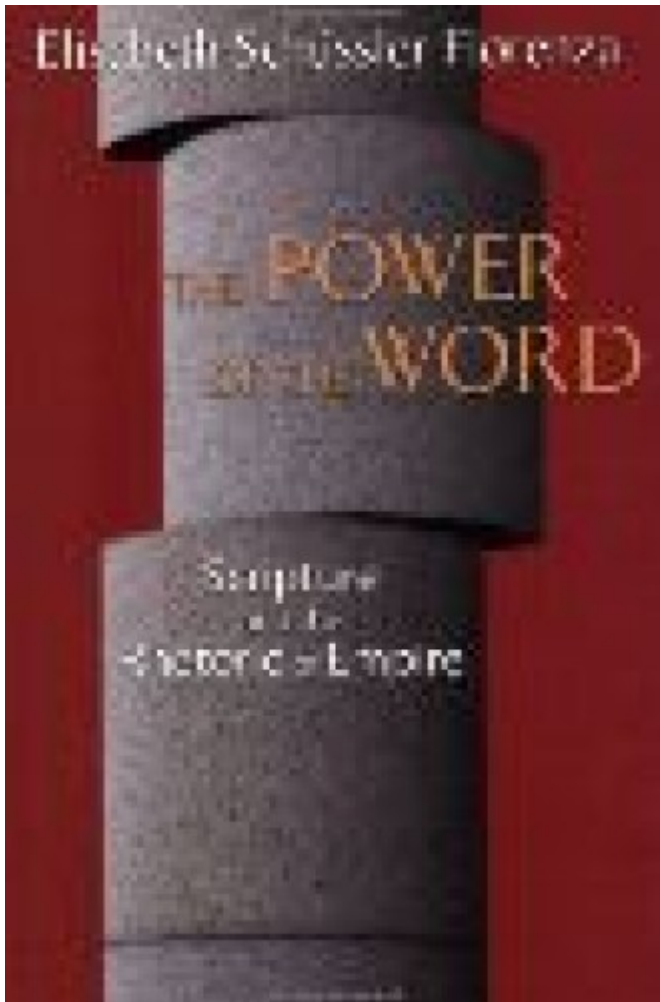


# Take and read

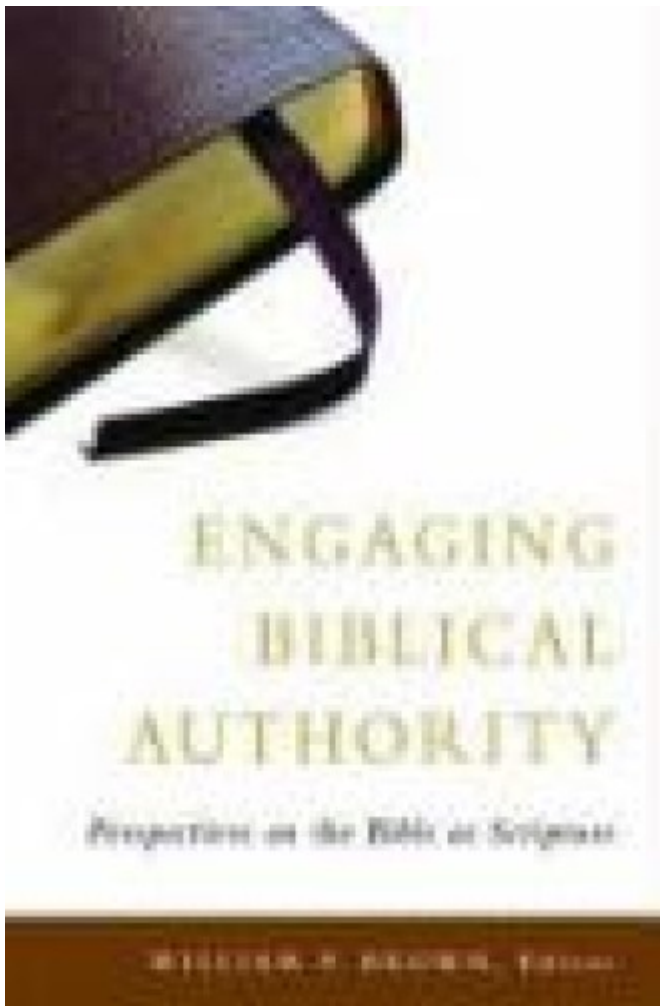
selected by [Gail R. O'Day](#) in the [October 21, 2008](#) issue

