

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?**



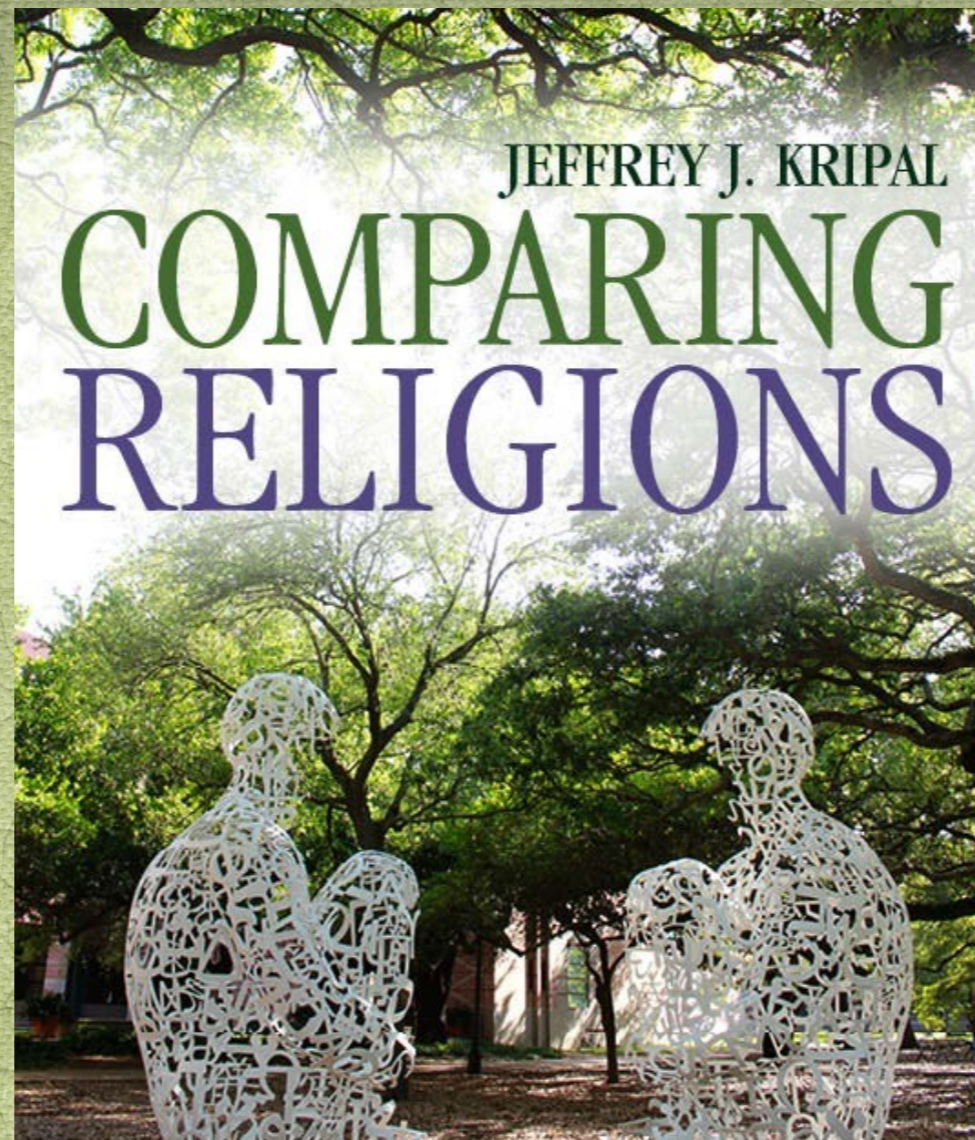
Covenant

- 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” (chapters 1-2)
- Class 2: Part I: “Prehistory, Preparation, & Perspective” (chapters 2-3)
- Class 3: Part II: “Comparative Acts”: Chapter 6: “Sex and Bodies”;
- Class 4: Chapter 8: “Imagination & Paranormal”
Chapter 9: “Soul, Salvation, & the End”
Chapter 4: “Myth/Ritual”; Chapter 5: “Nature/Science”; Chapter 7: “Charisma and Power”
- Class 5: Part III: Putting It All Together Again:
 - Chapter 10, “*Faithful* Re-readings: Exclusivism, Inclusivism, Pluralism, and Justice.”
 - Chapter 11, “*Rational* Re-readings: Masters of Suspicion, Classical and Contemporary”
- Class 6, August 26: Chapter 12: “*Reflexive* Re-readings: Looking at the Looker”

(See “Chapter Outlines”: “Browse by Resources” at wiley.com/go/kripal)



Chapter 10,
“Faithful Re-readings”
Exclusivism, Inclusivism, Pluralism, & Justice

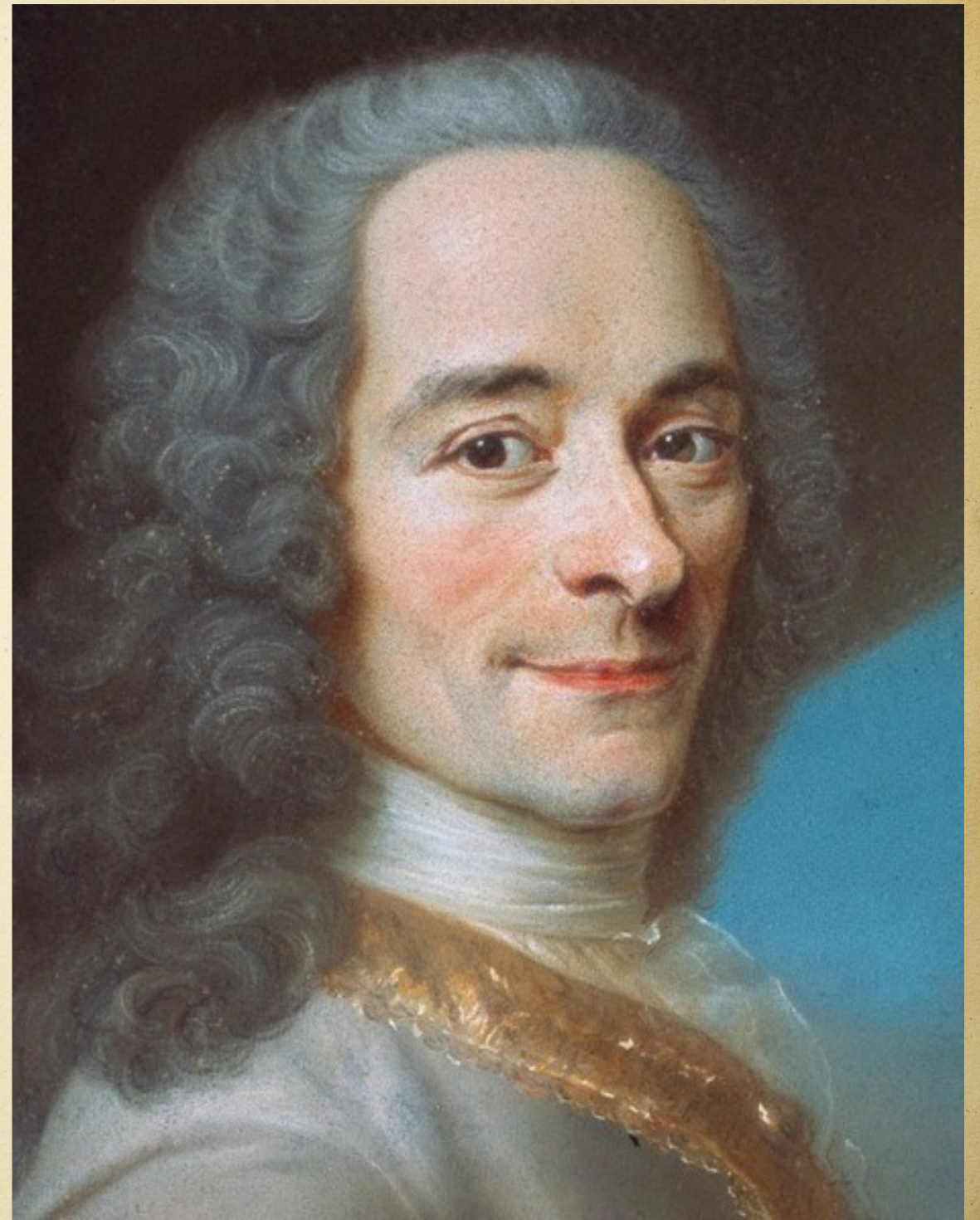
Voltaire

“If there were only **one** religion in England, there would be *danger of tyranny*;

if there were **two**, they would *cut each other's throats*;

but there are **thirty**, and they *live happily together in peace.*”

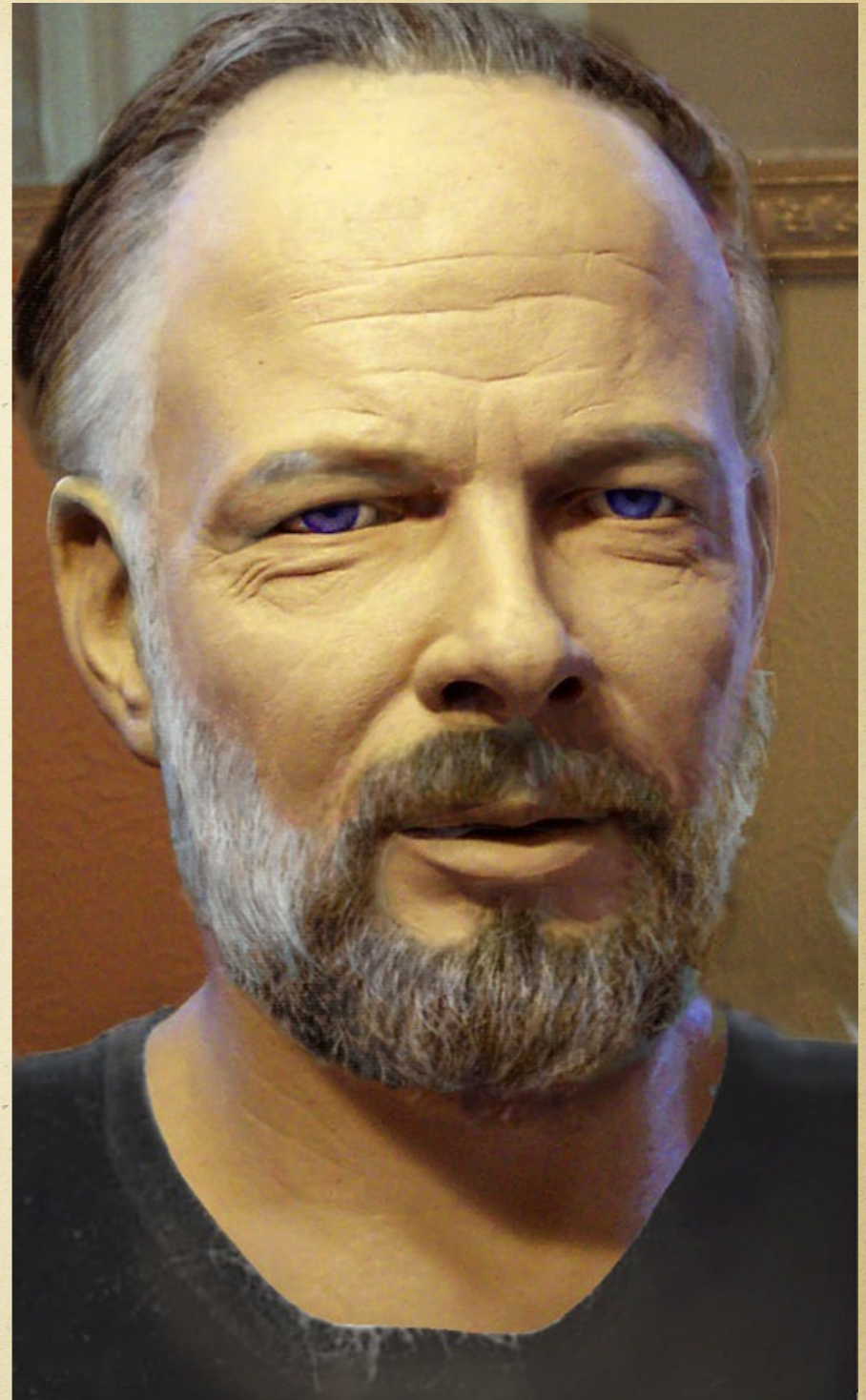
—“On the Church of England”
(Letter 5, *Letters Concerning English Nations*)



