

BANNED

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE



The Rev. Dr. Carl Gregg

Mondays, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm,

September 29 – November 3

Housekeeping

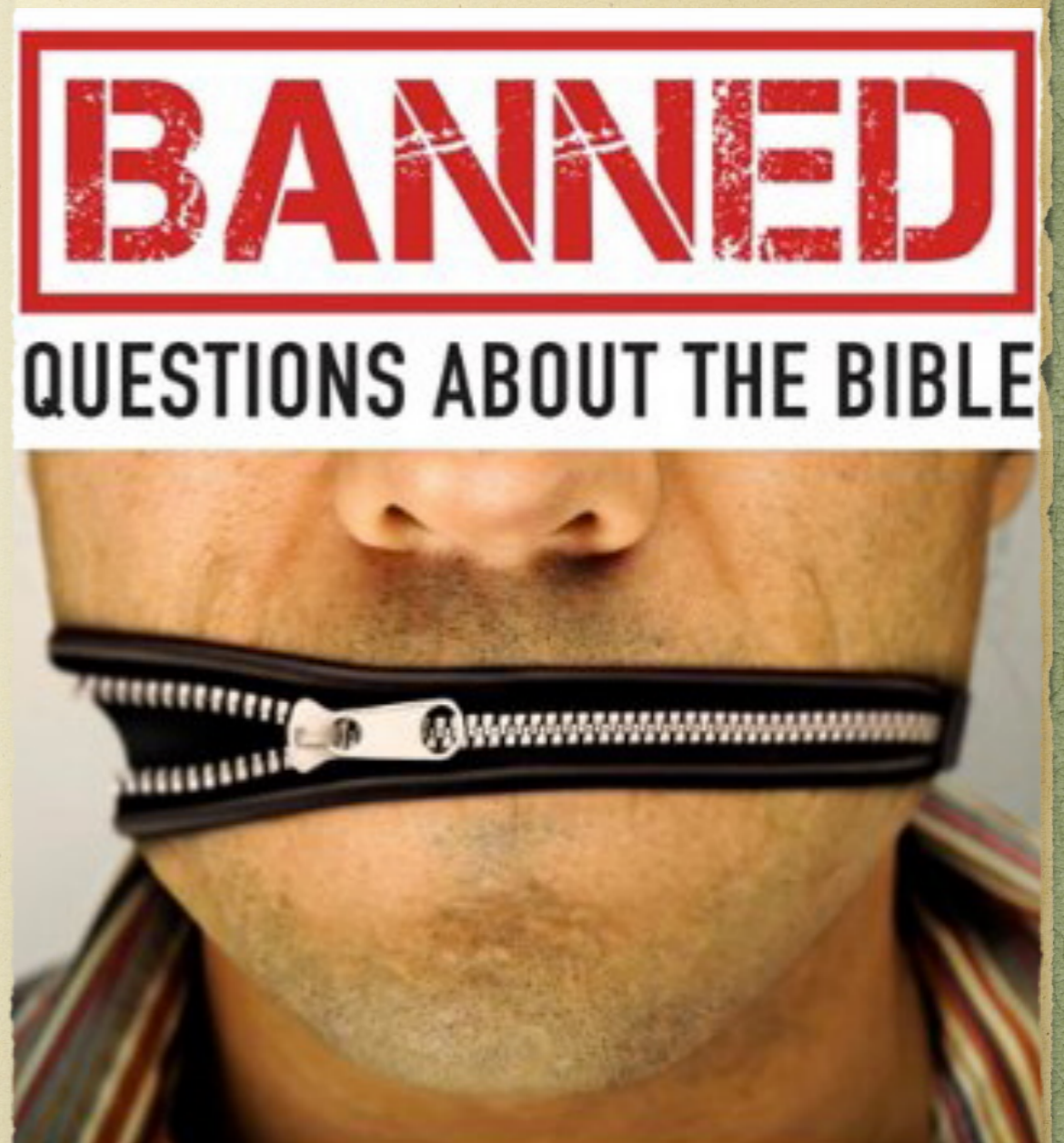
- Slides: frederickuu.org/fcc
- **Attendance** for FCC
- Add to **email** list?
- **Other?**

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.”**

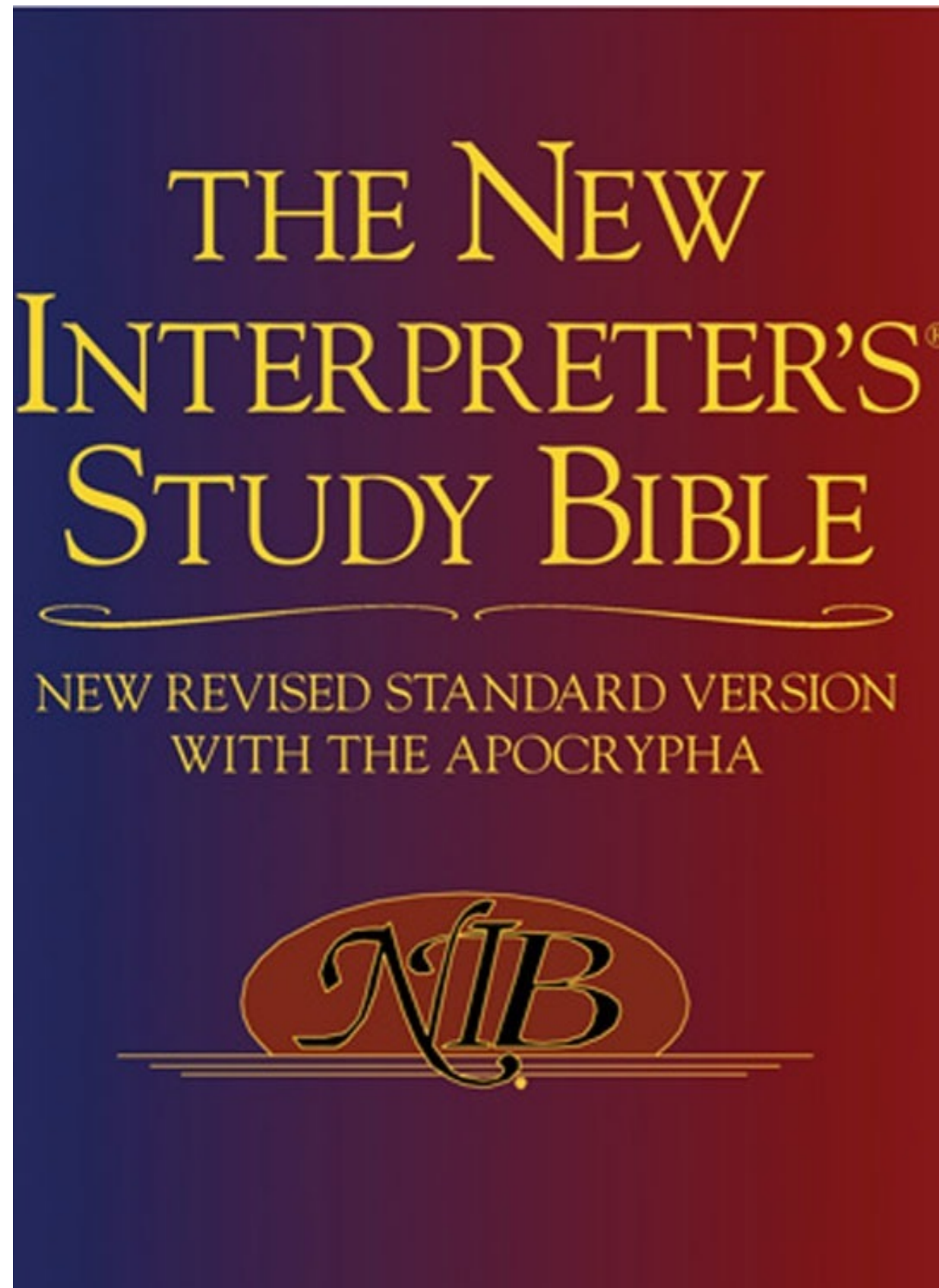


- **Minister** of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Frederick.
- Native of Florence, South Carolina
- *Phi Beta Kappa* graduate of Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina (Bachelor of Arts in Religion and Philosophy in 2000)
- Masters of Divinity from **Brite Divinity School** in Fort 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**

