

# The Top One Hundred Books on the Bible and Social Justice



Recommended by the Center and Library  
for the Bible and Social Justice

Compiled and Annotated by Laurel Dykstra

**T**HIS IS NOT A definitive list but a live, working document compiled by the members of the Center and Library team. It is the product of negotiation and conversation and reflects both the biases and perspectives of the producers as well as the reality that biblical studies has long been a discipline that is white and male dominated.

Titles were chosen according to several guiding principles.

- *Broad exposure and diversity*: Many anthologies and commentaries are included in order to introduce more scholars. In order to include the work of more individuals, we have limited the number of titles by each.
- *Buried Treasures*: We've included underappreciated and overlooked volumes.
- *Accessibility*: We include readable, findable, and affordable books.
- *Movement Building*: We emphasize scholars who are connected to communities working for change.
- *Inspiration*: We include books that Christians working for justice recommended because they changed how they thought and acted.

Aichele, George et al. (The Bible and Culture Collective). *The Postmodern Bible*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

Using readings from Old Testament and New Testaments, this book examines the multidisciplinary debates emerging from postmodernism by examining the epistemological, political, and ethical positions in the work biblical studies. A handbook on postmodern methods and contemporary approaches to reading, including reader-response, poststructuralism, and womanist. Produced by a collective. Challenging. (398 pages)

Avalos, Hector, et al., editors. *This Abled Body: Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies*. Semeia Studies 55. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007.

The first booklength publication to bring together disability scholarship and biblical studies. Essays from academics and activists address method, specific biblical texts, and the social construction of disability. Contributions range from scholarly to popular. (246 pages)

Bailey, Randall C., and Jacquelyn Grant, editors. *The Recovery of Black Presence: An Interdisciplinary Exploration*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1995.

Essays from Black scholars in honor of pioneering Old Testament scholar Charles B. Copher. Divided into biblical and theological sections, the book covers a wide range of topics related to Africans and Black men and women in Scripture. Tone ranges from scholarly and technical to grassroots and accessible. (250 pages)

Bauer, Angela. *Gender in the Book of Jeremiah: A Feminist-Literary Reading*. New York: Lang, 2003.

Follows the use of gendered imagery through Jeremiah. Feminist hermeneutics and literary criticism show how female imagery, particularly motherhood and sexual violence, substantiates the movement of Jeremiah from call to repentance, remembrance to redemption. Bauer examines issues of power and challenges the theology of Jeremiah from the perspectives of current feminist liberation theologies. Detailed, scholarly. (203 pages)

Berman, Joshua A. *Created Equal: How the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Rabbi Berman demonstrates the pervasive egalitarian impulse in the theology, narrative, politics, and economics of the Pentateuch in contrast to the hierarchical structure of surrounding ancient cultures. Includes modern parallels. Readable, somewhat technical. (249 pages)

Berrigan, Daniel. *Daniel: Under Siege of the Divine*. Rifton, NY: Plough, 1998.

A poetic and political contemporary commentary on the book of Daniel, by priest, poet, and activist Daniel Berrigan. Contains the full text of Daniel interspersed with thoughtful explorations of ancient and modern political and resistance contexts. Accessible. (219 pages)

Brenner, Athalya, editor. *Feminist Companion to the Bible*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993–1997.

A series of ten volumes to accompany books or portions of the Hebrew Bible. Each volume is a collection of scholarly articles anchored in specific texts. Christian and Jewish feminists offer varied perspectives on the liberative nature of the text and scripture as a source for liberation and justice. Accessible to quite technical.

Brett, Mark G., editor. *Ethnicity and the Bible*. Boston: Brill 2002.

Available electronically from Questia. An anthology of international contributions. The first half of the book looks at specific biblical texts that relate to issues of ethnicity. The second half focuses on culture and interpretation, with strong contributions from indigenous perspectives. Clear and scholarly. (512 pages)

Brown, Robert McAfee. *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984.

An introduction for North American Christians to the biblical readings of Latin American liberation theologians and base communities. Dated but accessible. (166 pages)

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Prophetic Imagination*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001.

This slim volume on prophecy in ministry describes Moses, the prophets, and Jesus offering and urging a radical alternative to empire through three practices: criticism, dismantling, and energizing. The new edition of the 1978 volume includes examples of communities involved in the concrete practice of prophetic imagination. Accessible. (146 pages)

Bunge, Marcia J. et al., editors. *The Child in the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

A collection of essays on children in particular passages and books of the Old and New Testaments, followed by four essays on broader themes.

The tone and focus are more on child affirmation than child liberation, but there is some discussion of power and justice. Clear. (467 pages)

Callahan, Allen Dwight. *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Callahan demonstrates through an examination of the history and present of Black music and literature that the Bible has been a powerful source and resource to critique injustice for slaves and subsequent generations of African Americans. The book addresses "poison" passages on skin color and slavery and is organized around four biblical themes: exile, exodus, Ethiopia, and Emmanuel. Thorough and readable. (304 pages)

Cardenal, Ernesto. *The Gospel in Solentiname*. Translated by Donald D. Walsh. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010.

Transcriptions of Base Christian Community liberation readings of gospel narratives by Nicaraguan peasants prior to the revolution. Collected by Solentiname community founder, poet, priest, and liberationist Cardenal. First released between 1979 and 1982 in four volumes. Very readable. (656 pages)

Carter, Warren. *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*. Bible & Liberation Series. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000.

Presents the Gospel of Matthew as for and from a marginal community of Jesus followers who resisted both Roman and Jewish authority. A line-by-line commentary with a significant introduction. Clear and detailed. (635 pages)

Ceresko, Anthony R. *Introduction to the Old Testament: A Liberation Perspective*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992.

A textbook-style introduction to Gottwald's *The Tribes of Yahweh* and other social-scientific work on the Hebrew Bible. Includes maps, illustrations, and chapter review questions. Very accessible. (336 pages)

Cook, Stephen L. *The Social Roots of Biblical Yahwism*. The Society of Biblical Literature Studies in Biblical Literature 8. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004.

An argument that the religion of premonarchic Israel came from geographically and socially diverse groups with a shared understanding of a relationship with a deity that was covenantal, village based, and

land oriented. Cook follows this "Sinai theology" stream through texts and histories. Readable. (310 pages)

Countryman, L. William. *Dirt, Greed, & Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and Their Implications for Today*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007.

Groundbreaking when it first appeared in 1988, this study of New Testament understandings and statements on sexual ethics focuses on purity and property in the ancient cultural-historical context. This is liberation scholarship for LGBTQ people experiencing homophobia in the modern church. The new edition examines recent scholarship and the conservative "ethic of creation," and offers a positive New Testament sexual ethic. Accessible. (349 pages)

Crosby, Michael H. *House of Disciples: Church, Economics, and Justice in Matthew*. 1988. Reprinted, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004.

A reading of the Gospel of Matthew from the perspective of economic justice. Matthean house churches, more affluent than those to whom the gospel was originally preached, grapple with questions of authority, division of labor, rank, patriarchy, and just distribution of goods. The book addresses the relevance of contemporary economics for those in first world. Readable with some technical language. (345 pages)

Crossan, John Dominic. *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.

A dense and passionate portrait of Jesus as social revolutionary based on sociohistorical context and the earliest Jesus tradition according to cross-attestation and strata of the ancient texts. The main body of the book has three parts describing the first-century Roman Empire, Jewish life, and Jesus himself. Significant front material and appendices. Written for scholars and lay readers. (507 pages)

Crossan, John Dominic. *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994.

A popularization of Crossan's more scholarly study *The Historical Jesus*. Based on cultural historical context and careful evaluation ancient texts, Crossan presents Jesus as a social revolutionary. Accessible. (209 pages)

De La Torre, Miguel A. *Reading the Bible from the Margins*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002.

A short introduction to liberation readings of Scripture by historically oppressed groups and faith communities living at margins. Examines race, gender, sexuality, and class. Very accessible. (196 pages)

Derrett, J. Duncan M. *Law in the New Testament*. 1970. Reprinted, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005.

A collection of eighteen studies analyze law in Jesus's environment as reflected in his parables and in his life, particularly his trial before the Sanhedrin. Derrett has researched the great body of Jewish law preserved in the Pentateuch, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Mishnah, and the Talmuds in order to expose and disclose how the juridical realities of law determined Jewish life as they are discernible in Jesus's stories, his teaching, and certain episodes in his ministry. Thorough and detailed. (550 pages)

Dube, Musa W. *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2000.

Musa Dube, of Botswana, critiques Western colonial, patriarchal, biblical scholarship and outlines a deconlonizing feminist practice based on the experiences of Two-Thirds-World women. She reads the story of the Canaanite woman of Matthew 15, focusing on its setting in empire and the colonial construction of gender and race. Thorough, scholarly, well written. (232 pages)

Dykstra, Laurel A. *Set Them Free: The Other Side of Exodus*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002.

This contemporary, First World political reading of the exodus story is a response to Latin American and Black liberation theologies. The focus is the resemblance between North American readers and the Egyptian empire. The final chapter offers First World readers strategies and examples for change, action, and solidarity. Accessible. (254 pages)

Ekblad, Bob. *Reading the Bible with the Damned*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005.

Firsthand narrative of the methods, experiences, and theological insights gained by a white evangelical pastor praying and reading Scripture, from Genesis to Paul, with marginalized persons and communities—Honduran *campesinos*, Latin American migrants, Chicano gang members, and prisoners. Clear and nontechnical. (204 pages)

Elliott, John H. *A Home for the Homeless: A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy—with a New Introduction*. 1990. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005.

Elliott applies textual and social-scientific analysis to 1 Peter, challenging the spiritualized readings of the strangers and resident aliens. Explores and demonstrates social-scientific method. Scholarly but clear. (342 pages)

Elliott, John H. *What Is Social-Scientific Criticism? Guides to Biblical Scholarship*. New Testament Series. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.

An introduction to New Testament social-scientific criticism, including its history, presuppositions, methods, practitioners, and their work. Four appendices, glossary, two bibliographies. Clear. (188 pages)

Elliott, Neil. *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008.

Employing the tools of classical studies, rhetorical criticism, postcolonial criticism, and people's history. Elliott reads Romans in the context of Roman imperial ideology as Paul's confrontation with the arrogance of empire while Christianity formed its identity in conversation with imperial power. Begins with the modern imperial context. Scholarly but clear. (224 pages)

Elliott, Neil. *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006.

Elliott argues that the Pauline texts historically used to justify oppression—slavery, the silence of women, anti-Semitism, unquestioning obedience to the state—have been distorted by interpretation through the pseudo-Pauline letters. Understanding the cross as an instrument of political execution is the key to seeing Paul accurately as agitator and martyr. Accessible. (308 pages)

Erlander, Daniel, *Manna and Mercy: A Brief History of God's Unfolding Promise to Mend the Universe*. Freeland, WA: Daniel Erlander Publications, 1992.

A deceptively simple, illustrated and hand lettered introduction to justice themes in the bible. A detailed and well-researched popularization of recent biblical scholarship. Extremely accessible. (93 pages)

Felder, Cain Hope, editor. *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.

The product of a five-year collaboration of African American Bible scholars in the US who “made biblical interpretation a daily vocational struggle” against racism and academic isolation. The landmark volume addresses the relevance of biblical scholarship for the Black church; African American sources for interpretation; ancient Africa in Scripture; and the reinterpretation of texts on slavery, power, and leadership. Accessible, tone varies. (264 pages)

Fiensy, David A. *The Social History of Palestine in the Herodian Period: The Land Is Mine*. Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 20. Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1991.

A study of land ownership in first-century Palestine contrasting the Little Tradition, under which land was a gift of God, with the Great Tradition, which saw land as a resource to be accumulated. The elites of successive dynasties formed large estates, displacing peasants from their patrimonial land, reducing them to day laborers and tenants, and disrupting the extended family. (248 pages)

Freyne, Sean. *Galilee, from Alexander the Great to Hadrian, 323 B.C.E. to 135 C.E.: A Study of Second Temple Judaism*. Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1980.

Freyne provides a detailed picture of Galilean life covering the time span in the title of his book. His use of archeological, historical, and literary sources, as well as the study of currency enables him to challenge some of the common assumptions about “Galilee of the Gentiles.” He shows that Galilee remained primarily Jewish and rural, and that the life of the Galilean peasants went on unaffected by Hellenistic and Roman cultural influences. (488 pages)

Goss, Robert E., and Mona West, editors. *Take Back the Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible*. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2000.

A collection of essays by theologians, activists, biblical scholars, pastors, teachers, and rabbis which offer a readings of particular biblical texts from diverse gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender perspectives. Resistant readings from readers who have been told the bible is, not only not for them, but against them. Accessible, varied in tone. (239 pages)



Gottwald, Norman K. *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250–1050 BCE*. 1970. The Biblical Seminar 66. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999.

The twentieth-anniversary edition of the volume that introduced social-scientific criticism to Old Testament studies and opened the way to seeing texts as ideological statements calling for social action, policy, and social criticism. Gottwald's thesis is that Israel emerged as an indigenous social revolutionary movement. Detailed but lucid. (917 pages)

Gottwald, Norman K. and Richard A. Horsley, editors. *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics*. Rev. ed. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993.

The tenth-anniversary edition of the 1983 volume co-edited by Gottwald and Antoinette C. Wire adds the voices of feminist and developing-world scholars to the conversation on sociological and political readings of Scripture. More than thirty essays by some of the most important scholars. Tone varies but mostly readable. (558 pages)

Grieb, A. Katherine. *The Story of Romans: A Narrative Defense of God's Righteousness*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002.

Follows Paul's argument in Romans for God's faithfulness as demonstrated by the faithfulness of Jesus. Particular attention is paid to the poor and powerless, and modern questions are engaged throughout. Each chapter ends with questions for further study. Well grounded in scholarship but accessible and down to earth. (167 pages)

Hamel, Gildas. *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine: First Three Centuries CE*. University of California Publications. Near Eastern Studies 23. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

A thorough examination of various poverty issues in the early church: diet, clothing, taxation, causes, language of poverty, charity, and disparity of wealth. Scholarly but readable. (290 pages)

Hanson, K. C., and Douglas E. Oakman. *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008.

A social-science companion to the gospels, which draws from Scripture, ancient texts, and archaeological data. The book introduces both social analysis and the ancient Mediterranean world through the

structures of family, politics, economy, and religion—with a focus in each section on power. Structured as a textbook, with charts and study material. Clear. (235 pages)

Hendricks, Obery M., Jr. *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of the Teachings of Jesus and How They Have Been Corrupted*. New York: Doubleday, 2006.

Hendricks presents Jesus as a radically justice-seeking political actor and strategist rooted in revolutionary strains of the Hebrew Bible. Hendricks engages modern situations of injustice during the Regan-Bush era in the US and concludes with a compelling manifesto on the practice of Jesus-politics. Accessible. (370 pages)

Herzog, William R., II. *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994.

A groundbreaking book that takes Jesus's parables of landowners, day laborers, corrupt judges, and tax collectors, at face value as political descriptions and theological evaluations of oppressive systems of power. The analysis is rooted in liberation literacy educator Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and social-scientific work on the ancient social and political context. Very accessible. (299 pages)

Horsley, Richard A., editor. *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008.

A collection of essays by leading scholars examining the ancient empires in and against which the Bible was written, and exposing the powerful anti-imperial claim that God is king. Some discussion of modern Christians resisting empire. Clear, nontechnical. (192 pages)

Horsley, Richard A. editor. *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*. Harrisburg: Trinity, 1997.

This collection of classic articles by important Pauline scholars challenges traditional readings of Paul. Addresses key Pauline terms and themes, and looks at Paul in terms of Roman Imperial context. (272 pages)

Horsley, Richard A., with John S. Hanson. *Bandits, Prophets & Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus*. Harrisburg: Trinity, 1999.

A study of the social context of first-century Jewish peasants, the popular movements that impacted them, and Jesus in that context. Challenges

the elite focus of both the gospels and biblical scholars. Accessible. (312 pages)

Howard-Brook, Wes. *Becoming Children of God: John's Gospel and Radical Discipleship*. Bible & Liberation Series. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994.

A commentary on the Gospel of John focused on the symbolic actions of Jesus in the narrative in light of the social and political situation of the Johannine community. Clear, thorough, detailed. (510 pages)

Howard-Brook, Wes, and Anthony Gwyther. *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now*. Bible & Liberation Series. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999.

Coauthored by activist scholars in justice communities on two continents, the book addresses the contemporary fascination with apocalyptic, treats the ancient social and literary context of Revelation, and offers a contemporary First-World reading that challenges the empire of global corporate rule. Detailed and thorough with tables and charts. (313 pages)

Howard-Brook, Wes, and Sharon H. Ringe, editors. *The New Testament: Introducing the Way of Discipleship*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002.

This introduction to the New Testament links discipleship in the time of Jesus with critical questions of discipleship today—justice, economics, politics, power. Each chapter, written by a different biblical scholar, takes on a book or group of books and ends with a list of literature for further study. Accessible. (214 pages)

Ipsen, Avaren. *Sex Working and the Bible*. London: Equinox, 2009.

Ipsen reads four biblical narratives with activist sex workers and calls for a feminist liberation hermeneutic that engages, rather than ignores, the perspectives and understandings of those involved in sex commerce. (247 pages)

Jobling, David. *1 Samuel*. Berit Olam. Collegeville: Liturgical, 1998.

This "critical narratology," informed by feminism and psychoanalysis, follows the large-scale patterns of 1 Samuel. Jobling organizes his reading of the text into three intersecting spheres: class, gender, and race; then asks how 1 Samuel might apply to modern justice questions around these issues. Accessible. (330 pages)

Kessler, Rainer. *The Social History of Ancient Israel: An Introduction*. Translated by Linda M. Maloney. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008.

A textbook-style introduction to social historical method and a history of Israel from early statehood to the Hellenistic age, focused on the lives, and social patterns of everyday people. Accessible with tables, charts, and timelines. (273 pages)

Kinsler, F. Ross, and Gloria Kinsler, editors. *God's Economy: Biblical Studies from Latin America*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005.

A collection of thirteen essays by important Latin American biblical scholars rooted in communities of struggle and resistance. The essays address poverty and economics in Old Testament and New Testament. Readable. (250 pages)

Kwok Pui-Lan. *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*. Bible & Liberation Series. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997.

Chinese theologian Kwok employs postcolonial and interfaith hermeneutics to challenge racism in feminist theology. She studies ancient Asian texts, and the interface between orality and literacy to rediscover a liberating biblical message. Concise and readable. (136 pages)

Lebacqz, Karen. *Six Theories of Justice: Perspectives from Philosophical and Theological Ethics*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986.

The author lays out the pros and cons of three philosophical theories of justice associated with John Stuart Mill, John Rawls, and Robert Nozick, and three theological theories of justice represented by the National Council of Catholic Bishops, Reinhold Niebuhr, and José Miranda. Clear and informative. (159 pages)

Levine, Lee I., editor. *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992.

After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, Galilee was the birthplace of rabbinic Judaism and an important Christian center. Christian and Jewish, Israeli, American, and European scholars, with a diversity of interests and expertise, offer twenty essays on the life, literature, sociology, politics, economics, and culture of Galilee from the first to seventh centuries. Scholarly. (410 pages)

Magill, Elizabeth M., and Angela Bauer-Levesque. *Seeing God in Diversity: Exodus and Acts*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2006.

A tiny and completely practical handbook for a biblically based, six-session, antiracism and diversity training, written by an antiracism trainer and a biblical scholar. This community resource uses the study of Exodus and Acts, from multiple perspectives, as a way to begin anti-oppression work. (64 pages)

Malina, Bruce J. *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*. 3rd ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001.

A classic textbook that introduces the importance of cultural anthropology in Biblical study. Malina describes values, collectivistic personality, family, and purity in the ancient Mediterranean cultural context. This edition includes new chapters on envy and the Jesus movement and ends with pages of study questions perforated for removal. Accessible. (256 pages)

Malina, Bruce J., and Richard L. Rohrbaugh. *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.

A commentary on Matthew, Mark, and Luke in two parts. (1) Blocks of the biblical text, divided by headings that emphasize sociological concerns, are followed by textual notes focused on the ancient social world. (2) "Reading scenarios" consists of alphabetized background topics from anthropological study, cross-referenced with the first half of the book. Illustrations, maps, and charts. Readable handbook. (439 pages)

Meyers, Carol. *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Using feminist and archaeological methods, Meyers challenges male and elite bias in both Scripture and archaeology. A carefully researched and constructed argument for a high level of gender parity in premonarchic Israel. Scholarly but accessible to other disciplines. (238 pages)

Miranda, José Porfirio. *Marx and the Bible: A Critique of the Philosophy of Oppression*. 1974. Reprinted, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004.

A liberation-theology classic first published in 1974. The author employs Catholic social teaching and Marxist analysis to elaborate justice, understood as fair distribution of resources to everyone, as the central theme of both Testaments. He illustrates socioeconomic oppression in Latin America with reference to the situation in his native Mexico. Lucid and accessible. (338 pages).

Moxnes, Halvor. *The Economy of the Kingdom: Social Conflict and Economic Relations in Luke's Gospel*. 1988. Reprinted, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004.

Illustrates how to study a biblical writing (Luke) as it deals with the ancient economy. Presents Luke's perspective on the moral economy of the peasant, poverty, purity, social order, hospitality, and "loving money." Engages present-day challenges. Scholarly and accessible. (183 pages)

Myers, Ched. *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*. Twentieth-anniversary edition. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008.

This groundbreaking socioliterary reading of Mark first galvanized biblical scholarship in the radical-discipleship movement in 1988, spawning political readings of other biblical texts. Myers shows Mark's Jesus as model for Christian nonviolent resistance to domination. Thorough, detailed, rigorous. (560 pages)

Myers, Ched, et al. *"Say to this Mountain": Mark's Story of Discipleship*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996.

Based on Myer's more scholarly *Binding the Strong Man*. Myers and four other community-based theological practitioners comment on the Gospel of Mark. Each chapter addresses consecutive passages from the gospel in two ways: (1) "Text in Context" looks broadly at the text in historical and cultural perspective; and (2) "Word in our World" draws out a single theme and examines it in modern context. Good for study groups, accessible. (240 pages)

Newsom, Carol A., and Sharon H. Ringe, editors. *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Expanded ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998.

A commentary on the Bible and Apocrypha from leading feminist scholars, including essays on feminist hermeneutics and women's lives in biblical times. Commentary on each book includes a general introduction to the text followed by focus on specific passages that concern women and have feminist implications. An easy to use desk resource. (501 pages)

Neyrey, Jerome H., editor. *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991.

An anthology by leading scholars on understanding Luke and Acts using social-scientific models. Divided into three sections: Social Science,

Social Institutions, and Social Dynamics. Limited gender analysis. Readable. (436 pages)

Oakman, Douglas E. *Jesus and the Peasants*. Matrix: The Bible in Mediterranean Context 4. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2007.

An examination of Gospel texts rooted in the practical realities of agriculture, subsistence diet, debt, and taxation. The collection of previously published essays is organized into three parts emphasizing Jesus as peasant: political economy and peasant values, the Jesus traditions, and the peasant aims of Jesus. Scholarly but readable. (336 pages)

Pleins, J. David. *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001.

Asks, "What are the social and moral values indicated in the varied literature—law, narrative, and wisdom, of the Hebrew Bible?" Looks at literary and cultural context and concludes that the Hebrew Bible represents a flexible and polyvalent ethical tradition that is internally corrective and complementary, striving toward greater justice. Thorough, readable. (592 pages)

Premnath, D. N. *Eighth Century Prophets: A Social Analysis*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2003.

