

book leaves the impression that it is still too soon for popular introductions to the subject of primitive religion to be written.

M. M. TEW.

THE HEATHENS: PRIMITIVE MAN AND HIS RELIGIONS. By William Howells. (Gollancz; 18s.)

The publishers describe this book as 'learned, peppery, scholarly, sprightly and unexpectedly provocative'. With the exception of the first and third epithets this would seem to be a fair appraisal of a compilation both cynical and naïve. Numerous field-work reports are used uncritically to support the author's theme that religion is the 'normal psychological adjustment by which human societies build a barrier of fantasy against fear'. The jocular style of writing accords well with an approach which is even less profound than it is original.

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THE UNITY OF EUROPEAN HISTORY. By John Bowles. (Cape; 18s.)

In the past we took Europe for granted. Today we are divided. Some are convinced that Europe is on its death bed and await its dissolution either with impatience or anxiety. Others are convinced that a splendid if slow recovery is just round the corner. All naturally turn to History. To the prodigal son it offers the support of autobiography while those who will have to compose his obituary must collect their ideas and cultivate their explanations.

Such is the situation today, and Mr Bowles's book is, in more ways than one, an admirable example of what that situation demands. 'To the generation which has grown up under the shadow of war', he writes, 'the unity and success of our civilisation have become obscure; yet still the historian may discover, as through a clearing mist, the permanent structure of the European tradition.' It is with the foundation, the development and the implications of that 'permanent structure' that Mr Bowles's book is concerned.

The broad outlines of the book are, it may be argued, familiar, but this is an argument which is not likely to carry much weight with those who are in touch with contemporary education. In many schools it is only the little patch of history which connects the French Revolution with our day which is seriously taught. An industrial proletariat, without roots, without property and without tradition, with the myths of Marx or of Hollywood for its folk-lore, must of necessity be barbarous. And it is this new barbarism which is forcing itself to the front. It provides us with a problem which is not unlike the problem which faced Bede in the days when England was new. The tradition of English historiography stretches from St Bede's day to our own and, after his own fashion, Mr Bowles is a writer in that august succession. Many English Catholics will see Europe and its past from a different angle, but it will be recognisably the same object as that at which Mr Bowles is looking, and they should learn much from his balance, his concision and his clarity.

T. CHARLES EDWARDS.