## In Review



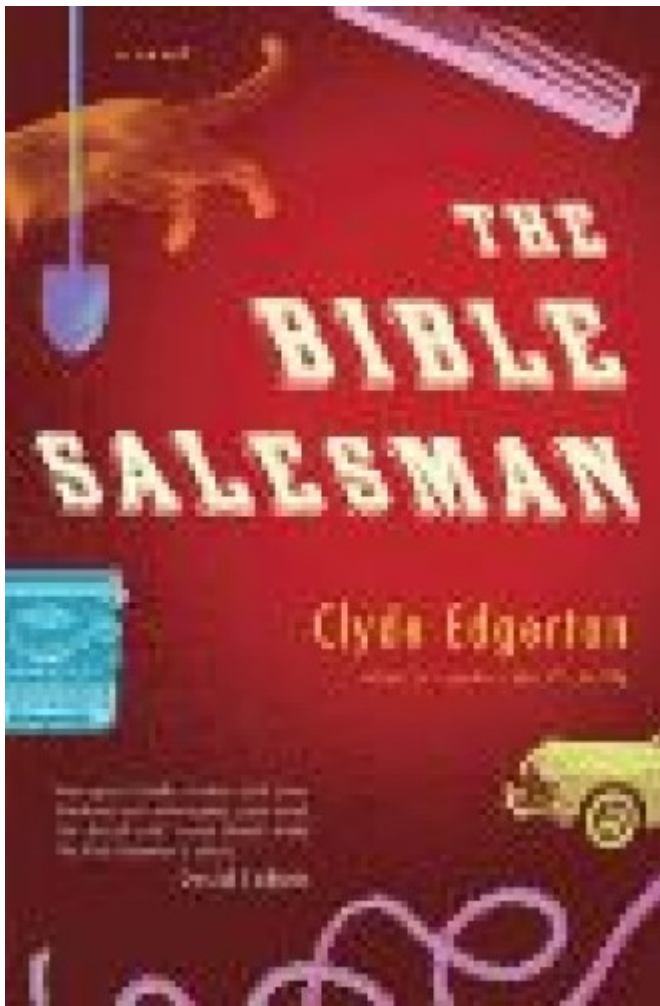
## **The Power of the Word: Scripture and the Rhetoric of Empire**

Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza  
Fortress



## **Engaging Biblical Authority: Perspectives on the Bible as Scripture**

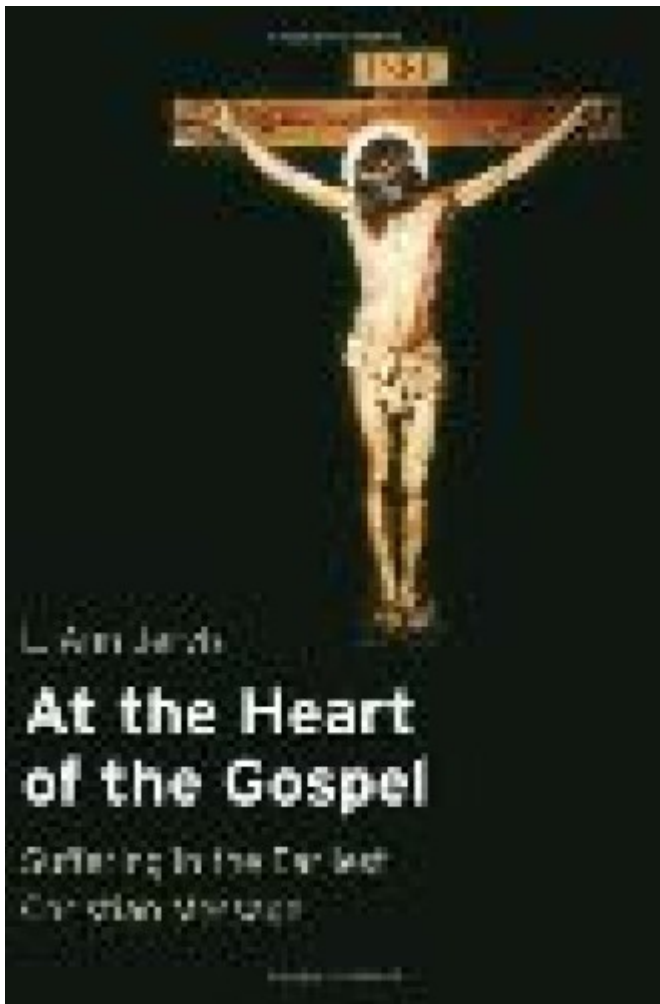
William P. Brown, ed.  
Westminster John Knox



