, and she has once more put us in her debt by bringing them together.

GERARD SITWELL, O.S.B.

THE TWO VOICES—Spiritual Conferences of Father R. H. J. Steuart, S.J., with a Memoir by C. C. Martindale, S.J. (Burns Oates; 18s.)

It has been felt that Miss Katharine Kendall's affectionate biography of

Father Steuart achieves much the same effect as that made by the Studio Portrait, taken by a photographer who, in order to surround his sitter with sweetness and light, screws the lens of his camera a little out of focus. Father Martindale, in the Memoir he has compiled to introduce twenty-eight of Father Steuart's Conferences, allows no mitigation of line or shadow to blur his view of that much-loved, well-remembered saint.

It is a portrait from within. 'Father Steuart', says his editor, 'believed, as I do, in the co-existence of contradictories in his soul.' The letters, diaries and notes from which this Memoir has been put together form what seems, at a first reading, to be a catalogue of such contradictories. We find Robert Steuart at one moment writing: 'Ever since the first thought of the religious life entered my mind it was always as the way of perfection . . . I seem to feel that I, by right, belong to the category of those who dare much and did much.' Before long he is declaring: 'I am a miserable caricature of a religious, a shame to the ineffable dignity and holiness of the priesthood'. He has advanced far on the way he has chosen and now '*Habes tota quod in mente petisti, infelix!*'.

Carefully, unrelentingly, Father Martindale collates this hidden see-saw of the spirit which in conferences, retreats and published books gave hope and strength and certainty to souls less ardent than his own.

To turn from the preface to the conferences themselves is to meet a serene, lucid, informed and humorous mind unclouded by any shadow of self-abasement.

In naming this book by the title of one of the conferences it contains—*The Two Voices*, Father Steuart's colleague has plainly offered us more than one meaning to his words.

NAOMI ROYDE SMITH

RECENT THOUGHT IN FOCUS. By Donald Nicholl. (Sheed and Ward; 16s.)

This book is an attempt 'to use modern learning as a focus for viewing the world into which we are born and in which it is so hard to discern our destiny'. There are chapters on Modern Philosophy, The Natural Sciences and Psychology. Modern Philosophy is viewed under the headings of: Marxism, Phenomenology, Existentialism and Logical Positivism. In the chapter on the Natural Sciences, Evolution, and particularly the Evolution of man, receives special attention.

The book is remarkably successful in the range and penetration of its assessments, and the readable way in which they are presented. It should be emphasised that it is addressed to the intelligence of the ordinary man, the non-expert, and it succeeds admirably in making intelligible to him what the experts are saying and the idiom in which they are saying it. The book is entirely free from a characteristic that has ruined so many similar attempts; namely, the attitude that the intelligent reader can, with