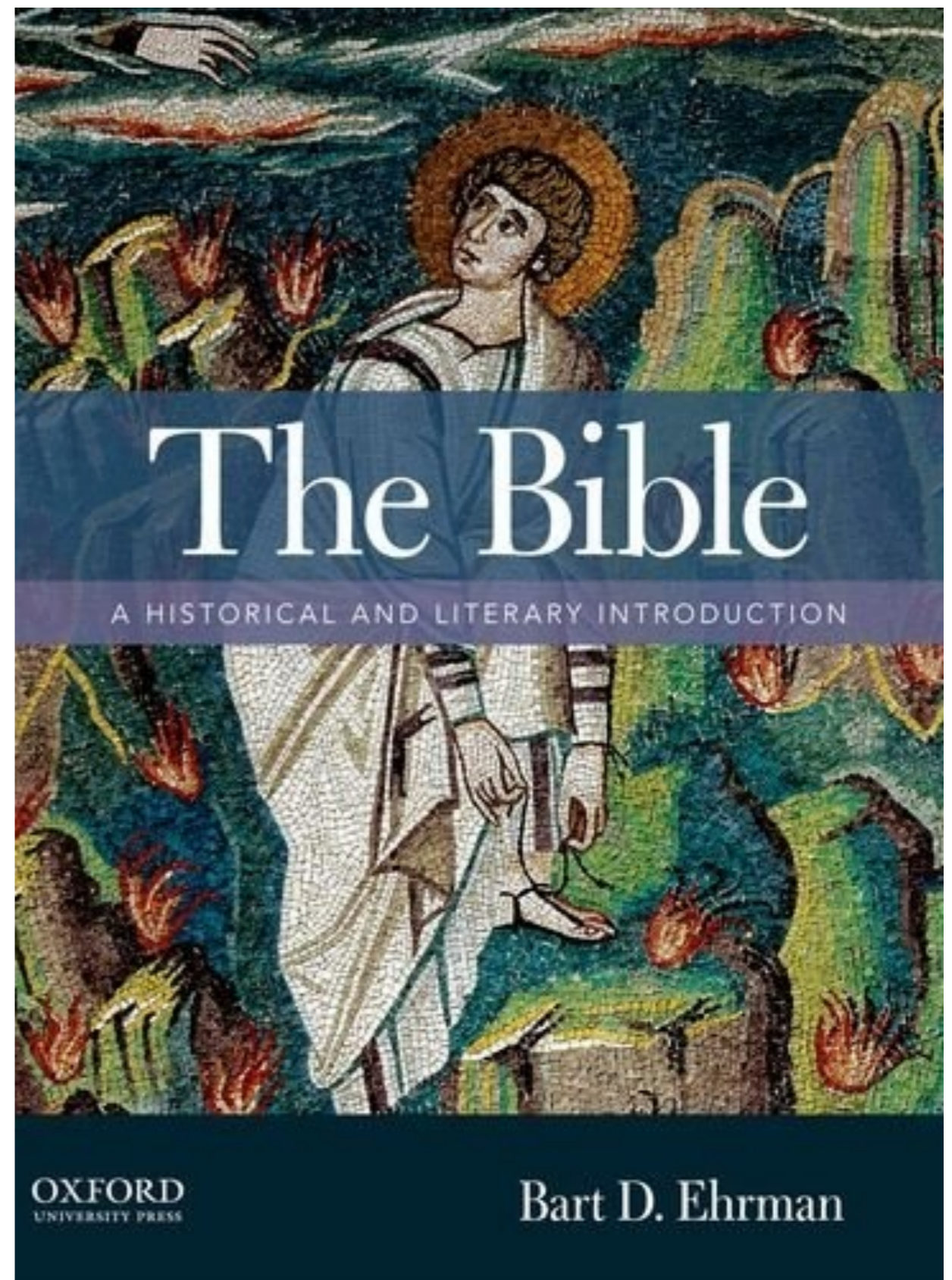




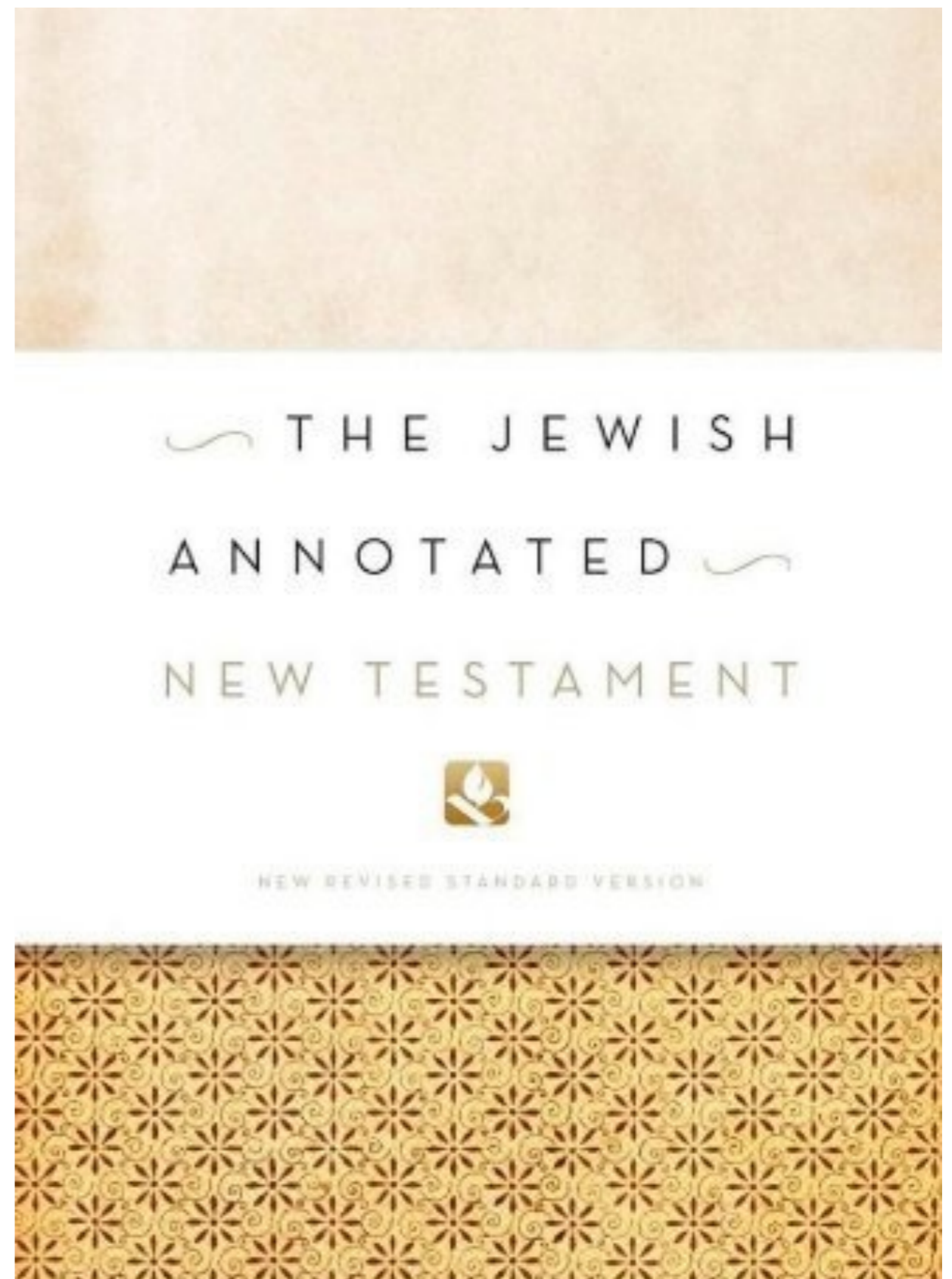
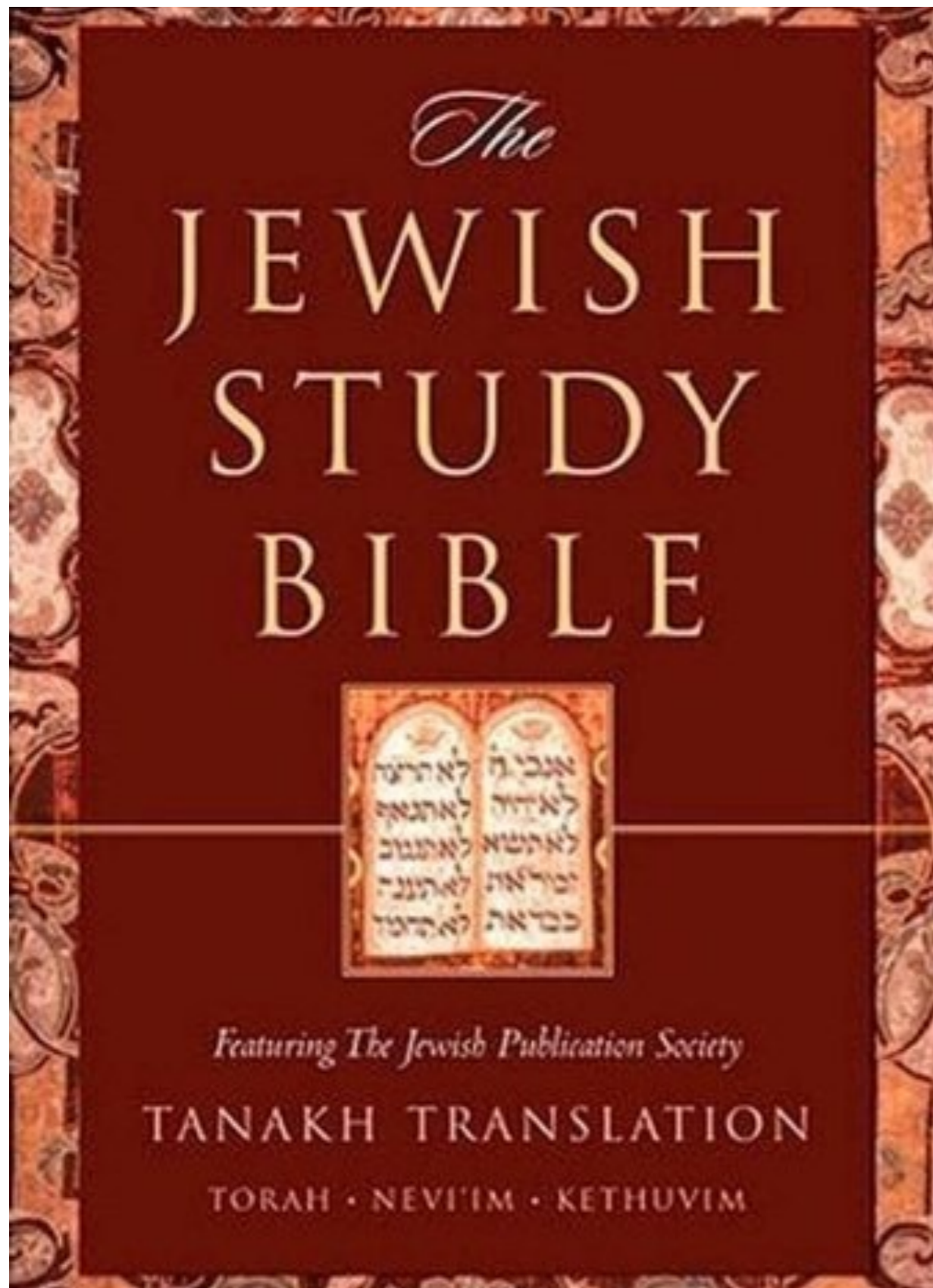
THE. REV. DR. CARL GREGG



\$36



432 p., \$63 on Amazon



