

BANNED

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE



The Rev. Dr. Carl Gregg

Mondays, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm,

March 3 – April 21

Housekeeping

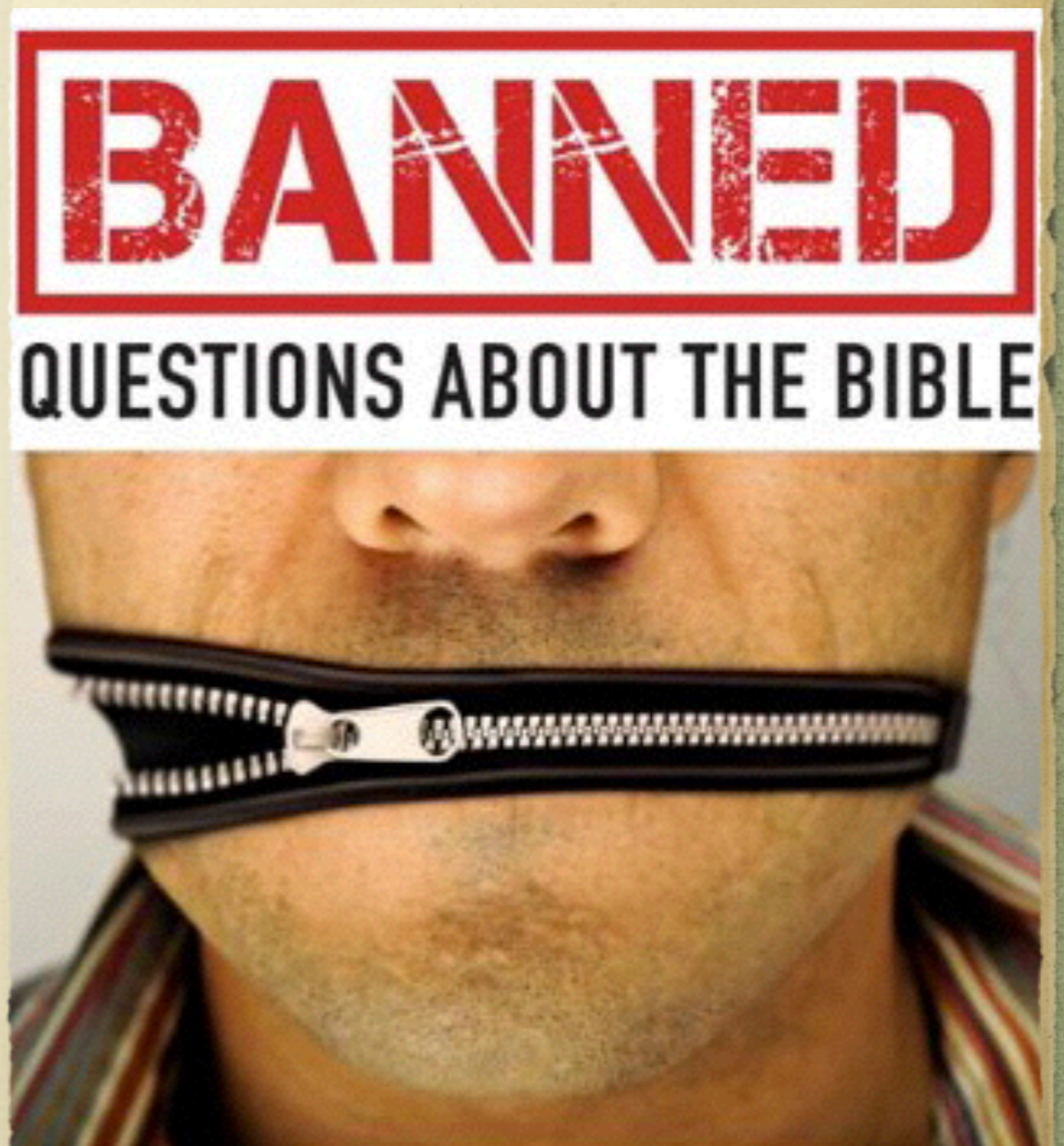
- Slides: frederickuu.org/about/FCC
- **Attendance** for FCC
- Add to **email** list?
- **Other?**

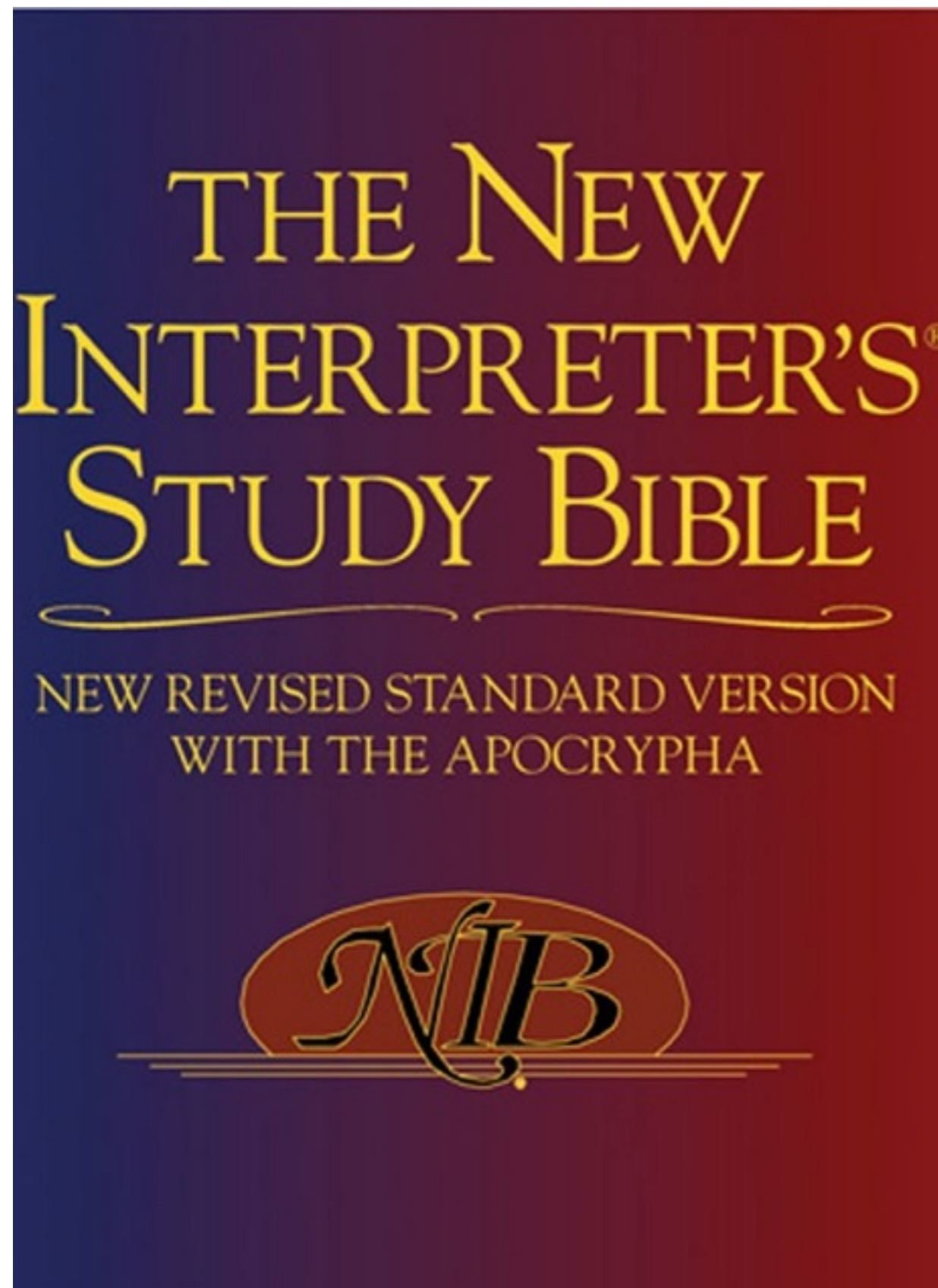
Covenant

- 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.”**

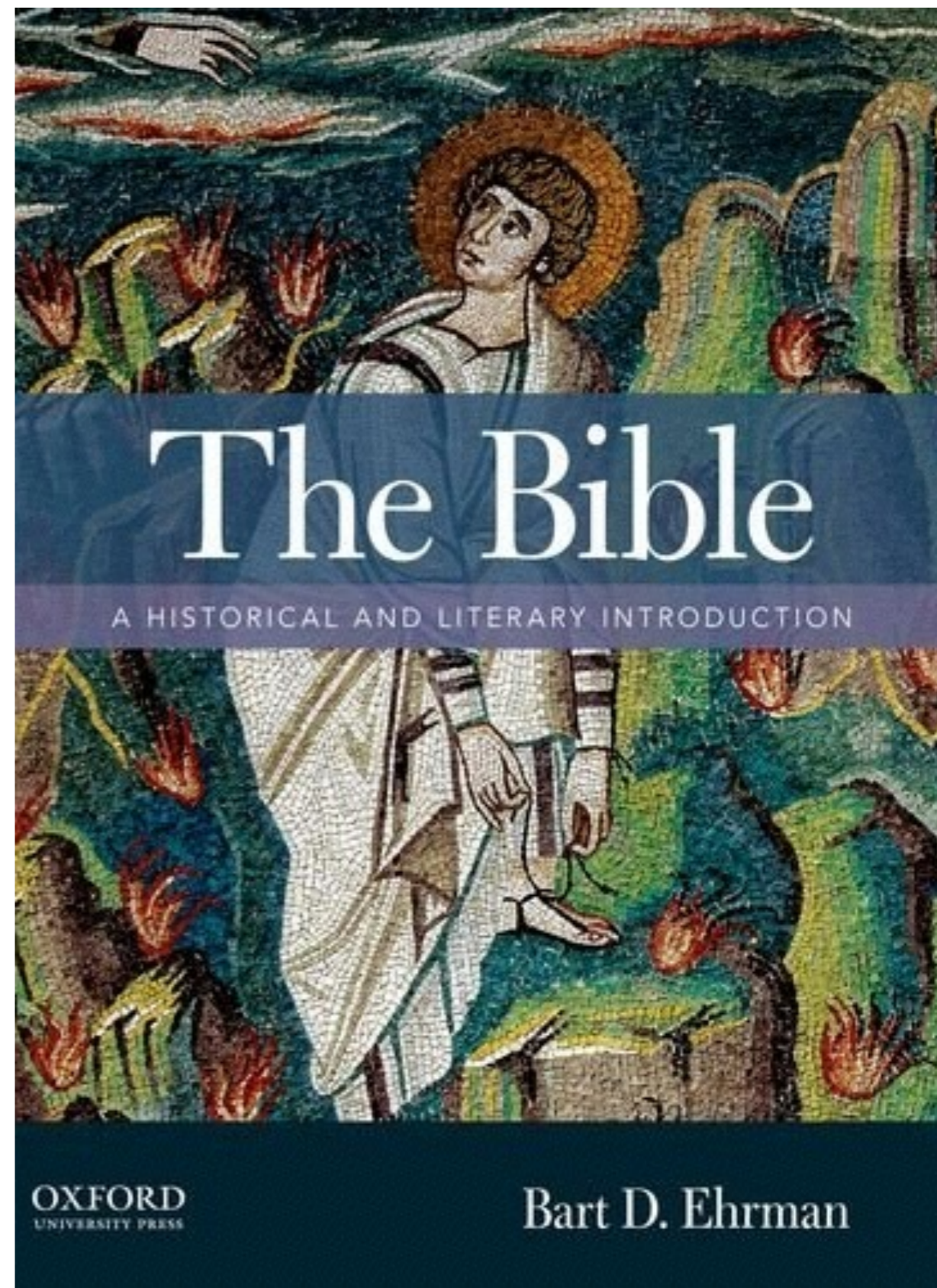


- Explore the questions mainstream scholars ask about the Bible that aren't always asked in religious communities.
- Feel more equipped to read the Bible for yourself: basic biblical background and history, diverse methods of biblical interpretation, major content and themes.
- Compare modern readings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

