



The Religion

Nicholas Condé

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An acknowledged classic in the horror genre, **THE RELIGION** tells the story of a Professor of Anthropology who relocates with his young son to New York City after the accidental death of his wife, and the way father and son become unknowingly enmeshed in the ongoing practice of Voodoo--and other voodoo-based cults--that survive in some of the city's communities. Suggested by carefully researched material, including police files and newspaper archives, the book supposes the continuing practice of human sacrifice for the purpose--as in ancient beliefs--of averting the wrath of divine forces, perhaps even to avert the end of civilization. Embracing the story of a father's love for his endangered young son, as well as a man's needful quest to find happiness again after a personal tragedy, **THE RELIGION** makes real what many must think impossible. It is not, however just a suspenseful story, nor merely a gripping emotional experience, but an informative examination of the primitive urges in Mankind that give rise to beliefs that can be at times sacred and holy, and at other times, misguided and profane. The book was adapted into the movie "The Believers" starring Martin Sheen, and directed by the renowned English director John Schlesinger, but as only a book can do, it delves much deeper into the history, and detail of the contemporary practice of Voodoo than is possible in the film.

The Religion Details

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George K. says

"Οι δαίμονισμοί", εκδόσεις Bell.

Ενδιαφέρον και καλογραμμώνο θρόνον τρέμου, με όλα τα καλόδια και τα κλισέ του εδους του και της δεκαετίας που γράφτηκε. Αν σας λείπει κάτι ο τρέλος στ'αγγλικά (The Believers), είναι πως επειδή έχετε δει την ταινία του 1987, σε σκηνοθεσία John Schlesinger και με πρωταγωνιστή τον Martin Sheen, η οποία βασίζεται στο βιβλίο αυτό. Βέβαια βλέπω τι έχουν κποιες σημαντικές διαφορές, όμως το γενικό πλαίσιο είναι ίδιο. Κάποια στιγμή θα ψέω να βρω την ταινία.

Βρισκόμαστε στην Νέα Υόρκη, όπου μια σειρά φόνων μικρών παιδιών έχουν θορυβήσει τις αρχές και τους πολίτες. Κατά τα φαινόμενα, πρόκειται για ανθρωποθυσίες της θρησκείας Βουντό, με σκοπό να ευχαριστηθούν οι Θεοί και να αποφευχθούν μεγάλες συμφορές. Αυτό πιστεύουν οι φανατικοί πιστοί της. Ο ανθρωπολόγος Καλ Τζέμινσον, που θέλει να κάνει μια νέα αρχή μετά τον τραγικό θάνατο της γυναίκας του, μετακομίζει με τον εφτάχρονο γιο του στο Μανχάταν. Μετά από διάφορες συμπτώσεις ακύμα και θετικές επεμβάσεις, ο Καλ θα μπλέξει σε μια επικίνδυνη ιστορία με την μυστηριώδη αυτή θρησκεία και θα καταλάβει τι ο γιος του σίχως να είναι το επόμενο παιδί που θα πρέπει να θυσιάσετε για το καλό της Γης...

Πρόκειται για ένα θρόνον που κινείται με σχετικά αργούς ρυθμούς, με λίγες καλές δυνατές σκηνές, μικρές εκπλήξεις στην πλοκή και αγωνία για το τέλος. Γενικά διαβάζεται πολύ ευχρήιστα και με ενδιαφέρον από την αρχή μέχρι το τέλος, η ατμόσφαιρα είναι αρκεντως σκοτεινή, οι χαρακτήρες αρκετά καλοί σκιαγραφημένοι και ενδιαφέροντες και η γραφή ευκολοδιάβαστη και σύγουρα καλή. Επσης, το τέλος μου φάνηκε αρκετά ανατρεπτικό και υπή μια έννοια συγκλονιστική. Αξίζει να ψέετε το βιβλίο και να το διαβάσετε.

Sarah-Jane Lehoux says

Would have been better if the main character had not been an anthropologist and instead was some other type of academic. Too much of the book was spent thinking that a real anthropologist would not be having the bigoted reactions Cal was having.

