

Thursdays, 10:00 – 11:30 am,
Mar. 10 – Apr. 21 (skip 3/24)

\$46; 448 pages (2014)

(We'll cover all of "Parts 1 & 3" and as much as we can of Part 2)

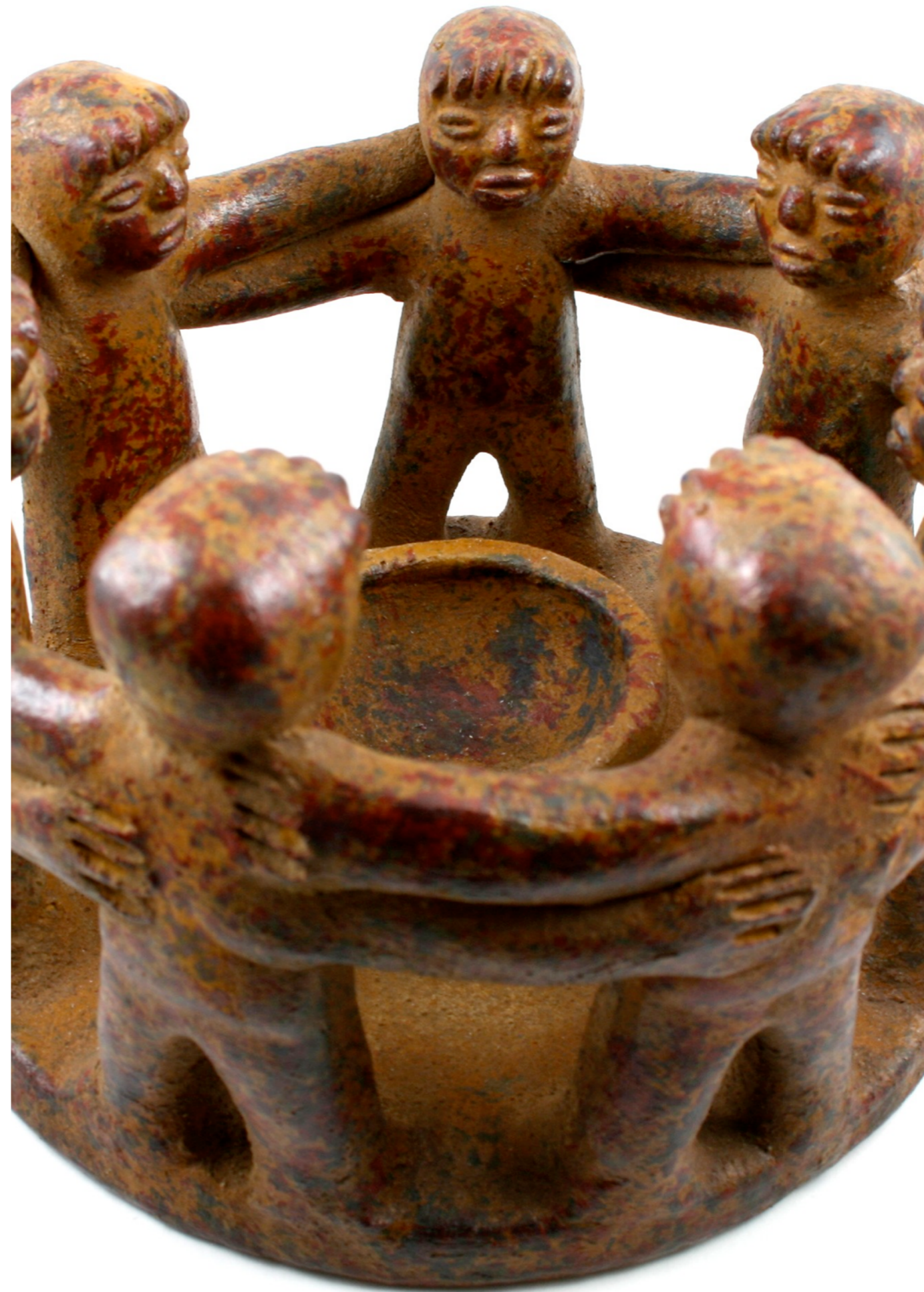
Housekeeping

- Attendance
- 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.”**



- Class 1: Part I: “Prehistory, Preparation, & Perspective” (ch. 1-2a)
- Class 2: Part I: “Prehistory, Preparation, & Perspective” (ch. 2b-3)
- Part II: “Comparative Acts”
 - Chapter 4: “Myth/Ritual”
 - Chapter 5: “Nature/Science”
 - **Chapter 6: “Sex and Bodies”**
 - Chapter 7: “Charisma and Power”
 - **Chapter 8: “Imagination and Paranormal”**
 - **Chapter 9: “Soul, Salvation, and the End”**
- Part III: Putting It All Together Again (chapters 10-12)

(For details, see “Chapter Outlines” under “Browse by Resources” at wiley.com/go/kripal)

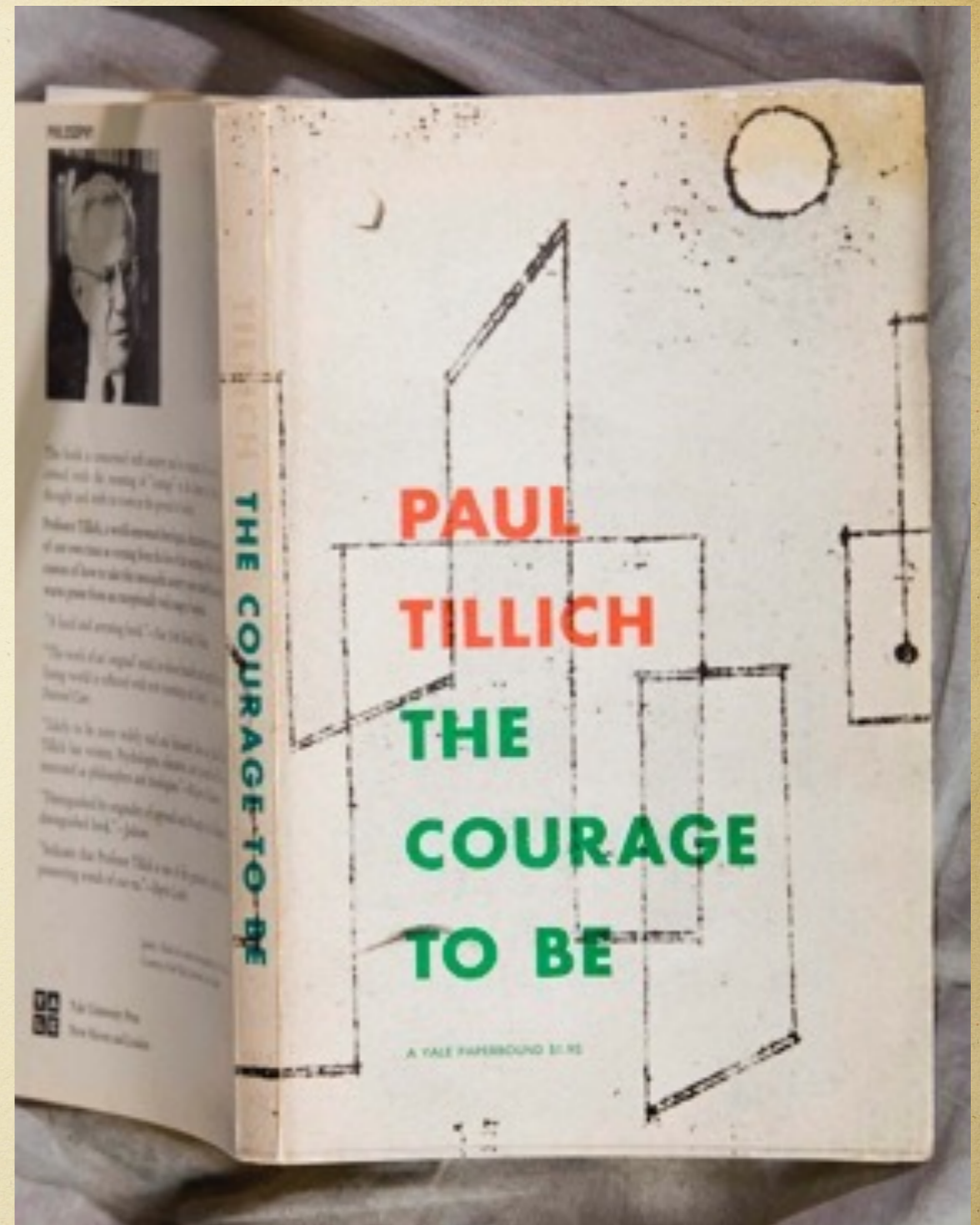
Dynamics of Faith

- **Reason** *grown courageous* about matters of Ultimate Concern.

Valentinus (2nd c.) [*almost became one of the first popes*]:

- Who are we?
- Where have we come from? (Where were we before we were born?)
- What is this world in which we find ourselves?
- How did we end up here, and why?
- Where will we ultimately go after we die?"

[Why is there something rather than nothing?]



1952

“The study of religion can *never* be value free.

Depends on the development of a worldview that **cherishes a neutral position** *vis-a-vis* the various religions.

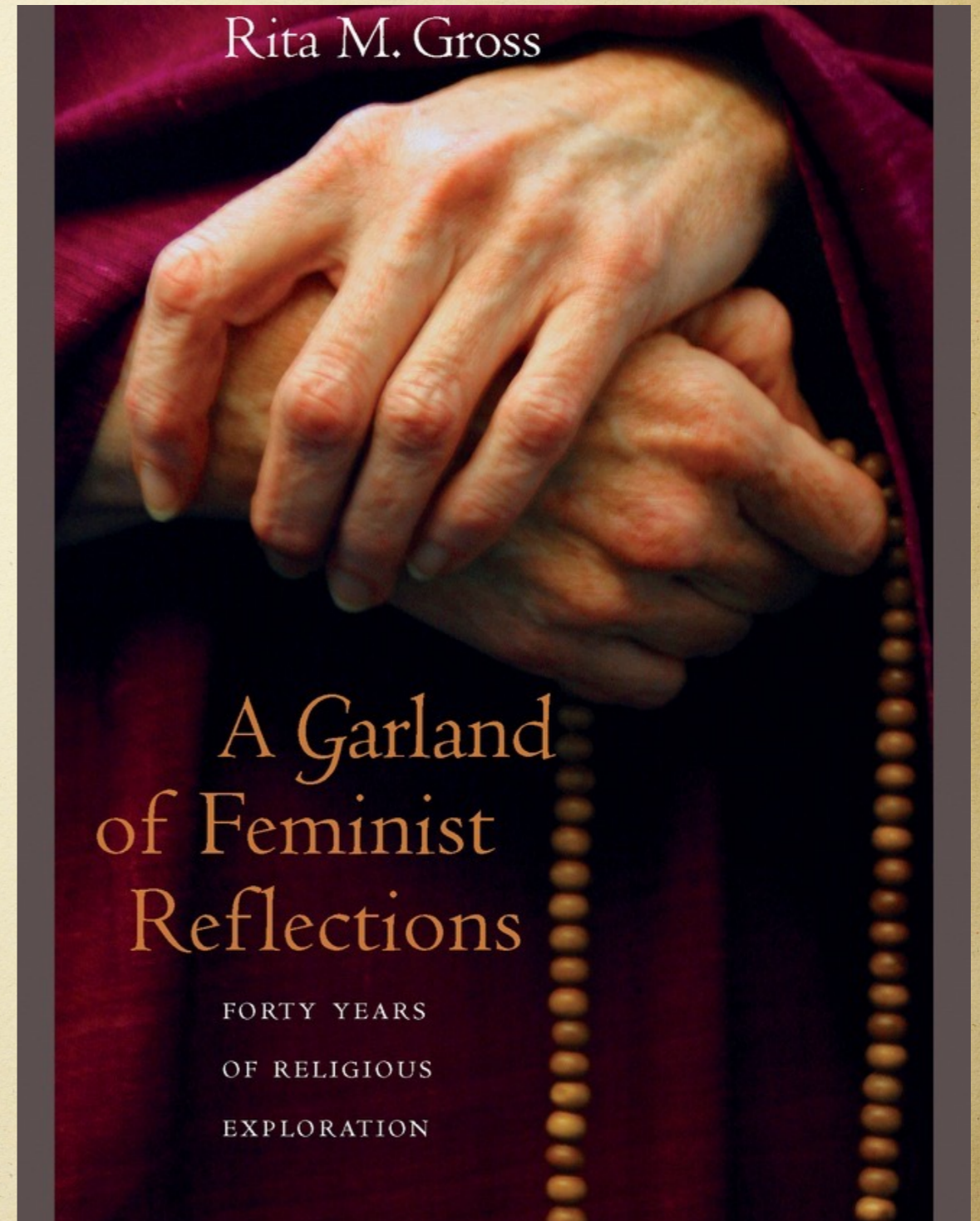
This value is **emphatically rejected** by at least some segments of all major religions....

Sexist, racist, and ethnocentric chauvinisms, if present, *are being threatened* by the academic study of religion....

Living with religious **diversity** and regarding it as an **interesting resource**, (rather than an undesirable deviation from truth), are the values that dominate the academic study of religion.”

Reflexivity

Rita M. Gross



(1943-)

Reflexivity

Research university or liberal arts college: standard non-discrimination policy.

All major religious traditions: routinely practice, indeed openly encourage, discrimination, which they often consider to be the very epitome of piety and morality.