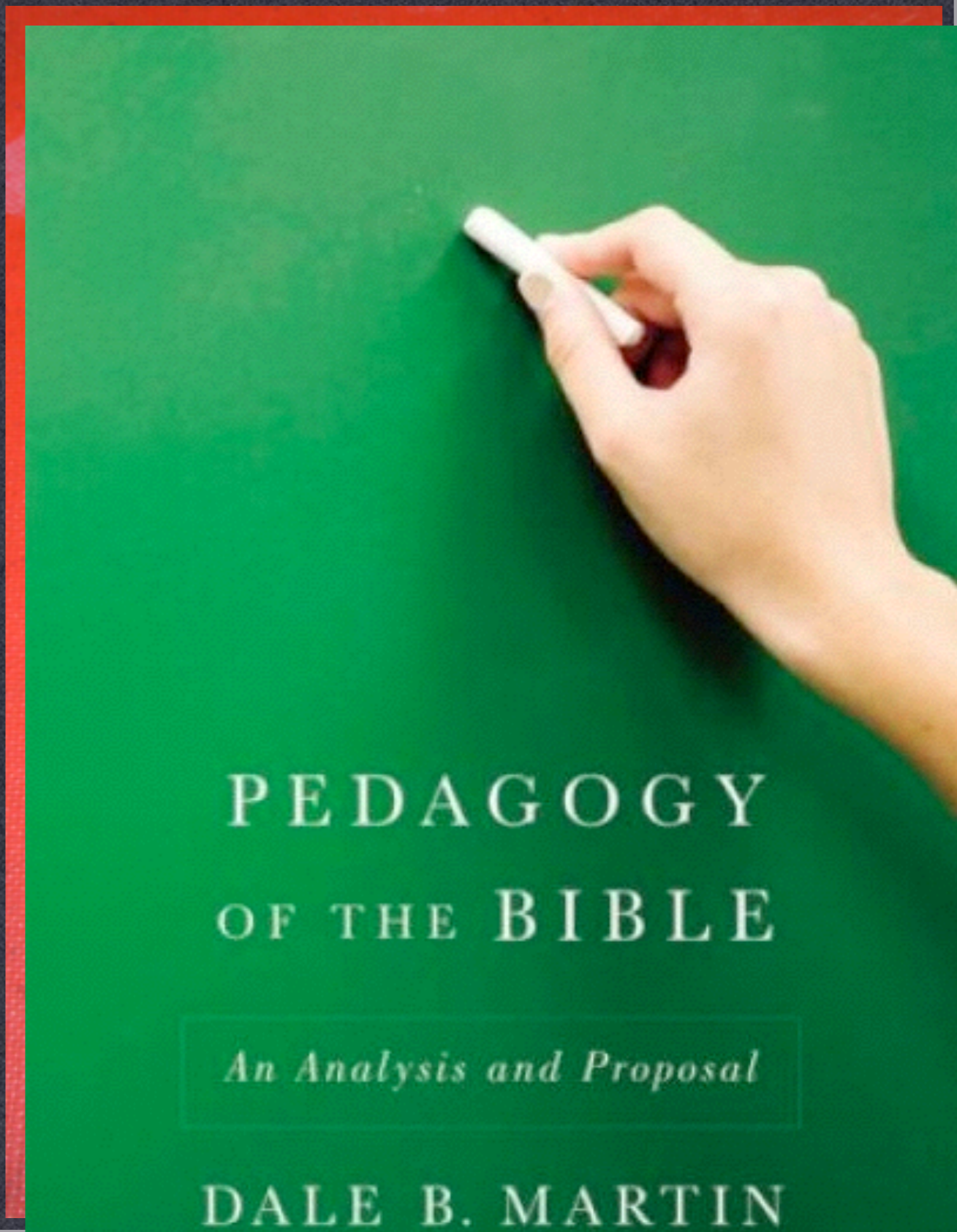
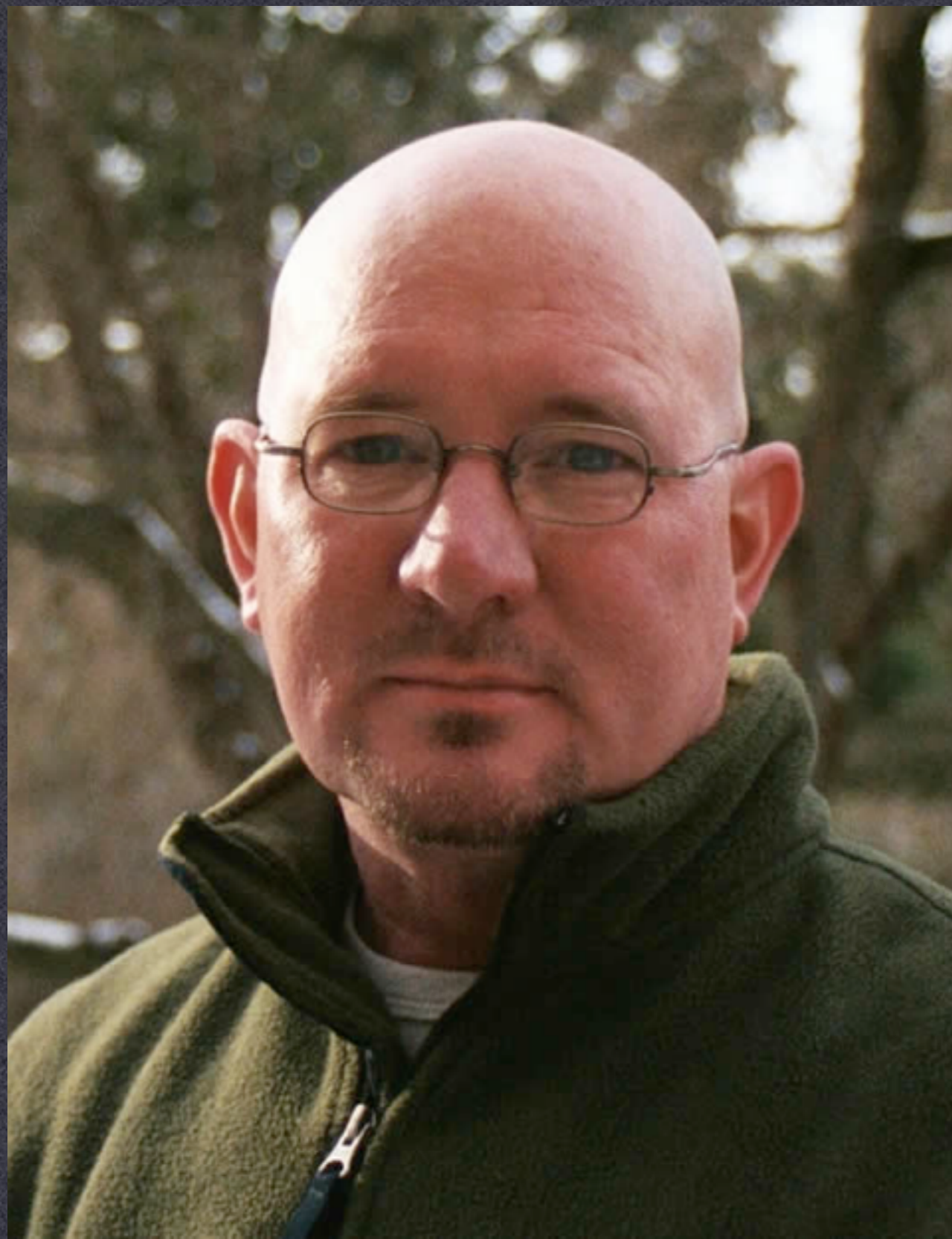




\$36



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



Dale Martin



Metaphor #1: flipping through the Bible as walking through a museum?

Diversity of objects & hierarchy of interpreters: child, adult, docent, art professor.



Art Collection / Bible Anthology: There are many things in museums that could be art, but that we do not take as art.



Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968)

"THE FOUNTAIN" (1917)