1694-1778

February 20, 1974

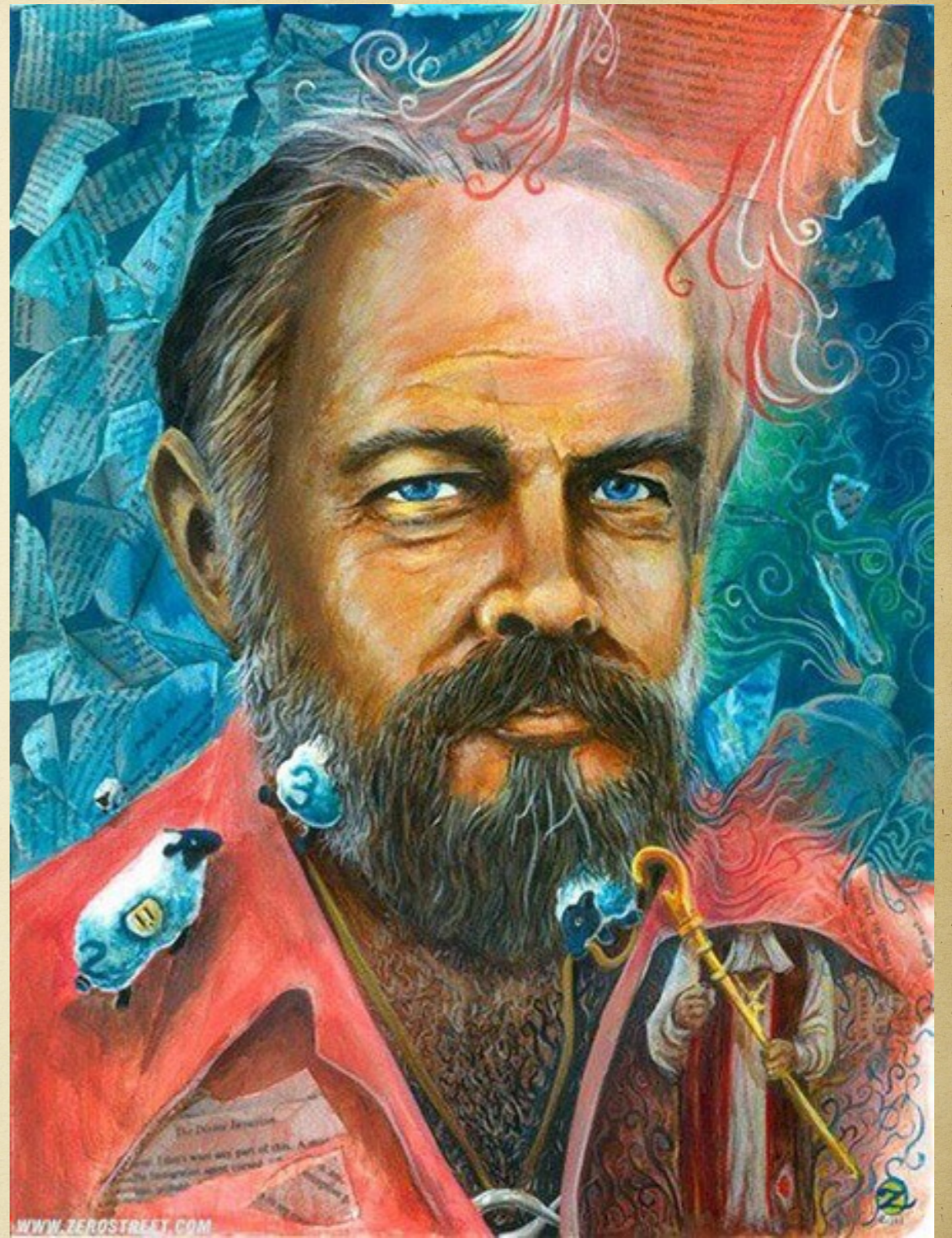
- American sci-fi writer
- 11 popular films based on his works have been produced, including *Blade Runner*, *Total Recall*, *A Scanner Darkly*, *Minority Report*, *Paycheck*, *Next*, *Screamers*, *The Adjustment Bureau* and *Impostor*.
- Doorbell rang.... (p. 304-5)
- VALIS (“Vast Active Living Intelligence System”)



Philip K. Dick
(1928-1982)

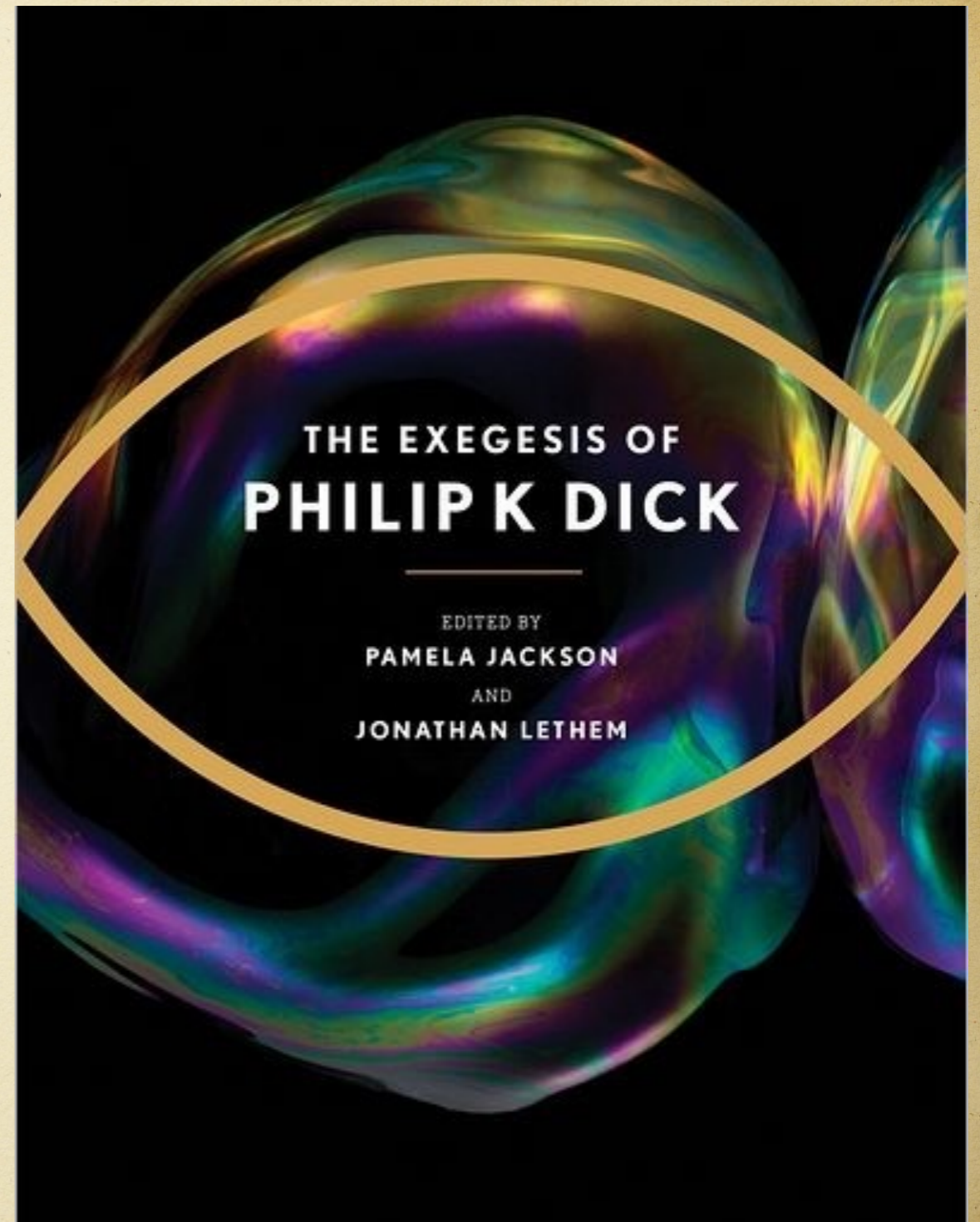
February 20, 1974

- **Fish sign** that triggered it all hangs on his chest
- His late friend, **Bishop James Pike**, who helped him to learn about ancient Christian gnosticism and who (Dick suspected) possessed him via the VALIS event, hidden mysteriously behind the writer's collar.

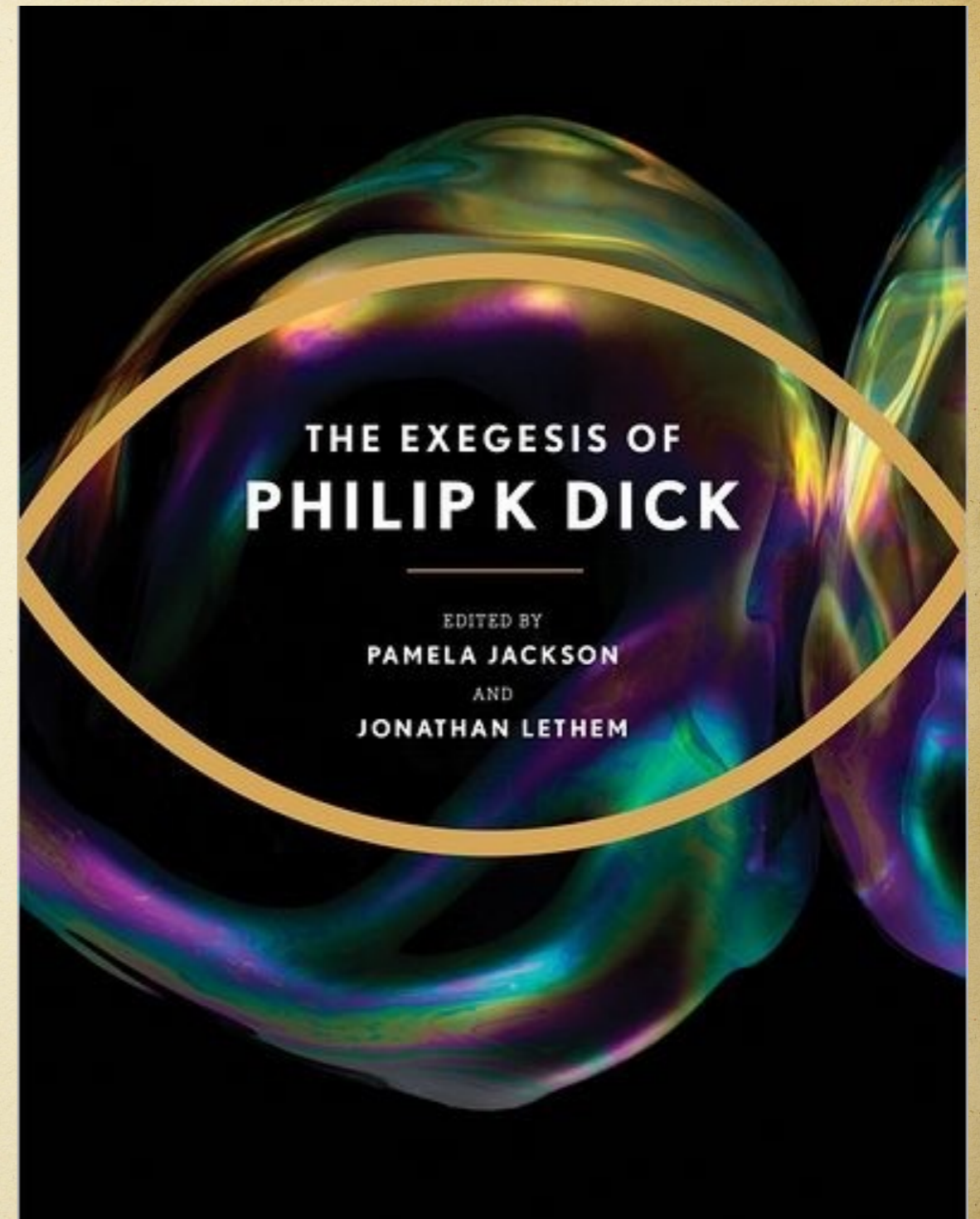


“A Philip K. Dick Moment”
by Robert Jiménez (2012)

- **Last 3 novels** (about the events of those months) written before he died 8 years later.
- Typed and scrawled ~8,000 pages of private journal entries (now known as *The Exegesis*) in an attempt to recover the meanings of those events.



