
This revised doctoral dissertation sets the teaching ascribed to Jesus into the economic context of his day. After a sensible introduction outlining the best way to use sociological models, the first two chapters provide a lucid and thorough description of production and distribution in first-century Palestine. The analysis is intelligent and careful; the author's impressive competence in referring to ancient units of measurement is in part explained by his specially devised computer program for the study of such material, which is published as Appendix 2.

I see little to quarrel with in the economic analysis. Oakman might have espoused a somewhat more optimistic view of the effects of taxation in coin if he had taken into account the work of Keith Hopkins (e.g. *JRS* 70 (1980)). The belief that Judaean land became *ager publicus* after A.D. 70 (p. 67) ought now surely to be dropped, not just qualified. The notion that the Jewish war was a battle for the use of the land and distribution of its products (p. 142) simplifies dangerously. The use of writings by agronomists from Italy, such as Columella, to understand Judaean peasant farming practices (p. 24) is somewhat suspect. More generally, more critical use could have been made of archaeological evidence and there could be rather more on the peculiar economic role of Jerusalem. But all this leaves a mass of material in which Oakman gives as good an account of the agrarian economy of first-century Palestine as can be found anywhere.

The second part of the book, which explores the Jesus tradition in the light of the analysis of the economy given in the first part, maintains the same cautious approach, exemplified in a long, somewhat antiquarian section on the likely behaviour of carpenters in Jewish society (pp. 176–82). Oakman's conclusion, that Jesus did not propose redistribution of land but did call for remission of debts (p. 168), is plausible enough but smacks of a statement of faith rather than argument from evidence. Since the analysis depends on assuming that particular sayings of Jesus in the Gospels are rightly attributed to him and mean what they seem to mean on the surface of the text, not all New Testament scholars will readily assent to it. Appendix 1, 'The nature and difficulties of the study of the historical Jesus,' comprises a resumé of past scholarship and a plea for the validity of the comparative method; it does not propose any specific methodology for isolating Jesus' teachings from the mass of traditions about him.

MARTIN GOODMAN


This unusual book by a Danish scholar is essentially about scholarship on Josephus. In spite of this somewhat formidable agenda, however, it is individual, readable and sometimes intriguing; its author proves a humane, generous and alert guide to the subject. Moreover, the subject itself, about which one might at first sight have reservations (better, it would seem, to attend carefully to Josephus than to put arid scholarly controversies under the microscope), turns out to have its own