

BANNED

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE



The Rev. Dr. Carl Gregg

*Mondays, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm,
March 3 – April 14 (skip 3/24)*

Housekeeping

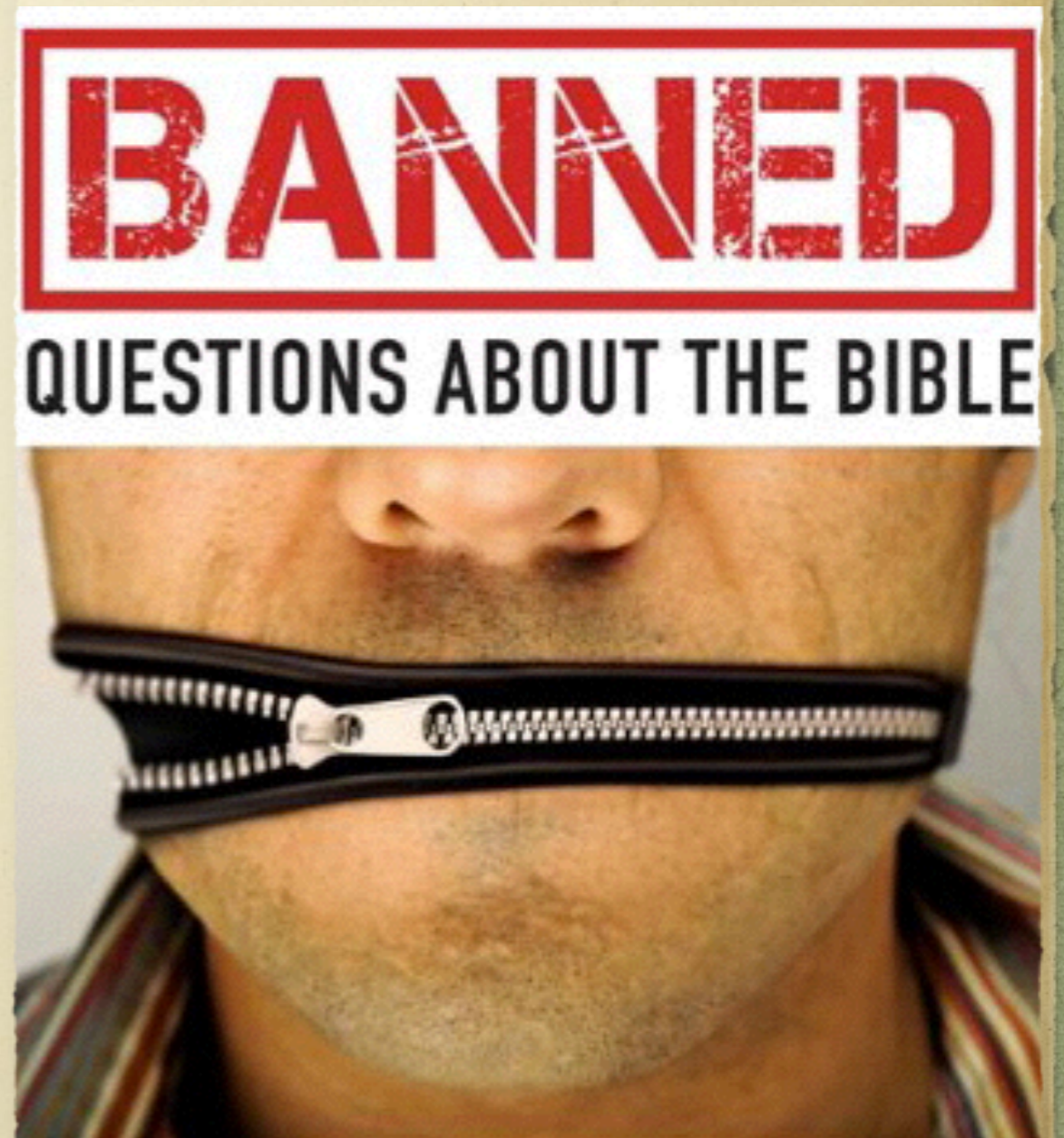
- Slides: frederickuu.org/about/FCC
- **Attendance** for FCC
- Add to **email** list?
- **Other?**

Covenant

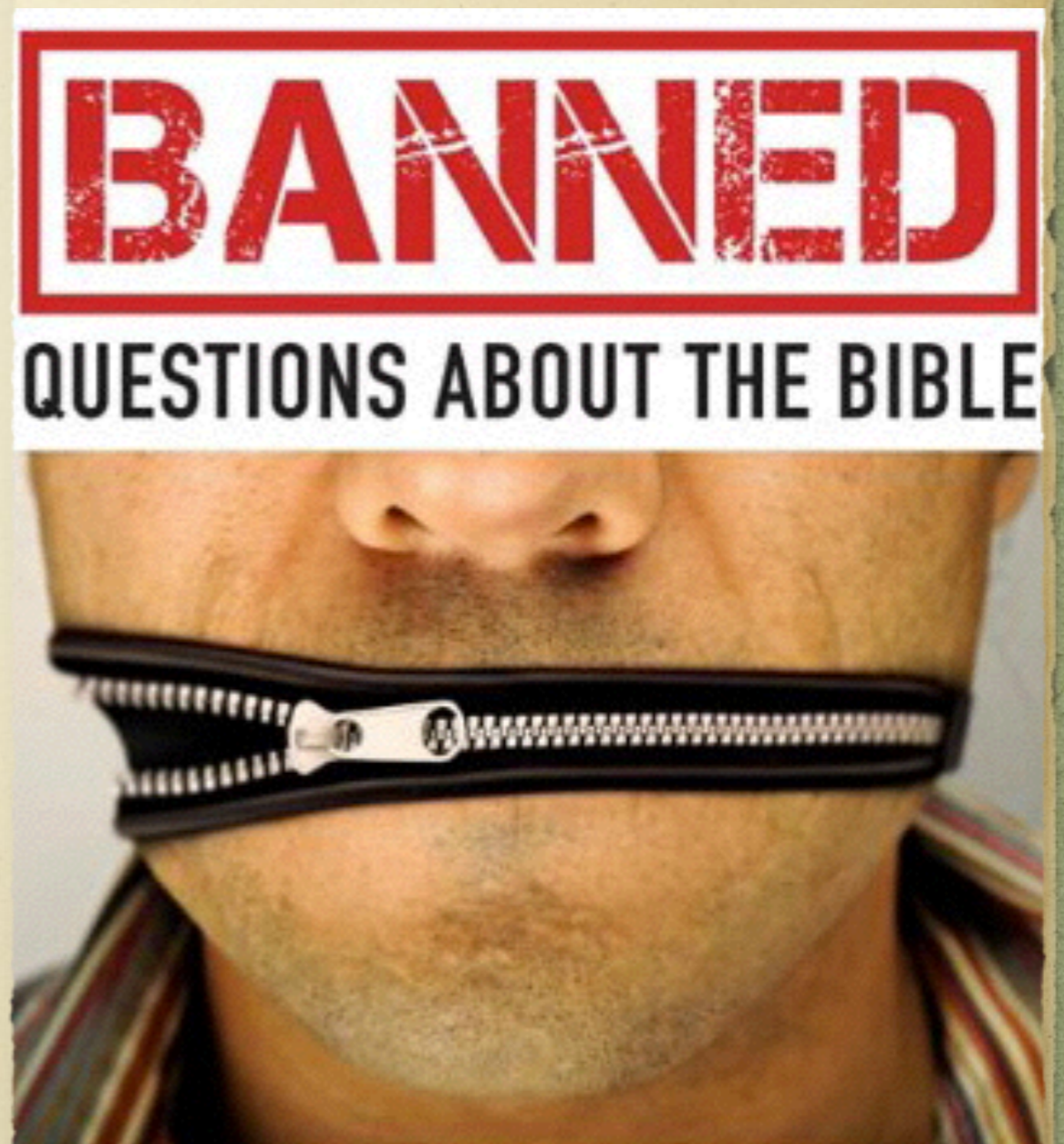
- Use **“I” statements**: *speak from your own experience.*
- **Ask permission before sharing** other participants’ stories outside the group.
- **Step-up, step-back**: be conscious of the level of participation that you bring to the conversation. Allow everyone a chance to speak before you speak again.
- You always have **permission to “pass.”**



- Explore the questions mainstream scholars ask about the Bible that aren't always asked in religious communities.
- Feel more equipped to read the Bible for yourself: basic biblical background and history, diverse methods of biblical interpretation, major content and themes.
- Compare modern readings with those of the Bible's earliest interpreters.

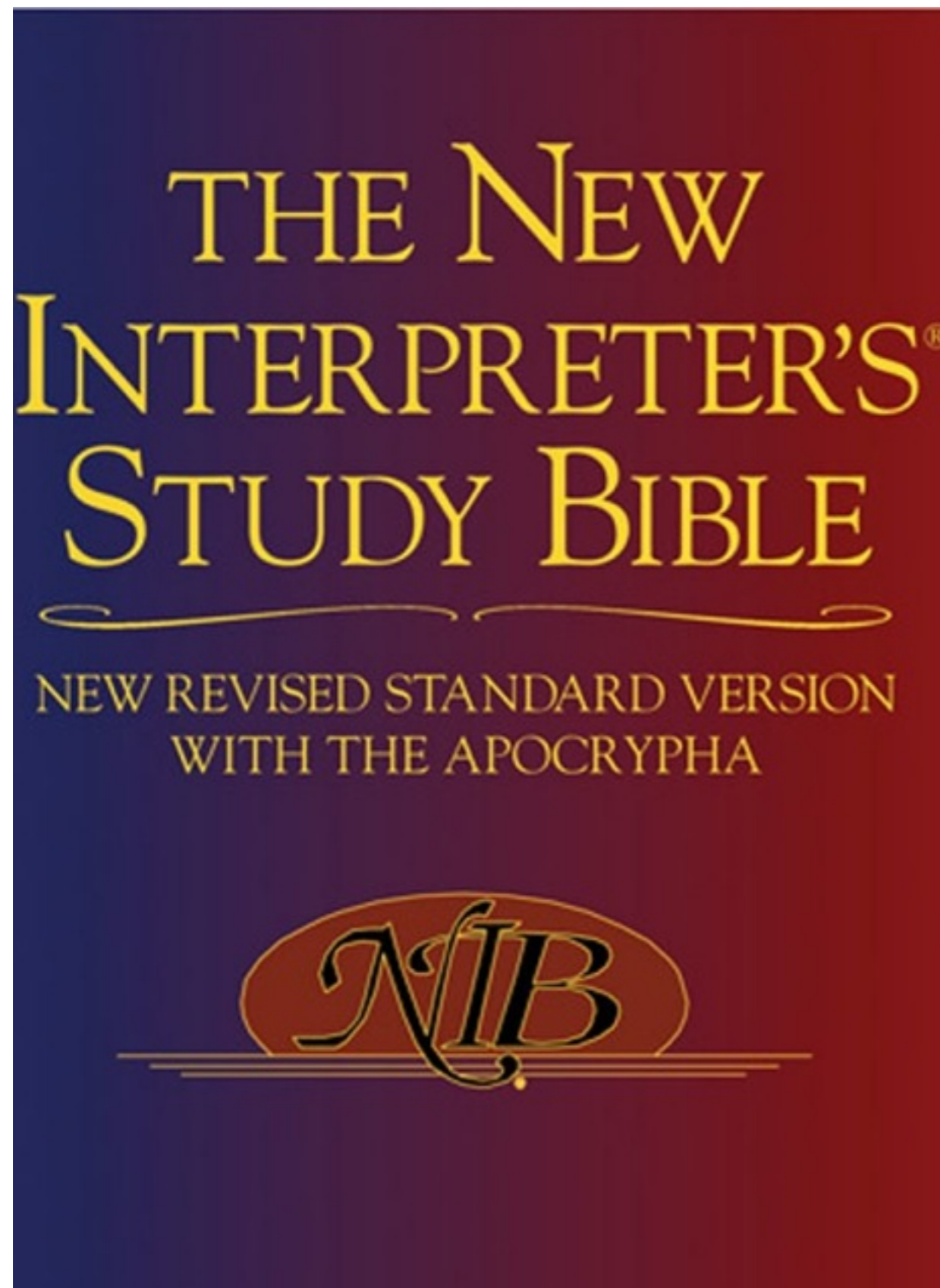


- **Minister** of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Frederick.
- Native of Florence, South Carolina
- *Phi Beta Kappa* graduate of Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina (Bachelor of Arts in Religion and Philosophy in 2000)
- Masters of Divinity from **Brite Divinity School** in Fort Worth, Texas
- Doctor of Ministry from **San Francisco Theological Seminary**
- Taught “Introduction to the Hebrew Bible” as an Adjunct Professor at the **University of Louisiana at Monroe**