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*

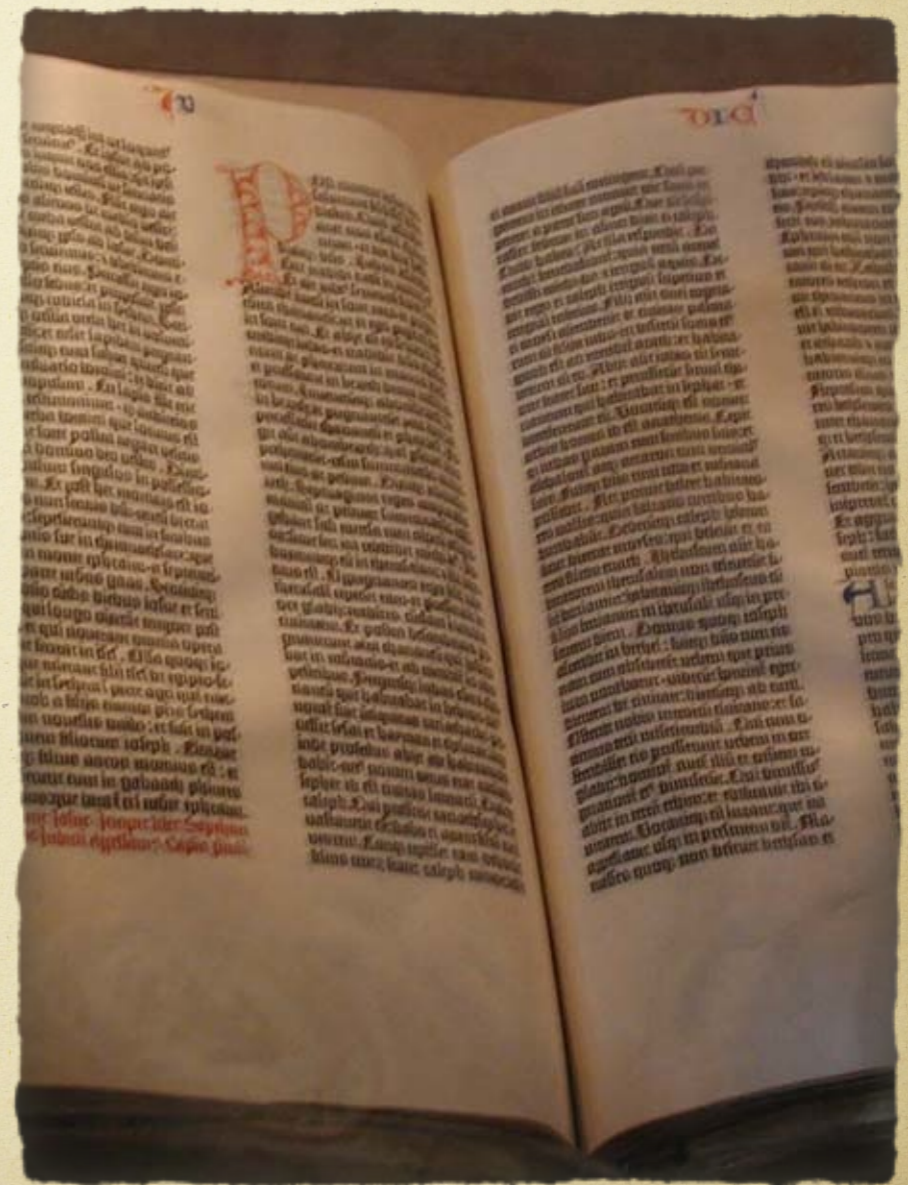
The Rise of Modern Biblical Scholarship

- “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”)