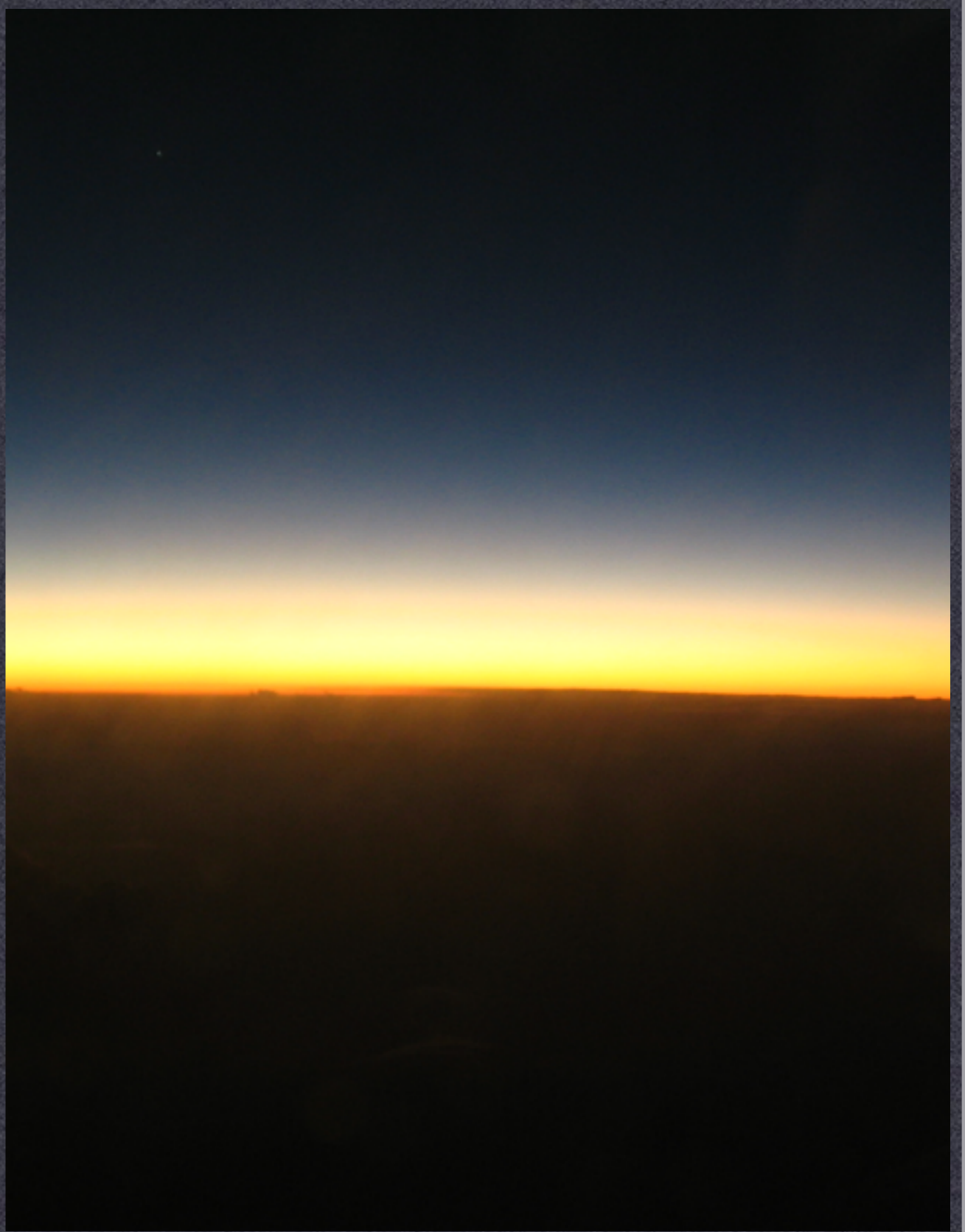
Metaphor #2: Scripture as Cathedral: a space that changes us, stirs our soul, and enlivens our imagination.

“One of the best arguments against taking the Bible as a constitution or rule book is that makes a lousy one.”



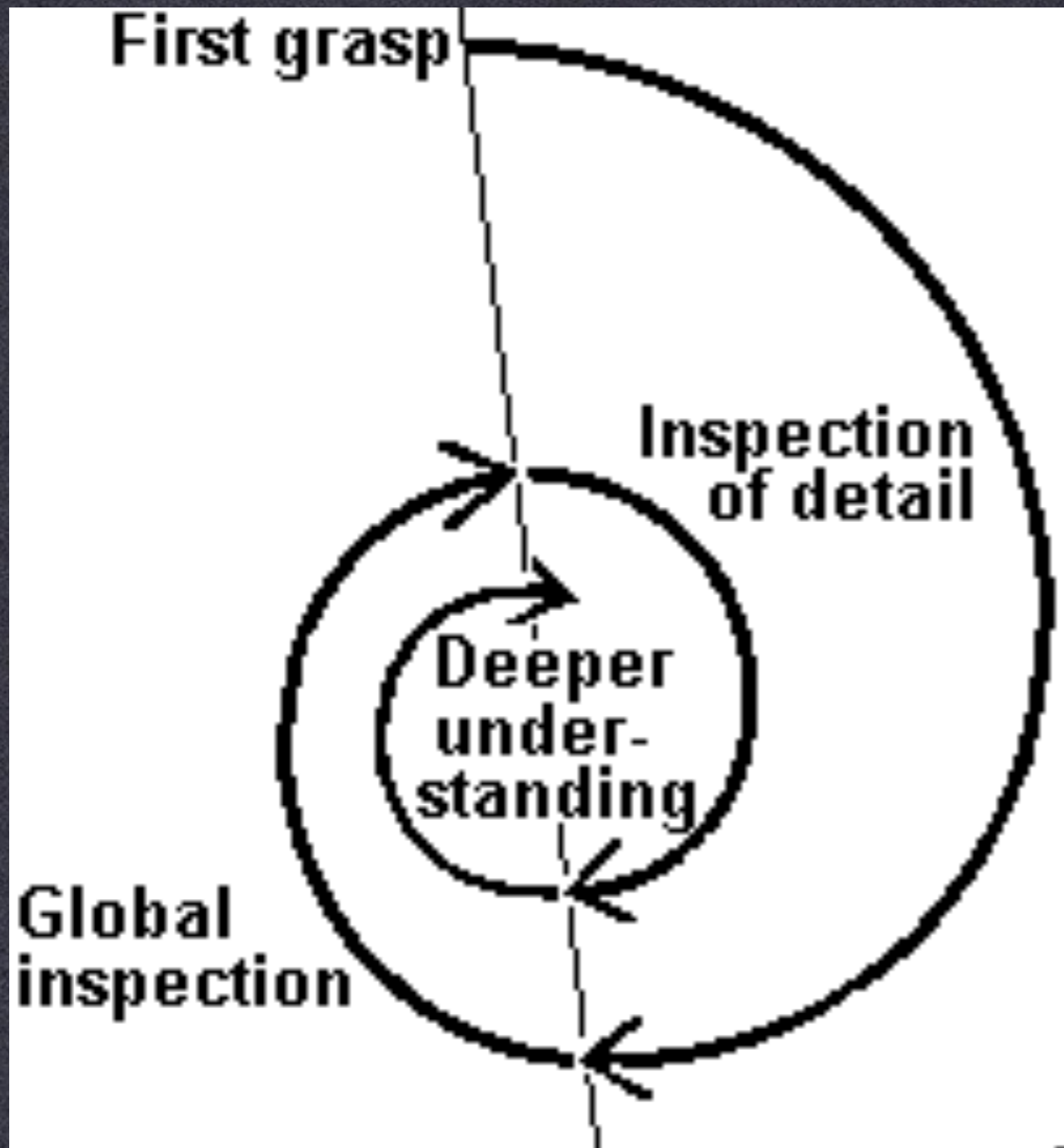
Metaphor #3: Scripture as world wide WEB...hypertext commentary

word as unit of meaning. Intertextual links to sermons, art galleries, a music, plays, films, Ancient Near Eastern parallels.



Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900 - 2002)

“FUSION OF HORIZONS” (HORIZONTVERSCHMELZUNG)



Hermeneutics (Hermes)

“Take responsibility for the truth, goodness, morality, & social effect of your interpretation.”

Nomenclature

- Hebrews: ancestors (before Israel was a nation)
- Israelites (Moses until exile, when Israel destroyed)
- Jews: Babylonian exile only the tribe of Judah survived
- Israelis – citizens of the modern state of Israel (founded in 1948)

Timeline

- 2000-1550 Ancestral Period
- 2000: Abraham and Sarah
- (1700 Famine in Canaan: Israel to Egypt -- 400 years in slavery)
- 1550-1280 Egypt and the Exodus
- 1300: Exodus (EGYPT)

Timeline

- 1280-1020 Conquest and Settlement
- 1020-922 United Kingdom
- 1000: David (monarchy)
- 922-721 Two Kingdoms
- 721 Destruction of N. Kingdom of Israel
- (ASSYRIA): Ten Lost Tribes

Timeline

- 721-587 Judah Alone
- 587-539 Babylonian Exile
- 586/7: Jerusalem destroyed;
- begin (BABYLONIAN) exile
- 539-333 Return and Restoration
- 539: Return from Exile (PERSIA...Cyrus the Great)

Timeline

- 333-70 C.E. Judaism and Hellenism
- 333: Alexander the Great (GREECE — Hellenism)
- 63 B.C.E. Romans take control of the Middle East
- ROME...Greco-Roman
- 70 C.E. destruction of Jerusalem Temple — *Rabbinical Judaism and Christianity as siblings*

Torah/Pentateuch

- Genesis 1-11: Primeval History (*Creation to Abraham*)
- Genesis 12-36: Abraham and Sarah
Isaac and Rebekah
Jacob + Leah + Zilpah + Rachel + Bilhah
- Genesis 37-50: Joseph Cycle
- Exodus 1-18: Exodus from Egypt
- Exodus 19:: – Leviticus – Numbers 10:10 Covenant at Sinai
- Numbers 10:11-36:13: Wilderness Wanderings
- Deuteronomy 1-34: Farewell Address of Moses

Mosaic Authorship

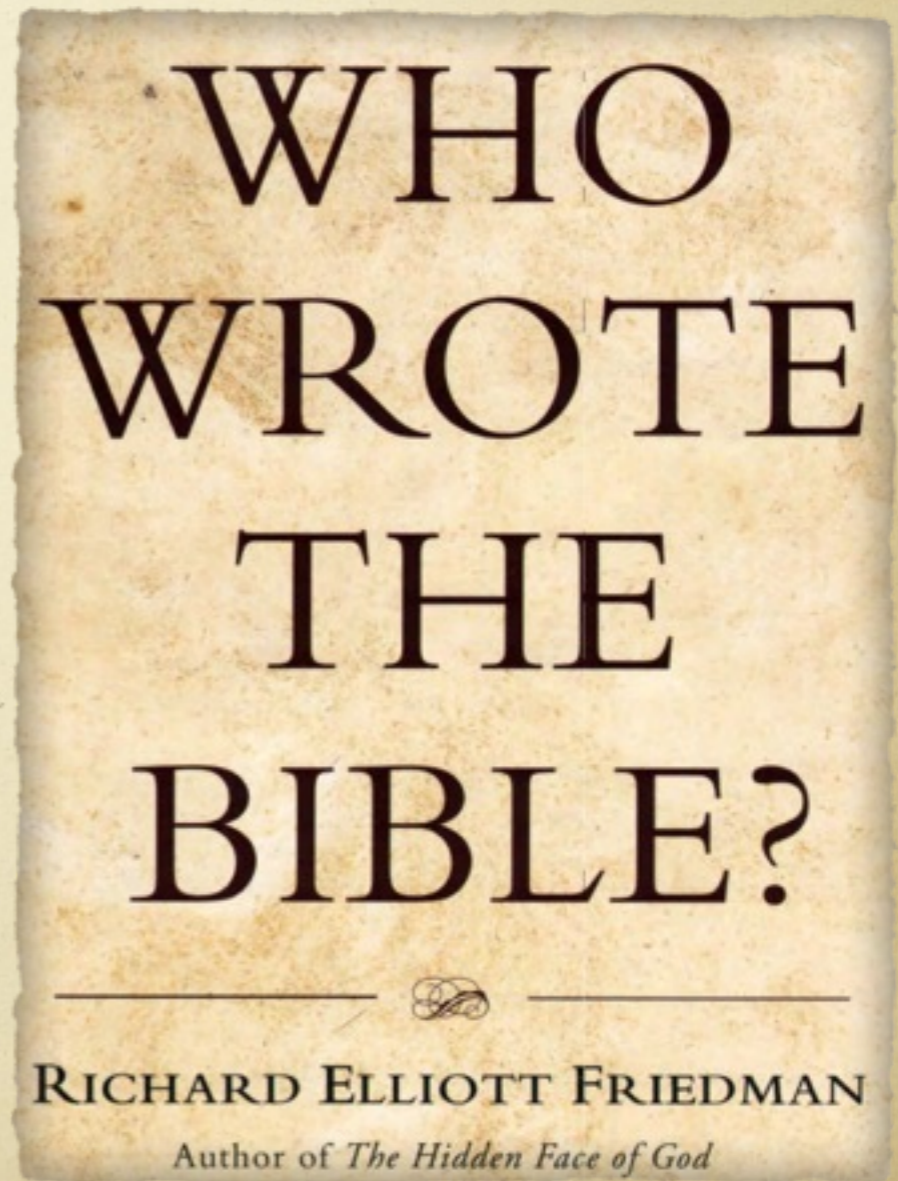
- In biblical culture, writers did not sign their works.
- Assumption of Jewish and Christian tradition is that Moses wrote the Torah.
- As early as the Middle Ages, scholars began to note that it was not possible for Moses to write the account of his own death (Deuteronomy 34:5-12).