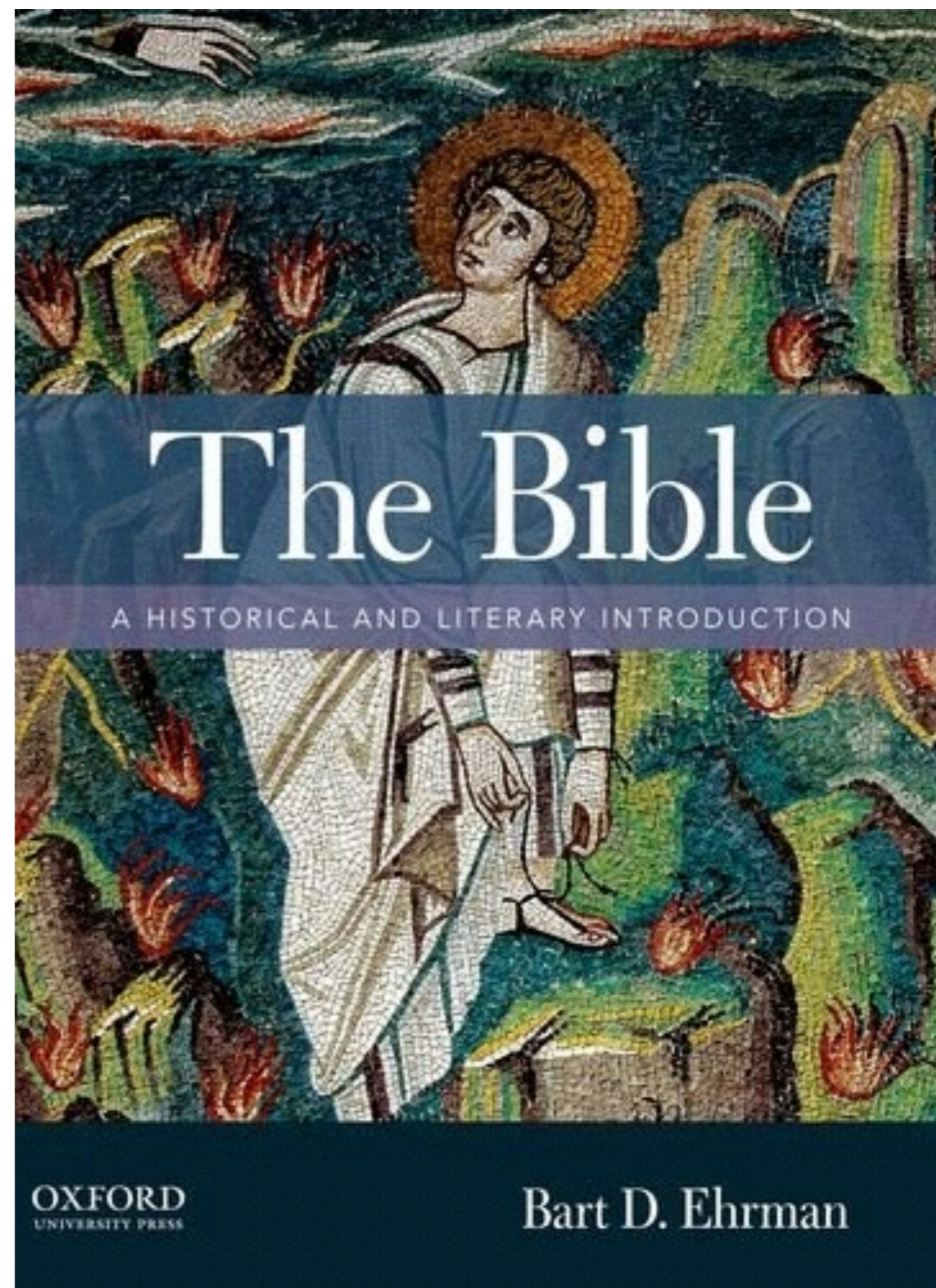




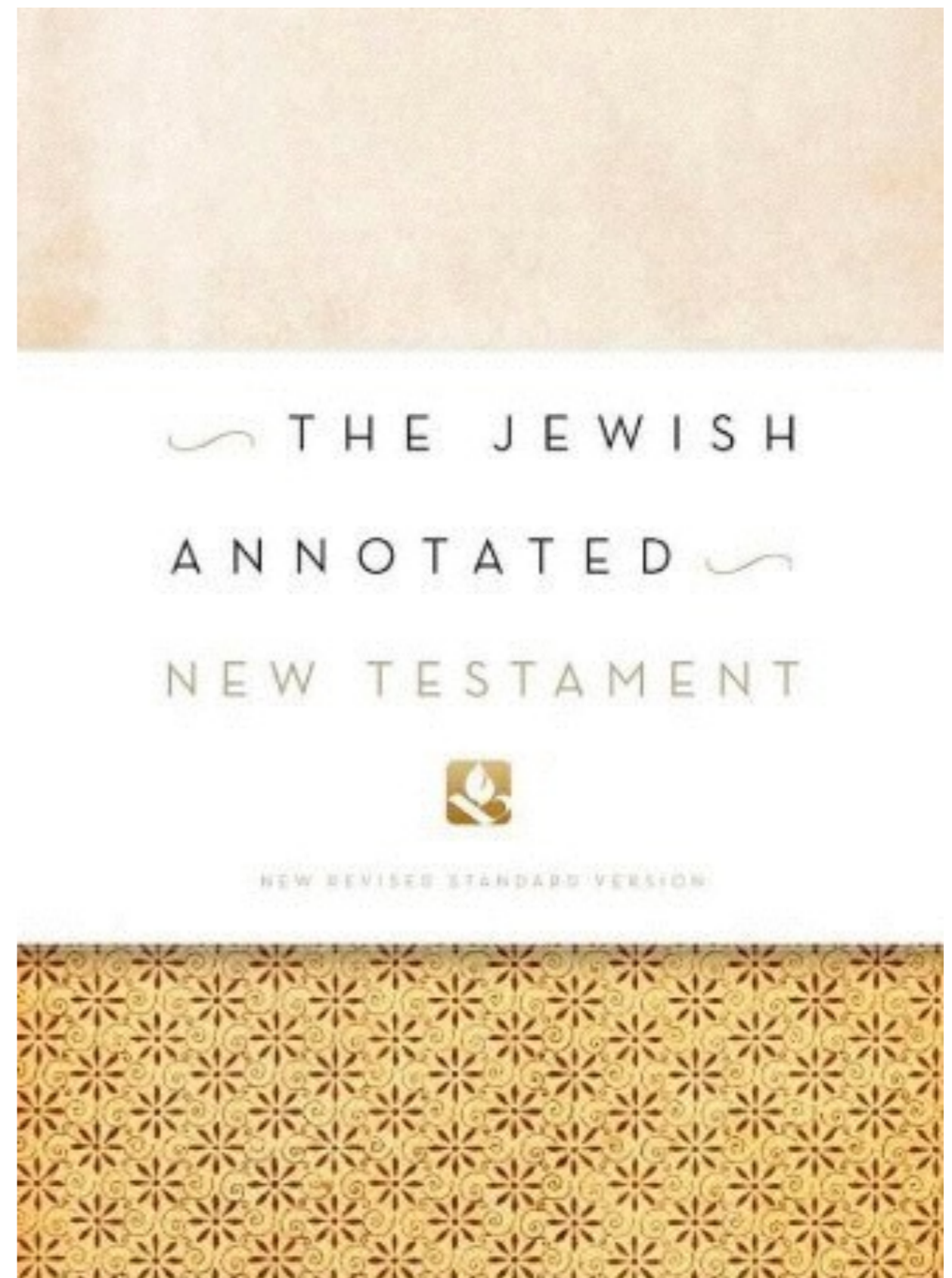
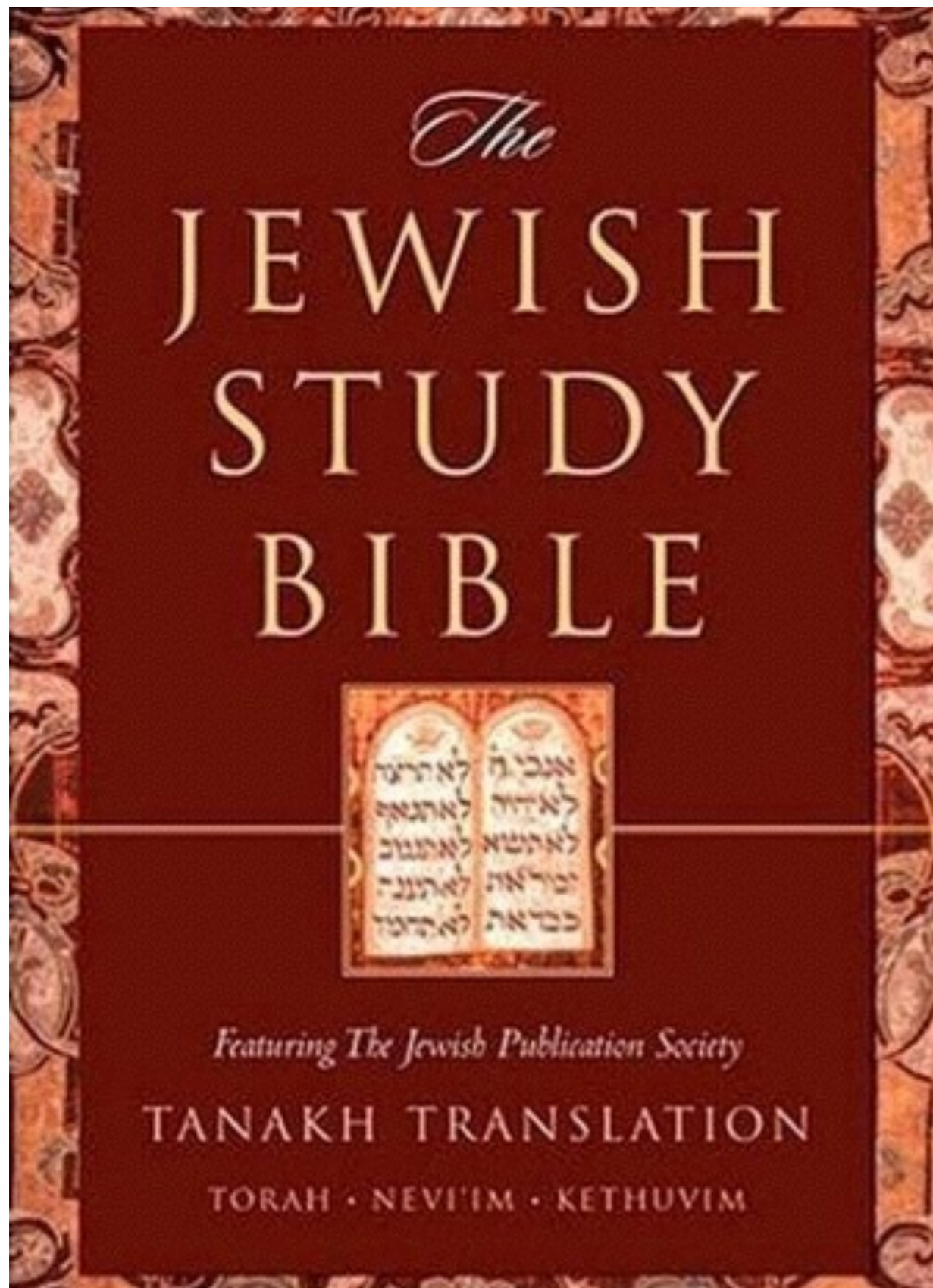
THE. REV. DR. CARL GREGG



\$36



432 p., \$63 on Amazon
(September 16, 2013)



THE
BIBLE
AS IT WAS



James L. Kugel

HOW TO
READ
THE
BIBLE

*A Guide to Scripture,
Then and Now*

JAMES L.
KUGEL

AUTHOR OF *THE GOD OF OLD*

The Rise of Modern Biblical Scholarship

- “Anthology,” “Library”
- Greek: *biblia* (“books”)
- Spanish: *biblioteca* (“library”)



The Rise of Modern Biblical Scholarship

- Oldest parts of the text go back very far, at least to some time in the 10th-century BCE — or considerably earlier.
- Latest chapters are a little easier to date; they belong to the early second century CE.
- Many different contexts and motivations for writing.