Other than that (I'm forgiving the racism due to the year this was written), the pacing was slow but the plot was interesting.

Mike Bevel says

White guy discovers a religion practiced by millions, gets it wrong repeatedly, maybe causes nuclear Armageddon.

Ryan Blanck says

August 2006 -- Monroe Public Library, Monroe, CT -- Horribly and Trashy horror novel. Unlikeable book about Voodoo.

Aaron says

One of the most terrifying novels of our time. Nicholas Conde is a master at creating atmosphere and suspense. You really feel for the good guys and fear the villains, all of which are three dimensional. There are plenty of juicy twists and the ending is a knockout. I also recommend the film based on it called The Believers with Martin Sheen and Helen Shaver.

Derek says

I loved it. A thrilling and scary page turner. The Religion is the story of an anthropologist, Cal Jamison, who gets pulled into dark and frightening activities involving Voodoo and Santeria.

The Religion is a straight forward thriller, but within the narrative Condé subtly and intriguingly explores deeper considerations of family, spirituality, power, ethics, and psychology. However, this book is no more about real Santeria than The Exorcist is about real Catholicism. Santeria is a device, like Catholicism in The Exorcist, that opens myriad fictional possibilities and reaches the reader at a place of deep spiritual fear and uncertainty. It's a simple and common plot device that allows the reader to accept a potentially paranormal world that is validated in a sense by the thousands of active faithful. For me it's irresistibly thrilling when done well, and I think Nicholas Condé did it well.

An unfortunate problem with the story is Cal's cultural insensitivity and ignorance. Normally, this wouldn't be a big deal, most characters aren't perfect and they learn and grow, but Cal is supposed to be an anthropologist! And a professor! His consistent tactless comments are a real distraction. The director of the movie version must have recognized this because in The Believers Cal is not an anthropologist. Despite this, I would not say that the book is culturally insensitive. There is plenty of religious skepticism but also much respect, and Condé puts a lot of effort into demonstrating just how deeply similar so many religions are at many levels.

Despite the flaws, The Religion was tense, thoughtful and hard to put down.

Alexandra Rolo says

Este foi o mais recente livro a ser arrumado numa das prateleiras do quarto. Comprei-o num alfarrabista da Feira do Livro de Lisboa deste ano por me ter parecido interessante. Por vezes gosto de fugir um pouco da fantasia e da FC para me refugiar noutros estilos...

Infelizmente para mim desta vez a coisa não correu bem. Temos então a história de um professor de

antropologia e do seu filho pequeno que se mudam para Nova Iorque após o falecimento da mulher (assassinada por uma torradeira). É pouco depois de chegar à cidade que nota uma alteração de comportamento no seu filho e toma conhecimento da existência de práticas de sacrifícios rituais de animais...

Temos assim uma história que nos leva aos vários tipos de voodoo e práticas de magia na era moderna e um grande mistério. Quem andava a sacrificar crianças e porquê?

A primeira metade do livro é bastante interessante e deixa o leitor curioso. No entanto à medida que a história avança esse interesse começa a ser perdido e o autor começa a empatar um pouco os acontecimentos. A segunda parte poderia ter sido escrita em metade das páginas que ocupa que não se perderia nada de importante.

Foi assim um livro que me desapontou pois esperava algo mais interessante.

in: <http://folhaembranco.blogs.sapo.pt/a-...>

Alberto Kennedy says

This book Was a trip and my very first look into what Santeria was. As far as introduction's go? It was horrible. It was okay writing but the research involved with the writing of this book and the making of it's eventual movie was a travesty to not only Santeria but of writing and of story telling ever. I don't recommend reading this book, unless you want a distorted view of what Santeria is.

Pam says

"Intriguing, informative and suspenseful" is the best way to describe this well written book. It was also an educational experience to read more about Santeria and Voodoo religions, which also so happens to be very common here in Los Angeles.

