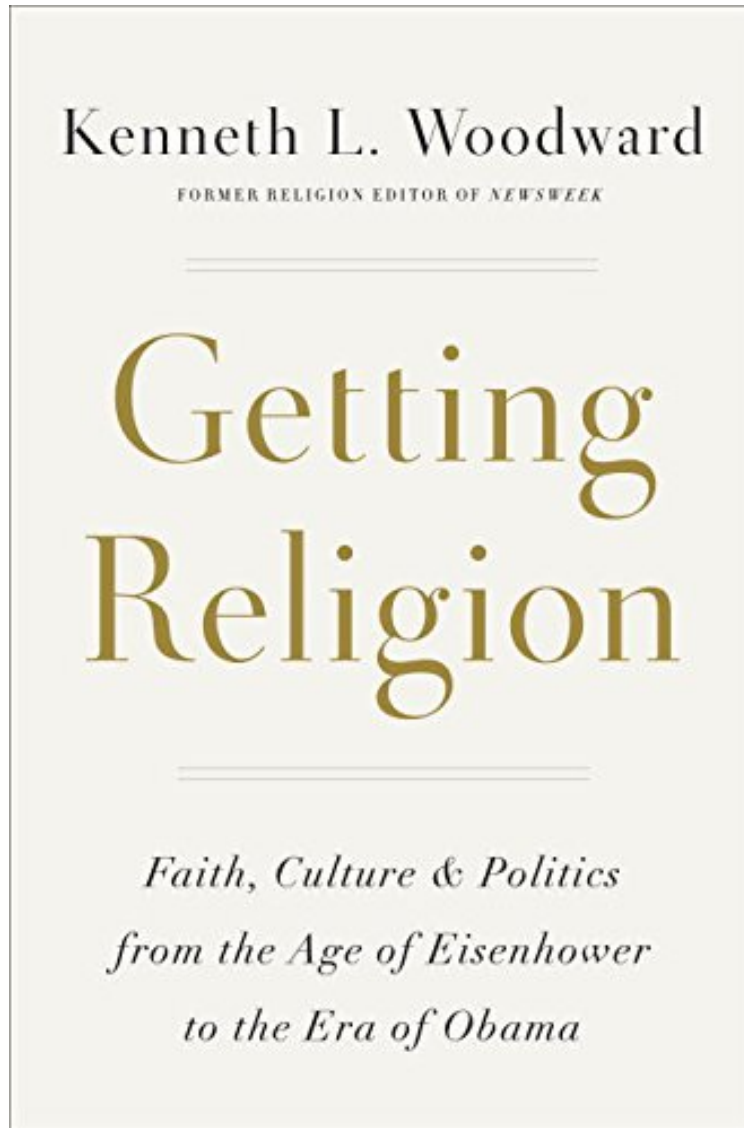


Getting Religion: Faith, Culture, and Politics from the Age of Eisenhower to the Era of Obama

Kenneth L. Woodward
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Kenneth L. Woodward : Getting Religion: Faith, Culture, and Politics from the Age of Eisenhower to the Era of Obama before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Getting Religion: Faith, Culture, and Politics from the Age of Eisenhower to the Era of Obama:

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Religion in all stripesBy Sheep23Getting Religion: Faith, Culture and Politics from the Age of Eisenhower to the Era of Obama by Kenneth L. WoodwardA book spanning faith, culture and politics from a noted Newsweek Religion reporter for many years is bound to stir up the pot. And yet, Kenneth Woodward's new book, Getting Religion, is as much about understanding how far we've come in unlearning overly dogmatic things and relearning what it means to bring faith to the public square. However overwhelming the task may be to cover such a broad swath of themes in a lengthy number of years, this book is really a good synthesis of the last 50 or so years. One of the key movements that took place that affected faith and culture in the past century was Vatican II. Woodward remarks that his interest was mainly in the foundation of the reforms that were past, especially the books and thinkers that helped shape the changes (Rahner and others). One thing that Woodward pointed out was that, I was deeply impressed by the mutual respect, camaraderie even, between the Catholic and Protestant veterans of the Council (75). Even an outsider and Evangelical stalwart such as David F. Wells contends after the council that, It also has placed on Protestants an obligation to revise their thinking about Rome (76). No longer heeding to the call of Pope Pius XII that only the church of Rome is the people of God, the Council sought to bring together the worldwide church and its various members. Much of the changing landscape of religion in our times is due to the posture we have towards certain religious documents, most notably the Bible. Woodward draws us into some key movements that took the Bible seriously but also took issues relating to women seriously too. Woodward writes, Written, edited, and translated solely by men, the Bible could be read and dismissed as the religion of patriarchy. The most influential feminist scholars were determined to reclaim the Bible as a user-friendly text for women's liberation (240). Reuther and Fiorenza to name two, devoted their life to making the Bible match their concern for the oppression of women, and looked at their liberation. Their hermeneutic of suspicion was very much in line with the modern historical-critical method but their bent was toward the major texts that prized women and eschewed the ones that hinted at male dominance. Overall, Woodward does an excellent job at painting the religious landscape of the past decades. You won't want to miss this book. Thanks to Blogging for Books for the copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A Roman Catholic Remembers 60 Years of ReligionBy C. C. I. Fenn'Getting Religion' by Kenneth Woodward was not at all what I expected. By the title and subtitle ('Faith, Culture, and Politics from the Age of Eisenhower to the Era of Obama'), I assumed that this would be a history of religion in America from the 1950s through today. But this isn't history per se. This is more of a memoir - a memoir laced with the history of religion in America - but a memoir none the less. Woodward's bias as a Roman Catholic also comes out in a number of chapters, planting it even more firmly in memoir territory. Woodward divides the book up into topical chapters: one on evangelicalism, one on the liberation theology movement, etc. In each, he examines different religious movements that have characterized the past six decades. Though in examining the movements, he's only able to discuss a handful of people per movement. In the fifth chapter, Woodward takes on evangelicalism, a movement he describes as "essentially an entrepreneurial religion." I would largely agree with his assessment regarding evangelicalism's strengths and weaknesses. However, I was disappointed that he limited his discussion to Billy Graham and Bill Bright. Obviously, these men are important when discussing this topic. But they aren't the movement. Francis Schaeffer gets a sentence or two as does Rick Warren but overall, Woodward's discussion of evangelicalism over the past fifty years is frail. And that's the drawback in every chapter. The history of religion for the past fifty years would require volumes to cover even the most major ideas, individuals, and movements. As a result, this book is a mile wide and an inch deep. I also felt like Woodward misunderstood certain aspects of evangelicalism (and perhaps some of the other movements, although I'm not as familiar with them so I can't make a judgment there). For example, he makes the statement that "Some Evangelicals took to calling themselves simply 'Christians,' as if only they could claim that title." I think this is a gross misreading of what's going on when someone refuses a denominational (or other) label. They aren't making a statement about what others are or are not. They're simply declaring their own allegiances. They see themselves as belonging wholly to Christ. They aren't (usually) declaring all others 'not-Christian.' They just don't want to be associated with any reformer or otherwise human leader. The only other complaint I had was the inclusion of a peculiar paragraph that seemed (to me at least) to invite suspicion that Jerry Falwell had a financial advisor murdered. According to Woodward, he "had died in a mysterious accident: he was hacked to pieces, apparently after falling into the blades of his own thrasher." Woodward mentions this briefly and doesn't expand on it at all. He doesn't even include a footnote to a news article so I could find out more about it. It was, to put it bluntly, strange. With all of that said, I really did enjoy this book. It's well written and includes a lot of anecdotes about leaders across the political and religious spectrum that Woodward had the opportunity to interview through the years. You might not walk away from it with a deep understanding of the religious movements that have defined the last 60 years, but you will at least be exposed to them. And that's a great first step. 9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Insightful book on the religious landscape from the 1950's till nowBy Chris LandIf you have followed the news, you would notice religion seems to be a topic that many talk about whether negative or positive. The landscape of religion in America has changed as well. In the 1950's, church attendance was looked on as a positive aspect about your character where today, in some circles, it is considered very negatively. Religion has always been in the history of America whether it is acknowledged or not. Religion has also shaped America in every

generation. Kenneth L Woodward is the former Religion Editor for Newsweek and has written a book that highlights the changes in the American culture and how religion has influenced it from the 1950's to today. The book is titled, *Getting Religion*. Woodward highlighted that many Americans attended church in the 1950's where today many don't have a religious affiliation. He goes through the times of the civil rights movement, anti-Vietnam war protests, and the rise of religious cults. He does all this to bring about how religion is viewed in the 21st century and how it has played a role in politics and the current cultural climate. He even looks at each president from Eisenhower to Obama on how religion has influenced them. Woodward has done a lot of research in this book and has carefully communicated the history of the second half of the 20th century up to this point on how religion has played a role in the current American culture. There is a lot of information to process. This book will be a good tool for pastors and theologians to use in understanding more of the current religious climate in America today.