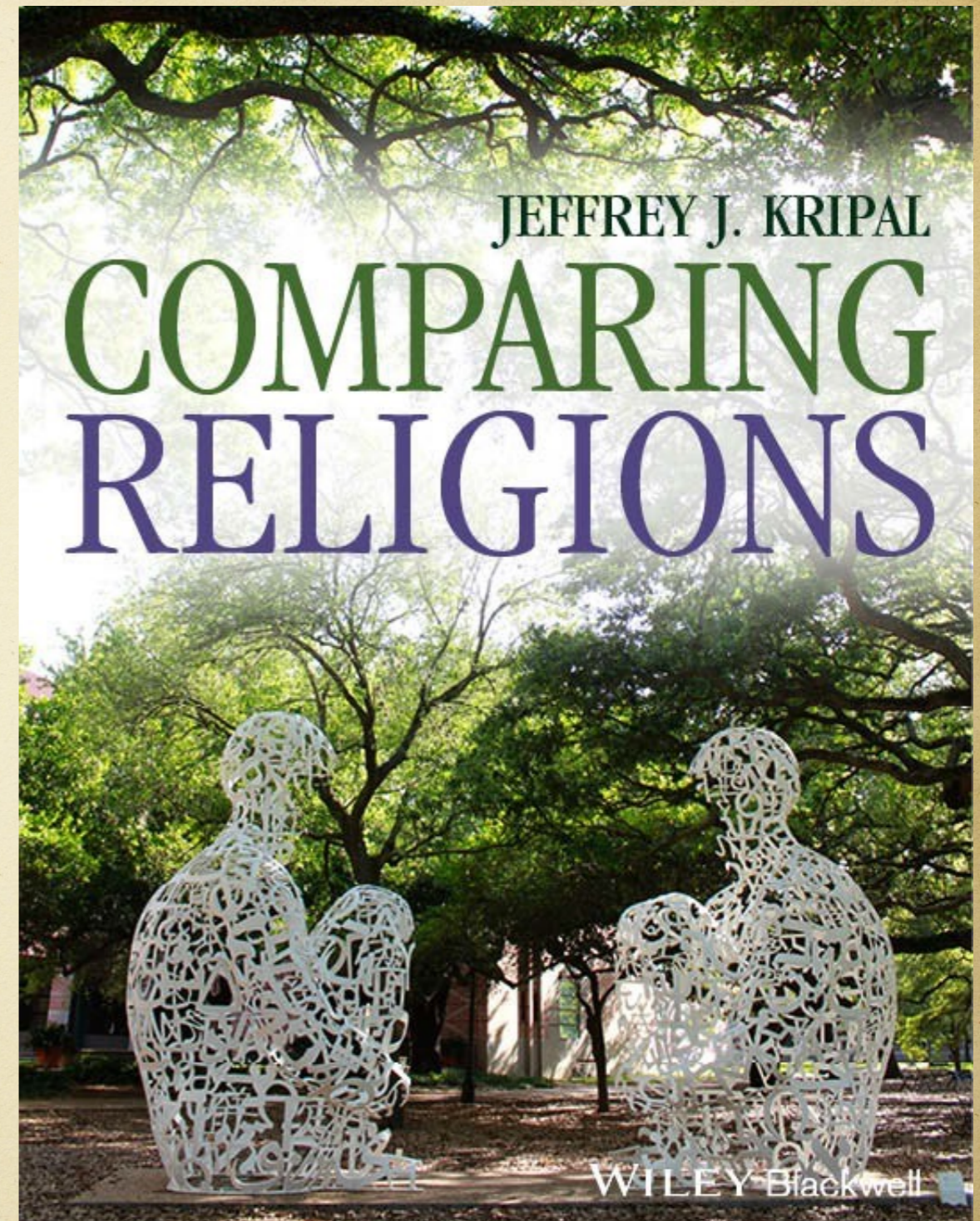
Academia: bigotry and prejudice born of ignorance that should be directly addressed and openly challenged by an enlightened liberal education.

Major religions: brave moral stand against godless secular world — a stand that must be defended at all costs.



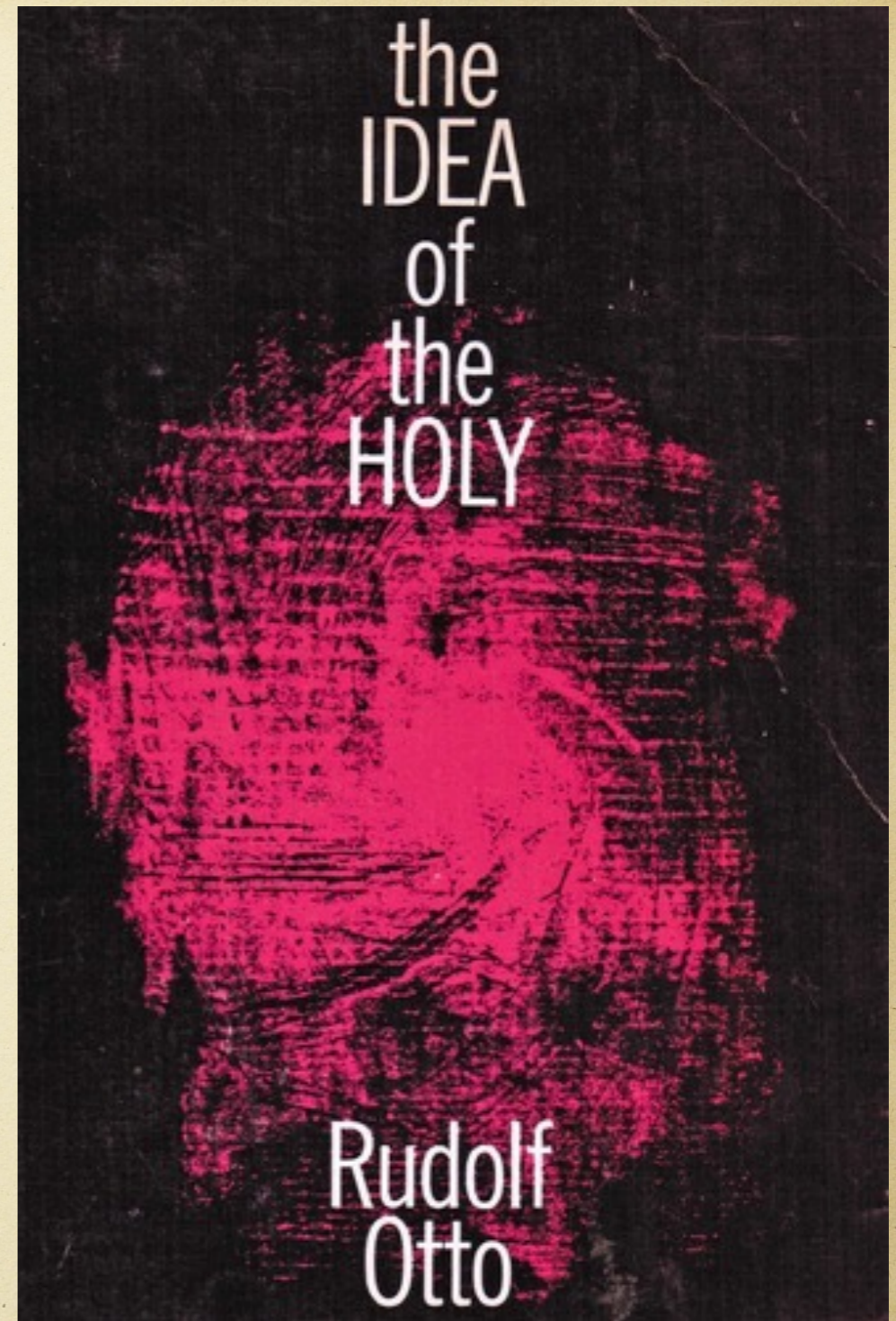
Religion

- Set of established stories, ritual performances, bodily practices, and social institutions that have been built up over time *around* extreme encounters with some anomalous presence, energy, hidden order, or power that is experience as Radically Other or More.
- *Not* that original anomalous experience, revelation, or salvation event.
- Rather, religion is the whole *psychological and social response* to that breaking-in.



Sacred/Numinous

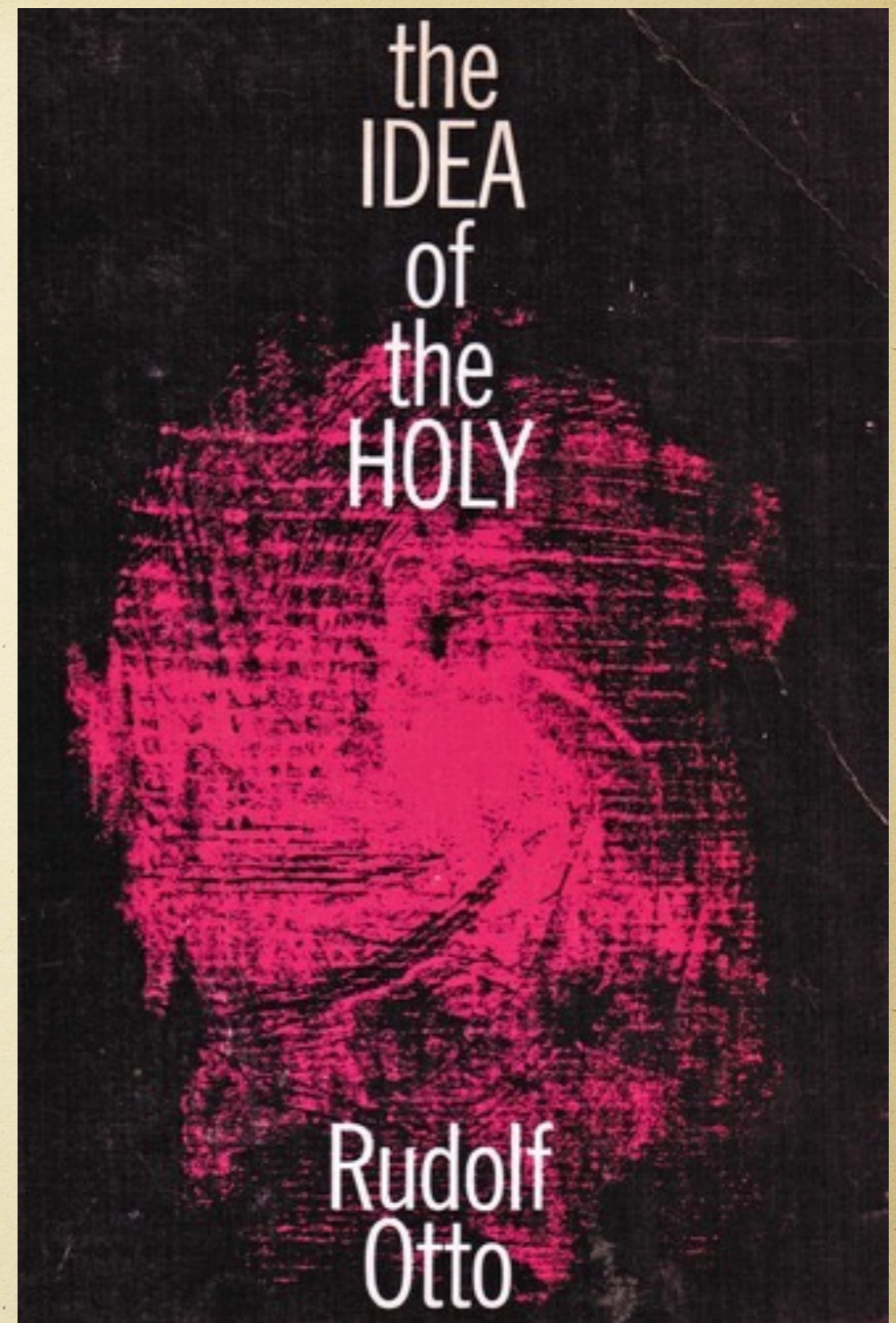
- Human experience of *mysterium tremendous et fascinans*
 - mystical presence that is at once
 - terrifying (*tremendum*) &
 - alluring (*fascinans*)