In the beginning of the novel, I found it a little unbelievable that Cal, an anthropologist who studied in the Philippines and other primitive communities found the beliefs of Voodoo in civilized societies to be inconceivable. It only makes sense that immigrants, whether transplanted by slavery or by choice, would bring their beliefs with them. It was hard to believe that Cal was ignorant to this idea. But I liked how Kate embraced the understanding of other cultures to the fullest extent - so the contrast between the two anthropologists, especially in terms of immersion, was evident. Although I agree with Cal that the sacrificing of people is a primitive, immoral, and unethical concept, I liked the portrayal of religion in terms of controlling people, and their mind, to the point of belief and action, despite some sad realities of their practices.

Thus, I really liked and appreciated the extensive amount of research that was put into this work, in terms of the religion, beliefs, cultures, practices, language, herbal cures, etc. I have a great deal of respect for authors who go far beyond their imagination to make their books REAL. Although, the disclaimer in the beginning said the book is fiction, there is a deep connection that the reader can receive from the work, especially a reader who understands that such events and beliefs can [and do] happen in real life, in modern societies, all in the name of 'faith'. The discovery of the religion by Cal and his journey to becoming a believer, complete

with his personal doubts and participation in rituals, in modern-day New York, is described in epic detail.

Robb Bridson says

For all its flaws, I enjoyed this book, at least toward the end.

The characters were rather boring and lifeless. In particular the main character is a ridiculous plot device. He's an anthropologist who is said to understand diverse cultures, but he sounds completely clueless and intolerant through most of the book (except when convenient).

The inaccurate depiction of Santeria and Vodou is forgivable since it's not meant to be a documentary and it's still a lot closer than most stories on the subject.

What made this book work for me is the basic moral dilemma of it. IT doesn't really ask us to judge the religion's adherents (the main character does enough of that).

It asks us to imagine the ramifications of magic-based theology being true. What if it was actually all up to the gods? What if the gods demand sacrifices? What if you are the one asked to make that sacrifice? Would you do it for the world?

It's all powerful enough to reduce the book's lackings to minor flaws.

I think this line of thinking can transcend to how we evaluate modern religion as well, and even some secular philosophies. We must consider the full ramifications of our thought systems.

In the extremes what comforts us may lead to horror.

Pat Murphy says

I found this novel to be a surprisingly good thriller. The title on my book said The Believers which made it a little hard to find in Goodreads.

Bathsheba says

I read this book when I was quite young, perhaps 13/14 and it had quite a strong impact upon me. I'd never read anything so disturbing however I think it served to open my mind rather than influence me in any particular direction. I can only vaguely recall the plot but my reactions of disgust at some scenes remain strong. I remember feeling a certain dirtiness after reading it but even at that age it helped me to understand that life was sometimes like that and that the best attitude to have is to roll your sleeves up and deal with it with grim determination. My own life was a bit of a horror story at the time and perhaps I took solace that someone else was having to deal with evil and that I was not the only one. I could have developed an unhealthy interest, perhaps, in seizing personal power through voodoo as a solution but despite what some people tend to believe it did not have that effect on me at all. This was one of the first horror books I'd read... I did then go on to read most of Stephen King's works over the following years.

Carol says

we it was ok ,getting turn in to something like at wow

BLRBrazil says

I found this book terribly disappointing - even before reading my colleagues' criticisms that it misrepresents Santeria (if true, that's an unforgivable failing in what was supposed to have been a well researched project). (Spoiler alert)

The main character was a pathetic individual who seemed to not only lack a moral compass but also the professional integrity to analyze his subject matter. Like the anti-hero of another book that drove me to distraction recently (Nirvana Blues), he would fly off the handle and resort to violence at the drop of a hat. It seemed to be his default response to anything he didn't like, even the behaviour of his own son, who we are later asked to believe he would risk everything for (did he want a child or a puppet to remind him of his dead wife?).

What was interesting for me about the book was the contrast between individual interests and the greater good of society. It is not surprising that in the good 'ole US of A the latter was sacrificed for the former (with supposedly dire consequences), but the approach was simplistic anyway. The key is to what extent one should balance the two, which are both important and need to be reconciled. In that respect, it is a very topical question, because that is precisely the question that is being asked of us today, as we stand at a crossroads in human evolution. Let's hope we choose wisely, rather than responding to media provocation.
