



Madonna and Child by Carlo Crivelli. Samuel H. Kress Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

qualities he valued in Renaissance paintings—youthful optimism, happiness, faith in the individual. He notes that even when depicting religious themes, Renaissance masters drew “handsome, healthy, sane people like themselves.” The technically stunning paintings of Northern European painters like Jan van Eyck, however, demonstrated to Berenson their creators’ concern for their hands rather than their heads. “Greatness,” he declared, is achieved only by the artist who can “seize upon the spirit of life and imprison it.”

SCIENCE IN THE MIDDLE AGES. Edited by David C. Lindberg. Univ. of Chicago reprint, 1980, 549 pp. \$9.95

Even during its “golden” age, Rome produced no great scientific theorist and no great technological advance, save for the accidental discovery of cement. The 16 contributors to this readable volume find it ironic that the Middle Ages, by contrast, should be maligned as “dark.” Starting with diffuse scraps of Greek (and later Arab) learning—the barbarian invasions had taken their toll—and without

teachers to define such unfamiliar terms as “square foot,” medieval European scholars refurbished the house of science. They pieced together classical physics, pioneered in optics, and virtually invented chemistry. Physicians introduced trial-and-error experimentation, trying new drugs “first on birds, then on dumb animals, . . . then on the Friars Minor.” Medieval scientists such as Robert Grosseteste (1175–1253) and Roger Bacon (1220–92) were generalists. (Grosseteste studied the tides, the sun, the weather, rainbows, comets, the Bible, free will, and phonetics.) They were also purists—“natural philosophers” who for the most part shunned applied science. Nevertheless, the role of borrowed technologies in advancing knowledge was profound—if sometimes indirect. For example, the Chinese art of papermaking, introduced to Mediterranean lands in 704, made possible the wide circulation of the Ancients’ texts among Western scholars.

THE DECLINING SIGNIFICANCE OF RACE: Blacks and Changing American Institutions. By William Julius Wilson. Univ. of Chicago reprint, 1980. 243 pp. \$5.95

When he first published this historical study in 1978, Wilson, a noted black sociologist at the University of Chicago, came under heavy fire from civil rights leaders. But, citing statistics, he stuck to his argument: Racism is no longer the determining factor in the life chances of individual blacks. Young college-educated blacks now do as well financially as their white peers. The real problem is that of the growing black “underclass,” left behind in declining big cities by the U.S. economy’s shift to suburban service industries and Sunbelt high-technology. Hence, Wilson now suggests, black politicians should stop stressing “race” and push for federal policies that produce more jobs for *all* the nation’s poor.