1917

Sacred/Numinous

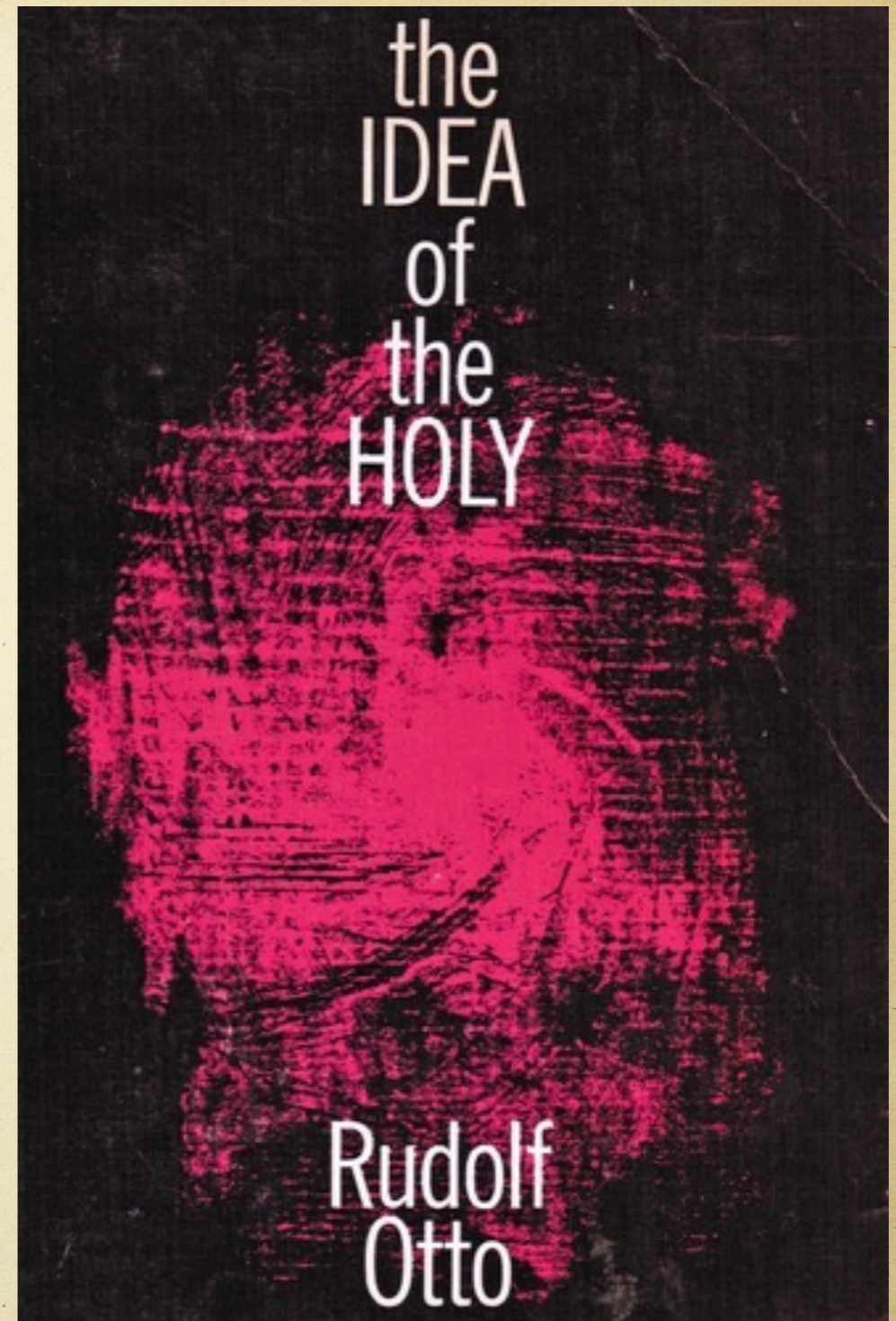
- Not stable “thing” or “essence.”
- “*God*” is a verb...*godding*.



1917

Sacred/Numinous

- Kripal: The sacred is a bit like modern electricity—needs two poles to work
 - can be harnessed for the human good
 - can also electrocute any who gets too close or is not properly insulated from its force.



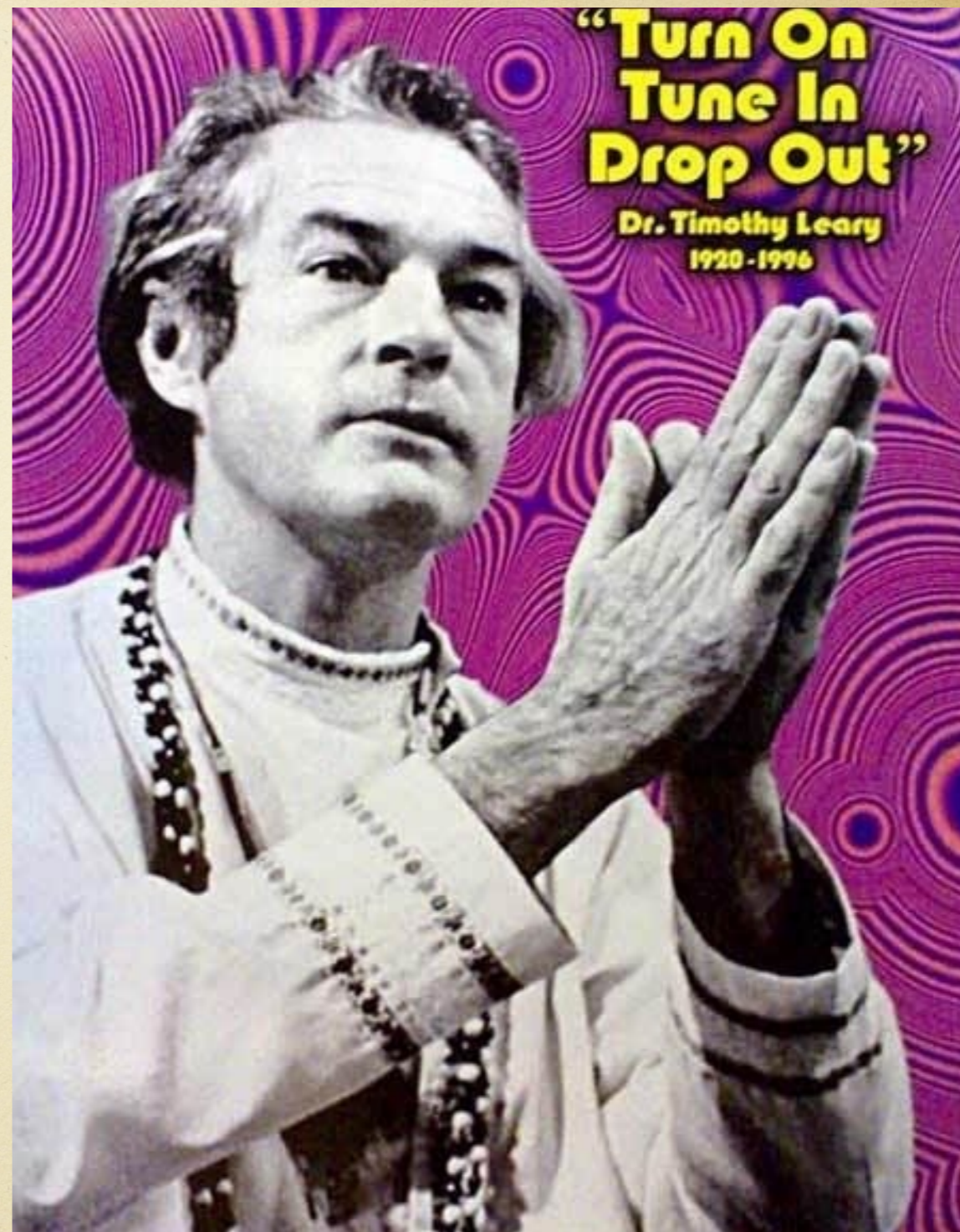
1917

New Years Day 1961

Huston Smith ingested two capsules of mescaline [*two “red pills”!*] in the home of Harvard psychologist Timothy Leary.

(Aldous Huxley, then teaching at MIT, had given Leary’s phone number to Smith.)

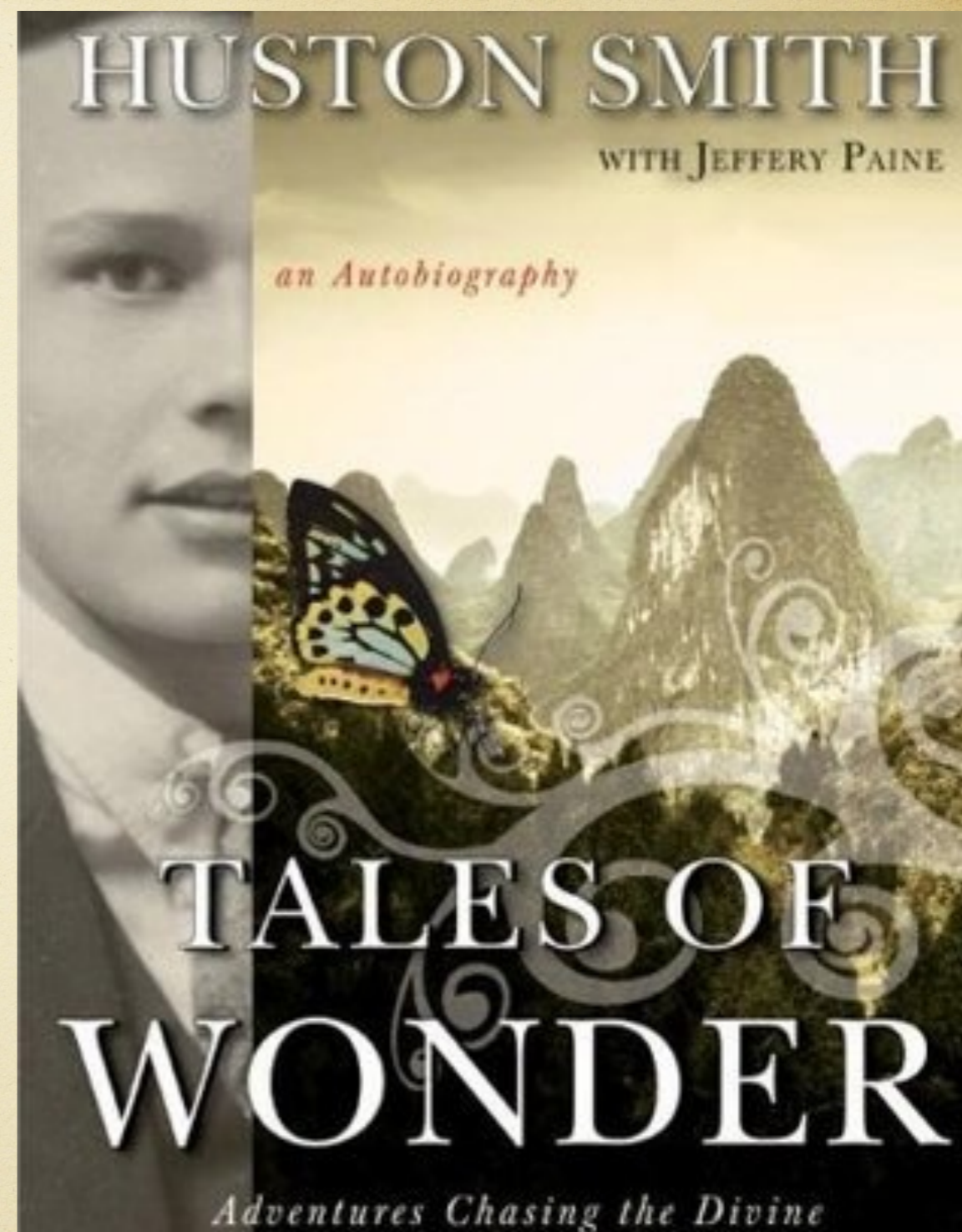
Here is what happened in Smith’s own words:



“The world into which I was ushered was **strange, weird, uncanny, significant, and terrifying** *beyond belief*....

It was as if the layers of the mind, **most of whose contents our conscious mind screens out** to smelt the remainder down into a single band we can cope with, were now revealed in their completeness —

spread out as if by spectroscope into about five distinguishable layers....

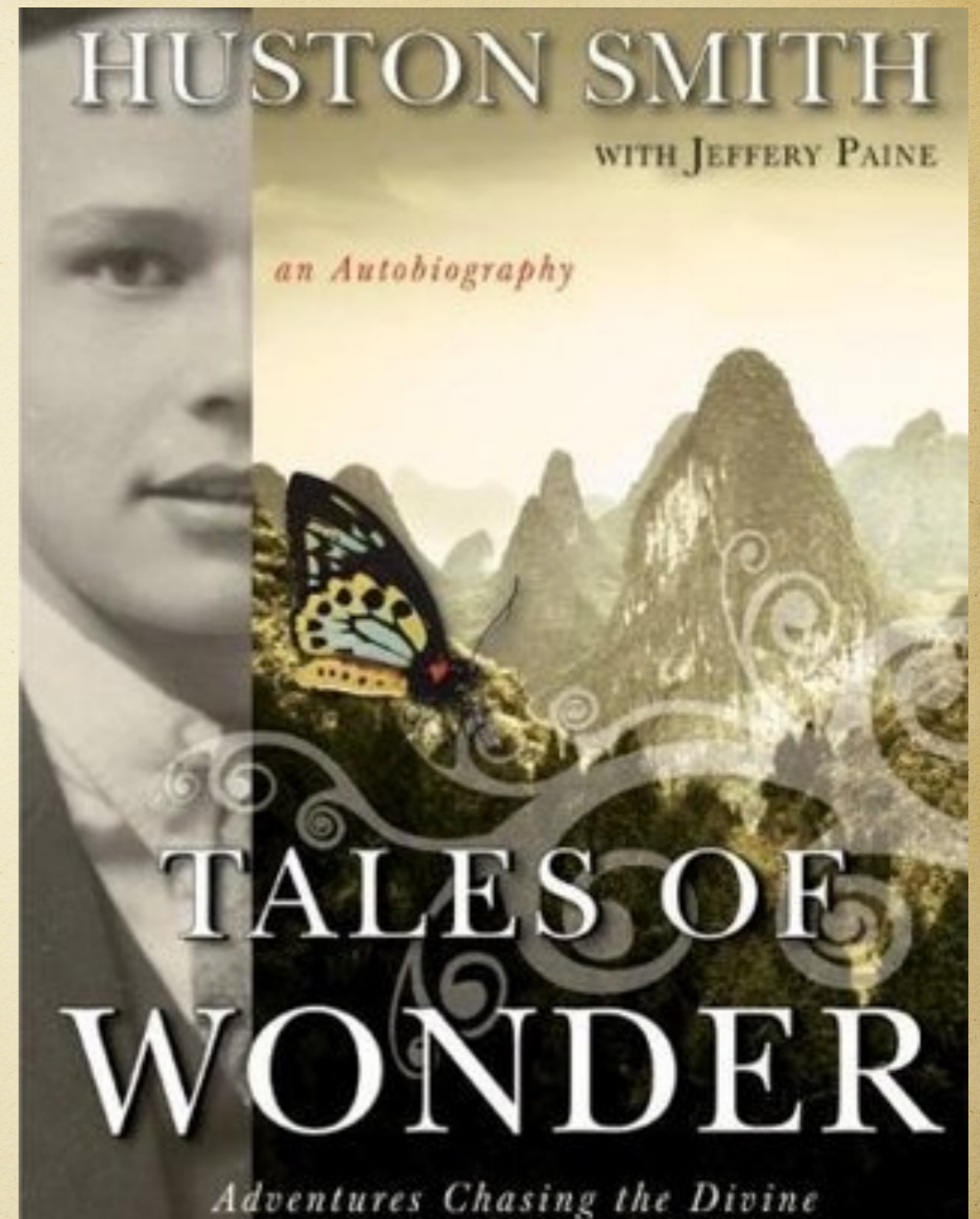


(1919 -)

As in Plato's myth of the cave, what I was now seeing struck me with the force of the sun in comparison with which **normal experience was flickering shadows on the wall....**

It should not be taken from what I have written that the experience was pleasurable.