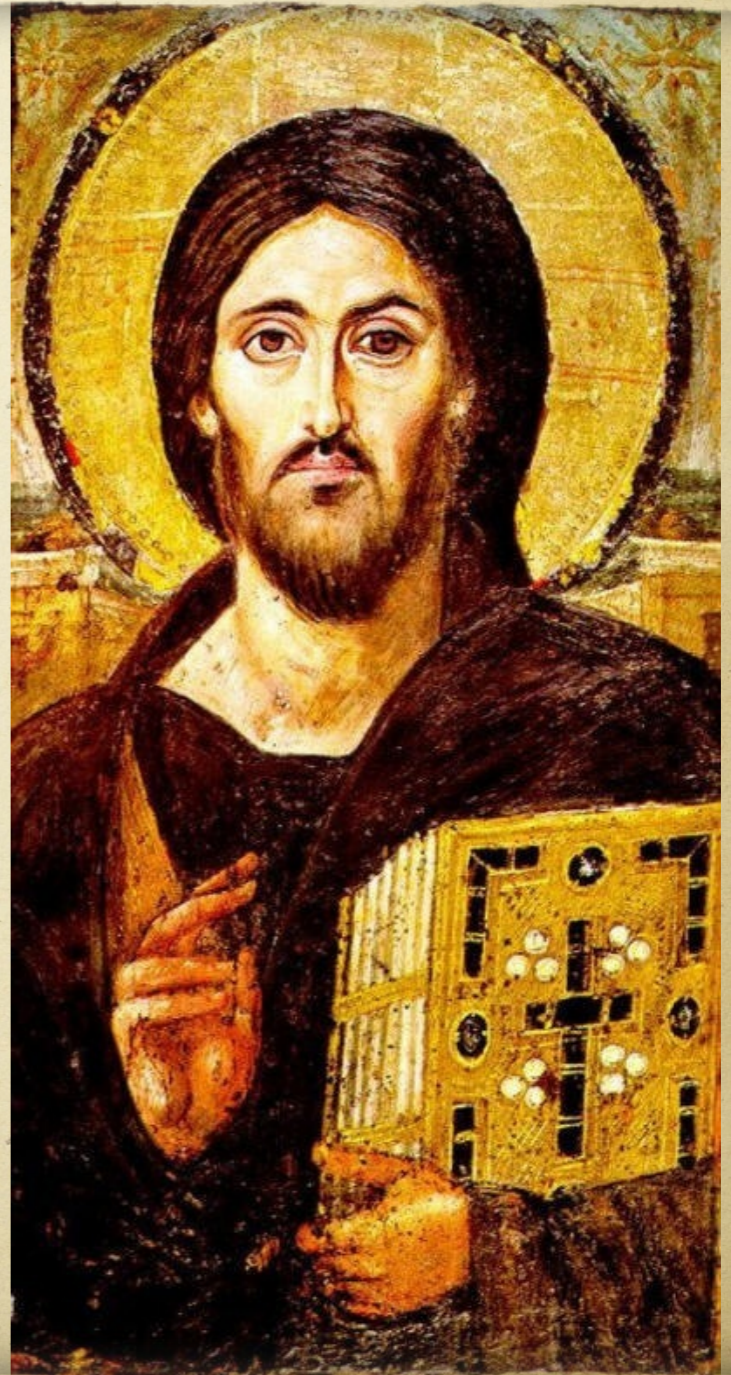
Perfectly Harmonious
(no contradictions or mistakes)

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)



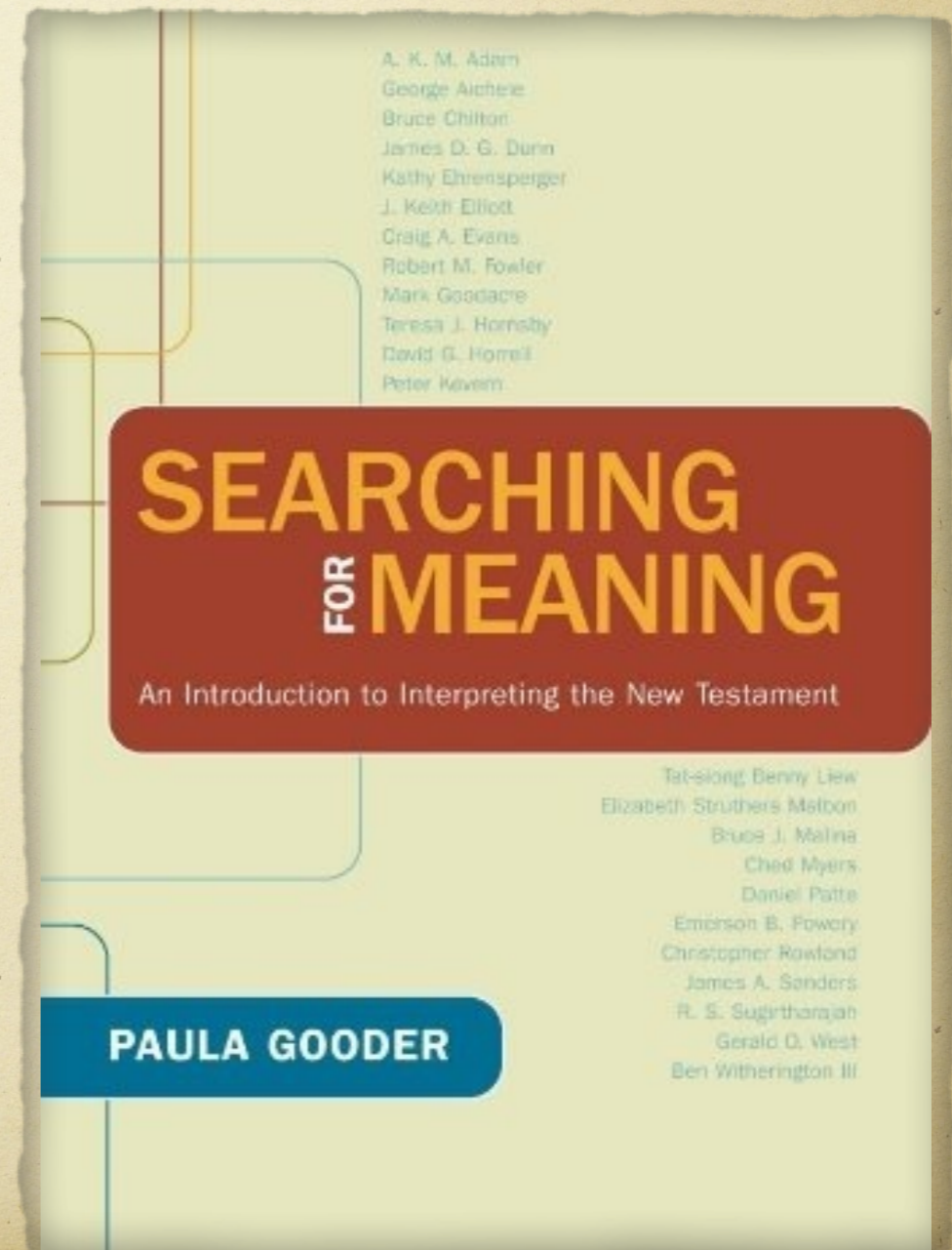
Lectio Divina

- 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



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*

Upcoming Classes

- Session 7: Isaiah
- Session 8: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve
- Session 9: Psalms & Proverbs
- Session 10: Job
- Session 11: Five Scrolls
- Session 12: Daniel and “After the Hebrew Bible”
- Spring 2015: 6-weeks on Jesus, the Gospels, and Acts
- Fall 2015: 6-weeks on Paul & the rest of the NT

