

THE SHRINE OF ST PETER. By Jocelyn Toynbee and John Ward Perkins. (Longmans; 42s.)

In 1939 during the preparations for the tomb of Pius XI some unexpected discoveries were made beneath the floor of the crypt of St Peter's. Excavations followed between 1940 and 1949 and a detailed Report was published in two volumes in 1951.

The Report by the Vatican archaeologists has been relatively difficult to procure and there have been spates of rumour. The present volume is admirably illustrated, gives a concise and detailed survey of the discoveries so far published and provides a commentary upon them. It is fortunate that it is by two scholars of such distinction and integrity as Professor Toynbee, the greatest living authority on Graeco-Roman art, and Mr Ward Perkins, the Director of the British School at Rome. They consider it established that though the cemetery found beneath the crypt was primarily non-Christian, it contained an *aedicula* which was already a place of Christian pilgrimage before Constantine. They hold it as certain that this *aedicula* was the reason why Constantine built his basilica to St Peter on this particular site and they believe it to be identical with the 'trophaeum of the Apostle' mentioned by Gaius early in the third century. They are inclined to think that this *trophaeum* was on the traditional site of St Peter's burial rather than on the traditional site of his martyrdom. They would seem to hold that it can neither be proved nor disproved archaeologically that the bones found beneath the *aedicula* are those of St Peter. They note that no medical analysis of the bones has so far been published or any details as to the number.

The discussion of the purpose of the *aedicula* has often tended to obscure the real importance of the other discoveries beneath the crypt. In Mausoleum M the mosaic of Christ-Helios driving the horses of the sun against a background of the True Vine is a masterpiece, perhaps the only masterpiece, of pre-Nicene Christian art. Other mausolea illustrate very perfectly the infiltration of oriental cults and the changing conception of the after-life. But many of the finds have an intrinsic beauty—like the marble head from near the tomb of the Valerii and the patterns on the vaulting of the first Caetennian tomb. The sarcophagi are usually of admirable craftsmanship and in the case of that of Marcus Hermes almost appallingly *de luxe*. This brings me to the only point on which I would seriously differ from the authors. I can only judge from first-hand knowledge of four of the mausolea, but my impression of the social background that they presuppose is different from theirs. They write: 'the general impression left by such a study is that few, if any, of the persons commemorated belonged to free families . . .'; and again, ' . . . their tell-tale Greek *cognomina* suggest that immediate forbears at any rate had been slaves or freedmen'. Of course

there are freedmen buried in the cemetery, and one family, the Aelii Tyranni, record that they were of Caesar's household, and perhaps made their fortune there in the department of the Privy Purse. But there was an influx of families with Greek *cognomina* into the senate and the high administration both under Hadrian and under the Severi, and, as Professor Syme has recently emphasized, these were often recruited from local dynasts or rich traders in the Levant. The Ulpii and Aelii of the Vatican cemetery must have gained full citizen rights under Trajan or Hadrian but not necessarily enfranchisement. In contrast to those on the Isola Sacra, the tombs on the Vatican seemed to me to belong to families of wealth and fashion.

This makes still more remarkable Constantine's action in desecrating them to form the foundations of his new Basilica. There must have been an urgent cause not only for the choice of such a site but for the orientation of the building. Perhaps, like that on Calvary, it was designed to cover the traditional site of an execution as well as a traditional grave.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

HISTORY IN A CHANGING WORLD. By Geoffrey Barraclough. (Blackwell; 18s.)

Professor Barraclough has long held a recognized position among English historians gained by the wide range of his interests, the challenging originality of his thought and by his concise and vivid prose. All these qualities are apparent in his *History in a Changing World*, a collection of articles and lectures for the most part already published but now re-issued linked together in a single volume.

It is perhaps the penalty of his originality of mind and of his power of incisive assertion that all his life he has had critics among his colleagues and that their number seems to be steadily on the increase. The present volume will provide them with much fresh ammunition: it contains so many assertions that are not tenable. It is not tenable that St Ambrose was filled with antipathy to Roman traditions (p. 36); even a reading of the *De Officiis* would show that his thought was moulded by that of Cicero and Seneca. It is not correct that 'it would be hard to show that the course of the Renaissance was accelerated or directly influenced by the fall of Constantinople' (p. 132); it could be done by a very brief consideration of the household of Cardinal Bessarion and of the influence of the disciples of Gemistos Plethon. It cannot be maintained that with the sole exception of Novgorod 'the towns played no part in Russian life' during the late medieval period (p. 189). The rise of Moscow would be sufficient answer; but all medieval Russian history seems to follow the pattern first set at Kiev, the importance of the prince