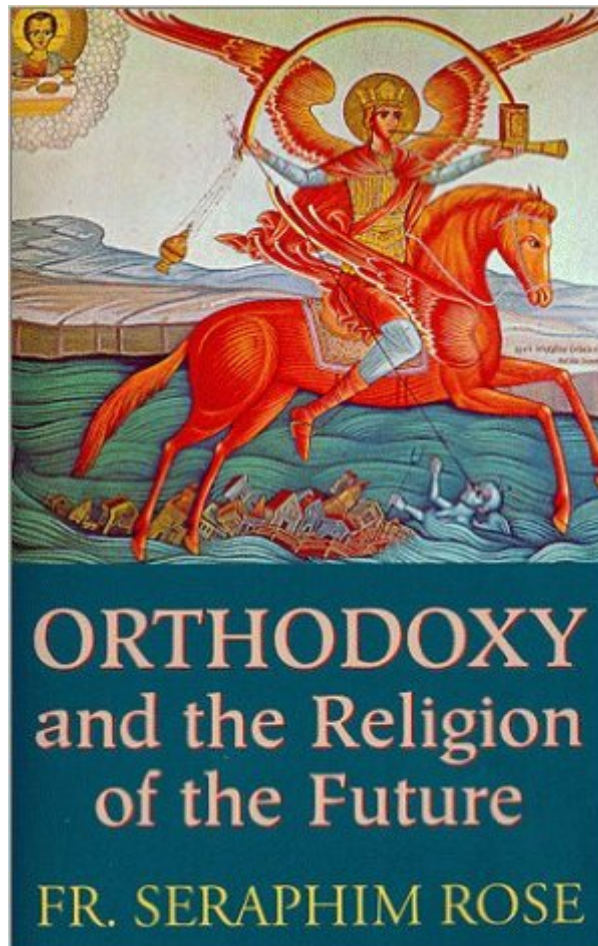


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Orthodoxy And The Religion Of The Future



Synopsis

What is the ancient Christian understanding of today's UFO sightings? What is behind the Charismatic Movement? What phenomena are assaulting Christianity in our modern world? How can Christians avoid being caught up in the Apostasy? **ORTHODOXY AND THE RELIGION OF THE FUTURE** examines in eight chapters these and similar questions facing Christians in the contemporary world. The religious phenomena of today are symptoms of a "new religious consciousness" that is preparing the world religion of the future. Phenomena such as Yoga, Zen, Tantra, Transcendental Meditation, Maharaj-ji, Hare Krishna, UFOs, the Charismatic Movement and Jonestown are presented in contrast to the Orthodox Patristic standard of spiritual life, without the understanding of which, in the coming time of antichrist, it will scarcely be possible for Christians to be saved. This work is a concise and unequivocal Orthodox statement on contemporary trends; its urgent message rings loud and clear. Viewed from a foundation based in Patristic teachings, the spiritual movements of the day are clearly various spiritual deceptions that have existed since the beginning of the Church, rather than the achievements of a new religious consciousness. Addressing soberly and directly the trends of pseudo-spirituality which loom enticingly today, **ORTHODOXY AND THE RELIGION OF THE FUTURE** provides a beacon of discernment in these times of widespread spiritual deception. The book examines a broad spectrum of issues facing modern Christians--each from the perspective of the early Church Fathers. As the "New Age" is becoming a household concept and is moving into wider acceptance by mainstream society, the "new religious consciousness" can be seen progressing precisely along the lines described by the late Fr. Seraphim