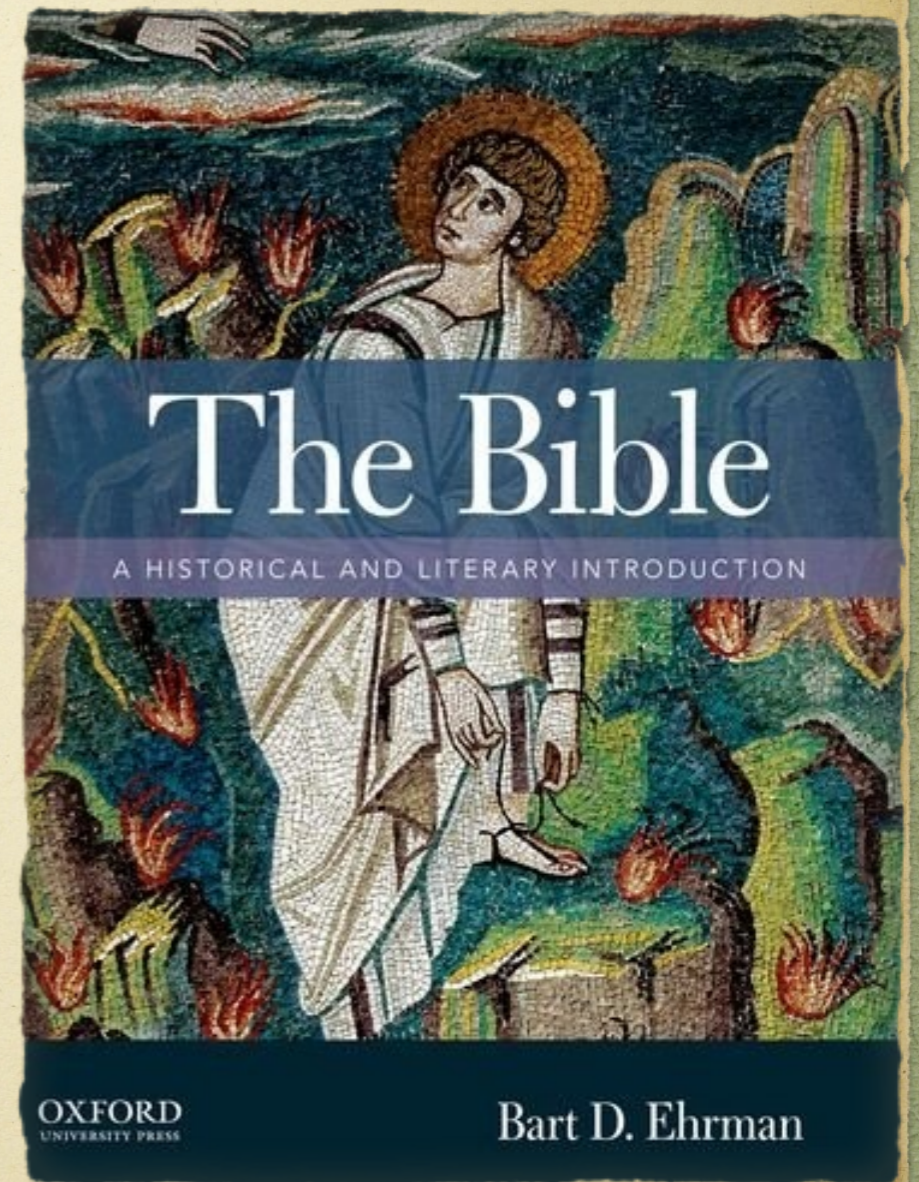
Alternately: Read primary text...*and* annotations
...*or just come to class*

➤ Chapter 5: The Early Israelite Prophets: Amos, Isaiah of Jerusalem, Jeremiah, Hosea, Micah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk

➤ Chapter 6: The Historians and Prophets of Exile and Return: Ezra and Nehemiah, Second Isaiah, Joel, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Third Isaiah, Malachi

➤ Chapter 7: Poets and Story Tellers of Ancient Israel: Psalms, Lamentations, Song of Songs, Ruth, Esther, Jonah, Daniel, 1 and 2 Chronicles

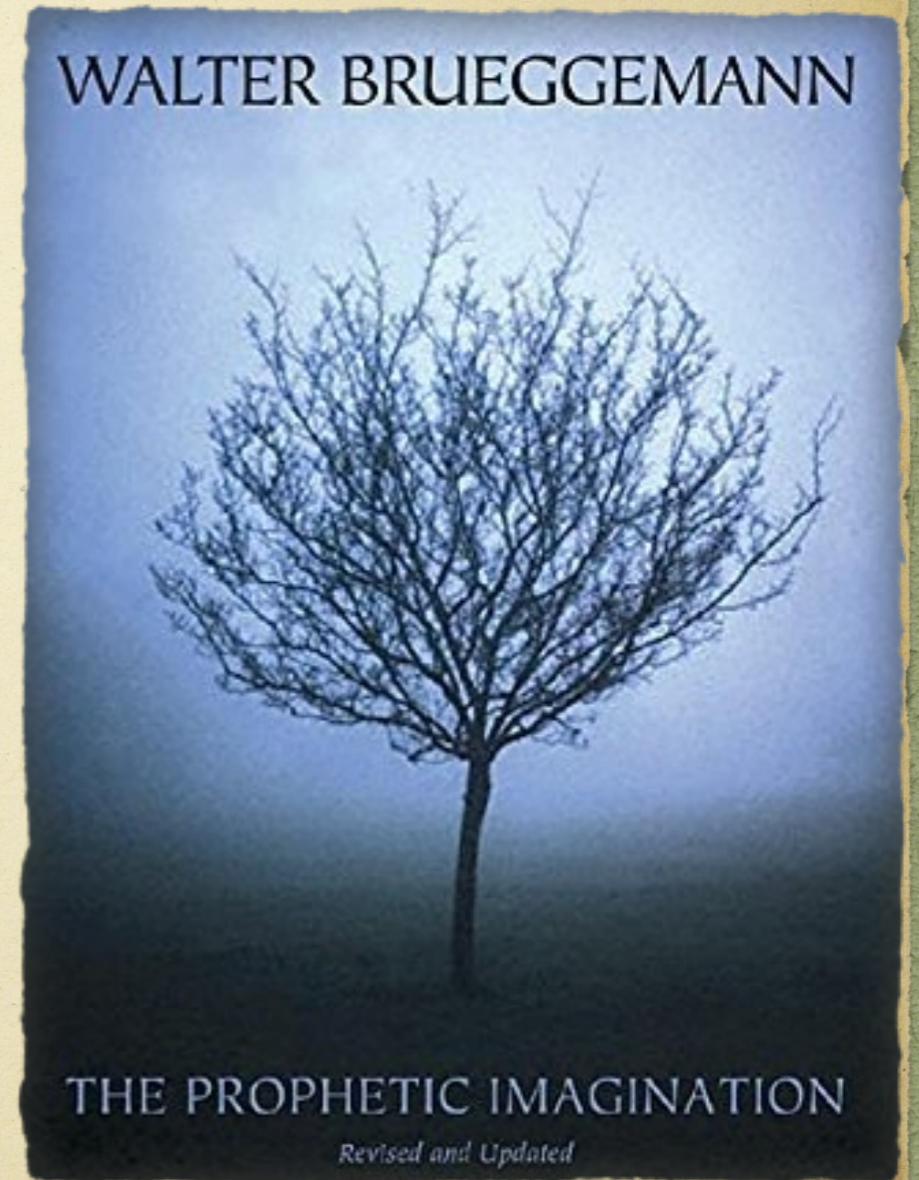
➤ Chapter 8: Wisdom and Apocalyptic Literature: Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Selections of AL