"In this thoughtful book, Ken Woodward offers us a memorable portrait of the past seven decades of American life and culture. From Reinhold Niebuhr to Billy Graham, from Abraham Heschel to the Dalai Lama, from George W. Bush to Hillary Clinton, Woodward captures the personalities and charts the philosophical trends that have shaped the way we live now." Jon Meacham, author of *Destiny and Power* Impeccably researched, thought-challenging and leavened by wit, *Getting Religion*, the highly-anticipated new book from Kenneth L. Woodward, is ideal perfect for readers looking to understand how religion came to be a contentious element in 21st century public life. Here the award-winning author blends memoir (especially of the postwar era) with copious reporting and shrewd historical analysis to tell the story of how American religion, culture and politics influenced each other in the second half of the 20th century. There are few people writing today who could tell this important story with such authority and insight. A scholar as well as one of the nations most respected journalists, Woodward served as Newsweek's religion editor for nearly forty years, reporting from five continents and contributing over 700 articles, including nearly 100 cover stories, on a wide range of social issues, ideas and movements. Beginning with a bold reassessment of the Fifties, Woodward's narrative weaves through Civil Rights era and the movements that followed in its wake: the anti-Vietnam movement; Liberation theology in Latin America; the rise of Evangelicalism and decline of mainline Protestantism; women's liberation and Bible; the turn to Asian spirituality; the transformation of the family and emergence of religious cults; and the embrace of righteous politics by both the Republican and Democratic Parties. Along the way, Woodward provides riveting portraits of many of the era's major figures: preachers like Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell; politicians Mario Cuomo and Hillary Clinton; movement leaders Daniel Berrigan, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Richard John Neuhaus; influential thinkers ranging from Erik Erikson to Elizabeth Kubler-Ross; feminist theologians Rosemary Reuther and Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza; and est impresario Werner Erhardt; plus the author's long time friend, the Dalai Lama. For readers interested in how religion, economics, family life and politics influence each other, Woodward introduces fresh a fresh vocabulary of terms such as embedded religion, movement religion and entrepreneurial religion to illuminate the interweaving of the secular and sacred in American public life. This is one of those rare books that changes the way Americans think about belief, behavior and belonging.

"In this thoughtful book, Ken Woodward offers us a memorable portrait of the past seven decades of American life and culture. From Reinhold Niebuhr to Billy Graham, from Abraham Heschel to the Dalai Lama, from George W. Bush to Hillary Clinton, Woodward captures the personalities and charts the philosophical trends that have shaped the way we live now." --Jon Meacham, Pulitzer Prize winner and New York Times bestselling author of *Destiny and Power* For decades, Kenneth Woodward covered religion like no one else in the field: with a keen intellect, an open mind, a big heart, and most of all, the inability to write a dull sentence. In his new memoir, which mixes his own religious upbringing with a typically clearheaded analysis of the times in which he lived (and on which he reported), he takes us on a fascinating journey of what he rightly calls the most volatile religious period in American history. You may open the book for the historical tour, but you'll stay with it because of your brilliant guide." --James Martin, SJ, New York Times bestselling author of *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*. Woodward's book is brilliant, lively, historically informed, and spiced throughout with his trademark wit. Having personally witnessed many of the most important events in American religion over the past half century, Woodward provides close-up, moment-to-moment reality to stories others often missed. His judgments are consistently edgy but also appreciative of the achievements of the era's key players he came to know so well. --Grant Wacker, Gilbert T. Rowe Professor Emeritus of Christian History, Duke Divinity School No American journalist has patrolled the borders of that often-troubled relationship between faith and culture longer or better than Kenneth Woodward. He's a reporter of the old school, taking the time both to get the story right and to be artful about how he crafts his prose. As Woodward says himself, being there matters, and in this book, you'll find the wisdom of someone who's just flat-out been there. This is a superb book. --John L. Allen Jr, editor of *Crux* and author of *A People of Hope* "This survey and interpretation of the American socio-religious scene over the past half century is deeply resourced, comprehensive in coverage, fair-minded in its judgments, and eminently readable. It covers much more than politics, but Woodward has original things to tell us on that highly charged topic. His account of the religious right is a model of clarity, and he balances that by calling attention to often overlooked religious dimensions to

Democratic party politics -- especially the importance of Methodism in the political formation of George McGovern and Hillary Clinton. All in all, a terrific book." --Philip Gleason, Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame. "If ever there were a journalist who could write of his journey through the multi-dimensional worlds of religion in America --- and in the world, it is Kenneth Woodward. Religion Reported is a fascinating account of his almost 40 years as the religion editor of Newsweek. He takes us behind the scenes with illuminating portrayals of some of the major religious and political leaders of the latter twentieth century and does so with thorough research, balanced reporting, candid assessments, and more than a little humor. As Woodward notes, 'being there' mattered. It becomes clear that the author has been everywhere on the religion scene and his observations are incisive and insightful. Readers of this engaging book will feel, as I did, that they were there also." --Michael Cromartie, Vice President, Ethics and Public Policy Center

Not since de Tocqueville's Democracy in America, has there been such a personal and insightful survey of religion in American life. Ken Woodward's Getting Religion is in some ways even better because de Tocqueville was a just visitor to America while Woodward is a sympathetic insider who loves church and state as well as the separation between them that mutually enriches both. This is a masterful record of the dance of religion on American shores since the second world war. Ken Woodward may be the only one who could have written it.--Rabbi Marc Gellman, Ph.D., former religion columnist for Newsweek.com

About the Author KENNETH L. WOODWARD, edited Newsweek's Religion section from 1964 until his retirement in 2002. He remained a writer-at-large at Newsweek until 2009. He is the author of Making Saints: How the Catholic Church Determines Who Becomes a Saint and Who Doesn't and The Book of Miracles: The Meaning of the Miracle Stories in Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam.