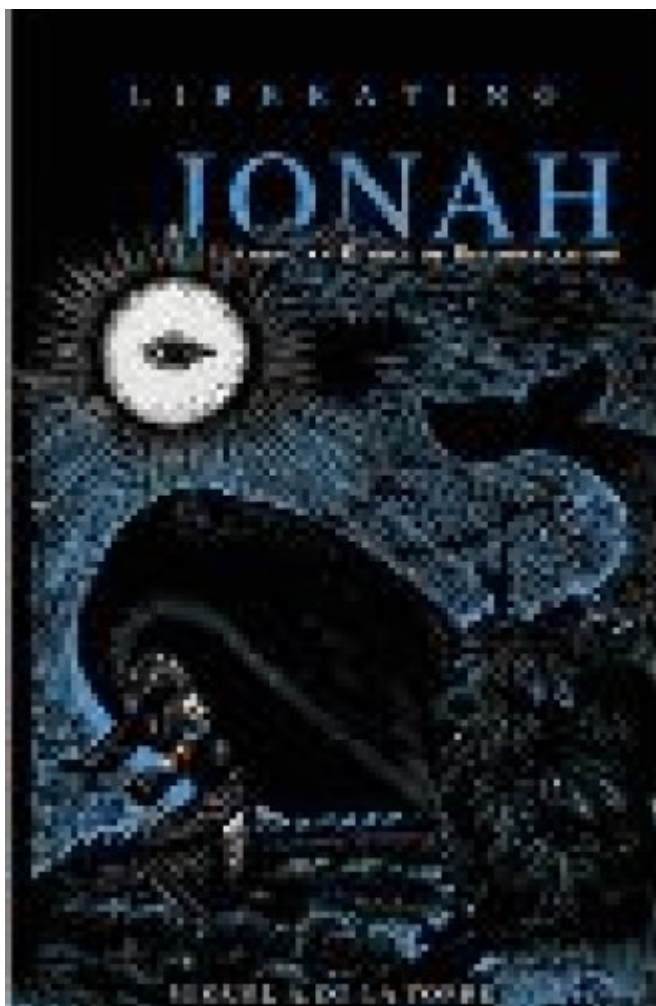


# Take and read

selected by [Kathleen M. O'Connor](#) in the [May 6, 2008](#) issue

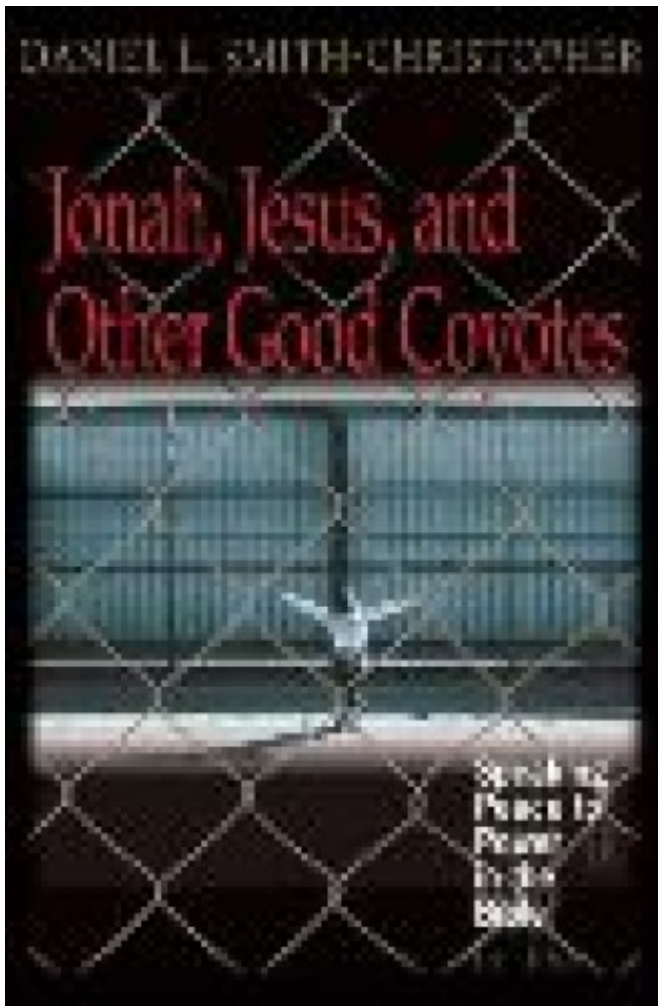
## In Review



### **Liberating Jonah: Forming an Ethics of Reconciliation**

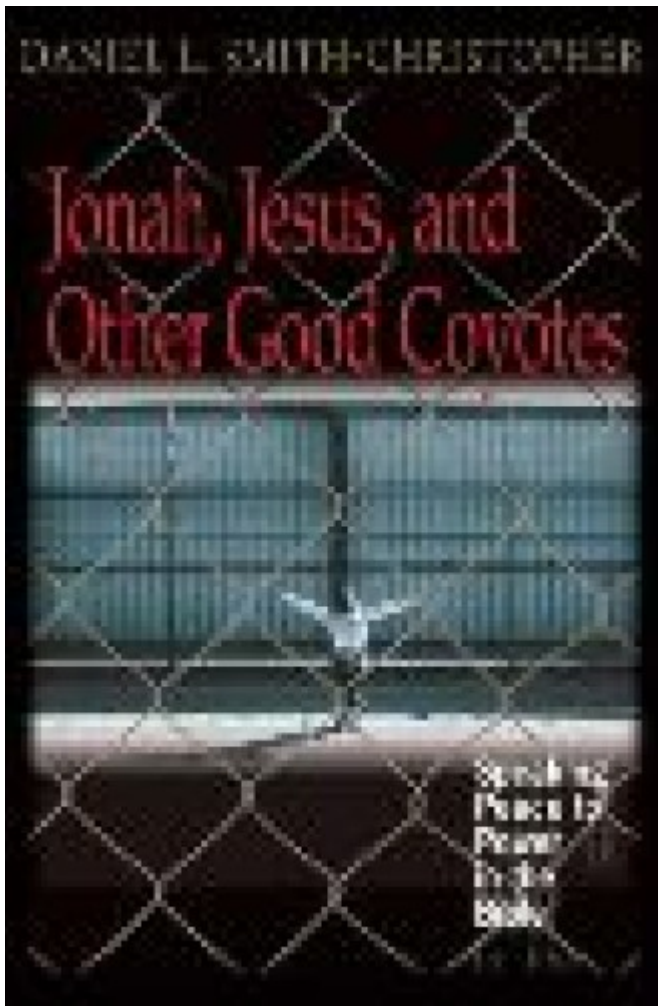
Miguel A. De La Torre

Orbis



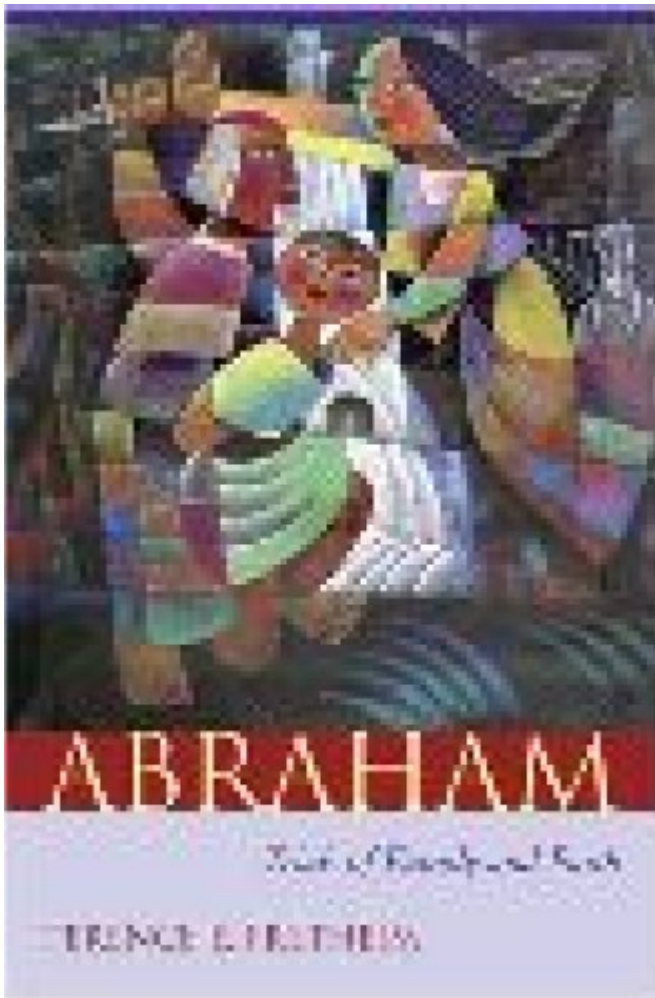
**Jonah, Jesus, and Other Good Coyotes: Speaking Peace to Power in the Bible**

Daniel L. Smith-Christopher  
Abingdon



**Jonah, Jesus, and Other Good Coyotes: Speaking Peace to Power in the Bible**

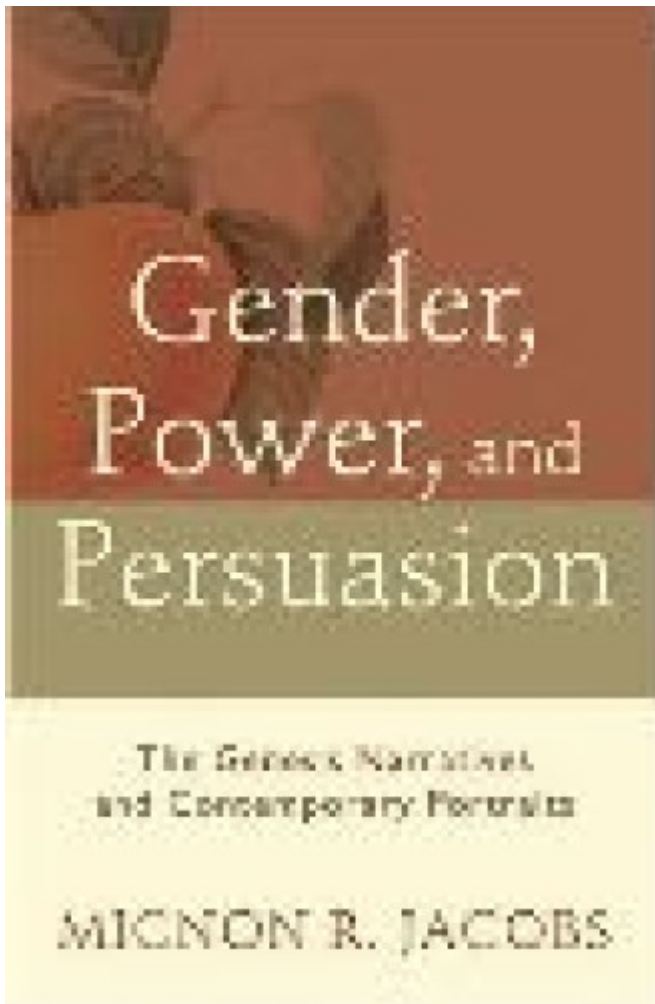
Daniel L. Smith-Christopher  
Abingdon



## **Abraham: Trials of Family and Faith**

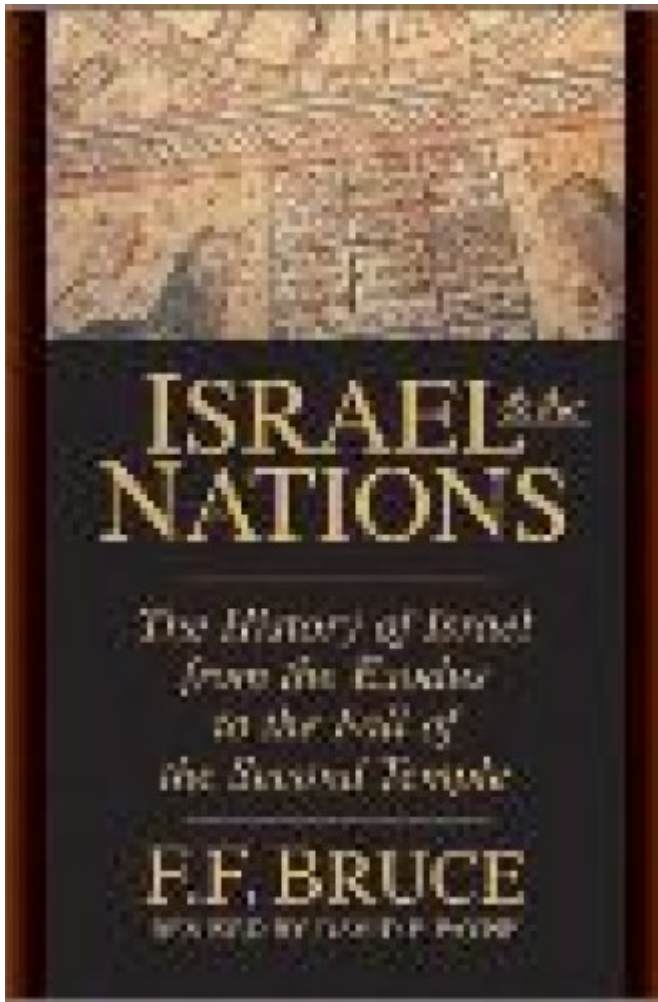
Terence E. Fretheim

University of South Carolina Press



**Gender, Power, and Persuasion: The Genesis Narratives and Contemporary Portraits**

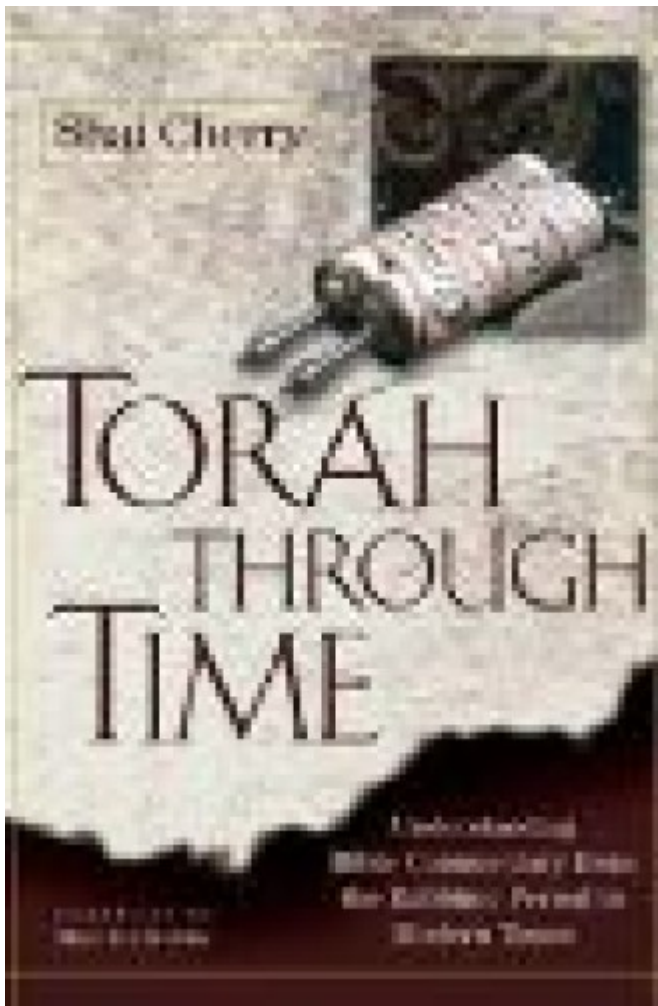
Mignon R. Jacobs  
Baker Academic



## **Israel and the Nations: A Mission Theology of the Old Testament**

James Chukwuma Okoye

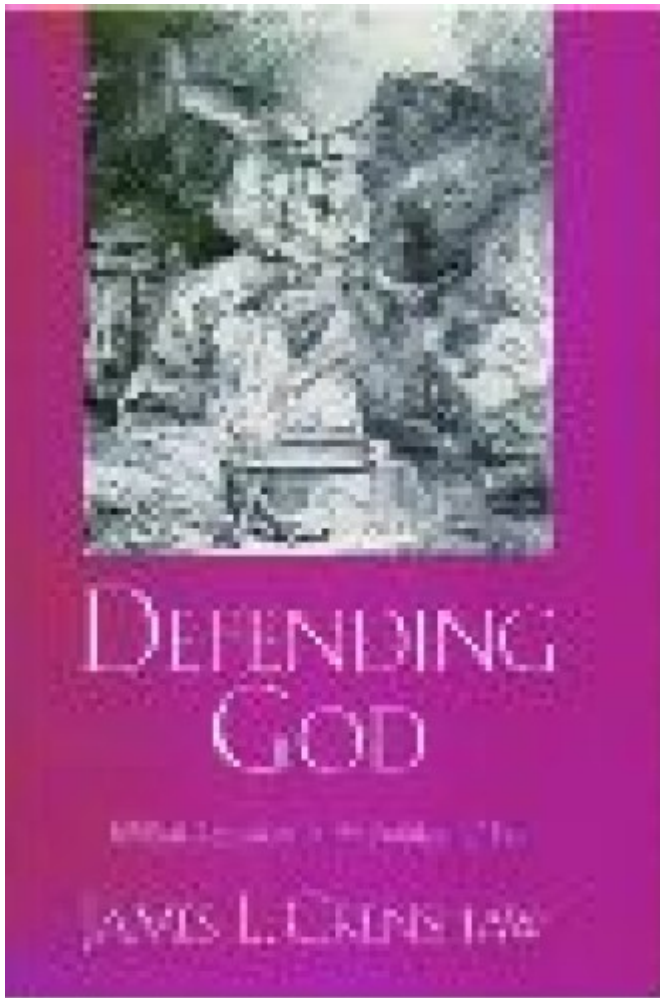
Orbis



**Torah Through Time: Understanding Bible Commentary from the Rabbinic Period to Modern Times**

Shai Cherry

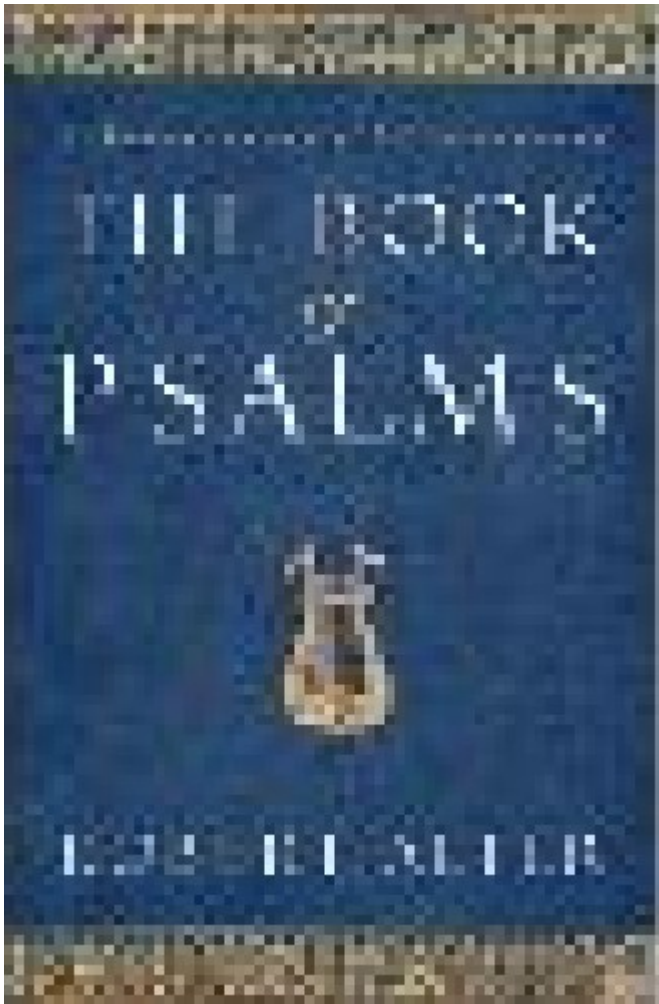
Jewish Publication Society



## **Defending God: Biblical Responses to the Problem of Evil**

James L. Crenshaw  
Oxford University Press





## **The Book of Psalms: A Translation with Commentary**

Robert Alter  
Norton