The accurate words are **significance and terror—or awe**, in Rudolf Otto's understanding of a peculiar **blend of fear and fascination.”**



(1919 -)

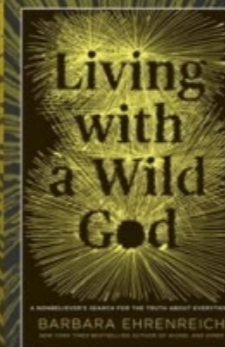
How **TIMOTHY LEARY, RAM DASS,**
HUSTON SMITH, and **ANDREW WEIL**
Killed the Fifties and Ushered
in a New Age for America

THE
HARVARD
PSYCHEDELIC
CLUB

DON LATTIN

BARBARA EHRENREICH

[Home](#) [About Barbara](#) [Living With a Wild God](#) [More Books](#) [Events](#) [Contact](#)



"Step outside the borders of what is 'real' and collectively agreed upon and you might as well fall right off the planet into a personal orbit of your own."

—From *LIVING WITH A WILD GOD* by Barbara Ehrenreich

[The Book](#) [Excerpt](#)



From the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Nickel and Dimed* comes a brave, frank, honest, and exquisitely written memoir that is sure to rattle your world. In *Living with a Wild God*, Ehrenreich reconstructs her childhood mission, bringing a wry and erudite perspective to a young girl's impassioned obsession with the questions that torment us all.



Richard Alpert, Ph.D.



“St. Alpert & the
LSD Revolution”
— Alex Grey

ALEX GREY 





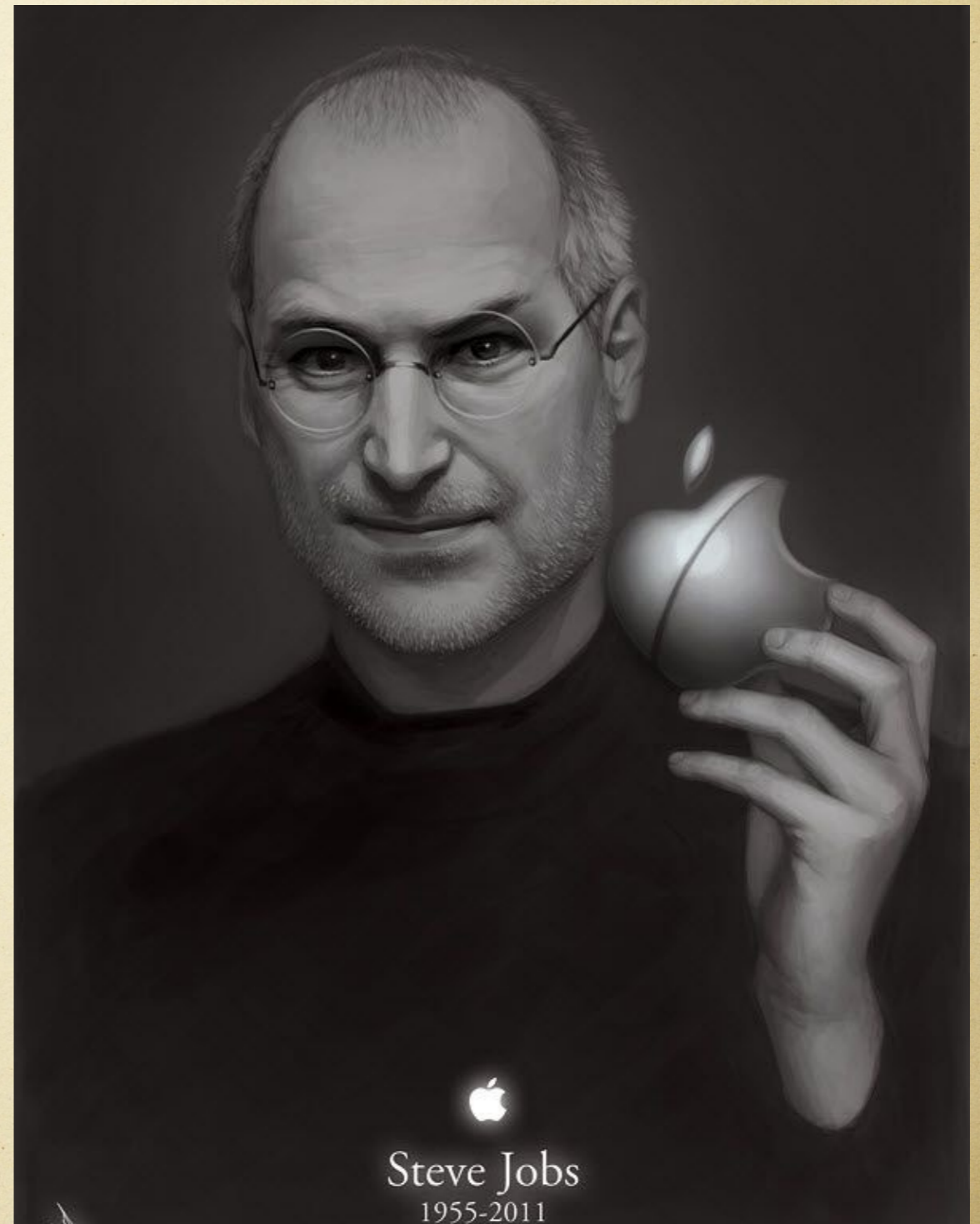
ALEX GREY



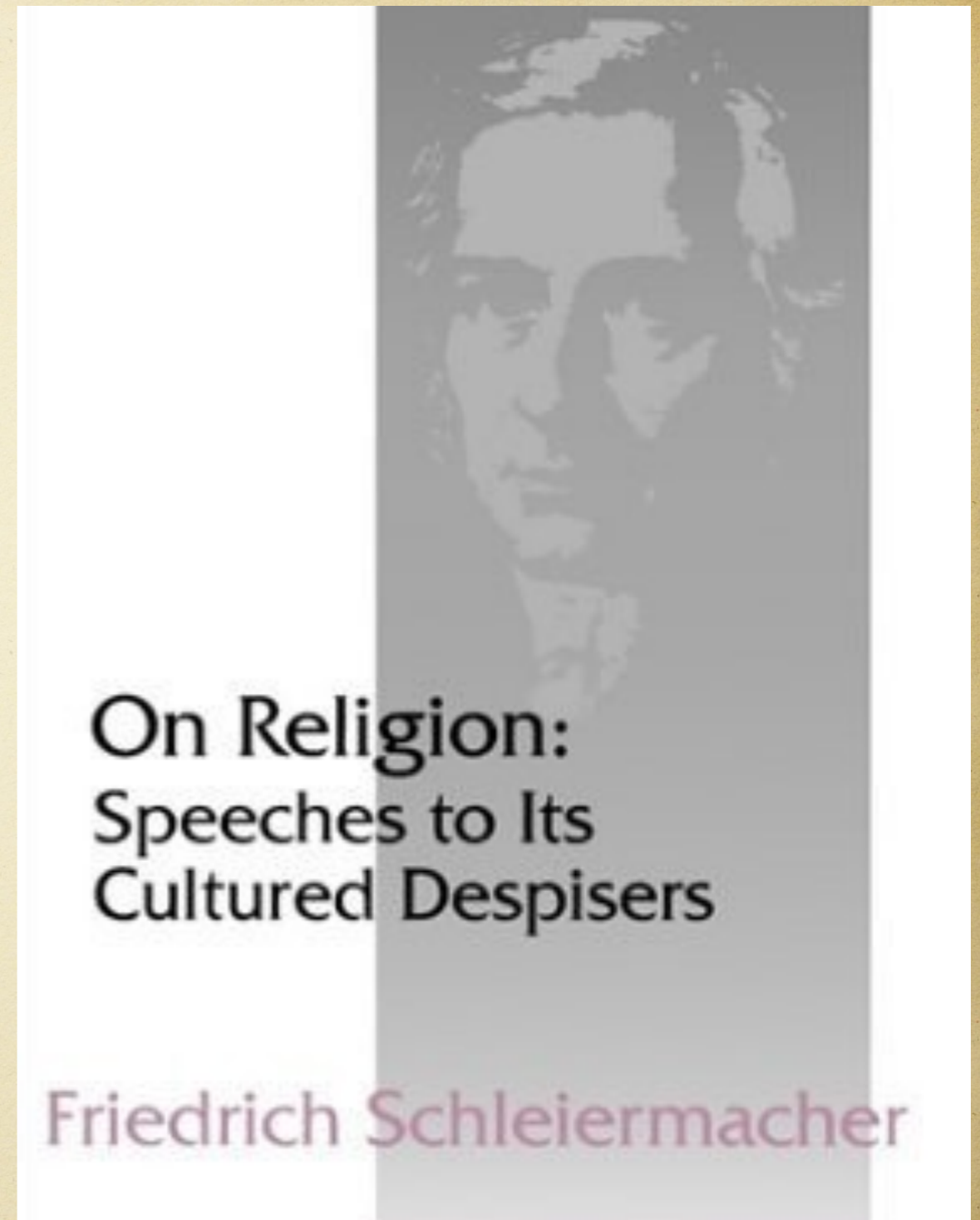


Psychedelic Mushrooms:

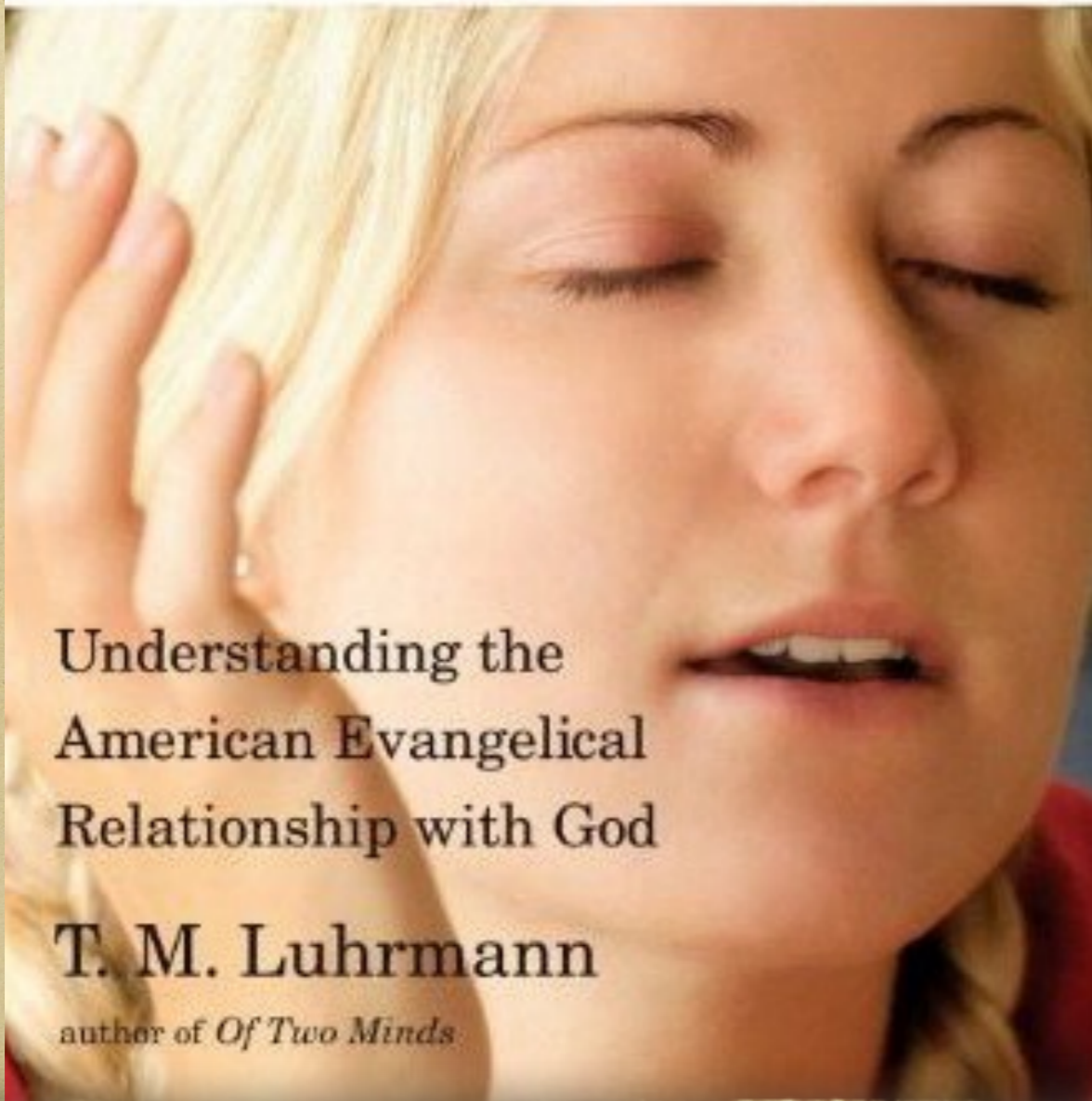
“One of the two or three most important things” he had experienced.