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Customer Reviews

Eugene, a.k.a. Father Seraphim Rose, was studying for a Master's degree in Chinese language so he could penetrate more deeply into the study of Chinese religion and philosophy when he converted to the Eastern Orthodox Church. Consequently, he understood very well Eastern religious spirituality and its relation to western religion (see "Christ the Eternal Tao"). He was not a bigot. Contrary to the beliefs of many modern people, a bigot is one who holds any opinion ignorantly and inflexibly; it is not intended to refer to those who hold certain currently unpopular opinions. There is more real bigotry in many of these reviews than Father Seraphim ever included in any of his writings. He was not a bigot, but he was enamored of a Truth, and he found the locus of this truth to be contained in the Eastern Orthodox Faith. He never said that there was no truth in other religious traditions. That being said, I understand why those who are outside this faith might have trouble with this book. The truth is, it's not addressed to them, but to the faithful of the Orthodox Church. He is not trying to insult the Charismatic who has learned to love Jesus in that context, or even the Hindu who derives strength and comfort from their religious practice, but to demonstrate the incompatibility of these things with the ancient Christian Faith which Orthodox Christians hold, and is a warning to them to hold to the truths of their faith, and not to tolerate having them altered or watered down. The title does not identify Orthodoxy as "The Religion Of The Future", but instead contrasts it to this religion, which is being formed by those who have betrayed the truths of their own faith tradition in order to join with like-minded people in a congregation of those who have ceased to believe in truth. It is not outdated; these things are still with us. Father Seraphim may have believed the Religion of the Future to be more imminent than it actually was, but he wasn't wrong in identifying the components of the system, or the spirit which animates it, which is far from the sober and rigorous spirit of traditional Christianity, and does indeed seem close to the spirituality of the Charismatic movement in its emphasis on emotional expression (and de-emphasis on emotional discipline). Probably the most fascinating part of the book to me was the part where he deals with the UFO phenomenon. Father Seraphim was very well-read in Patristic literature, and was able to identify similarities in the accounts of the struggles of the ascetic Fathers with Demonic deception, and the contemporary activities of UFO's, concluding that they are the same kind of event, adapted to a modern, rather than a pre-modern imagination. I was interested to learn that secular investigators have determined UFO's to be psychic rather than material

phenomena; I hadn't known this previously. These things aren't just Father Seraphim's opinions; anyone who holds to the traditional views of the Church will say the same. Father Seraphim differs only in being somewhat more cognizant of contemporary culture, and thereby better suited to present the traditional perspectives to modern readers. The current edition has an epilogue by Father Damascene updating the information contained in the book which is almost as good as the book itself. Reading this book, more than any other single factor, drew me into the Orthodox Church, because I found articulated here an absolute and uncompromising adherence to Truth, very refreshing to one coming from the Rock of Jello which is modern Protestantism. However, I can give only a conditional recommendation. It could be better organised. For those outside the Orthodox Church, realise it is addressed to those in the Church, and read only if you wish to learn of the perspectives of the traditional Orthodox faith without any beating around the bush. Those who are in the Church who think the Church must adapt itself to the currents of prevailing modern opinion are going to hate it, but those who experience the Church as the Faith "once delivered to the Apostles" will find here an unshakable rock of faith, founded on a Truth which transcends the world.

When first reading this book, I thought much of what Fr. Seraphim (+1982) was writing was extremist or alarmist, but I then began to realize that his arguments aren't trying to catch people in a rush of emotions. They are sober, well thought out, intelligent, and above all loving writings that seriously want to help elevate man above the non-fulfilling hum-drum world of unitarian and new age thought. Read the book with an open mind and prepare to be shaken up...I know I certainly was. Fr. Seraphim's book greatly changed the way I looked at a lot of modern "spirituality," and the dangers incurred in practicing them.

I wish that I would have read this book when I was a teenager, about 13 years old, and just beginning to question religious and spiritual matters and investigate the Eastern, Neo-Pagan, and other religions. It's a shame that it has taken me so long to find it, but at least I finally found it! This book is an excellent discussion of the dangers of the new movements in Western "spirituality" -- such as the introduction of elements from Eastern religions, such as Buddhist meditation and Hindu yogic practices, Neo-Paganism, with its pseudo-revival of ancient demon-worship, and Pentecostalism, with its unquestioning acceptance of whatever "spirit" it is that takes possession of a man, causing him to behave in ways deeply contrary to the true movement of the Holy Spirit. Father Seraphim does a wonderful job of exposing all of this and contrasting it with the authentic, ancient spiritual tradition of the Orthodox Christian Church, the sole spiritual preserve of the

Apostolic Faith.