Fall 2014

Introduction to Prophetic Literature

- Speaking Truth to Power (in the present)
- “The criticizing, energizing, and alternative imagination of the latter prophets,
- or: it’s *not* just about the future”



1978/2001

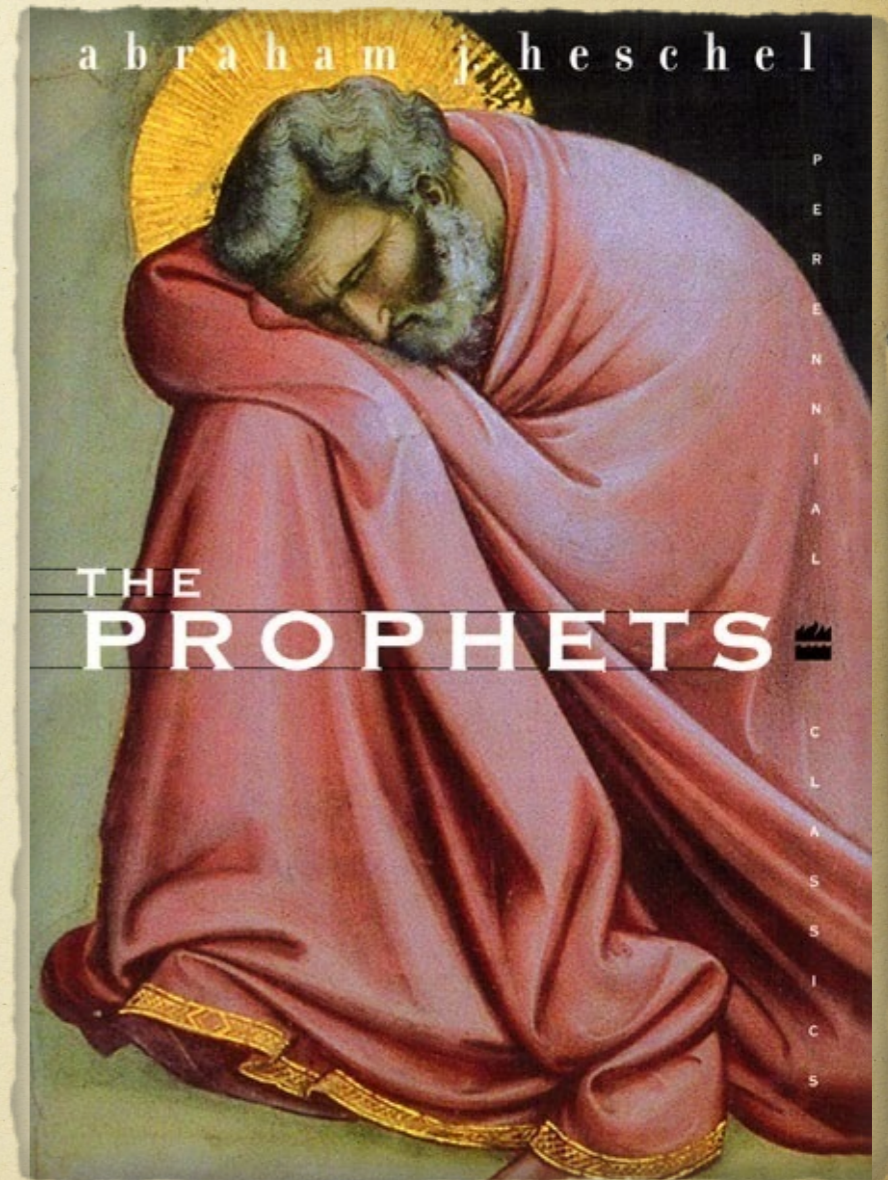
Introduction to Prophetic Literature

“[Prophets are] some of the most disturbing people who have ever lived.”

“Prophecy is *not* simply the application of timeless standards to a particular moment in history;

it is a divine understanding of a human situation.

Prophecy, then may be described as exegesis of existence from a divine perspective.”



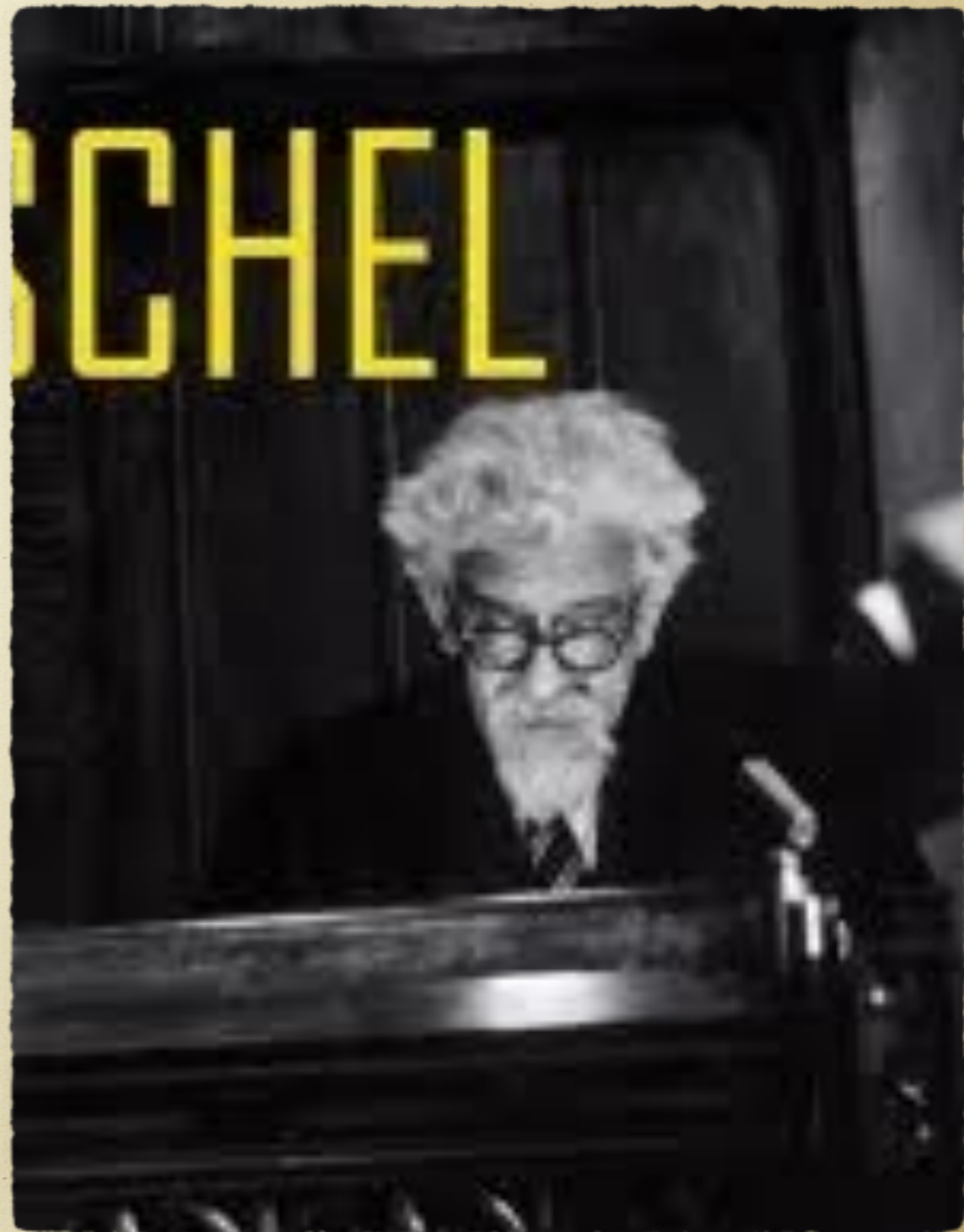
Abraham Joshua Heschel

Edward K. Kaplan

Samuel H. Dresner



Prophetic Witness





“My legs were praying”

Introduction to Prophetic Literature

❧ Hebrew: *Nabi* (“prophet”)

❧ one who calls (announcer)

❧ one who *is called*

❧ Akkadian *nabitu* suggests that prophecy was a practice that Israel shared with other cultures.