Documentary Hypothesis



Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918)



Documentary Hypothesis

ONE OF THE WORLD'S FOREMOST BIBLE EXPERTS OFFERS A
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In *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, Richard Elliott Friedman offers a new, visual presentation of the Five Books of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—unlocking the complex and fascinating tapestry of their origins. Different colors and type styles allow readers to easily identify each of the distinct sources, showcasing Friedman's highly acclaimed and dynamic translation.

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—MICHAEL D. COOGAN, editor, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*

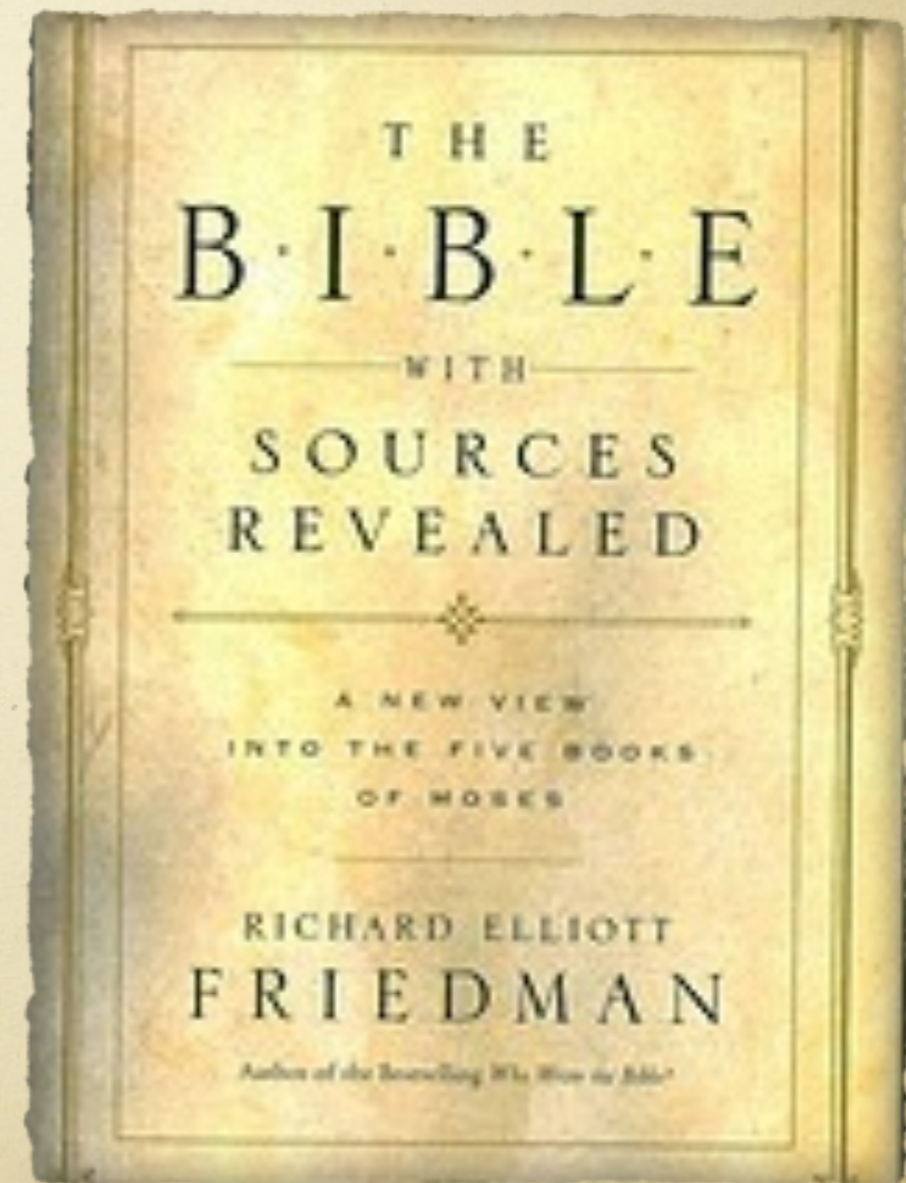


"In an easily understandable manner accessible to the general public, Friedman treats the complex, technical, and thorny problem in Old Testament interpretation concerning the existence of four separate literary sources in the Pentateuch... Very highly recommended."

—LIBRARY JOURNAL

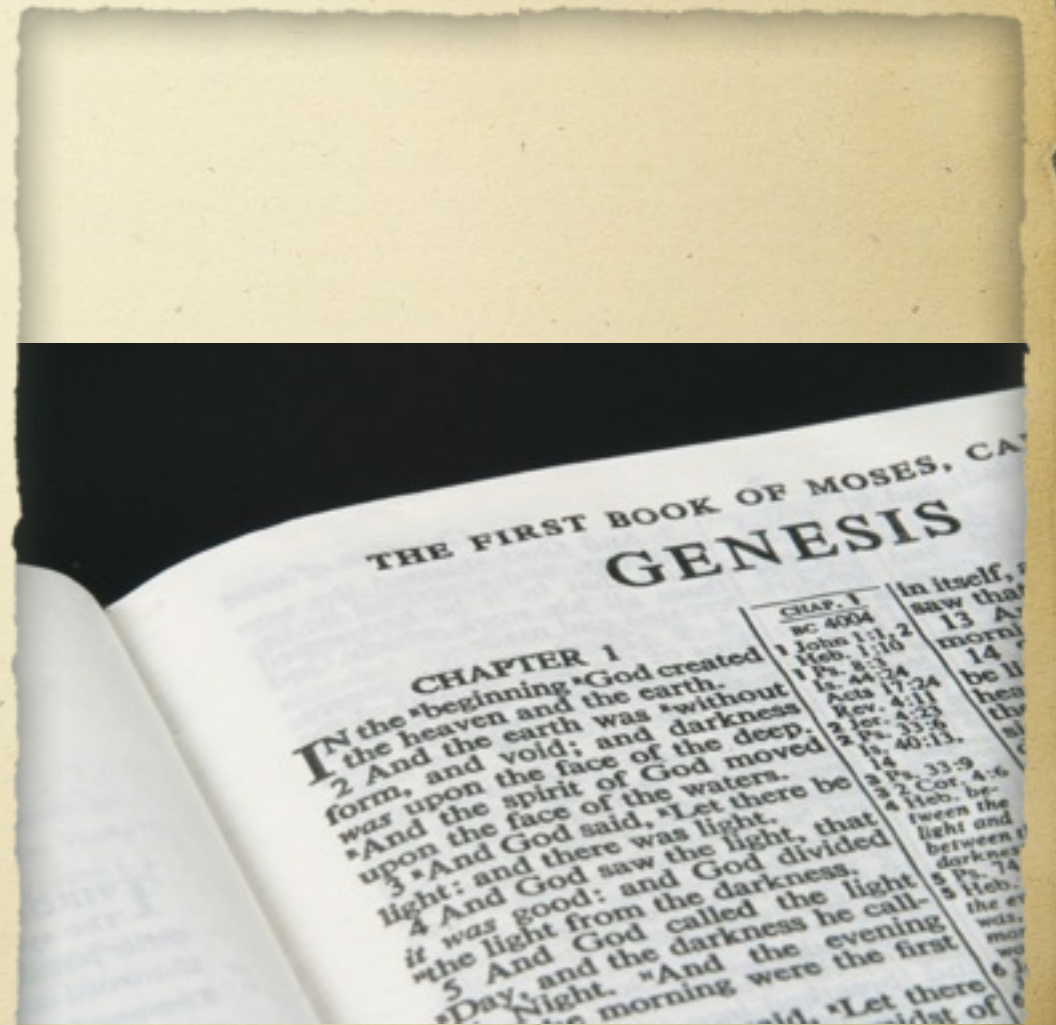
RICHARD ELLIOTT FRIEDMAN is Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature and holds the Katzin Chair at the University of California, San Diego. One of the premier biblical scholars in the country, he received his doctorate at Harvard and has been a visiting scholar at Oxford and Cambridge. Friedman is the author of *The Hidden Face of God*, *The Hidden Book in the Bible*, *Commentary on the Torah*, and the bestselling *Who Wrote the Bible?*

