

of the San Pudenzianna church in Rome. A new departure in this issue is the large increase in the number of learned reviews, no fewer than twenty-nine being printed. This is a welcome development, introducing, particularly to research students, a wide variety of new work on early Christian history by scholars of international standing. As usual, the production of this well-illustrated issue is faultless.

GONVILLE AND CAIUS COLLEGE,
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W. H. C. FREND

Roman law in European history. By Peter Stein. Pp. x + 137 incl. 1 map. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999 (first publ. in German as *Römisches Recht und Europa*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1996). £35 (cloth), £11.95 (paper). 0 521 64372 4; 0 521 64379 1

This is a learned and lively synthesis of the history of the *ius commune*. Beginning with an outline of the law of the Roman Republic and the formation of the Justinianic compilations, the author moves ahead to describe the rebirth of legal science in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the emergence of the classical canon law, the growth of juristic literature during the later Middle Ages, the impact of humanism on the law, the reception of Roman law in France and Germany, the growth of the natural law school, the rise of Codification, and the place of Roman law in nineteenth-century legal science. He even takes the reader into recent attempts to revive the *ius commune* within the European Community. Despite its extensive coverage and compact presentation, the book includes many gems. Its specific examples are telling, its description of (and appreciation for) commentators like Bartolus and Hugo Donellus seems particularly good and, as one might expect, the author's discussion of juristic maxims is consistently illuminating. Every scholar will learn from this account, and students coming fresh to the subject will find it an excellent place to start. Because the *ius commune* has played a vital role in the history of the Church, many readers of this JOURNAL will read it with profit.

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

R. H. HELMHOLZ

Scrivere di santi. Atti del II Convegno di studio dell'Associazione italiana per lo studio della santità, dei culti e dell'agiografia. Napoli, 22-25 ottobre 1997. By Gennaro Luongo. Pp. 535 + 6 colour plates. Rome: Viella, 1998. L.75,000. 88 85669 81 6

To 'write about saints' was essentially a propagandistic exercise, a way of making the saint in question more visible, and hagiography soon moved from the early Christian celebration of a saint's martyrdom to a genre of biography, describing the saint's entire life and *post mortem* thaumaturgic activity. The study of hagiography has come a long way from its initial use in ascertaining the 'truth' about particular saints, as Gennaro Luongo observes in his introduction to this collection. It is now just as important in the study of the role of holiness and

sanctity in Christianity and Christian theology as it is in understanding collective religious experience and the organisation of social and political life in very different times and places. In fact, the particular strength of this volume lies in its highlighting the variety of ways in which hagiography is being approached by scholars from different disciplines. And while there are papers on the Middle Ages, traditionally the preferred period for those interested in the genre, this collection gives ample space to earlier and later periods as well. A first section explores the birth and evolution of this new form of writing in response to the needs of early Christian communities, followed by a section devoted to the writing and indeed re-writing of hagiography. The focus here is on the uses to which hagiography has been put, for example, by Dante and Boccaccio (L. Battagli Ricci), in Latin and vernacular Italian *poemetti* (M. Chiesa), in women's writing within enclosed convents (C. Santoro). A third section moves away from hagiography to look at the related issues of saints' images and cults, including two papers on the Neapolitan shrine of the Madonna dell'Arco (M. Miele and L. Mazzacane), fitting given the location of the conference. The fourth and final section looks at the writings of three as yet uncanonised figures to explore their understanding of sanctity: Thérèse de Lisieux, and two popes, John XXIII and Paul VI (papers by G. Martina, A. Melloni and G. M. Vian respectively). The volume is a welcome contribution, reminding us of the legitimacy of hagiographical sources in a wide range of historical research.

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

DAVID GENTILCORE

Roms christliche Katakomben. Geschichte – Bilderwelt – Inschriften. By Vincenzo Fiocchi Nicolai, Fabrizio Bisconti and Danilo Mazzoleni (trans. Franziska Dörr). Pp. 208 incl. 178 colour and black-and-white plates + loose-leaf colour map. Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 1998. DM 58. 3 7954 1191 2

This splendidly illustrated and up-to-date study of the Roman catacombs by three distinguished Italian scholars represents a contribution by the Papal Commission for Christian Archaeology to mark the Jubilee Year of AD 2000. In the first part Vincenzo Nicolai traces the history of the catacombs from the first acquisition by the Christians of their own cemetery areas towards the end of the second century to their final disuse sometime in the sixth century. The earliest catacombs were laid out on a system of single or parallel corridors from which led a series of passages at right angles containing the serried rows of simple, anonymous graves cut into the tufa. Even those of the popes, though marked by marble plaques, were of the same design, reflecting, the writer suggests, the sense of brotherhood and uniformity among the Christian community. The great extension of the catacombs took place between 260 and 350 when the progress of Christianity among the upper classes was marked by the creation of elaborate family tombs decorated with biblical episodes, or often scenes derived from the eucharistic liturgy related to the Christian hope of the afterlife. In the latter half of the fourth century increasing devotion to the cult of martyrs led to the building of churches and the creation of adjacent cemeteries above ground, with a consequent decline in the use of catacombs for burial, a process that resulted in their ultimate abandonment.