- “Father of Liberal Theology”
 - turn toward reason and experience
 - Latin: liber (“free”)
- Rescue religion from its Enlightenment, rationalist critics (“secular fundamentalists”).
- Not about literal belief or immortality of the soul, but **intuition, feeling, pure contemplation, direct experience** of the infinite.
- *From* whether various beliefs were true *to* psychological fact that religious experience happens — even if personal and subjective and not always repeatable in laboratory condition.



when God talks back



Understanding the
American Evangelical
Relationship with God

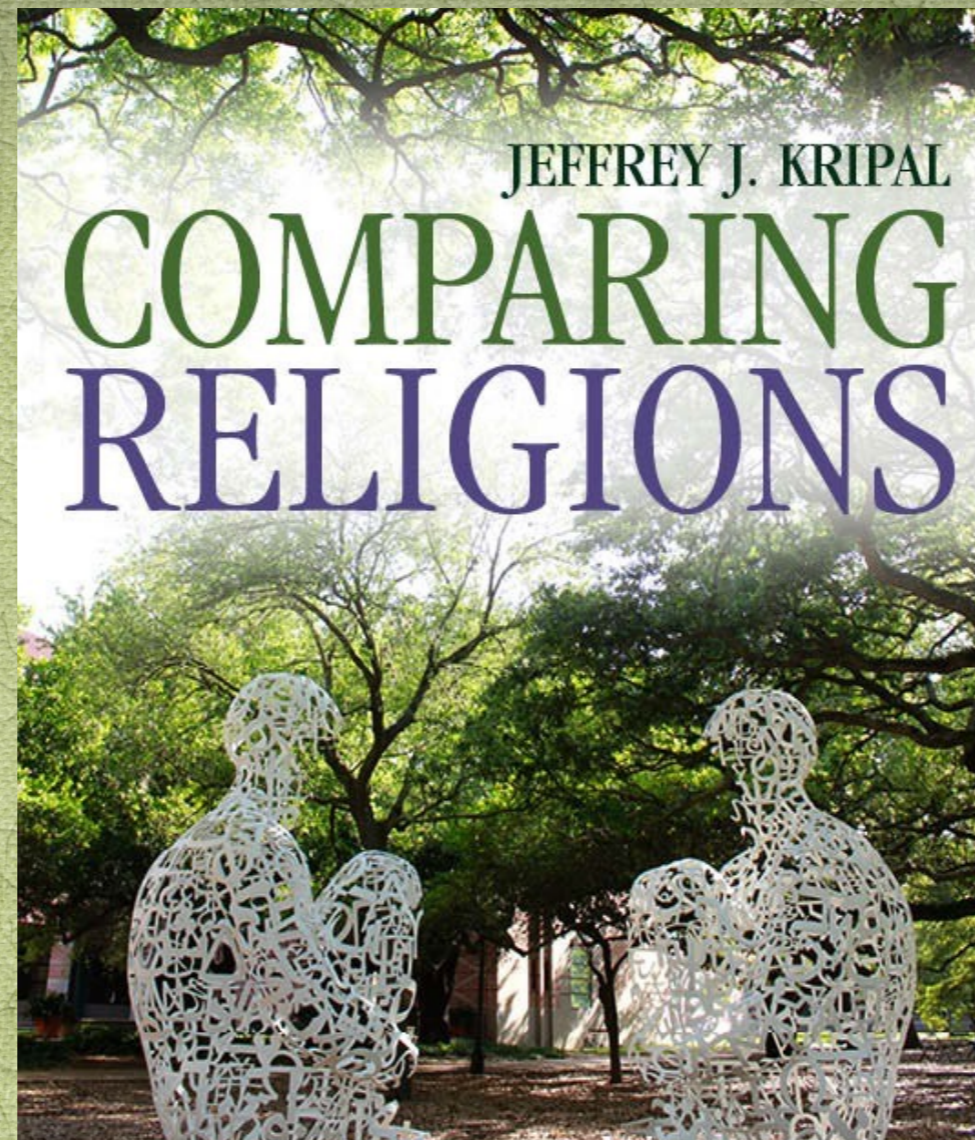
T. M. Luhrmann

author of *Of Two Minds*



“We know that God is experienced in the brain as a social relationship.

Put someone in a scanner and ask them about God, and the same region of the brain lights up as when you ask them about a friend.”

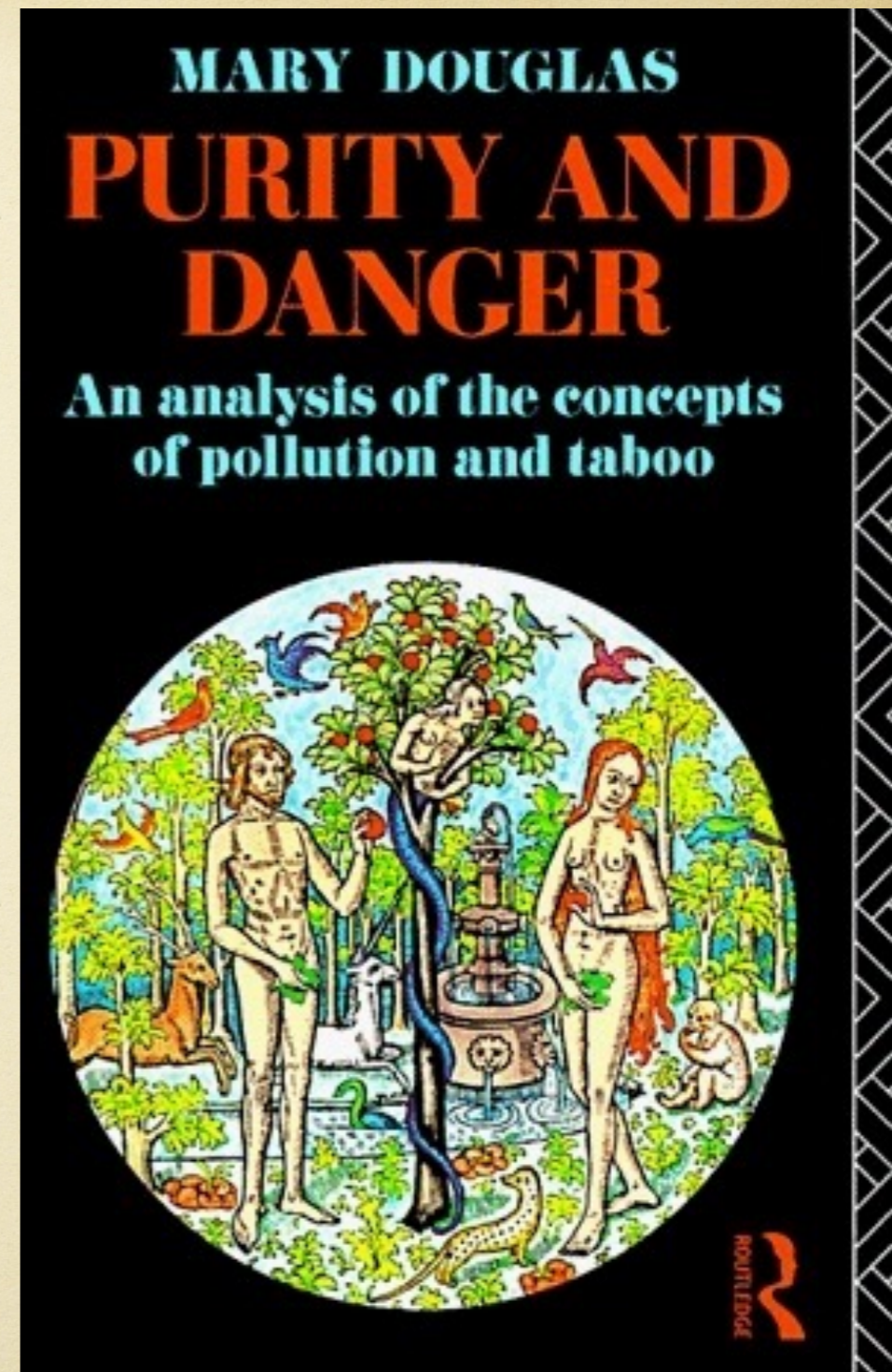


Chapter 6:
Sex and the Bodies of Religion

“The Terms of Our Time Travel”

What most defines everyday structure & dynamics of most religious worlds?

- *Not* myth & ritual...
- ...but Food & Sex!
- What one eats and whom one has sex with are matters of *extreme importance* for many religious communities.
- Both: what goes “in” & “out” of the body.



1921-2007

For I believe that ideas about
separating, purifying,
demarcating, and punishing
transgressions



have as their main function
to impose system on an
inherently untidy experience.

- Mary Douglas,
Purity and Danger (1966)



Holiness Continuum in Leviticus (Jensen 1992)

	Very Holy	Holy	Clean	Unclean	Very Unclean
Places	holy of holies	holy place	court	camp	outside the camp
People	high priest	priest	Levites, clean Israelites	minor impurities	major impurities, the dead
Rituals	sacrifice (not eaten)	sacrifice (priests eat)	sacrifice (non-priests eat)	purification (1 day)	purification (7 days)
Times	Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)	festivals, Sabbath	common days		

Kosher/Kashrut

(“proper, ritually correct” Jewish Dietary Practices)

- Only land animal that chew the cud and have split hooves (sheep, beef; not pigs, camels) are permitted and must be slaughtered in a special way.
- Meat products may *not* be eaten with milk products.
- Sea creatures, only those fish having fins and scales are permitted;
- Fowl is a meat food and has to be slaughtered in a special manner.
- “Abominations”: *ritual impurity*, not acts that are inherently evil or a violation of the Commandments. (Should be avoided because the Gentiles do it.)

Food & Sex

- Agricultural metaphors for sex
- “Seed” (*male*) in “Soil” (*female*)
- “Plowing”
- “Forbidden Fruit”
- “Barren” (*womb*)

Food-- like sex,
politics, and
religion-- is an
intensely personal,
emotional, and
complicated subject.

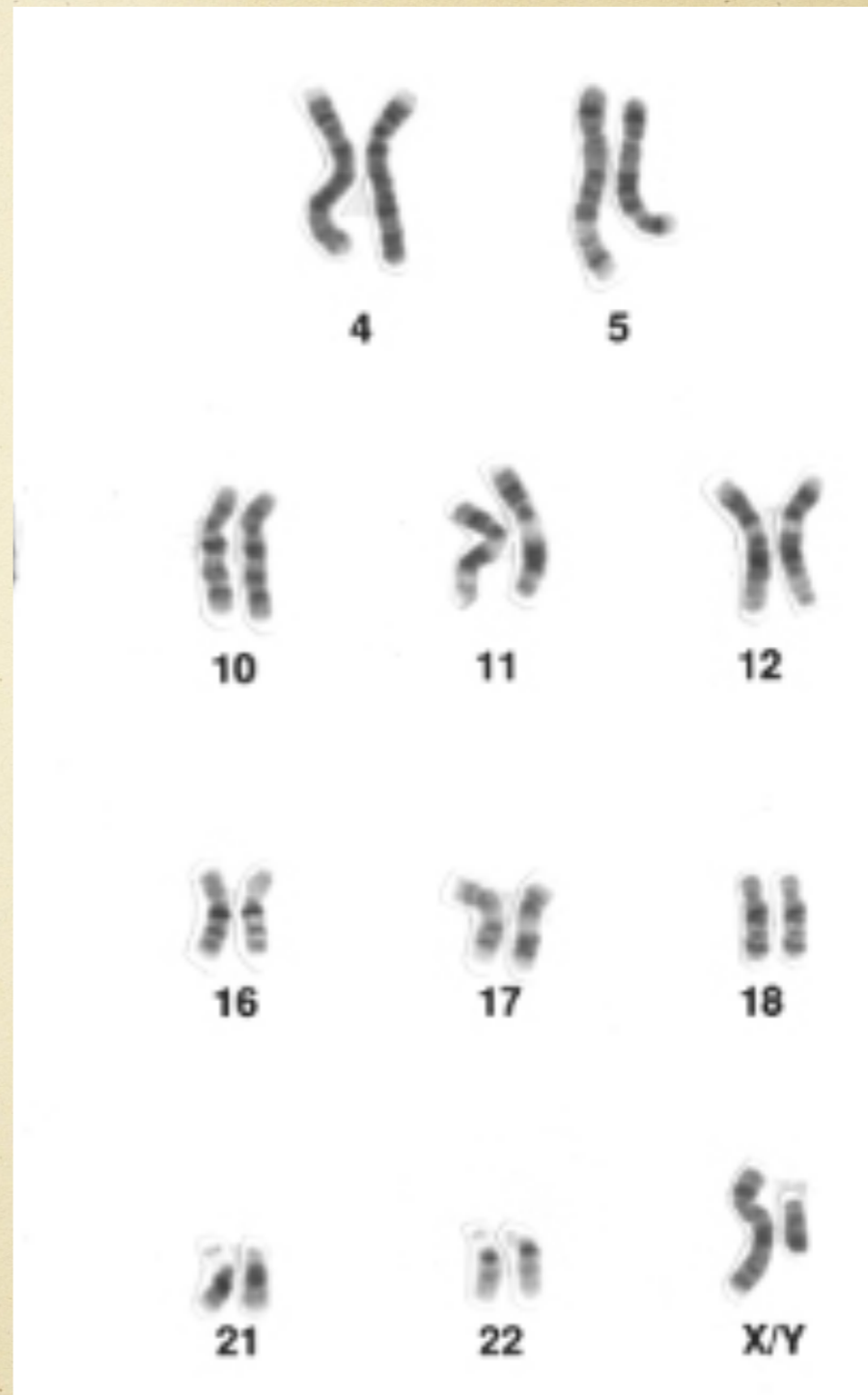
David Kirby

Food & Sex

Massive mismatch between *premodern agricultural* understandings of human sexuality (that male plants “seed” in female “soil”) and *modern biological* understandings of reproduction.