BCE / CE

- Judaism: A.M. (anno mundi, in the year of the world) — counting forward from creation of October 7, 3761 B.C.E. on the Gregorian calendar
- Islam: A.H. (622 of the Western Calendar)



Ancient vs. Modern

Four Assumptions of Ancient Interpreters (300 BCE – 200 CE)

Modern Biblical Scholars (starting around 150 years ago)

Fundamentally **Cryptic**

Plain Sense
(unless clearly proven otherwise)

Lessons directed to **each reader** in their own day (“All”)

Not intended as eternally valid; meant for **original context**. (“Some, few”)

Perfectly Harmonious
(no contradictions or mistakes)

Contradicts itself and our current understanding (e.g., science)

Divinely Given

Trail of the Human Serpent

- **Biblioatry:** making the Bible in something it's not (“finger pointing at moon”)
- **Worthy Lifelong conversation partner**
(sacramental)



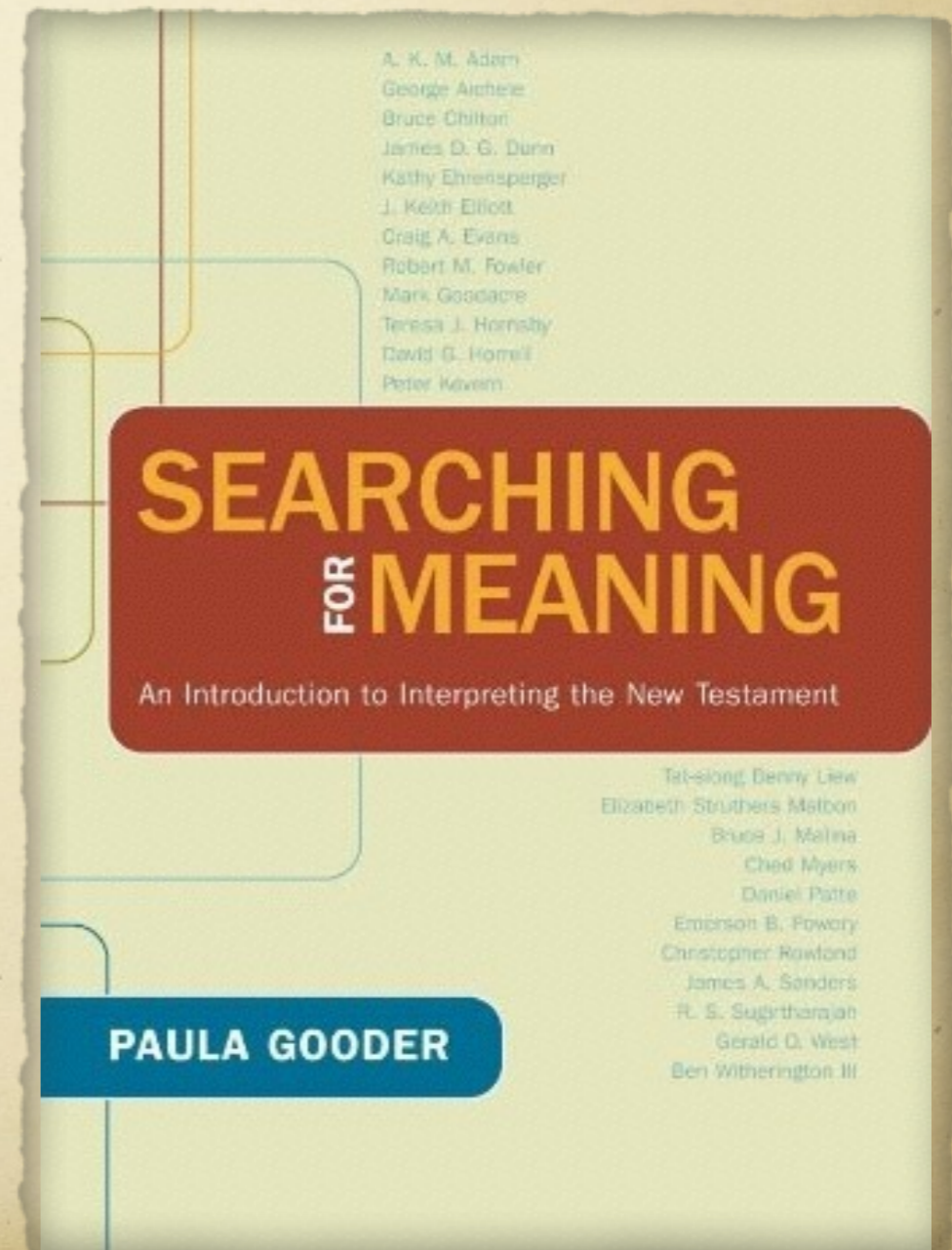
Lectio Divina

- Modern readers: unit of understanding is the sentence or pericope
- Ancient interpreters: unit of understanding was the word.



(Con)text

- “Behind” the text: historical events or sources that underlie a text (using the text to get behind the text, perhaps to earlier forms)
- “In” the text: interaction of elements and structure that emerge in a close reading of the text in its final form literary
- “In front of” the text: construction of meaning that takes places in the interaction between text and reader



“Behind” the text: from event to text

- Historical criticism
- Range of techniques to increase our understanding of the social and cultural world of the New Testament (Bible like any other historical or literary text)
- Enlightenment thinkers stressed the importance of using the intellect and reason to understand the biblical language.
- Triangle of reason-experience-tradition
- De-centerings of Galileo, Darwin, Freud, Einstein





“Behind” the text: from event to text

➤ Source Criticism

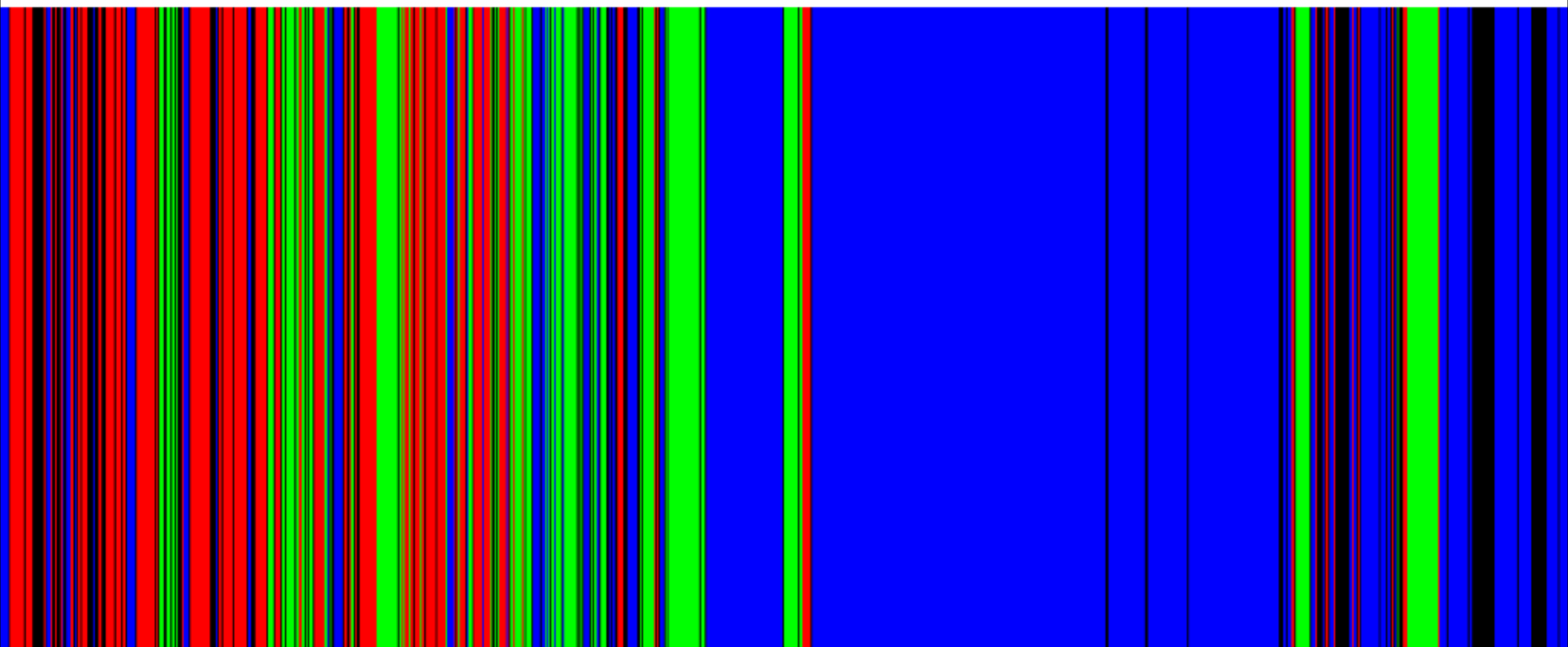
- discover the *sources* used by an author in the construction of the text.
- What was on the writer’s desk?
- If I say, “Amazing Grace” or “It is well with my soul” (*source?*)



“Quit worrying about corroborating your sources—it’s not as if anyone’s going to take all this literally.”

