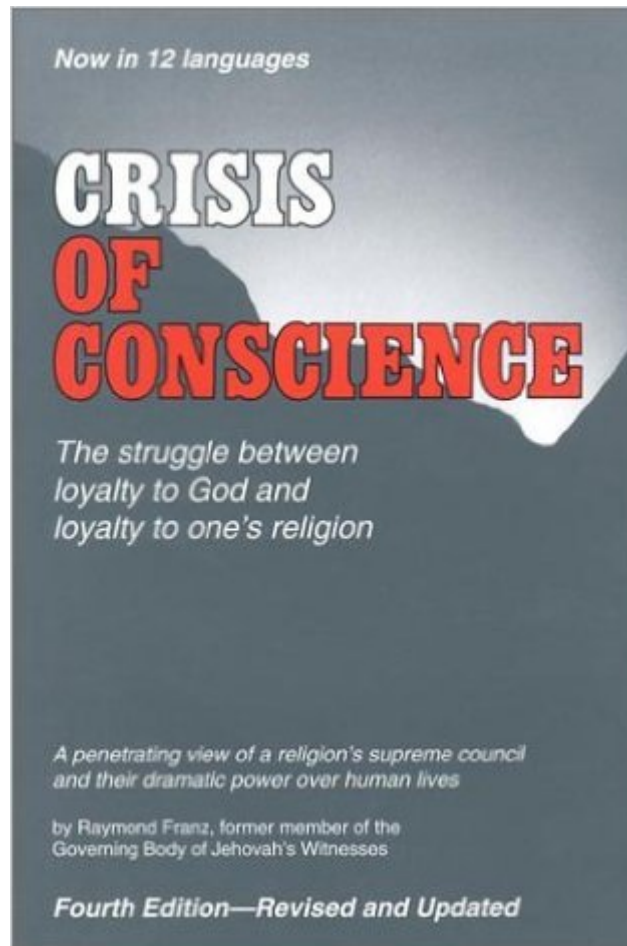


The book was found

Crisis Of Conscience



Synopsis

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. Product Identifiers

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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 JWs 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 JW's, 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, dissatisfied 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 highest 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 unpleasanties 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.

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