## **The Bible Salesman: A Novel**

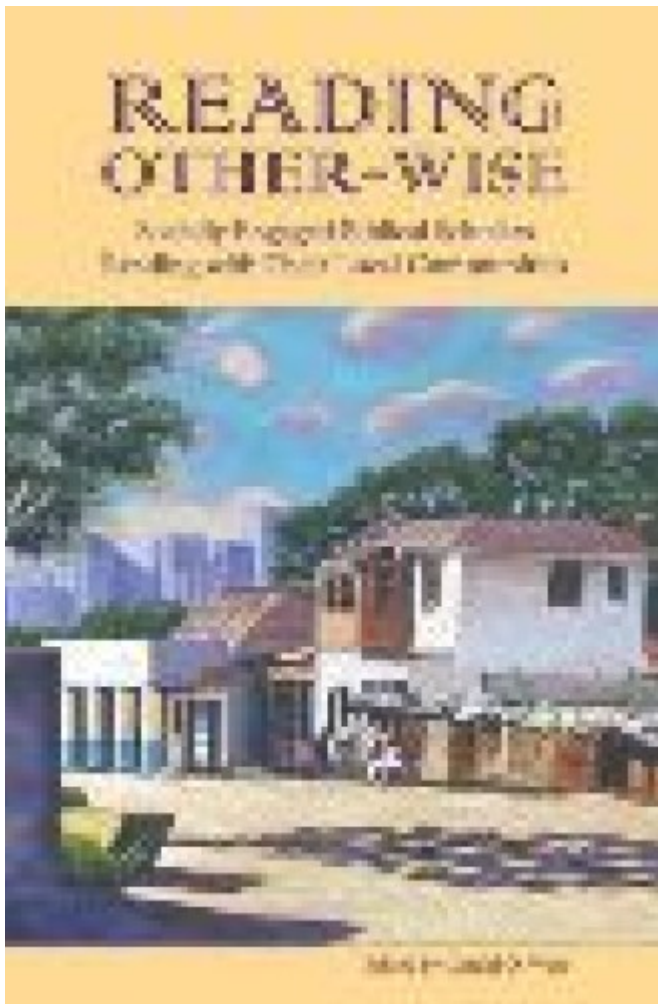
Clyde Edgerton

Little, Brown



**At the Heart of the Gospel: Suffering in the Earliest Christian Message**

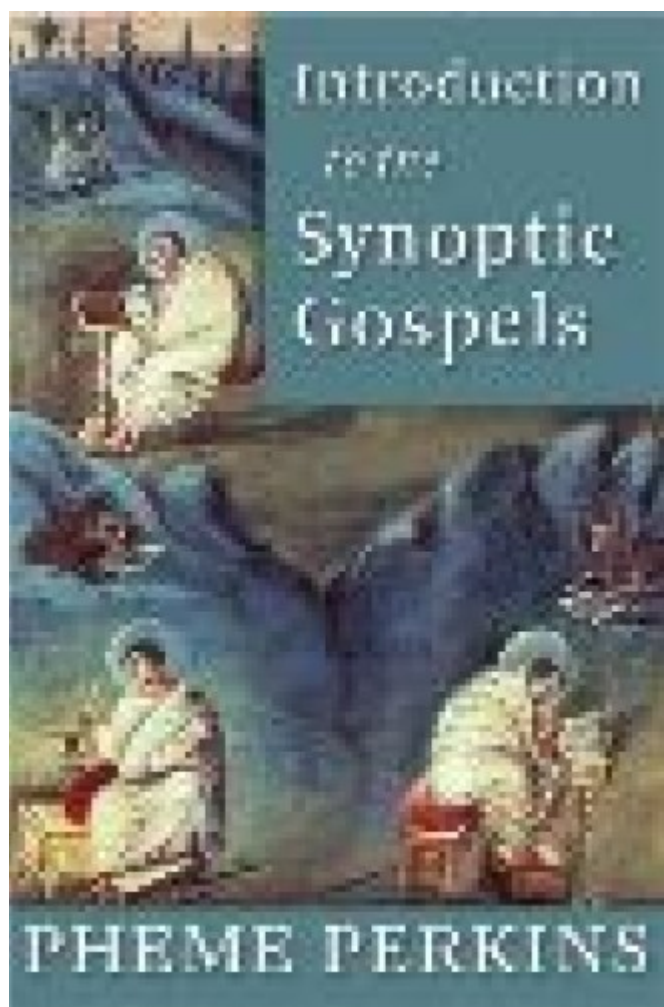
