

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.

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## 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

Academia Belgica in Rome, which he inspired well beyond his death in 1947, not least through the donation of his significant library.

The volume is subdivided into four parts and one concluding essay. The first part focuses on Franz Cumont himself, his involvement in the founding of the Academia Belgica, aspects of his scientific correspondence, a bibliometric analysis of citations of his work, and his own use of 'syncretism'. As A. Motte elaborates, Cumont himself used the word rarely, and certainly not as a clearly defined methodological tool (p. 38). Rather, a survey of his works reveals that he used the term to evoke a multifaceted and fluid phenomenon: the transplantation of 'oriental' religious ideas into the Roman world and their impact on indigenous practices, the progressive erosion of differences between religions, and the resulting unifying tendencies, both theologically and in the area of ritual practice. 'Chez Cumont, syncrétisme évoque prioritairement un habitus de l'esprit, une mentalité' (p. 34). The term also indicates Cumont's fundamental methodological contributions to religious scholarship, his 'multi-disciplinary' approach, combining material and textual evidence. All three of his principal areas of interest are informed by this method: Mithraism, the presence and influence of so-called oriental religions such as Judaism in Rome, and notions of the beyond as expressed in funerary rites, concepts of suicide, and astrological treatises. According to B. Rochette, this approach permitted Cumont to organize the most variegated materials, and ensured the continuous relevance of his work (evidenced by a short and not entirely useful bibliographic survey of modern works based on Cumont).

Parts 2–4 seek to anchor the notion of syncretism (more specifically, the concepts of syncretism that have developed since Cumont, especially during the last two decades) further through detailed analyses of specific religious phenomena in different Mediterranean regions: (2) Egypt and the Near East; (3) Greece; and (4) the Etruscan, Roman and Christian world (Part 2 occupies the most and Part 4 the least space). Cumont's research interests, in terms of both regional specificity and, to some degree, chronology, prompt this arrangement. Part 2 begins with F. Dunand's interesting paper on the coexistence (rather than the syncretism) of religious images in Hellenistic Egypt, an argument she elaborates through an analysis of Serapis-imagery, which combined and juxtaposed rather than merged Greek as well as Egyptian iconographies, thus reflecting divinities that could express themselves in a plurality of forms. P. Derchain highlights the important rôle of Egyptian astrologers at the Ptolemaic court during the second century, based on the evidence of astrological, magic, and consolation literature in both Greek and Demotic. P. Xella's paper seeks to define syncretism in a manner that would allow its use in periods predating its 'classic' Hellenistic period, thus clarifying whether or not it describes a historically determined or a universal religious phenomenon. His brief overview of Mesopotamian, pre-classic Anatolian, Syro-Palestinian, and Phoenician religions reveals isolated phenomena that could be classified as tending towards syncretism, yet only the Syro-Palestine and Phoenician regions show developments he identifies as a 'prodrome' of syncretism proper. S. Ribichini's rich textual analysis of Philo of Byblos' *Phoenician History* illuminates the utilization of 'syncretistic' elements during the time of Hadrian to reconstruct a Phoenician religion. He concludes that the majority of Philo's reconstruction corresponds to Greco-Roman literary concepts. Nonetheless, Ribichini, like Xella, stresses the cosmopolitan aspects of Phoenician religion that might well have provided a particularly apt matrix for such reinterpretations. Part 2 concludes with two contributions regarding Asia Minor, R. Lebrun's observations on assimilation in central Anatolia, based on the continuous use of Hittite *theologoumena* from the second and first millennium B.C.E. and their reception in classic Greek documents, and

M. Waelkens's excavation report entitled 'Sagalassos. Religious Life in a Pisidian Town during the Hellenistic and Early Imperial Period', which confirms a virtually complete Hellenization of this city.

Part 3 begins with M. F. Baslez's overview of the reception of Atargatis in central and northern Greece, which reveals the strong local support for the goddess, followed by C. Bonnet's and V. Pirenne-Delforge's discussion of a *vexata quaestio*: the relationship between Astarte and Homer's Aphrodite, whom the authors consider a truly syncretistic 'product'. G. Sfameni Gasparro revisits Franz Cumont's first 'hero', Lucian's Alexander of Abunoteichos, and demonstrates Lucian's use of oracular practices at Delphi, Didyma, and Claros in constructing his pseudo-prophet. The section concludes with M. Waegeman's return to the hypothesis, proposed by Cumont and rejected by Gordon, that Dio Chrysostom's *Or.* 36 contains the nucleus of an authentic Zoroastrian–Mithraic hymn. She concludes that the hymn might not have to be entirely fictional—Dio might have received some insights through Posidonius of Apamea, who might have had first-hand knowledge.

J. Arce's contribution to the methodological problems regarding Roman funerary practices (as opposed to funerary monuments) responds to Cumont's fundamental works on the subject, emphasizing that only one subsequent monograph (G. Wesch-Klein, *Funus Publicum* [Stuttgart, 1993]) details funerary practices in the western part of the empire. His brief overview, which opens Part 4, highlights the interplay between 'fixed' and 'flexible' parts of funerary rituals, which reflect the cost and the social status of the deceased rather than chronological, regional, or religious differences. D. Briquel's essay on the 'renaissance' of Etruscan religion, the *Etrusca disciplina*, as an anti-Christian movement in late antiquity, and P. F. Beatrice's reconstruction of the fate of the so-called *Book of Wisdom of Hystaspes*, a widely known anti-Roman Mazdean apocalyptic text written during Trajan's reign, in Christian hands (primarily Lactantius'), complete Part 4. R. Turcan's summary concludes the volume.

Cumont's far-reaching interests provide the matrix for this collection of equally far-reaching essays, and his work, concretized in the concept of 'syncretism', should also be the force unifying them into a cohesive whole. This is, of course, a tall order, yet one that the volume achieves in the end thanks to Cumont's method. Each contribution investigates the multivalent notion of 'syncretism' in a specific period and region by resorting to a detailed analysis of material and textual documents. The result is a series of *Einzelstudien* of great interest and high scholarly standards by authors who also reflect Cumont's *Sitz im Leben*, Belgium, France, and Italy. The theoretical discussions might have benefited from greater 'geographical' diversity, but the volume remains a fitting tribute to a great scholar.

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## PERIPATETIC DIALECTIC

H. BALTUSSEN: *Theophrastus against the Presocratics and Plato. Peripatetic Dialectic in the De sensibus*. Pp. xiv + 285. Leiden, etc.: Brill, 2000. Cased, \$90. ISBN: 90-04-11720-2.

This book has an excellent project, but its execution leaves something to be desired. The project lies at the intersection of two of the liveliest areas of ancient philosophical studies in recent years. First, there is the development of Theophrastan