

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whose works have been published, but she also quotes many passages from little-known and for the most part still unpublished sources, which her great knowledge of medieval English devotional manuscripts enables her to do.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