limited number of pages, but more space might usefully have been given to direct discussion of the evidence rather than the citation of modern scholars: at times the main text reads much like the annotated bibliography, with strings of authors' names listed in support of particular ideas. It is curious that a scholar so keenly aware of changing trends in his subject should feel that a majority vote of contemporaries will in itself help to advance the debate.

The final substantive chapter of the book (chapter 6), 'Jesus' Concept of God and his Self-Understanding’, is rather different from the rest, comprising Charlesworth’s own attempt to discover something about Jesus' purpose. He makes a number of good points, but it is unfortunate that much of his analysis is based on Jeremias's theory that 'Abba' means 'Daddy', against which see now James Barr in Journal of Theological Studies 39 (1988), pp. 28–47.

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This is a thorough collection of possible Cynic parallels to themes in the early Christian writings. Downing hopes to establish that some early Christians would often have sounded to their hearers like those radical pagan preachers who were seen by others and by themselves as Cynics. He further suggests, but more tentatively, that 'these Cynic-sounding Christians did in fact mean (or often meant) to be understood in much the same sort of way as the general run of Cynics seemed to be understood' (p. ix), and that the first Christian to use Cynic ideas in such a way was Jesus himself. According to this hypothesis, Jesus will have picked up Cynic notions from wandering preachers who visited Sepphoris, the hellenistic city which lay only six miles from Nazareth (p. x). Downing goes on to suggest that the Cynic parallels he has accumulated are often much closer to the Jesus tradition than parallels from Palestinian Judaism, and that Jesus is better understood against a pagan philosophical background than in the light of Josephus, Philo, and Qumranic and rabbinic texts (p. xi).

This is a bold and independent thesis in the context of recent scholarship. It is also historically possible, for the degree to which Jews in Lower Galilee in the first century were influenced by Greek culture of any type is a matter for legitimate, if not always very fruitful, debate. But it is questionable whether the issue can be determined, or even understanding much advanced, by the sort of exercise undertaken here. Downing has divided the New Testament writings into seven chapters on the basis of their origin (from the 'Q' material to the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline epistles), and has then sub-divided each chapter into broad themes, for each of which he has collected from the Cynic corpus a mass of more or less close parallels to the New Testament topic or images. What Downing sees as close similarities are printed in large type, less close material in small type; verbal correspondences are given in Greek as well as in translation; Jewish parallels, when they can be found, are printed between square brackets at the beginning of each section. A great deal of sometimes recondite material from the ancient world is thus made easily accessible to the reader.

But what does it all add up to? To take an example at random: how does it
illuminate Matt. 21:14 on Jesus' healing of the blind and the lame to contrast it with Epictetus' remark that you should not boast of your own good health unless like Asclepius you can show your auditors how they can immediately be restored to health (p. 110)? The reader is often left floundering to see any significance at all in the passages put forward. In any case, as Downing is well aware, Cynicism was as much a philosophical style as a philosophical programme, and there was much variation in the teachings of different Cynics, while Cynic moral commonplace crop up in the writings of many authors such as Seneca who adopted neither the Cynic name nor the Cynic lifestyle. It may be that such ideas spread so widely precisely because they were commonplace. Both Cynics and Jesus (as portrayed in the Gospels) espoused many earthy ethical notions whose unremarkability is positively accentuated by Downing's highly colloquial translations in this collection. Whether such similarities imply anything at all about a Cynic-like call to radical political action by the early Jesus movement in Galilee (p. x) is another matter altogether.

**Martin Goodman**


This is a sound introduction to the Roman world in which early Christianity blossomed. Written jointly by a classicist and an expert in the New Testament, it will serve a useful purpose in bringing the fruits of modern scholarship to New Testament students at a reasonable price.

Some of the over-simplification inevitable in such a survey grates a bit. Too much is asserted about the whole Roman Empire on the evidence of Italian sources alone. Material from different centuries is flung together into a composite picture without warning to the reader. The chapter on the ancient economy ignores much recent work by Keith Hopkins and by Italian scholars. No account is given of the problems in using difficult sources for history—the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and Josephus are all quoted uncritically. The literary style is rather careless and occasionally repetitive.

It is more disturbing for readers of this journal that the authors of such a book are apparently not familiar with the relevant Jewish materials. There is hardly a reference to Qumran, and a passage from the Babylonian Talmud is ascribed to the Mishnah (p. 49). Reliance on good modern scholarship usually prevents anything very misleading from creeping in. An exception may be the assertion (p. 64) that Jewish charity ('among the Hebrews') differed from Christian charity in that the former is essentially selfish.

Much remains of value. New Testament students will find this book accessible and useful. Brief bibliographies give balanced suggestions for further reading.

**Martin Goodman**


This book is one of a new series intended, according to the editors, to introduce