

readers by translating some of her literary source material, especially when this is drawn from authors like Seneca and includes phrases in Greek.

Yet, despite these niggles, no review can encompass within a few hundred words the wealth of information that I.-M. has accumulated and analysed. She has brought together evidence from a whole range of sources—epigraphic, sculptural, architectural, numismatic, and decorative—into a well organized, scholarly, and lucidly argued account of a vastly complex mosaic of interaction.

University of Warwick

STANLEY IRELAND

GOD AND GOLD

D. JANES: *God and Gold in Late Antiquity*. Pp. xii + 211, 13 figs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Cased, £37.50. ISBN: 0-521-59403-0.

In this book Dominic Janes surveys the material culture of the Church from the developed Tetrarchy to just prior to the Carolingian Empire. As a self-confessed atheist, he finds great irony in the seeming disparity between the Christian message of poverty expressed in the Gospels and the Church's use of wealth to beautify buildings rather than to succour the poor. To explain the continuation of this tradition, previously used to express the power of secular nobility and pagan gods, J. uses modern and comparative approaches to the study of material display. He includes ideas from archaeology, anthropology, and art history, but unfortunately to extremes; at times the text appears to be a collection of extracts from other writers, and lengthy footnotes disrupt the continuity. Some references, although interesting, do not seem particularly relevant and only complicate the picture. Is it necessary to highlight the importance of medieval grave goods with a study of funerary ritual in Borneo and an examination of the funeral rates of the Mesakin and Moro of the Sudan (p. 39 ref. 148 and p. 140 ref. 149)? J. would have done better to concentrate on his Latin: he has *Comites Sacrorum Largitionem* (p. 36) and *Comites Sacrae Largitiones* (p. 38), *coronae aurea* (p. 126) and *corona aurea* (p. 27).

The disparity, as J. himself states several times, was not recognized as an issue during Late Antiquity; the most appropriate use of wealth was to honour God through the beautification of His agent on earth, the Church. Is it possible, then, that the main argument of this book merely states the obvious? Christianity had inherited a long tradition in the use of gold and other precious substances as symbols of divinity and power and, as J. points out, the Church had to find an accommodation with the 'treasure society' of which it was a part. There is a considerable amount of evidence in the Old Testament for the use of precious metals and gemstones to decorate the Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle, and the Temple of Solomon that J. mentions in passing but does not examine in detail. There are also two direct requests from the Lord for offerings from the children of Israel (Exod. 25:1–7 and 30:11–16). Such passages deserve comment, and greater emphasis could have been placed on the gifts of the Magi, three of the most precious substances in the Ancient world.

Instead J. concentrates on biblical books which generated a considerable body of literary exegesis from Late Antiquity, the Song of Songs, and the Revelation of John the Divine, focusing on the latter possibly because the former has little mention of treasure items. Even though the Gospels direct individuals not to lay up treasure for themselves on earth, no rules were laid down to govern the appearance of places of

worship. J. points out these facts and refers to the example of the Apostles, who held their wealth in common (Acts 2:44 and 4:32–5). A discussion of this aspect rather than the reference given (p. 93 n. 227) would perhaps have been more useful here, especially in light of the instructions Jesus gave to the Apostles to have neither gold, silver, nor brass in their purses (Matt. 9:10 and Luke 9:3).

On contemporary opposition to the Church's wealth, J. correctly draws attention to the criticism of the incorrect use of riches in Jerome's epistles and the lack of references to treasure in Augustine's *City of God*, but he does not place this in the context of the literary tradition of complaint, though he does point out the condemnation of luxury by Pliny and Livy. He also fails to comment on Jerome's friendship with Gregory of Nazianzus, the affluent Bishop of Constantinople, which perhaps accounts for his being 'compelled to pull his punches' (p. 56) in order to avoid direct criticism of the wealth of the Church.

The chapter on gold ground mosaics is informative, if selective rather than comprehensive, and the lack of illustrations, especially colour, disappointing but understandable in a volume of this size. J. does generalize, though, when he says that 'the most complex schemes would have been placed on walls' (p. 107); there are many examples of the most complicated designs laid on floors, such as the 'Alexander' mosaic from the House of the Faun at Pompeii.

J. comments on the symbolic nature of Christian art but misses the point that the fixed staring gaze in the portrait mosaics of Theodora and Justinian was to suggest that they had their eyes upon, not this world, but the next. He also pays little attention to the importance of the Cross as a symbol of the Christian triumph over death as well as paganism, which would be difficult to portray by a literal picture of the dying Christ, his body broken in the process of crucifixion.

This book contains much of interest, but J.'s disjointed style makes it hard going, and his determination to demonstrate his familiarity with a large number of modern social theories adds an unnecessary complication. A simpler answer might have been to recall that the Wise Men had brought gold to the stable at Bethlehem and that Jesus had reproached those who criticized Mary Magdalene for lavishing an expensive unguent on his feet.

University of Warwick

BARBARA BERRY

CUMONT'S LEGACY

C. BONNET, A. MOTTE (edd.): *Les syncrétismes religieux dans le monde Méditerranéen antique. Actes du Colloque International en l'honneur de Franz CUMONT à l'occasion du cinquantième anniversaire de sa mort. Rome, Academia Belgica, 25–27 septembre 1997*. Pp. 400, pls. Tournhout: Brepols, 1999. Paper. ISBN: 90-74461-27-1.

Franz Cumont's name is virtually synonymous with Mithraism and its historiography. However, as the title of this collection indicates, his interests as well as his influence had a far wider reach. His contributions to the emergence of the notion of syncretism, now central to the study of religions and culture in the Mediterranean world, were seminal. This volume is dedicated both to a reassessment of this concept in Cumont's work and to its impact on scholarship half a century after his death. It also pays homage to his activities on behalf of the foundation in 1939 of the