Yahwist (J)   *Priestly (P)*

Elohists (E)   *Redactor (R)*



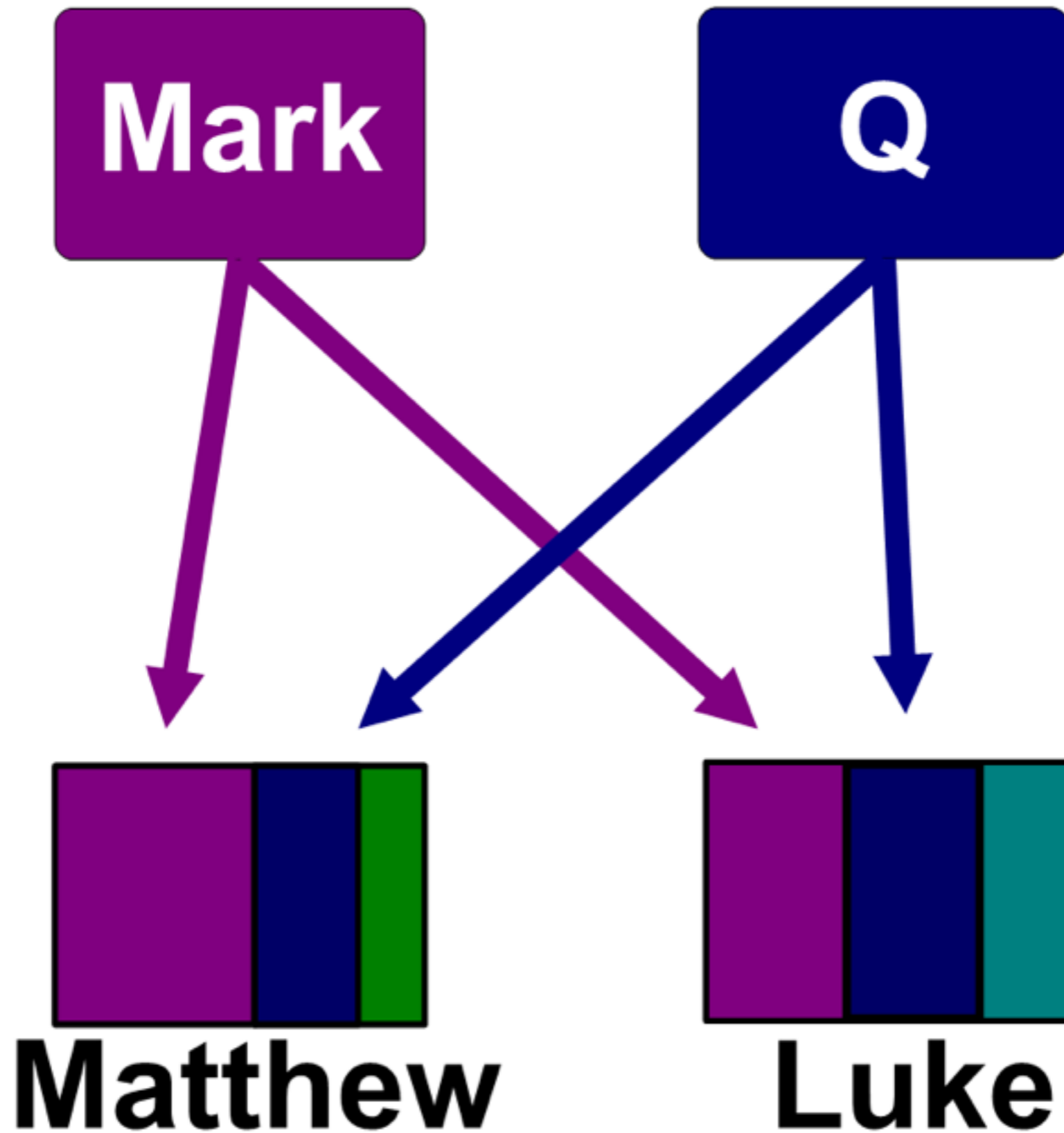
Genesis

Exodus

Leviticus

Numbers

Two-source Hypothesis



Source Criticism

- initial motivations came from a close reading of the Bible:
- Numbers 21:14, “Wherefore it is said in the **Book of the Wars of the Lord...**”
- Joshua 10:13, “And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Is this not written in the **Book of Jashar?** The sun stopped in midheaven, and did not hurry to set for about a whole day.”
- 2 Sam 1:18 “(He ordered that **The Song of the Bow** be taught to the people of Judah; it is written in the **Book of Jashar.**)”
- 1 Kings 11:41, “Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did as well as his wisdom, are they not written in the **Book of the Acts of Solomon?**”
- 1 Kings 14:29, “Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, are they not written in the **Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah?**”

Redaction Criticism

- Consistent ways the Gospel or JEPD writers *edited* their source material.

What is
Redaction
Criticism?



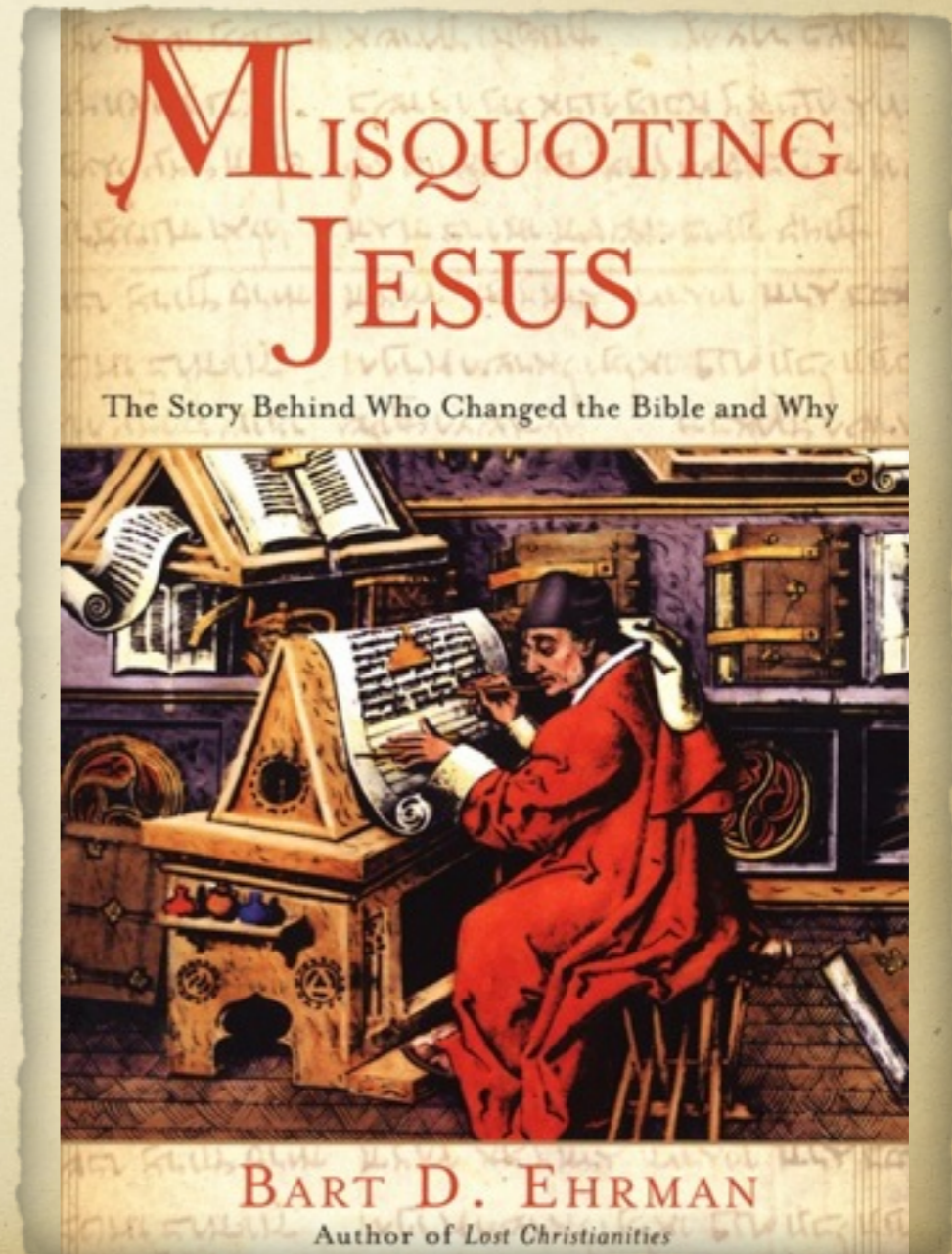
by

NORMAN PERRIN

DAN O. VIA, JR., EDITOR

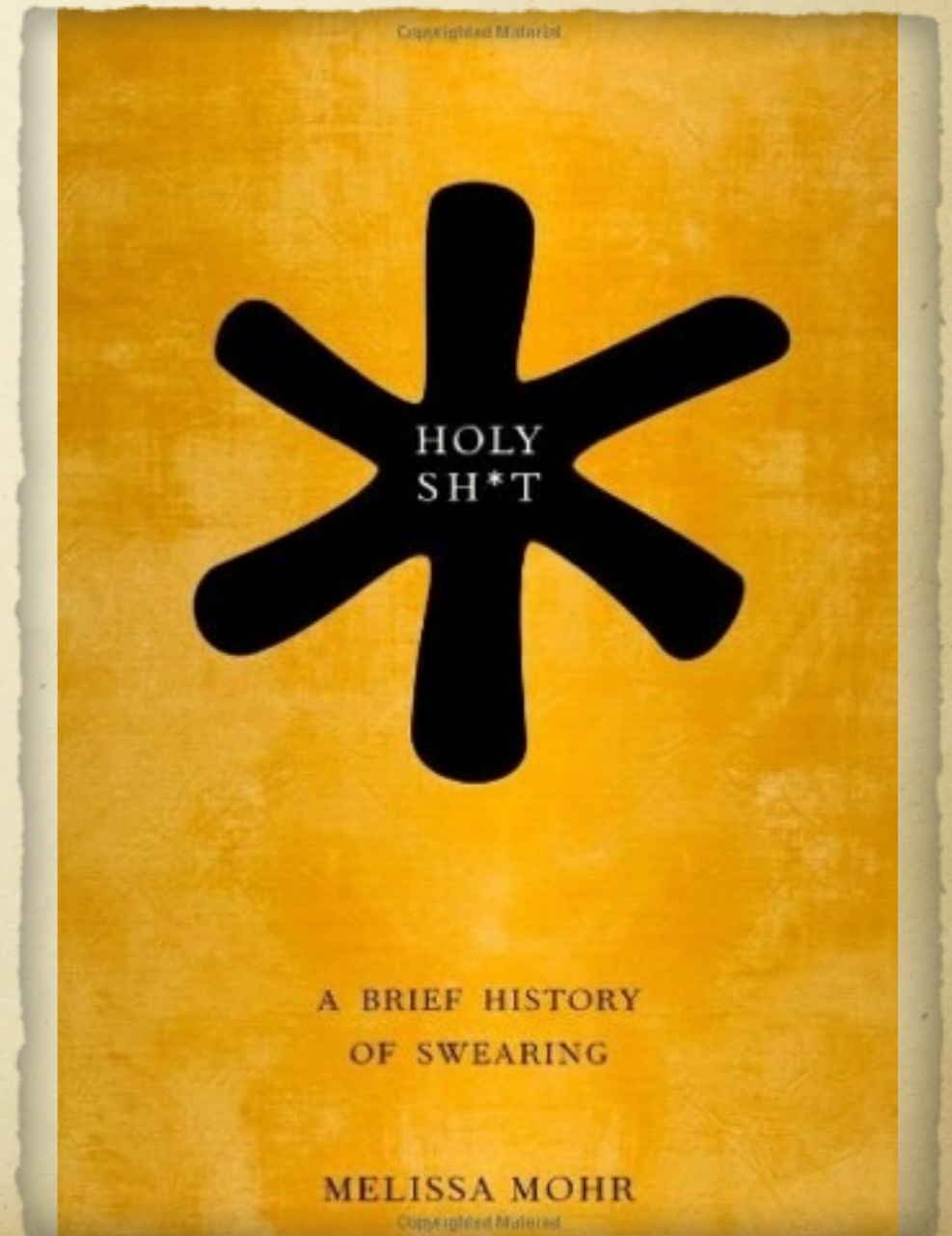
“In” the text: within text

- Textual Criticism
- Seeks to discover the original version of the text found in a manuscript
- Remove errors or alternations that have been made by scribes when they transcribed the document



“In” the text: within text

- Translation Criticism
- Study of the principles and procedures that govern a good translation of the Bible.
- Dynamic Equivalence vs. Formal Equivalence [*graphic*]