De La Torre brings new light to the book of Jonah when he sets it in conversation with the lives of marginalized peoples. The United States takes the role of Nineveh, capital of the Assyrian empire, in an argument that hopes for readers' conversion to God's revelation among the disenfranchised. For the sake of reconciliation among peoples, De La Torre urges a Christian praxis that extends mercy and establishes justice simultaneously.

Smith-Christopher takes the coyote image from guides who lead immigrants through the life-threatening perils of crossing the U.S.-Mexican border. He asserts that biblical peacemaking requires "running borders," that is, crossing over hostile divides of faith, culture and bigotry. Old Testament border runners like Amos, Micah,

Jeremiah, Jonah, Daniel and the author of Second Isaiah sowed seeds for the New Testament border runners known as Christians.

Fretheim's elegantly written study of Abraham stresses the call of the patriarchal family to be a blessing to the nations, to receive blessings from outsiders, to regard the place of humans within creation and to recognize the presence of the Creator in all. Now as then, Abraham's offspring have differences and conflicts, but as children of the same father, they also have deep connections that point toward peace.

Jacobs cares about ways the Bible influences contemporary gender relationships. Taking up selected Genesis narratives, she examines power dynamics in relationships between male and female, female and female, male and male, and God and everybody. Both the weak and the strong express relational power in surprisingly nuanced modes of control, deception and persuasion.

Okoye believes Christians should root their mission in the Old Testament as well as the New without collapsing the two. His study of selected Old Testament texts yields visions of God at work in the world, blessing all nations and calling for lives of worship and peace. This leads to the important conclusion that mission today should not be one-directional evangelizing but must involve the sharing of the many gifts of churches around the globe.

Cherry wants to avoid performing autopsies on dead texts and instead to see the Hebrew Bible as the living religious literature it has been for the Jewish community throughout the centuries. This highly readable book uses Jewish interpretation from ancient times to the present as a lens for studying texts from the five books of Moses. Cherry shows how the Torah functions as literature that is fluid, compelling and persistently generative of new meanings.

This book is several years old but is worth mentioning. It focuses on the problem of God, who is portrayed in the Old Testament as loving and benevolent on the one hand, and violent and absent on the other. Rather than arguing for one position, Crenshaw evenhandedly lays out ten interpretive stances available to modern readers, from atheism to acceptance of mystery. Because he writes clearly and leaves the question open, Crenshaw provides the ingredients for stirring discussions about this perennial problem.

In his much reviewed translation of the Psalms, Alter seeks to express faithfully the nuances and cadences of the original Hebrew rather than those of King James

English. The result reveals a startling earthiness, a compressed rhythm and a quality of contemporary aliveness in these ancient prayers. The commentary in footnotes is informative and unburdened with heavy technical details.