Fr. Seraphim Rose may have gotten his monastic name from a famously gentle Russian saint, but he had a warrior's spirit. His goal in life was to prove, by his own example, that a contemporary Orthodox Christian can still live exactly like a 3rd-century Desert Father, if only the will and the zeal were there. While doing this, he still found the time to write a number of passionate polemics (of which this book is the best-known) attacking what he saw as various forms of indulgence and temptation masquerading as "spirituality." First, though, if you're reading this like an editorial, demanding to be convinced of the author's "correctness," this might not be for you. And, while we're on the subject, let me also suggest that this approach is unproductive. I think that, for better or for worse, people adopt beliefs by example, based on the moral authority of their role models, rather than on their philosophical "validity." We look down on huckster moralists who engage in the same hedonism they rail against when they think no one is watching. By the same token, I have to feel a certain respect for a man who backed up his beliefs by living a life of ascetic prayer in the mountains. "Agreeing" or "disagreeing" with him is not really important. But on to the book. Its subject matter is somewhat eccentric, but that simply reflects the strangeness of various "spiritual" fads and trends in 1970s California. The type of person who would be moved to visit a remote Orthodox monastery in California, a place more frequently associated with over-the-top hedonism, would likely be the spiritually vulnerable type, the type to have previously been damaged by various garish UFO cults, gurus, and charlatans, before reaching out in desperation for something else. It is not possible to reach such people by mocking their beliefs, or by attempting to prove to them that they are "wrong" -- they have absorbed enough sophistry and rationalizations to beat you at this game, and unlike you, they feel that they have something to lose. Rather, Fr. Seraphim neatly subverts their worldview. He casually allows the possibility that their alleged mystical experiences were "real," but strongly questions their "goodness." He then interprets them using Orthodox demonology, and emphasizes the danger of trusting these mutable, impressionable perceptions. The spirit of ancient Orthodoxy may seem "superstitious," but paradoxically, for that very reason, it is also extremely distrustful of superstition (or "spiritual deception," eloquently described by Fr. Seraphim in Ch. 7 of this book). Orthodox philosophy is quite practical for understanding and resisting the mass delusions and spiritual pitfalls described in this book, which exemplify the concept of "spiritual deception" perfectly. If they have any weakness at all, it is precisely to this view. Their claim to truth is based on the idea of "verifiable" personal experience, so that if their adherents are experiencing ecstatic revelations, those experiences must therefore be

true and good. By conceding this "verifiability," but decoupling it from "goodness," the rug is pulled out from underneath the lot. Intellectually, this is a subtle approach. The opening line of the book is, "Every heresy has its own 'spirituality,' its own characteristic approach to the practical religious life." (xix) This is a deep statement. To believers, this is saying that the way to combat "heresy" is to understand, explain, and address its deeper psychological cause, instead of simply repeating comforting doctrinal formalities. In Fr. Seraphim's words, "the willingness of our fallen human nature to mistake illusion for truth, emotional comfort for spiritual experience, is much greater than you think." (141) The purpose of religion is not to provide excuses to hide behind; it's a simple point that often gets lost in profit-seeking double-talk. From a purely Christian viewpoint, Fr. Seraphim offers a sobering warning. It is easy to imagine the antichrist as a comic-book villain who cackles maniacally, twirls his handlebar mustache, and oppresses Christians in cartoonishly evil ways. In fact, many fringe groups use exactly this image to rally their faithful. But, in Fr. Seraphim's interpretation, the antichrist will not be openly confrontational, but rather will mimic the appearance of Christ as closely as possible, playing into a widespread yearning for "meaning in life," and seemingly offering to everyone exactly what they want. The title does not imply that Orthodoxy is "the religion of the future," but rather puts the two in mutual opposition. The message is that "the religion of the future" will tell you exactly what you want to hear, and, if you self-identify as Christian, it will deliberately play on your sense of identity; instead of using brute force, it will seduce you into accepting it as Christianity. Complacency is dangerous. Fr. Seraphim's cultural analysis is likewise provocative, regardless of whether one "agrees" with it. I like science fiction -- first, a large part of it actually reflects a profound anxiety about "progress" in general (think *Blade Runner* or any other post-apocalyptic setting), and second, the more "optimistic" variety (think 1960s *Star Trek*) at least tries to hold humanity to a higher standard, or simply offers a way to make analogies to contemporary political problems (most of the "aliens" in *Star Trek* were just "foreigners" in make-up). But Fr. Seraphim's observation, "Science fiction in general is usually not very 'scientific' at all, and not really very 'futuristic' either; if anything, it is a retreat to the 'mystical' origins of modern science" (75-76) is dead-on, and makes one wonder why popular culture always has to be so delusional. I think that the best way to understand what Fr. Seraphim was all about is not from his writing, but from his life. He also seemed to believe that his point would be better made by living properly than with words. But he was undeniably a perceptive and original thinker, with an articulate and compelling interpretation of the spiritual woes that he encountered.

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