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 commonplaces 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 commonplaces. 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