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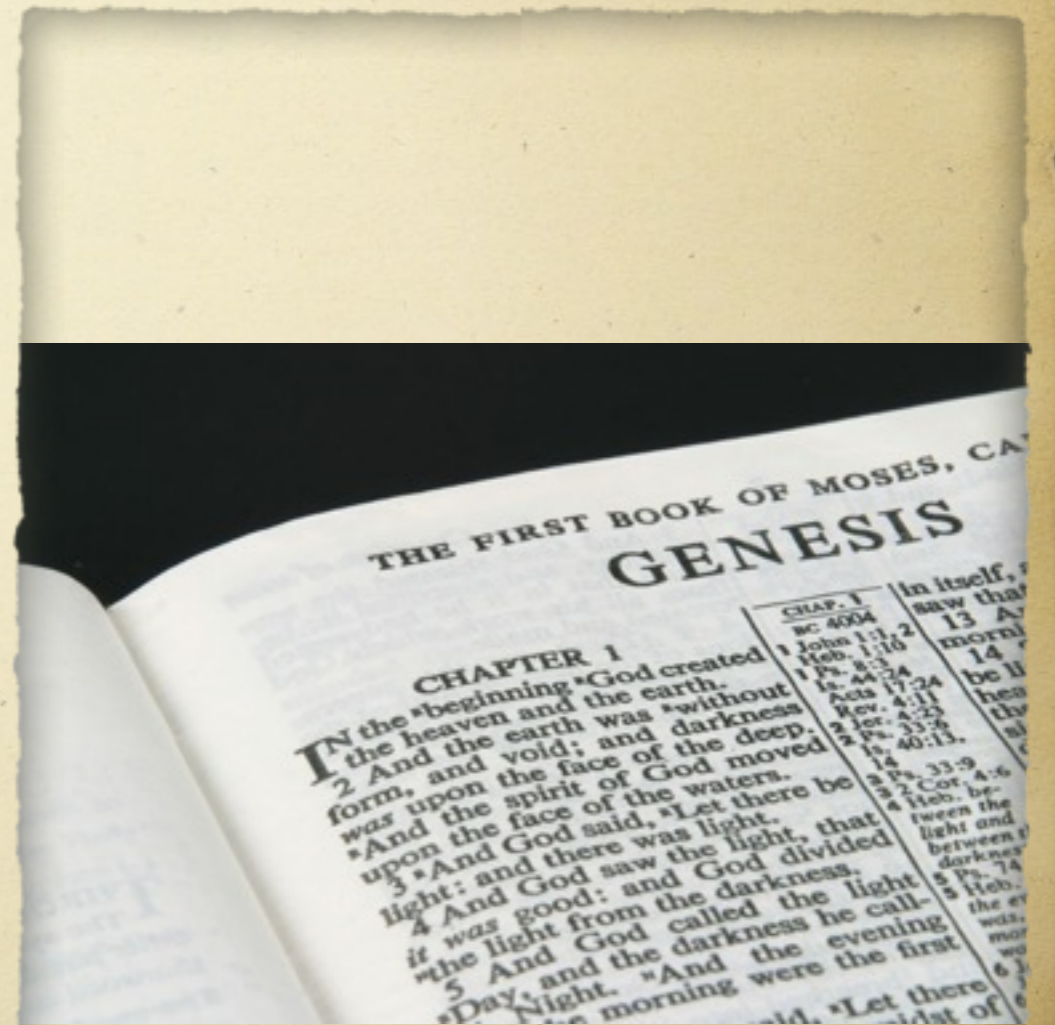
Genesis

- Hebrew: *Bere'shit* = first words, “in the beginning”
- Greek: “Genesis”



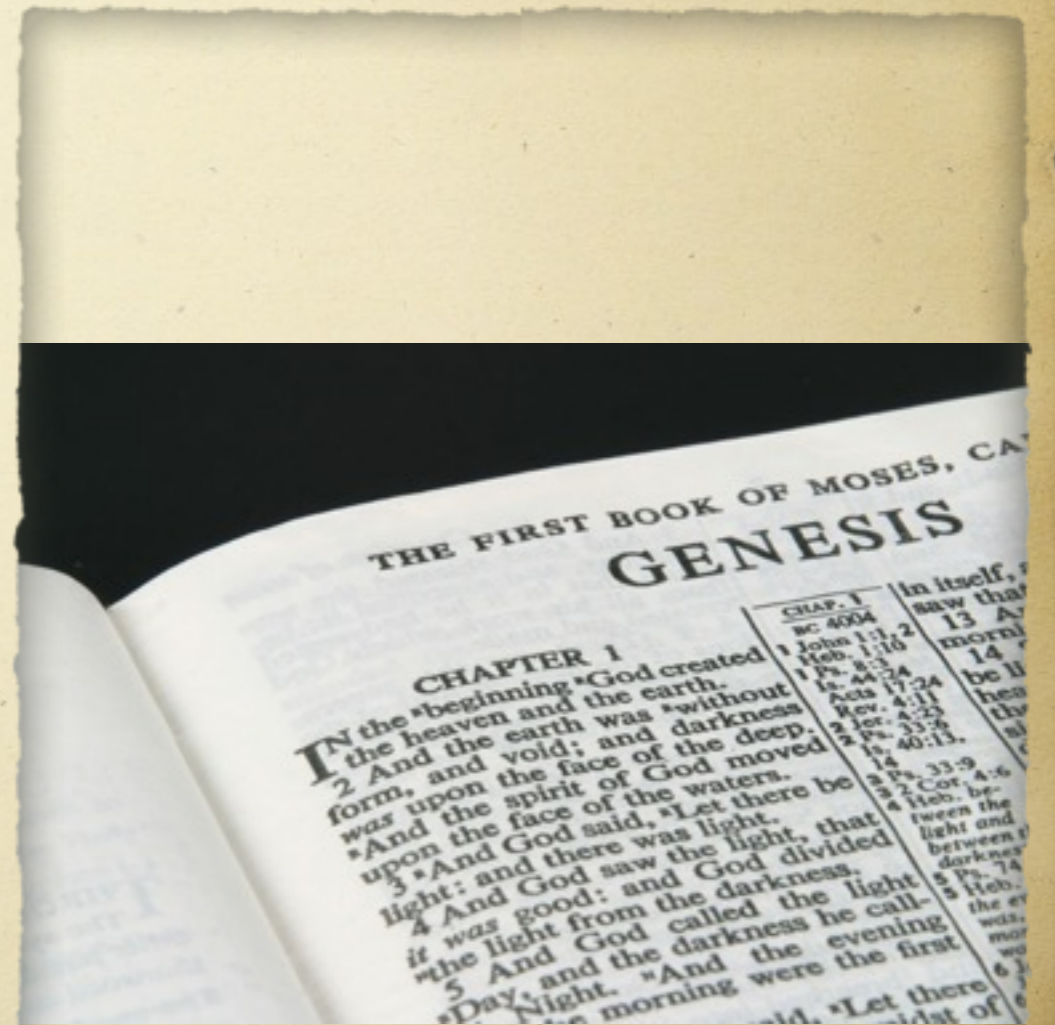
When God began to create...

- Genesis 1:1, “When God began to create heaven and earth”
- In the 11th century the great Jewish commentator Rashi made a case that this verse functions as a temporal clause.



Assumptions

- Read Hebrew
- Familiar with the cultural milieu



Genesis 1:2

- “Darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters”
- Allusion: TeHoM (literally: “deep water” — chaos), related to the Akkadian word TiaMat, name of the ocean goddess in the Mesopotamian creation story the *Enuma Elish* (“when on high”)
- Not just bottomless oceans, but the threatening waters of Mesopotamian lore that ancient people always feared would be their undoing.
- Genesis starts in the waters Babylonian – deep water (e.g. Tigris and Euphrates) (*In Palestine, – you would expect a desert setting.*)



Enuma Elish

When on high the heaven had not been
named,

Firm ground below had not been called by
name,

Naught but primordial Apsu, their
begetter,

And Mummu-Tiamat, she who bore them
all,

Their waters commingling as a single body.



Enuma Elish

He split her like a shellfish into two parts: Half of her he set up and ceiled it as sky,

Called down the bar and posted guards.

He bade them to **allow not her waters to escape.**

He crossed the heavens and surveyed the regions.

He squared Apsu's quarter, the abode of Nudimmud,

As the lord measured the dimensions of Apsu.

The Great Abode , its likeness, he fixed as Esharra,

The Great Abode, Esharra, which he made as the firmament.

[Thereafter Marduk made humans to be workers for the gods]:

Blood I will mass and cause bones to be.

I will establish a savage, "man" shall be his name.

Verily, savage-man I will create.

He shall be charged with the service of the gods

That they might be at ease!

Myths, Legends, and Novellas — Oh My!:
Telling Creation Stories in and around the
Ancient Near East (Genesis 1-2)



Sumerians Look On In Confusion as God Creates World

- The Lord God, Creator of All, caught thousands of Sumerian farmers and mathematicians somewhat off guard.
- Members of the earth's earliest known civilization, the Sumerians, looked on in shock and confusion some 6,000 years ago as God, the Lord Almighty, created Heaven and Earth.
- "I do not understand," reads an ancient line of pictographs depicting the sun, the moon, water, and a Sumerian who appears to be scratching his head. "A booming voice is saying, 'Let there be light,' but there is already light. It is saying, 'Let the earth bring forth grass,' but I am already standing on grass."



Sumerians Look On In Confusion as God Creates World

➤ Historians believe that, immediately following the biblical event, Sumerian witnesses returned to the city of Eridu, a bustling metropolis built 1,500 years before God called for the appearance of dry land, to discuss the new development. According to records, Sumerian farmers, priests, and civic administrators were not only befuddled, but also took issue with the face of God moving across the water, saying that He scared away those who were traveling to Mesopotamia to participate in their vast and intricate trade system.



Sumerians Look On In Confusion as God Creates World

- Moreover, the Sumerians were taken aback by the creation of the same animals and herb-yielding seeds that they had been domesticating and cultivating for hundreds of generations.
- "The Sumerian people must have found God's making of heaven and earth in the middle of their well-established society to be more of an annoyance than anything else," said Paul Helund, ancient history professor at Cornell University. "If what the pictographs indicate are true, His loud voice interrupted their ancient prayer rituals for an entire week."



Cosmic Creation (P) [sketch ancient cosmology]

1. Light - day/night

- Yom (“day or period of time”)
- “*Evening and morning*” (Sabbath starts Friday *sunset*)
- Not “*creatio ex nihilo*”

2. Dome - sky

- Gen 1:6, “waters from the waters”...holes *not* water cycle

Cosmic Creation (P) [sketch ancient cosmology]

3. Dry Ground - earth, seas, trees

- Gen 1:16 - some other light source before sun
- Circumlocution: SHeMeSH (“sun”) // SHaMeSHu “sun god”) // SHaMeSH (hanukah)
- 2 Kings 23:5, “He deposed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to make offerings in the high places at the cities of Judah and around Jerusalem; those also who made offerings to Baal, to the sun, the moon, the constellations, and all the host of the heavens.” *[anti-astral body worship]*

4. Heavenly bodies

5. Sea Creatures and Birds

- Gen 1:21, “So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good.” *[anti-Tiamat polemic]*

Cosmic Creation (P) [sketch ancient cosmology]

6. Land creatures, humans

- “*Let us...our image*”: Divine council
- Christian Trinity: anachronistic reading
- Royal Plural – God is talking to God’s self. Elohim is grammatically plural, “Plural of majesty”, the royal “we”
- Divine Council – most likely reading
 - Angels, etc. as a parliament of heaven
 - Job 1:6 and Job 2:1, “*ha satan*” and “sons of God,” meaning angels
 - Is 6:8, “Who will go for *us*”
 - 1 Kings 22:19, “whole *heavenly host* was standing by Him”

7. Sabbath - rest

Genesis 1:26

- “Dominion” or “Rule” (*radah*)—stewardship
- “Rule” can be either benevolent or harsh.
- Since humans are created in the image of God, one would assume that humans should rule as God would rule over a creation declared “good” in all its parts.
- Lev 25:23, “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants.”
- In Genesis 2:15, humans are made out of soil and commanded to cultivate (*abad*) it--“till it and keep it”

Verbal Brackets Mark the 2 Creation Stories

- Gen 1: “In the beginning when God created the *heavens* and the earth,”
- Genesis 2:4a, “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.”
- Gen 2:4b: *In the day* that the Lord God made the *earth* and the heavens. [vs. “7 days”]
 - versification: Middle ages (previously just paragraphs and phrasing in Masoretic text)