- If Dick had been living in a previous era, he would certainly have framed VALIS in traditional religious terms (“God”).
- Instead of writing three sci-fi novels to explain his experience, he would have channeled another religious scripture or written a commentary of NT/Torah/Upanishads, etc.



Summarizing Philip K. Dick's Conclusions

- The sacred:
 - *manifests* itself in all the religions,
 - yet *overflows* each of them.
- Transcendent truths: scattered throughout space and time
- Revelation: falls fundamentally *outside & beyond* the rules and boundaries of human reason

Summarizing Philip K. Dick's Conclusions

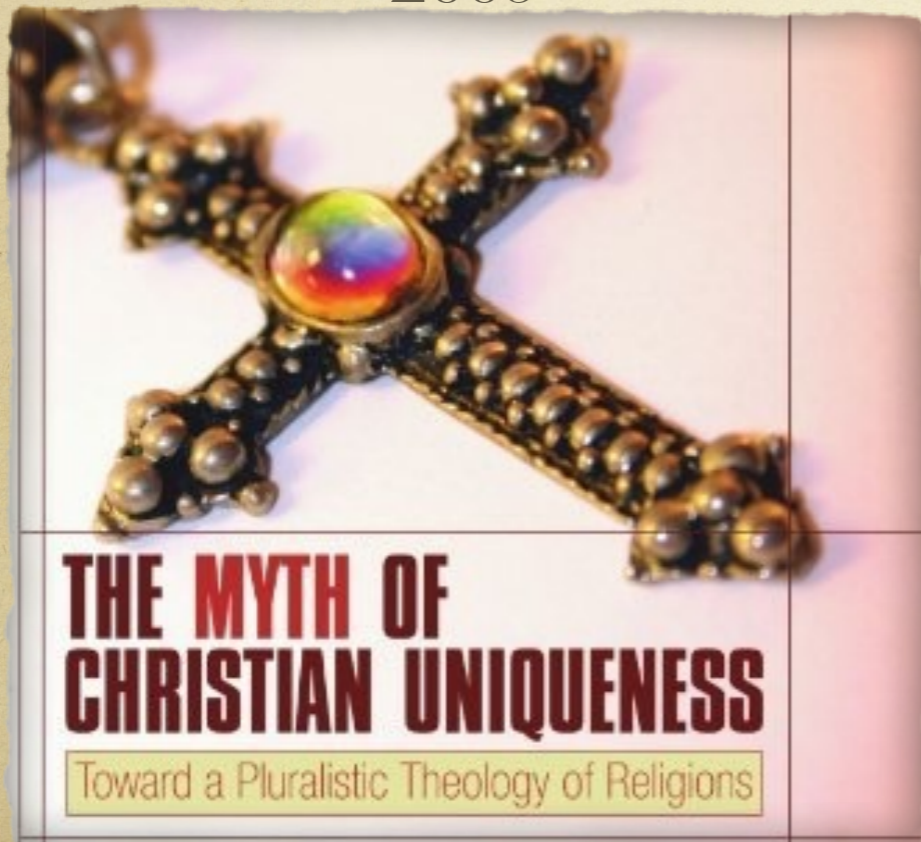
Kripal

- Sameness of the religions: resides primarily in their *functions*,
- Differences of the religions: content, teachings, or final states of salvation,

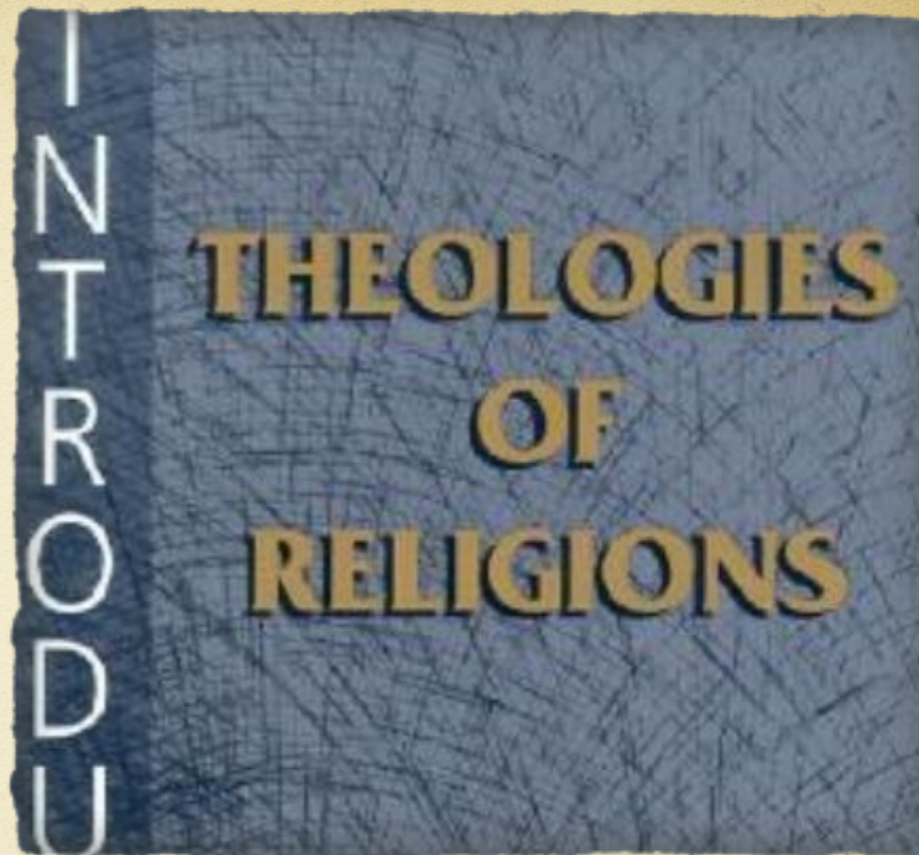
PAUL F. KNITTER

Without
BUDDHA
I Could not be a
CHRISTIAN

2009



1987, ed. w/ John Hick



2002

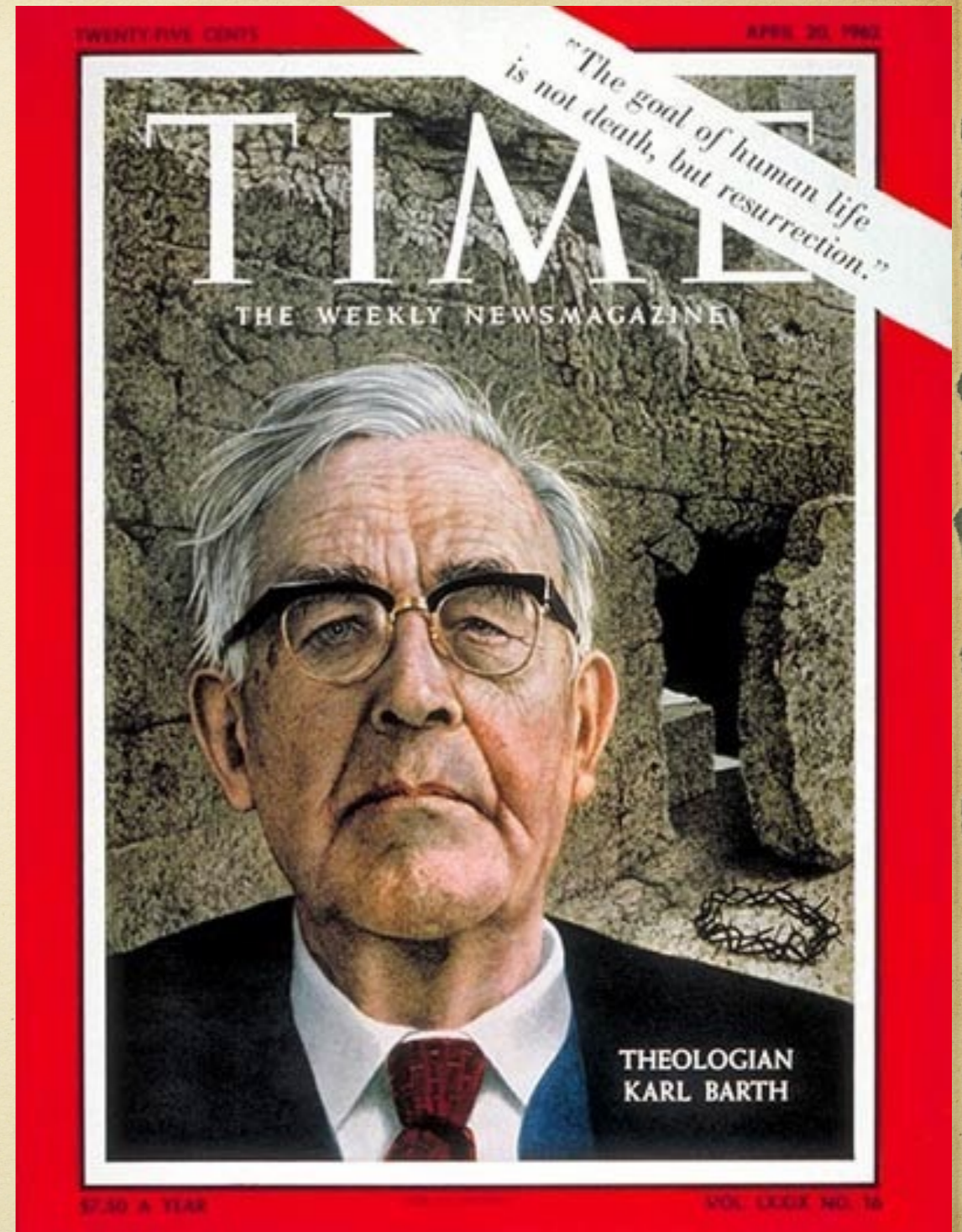


I: Exclusivism

“Christian religion is true, because it has pleased God, who alone can be the judge in this matter, to affirm it to be the true religion...it alone has the commission and the authority to be a missionary religion, i.e., to confront the world of religion, with absolute self-confidence to invite and challenge it to abandon its ways and to start on the Christian way.”

[James Freeman Clarke: “the leadership of Jesus”]

John Hick: “The sublime bigotry of Barth.”



cover: Apr. 20, 1962
(1886-1968)

Exclusivism

- **Replacement** (“*Only One True Religion*”) — or, “Jesus loves me, and he hates you, unless you convert.”

- “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

- “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” (John 14:6)

- Speaking *intra*-community (“Best father in the whole world,” and *subjectively*, “My spouse is the most beautiful person in the world.”)

II: Inclusivism

- **Fulfillment** (“*The One Fulfills the Many*”) — or, “Jesus loves me, and he loves you...even if you don't know it.”

- Karl Rahner: “anonymous Christian”

- Vatican II: “God has been present to and making God’s self known to the Hindu long before the missionary arrives.”

- Critique: Why not “anonymous Buddhist” instead?!