Themes

- Prophets are consumed with the conviction that there is only one ultimate reality in human life: YHWH, the God of Israel.
- Israel was chosen by God for special relationship with God.
- Judgment and repentance
- Sin cannot frustrate the sovereign power of God's love
- Messiah (God's anointed), Davidic king.

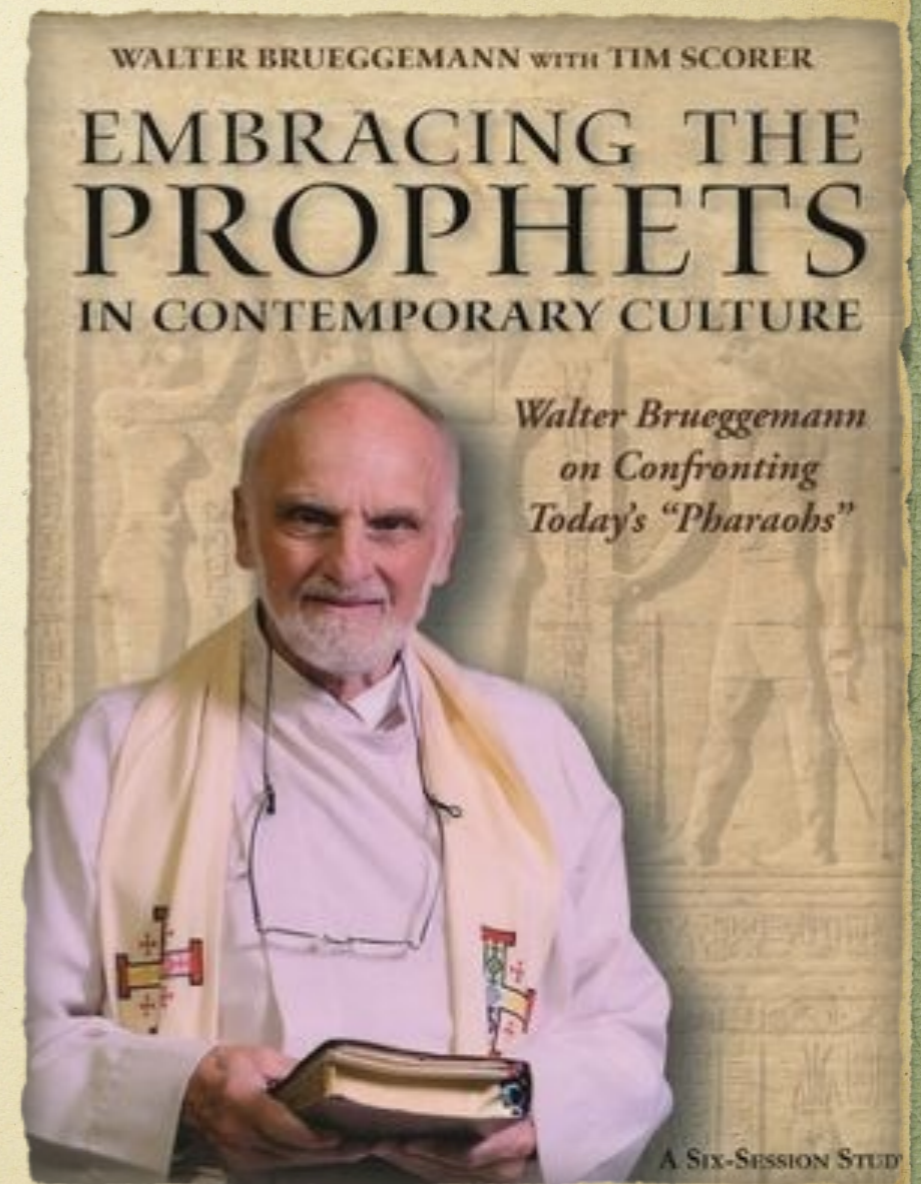
Themes

➤ Robert Wilson: prophets are not lonely voices against the establishment, but are in fact *representative voices* that give social expression to what may be important and engaged social constituencies.

➤ Bandstra: “basic function of biblical prophecy was to analyze political and social policies in light of God’s demands of justice, loyalty and faith in God.”

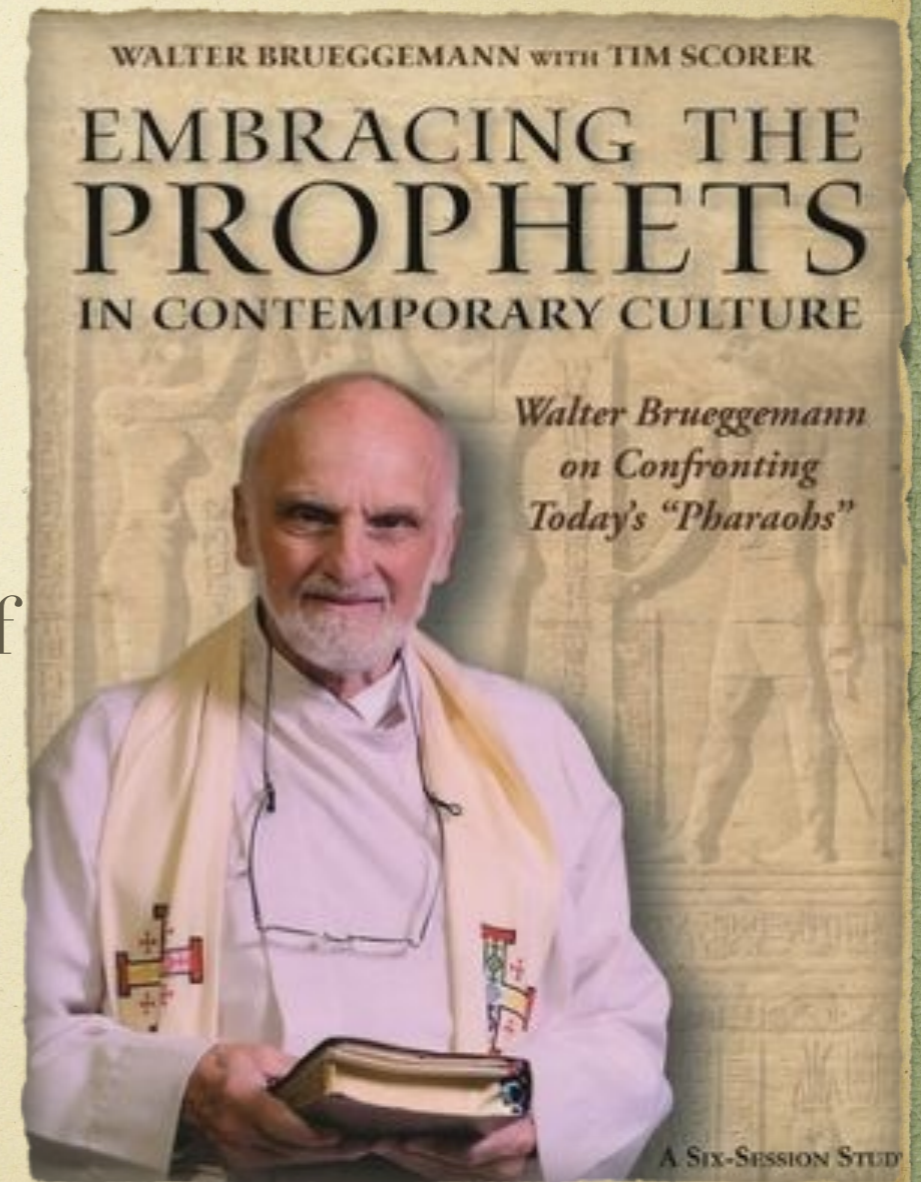
Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*