English Bible Translation Comparison

Word for Word

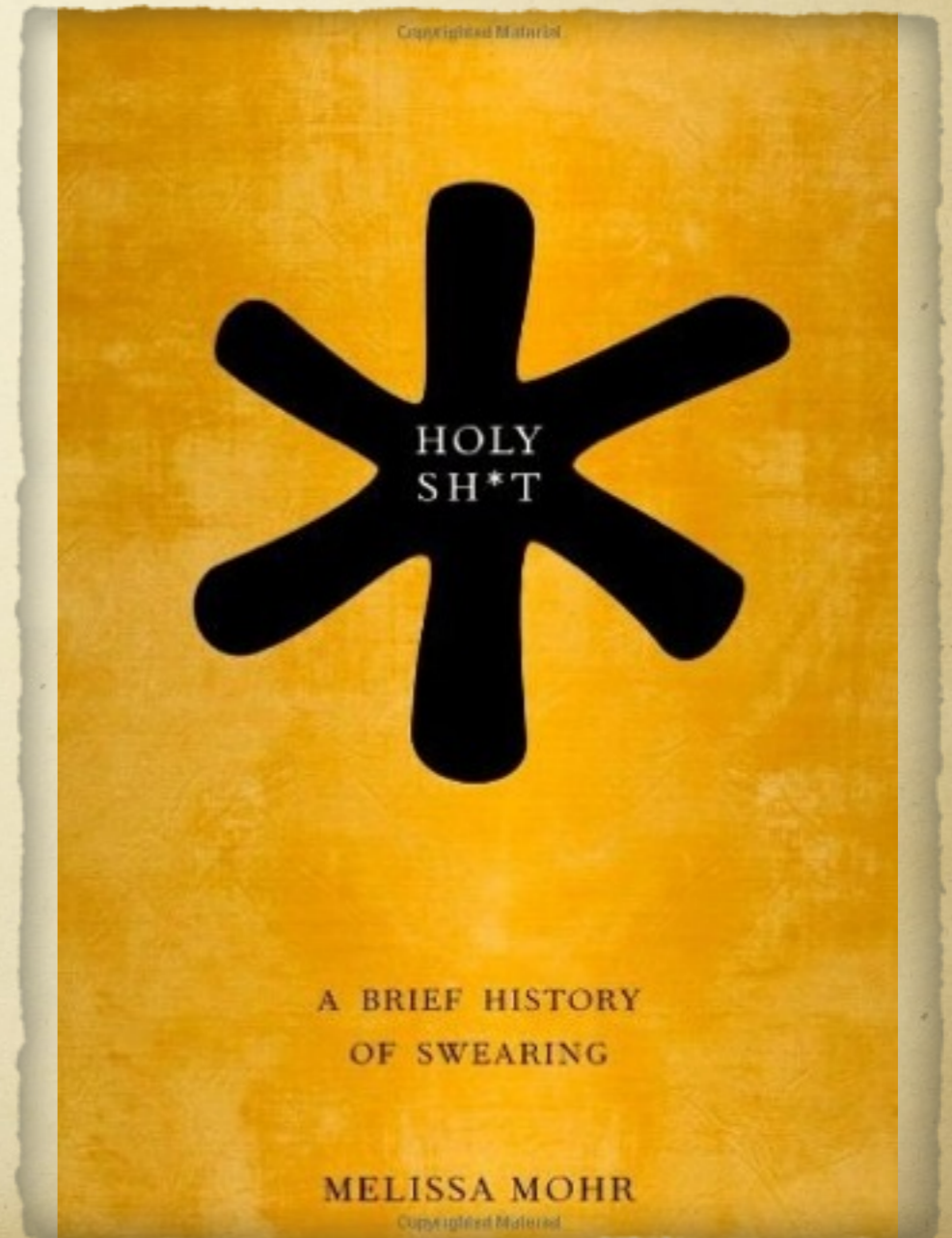
Thought for Thought

Paraphrase



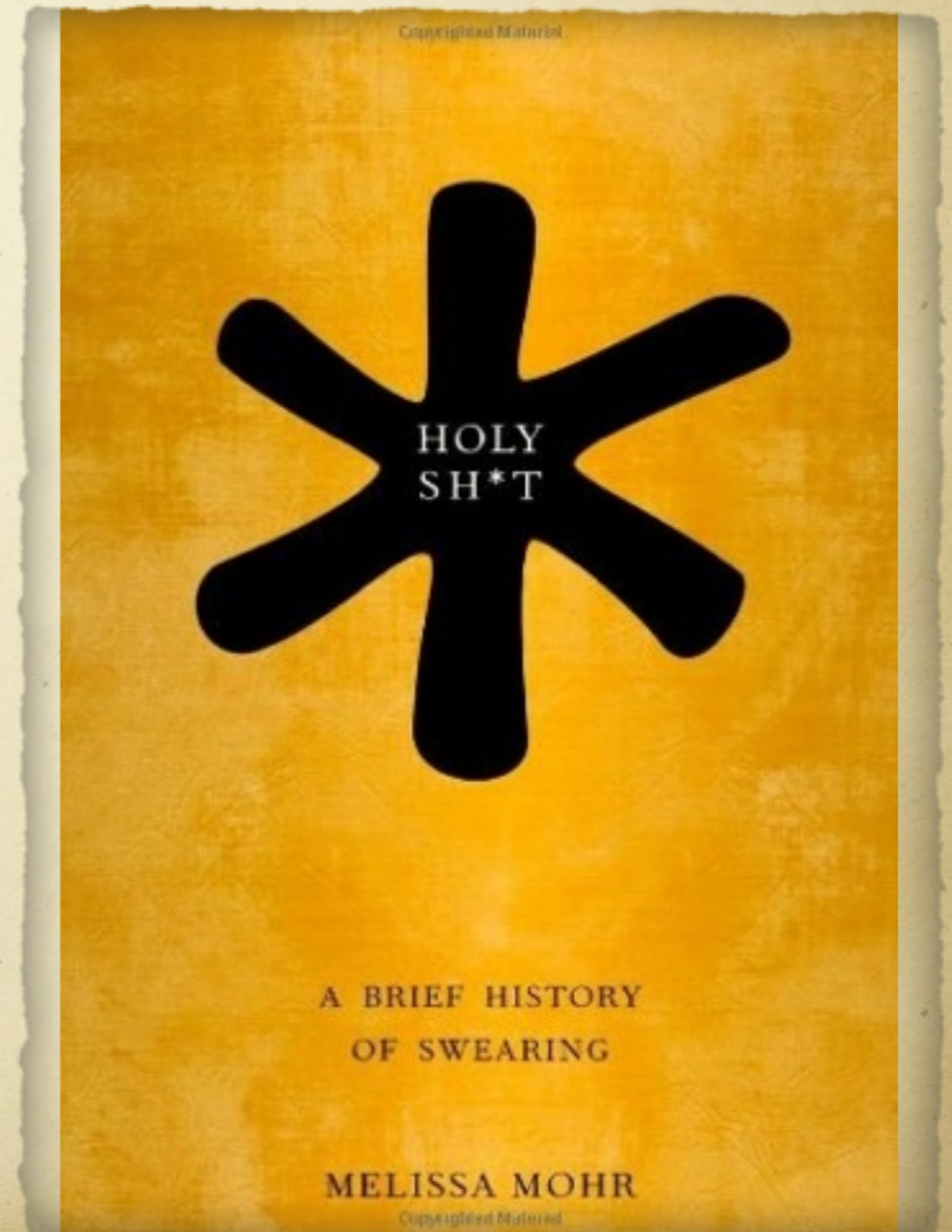
Translation Criticism

- The first time I heard the C-word used to translate the Bible, I almost fell out of my chair.
- I was conditioned to embrace a sanitized Bible, scrubbed clean of profanity and indecency. I conceived of God as a teetotaling southern gentleman, brash in deed but decorous of speech. Naturally, I was shocked to hear such an abrasive term used to render the Divine Word into the English tongue.



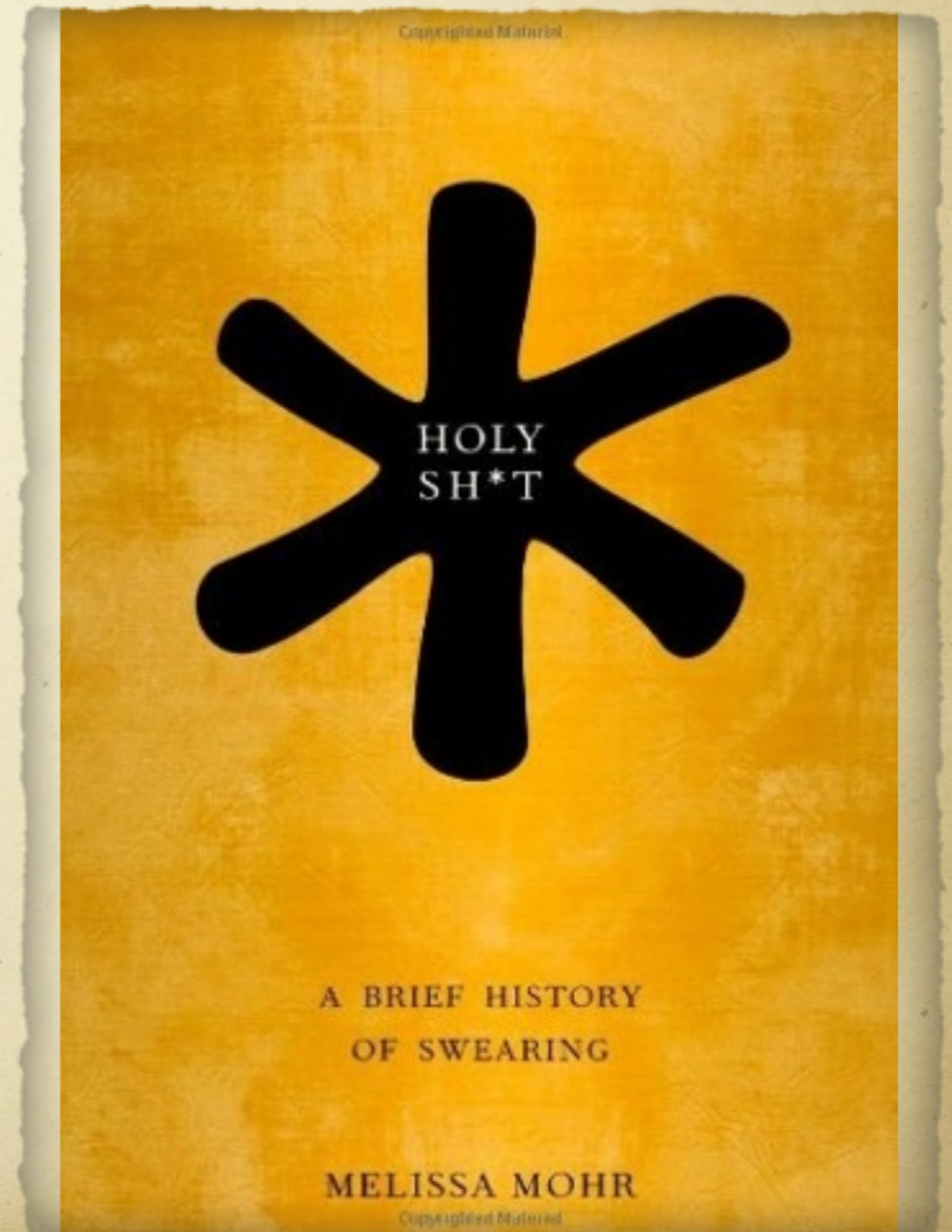
Translation Criticism

- Over the years my picture of Scripture changed and became fuller.
- The disinfectant contemporary translators use washes away the Bible's aesthetic texture.
- OMG! (*damnable violation at one time*)



Translation Criticism

- The Hebrew Bible openly discusses what we tend to whisper in private: the treatments of nakedness, adultery, incest, homosexuality, virginity, bestiality, prostitution, crushed testicles, transvestitism, polygamy, rape, phallic symbols, female pudenda, ejaculations, and bodily functions.



- One of the few areas in which contemporary culture has become more puritanical, and not less, is in the way we approach biblical texts.
- Isaiah 36:12 records a taunt from an Assyrian military figure as he tries to convince the Israelites to surrender.
- In the fourteenth century, John Wycliff translated the passage like this: *And Rapsaces seide to hem, Whether mi lord sente me to thi lord, and to thee, that Y schulde speke alle these wordis, and not rathere to the men that sitten on the wal, that thei ete her toordis, and drynke the pisse of her feet with you?* (And Rabshakeh said to them, Whether my lord sent me to thy lord, and to thee, that I should speak all these words, and not rather to the men that sit on the wall, that they eat their turds, and drink the piss off their feet, with you?)

- Yet, almost every translation made in the last hundred years has softened the language to read, “... that they eat their **excrement** and drink their **urine.**”
- As permissive as our culture is in almost every other area, when it comes to translating the Bible we’ve become stricter than the dark ages.
- Is it realistic to expect an Assyrian soldier, many of whom are depicted within Assyria’s own art as flaying captives alive and chopping limbs from their bodies, to use polite circumlocutions when trying to get their enemies to give up during a siege?