Parallel Symmetry

Environment

1. Light
2. Sky and Sea
3. Land (*dry land and vegetation*)

Inhabitant

4. Sun, Moon, Stars
5. Birds and Fish
6. Creatures (land animals, humanity)

Terrestrial Creation (J)

1. Adam (*yṣr*, “formed”)

- *Adam* – “humankind” or “individual’s name”
- *Adamah* is “ground” in Hebrew (“humans out of hummus”)
- “formed” (Gen 2:7) - *yṣr* — pottery word (“God as potter”)
- “breathed” (“God as EMT”...Cardio Pulmonary *Susitation* [God’s hands get dirty...intimate in contrast to priestly Gen 1])
- Phyllis Trible: Adam as “undifferentiated earth creature” pre-Eve — neither male nor female until sexuality created...what would be the point? [*God and Rhetoric of Sexuality*]

Terrestrial Creation (J)

2. Garden

- Gen 2:8, “planted” (“God as farmer”)
- Anthropomorphic (*in contrast to Gen 1*)

3. Animals (*before “man” in Gen 1*)

Terrestrial Creation (J)

4. Woman

- Gen 2:21, “deep sleep” (*God as surgeon, anesthesiologist*)
- woman is *bna*, “built” of bone (man is *clay*).
- Consistent with powerful SoS female imagery (woman is “tower, animals”)
 - Sos 4:4 “Your neck is like the tower of David, built in courses; on it hang a thousand bucklers, all of them shields of warriors.”
 - SoS 7:4 “Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes are pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim. Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon, overlooking Damascus.”

Cosmic Creation (P) Terrestrial Creation (J)

1. Light - day/night

2. Dome - sky

3. Dry Ground - earth, seas,
trees

4. Heavenly bodies

5. Sea Creatures and Birds

6. Land creatures, humans

7. Sabbath - rest

1. Adam

2. Garden

3. Animals

4. Woman

Two Different Creation Stories

- Compare: *Four* Gospels
- Tolerance for variation...include *both*

Inherited Patriarchal Readings

- Gen 1: “Last is best, the pinnacle” [*humans*]
 1. Adam
- Gen 2: “First one to be created is best” [*Adam*]
 2. Garden
- So...if woman came *after* man and *out of* man, woman is lower than man....
 3. Animals
 4. Woman
- Then, since man was created *after* dirt and *out of* dirt, men are lower than dirt?!

Cosmic (*Priestly*)

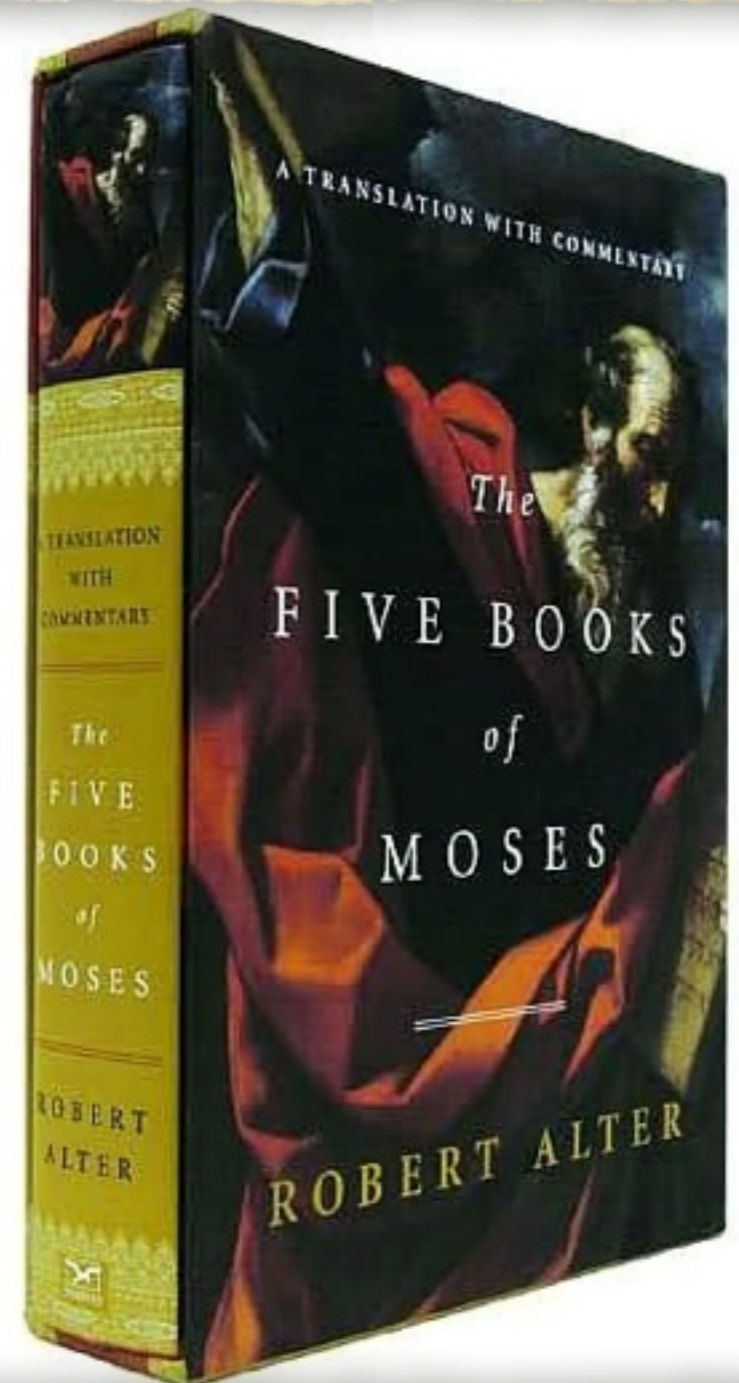
1. Six Days
2. Gen 1:1 (“*heaven & earth*”)
3. God (Elohim)
4. God speaks creation...like a worship litany

Terrestrial Creation (J)

1. In the [*one*] day
2. Gen 2:4, “*earth & heaven*”
3. LORD God (YHWH Elohim), *Adonai*
4. God gets hands dirty like a potter, farmer, surgeon.

Paradise Lost or Paradise Outgrown?
Original Blessing, Original Responsibility,
and what the heck are the Nephilim anyway?
(Genesis 3-50)

- “We began to think that ancient peoples told **dumb, literal** stories that we were now smart enough to recognize as such. Not quite.
- Those ancient people told **smart, metaphorical** stories that we were now dumb enough to take literally. Enlightenment, yes, but Endarkenment also.” - John Dominic Crossan, memoir, 148



Genesis 3

- Conventional Wisdom: Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating the fruit and were therefore cursed.
- This was the “Original Sin” causing the so-called “fall” of humanity from Paradise.



“No one said we couldn’t eat the snake.”

History of “Original Sin”

- Sirach 25:24 (c. 180 BCE), “From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die.”
- Developed by Paul (60 CE)
 - Romans 5:12, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned.”
 - Romans 5:18, “Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all.” [*Jesus as new Adam*]
- 2 Esdras 7:118 (late 1st c., early 2nd c. CE) 2 Esdras), “O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants.”

History of “Original Sin”

- Solidified by **Augustine** in the 4th century
- Summary: Our reading of Gen 3 is shaped by **reinterpretations** of the story of Adam and Eve, not only in the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical works, but also in the Pseudoepigrapha (forged in someone’s name), New Testament, rabbinical and early Christian writings, art, and literature
- What do the text actually say?

History of “Original Sin”

- Judaism: No “fall” or “original sin.”
- A person is subject to the evil impulse [*yetzer hara*] that must be controlled by the good impulse [*yetzer hatov*] — cultivated by observing the mitzvot (“commandments”) [Wolf: which one will you feed?]
- Gen 8:21, “inclination of the human heart is evil from youth” [*Aristotle’s habits*]
- Jews, if anything, were waiting for a restoration of the Davidic monarchy, not sacrifice to make up for “original sin”

Questioning Conventional Wisdom

- (1) What kind of fruit was it?
- Conventional Wisdom: apple
- Text: “fruit”
- Influence of art (“medium and message”) make it difficult to read/remember the text freshly.
- Likewise: how many “kings” visited Jesus? (influence of art/crèches/carols)

Questioning Conventional Wisdom

- (2) Why did Adam and Eve not die when they ate the fruit?
- Did God lie?!
- Genesis 2:17, “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

Questioning Conventional Wisdom

- (3) How is God justified in punishing Adam and Eve for breaking the rule against eating the forbidden fruit if they had *no knowledge of good and evil* before they broke the rule — because they had not yet eaten the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil.

Questioning Conventional Wisdom

- Hebrew word for “sin” is *not* used in Genesis 1-3. “Sin” first appears in **Genesis 4:7** in reference to the first murder. God tells Cain, “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.”
- Eating from the tree is *never* declared “sinful” in the text.
- Genesis 3:14, “The Lord God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures.’” Genesis 3:17, “cursed is the ground because of you”
- LORD God curses the *serpent* and curses the *ground*, but Adam and Eve are only *punished*.

