

acknowledged, he found in Poussin that ideal of an abstraction from mere narration and of submitting the thing seen to the government of the intelligence which the artist must always be seeking.

M. Germain Bazin remarks that Poussin is 'the inheritor of Thomism and the precursor of Matisse'. The claim is not as improbable as it must seem when uttered as a mere generalization. The Louvre exhibition enables one to see the lucid intellect at work, illuminating the pastoral lyricism of *Echo and Narcissus* or the wonderful *Wounded Tancred* from Leningrad, giving their special depth and delight to the religious paintings above all (of which we in this country have such wonderful examples, both at Dulwich and especially at Edinburgh, where the Ellesmere *Seven Sacraments* are on permanent loan).

The severity of Poussin's response to sacred themes has too easily been catalogued as a Jansenistic mistrust of created good. Nothing could be more false, for in his religious pictures he supremely exercises that serene intellectual scrutiny which selects, eliminates, reduces. And yet all is gracious: he finds the harmony of form and colour to match a theme that he has inwardly made his own. That is why the iconography of Poussin's paintings, sacred and profane alike, is such a fascinating subject. The source may be Ovid or Tasso, the accepted biblical story or the hagiographical tradition; but it is wholly absorbed, translated boldly into the personal terms of a painter's vision. And in the religious pictures, whether a Holy Family *à la baignoire* (in which the exquisite grouping of gay children only emphasizes the deep significance of the bath being prepared for the Holy Child, symbol as it is of the redeeming work of baptism) or of a sacrament such as *Confirmation* (in either of the two versions he painted, so senatorial and grave), we are aware of the profound discipline which has applied a meditated wisdom to the astonishing virtuosity with which he shapes his forms.

PEREGRINE WALKER

REVIEWS

Rome and Room Enough

THE palimpsest that is Rome has never lacked readers to decipher what they will in this marvellous, muddled text. For some the ancient and imperial are all: for others the Rome of the Popes, or even the Rome of Cinecittà. The guides indeed are as various as the things you see: the fallen column, the baroque statue or the brash new flats. For each its interpreter; and the pattern continues to grow.

M. Emile Mâle, whose *Early Churches of Rome*¹ (originally published in 1942) now appears in an English version, with over a hundred excellent photographs to illustrate a wise and deeply-considered text, was quite sure that the greatest glory of Rome lies in the group of basilicas which evoke the classical virtues of proportion and order as engraced by the Christian

¹ *The Early Churches of Rome*. By Emile Mâle. Translated by David Buxton. 118 photographs. (Ernest Benn; 63s.)

faith which they were built to declare. Mâle was a formidably equipped scholar, for many years Director of the French School at Rome, who had given a new dimension to the criticism of sacred art. His sound historical sense and theological discernment had in particular transformed the appreciation of Christian iconography. There could be no better guide to the churches of his choice, illustrating as they do the themes that most appealed to his lucid intelligence.

He sees his churches as the embodiment of a human history, and his chapters on Santa Sabina (which is naturally a church he loved) is a brilliant reconstruction of Peter of Illyria's achievement, with its eastern innovations and its memories of the patrician splendours of the Aventine and, much later, of its associations with St Dominic. So, too, the wonderfully informative chapter on the effects of the iconoclastic controversy on Rome in the eighth and ninth centuries gives a new meaning to the frescoes of Santa Maria Antiqua and the mosaics of Santa Prassede. A happy example of Mâle's method is his search for traces of the Emperor Otto III which leads him to such relatively unfamiliar churches as San Bartolomeo, San Sebastiano in Pallara and the mysterious Castel Sant' Elia. 'If we really want to understand these old Roman churches . . . we must enter them with History as our companion and guide', he remarks, and such details as the half-forgotten mosaic in Santo Stefano Rotondo take on a new meaning when we realize that its empty cross and medallion of Christ are a conscious echo of Constantine's cross from Golgotha. Mâle is always aware of the power of history to illuminate buildings that ask for so much more than a merely aesthetic understanding. He ends with the Minerva, Rome's only Gothic church, 'a stranger in its architecture' which nonetheless has its place in his procession of churches that recall the austere glories of Christian Rome.