- The passage that nearly pushed me from my chair was a line in a song that Deborah, the prophetess, sang after Jael drove a tent peg through Sisera's skull. Sisera's violent end caused his army to withdraw from their attack on the Israelites, which is the focal point of rejoicing within Deborah's poem.
- In the English Standard Version, Judges 5:30 reads: "Have they not found and divided the spoil? / A womb or two for every man ..."
- If Wycliffe could comment on this rendering, he might say: "A literal translation doth not an accurate one make."

- This phrase was put into the mouth of Sisera's mother as she waited for the return of her son from battle. She consoles herself upon his delay by remembering that Sisera and his forces were likely late because they were busy collecting the spoils of war. Sisera's mother says that, along with clothing, every warrior takes for himself "a womb or two."
- To her, twice-conquered females were merely things that existed to satisfy her son's desires. They aren't human. They aren't even full bodies. They are merely reproductive organs, genitals. The C-word represents this exactly. That's probably why it is such an offensive word to us today. It strips half the human race of their personhood and uses an anatomical part that men so often appropriate as their own to represent a woman as a whole.
- The women of Judges 5:30 don't have names. They aren't even people. They're just booty to be used up until they're worn out. I never have been able to get comfortable with the C-word. Yet I'm convinced that it is an appropriate – the appropriate – translation of Judges 5:30.

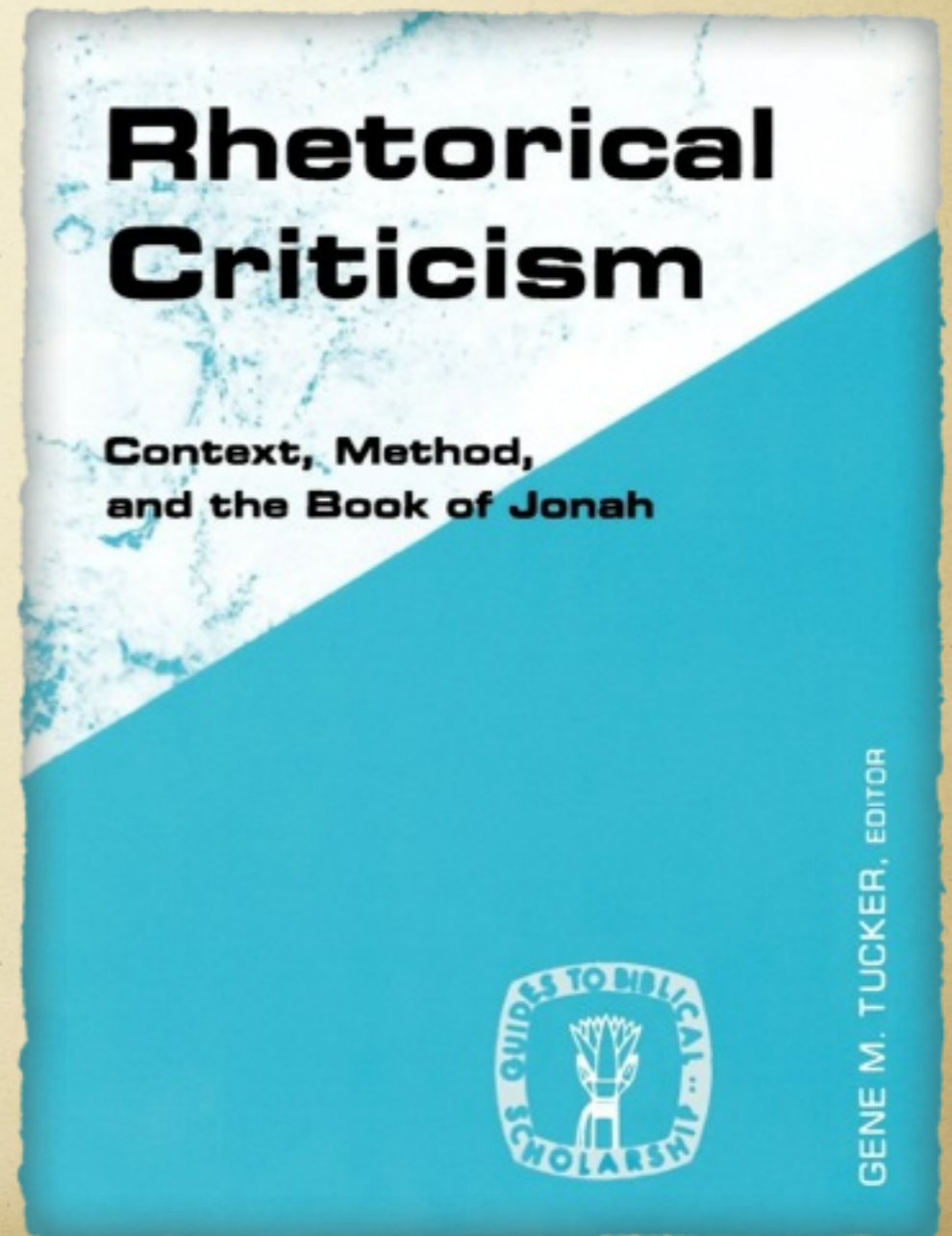
Canonical Criticism

- In 1970, Bernard Childs suggested in *Biblical Theology in Crisis* that exegesis should not stop with relating a pericope to its original context but should explore the dialectic between individual texts and full canonical context.
- Unity of Scripture vs. High/Low points
- Texts of Terror vs. “Great Commandment”



Rhetorical Criticism

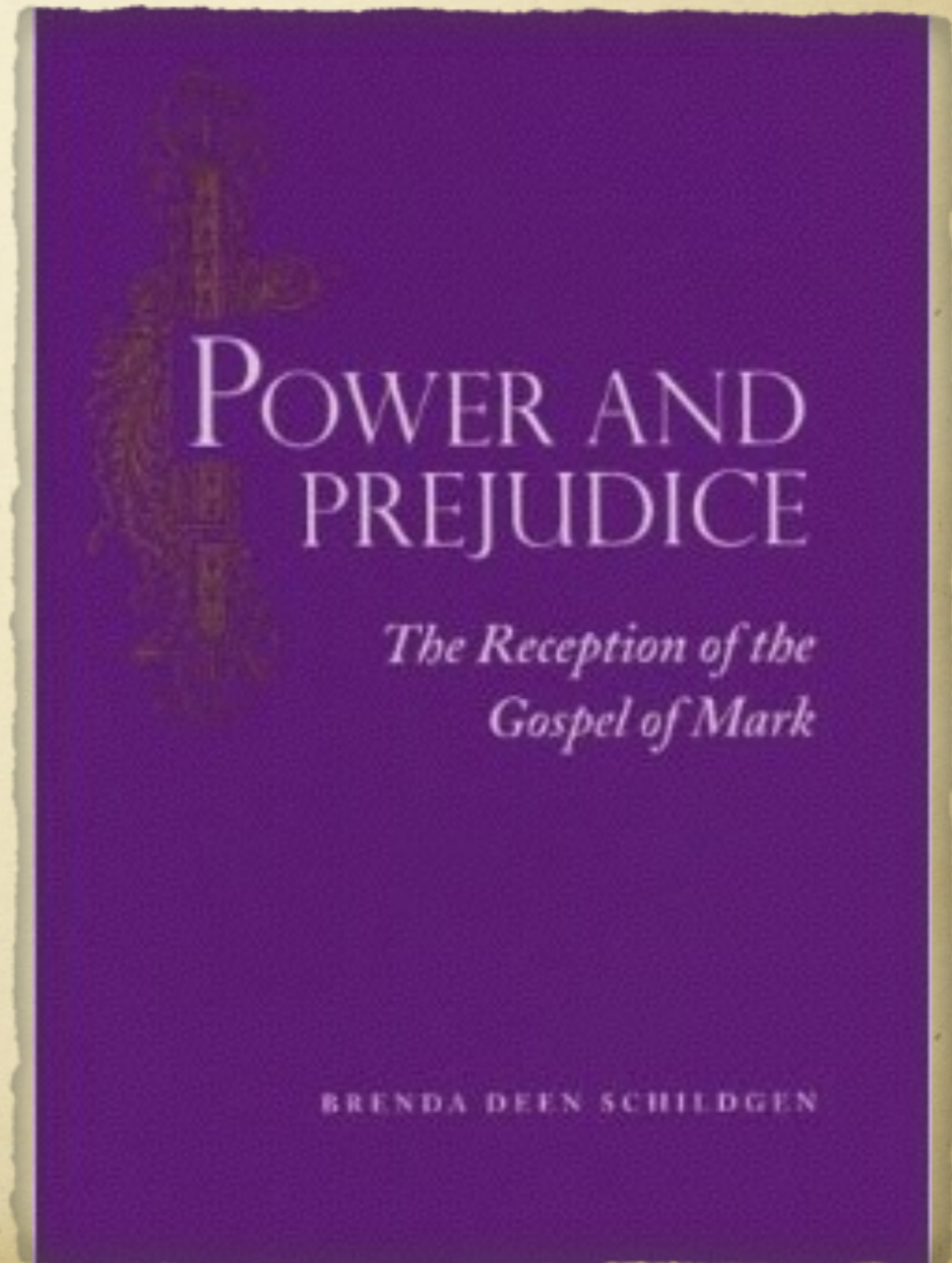
- Details “in” the text itself:
- beginning and ending of a text;
- repetition of words,
- phrases and sentences;
- themes;
- climax;
- types of discourses;
- design and structure;
- plot development;
- character portrayals;
- particles.



“In front of” the text: from text to reader

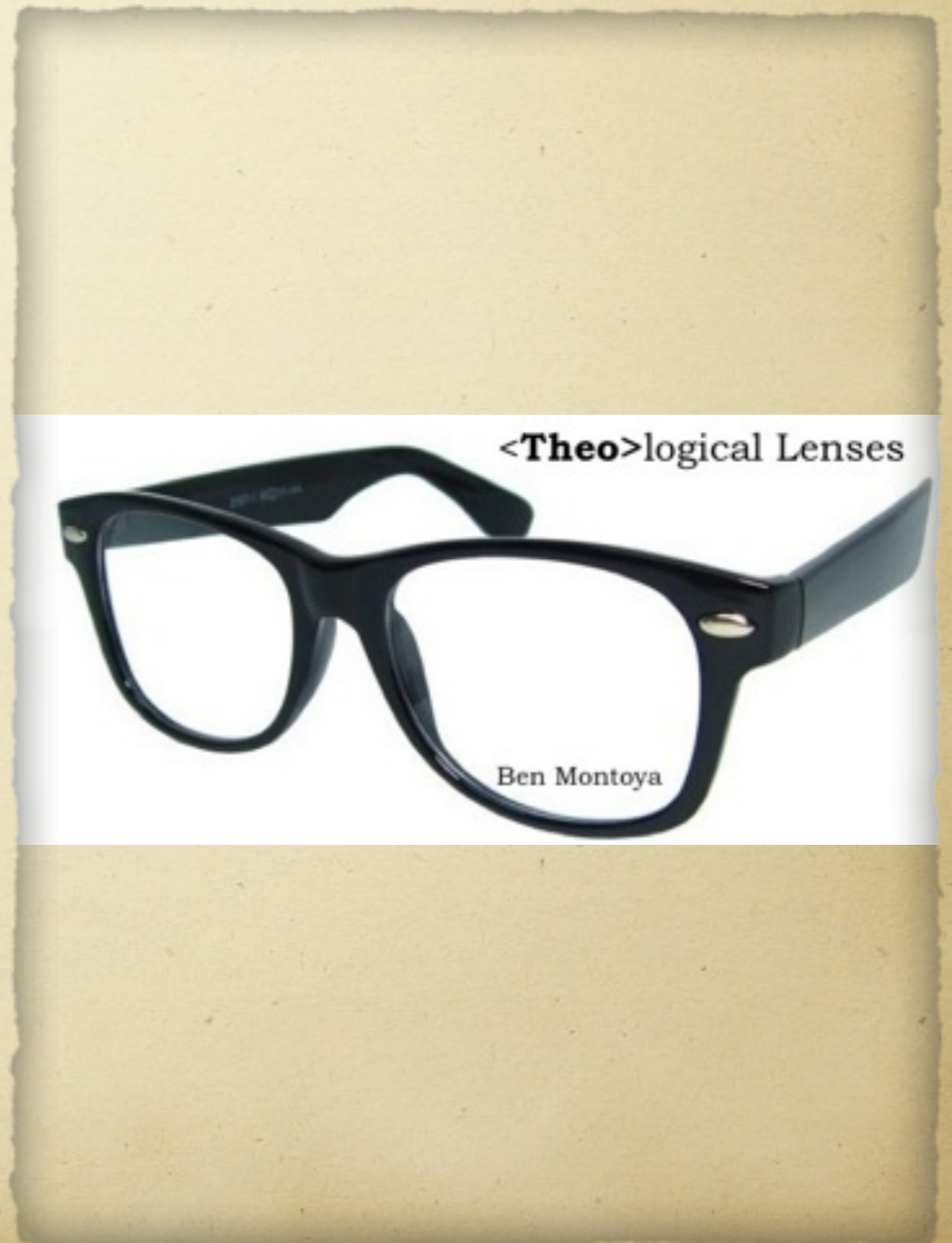
➤ Reception History

- history of the meanings that have been imputed to historical events.
- Traces the different ways in which participants, observers, historians and other retrospective interpreters have attempted to make sense of events both as they unfolded and over time since then, to make those events meaningful for the present in which they lived and live.



