

human, because the director is detached from his characters, without the genuine concern he shows for his infinitely less valuable sophisticates in *Avventura*.

Marxist Antonioni may be, but he is an aesthetic director, not a didactic one by nature, and it is in the tensions so set up that his peculiar fascination lies. And so we come to *l'Avventura*, the beautiful, irritating, sad and sensual work about which I wrote in these pages in January. Until we can see *La Notte*, this must be accepted as the fine flower of this ambiguous talent for here Antonioni's mastery of the evocative image, his dominant characteristic, is deployed in the delineation of character with greater control than in any of his earlier work.

MARYVONNE BUTCHER

Reviews

THE TOMB OF ST. PETER. *The New Discoveries in the Sacred Grottoes of the Vatican*. By M. Guarducci; translated from the Italian by J. McLellan, with an Introduction by H. V. Morton; Harrap, 25s.

This admittedly popular account of the recent Vatican excavations falls into two distinct parts. One part, Chapters 1-4 and 6, which deals with the testimony to the Roman Petrine tradition of the ancient writers, the Vatican region in classical times, the Roman necropolis under St Peter's Basilica, the Apostle's Vatican Memorial, and the joint cult-centre of St Peter and St Paul by the Appian Way, is based on the more detailed and more closely documented studies that have already appeared in several languages, including English, and on the official *Report* of the Vatican excavators, published in 1951. Little that is new or original will be found in these portions of the book; and they contain several debatable statements. For instance, the Trajanic dating of St Ignatius of Antioch is probably too early (p. 33): H. Gregoire (*Les persécutions dans l'empire romain*, 1951, p. 162 ff.) makes out a good case for assigning his letters to the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Again, it is by no means necessary to assert that the obelisk of Gaius Nero's circus must have stood upon its *spina* and that therefore the circus was in use no longer at the end of the second century, at the time of the building of the circular pagan mausoleum, later the Church of St Andrew, which would have cut across the *spina's* assumed line (pp. 48-50): the *spina* could well have lain further to the south, and since the obelisk carries a Latin funerary inscription, in honour of Augustus and Tiberius, it could have stood most appropriately beside the road that ran between the circus on the south and the open, burial area on the north. All the same the authoress has assembled, to illustrate these chapters, a fine array of clear and useful pictures.

The second part of the book, Chapter 5, 'The Testimony of the Inscriptions', is, on the other hand, wholly original and extremely controversial, being a boil-

ed-down version of the authoress's interpretations of the many scratched and, in a few cases, painted texts, mostly in Latin, but a few in Greek, that the excavations underneath St Peter's have revealed. The present reviewer's reactions to the treatment by Professor Guarducci of these inscriptions have already been fully recorded elsewhere (J. M. C. Toynbee and J. B. Ward-Perkins, *The Shrine of St Peter*, 1956, pp. 14-17, 23-24; J. M. C. Toynbee, 'Graffiti beneath St Peter's,' *Dublin Review*, Autumn, 1959). But here she feels obliged to state her view that this new telescoped 'vulgarisation' of the results of Professor Guarducci's researches is most unfortunate, in as much as it will inevitably mislead the public for whom it is intended. Again and again the reader is required to accept as proven facts what recourse to the primary publications of the authoress's work (in expensive and, to the general English reader, not readily accessible Italian monographs) reveals to be merely unverifiable assertions or conjectures or subjective interpretations. Here three examples must suffice. On p. 141, fig. 44, we have a transcription of the authoress's reading of a painted text on one wall of the Tomb of the Valerii beneath St Peter's. On p. 139, fig. 43, we are shown a photograph of that wall as partly excavated, on which the two crude heads and the PETRVS, that everyone can see and read, alone are uncovered. But why was the reader not given the chance of checking the rest of the text set out in fig. 44 by being shown a photograph of the wall as completely cleared? That such a photograph exists we learn from one of Professor Guarducci's original works. On p. 108 it is stated as a fact that 'Peter's name is also expressed by a characteristic sign,' which she illustrates. No hint is given to the reader that this is only the authoress's own idea and that other scholars have propounded other and (to this reviewer's mind) far more plausible explanations of that monogram—explanations that fit the many wholly pagan, as well as the Christian, contexts in which it occurs much more convincingly, and with far less strain on our powers of belief, than does the Petrine explanation. On pp. 136-144 the graffiti scratched on the wall of Tomb R beneath St Peter's are discussed and categorically stated to be Christian. The reader is not told that the fish was a common pagan funerary, as well as a Christian, symbol; nor is he made aware that the Greek memorial formula that appears here is found, not only in some 'particularly beautiful, unusual, or holy' place (which, Professor Guarducci declares, could only be for the writer of this graffiti the region of St Peter's tomb), but also in ordinary private houses at Pompeii.