Basic ignorance almost all ancient religions share

(*B.C.* = “*Before Copernicus*”)



Garden of Eden

- Forbidden Fruit
- Loss of Innocence
- Tree of the Knowledge (*yada*) of Good and Evil.



“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.

“Original Sin” to “Loss of Innocence”

Eating the forbidden “fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” symbolizes:

- coming of age (body blooming into fruition),
- increasing awareness of sexuality,
- loss of innocence that signifies the passage from childhood through puberty to adulthood (knowing good/evil).

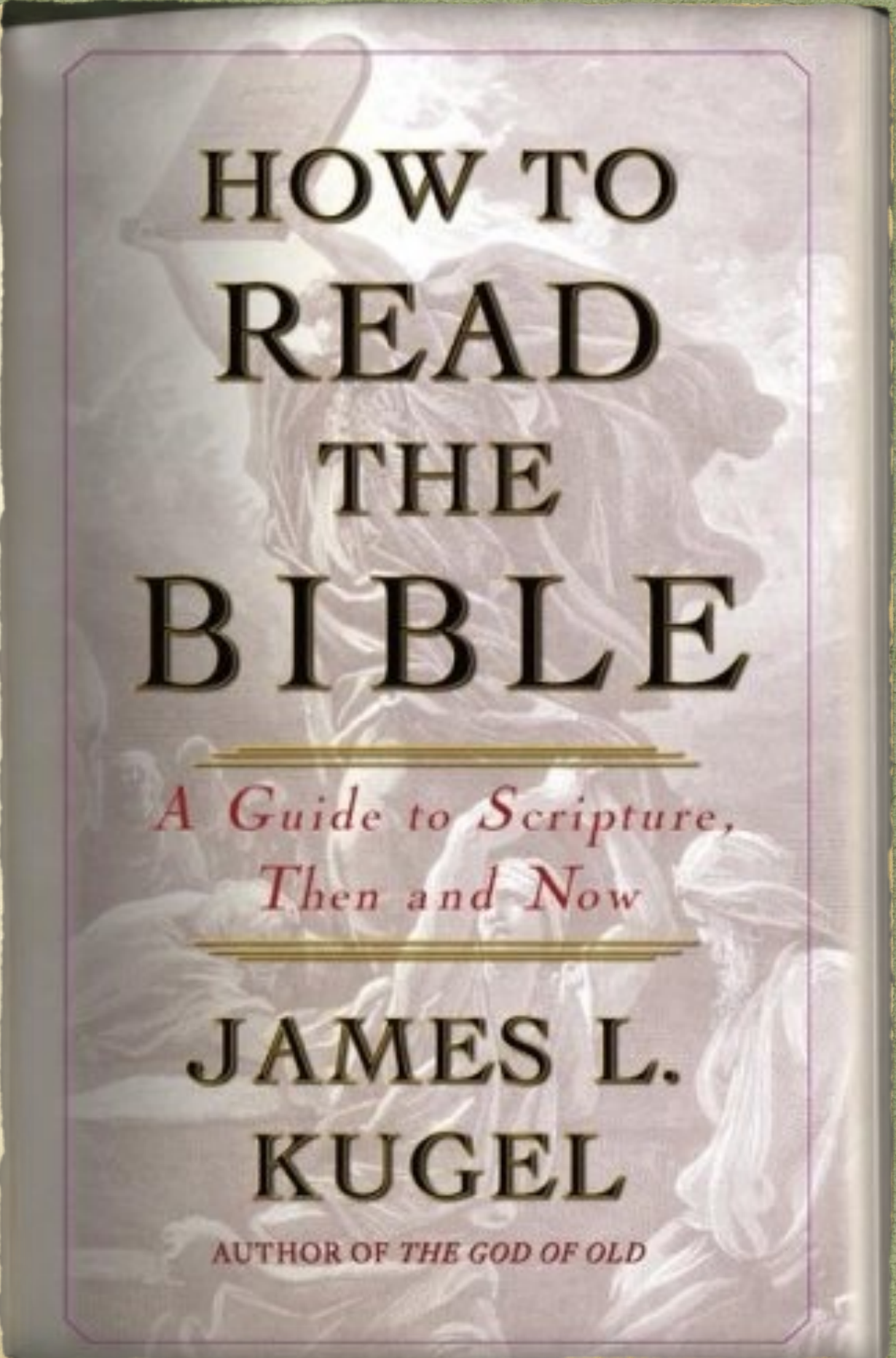
“Original Sin” to “Loss of Innocence”

- Puberty: one cannot go back to the state of innocence ever again — back to the Eden of being unaware of one’s sexuality.
- 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*]

Questioning Conventional Wisdom

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?

They had not yet eaten the fruit of the tree of the *knowledge of Good and Evil*.



HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

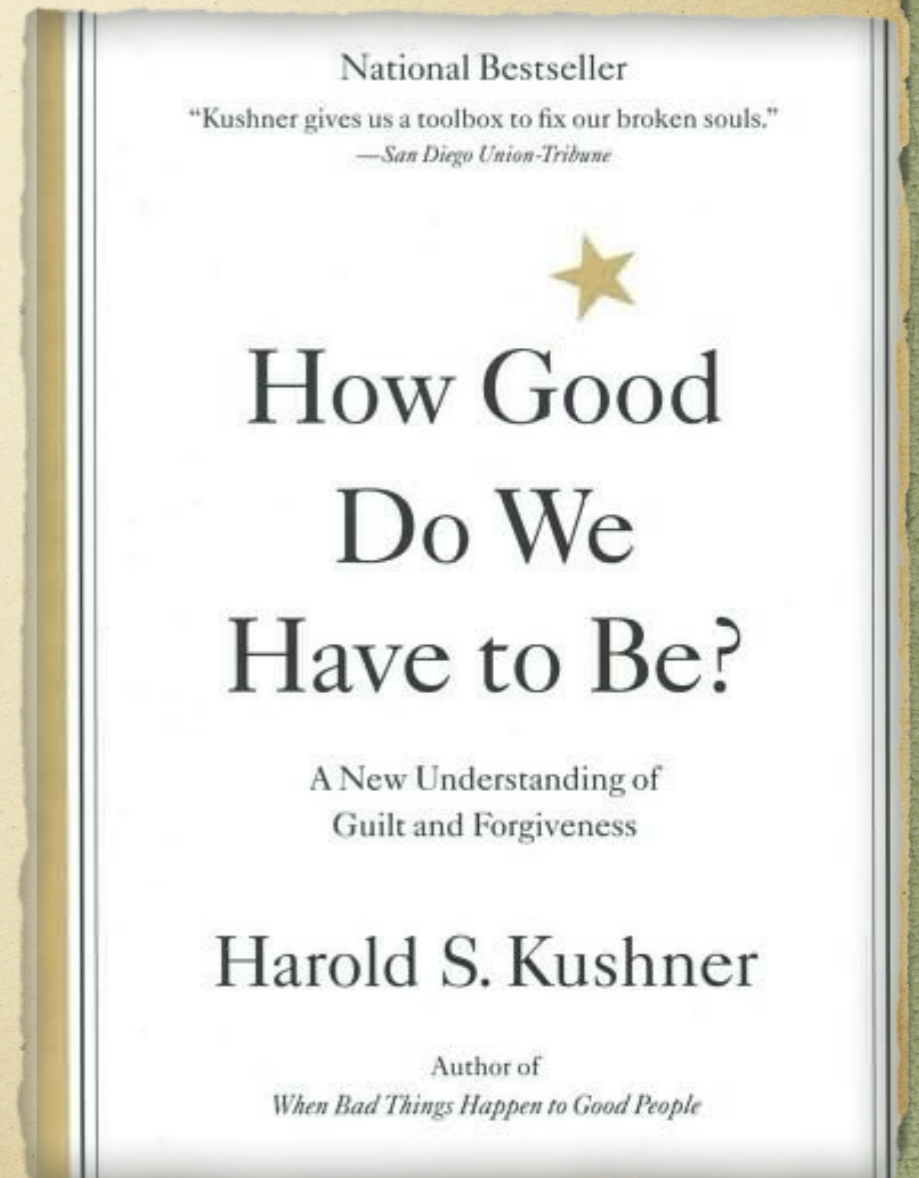
*A Guide to Scripture,
Then and Now*

**JAMES L.
KUGEL**

AUTHOR OF THE GOD OF OLD

from “Original Sin” to “Loss of Innocence”

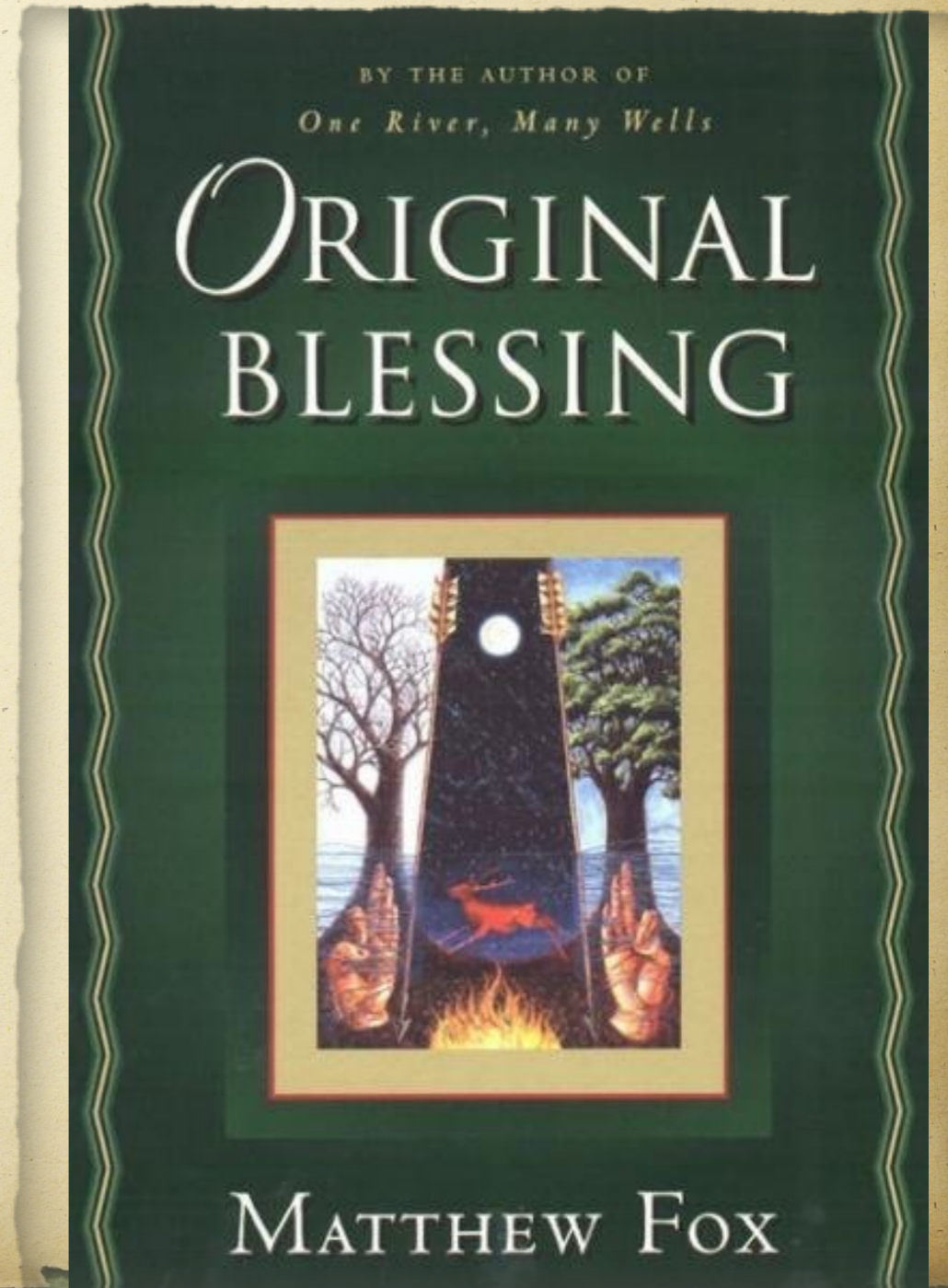
- Perhaps Genesis 3 is about becoming *adults* and *parents*...about becoming “like God, knowing good and evil?”
- And how frustrating it is to be *like God*, to create something and then give up control of what you have created, to want something to turn out as perfectly as you pictured it in your mind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



