

*Mark and Empire: Feminist Reflections.* By Laurel K. Cobb. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2013. Pp. xiii + 194. \$34.

This study guide on the Gospel of Mark uniquely combines three elements: recent scholarship on empire, past and present; select fruits of Markan scholarship; and the experience of people in the Two-Thirds World, with particular attention to the struggles of women. Cobb's reading is informed by her graduate studies in theology, social work, and public administration, and three decades of work with social welfare programs in 35 countries. The format resembles a biblical commentary, with sections of the Markan text printed in narrative sequence; but, as the subtitle indicates, the book is a series of "reflections" on Mark rather than a conventional commentary. C.'s primary concern is "to give a face and a voice to that Two-Thirds World I have known, and to identify modern disciples I have encountered" (5).

The first three chapters illumine the realities of empire, ancient Roman and modern American, and the imperial injustices that call disciples to a gospel response. An appendix, "Confessing Christ in a World of Violence," presents Jim Wallis's response ("The Religious Right Era Is Over," *Sojourners Magazine* [October 2004] 5–6) to the dangers of an American "righteous empire." The book's content is light on scholarly commentary but dense with the implications of the text for discipleship. Due to C.'s overarching concern for justice issues, the scholars whose works inform the comments are a select group, most often William Herzog, Richard Horsley, and Ched Myers. The reflections are designated "feminist," presumably due to the focus on the implications of the text for contemporary women. There is no explicit engagement with feminist theory and sparse reference to feminist scholars, even women scholars from the Two-Thirds World. Those familiar with the hazard of anti-Judaism in Christian interpretation of the Gospels, especially feminist readers, will regret that C.'s comments neglect to explain the villainization of Jewish leaders that occurs in the Gospels.

I highly recommend the book as a thought-provoking study guide for church groups seeking to engage Mark for contemporary discipleship. It would make a useful companion volume for groups interested in reading the works of biblical scholars who share the social location of the vulnerable women whose stories C. tells.

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*Reading Matthew for the First Time.* By Wilfrid Harrington. New York: Paulist, 2014. Pp. iii + 156. \$14.95.

In his three-page introduction, Harrington, professor emeritus of the Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy in Dublin and a prolific popularizer of current biblical scholarship, deftly indicates the post-70 AD circumstances of Matthew's Gospel and its Jewish-Christian author's concern to present Jesus as teacher or sage for a community "in a state of 'cold war' with official Judaism" (2). A 25-page overview fleshes