(Vatican II, 1962-1965)

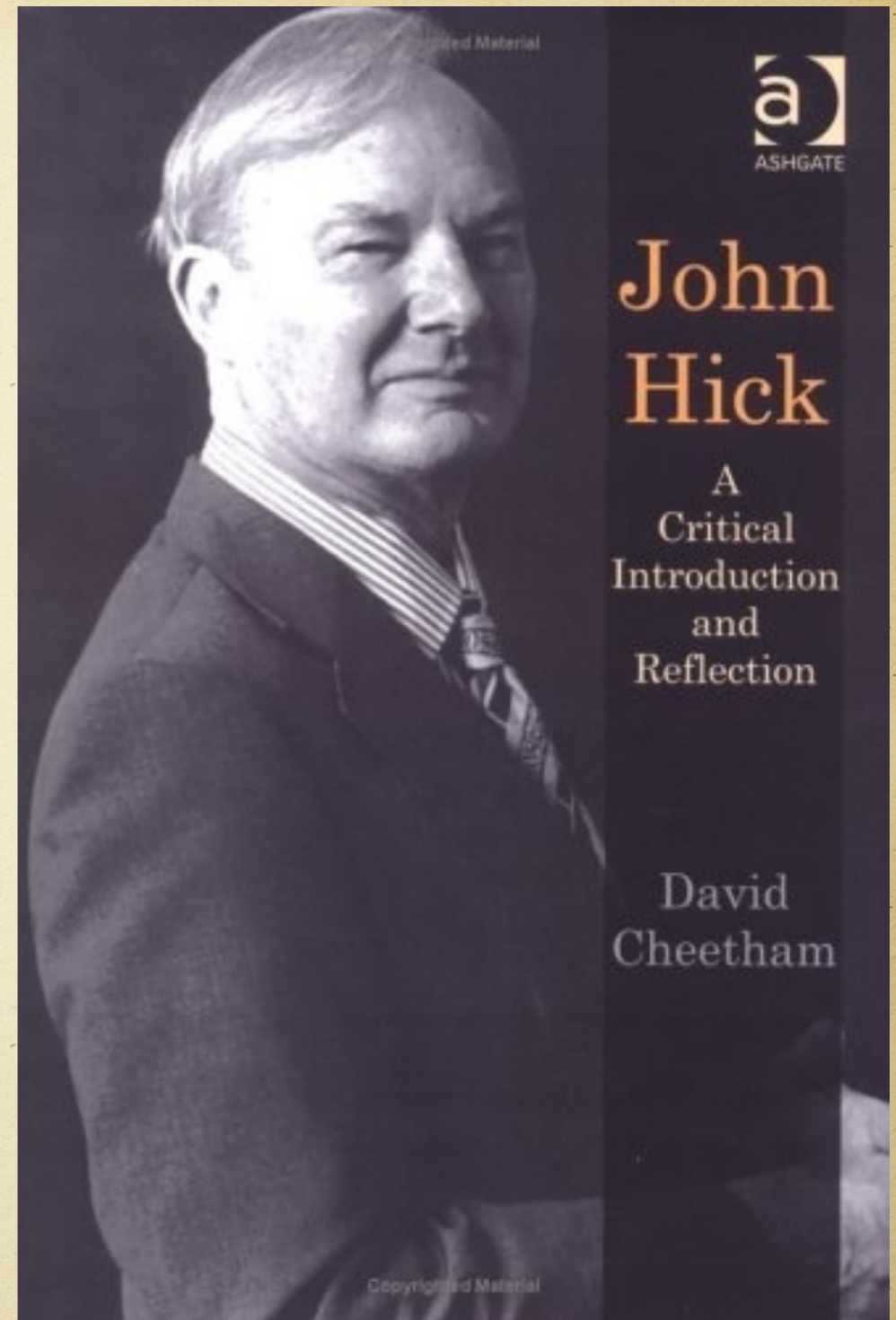
III: Pluralism

- **Mutuality** (“Many Religious Paths up the Same Mountain of Salvation”) — or, “Buddha/Brahmin/YHWH/Allah all want us to love one another right now.”

- Hick: “Copernican Revolution in Religion”

- Borg: *Seriously*, not literally (metaphor, sacramental, poetry, etc.)

- No religion can deliver the full and final truth



John Hick
(1922-2012)

Reaction to Pluralists

- *Dominus Iesus* (“The Lord Jesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church”)

- Declaration by the “Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith” (*formerly known as the “Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition”*)

- signed by then Prefect, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI,

- Approved by Pope John Paul (2000)



Pope Benedict XVI (2005-2013)

Competing Visions

aggiornamento: “a bringing up to date”

ressourcement (“return to earlier sources, traditions and symbols”)

Social Justice: moral insistence on being treated the same

[Kripal: “universal comparative practice that despite differences, everyone should be treated the same by society’s public, legal, and political institutions, regardless of religious/ethnic/gender/sexuality”]



Same Text Used for Many Different Purposes

- Many sincere Protestant Christians in the U.S. assumed that the Bible was on their side in the 19th-century debate over slavery.

- **1886:** Pope Pious IX said, “It is *not* contrary to the natural and divine law for a slave to be sold, bought, exchanged or given.”

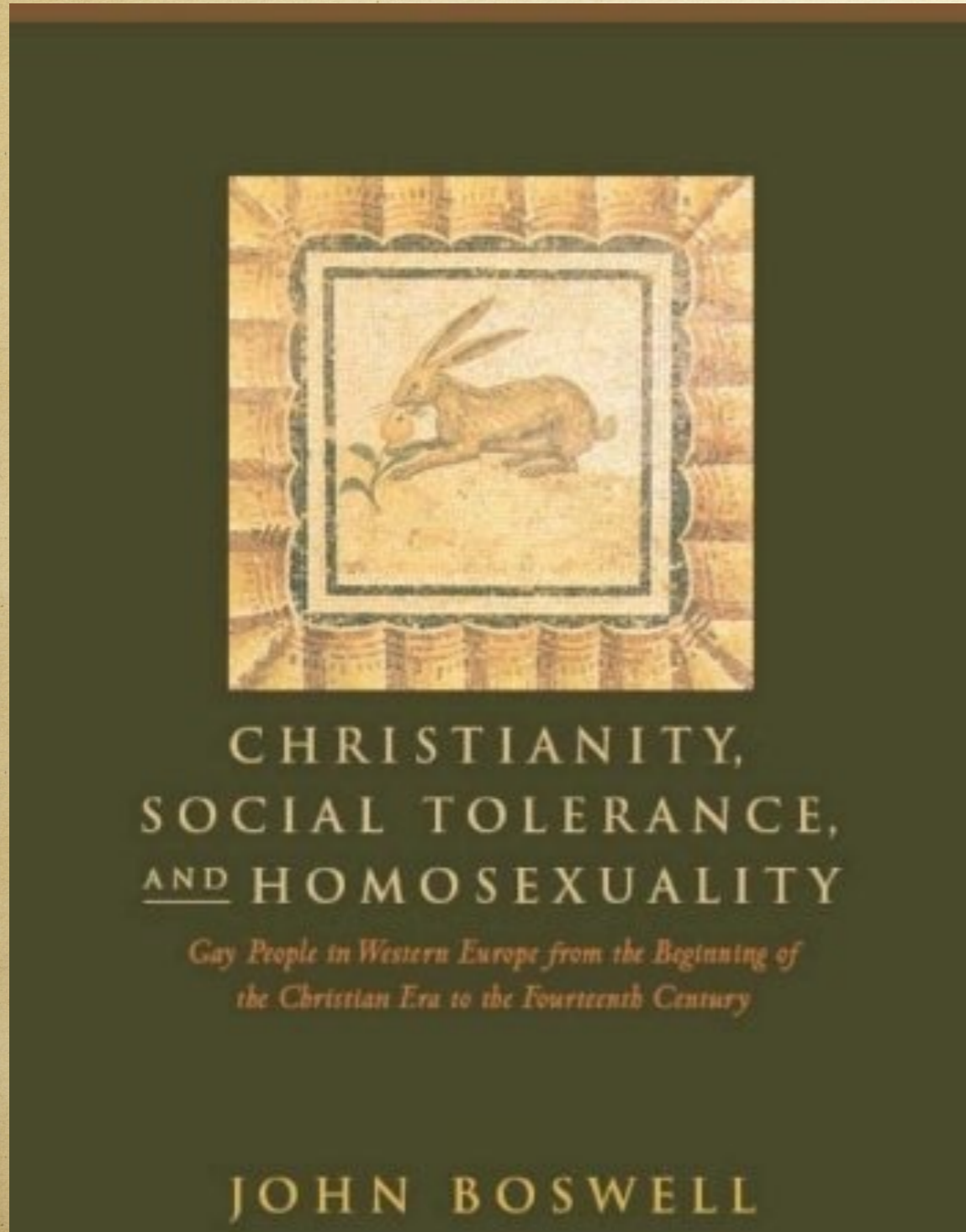
- Parallels in Qur’an: female slaves as “property,” and owner as having legal right to have sex with her.

brandeis.edu/projects/fse/conferences/beyond-slavery/videos/mende-nazer

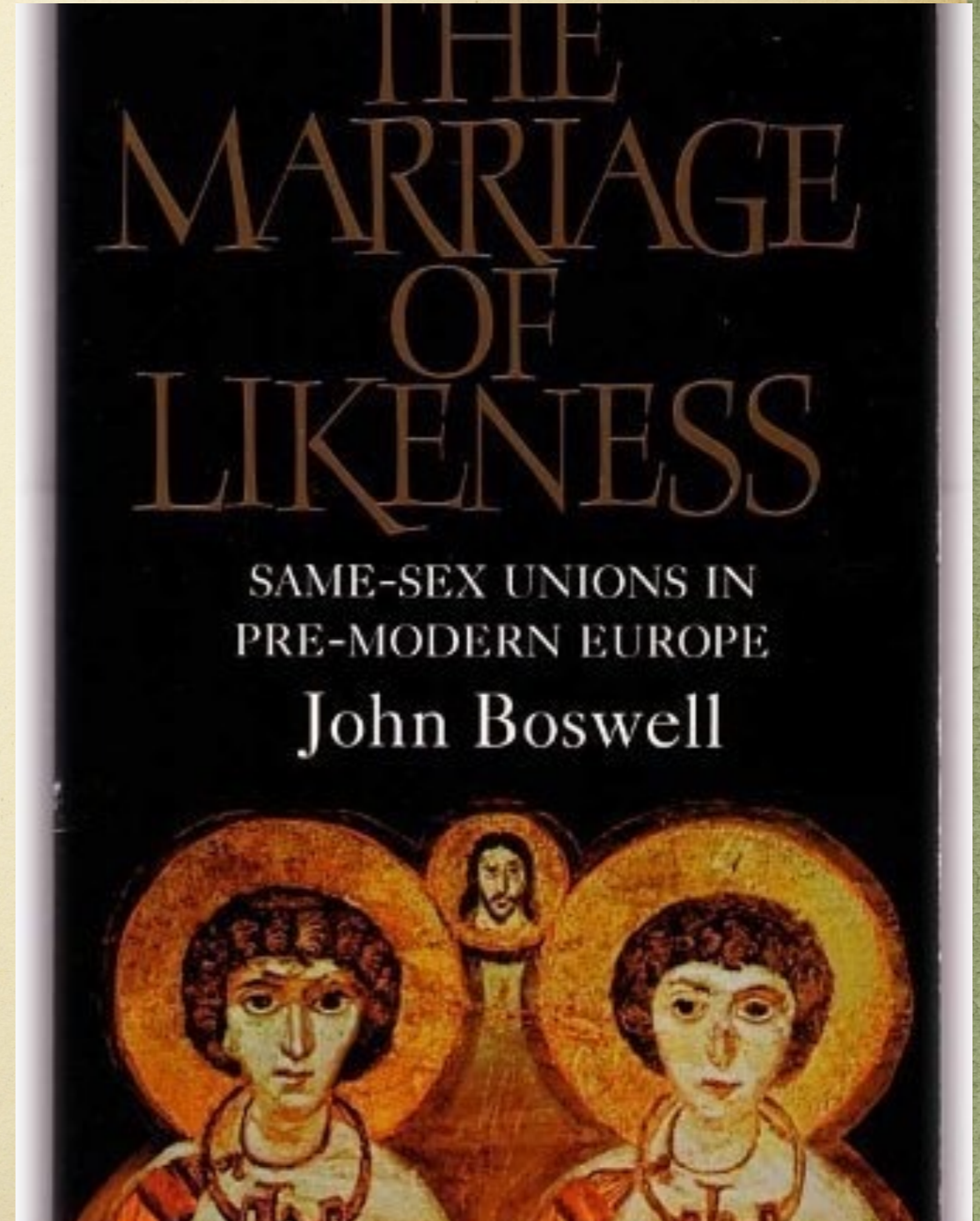
The devil can cite
Scripture for
his purpose.