- Prophets were interested in more than confrontation.
- The interpretation of biblical prophets should be freed from the usual stereotypes of either (1) foretellers or (2) social protesters.
- The point is not about centuries in the future or posturing in the present, but **effecting change in social perspective and social policy.**
- Thesis: task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception **alternative** to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us.



Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*

- This alternative consciousness of biblical prophecy is a third way between entrenched conservative and liberal extremes. It seeks to:
- criticize in order to dismantle the dominant consciousness—echoing the liberal tendency to reject and delegitimize the present order of things (*“it doesn’t have to be this way”*).
- energize persons and communities by its promise of another time and situation toward which the community of faith may move—reflecting the conservative tendency to live in fervent anticipation of the newness that God has promised and will surely give.



Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*

- Paul Ricoeur: people are changed, *not* by ethical urging, but by **transformed imagination**.
- Example: Alternative Community of Moses (early prophecy)
- The alternative life is lived in this **very particular historical community** —the people of Israel set apart and call out from the world to live according to their covenant with God.
- This community criticizes and energizes by its special memories that embrace **discontinuity and genuine breaks** from imperial reality.
(remember the ubiquity of empire in and around Israel throughout its history).
- The community, gathered around the memories, knows it is defined by and is at the disposal of a God who is **unco-opted and uncontained** by the empire (Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, etc.)

Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*

➤ Prophetic Energizing: Prophets bring to public expression those very hopes and yearnings that have been denied so long and suppressed so deeply that we no longer know they are there. They inspire a **prophetic imagination** that things don't have to be the way there are—an alternative to the royal consciousness.

➤ Royal Consciousness: (*kingship*) management mentality, which believes there are no mysteries to honor, only problems to be solved. “Official religion of optimism”: God has no business other than to maintain the *status quo*, which is fine for those in power.

Interplay of
Prophetic Imagination & Royal Consciousness

587

The end of
the known world
and its
relinquishment

Destruction
of the
old world
of Temple
and King

Reception
of
new world
given by
God
through
these poets

Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*

- Prophetic imagination speaks of a new world, which the people did not believe possible and which was not the one it would have preferred or chosen.
- Prophetic poets speak in conviction and invitation.

New World Poetry

- Exile: sense of *not* belonging, of being in an environment *hostile* to the values of the community and its vocation. Exile is practiced by those who *refuse to accept and be assimilated* in the new situation.
- Empire (*Babylon*): concentration of power and value which is dominant and which is finally hostile to the covenant faith of this community. The empire regularly seeks to *domesticate* such a community with a special vocation and characteristically ends in oppression.
- Homecoming: dramatic decision to *break* with imperial rationality and to embrace a place called home where covenantal values have currency and credibility.

Avoiding “Homecoming” to
new empire, new Pharaoh

Enslavement

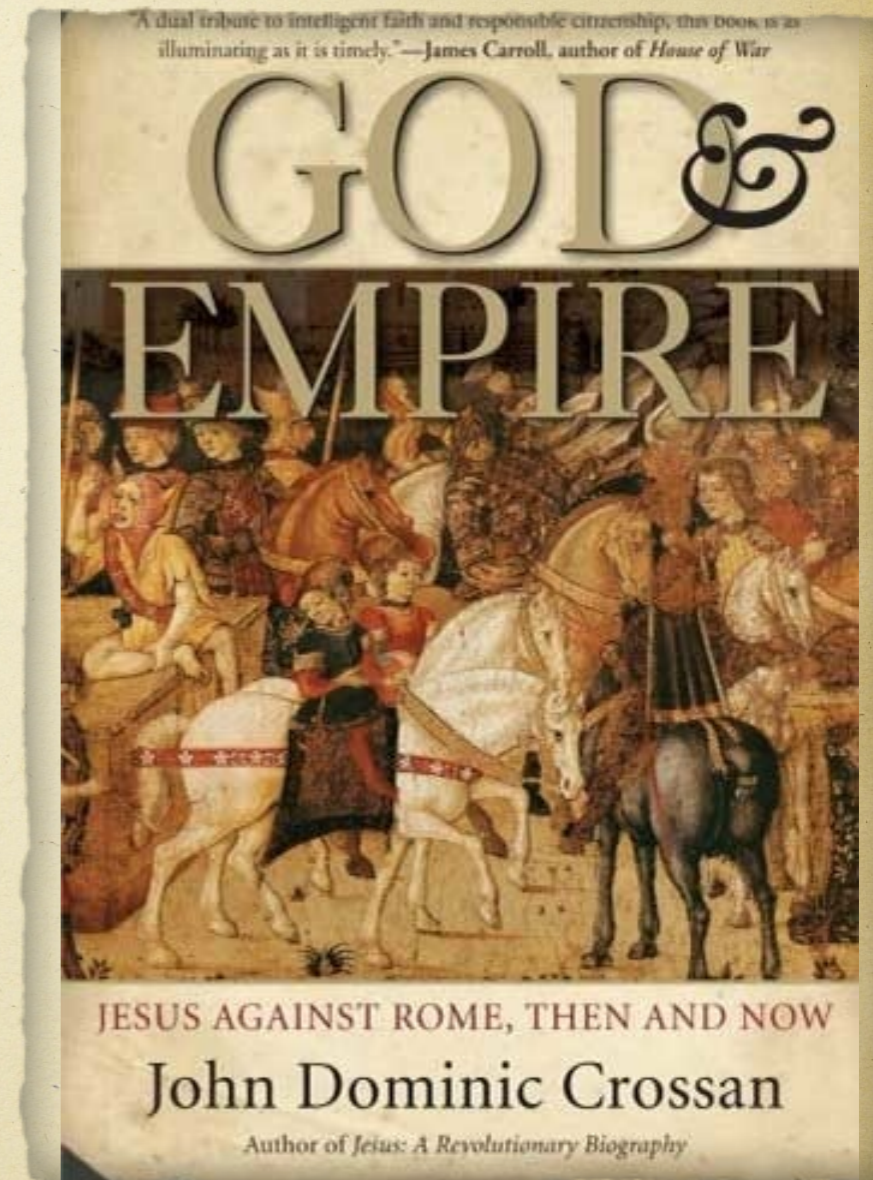
Exodus

Empire

➤ Pre-civilization: anarchy civilization — better than anarchy, except for the oppressed.

➤ Civilization: Peace based on the threat of violence

➤ Post-civilization: peace with justice.



- Jesus in the Hebrew prophetic tradition (kingdom/reign of God)
- 20th century examples:
- Martin Luther King, Jr. (I have a dream)
- Mahatma Gandhi (independence)
- Mad Prophet of the airwaves (*Network*)...I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore
- Brueggemann: "The central task of the church is the formation of a community with an alternative, liberated imagination that has the courage and the freedom to act in a different vision and a different perception of reality."



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