Questioning Conventional Wisdom

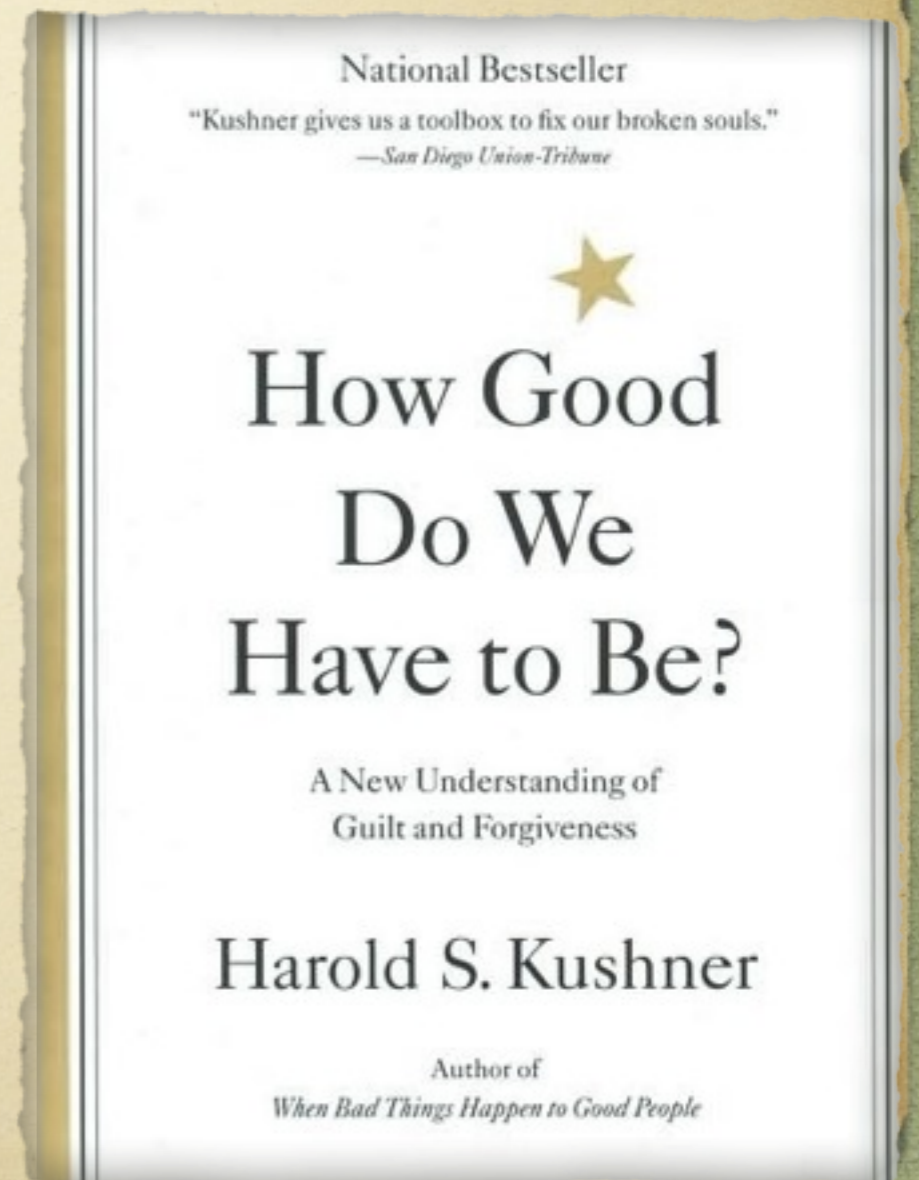
➤ *Sidenote:* The unusual Hebrew word used for pain in Genesis 3:16 for Eve's *punishment* ("greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children") is the same as the word used in Genesis 6:6 for the pain God feels at seeing how badly the world turned out, "And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it pained him to his heart."

“Original Sin” to “Loss of Innocence”

- Death is not a punishment for their behavior. The first humans were created mortal (there were always going to die); otherwise, the tree of life would've been pointless.
- The problem was that with the newfound knowledge of good and evil, the couple is in danger of eating from the tree of life and having to live forever with the awareness of their mistakes and the mistakes of others — which is explicitly why the cherubim is posted at the east gate of the Garden upon the expulsion from Eden: “to guard the way to the tree of life” (Genesis 3:24).

from “Original Sin” to “Loss of Innocence”

- Perhaps Genesis 3 is about becoming *adults* and *parents*...about becoming “like God, knowing good and evil?”
- and how frustrating it is to be *like God*, to create something and then give up control of what you have created, to want something to turn out as perfectly as you pictured it in your mind and then see how far short the reality falls from your original intention. There is indeed much *pain* in knowing about Good and evil. (24)



“Original Sin” to “Loss of Innocence”

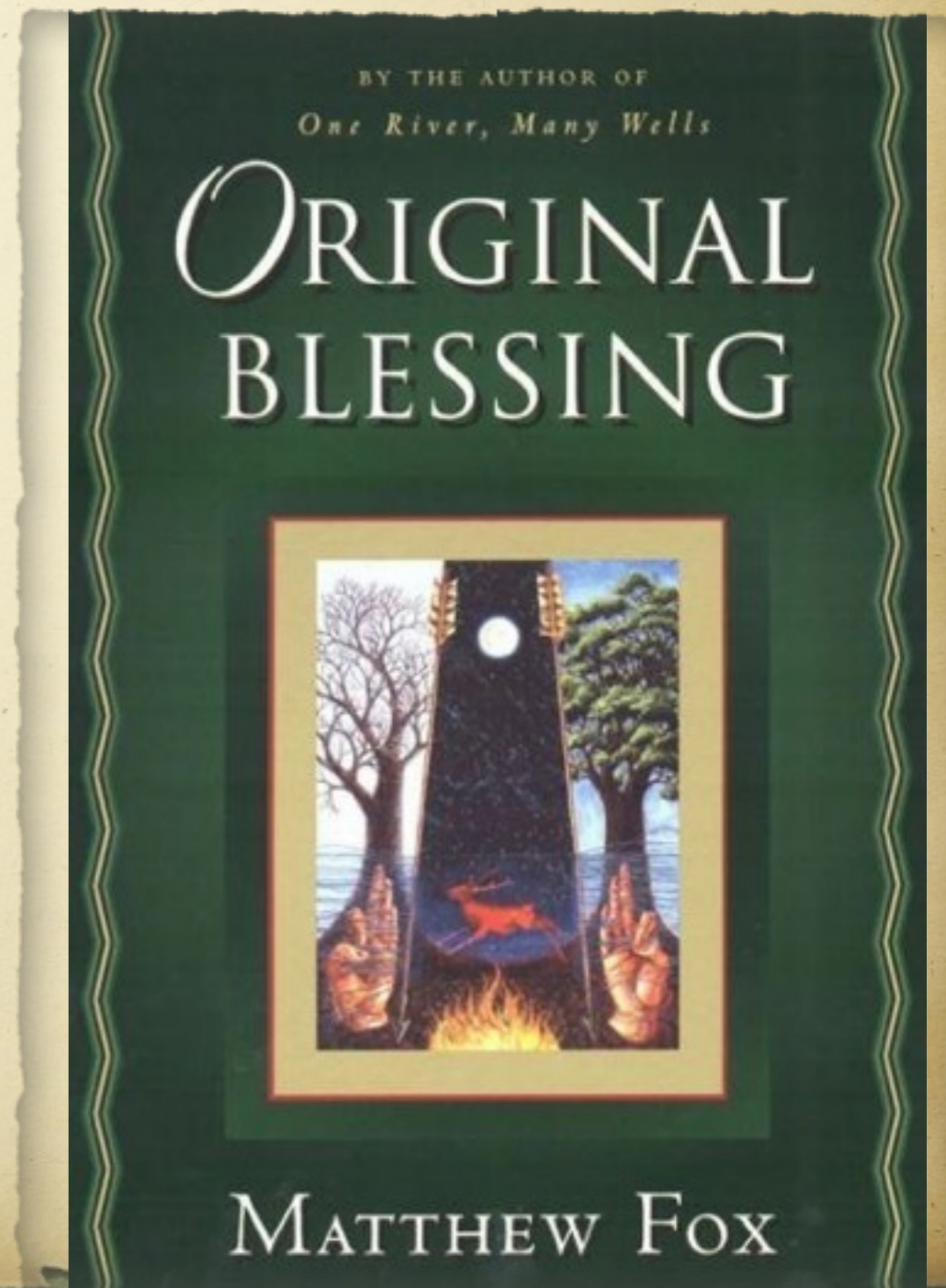
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“Original Sin” to “Loss of Innocence”

- At first: naked and *not ashamed*. Later: *shame* because of their nakedness.
- Hebrew for “knowledge” [*yada*] can be a euphemism for sex, such as in Genesis 4:1, “Now the man *knew* his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain.
- The eating of the forbidden “fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” symbolizes the coming of age (body blooming into fruition), the increasing awareness of sexuality, the loss of innocence that signifies the passage from childhood through puberty to adulthood (knowing good/evil).
- Puberty means one cannot go back to the state of innocence ever again — back to the Eden of being unaware of one’s sexuality. (*Bandstra 71*)
- Kushner: In adolescence, you become exquisitely self-conscious. The 11-year-old who calls, “Mom, come see what I can do,” becomes the sullen 14-year-old who says, “Ma, just leave me alone” (25). [*c.f., naked toddlers running around unashamed*]

Paradise Lost or Paradise Outgrown? Original Blessing, Original Responsibility,

- Genesis 3 records an ancient story reflecting on the transition from childhood to adulthood — growing into what it means to be creatures created in the “image of God,” knowing good and evil,” and having the responsibility to (1) make self-aware, conscious choices and (2) deal with the consequences of those decisions.
- Rather than Eve’s decision causing the “fall” of humanity, she helped fulfill God’s intention of having humans created in the image of God?
[like Judas?!]



Paradise Lost or Paradise Outgrown? Original Blessing, Original Responsibility,

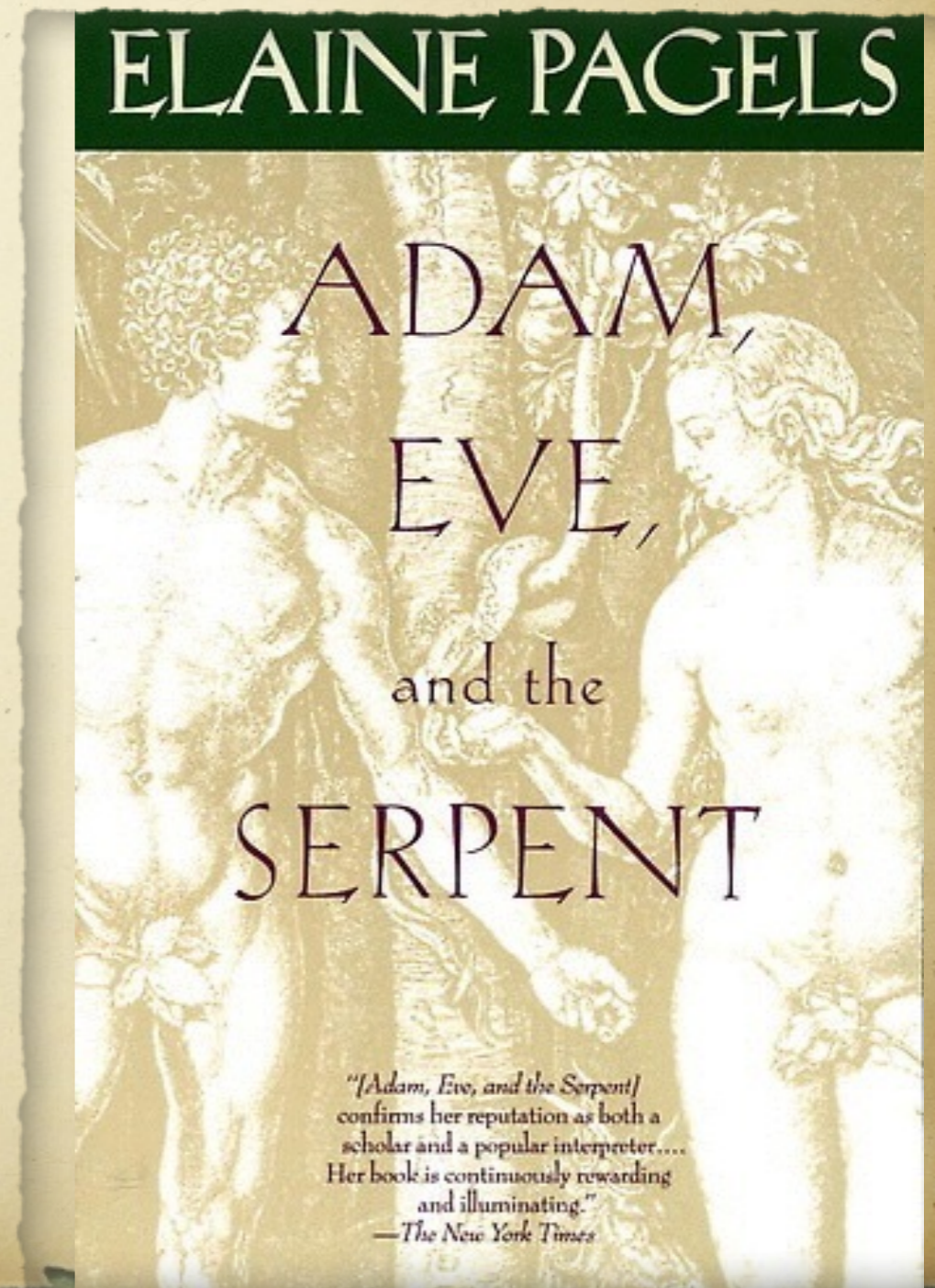
- “If we embrace the idea that humans are not originally sinful but rather *originally blessed* and endowed with the ability to choose good over evil, then how we live our lives must change. We must be held accountable for the wrongs we do.
- The defense of “I’m only human” never has been an adequate excuse. Rather, when humans choose the evil over the good, [*the evil impulse over the good impulse*] the accusation should be: “How could you do this? After all, you’re human, you’re created in the image of God?” We must hold ourselves to a high standard, living as those who reflect the Divine in the world.”