As for the early-Christian cryptographic language that the authoress claims to have deciphered in inscriptions both outside the Vatican and, above all, in the 'Wall G' graffiti close beside the Petrine shrine; and for her findings in these texts of the names of St Peter and Our Lady, of hidden references to the Blessed Trinity, and of an allusion to the well-known vision of the Emperor Constantine, findings that lead the finder to the most elaborate theological and historical deductions—these the reader will be well equipped to form his or her own judgment by studying the reproductions of the extra-Vatican inscriptions (figs. 29-36), by comparing Professor Guarducci's own diagrams of selected 'Wall G'

graffiti (pp. 113-128) with the first-class photographs of the actual wall (pls. 4-13), and by using his or her common sense.

Of one conclusion from the recent excavations this reviewer is as certain as is Professor Guarducci: the little shrine found by the official excavators directly below the papal altar of St Peter's marks the spot that Roman Christians from the mid-second-century onwards believed to be the burial-place of the Apostle. That conclusion is indeed clinched by one late-second-century Greek *graffito* discovered close beside the shrine—*Petos eni* = 'Petros eni' = 'Petrus inest' = 'Peter is within' = 'Peter is buried here' (since there is abundant evidence for *ἐνεῖναι* and 'inest' used in this sepulchral sense). The authoress of this book did not herself discover that inscription. But the establishment beyond all doubt of the final letter of 'eni' as 'i' is due to her; and we must congratulate her on her definitive reading of the only, but vitally important, text at the shrine in which St Peter's name quite *certainly* occurs.

J. M. C. TOYNBEE

HINDU AND MUSLIM MYSTICISM *Jordan Lectures 1959* By R. C. Zaehner; University of London, the Athlone Press; 30s.

MUSLIM DEVOTIONS *A Study of Prayer-Manuals in Common Use* By Constance E. Padwick; S.P.C.K.; 35s.

There are as many kinds of mystics as of men. The Californian with a fancy to practise yoga may not be very serious, but the curious reader of Knox's *Enthusiasm* or Cohn's *Pursuit of the Millennium* will remember the pathetic eccentrics who pass from a delusion of deification into inspired antinomian behaviour. How are we to distinguish the tried and tested ascetic who after a hard-earned mystical experience follows the same course? Such cases are probably exceptions; and certainly the experience itself, natural and acquired, is remarkable enough, this 'realization of the undifferentiated unity'—a direct knowledge of the immortality, even the eternity, of the soul, but not of a Creator or a loving God.

BLACKFRIARS readers already know Professor Zaehner's special interest in the emergence of the idea of a loving transcendent God in Hindu mystical writing, but he rightly insists that this revelation remains ambiguous and uncertain, even in Ramanuja's commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita. About the 'realization of unity' and 'liberation' of the soul there is little doubt, however: despite the confusion of mystical authors who can neither agree upon the terms to describe it, nor on its interpretation, the experience of different epochs, cultures and religions is closely comparable. Professor Zaehner shows how variously, too, it can be interpreted by the observer: that, for example, though we can take it as what the mystic himself claims for it, or place it in a monotheistic frame, we can also give it a Jungian explanation which admits its value while denying its evidential validity; and there are other possibilities. The Hindu mystic (for whom God may enter the process, if at all, only as part of the technique) may even describe