An examination socioeconomic practice and change in 8th C Israel and Judah with a focus on peasant impoverishment and land ownership. Premnath examines the critique of land accumulation in Amos Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah with clear implications for Christians today. Clear. (231 pages)

Prior, Michael. *The Bible and Colonialism: A Moral Critique*. The Biblical Seminar 48. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997.

Examines biblical narratives of land conquest and their appropriation in the colonization of Latin America, South Africa, and Palestine. Readable. (342 pages)

Rohrbaugh, Richard L., editor. *The New Testament in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Matrix: The Bible in Mediterranean Context 1. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2006.

A collection of Rohrbaugh's previously published essays on social scientific reading of the gospels. Addresses village, family, honor, city, and status. Readable. (211 pages)

Rostovtzeff, Michael Ivanovich. *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*. 2 vols. 2nd rev. ed. by P. M. Fraser. Oxford: Clarendon, 1957.

Rostovtzeff, Michael Ivanovich. *The Social & Economic History of the Hellenistic World*. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1967.

These companion works give a comprehensive history of the Roman and Hellenistic worlds relevant to the study of the New Testament, with focus on social and economic phenomena in the light of the political, constitutional and cultural development of the time. An important multivolume reference that has been a resource for many scholars. Detailed and scholarly.

Safrai, S., and M. Stern, editors. *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*. 2 vols. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1974–1976.

These two volumes are an international effort of Jewish and Christian scholars to present the history, literature, thought, and religious culture of Judaism and early Christianity, and the relationship between these two communities in the early common era and their subsequent developments. Scholarly reference volume, tone varies. (vol. 1, 550 pages; vol. 2, 1289 pages)

Schaberg, Jane. *The Illegitimacy of Jesus: A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives*. Classics Reprints. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix, 2006.

Schaberg argues that evidence of Jesus' illegitimate conception, probably by rape, is found in Matthew and Luke. This edition includes Schaberg's description of the book's reception and divergent responses from two New Testament scholars. (318 pages)

Schottroff, Luise. *Lydia's Impatient Sisters: A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity*. Translated by Barbara Rumscheidt and Martin Rumscheidt. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995.

Shows how the everyday lives of women in Roman imperial society and their experiences of work, money, illness, and family impacted the Scripture, theology, and ecclesiology of the early church. A practical, immediate and nonspiritualized approach to parables and eschatology. Foreword by Dorothee Sölle. Densely written and well referenced. (298 pages)



Schottroff Luise, and Wolfgang Stegemann. *Jesus and the Hope of the Poor*. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986.

A methodologically careful look at Jesus through sociohistorical interpretation that locates him within Judaism and a community of disciples. The focus is on economic issues in earliest Jesus community, the wandering prophets of Sayings Source, and the more affluent and socially stratified community in the Gospel of Luke. Clear with some technical language. (134 pages)

Schottroff, Willy, and Wolfgang Stegemann, editors. *God of the Lowly: Socio-historical Interpretations of the Bible*. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1984.

A collection of essays from German scholars on "materialist interpretation" of Scripture. Divided into Old Testament and New Testament, the volume is conceived of as an experiment in method, exegesis, and social-contextual analysis, with the intention of building a "bridge of love" between our world and the biblical world. Scholarly European response to liberation theology. (172 pages)

Schüsler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. 10th anniversary ed. New York: Crossroad, 1994.

First published in 1983, this groundbreaking volume changed the face of New Testament studies. Schüsler Fiorenza set the foundation for feminist biblical interpretation and historical-theological reconstruction laying out a fourfold feminist hermeneutic of suspicion, remembrance, proclamation, and imagination. She examines the role and experience of women in the early church and the Jesus community, characterizing it as the "discipleship of equals." Scholarly, detailed. (357 pages)

Schüsler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation*. 10th anniversary ed. Boston: Beacon, 1995.

The groundbreaking volume in critical feminist biblical hermeneutics in 1985. A new Afterword to this edition situates the book in terms of recent biblical scholarship, theology, and feminism. Scholarly and detailed. (224 pages)

Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth, editor. *Searching the Scriptures*. 2 vols. New York: Crossroad, 1993–1994.

Originating with the Women in the Biblical World section of the Society for Biblical Literature, this collection uses first wave feminist Cady Stanton's 1895 *The Woman's Bible* as a starting point for a multicultural and ecumenical exploration of feminist biblical scholarship. Volume 1, *A Feminist Introduction* (1993), is focused on hermeneutics. (397 pages) Volume 2, *A Feminist Commentary* (1994), is a commentary on forty biblical and extra-biblical texts of the early Christian era, by feminist Christian, post-Christian, and Jewish authors with diverse styles, perspectives, and methodologies. (889 pages)

Segovia, Fernando F., and Mary Ann Tolbert, editors. *Reading from This Place*. 2 vols. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.