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

Genesis 3

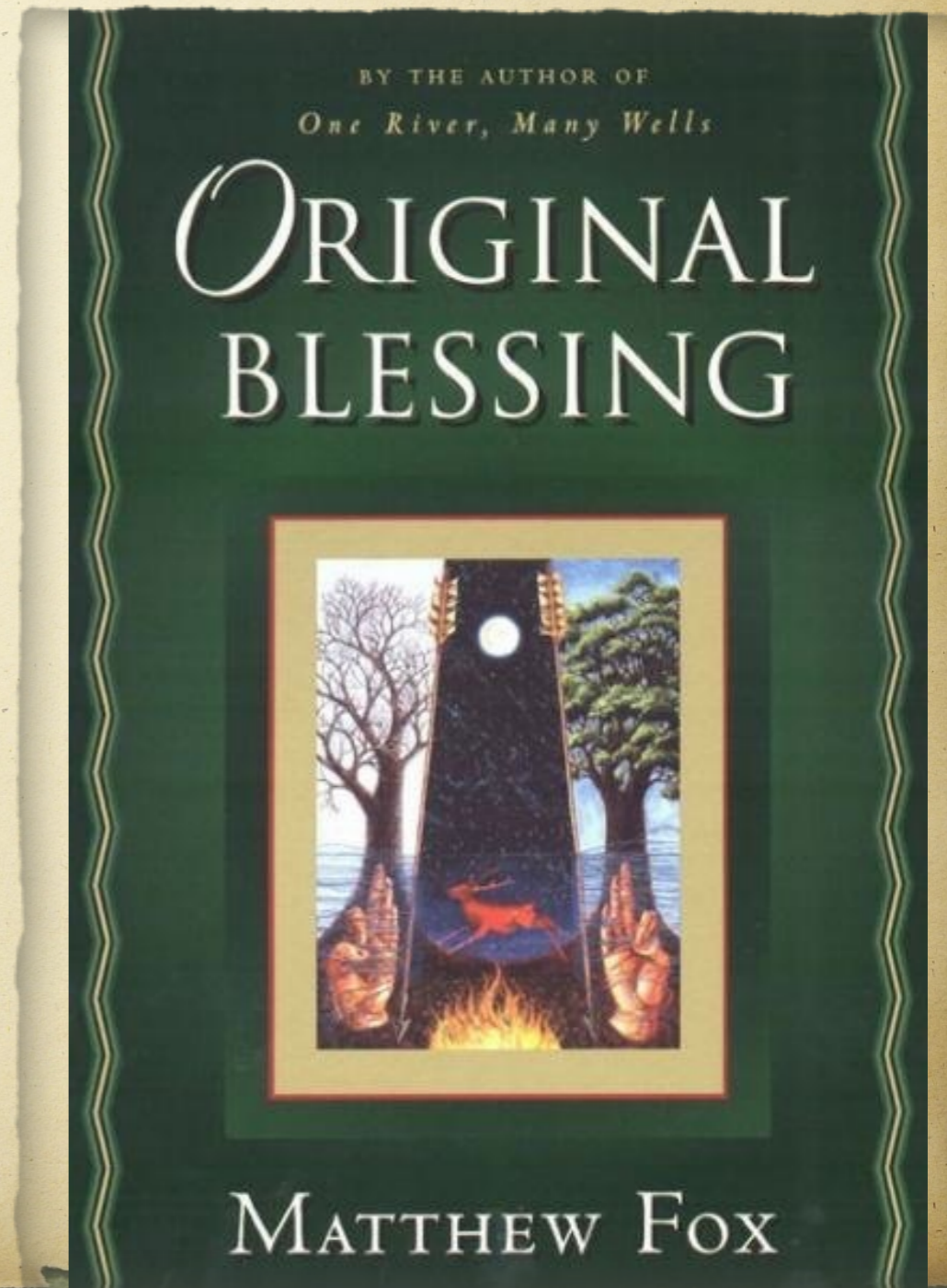
- ancient story reflecting on the transition from childhood to adulthood
- Growing into what it means to be creatures created in the “image of God,”
- knowing good and evil,”
 - making self-aware, conscious choices
 - dealing with the consequences of those decisions.



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

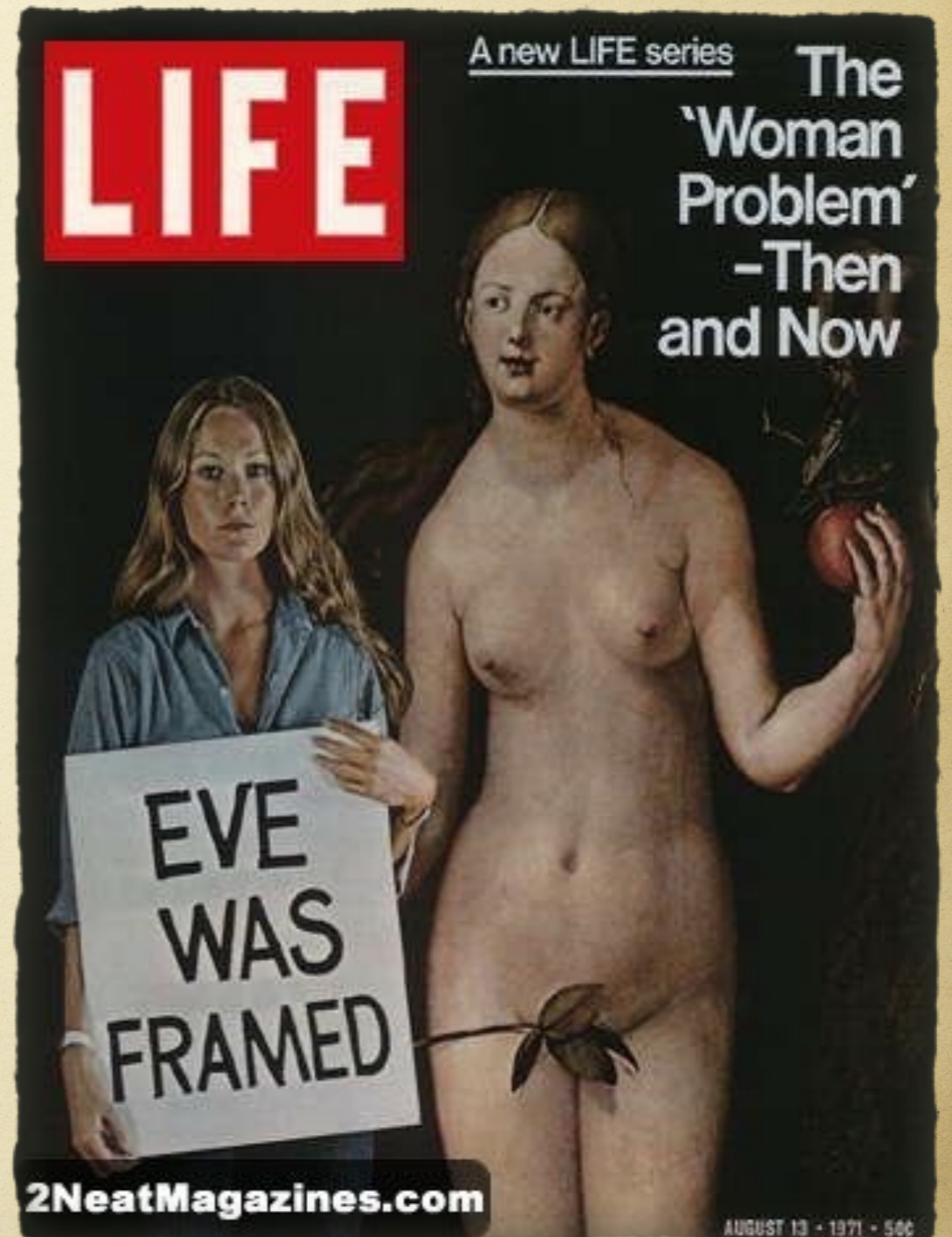
Genesis 3

- Rather than Eve causing the “fall” of humanity,
- She helped fulfill God’s intention of having humans created in the image of God.
- [*like Judas?!*]
- “Breaking the commandments of orthodox religion, the teenagers experimented with drugs and sex, and there were consequences.”



Eve Was Framed, the Serpent Was Right!

- Non-canonical, Gnostic text *The Testimony of Truth* criticized God as a “malicious envier” for punishing Adam and Eve
- Criticizing God for playing the role of every controlling authority figure who has unsuccessfully tried to repress adolescent rebellion in countless teenage film, dramas, and books.



Eve Was Framed, the Serpent Was Right!

- We might learn to love the wise snake, listen to his many hissing whispers, and realize finally that we are not cursed to die.
- We have not sinned. We have not fallen.
- We have sex and reproduce because we die. [*We are mortal and want to leave a legacy.*]
- We do not die because we have sex and reproduce. We have only grown up.



GNOSTIC REFLECTIONS ON THE STUDY OF RELIGION

The Serpent's Gift

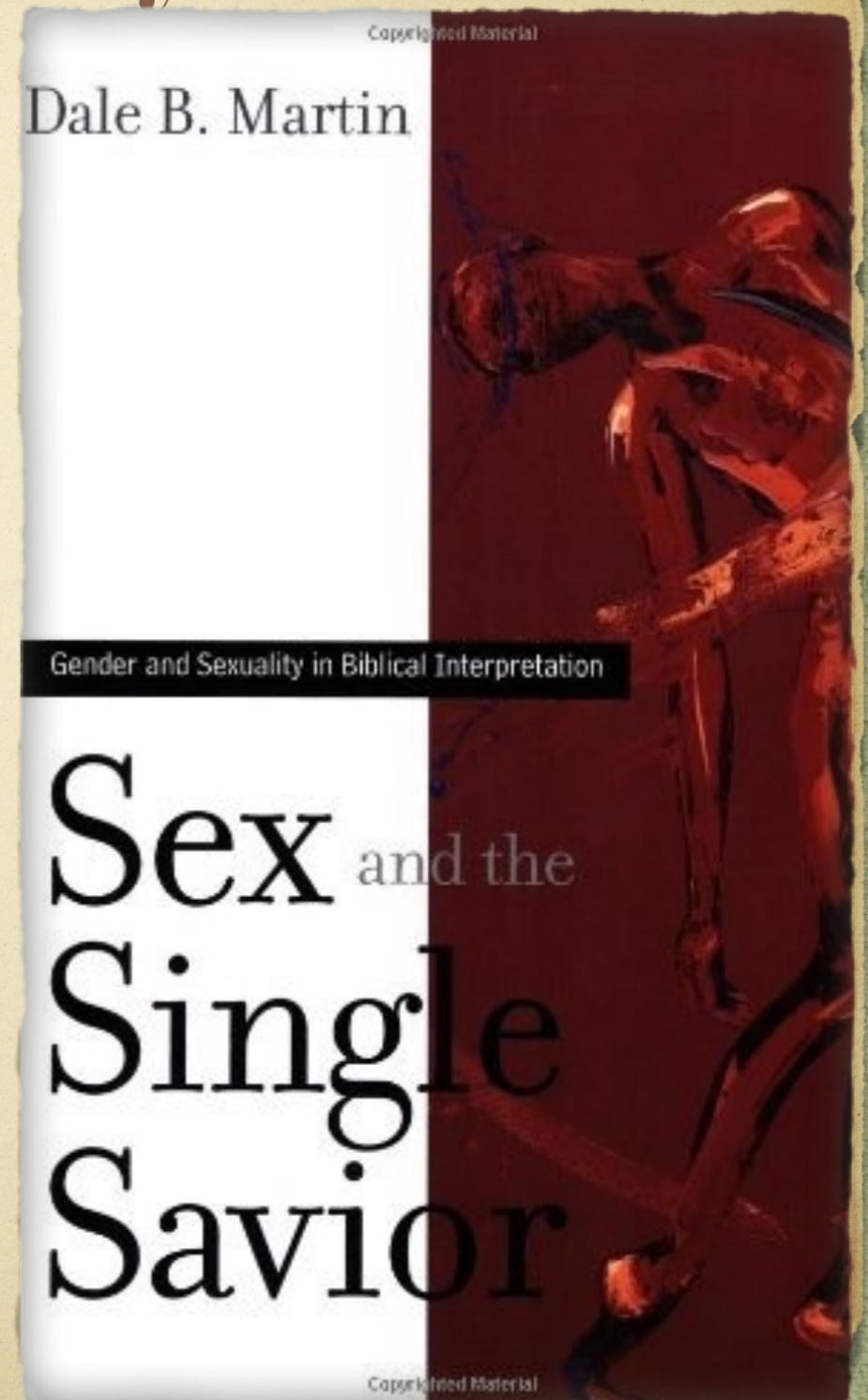
JEFFREY J. KRIPAL

Monastic Ideal vs. “Family Values”

I Corinthians 7

If you are too weak for celibacy,
then you should get married.

If you are strong enough for celibacy,
you should remain unmarried and
chaste.



2006

Jesus Wasn't a "Family Man"

Mark 3:32-35 (*cf. Mt 12:46-50; Lk 8:19-21*)

- 32 A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you."
- 33 And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?"
- 34 And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!"
- 35 Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

Jesus Wasn't a "Family Man"

Mark 9:59-60 (cf. Mt 8:21-22)

- 59 To another he said, "Follow me."
- But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."
- 60 But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Jesus Wasn't a "Family Man"

- **Luke 14:26** 26 "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple.