L. Ann Jervis  
Eerdmans



## **Reading Other-wise: Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with Their Local Communities**

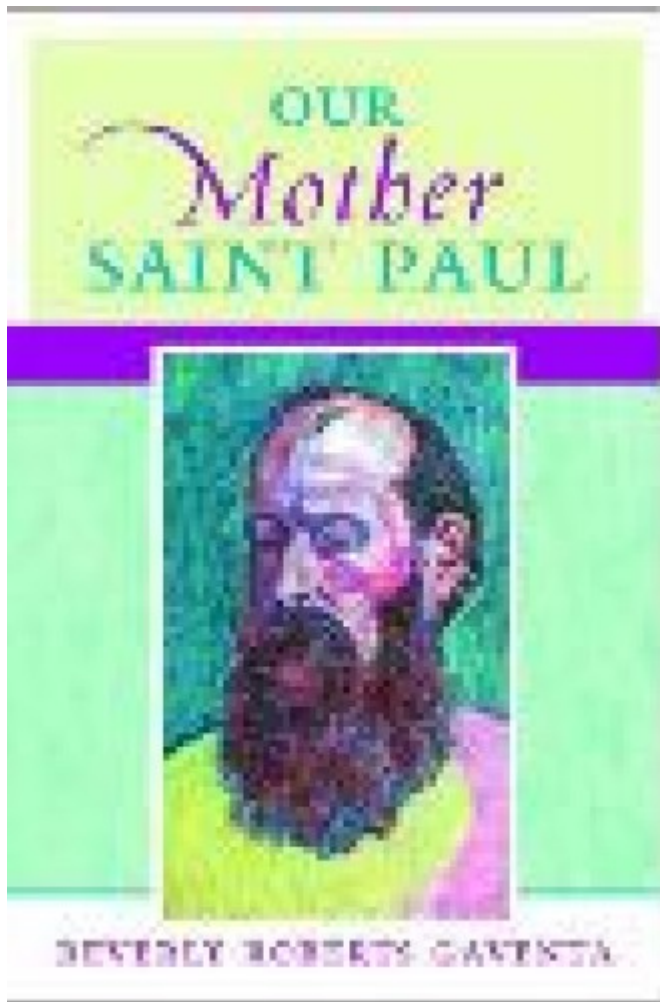
Gerald O. West, ed.