William Shakespeare

Christianity *not* particularly concerned about
“homosexuality until c. 12th c.



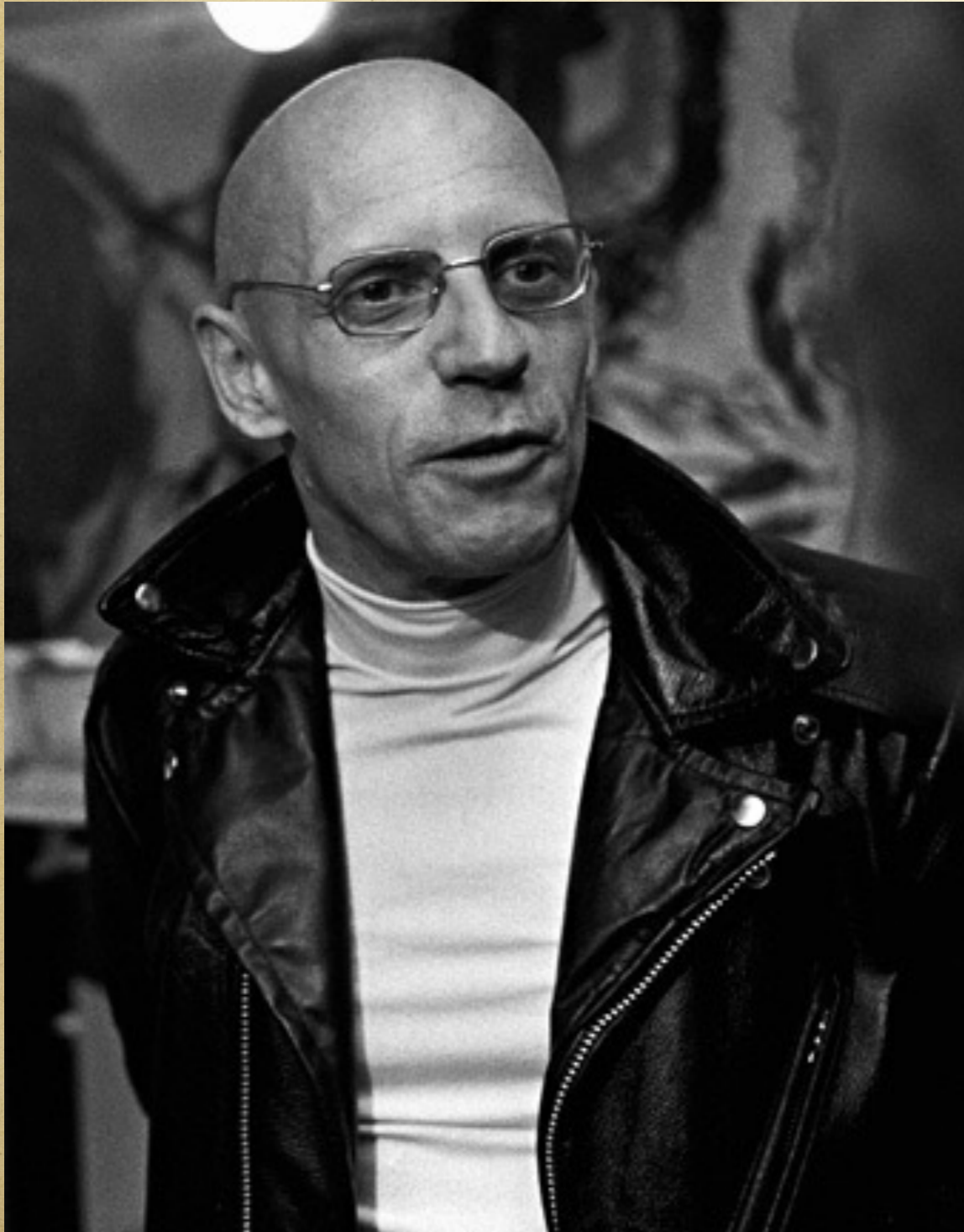
1980



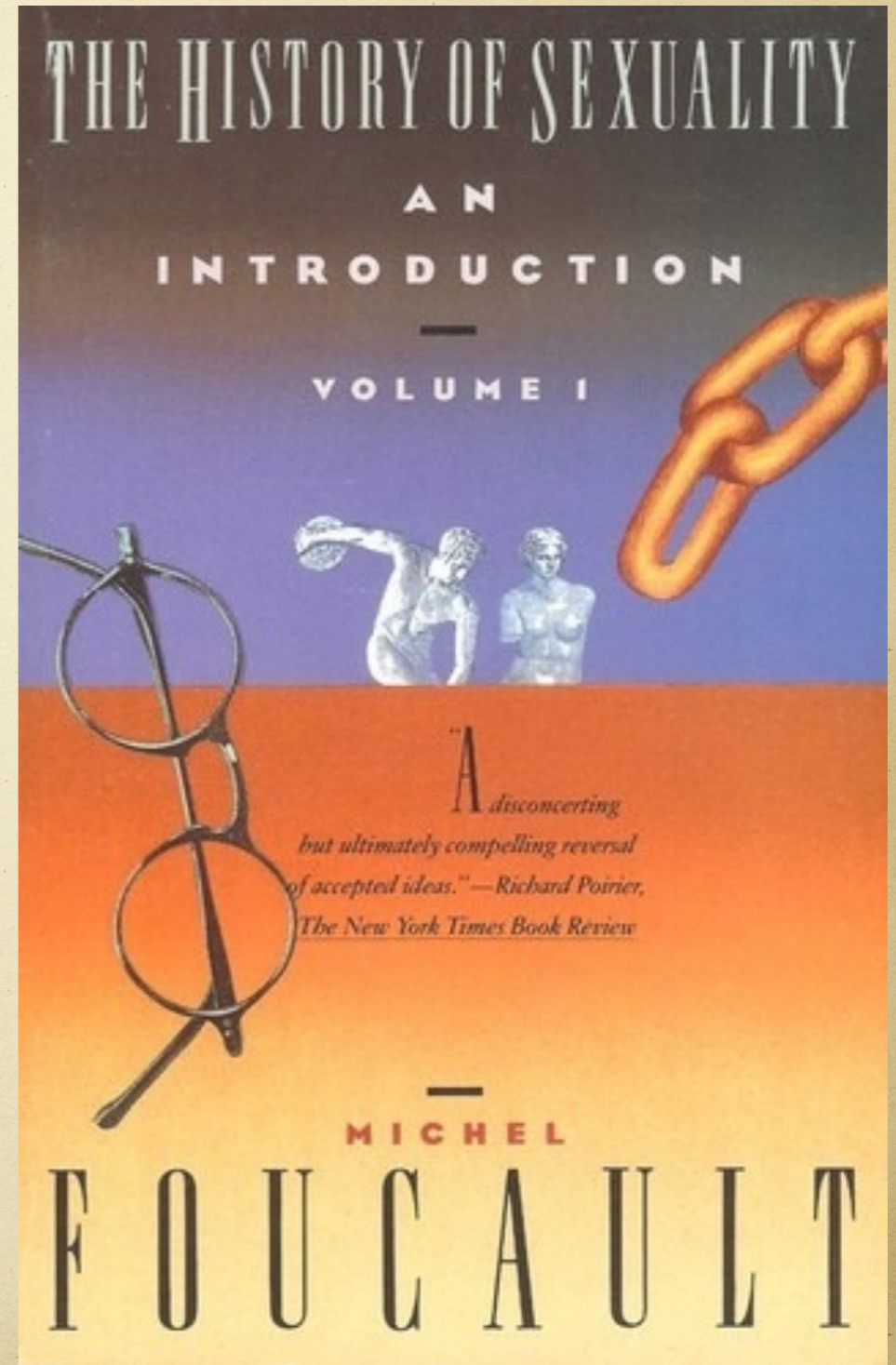
1994

Power/Knowledge:

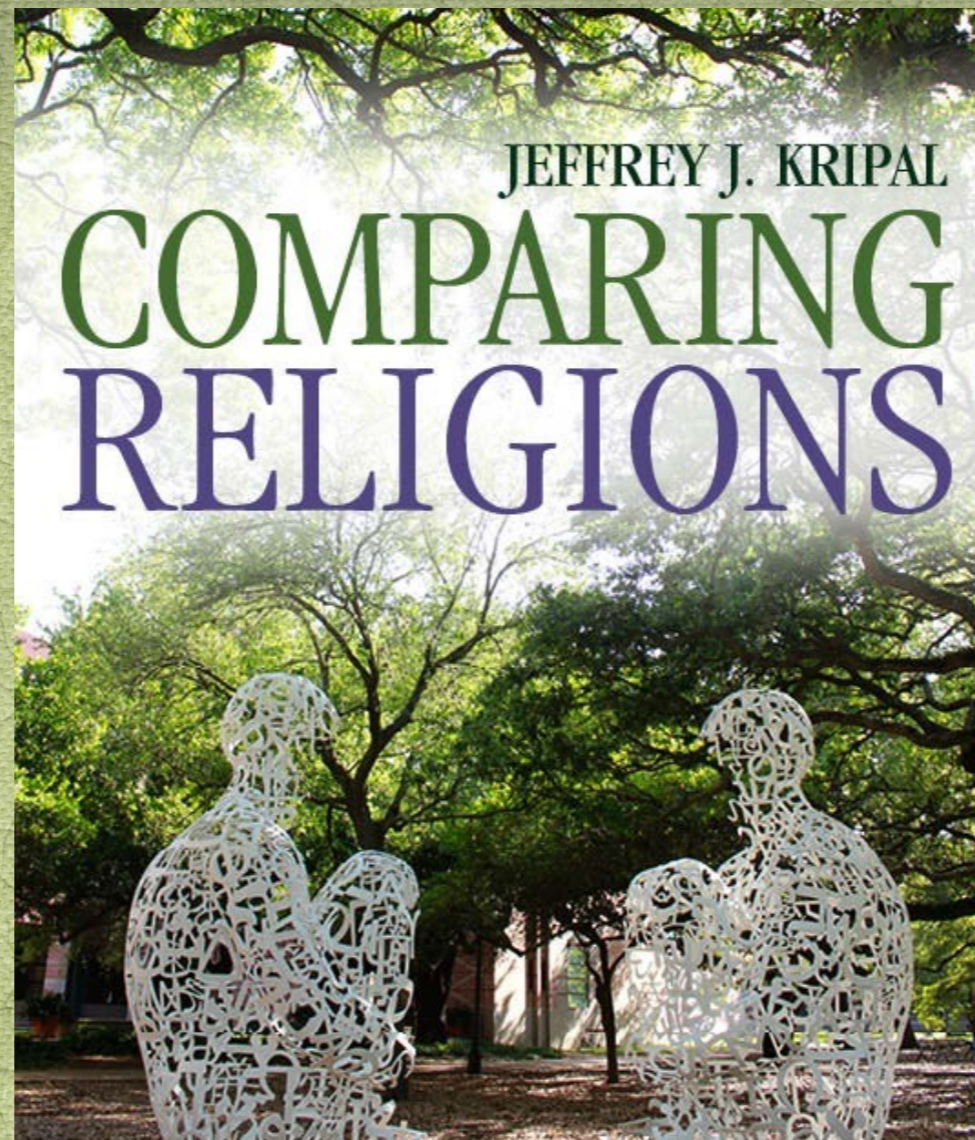
“Same-sex acts” vs. “Homosexuality”



1926-1984



1976



Chapter 11,

“Rational Re-readings”

Masters of Suspicious, Classical and Contemporary

David Hume

- “If we take in hand any volume of divinity, or school metaphysics, for instance, let us ask:
- Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No.
- Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No.
- Commit it then to the flames; for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.”

—*Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748)



(1711-1776)

Reductionism

- “There is no gap”: explanation of religious phenomena as the effects of some deeper, more basic non-religious causes, processes, or mechanisms.

