REVIEWS

THE GATE OF HORN, A Study of the Religious Conceptions of the Stone Age and their Influence upon European Thought. By Gertrude Rachel Levy, M.A., F.S.A. (Faber; 42s.)

The symbol of the Horned Gate, like that of the Golden Bough, is mostly familiar from the allusion in Book VI of the Æneid: it is the '*somni porta . . . qua veris facilis datur exitus umbris*'. For Miss Levy it is not only a symbol which describes the function of her book; she also shows that the Horned Gate is quite literally a constant and recurrent cult-object which, among others, can be traced back to our origins in the Stone Age, to the entrances of the paleolithic caves which were the womb of human culture. Her title boldly challenges comparison of her work with *The Golden Bough*, and whether the comparison is intended or not, it is not misplaced. As the Vergilian Golden Bough gave Æneas the royal power to enter the underworld and behold its shady mysteries, so Frazer's book enabled the reader to view the character and universality of the nature cults and mysteries in their worldwide diffusion. Where Frazer worked in space, Miss Levy works in time, tracing chronologically the developments and deviations of the 'true shadows' first found in primaeval caves.

Her subtitle perhaps lays too heavy a burden on her first hundred pages, which alone deal with the Stone Age material. The data here are notoriously sparse, and interpretations of them are necessarily highly speculative and problematic. Almost any axe can be ground on man's first artefacts of stone, and almost any picture of primitive man be projected into his first dark caves: some while ago BLACKFRIARS reviewed an interpretation of primitive cave paintings in terms of Dialectical Materialism and class-struggle. The Marxist and the Nazi, the occultist and the psycho-analyst, the theist and the atheist, to say nothing of the various conflicting schools of anthropological theory, have each given us more or less plausible interpretations of our caveman forebears and their meagre remains. What gives Miss Levy's 'religious' interpretation more than plausibility is less her brief analysis of the acorn than her triumphant demonstration of the continuity of the full-grown oak of historical civilisations with it, together with the confirmatory evidence she adduces from contemporary 'Stone Age' peoples—evidence still further established in Dr Layard's *Stone Men of Malekula*. It is the developments that illuminate the beginnings, and thereby the beginnings are shown to precontain the developments. All too briefly Miss Levy traces these developments, from the Paleolithic and Neolithic, through the Megalithic phases, to the Egyptian and Sumerian 'culmination'. Then the story takes us to pre-Columbian America, in whose hideous hecatombs Miss Levy sees a frightful 'perversion' of the primitive tradition; then to Palestine, where she invites us to see a 'revolution' of which the

principal feature is a new conception of sacrifice. In this the victim is not God offered to God but man offered to God, a conception which expressed and fostered the emancipation of ethical and responsible man from the dominion of purely natural forces. Next, the story switches to the 'Cretan survival', and concludes with 'Resurrection in Greece', the transformation of the old religion through the mystery cults until they flower in the 'intellectual development' of Greek philosophy and drama.

A Christian reader may suspect that this story might be profitably continued into an account of the 'recapitulation' of all the foregoing in Christ and His Church. Miss Levy herself hints at such a possibility when she remarks:

> The division into two kingdoms (i.e. of Judea and Israel), formerly so catastrophic a testimony of moral disunion, would prove in the new cycle to be a source of strength. The Northern adherence to the nature-cults, strengthened by separation from Jerusalem, was reinforced after the captivity by settlements from Chaldaea. The gentler landscape of the North was thus a natural setting for the birth of Christianity; but because Judah's ideal of righteousness and faith had once become articulate, the religion of rebirth was henceforth inseparable from ethics. . . . Its mystic elements were therefore no longer derived from the Syrian ritual, with its stains of sensuality and human sacrifice, but from the spiritual empire of Hellenism, the last permanent survival of Stone Age religion in the West. (p. 209.)

A Catholic reader may well be tempted to take, but also to amplify, this hint. In the crucifixion of the God-Man he will see not only the consummation of the 'man to God' sacrifice but the return also of the primitive mystery of the offering of 'God to God'; and in that very fact man's liberation from the Law of a purely ethical religion which had become terrible in its revelation of man's incapacity to meet his responsibility. Even human sacrifice and ritual sensuality, perverted in America and Syria, find a rightful and central place in the life-giving blood-shedding of the Word made flesh.

But any such continuation of the story must be beholden to Miss Levy's work in telling of its beginnings. Whatever corrections must be brought to her work in matters of detail, and whatever its own debt to generations of previous inquirers and scholars, it is a magnificent effort at the synthesis of enormous masses of material. To reduce it at all to manageable proportions must have been a taxing labour; for ourselves we must regret that her Gate of Horn is so *very* narrow, and that the *exitus* is the reverse of *facilis*. Where Frazer deterred us by his voluminous diffusiveness, Miss Levy's 330 pages may appal us by their condensed constriction. Her long, cumbersome, tightly packed sentences must often be read again and again to become intelligible. Too often is the reader tantalised by a brief, obscure allusion, or even just a footnote reference on

some point, which could well have been expanded in the text. Many of the magnificent and illuminating photographs deserve to be less reduced and less crowded; splendid and plentiful as are the illustrations, there are references to too many more which must involve the reader in long research in libraries. In short, we must regret that both author and reader have so little elbow-room; difficult as it must be to draw the line, it might be expected that two guineas could purchase a little more spaciousness. A work of such general interest would also benefit from a glossary and chronological table.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILISATION. First part: Foundations. By Emil Brunner. (Nisbet; 10s. 0d.)

Dr Brunner's Gifford lectures for 1947, like everything he writes, will provoke much thought and interest. Civilisation can exist, he tells us, without Christianity, and Christianity without what we call civilisation. On the other hand our civilisation is based upon Christian culture-transcendent presuppositions.

These presuppositions concern fundamental problems such as those of being, truth, time, meaning, personality, justice, freedom and creativity. Without the Christian solution to these problems our culture would be wrongly orientated with regard to the deepest questions of existence.

In his general defence of the position of Christianity, a cursory perusal of his book gives the impression that he is in essential agreement with traditional Christian philosophy, even with the Thomism he so heartily distrusts. For Dr Brunner as for the Thomist, creatures have no more than a relative reality—a reality wholly dependent upon the mind and will of the Creator. Both agree in rejecting all forms of pantheism. Both vigorously reject the extremes of materialism and idealism. Both have the same view of history as a God-guided process having a beginning and an end, and having no meaning except from the point of view of a transcendent God. Both agree that man's relation to God, his capacity for grace, for being lifted up to union with God, is his greatest glory. For both it is this capacity that raises up the least talented of men to a position of dignity equal to that of the most talented, so that he is truly the image of God. Both reject the extremes of individualism and collectivism, putting in their place the true notion of the membership of Christ and the communion of saints.

At this apparent agreement the Thomist would rejoice, while Dr Brunner would object. Dr Brunner always appears anxious to show how different his own position is from ours. He rarely seems to mention Catholic philosophers without appearing to us to misunderstand them. In this he is unlike Dr Barth. Dr Barth is often further from us, but usually seems to understand us. To Dr Brunner the only alternatives for the thinking man are Greek humanism