Crisis Of Conscience

The struggle between loyalty to God and loyalty to one’s religion

A penetrating view of a religion’s supreme council and their dramatic power over human lives

by Raymond Franz, former member of the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses

Fourth Edition—Revised and Updated
Synopsis

The tendency of religious authority to seek to dominate rather than serve, and the struggle of those who wish to prevent the erosion of their God-given freedom of conscience -- these form the heart of the very personal and candid account in Crisis of Conscience. The scene of struggle is within the membership of a distinctive religion: Jehovah’s Witnesses. The same fundamental issues that mark this account, however, could arise within any of the world’s religions. Starting in the 1870’s as an independent Bible study group composed of a handful of persons in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Jehovah’s Witnesses today number more than five million in some 200 lands. When their publishing agency, the Watch Tower Society, puts out a new book, the normal initial printing is one million copies, with other millions following. In countries where they are active, few people have not had contact with the Witnesses as a result of their intense door-to-door activity.

Book Information

Paperback: 447 pages
Publisher: Commentary Press; 4 edition (May 1, 2002)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 0914675230
Product Dimensions: 9 x 6.1 x 1.3 inches
Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds
Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars (See all reviews (125 customer reviews)

Customer Reviews

About 12 years ago I considered myself the "cult-buster." In my young mind I could, armed with proof-texts, shoot down any cult member, especially Jehovah’s Witnesses. Unfortunately I was just as rigid and legalistic as the Jehovah’s Witnesses I would witness to. Actually most of them were less chained to their ideology than I was. Unfortunately, many books that reach out to Jehovah’s witnesses are written by conservative JW’s turned conservative Baptist, who take a different doctrinal stance, but still do not shed the notion that only "Only I and those Christians like me have
the truth." Franz, on the contrary, offers a more balanced appraisal. Unlike other books written by
former JWs, Franz seems more saddened than angry, and his tone reflects this. This style displays
his personality, which was in constant conflict with the Watchtower's rigid leadership. Franz does not
detail doctrinal problems with the Watchtower. Franz most likely holds to many of his old
Watchtower doctrines. The Watchtower does have doctrinal problems when compared with the
beliefs commonly held by the Church throughout Christian history. In fact the Watchtower is in my
opinion just another apocalyptic group founded in the mid-late 1800s. However, Franz is not
concerned with issues like the Trinity or Christ's divinity. He is more concerned with what makes a
group truly a cult, which is control by the leaders over its members. Franz details this marvelously,
and explains how the Watchtower even monitored its members bedroom activities. He speaks of
disfellowshippings where families were encouraged to "shun" other members who had been kicked
out of the Watchtower, effectively ruining the lives of thousands people.

Lord Acton said that power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Raymond
Franz describes the descent of the Jehovah's Witness organization from its origins as a group of
earnest Bible students, disatisfied with the smug status quo of religion in their day, to an absolutely
corrupt spiritual regime. Raymond Franz was in the ideal place to observe the inner workings of the
highests levels of decision-making in Jehovah's Witnesses Watchtower Bible & Tract Society. His
account is detailed, careful, and to non-members of the group, perhaps ultimately unsurprising.
Governing Body members often made quick personnel decisions, without personal knowledge of
who they were appointing. They made doctrinal decisions based on consensus, often with little
discussion of Scriptural or historical precedents. Sometimes principles were applied unevenly.
There were power-struggles--often justified by Scripture in a manner that suited the moment. Most
religious adherents would admit that such unpleasantries happen in their religious organizations
from time to time. "After all," they might say, "we are a broken people struggling to do spiritual work."
However, Jehovah's Witnesses claim to be the only true messengers of God--and that message is
composed from the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society. Adherents place total trust in what is said to
be "Jehovah's Organization." Therefore, for a Jehovah's Witness to read that the difficulties,
compromises, and personality disorders that plague other religious groups are just as prevalent in
their own comes as quite revelation. The failures are all the more troublesome, in that the religion is
authoritarian and hierarchical. This is an important work that will keep open-minded, searching
Jehovah's Witness captivated.

Download to continue reading...

Dmca