- Strong form: entirely natural mechanisms, unequivocal denial of the transcendent or ultimate truth claims of religions as false.

- Moderate form: leaves the door open or avoids the truth questions by focuses on psychological/sociological functions of religion.

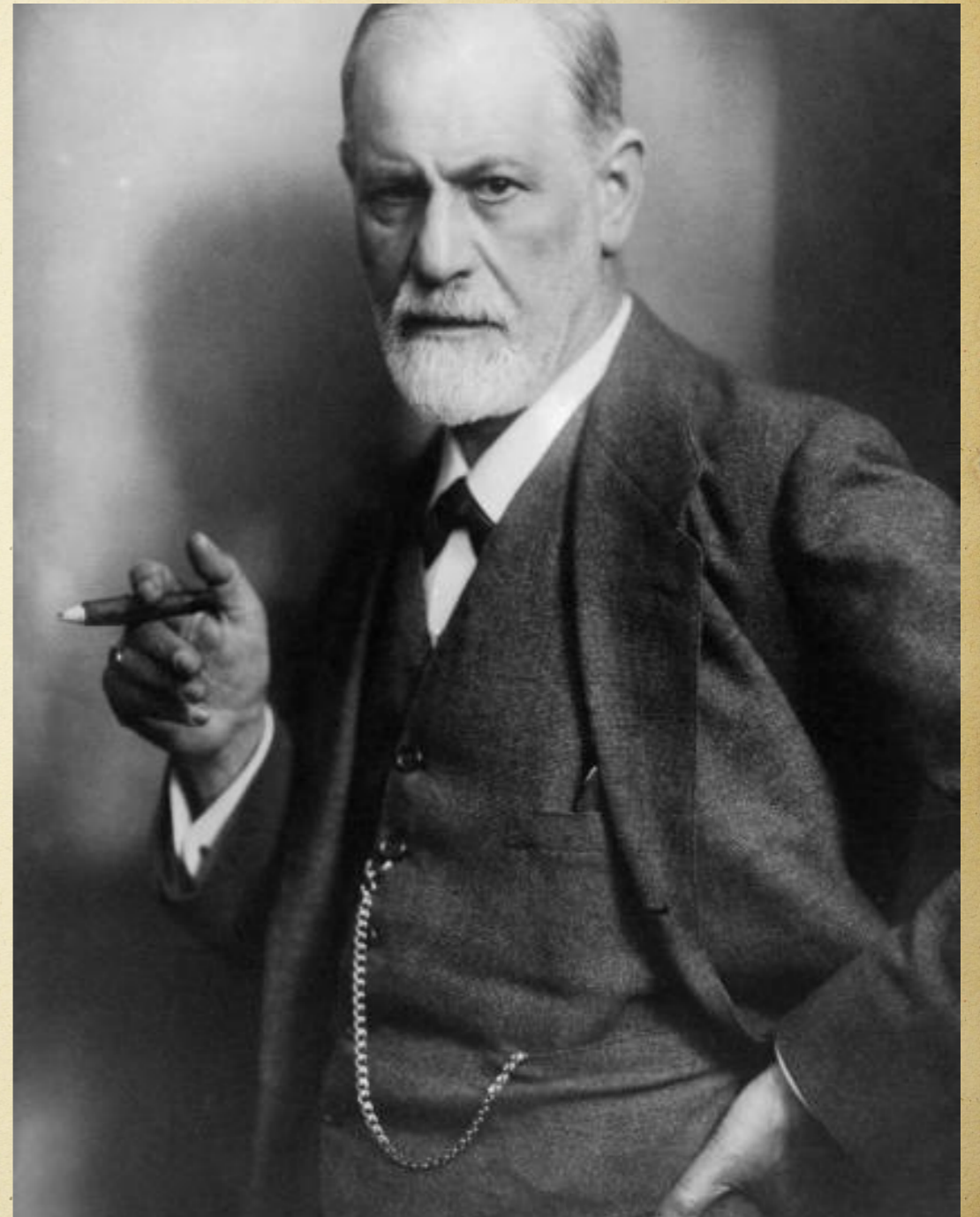
- vs. William James: “The MORE”



Richard Dawkins

Religion as Childish Illusion (Oedipal)

• Buddhist scripture (542 CE): “As the time of his death approaches he sees a bright light.... He sees his (future) father and mother making love, and seeing them a thought crosses his mind, a perversity arises in him. If he is going to be reborn as a man he sees himself making love with his mother and being hindered by his father [or vice-versa]. It is at that moment that the Intermediate Existence is destroyed and life and consciousness arise and causality begins once more to work.” *[Not just Western]*



Sigmund Freud
(1856-1939)

Sublimation

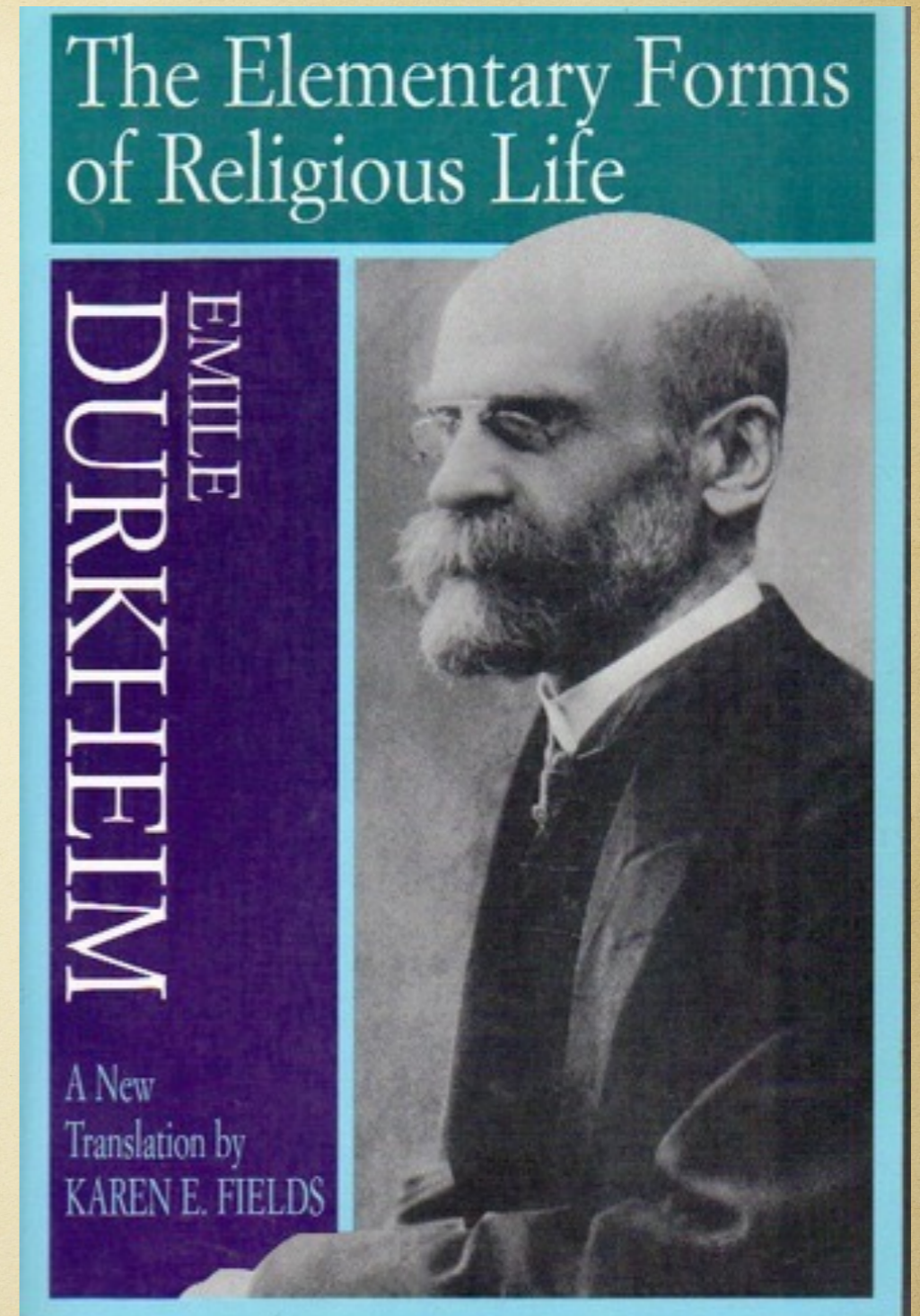
- Libidinal energies are diverted from sexuality into religion, art, literature



“Ecstasy of Saint Teresa of Avila,
by Bernini (1647-1652), Rome

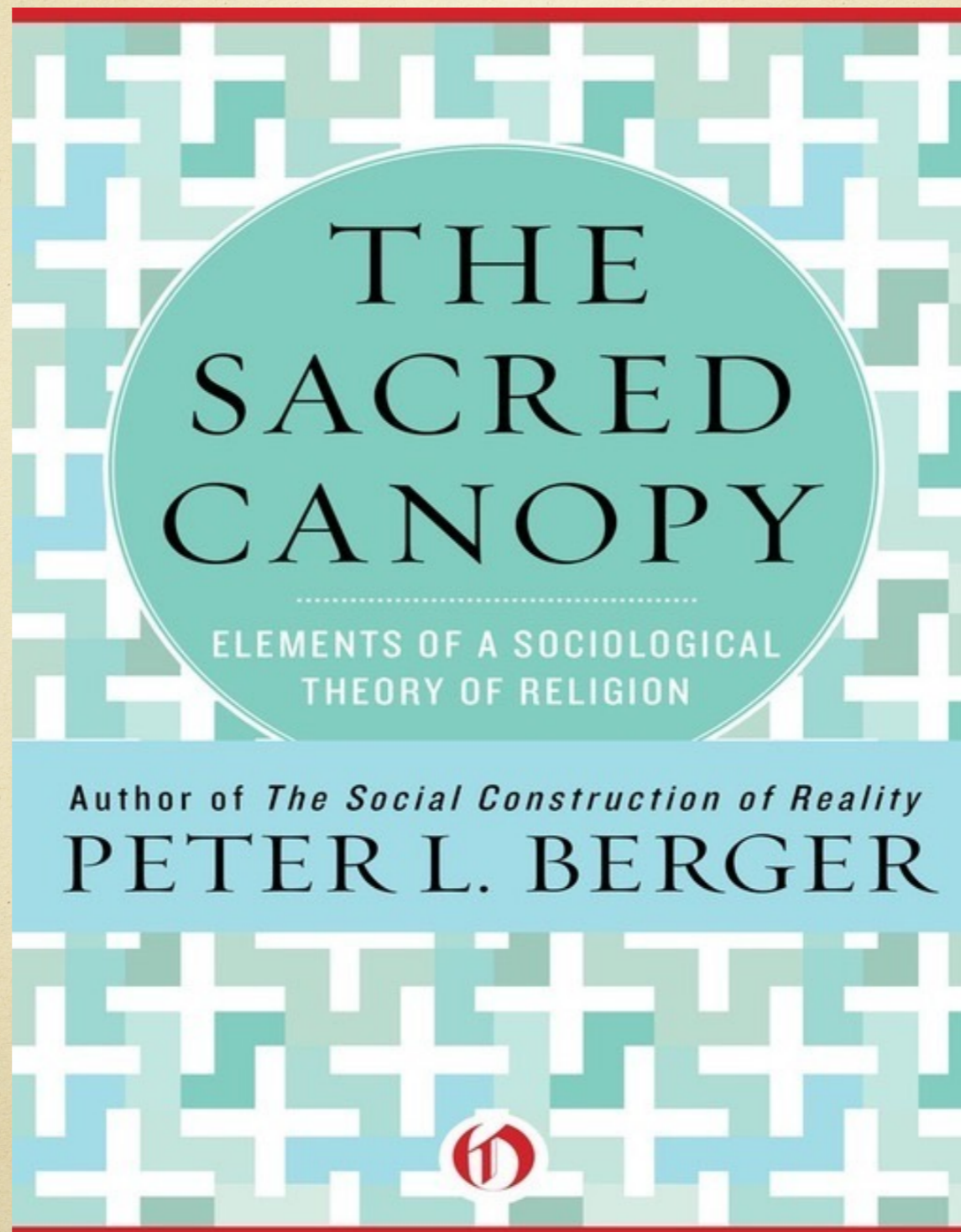
Sociology of Religion

- “Religion is *society worshipping itself*”
- “God is *society writ large*.”
- Humans are bowing down and submitting to their own collective social systems.
- The sacred, the “other,” of ‘the human as two’ is the social.



