

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 The past is not so easily made out of date.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-

ries at the turn of the century: for him socialism was too exclusively economic. Rather, following Westcott, he was a Christian humanist, rooted in the belief that creation was in truth very good and seeing in Christ 'the light that lighteth every man', however marred by pride and wilfulness.

He deplored that 'the English people have no conception of an authoritarian Church', yet never, apparently, asked himself whether the Established Church he served could speak with the authority he sought. A Catholic Church was to him primarily the Church of England in its sacramental aspect. Of the social side of the faith, as illustrated by either the papal encyclicals or the social concern of nonconformity, he says and writes little or nothing.

Yet in his own field he is significant, apart from his dubious separation of the Church and the Kingdom. In his essay in the symposium, 'The Return of Christendom' (to which G. K. Chesterton contributed his last writing as an Anglican), he is at his best. Few Catholics would care to differ from his conclusion as to the conception of the Kingdom of God in our Lord's teaching and its development from the Old Testament.

In his later years he dissociated himself from the Labour Party, of which, as a curate, he had been an ardent supporter, nor did he retain much sympathy for the collectivism of his youth. Rather he inclined to some notion of co-operative guild administration of production and feared state capitalism and the servile state. This view was largely consistent with the papal encyclicals, but never, I think, did he recognize the fact or rely on *Rerum Novarum* or later pronouncements on social problems to support his opinions. When already elderly, he befriended, at great sacrifice of time and energy, the Orthodox refugees, particularly in Paris, and earned their lasting respect, but here again we seek in vain for any consideration of their theology or their dissident state.

It was his work, largely, which encouraged an outlook which made the attitude of Archbishop Temple and other enthusiasts for social reform acceptable to many, and his influence, both within the Church of England and beyond it, has been much greater than is often appreciated.

HENRY SLESSER

THE LETTERS AND DIARIES OF JOHN HENRY NEWMAN. Edited at the Birmingham Oratory with notes and an introduction by Charles Stephen Dessain of the same Oratory; Volume XI; Nelson; 63s.

One sometimes wonders if the great mass of books and articles, not to mention theses, on various aspects of the Cardinal's life and character have done much to elucidate what Abbé Bremond called the mystery of Newman. Although there are few today who would accept the Frenchman's interpretation of the mystery, there is a sense in which the great Oratorian's character remains enigmatic, and a grasp of his character and the value of his work seems always to elude us. The very diversity of the judgments on this many-sided man show we are