

that in regard to the two natures 'Monophysitism . . . refused to admit the infallible decision of the Church in the matter' (p. 3) gives a totally false impression of the origins of this schism. Similarly, it is a historical fact, however much we may regret it, that the universal primacy of jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff was never generally recognized in the Christian East. It is therefore naïve to say that 'The Oriental Churches all broke away in time either from the unity of faith (thus becoming heretical) or from Primacy (sic) of the Catholic Church (thus becoming schismatic). Since the Middle Ages, however, individuals and groups have returned to the Catholic Church . . . ' (p. xviii). One cannot 'return' to something to which one has never consciously belonged. The practice in some rites of celebrating 'Low' and even, *proh dolor*, silent Masses is recorded without comment.

It must be reiterated that this book contains a mass of useful information, statistical, historical and liturgical. It is to be feared, however, that its effect upon non-Catholic Orientals will only be to confirm them in their (mistaken) conviction that the Catholic Eastern rites are but a parody of the real thing.

C. J. L. NAPIER

MODERN ATHEISM, by Etienne Borne; Burns and Oates (Faith and Fact); 8s 6d.

Does anyone take atheism seriously in England? It is not only that one cannot imagine an English Catholic writing a book like this, but that the English atheist himself (a distinctive and not uncommon phenomenon) would not much care to be associated with the kinds of atheism which M. Borne so ably describes and analyzes. The English atheist does not care much for Marx or Nietzsche, and one must therefore treat this book, as the publishers suggest, more as an anthropological sidelight on the European situation than as a practical guide to our own. The first chapter, certainly the clearest and the most useful, shows that atheism is a permanent possibility for the human mind simply because the fact that God exists is open to dispute—really open to *dispute*, that is, to rational argument, to 'demonstration', and it would be a rash man who claimed that it is easy to prove an atheist wrong. St Thomas Aquinas had to insist, astonishing as it seems to us now, against many of his contemporaries, that this is so—that there are in fact at least two strong arguments against the existence of God. It is these two arguments, which he puts to himself at the outset of the five ways, which are the nuclei of the two great forms of modern atheism which M. Borne identifies: the positivist and the existentialist. The first of these, springing from the self-assurance of the human mind, from its sense of the power and the scope of scientific enquiry, finds that the existence of God is a superfluous hypothesis. The second, coming from the natural anguish of the human heart at the sight of evil, refuses to consent that such a world could be ruled by a loving God. 'God is scientifically unnecessary and ethically impossible'. These are the two

perennial sources of atheism. We do not have to concede that modern man has discovered some irrefutable argument against the existence of God which no earlier thinker could have taken into account. The past is not so easily made out of date.

This does not mean, however, that these perennial arguments have not taken on a very local and specifically modern *form*. They have indeed. They are shaped and coloured by the idea that to believe in God is to degrade, to dehumanize, oneself—that religion is an ugly incubus which pauperizes and stultifies its devotees. This belief, which is widespread today, comes ultimately from Hegel. At this point M. Borne has some good pages on the overwhelming importance of Hegel in shaping the mental climate in which we live: 'the twentieth century is in many ways a Hegelian century'. The truth of that is something we are coming too slowly to realize. It is easy to see how this works out, in the second chapter, when M. Borne turns to apply his general analysis to particular trends in the contemporary European (French?) scene: first, positivism-marxism, represented by Comte and Marx (atheism of solidarity, ultimately a form of pantheism); and then Nietzsche and Sartre (atheism of solitude, integral atheism). He insists on how these two forms contradict each other (one has only to think here of how impatient marxists get with existentialists).

The third and fourth chapters draw us deep into foreign waters, with an interpretation of the function of atheism in history which is partly dependent on Maritain and not altogether easy to understand, and finally an outline of how the Christian must respond—a response which is heavily indebted to Pascal. By this time, of course, one is far away from the phenomenon of English rationalism—which, rather typically, owes so much to that great Scotsman, David Hume. This is an atheism of a very different temper from any described by M. Borne, and perhaps a good deal more difficult for a Christian to deal with. One hopes that somebody may undertake to analyse it for us. This book is stimulating enough to make one conscious of the need for an English supplement.

FERGUS KERR, O.P.

P. E. T. WIDDINGTON, by Maurice Reckitt; S.P.C.K.; 18s 6d.

There are men of moment, not always in Government offices, who exercise an influence on their own and future generations which is, in their lifetime, almost unrecognized. Such a person was Canon Widdington, for long one of the leaders and inspirers of the social protests against the commercialism of their time. A disciple of Maurice, to whose insistence on the regulative notion of the Kingdom of God he was so fundamentally indebted, he influenced the whole Church of England, so far as its progressive members were concerned, culminating in the work of Archbishop Temple.

He was no conventional socialist, as were so many of his clerical contempora-