(1912)

Sociology of Religion



(1967)

**The more the universe seems comprehensible
the more it also seems pointless**

Steven Weinberg, American theoretical physicist (b. 1933)

Negative Examples of New Religious Movements

- 918 people died by religious suicide by drinking a cyanide-laced fruit drink in Jonestown, Guyana,
- under the inspiration of the Christian Jim Jones and his People's Temple movement.



1978

Negative Examples of New Religious Movements

- 76 members of the Branch Davidians (a splinter group of the Seventh-Day Adventists), under the leadership of David Koresh in Waco, TX,
 - died in a fire at the end of a 51-day siege by the U.S. government.



1993

Negative Examples of New Religious Movements

- Followers of the elective Japanese Buddhist-Hindu movement known as Aum Shinrikyo used a biological weapon, sarin gas, killing 12 and injuring thousands in a Tokyo subway.



1995

Negative Examples of New Religious Movements

39 members of a UFO religion called Heaven's Gate died by suicide in the hope of joining a spacecraft that they believed was following the Hale-Bopp comet, which was then approaching earth.

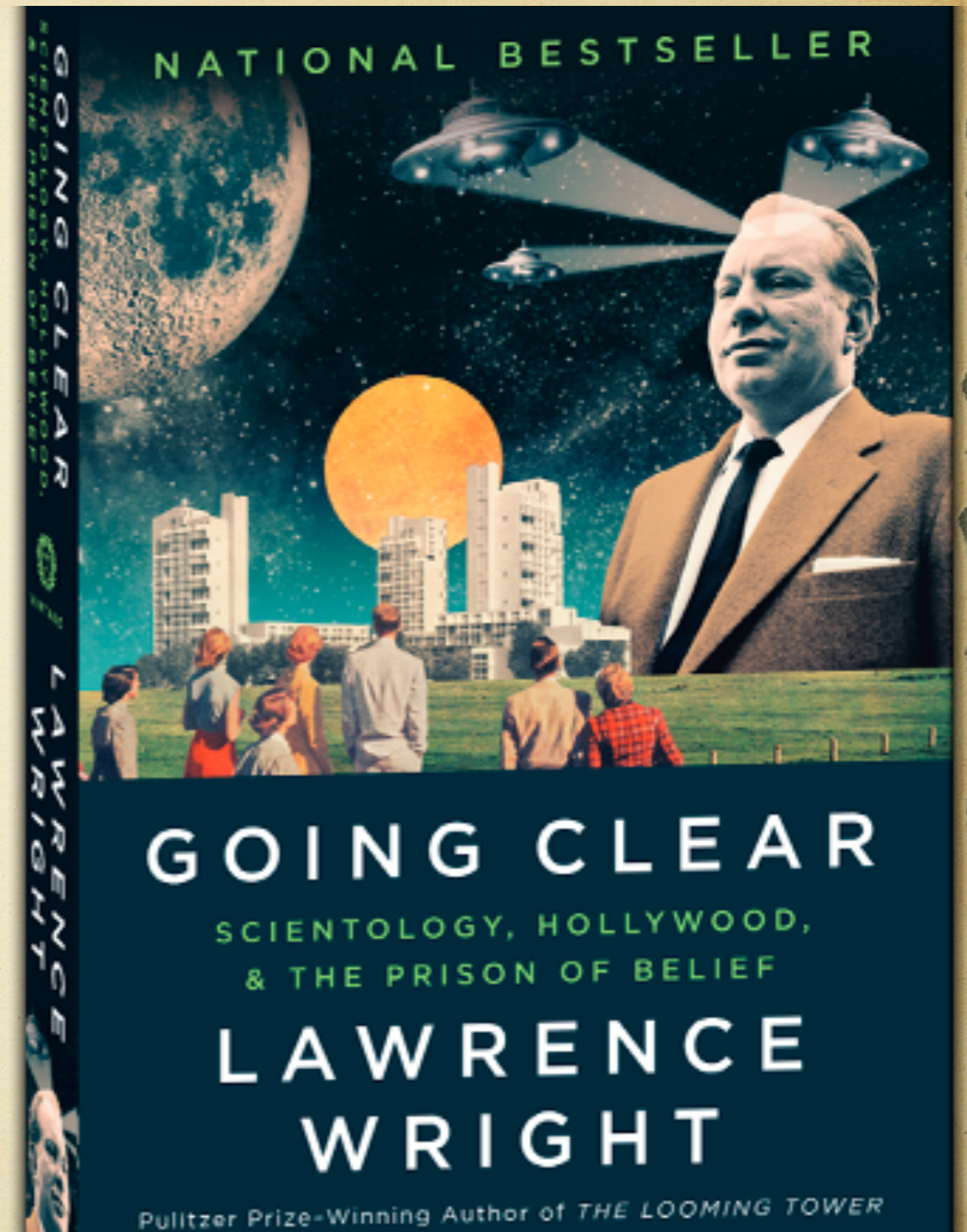
Two charismatic founders, Marshall Applewhite and Bonnie Nettles, taught they were extraterrestrial "walk-ins," aliens in human form.



1997

“From a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, based on more than 200 personal interviews with current and former Scientologists—both famous and less well known—and years of archival research.

Wright uses his extraordinary investigative ability to uncover for us the inner workings of the Church of Scientology — including the darkly brilliant science-fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard, who invented a new religion. And his successor, David Miscavige.



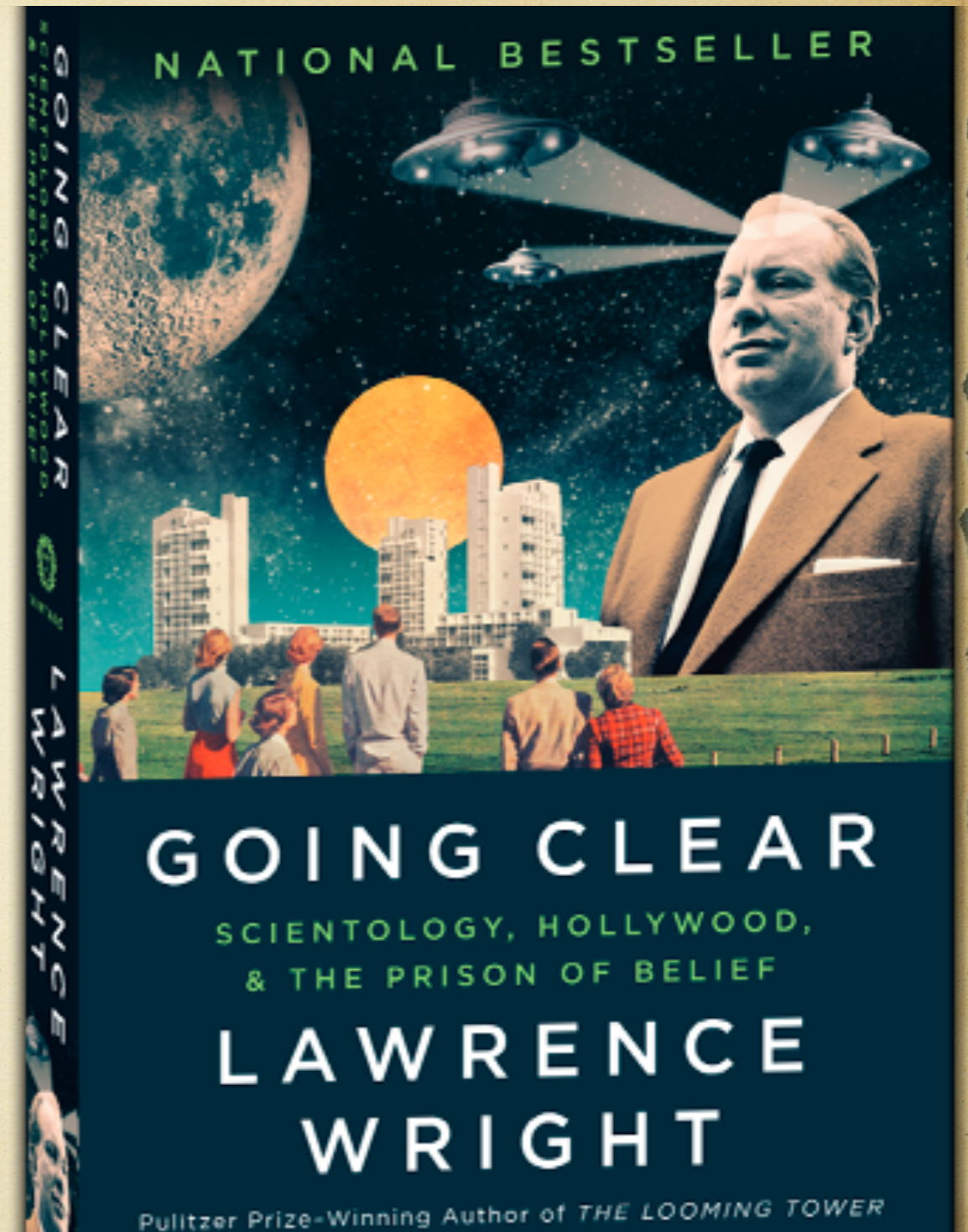
2013

Learn about Scientology's complicated cosmology and special language.

See the ways in which the church pursues celebrities, such as Tom Cruise and John Travolta, and how such stars are used to advance the church's goals.

Meet the young idealists who have joined the Sea Org, the church's clergy, signing up with a billion-year contract.

Whether Scientology deserves constitutional protection as a religion.



2013

Our Lady of Perpetual Exemption

Legally recognized church in the U.S.,
established by comedian and satirist
John Oliver.

Expose and ridicule televangelists
who preach the "prosperity gospel" to
defraud victims of their money,

Greater attention to issue of tax-
exempt status for religious charities
w/ little oversight by government.

Donations forwarded to Doctors
Without Borders.