Lisa Davison

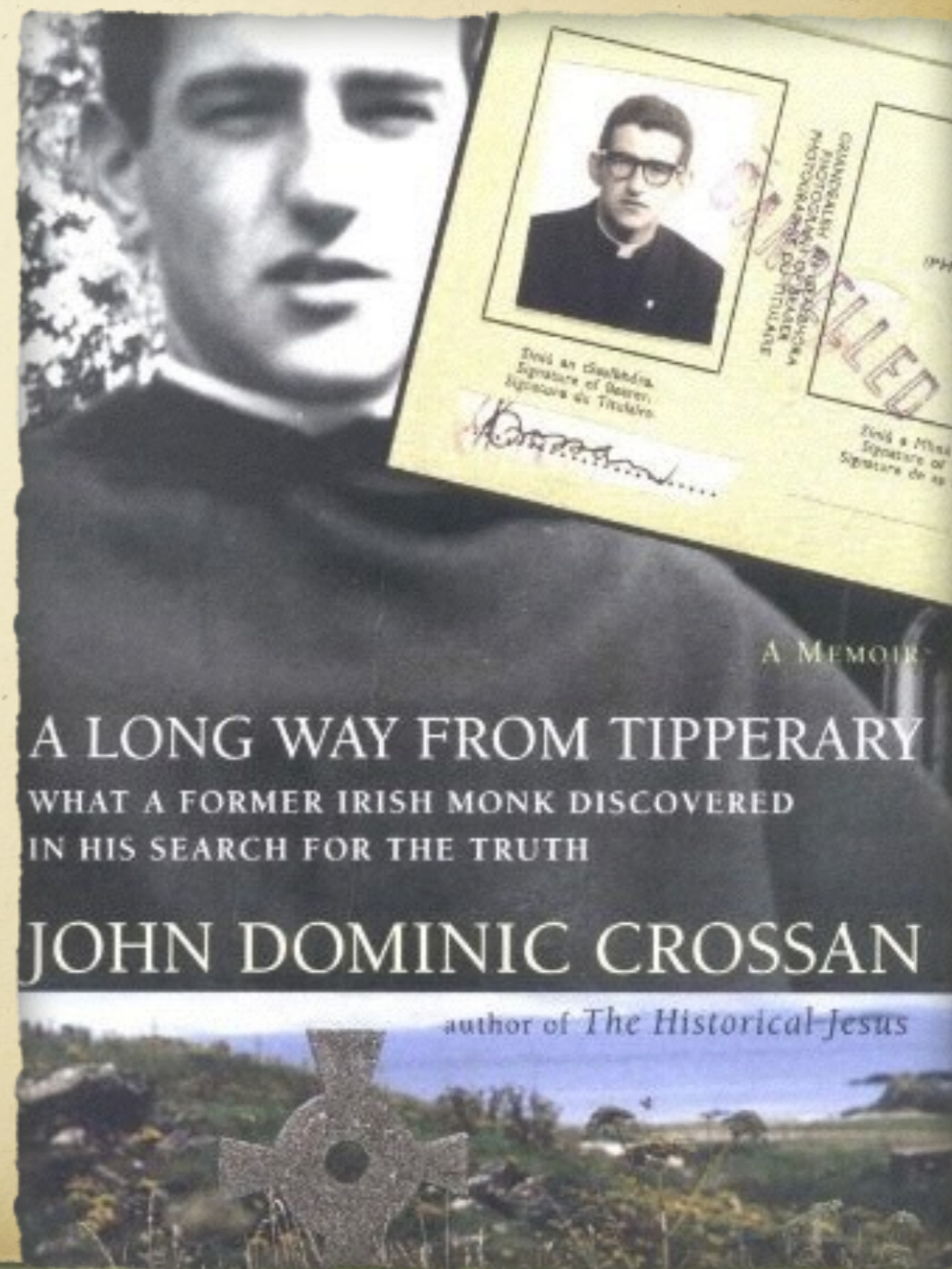


Theodicy vs. Anthropodicy

- How can human beings *created good*, allow evil to continue, and compassion to fail?



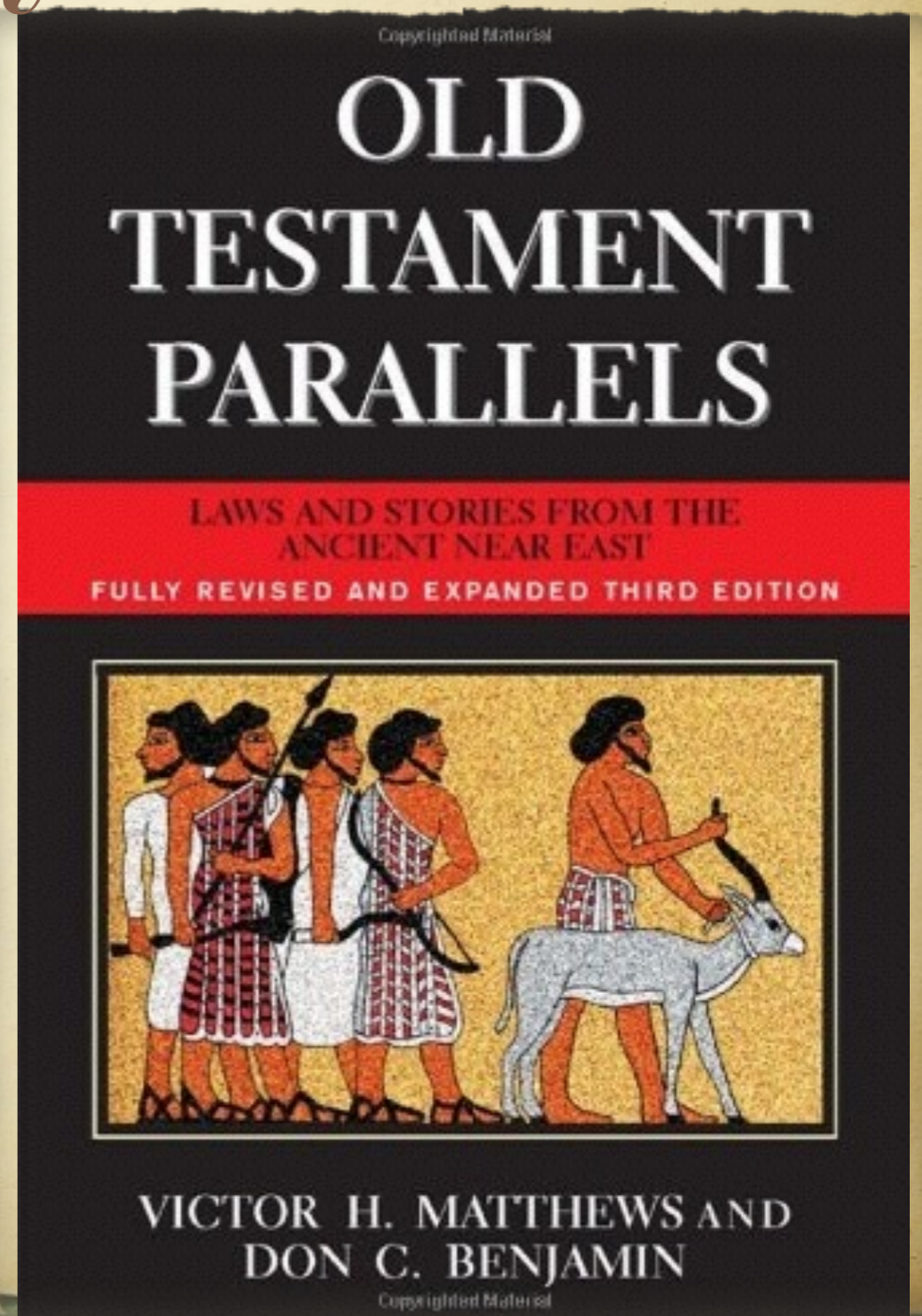
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Primeval Stories (*Gen 1-11*)

Genre: Myth

- Examples: Cain and Abel, Flood, Nephilim (6:1-14), Tower of Babel
- Stories that help us discover our identity
- Reveal, illumine human existence
- *Not* historical; rather, about “universal” human condition (“never happened, but *always happen*”)
- Do not explain, but help us understand.



Fiction can be deeply true in a way beyond journalistic facts.

- “I don’t take the story of the Garden of Eden as a newspaper report of an actual event (although I know that some people do), describing the human race as beginning with two full-grown, Hebrew-speaking adults and a talking snake. But I do believe that the story of the Garden of Eden tells us something profoundly true about the emergence of the human race.... The Garden of Eden is a tale, not of Paradise Lost but of Paradise Outgrown, not of Original Sin but of the birth of consciousness.” — Rabbi Harold Kushnermore
- More mature interpretation than asking “Where did Mrs. Cain come from?”



Upcoming Classes

- Session 3: Genesis 4-50 and Exodus
- Session 4: Leviticus and Numbers
- Session 5: Deuteronomy and Joshua and Judges
- Session 6: Samuel and Kings
- *(Topics will be adjusted, depending on how far we get each session.)*
- Options for Fall 2014: (a) Pick-up wherever we stop, and continue through the Hebrew Scripture / Old Testament OR (b) Skip to New Testament and come back later to finish Hebrew Scripture.



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