A two-volume collection of papers on social location and biblical interpretation from some of the most important scholars in this field. Volume 1, *Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*, includes a diversity of American voices. (231 pages) Volume 2, *Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective*, draws from the work of international scholars. (365 pages) Both include accessible discussions, methodology, and examples of contextual reading.

Smith, Mitzi J. *The Literary Construction of the Other in the Acts of the Apostles: Charismatics, the Jews and Women*. Princeton Theological Monograph Series 154. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010.

Demonstrates how in Acts those associated with the community—charismatics, Jews and women—are deliberately constructed as outsiders, an “internal other.” Looks at the nature of language and storytelling and what this “othering” means for Luke's theology of mission. Scholarly but accessible. (186 pages)

Soulen, Richard N., and R. Kendall Soulen. *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*. 3rd ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001.

A concise, alphabetical encyclopedia of technical terms, names, tools, and interpretive approaches in biblical scholarship. A useful companion for some of the more technical books on this list. (234 pages)

Spohn, William C. *What Are They Saying about Scripture and Ethics?* Rev. and exp. ed. New York: Paulist, 1995.

An introduction to six different ways of using the Bible for moral guidance: as command of God, moral reminder, call to liberation, response to liberation, and call to discipleship. An excellent primer and readable. (142 pages)

Stegemann, Wolfgang. *The Gospel and the Poor*. Translated by Di-etlinde Elliott. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984.

Situates the issue of poverty in the context of first-century history, politics, and economics and shows how the teaching of Jesus was truly good news to the poor. Today's Christians must be sensitive to the scandal of world-wide poverty. Passionate and accessible to the general reader. (78 pages)

Stegemann, Ekkehard W., and Wolfgang Stegemann. *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century*. Translated by O. C. Dean Jr. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999.

An economic and social history of the early church in four sections: first-century Mediterranean, Jesus and Judaism, the early church in urban Roman centers, and the role of women. Each section and chapter can be read alone. Thorough, scholarly tone, some technical language. (532 pages)

Sugirtharajah, R. S., editor. *The Postcolonial Bible*. The Bible and Post-colonialism 1. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1998.

A collection of essays by leading international scholars. At the turn of this new century, with most African, Asian, and South American countries having gained independence from their former colonists, Third World Christians struggle with a heritage of Western theology, expectations, and abuses. Non-Western readers appropriate the Bible and interpret it to resist the Western imperialism. Additionally, a history of hermeneutics in the Third World and current trends such as liberation theology and Postcolonialism are included. Scholarly and challenging. (204 pages)

Sugirtharajah, R.S., editor. *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*. 2nd ed. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995.

The first reader of post-colonial biblical scholarship. An anthology of Asian, African, Latin-American, Caribbean, and Pacific biblical interpretation that identifies the margin as a place alive with creative critique. Contributions vary in tone from grassroots to scholarly. (454 pages)

Tamez, Elsa. *Bible of the Oppressed*. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell. 1982. Reprinted, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006.

The first half of the book is a study of nine Hebrew words that mean "oppression," the context in which they appear and the agents, causes, and methods of oppression, of Israel and within Israel. The second half offers an active, resistance-based alternative to individualist and spiritualized readings of liberation, hope, and conversion. Clear, readable. (88 pages)

Tamez, Elsa. *Struggles for Power in Early Christianity: A Study of the First Letter to Timothy*. Translated by Gloria Kinsler. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007.

First Timothy has been used for centuries to reinforced patriarchal structures in the family, society, and church. Tamez looks at 1 Timothy in its socioeconomic setting in the Roman Empire and examines power struggles in the early church over social position, gender roles, theological pluralism, and authority. She draws parallels to the role of women in Latin American society and households. Contains the full text of the epistle. Accessible. (163 pages)

Trible, Phyllis. *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*. Overtures to Biblical Theology 13. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984.

Using incisive literary criticism and a feminist hermeneutic Tribble examines four neglected Old Testament stories of violence against women: Hagar, Tamar, an unnamed concubine, and Jephthah's daughter. Through a close reading she finds a powerful indictment of the texts' misogyny. Compelling, dense, and clear. (128 pages)

Waetjen, Herman C. *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple: A Work in Two Editions*. New York: T. & T. Clark, 2005.

Addresses the scholarly consensus that the Gospel of John had two distinct editions with different settings and audiences. Waetjen argues that chapters 1–20 came from the Jewish community of Alexandria and that the second edition originating at Ephesus and addressed to Gentiles, adds chapter 21 and recasts the earlier chapters in its light. Thorough, scholarly, readable. (473 pages)

Waetjen, Herman C. *A Reordering of Power: A Sociopolitical Reading of Mark's Gospel*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989.

