burrowing through upper levels in their haste to get to more significant artifacts or simply did not recognize the telltale signs that an earthquake leaves in the earth. He provides specific details that should be helpful in creating better techniques to enable more accurate assessments of whether or not an ancient site was damaged or destroyed by an earthquake.

Throughout the book, Nur continues to challenge those who dismiss even the possibility that some ancient sites were destroyed by earthquakes instead of by the omnipresent "sea peoples" or other invaders. Nur's definition of an apocalypse does not rely upon Biblical miracles or fantasies, although several of his sources are Biblical in origin. In this well-written and scholarly text, Nur guides the reader to the compelling conclusion, based on ample scientific evidence, that many Bronze Age cities did experience considerable earthquake activity. It was not God's fault!

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Einstein's Mistakes: The Human Failings of Genius. By Hans C. Ohanian. (New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008. Pp. xix, 394. $24.95.)

Albert Einstein once admitted that "We all must from time to time make a sacrifice at the altar of stupidity, for the entertainment of the deity and mankind" (276). To track such failures, physicist Hans C. Ohanian tries his hand at history by assembling an entertaining collection of Einstein's mistakes, mainly in science but also in life, organized biographically.

The author argues that Einstein's early mistakes were fruitful, that his genius consisted of being able to distill great discoveries from erroneous ideas. Contrary to traditional accounts, Ohanian portrays Einstein as a stubborn mystic who danced blindly around his silly mistakes, cherry-picking experimental data, leading sometimes to inspired success but often to mediocre results and delusional failure. The historical material mainly echoes lively passages from popular biographies of Einstein—hence lacking provenance and dates or marred by apocryphal quotations and false anecdotes. Most primary sources used consist only of Einstein's published works in his *Collected Papers* and letters, but at least Ohanian does provide accurate translations from the German originals.

Ohanian hardly admits that some of Einstein's "big mistakes" continue to be debated. For example, he disparages the conventional procedure for synchronizing clocks by which Einstein posited the constancy of the one-way speed of light as an assumption. Ohanian claims that it is an experimental fact, verifiable by the transport of clocks. But since the rate of clocks is affected by their speed, how does

one even measure their speed? This problem has been debated for decades, yet Ohanian just ignores the literature. By contrast, a masterful history is available: Max Jammer's *Concepts of Simultaneity* [2006].

Such disagreements with Einstein lead Ohanian to revive Hendrik Lorentz's old theory (that a privileged reference frame exists in the universe and that there are dynamical causes for the relativistic effects of length contraction and time dilation). He claims that Lorentz and Einstein were both right. But not everyone will agree. Nevertheless, Ohanian discusses many topics with admirable clarity. He provides crystal clear explanations of why Einstein's famous Principle of Equivalence is, strictly speaking, false. He lucidly critiques Einstein's inconclusive attempts to prove $E = mc^2$ by comparison to Max Laue's proof of 1911. The book also includes discussions of quantum physics and of Einstein's personal and professional relations.

Over the decades, Einstein became increasingly isolated from other physicists, most of whom dismissed his aims as misguided. Ohanian describes the older Einstein's efforts as a tragic and futile obsession to publish half-baked theoretical trash, deaf to peer criticism. Still, impressed by Einstein's overall success, Ohanian celebrates him as "a sleepwalker," *à la* Koestler, a genius who benefited from "a gift that cannot be learned" (335). But this emphasis on a supposedly "mystical" intuition fails to satisfy as a fair explanation of Einstein's creativity.

This book will certainly entertain general readers, but it has no mathematical explanations and lacks the historical solidity to satisfy specialists. Historians can yet appreciate it as a unique collection of Einstein's failures, and a welcome step away from physicists' tired hagiographies of their favorite role model.

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The Interweaving of Rituals: Funerals in the Cultural Exchange Between China and Europe. By Nicolas Standaert. (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washingon Press, 2008. Pp. viii, 336. $65.00.)

Death may seem a strange place to seek evidence of cultural exchange, but in this elegant study, funerary rituals clearly manifest the early interaction between European Jesuits and Chinese elites. Weaving together sources as varied as Latin liturgies, Confucian classics, and the edicts of Manchu emperors, the author deftly traces the emergence of a new Chinese Christian identity in the seventeenth century. Along the way, Nicolas Standaert proposes an important new framework for analyzing cultural exchanges in situations where an entity other than the West plays a dominant role.