Jesus Wasn't a "Family Man"

- **Matthew 19:12** For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can."
- *[the avoidance of procreation and marriage is preferable]*

Jesus Wasn't a "Family Man"

- **Mark 12:25** (cf. Matthew 22:30) 25 For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

Sexual Suspect in Jesus' Lineage

➤ Tamar: disguised herself as a prostitute to sleep with her father-in-law Judah (Genesis 38)

➤ Ruth, a Moabite, who sexually seduced Boaz at the encouragement of her Israelite mother-in-law (Naomi)

➤ Rahab, a Canaanite prostitute who protected some Israelite spies (Joshua 2)

Jesus Christ's Genealogy Matthew 1:1-17

Patriarchs

Abraham
Isaac
Jacob
Judah
Perez **by Tamar**
Hezron
Ram
Amminadab
Nahshon
Salmon
Boaz **by Rahab**
Obed **by Ruth**
Jesse
David **the king**

Monarchy

Solomon **of Uriah**
Rehoboam
Abijah
Asa
Jehoshaphat
Joram
Uzziah
Jotham
Ahaz
Hezekiah
Manasseh
Amon
Josiah
Jeconiah ... **at the time of the deportation to Babylon.**

Joseph
by whom
is

American Shaker Community

- If sin = sex,
- *then* salvation = no sex!
- Background: Ann had lost all four of her babies in infancy.
- Her husband Abraham brought a prostitute to the house and told Ann to sleep with him or he would choose the prostitute. He left with the prostitute, never to be seen again in the Shaker community.



Mother Ann
(1736-1784)

God as Androgyne *(whose maleness is privileged)*

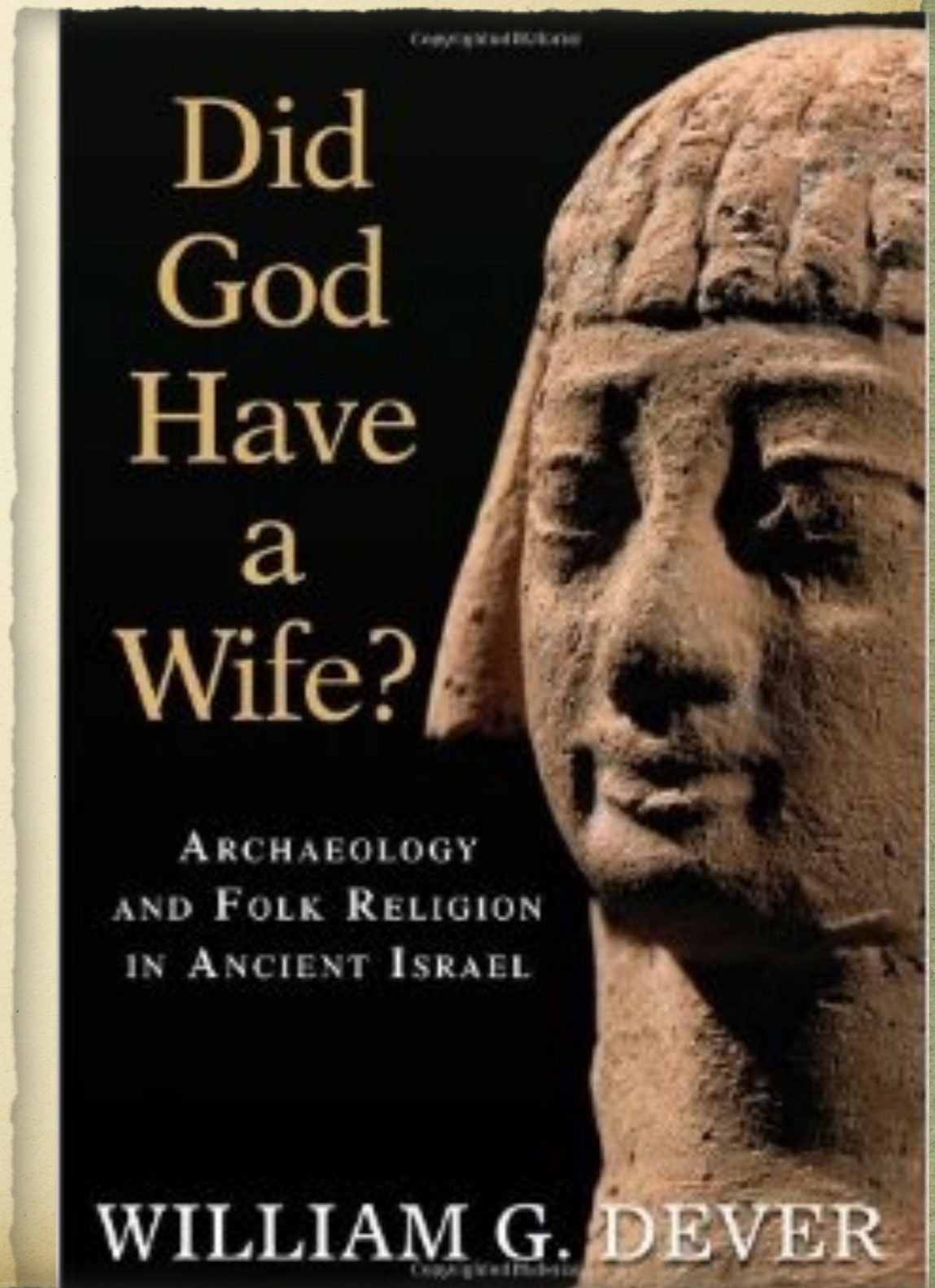
Genesis 1:27

“So God created man in his own
image,
in the image of God created he him;
male and female created he them.”



God's Wife

- Inscriptions date back to 800 BCE with blessing “by Yahweh and his Asherah,” a goddess worshipped by the Canaanites.
- “They appear to have been a very popular divine couple worshipped for centuries prior to the religious changes introduced by King Josiah in 622 BCE.”



➤ 1 Kings 15:13, “He also removed his mother Maacah from being queen mother, because she had made an abominable image for **Asherah**; Asa cut down her image and burned it at the Wadi Kidron.” [2 Chronicles 15:16, “King Asa even removed his mother Maacah from being queen mother because she had made an abominable image for **Asherah**. Asa cut down her image, crushed it, and burned it at the Wadi Kidron.”]

➤ 1 Kings 18:19, “Now therefore have all Israel assemble for me at Mount Carmel, with the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of **Asherah**, who eat at Jezebel's table.”

➤ 2 Kings 21:7, “The carved image of **Asherah** that he had made he set in the house of which the Lord said to David and to his son Solomon, “In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever;”

- 2 Kings 23:4, “The king commanded the high priest Hilkiah, the priests of the second order, and the guardians of the threshold, to bring out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels made for Baal, for **Asherah**, and for all the host of heaven; he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel.”
- 2 Kings 23:6, “He brought out the image of **Asherah** from the house of the Lord, outside Jerusalem, to the Wadi Kidron, burned it at the Wadi Kidron, beat it to dust and threw the dust of it upon the graves of the common people.”
- 2 Kings 23:7, “He broke down the houses of the male temple prostitutes that were in the house of the Lord, where the women did weaving for **Asherah**.”



If God is male, then male is God. The divine patriarch castrates women as long as he is allowed to live on in the human imagination.

(Mary Daly)

izquotes.com



1928-2010

Patriarchy

pater (“father”) + *arch* (“rule”)

- Religion crosses into a dangerous patriarchal fundamentalism when the Sacred Masculine archetype of Father Sky devolves into a literal Sky Father:
- worship of a Zeus-like male human figure, who is imagined to actually live in the sky and sit in judgment of humanity.
- Circumcision: inscribing covenant on male member

BEYOND GOD
THE FATHER

TOWARD A
philosophy
OF WOMEN'S
LIBERATION

MARY DALY

(1974)

- Traditional philosophy of religion (and western culture generally) is preoccupied with violence, sacrifice, and death, and built upon mortality not only as a human fact but as a fundamental philosophical category.
- But what if we were to begin with birth, and with the hope and possibility and wonder implicit in it?
- How if we were to treat natality and the emergence of this life and this world with the same philosophical seriousness and respect which had traditionally been paid to mortality and the striving for other worlds?
- Such a feminist approach is philosophically viable, and opens up new ways of considering religion, human flourishing, identity, and difference, and ecological concern.



Becoming Divine

TOWARDS A FEMINIST
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Grace M. Jantzen

Kripal's "Tough Questions"

- In contemporary American culture, a bride generally wears white (*vs. black or red*) and a pornographic magazine is called a "dirty magazine" (or smut), despite the fact that it is in chemical fact glossy and perfectly clean. Consider this in light of religious purity codes.
- Why are there so few *daughters* in religious mythology compared to the number of fathers and sons?
- Comment on the historical background of a father "giving away" his daughter at a Christian wedding (c.f. an engagement *ring*, singular).

Kripal's "Tough Questions"

- Consider the famous *New York Review of Books* essay "100 Million Women are Missing" (1990) about cultures who eliminate millions of women.
- "160 Million and Counting" by Ross Douthat (2011)
- If religions abandon their biologically false agricultural models of sexuality, can biologically correct genetic models produce more gender equity?

UNNATURAL



SELECTION

CHOOSING BOYS OVER GIRLS,
AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF A
WORLD FULL OF MEN

MARA HVISTENDAHL

Kripal's "Tough Questions"

- How would you respond to Valentinus' five questions:
 - "Who are we?"
 - Where have we come from? Where were we before we were born?
 - What is this world in which we find ourselves?
 - How did we end up here, and why?
 - Where will we ultimately go after we die?"
- [Note: In noticing how you reach your answers, pay attention to the "water you are swimming in and the web you are crawling around on. Most importantly, become more aware that it is water and web.]*
- Why did Tertullian (early church father) associate Valentinus' questions with "heretics"? What's wrong with asking these questions?

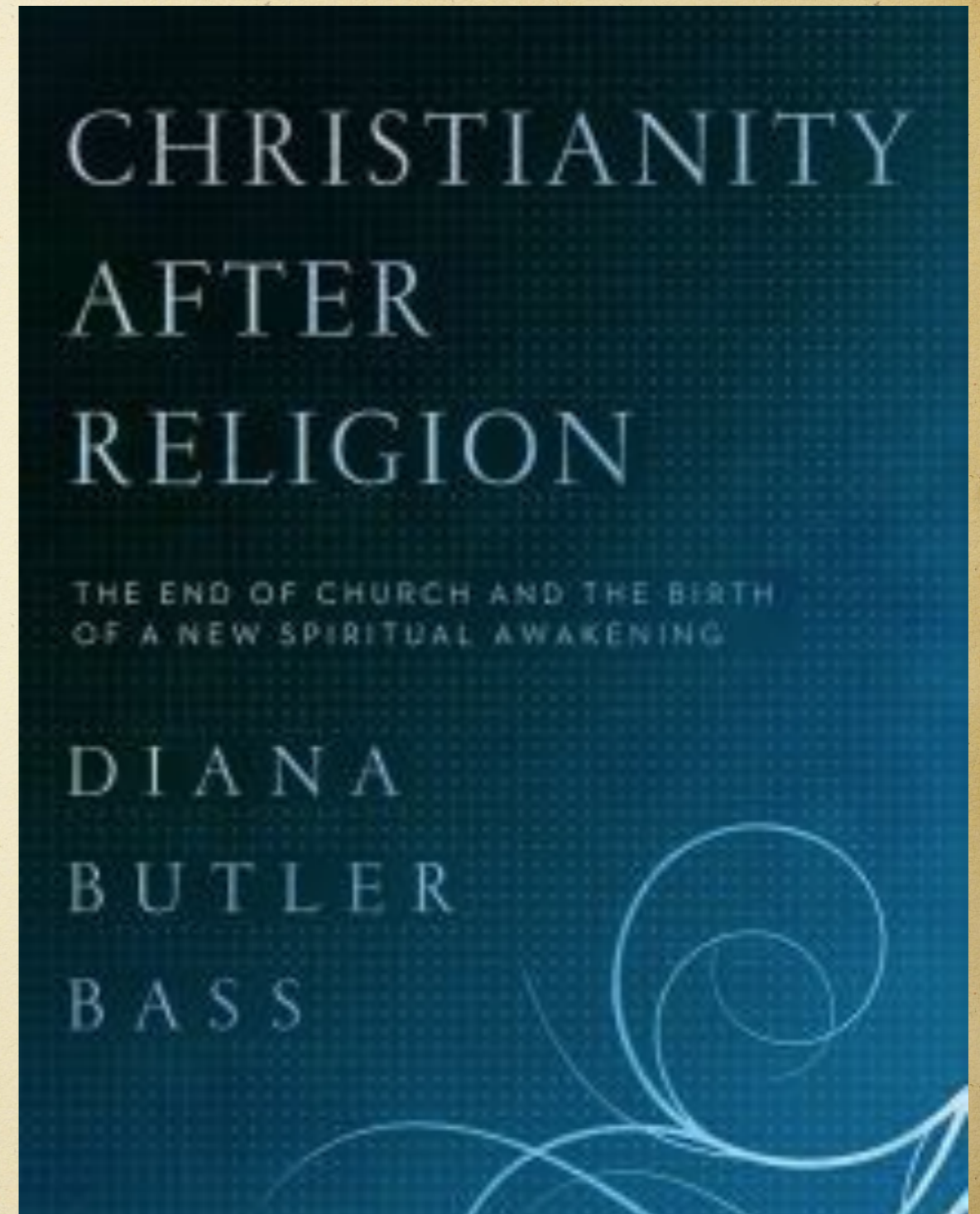
Jeffrey Kripal's "Tough Questions"

- Have you or someone you have known had a similar firsthand experience of the strange, the uncanny, the unrepeatably, the unasked for, but the nonetheless existentially real?



"Paranormal Reader" by Rob Beschizza

- In 1962, only a couple of years after I was born, pollsters found that 2% of Americans claimed to have had a “mystical experience” of God.
- In 1976...that number had risen to 31% of the population....
- By 2009, 48% of Americans confessed that they had had a mystical encounter with the divine.



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