Miss Bowen's *A Time in Rome*² is only the latest in a long succession of English travellers' books, but there is nothing derived in this sensitive evocation of a stay of some months in a city which has a capacity greater than any other to command the response of love. 'Knowledge of Rome must be physical, sweated into the system, worked up into the brain through the thinning shoe-leather', Miss Bowen reminds us, and we share in her gradual conquest of the city (and, incidentally, agree with her sharp criticism of the awkward but universal *Pianta* which continues to frustrate so many travellers who seek its inadequate aid). She brings the precision of the novelist's eye to bear on restaurants, the improbable Metropolitan railway, the abandoned Exhibition buildings. But, personal and prejudiced (in an acceptable sense) as is this enchanting book, it is a most practical guide for the visitor with leisure, who is content to wander in company with a writer who is above all fascinated by the people—Augustus and St Paul, Garibaldi and Keats—who over the centuries have given meaning to the incomparable city. 'Attempts to write about Rome made writers rhetorical, platitudinous, abstract, ornate, theoretical, polysyllabic, pompous, furious', writes Miss Bowen with pardonable vigour, but her own book deserves none of these

² *A Time in Rome*. By Elizabeth Bowen. (Longmans; 21s.)

epithets. It pays Rome the compliment of an informed love that has grown to know its complexities but sees 'the unbroken chain which had led me, and has led others and would lead others, on and on, in and out of the many Romes'.

Sir Alec Randall's intention, in his *Discovering Rome*,³ is to help the unaccompanied visitor to find his way about the city, and, following the excellent precedent of Augustus Hare, he suggests a series of walks that embrace the main sights. Sir Alec has lived for years in Rome and he has an engagingly discursive style, full of interesting parentheses and other people's opinions as well as his own obviously first-hand knowledge. His frequent literary references—Stendhal, Goethe, and above all Henry James—are a reminder of how profoundly Rome has affected the Western imagination, and 'Rome my country, city of the soul' is more than a piece of Byronic rhetoric. The only feature that can be faulted in this accurate and readable guide is its feeble little map.

Mr William Klein's *Rome*⁴ is a very different city, and this collection of exciting photographs begins with a quotation from 'an anonymous New Yorker' in 1848 who remarked that 'every visitor to Rome sees a different Rome from that of his companion'. For Mr Klein it is a roaring city full of Vespas and vulgarity, its ruins the background for shouting Italians, its churches the setting for ludicrous rites. It is the Rome of Fellini that is recorded here with astonishing virtuosity, and, however unacceptable it may seem as the picture of a city which remains venerable despite all that has happened in the last few years to ruin it, this collection of brilliantly observed snapshots at least reminds us that Rome is alive, more than a monument, and forever growing new.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

MORAL PROBLEMS NOW. By George Hagmaier, c.s.p., and Robert W. Gleason, s.j. (Sheed and Ward; 21s.)

Counselling, as the term is currently used in the United States, is one of the more recent specialities within the ever-growing domain of psychology. It is something less than psychotherapy, and more than 'good advice'—it is a professional discipline, and clearly one in which priests should be professionally interested. The counsellor is usually, though not apparently necessarily, a trained psychologist, but he uses the 'insights' of psychology to help him in deciding the nature of the problem, and the correct way of solving it. Clearly, since 'grace does not take away nature, but perfects it', the spiritual counselling of souls can benefit enormously from an adequate knowledge of psychology. The application of psychology to spiritual direction and spiritual problems has yielded valuable results in the works of Father Bruno in *Etudes Carmélitaines*, Père Plé, o.p., Father Godin, s.j., and others in Europe, while in America the writings of Zilboorg, the annual seminars on pastoral psychology at St John's College, Minnesota, the 'Sister

³ *Discovering Rome*. By Alec Randall. (Heinemann; 16s.)

⁴ *Rome*. By William Klein. (Vista Books; Edward Hulton; 45s.)