

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

out the initial characterization of the Gospel with attention to its date (AD 80–90); context in Judaism (apocalyptic and formative/rabbinic); author, sources, structure in five narrative/discourse sections; and literary features (OT quotations and parables about evildoers).

The majority of the book focuses on the five major discourses of Jesus presented in Matthew, within the framework of the infancy narrative at the beginning and the passion narrative at the end. H. treats the birth of Christ (Mt 1–2); the Sermon on the Mount (5–7); the mission sermon (10); the sermon in parables (13); the sermon on the church (18, with attention to Matthew 16:13–20); teachings foretelling the Passion (19–23); the judgment sermon (24–25); and the passion, death, and resurrection (26–28). Each of these sections of text is further subdivided into their main component parts—for example: the beatitudes (5:1–12); the principle (5:17–20); the antitheses (5:21–48); and three acts of piety (6:1–18). Also included are a four-page epilogue that succinctly reprises the presentation in the main part of the book, a two-page bibliography, and a six-page glossary.

H.'s presentation is especially recommended for nonspecialists eager to deepen their knowledge of Scripture in the context of the church. His treatment of Matthew's text is clear throughout, informed by pertinent scholarship, unencumbered by jargon, and based on consensus views. Care is taken to contextualize each segment of the text treated in relation to the larger Gospel, the presumed historical situation, and issues of a pastoral/theological nature that may be raised by the text.

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Hellenistic and Biblical Greek: A Graduated Reader. By B. H. McLean. New York: Cambridge University, 2014. Pp. xxxiv + 509. \$39.99.

McLean's volume, inspired by Allen Wikgren's *Hellenistic Greek Texts* (1947), consists of 67 carefully chosen textual excerpts ranging in length (20–100 lines) and complexity (isometric and compositional examples), arranged in eight parts according to their reading difficulty. Each text is amply annotated with details of source text, date, provenance (if known), related texts, and grammatical details of vocabulary and syntax.

The real value of M.'s work is the selection of texts that provides valuable exposure to the variety and complexity of Hellenistic Greek. The examples selected move the reader far beyond the biblical and early Jewish and Christian material typically found in an intermediate-advanced reader. The extensive noncanonical material avoids the acute difficulty of students' common knowledge of translations and also subverts dependence on computer software. The array of papyrus letters (part IV), magical texts (part V), and epigraphic inscriptions (part VII) will inevitably whet the appetite for more. Drawing on his earlier research in epigraphy, M. offers several helpful avenues for considering dialectical differences within the corpus. Online materials (listed on ix–xi) are readily downloadable from the accompanying CUP website, and consist