Society of Biblical Literature



## **Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels**

PHEME PERKINS  
Eerdmans



## **Our Mother Saint Paul**

Beverly Roberts Gaventa  
Westminster John Knox

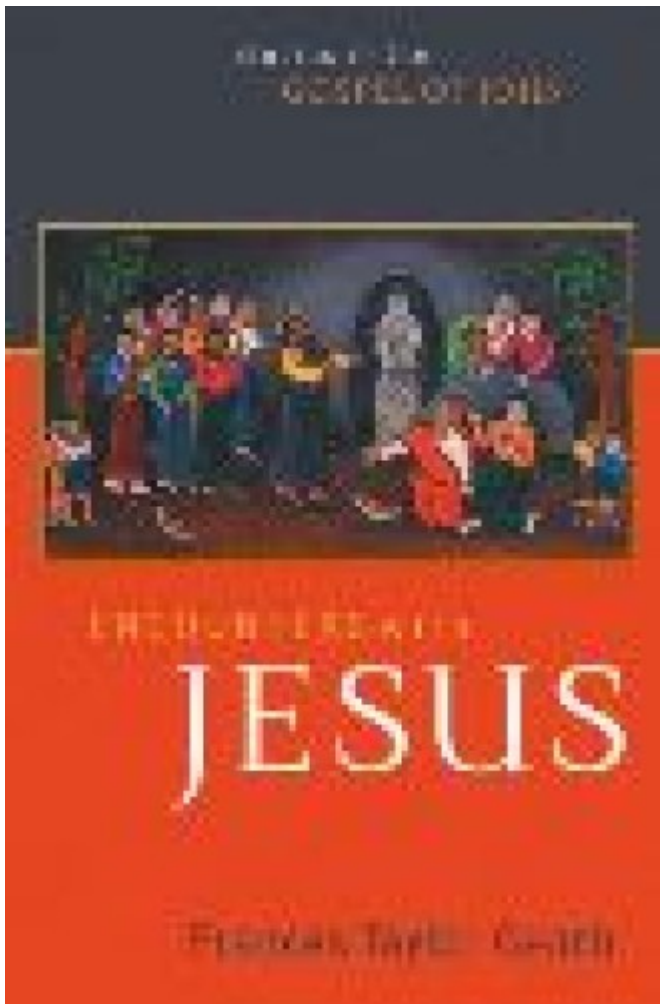




## **The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible**

Allen Dwight Callahan  
Yale University Press





## **Encounters with Jesus: Studies in the Gospel of John**

Frances Taylor Gench  
Westminster John Knox

Because Brown's collection of writers hail from a wide range of theological and cultural perspectives and address biblical authority as something vital to them both as scholars and as members of faith communities, readers will not discover here any simple answers or formulas. Instead, they will find themselves drawn deeper into a rich conversation that is essential for appropriating this ancient text in the modern world.

Set in the mid-20th-century rural southern U.S., this novel would be great to place in conversation with Brown's essay collection for a class or Bible study on biblical authority. Edgerton gives comic treatment to his title character, a young man who struggles to make sense of what he has been taught about the Bible, what the Bible

teaches him and what life teaches him. The issues Edgerton raises will resonate with anyone who wonders about how to grow with the Bible and not away from it.

The three-year lectionary cycle devotes a year each to Matthew, Mark and Luke, leaving John as a lectionary orphan. Yet at the most significant moments of the church's liturgical life—Christmas, Lent and Easter—John is the dominant Gospel voice in all three cycles. Gench reads John through the lens of the Gospel's use in the lectionary to provide an introduction that attends equally to the details of John's Gospel story and the place it can hold in the life of the church.

Jervis approaches the question of suffering from the dual perspective of her personal experience and her considerable talents as a Pauline scholar, creating a fresh resource for Christians who struggle with the seeming incongruity of the world's suffering and God's love and grace. Because Jervis gives exegetical, theological and pastoral attention to the realities and depths of human suffering, her presentation of the gospel response to suffering is far from an offer of cheap grace.

Using examples and stories of the ways the Bible is read and taught in communities ranging from Skagit County Jail in Washington State to women's associations in Bico do Papagaio, Brazil, the authors raise necessary questions about what is the correct context for Bible study and about how the place where we read informs what we find in the text. As we reexamine what it means to be a global citizen, this book will sharpen the contours of the global conversation about the claims of scripture.

Perkins can always be counted on to write an introductory text that simultaneously presents a coherent overview of the state of the field and provides readers with a fresh vantage point on well-known questions. In this introduction she takes readers from the material production of the synoptic Gospels to their reception history and places the Gospels in their cultural and theological context.

*Mother* is not usually the first word one associates with the apostle Paul, but Gaventa suggests that perhaps it should be. She shows how the language of maternal nurture shaped Paul's self-presentation and helped define both his relationship to the new Christian communities and the communities' own identities as newborns. This book creates new possibilities for thinking about pastoral authority that are much needed in today's churches.

Schüssler Fiorenza's body of work is shaped by the conviction that biblical scholarship must be ethically engaged and responsible; it must name the evidence

of injustice inscribed in the biblical text and practiced in the present day. Her most recent book is both a careful study of Paul's letters, Revelation and 1 Peter and a programmatic essay on the demands of socially engaged biblical scholarship. Schüssler Fiorenza explicitly includes preachers and lay Christian readers in her audience for this discussion of the rhetoric and practices of ancient and contemporary empire and the ongoing need for a counterbalancing rhetoric of justice.

The history of interpretation continues to grow in importance as biblical scholars become increasingly aware of the importance of reading the Bible along with people who have read it in different times and places. In addition to reading with the earliest Christians, scholars are looking to contemporary reading partners who have shaped the place of the Bible in U.S. religion and culture. Callahan shows how the Bible and its motifs have been appropriated by African Americans in literature, music, art and religious and political life.