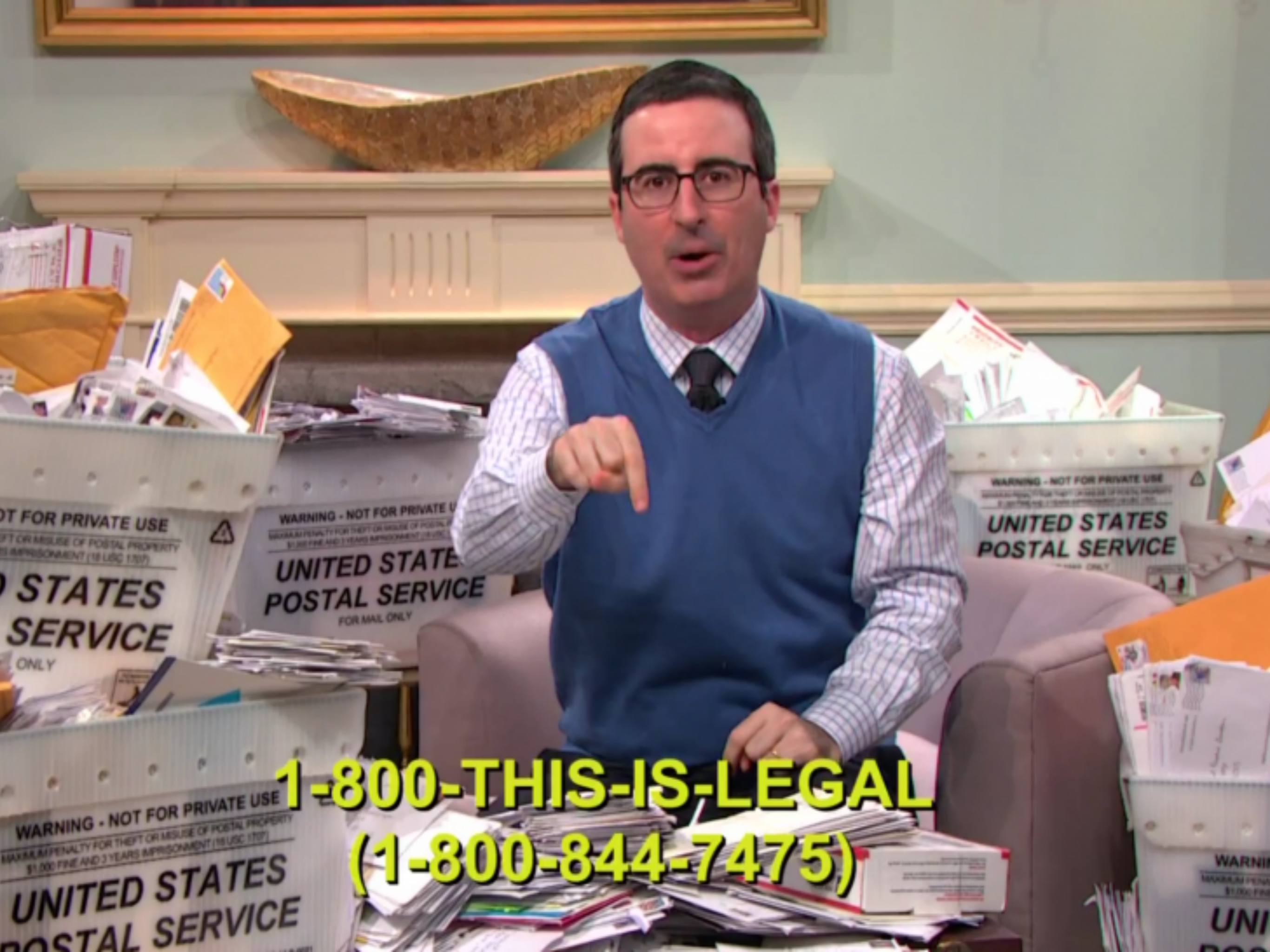
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?
v=7y1xJAVZxXg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7y1xJAVZxXg)

When John Oliver found out that Robert Tilton, Kenneth Copeland and other pastors of their ilk have been taking advantage of the open-ended IRS definition of the word "church" and procuring a litany of tax breaks, he founded the Our Lady of Perpetual Exemption Church, a tax-exempt organization that you certainly can't say is not a church. From that day forward, he has been dedicated to collecting copious donations and all manner of divine blessings, but mainly the donations.



*Our church services are
Sunday evenings at 7 PM,
CBS studios, New York, NY*

2015



**1-800-THIS-IS-LEGAL
(1-800-844-7475)**



Our Lady of Perpetual Exemption

DONATE NOW!

Lo, true believer, the hour of donating to Pastor, Megareverend, and CEO John Oliver's Our Lady of Perpetual Exemption Church is at hand! Can you feel the spirit stirring within you? Specifically, the spirit of tax-exempt monetary compensation?

If so, please send check, cash or money orders only to:

*Our Lady of Perpetual Exemption
PO Box 1954
New York, NY 10113*

Praise Be Unto You

September 13, 2015

*It is I, Megareverend and C.E.O. of Our Lady of Perpetual Exemption Church,
Pastor John Oliver.*

*We thank you for all your kind donations, but I'm sorry to report that we have
closed down the church. And let me take a moment to explain why - it's certainly
not because we have to.*

*We have still, miraculously, not broken any laws by promising you untold riches
in return for sending us money. We're also not closing down because you all kept
sending us actual seeds, even though we explicitly told you not to. We're closing
because multiple people sent us sperm through the mail. And when someone
sends you jizz through the mail, it's time to stop whatever you're doing.*

*So we are shutting this s**t down. Praise be!*

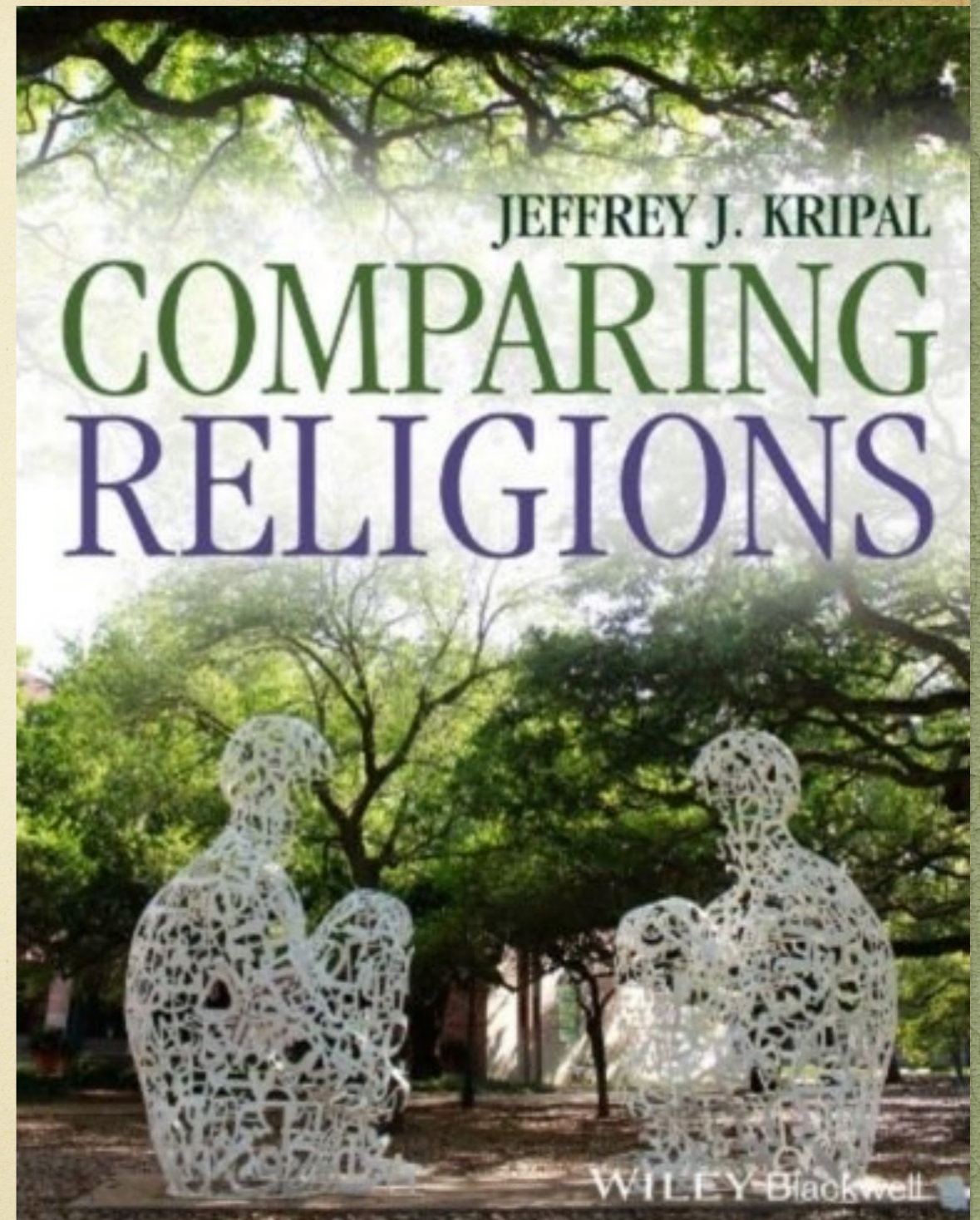


Worldviews

- Conservative/Closed: insists on *sameness*

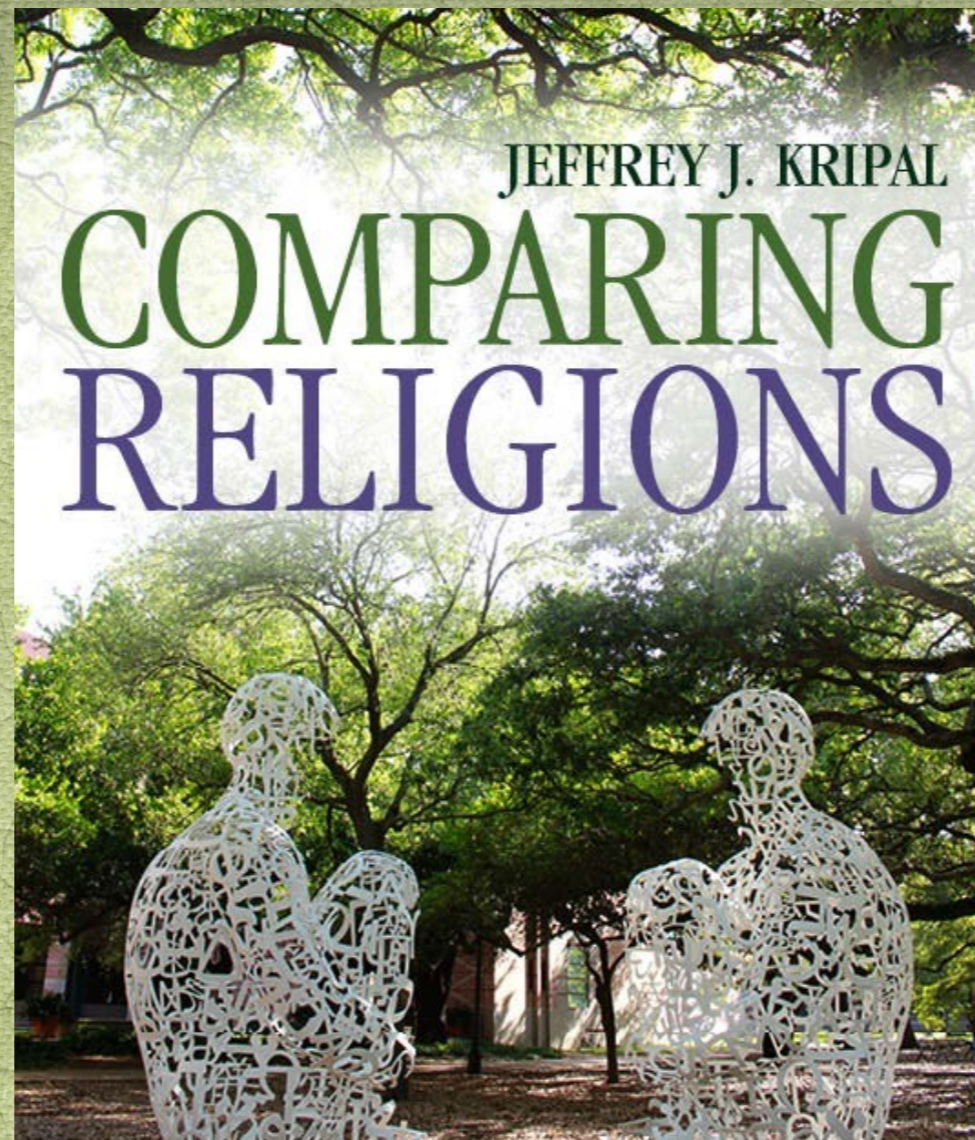
- Liberal/Open: insists on both *sameness* (human equality & equal rights) and *radical difference* (religious liberty & autonomous moral agency)

- Kripal: put most provocatively, comparison done badly and comparison done well.



Kripal's Tough Questions

- How is the statement “A Buddhist is going to hell” or “Non-Muslims are infidels” any different from “Blacks are inferior?” Are not all three forms of bigotry and ignorance?
- What is your community's position on mixed marriages between two different faith traditions? *[see Susan Katz Miller's book Being Both]*
- Can a person who adopts a pluralistic position really be tolerant of all other worldviews? Can one tolerate intolerance?
- How is human evolution related to religion?
- What do you do with the observation that two of the most common professional occupations of fundamentalist leaders around the world have been engineering and computer programming?



What has resonated most
with you about this course?

How do you now see/approach religion differently?

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