A sociopolitical reading of Mark's gospel, based on the literary-critical principles of a close reading of the text and consistency building, that

follows Jesus, who is called into being as God's Son through his baptism, and who at the same time plays the role of an Elijah-like figure who leads his disciples into the same reordering of power (that he entered through his baptism) in order to continue the work of transforming the world and establishing justice and reconciliation. (257 pages)

Walsh, Brian J., and Sylvia C. Keesmaat. *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004.

This reading of Colossians in ancient and contemporary contexts presents a radical challenge from the Apostle Paul. The messiahship of Jesus necessarily subverts world powers and calls Christians to do the same. Well written, with broad range, sometimes technical. (256 pages)

Walzer, Michael. *Exodus and Revolution*. New York: Basic, 1985.

A political reflection on the exodus story and the ways it has been used politically in recent history. Walzer contrasts two readings of the text: specific and practical "Exodus politics" and universalized and idealized "messianic politics." Accessible and engaging. (170 pages)

Weems, Renita J. *Just a Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible*. Philadelphia: Innisfree, 1988.

Explores the few relationships between women in Old Testament and New Testament from an unapologetically African American perspective. Short reflections on dynamics of power and affection connect women today with women in Scripture. Illustrated by Nashormeh Wilkie. Available electronically with the subtitle *Understanding the Timeless Relationship between Women Today and Women in the Bible*. Passionate and accessible. (145 pages)

West, Gerald O. *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible*. Interventions 2. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1999.

This call for dialogue between biblical scholars and those who read the Bible from their own impoverished and marginalized contexts seeks a new popular methodology. Engages liberation hermeneutics, inculturation hermeneutics, and postmodernism. Readable. (182 pages)

West, Gerald O., and Musa W. Dube. *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

Fully aware of its colonial history this anthology engages the Bible as an African book. Prominent African scholars address African biblical

scholarship and interpretation, African contexts, and intersections of power in African biblical interpretation. Includes a bibliography of African biblical scholarship. Scholarly and clear. (828 pages)

Wink, Walter. *The Powers Series*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984–1992.

A three-volume series: a resource for scholars and activists. An attempt to address violence and social evil from a New Testament perspective based on the understanding of “principalities and powers” in modern and ancient Domination Systems. *Theology of Nonviolence. Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (1984) (181 pages); *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence* (1986) (227 pages); *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*. Some technical language, (1992) (423 pages)

Wire, Antoinette. *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul’s Rhetoric*. 1990. Reprinted, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003.

An analysis of 1 Corinthians focused on the theology, practice, and social status of the Corinthian women prophets as revealed by Paul’s contrasting theology, practice and status. Scholarly, technical, and densely argued, with significant appendices. (320 pages)

Yee, Gale A. *Poor Banished Children of Eve: Woman as Evil in the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003.

An examination of “wicked women” in the Hebrew Bible. Drawing on examples from Genesis, Hosea, Ezekiel, and Proverbs, Yee shows that the subordination of women in the text is an expression of elite males’ legitimation of their own socioeconomic, religious, and political power. Tone is scholarly but relatively accessible. (298 pages)

Yoder, John Howard. *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.

Concerns nonviolence and Jesus as a political figure. Through readings of Luke and Romans, Yoder argues that Jesus taught and demonstrated a social ethic that was normative for the early church. Updated after twenty years to reflect more recent scholarship. Connected but independent essays. Readable. (257 pages)

#### AND FOUR RECOMMENDED BIBLES

*The Christian Community Bible*. Pastoral Bible Foundation, Claretians Publications, 1988.

A dynamic-equivalence translation from the Philippines. The original version was the very popular *La Biblia Latinoamérica* (1971) in Spanish, which came out of the base Christian communities. Versions are now available in French, Tagalog, Chinese, and other languages and most are free online. Includes introductions and notes that reflect on justice themes. Within the text these themes are amplified by font and text size.

*Holy Bible: African American Jubilee Edition* (Contemporary English Version). American Bible Society, 1999.

Edited by the Reverend Virgil Wood, one-time associate of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., this version of the Bible focuses on the Jubilee vision of spiritual, social, and economic justice. It has three hundred pages of materials connecting Scripture with African American context, culture, values, and imagery.

*New Revised Standard Version*. Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, 1989.

A thorough revision of the Revised Standard Version of 1952 incorporating new scholarship and sources. A word translation. Uses gender-inclusive language. The editors of this volume consider the NRSV to be the best English-language study Bible.

*The Poverty and Justice Bible* CEV (Contemporary English Version), American Bible Society, 2008.

The CEV focuses less on ancient context and makes use of paraphrasing but is accessible to those with limited reading skills. Highlights passages that pertain to issues of poverty and justice. Includes brief studies on modern justice issues like water, fair trade, and trafficking in persons, and suggestions for action.