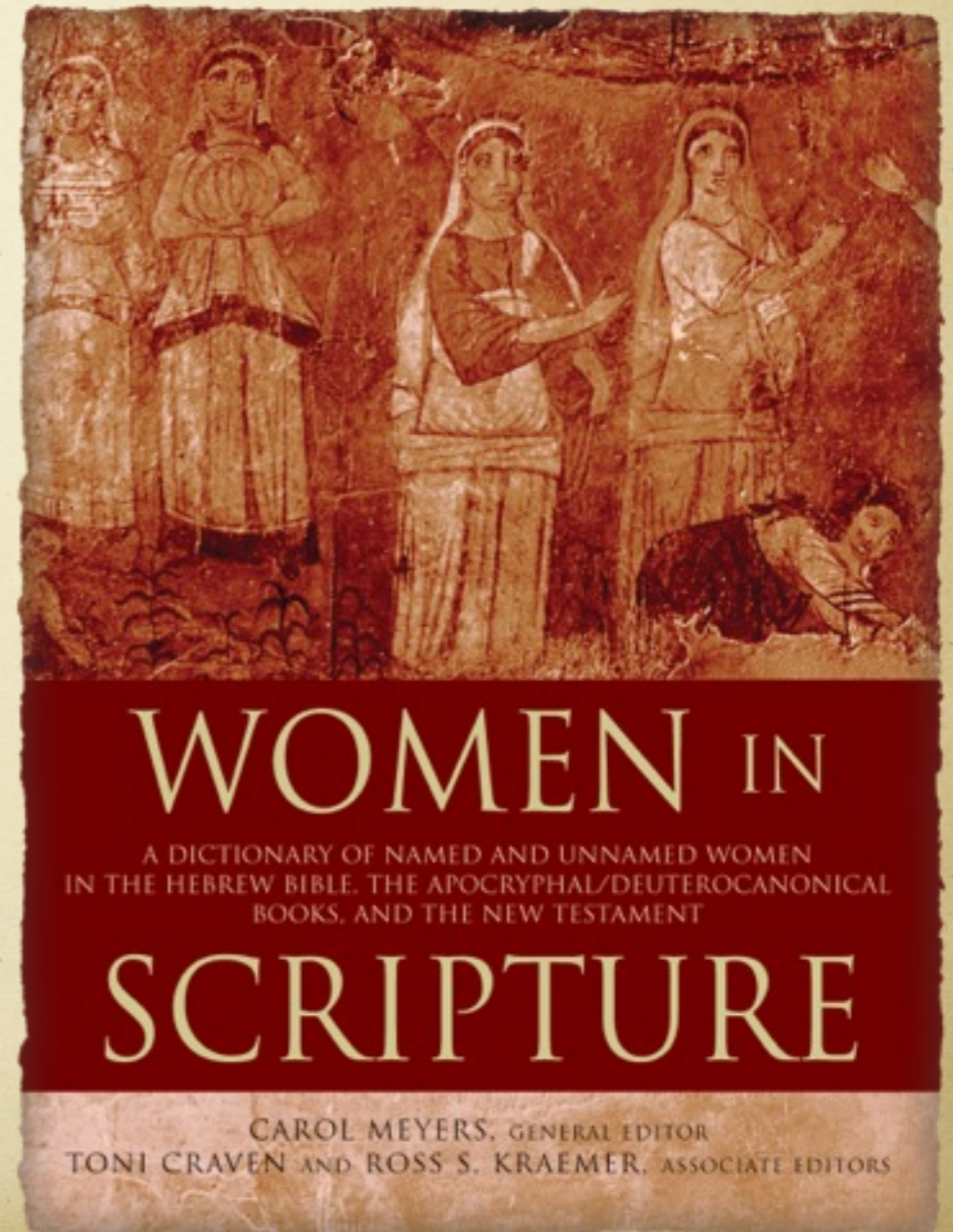
“In front of” the text: from text to reader

- Reader-Response Criticism
- focuses on the reader (or "audience") and his or her experience of a literary work
- readers experience texts differently in different reading communities.



“In front of” the text: from text to reader

- Feminist Criticism
- attentive to the perspective and experience of women in reading texts.
- (tracing all women in scripture, whether they have a name or not.)



“In front of” the text: from text to reader

➤ Liberation Criticism

➤ “preferential option for the poor”

➤ “No salvation outside the church/
poor” [*extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*]

➤ ...*the poor you shall always have with
you.*



“In front of” the text: from text to reader

➤ Postcolonial Criticism

➤ how writers from colonial powers sometimes misrepresent colonized cultures by reflecting more their own perspectives.

Orientalism

- Edward Said, *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1978.
- “The Orient was...a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (Said 1).
- **Examples of Orientalism:** discourses of “the east” as sexually lascivious or repressed, constructions of Arab and Muslim men as “terrorists” in the “war on terror”, “China doll/Dragon Lady” stereotypes, western obsessions with the veiling practices of south asian and middle eastern bodies, terrorism studies.



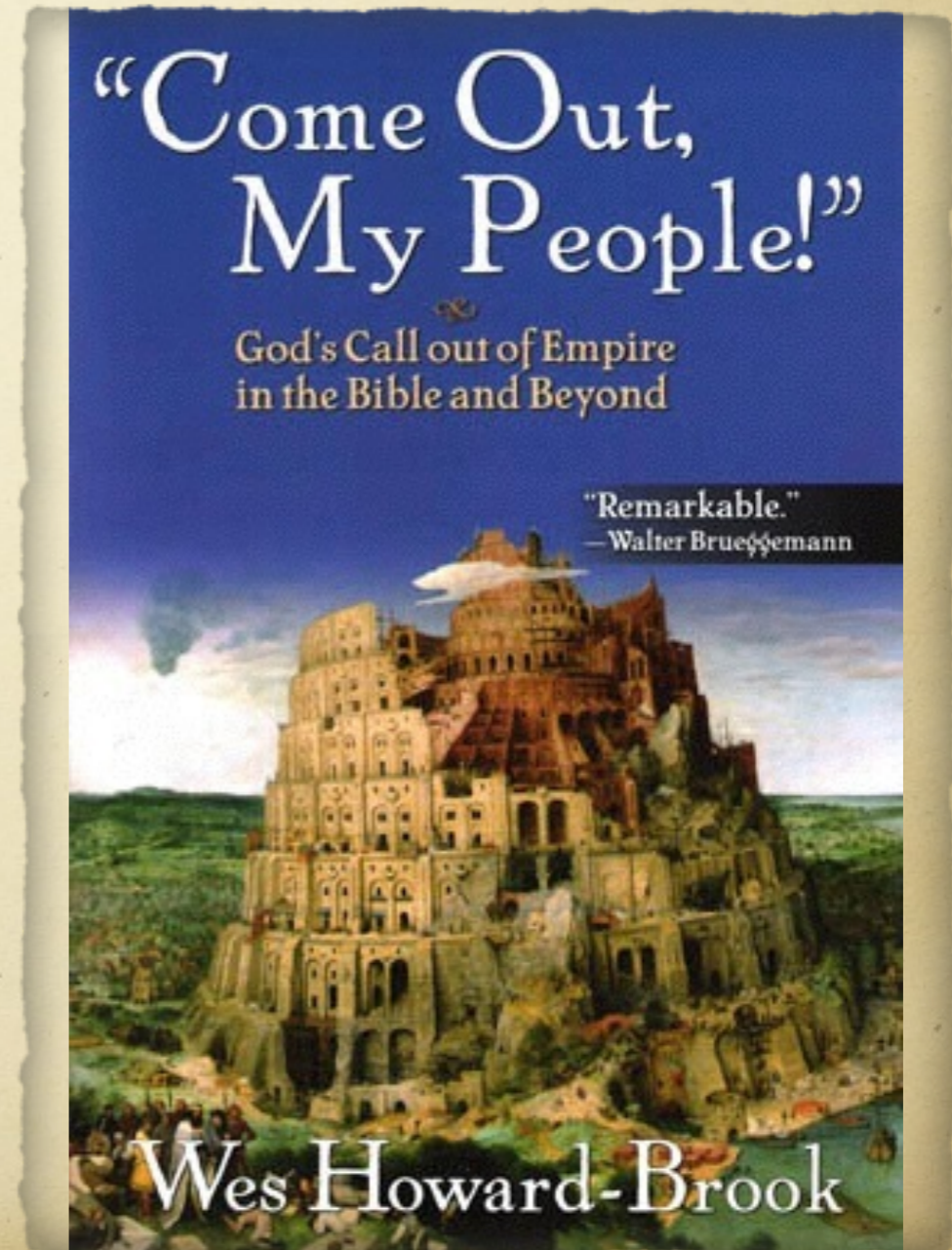
EDWARD W. SAID

Orientalism



“In front of” the text: from text to reader

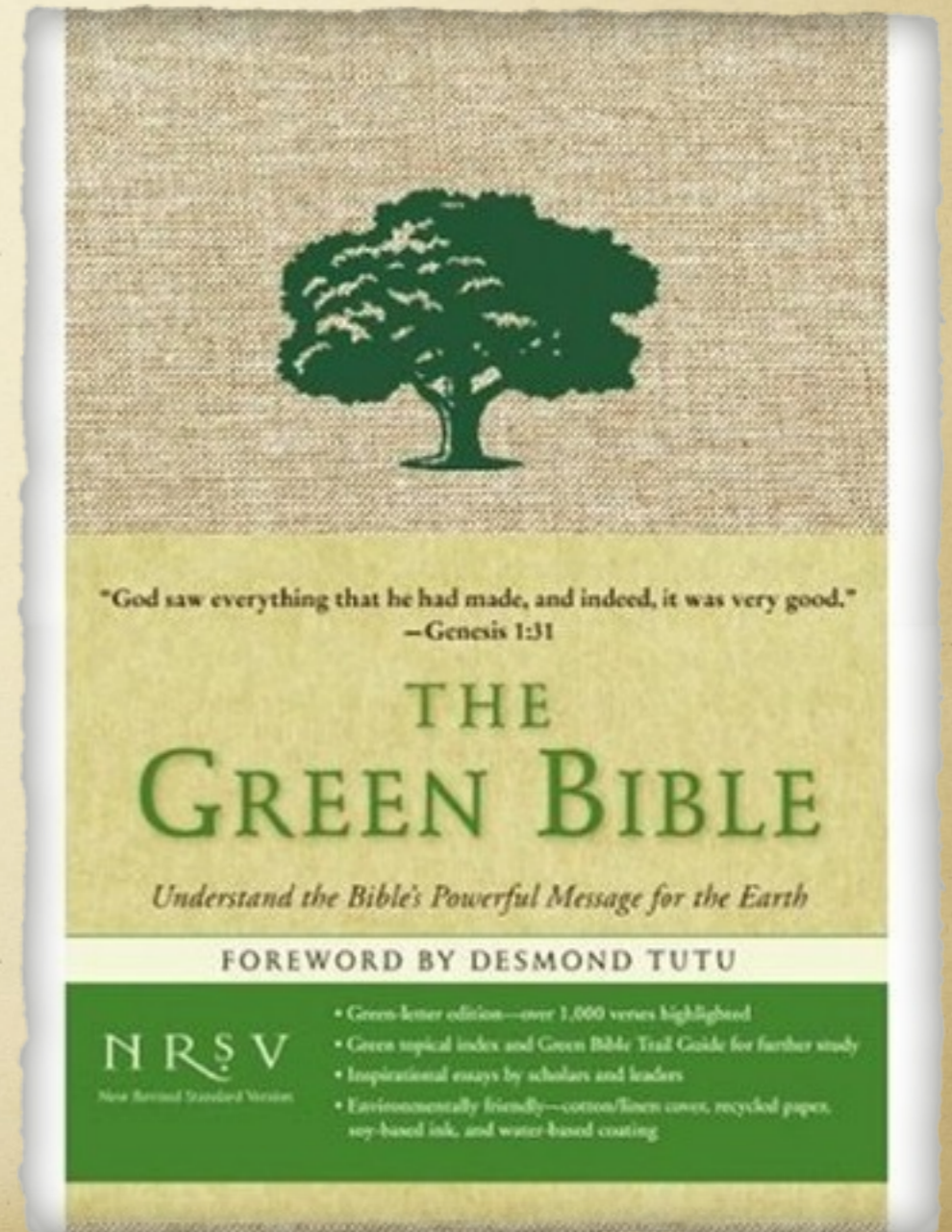
- Empire Criticism
- relationship to ideology of empire



“In front of” the text: from text to reader

➤ Ecological Criticism

➤ importance of developing a more ecologically informed interpretations



“In front of” the text: from text to reader

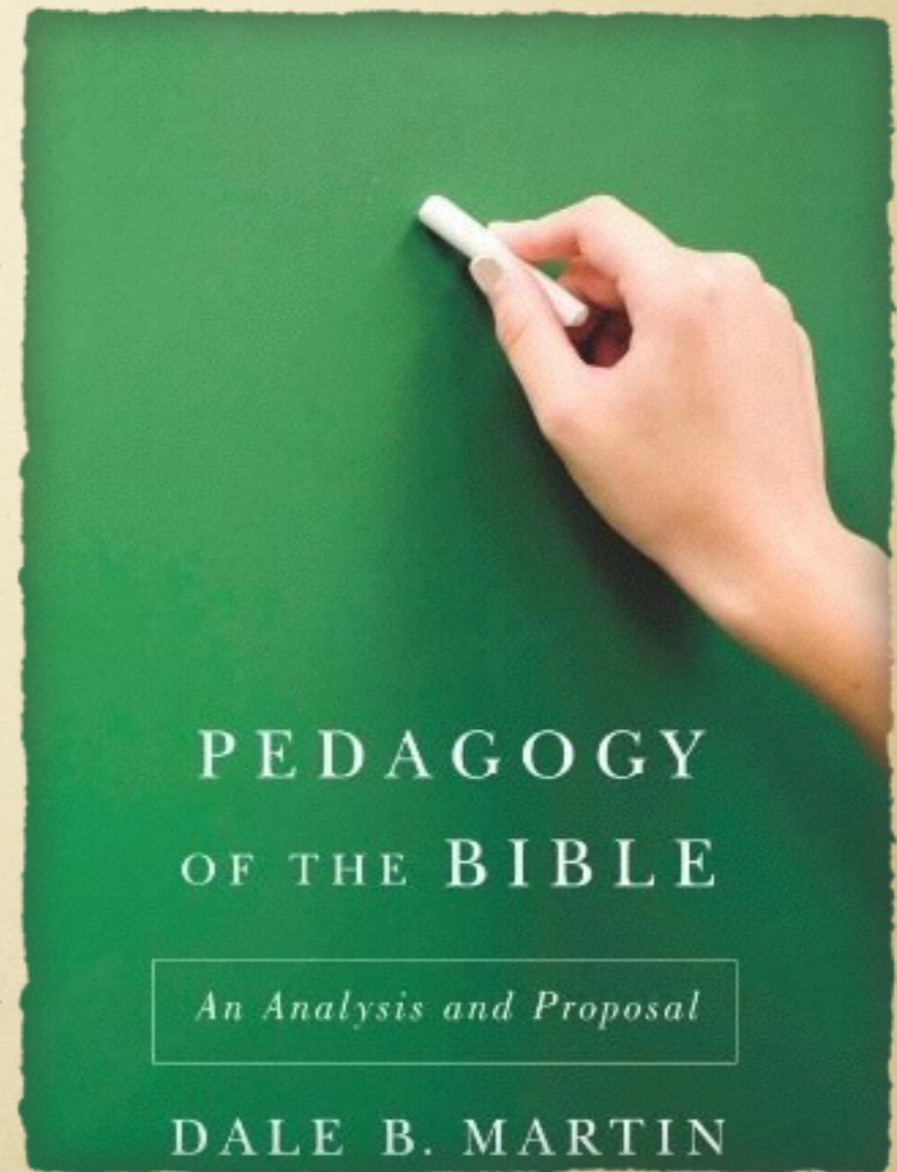
- Intertextuality
- inseparability of any text (broadly understood) from association with other texts.
- Every text we hear or read is intelligible by means association with what has already been heard or read; moreover, every text we write or speak is constructed from the building blocks of previous texts.



Julia Kristeva

Reader-Response Criticism

- Text comes from the Latin root for “to weave” and is related to the word for “textile.”
- How one interprets a text depends on what parts of that “textual fiber” you emphasize, and what strings you choose to pull, and in what order.
- Stanley Fish was teaching a course “on interpreting symbolic poetry.” And the students, at this point, were ‘learning how to identify Christian symbols and who to recognize typological patterns and how to move from the observation of these symbols and patterns to the specification of a poetic intention....’ during a previous class in the same room, Fish had written on the chalkboard a list of names of authors he had been discussing while teaching on a completely different topic.



Reader-Response Criticism

➤ The names were arranged on the board like this:

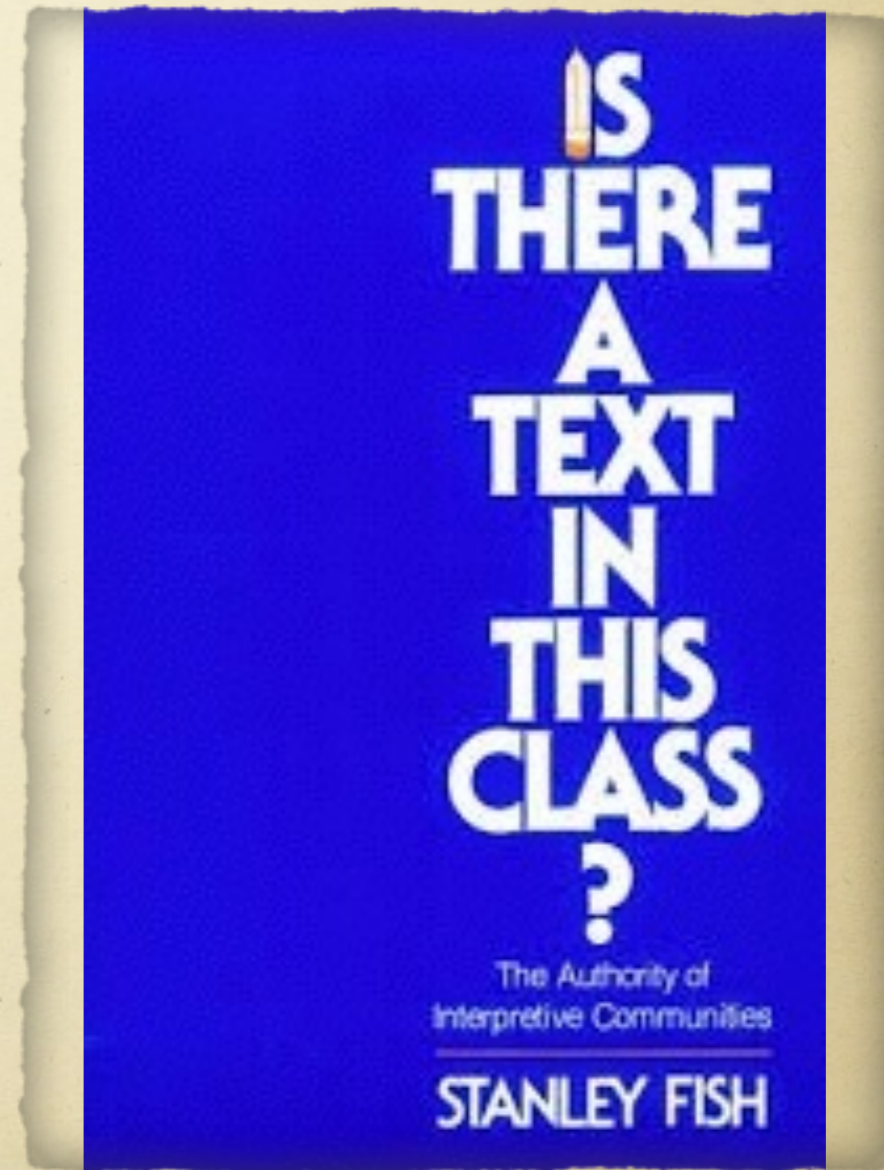
Jacobs-Rosenbaum

Levin Thorne

Hayes Ohman (?)

➤ Fish notes that he had originally placed the question mark in parentheses after the last name because he couldn't remember whether it was spelled with one "n" or two. Before the next group of students entered the room,

➤ Fish simply drew a frame around the names and write, "p. 43" n top of the frame.



Reader-Response Criticism

- Fish told them this was a poem and asked them to interpret it, which they proceeded to do with no hesitation.
- One student pointed to the spatial arrangement of the words and suggested it could invoke a cross or an altar.
- Another interpreted “Jacob” by reference to Jacob’s ladder.
- We could imagine them interpreting “thorne” as a reference to a crown of thorns, and “Rosebaum” also as a religious symbol (“rose-tree”).
- Because the students had been taught how to interpret religious, symbolic poems and had been told this text was precisely that, they had no trouble making perfect sense out of the text, even though the text had originally been a mere list of authors [related to a completely different lecture and course].

Reader-Response Criticism

- The students needed no actual “author’s intention” (though they clearly could have assumed an author’s intention of their own imagination).
- Obviously the meaning of the poem was not simply a property contained by the text in the normal, commonsense way of thinking of such.
- As Fish concludes, “As soon as my students were aware that it was poetry they were seeing, they began to look with poetry-seeing eyes, that is, with eyes that saw everything in relation to the properties they knew poems to possess.”
- The point is that “texts do not themselves contain or create meaning.... Textual meaning is created by human beings practicing rather complicated socially learned skills we call “reading.” [And the interpretive communities that have formed you have a heavy impact on how you read texts — on what “strings” of that textual/textile “fabric” that you choose to pull on or weave through your interpretation. This phenomenon is not necessarily a good or bad thing; but it can be healthy to make our unconscious interpretative inclinations more conscious and intentional.

Upcoming Classes

- Session 2: Genesis
- Session 3: Exodus
- Session 4: Leviticus and Numbers
- Session 5: Deuteronomy and Joshua and Judges
- Session 6: Samuel and Kings
- *(Note: The above topics will be adjusted, depending on how we progress each session)*