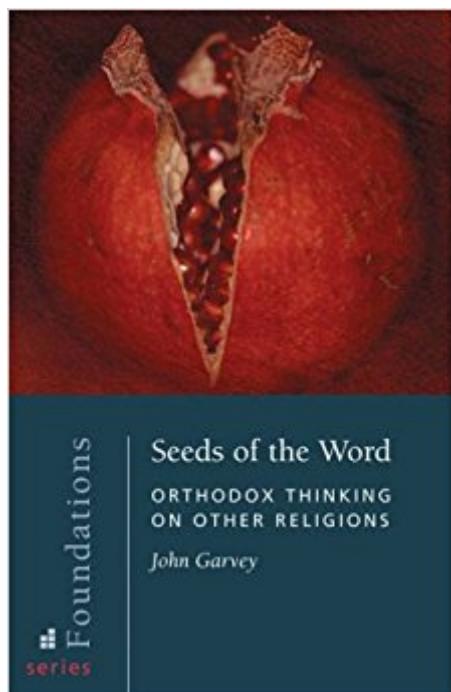


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Seeds Of The Word: Orthodox Thinking On Other Religions (Foundations)



Synopsis

How should Orthodox Christians regard non-Christian religions? To treat this question, John Garvey provides a concise introduction to great religious traditions, East and West, and goes on to explore how seeds of truth may be found in them, while upholding the Orthodox Church's claim as the unique repository of the Christian tradition and the ark of salvation. "This book offers a solid introduction to interfaith relations, in which encounters among diverse faiths offer both challenges to peaceful coexistence and opportunities for fruitful exchange." -Dr Antonios Kireopoulos, Associate General Secretary for International Affairs and Peace, NCCC

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Customer Reviews

I read this book as a library book and then decided I wanted my own copy. Since I have not read much on other religions, I appreciated the first half of the book which described them. However, I agree with another post which mentioned that the best portion of the book is a history or summary of the varied styles in which Christians have responded to those of different faiths. I've had exposure to several styles, some of which make me cringe. I fully appreciate the Orthodox perspective. How wonderful to consider that God does want to speak to all people and that some Truth, however clouded by human falsehood, is whispered into all of our hearts! (That is what I understood, anyway.) May we Christians reveal/reflect Him and His Ways more and more. May we walk and speak with greater wisdom and humility. May our lives and words cause a greater number of people to be brought to the fullness of Truth and may His Name be glorified forever and ever. Amen!

Written from an Orthodox Christian perspective, this is a very good, succinct book highlighting both the differences and similarities between Christianity - especially Orthodox Christianity - and the world's other major religions. A work that is not merely informative, but wise and humble. However, those with an already broad and deep knowledge of comparative religion looking for a more technical discourse on interfaith dialogue may find this book too short and sweet. The book's footnotes and bibliography provide suggestions for further inquiry.

Wonderful reading!

Having read and loved *Prematurely Saved and Other Varieties of the Religious Experience*, I was very interested in what John Garvey would have to say about Eastern Orthodox perspectives on various religious traditions. I cannot say that I was disappointed, only not terribly impressed. The thin book is handy for a brief overview of the major world religions, which takes up about well over half the book. I felt, however, that this was something that I could have used the internet for. The title didn't indicate anything about those chapters and I felt the book could have done without them altogether. So the heart of the book for me began on page 79 (out of 126 pages of text, excluding bibliography and further reading). Honestly the first 2/3rds felt like filler now that I think about it. He could have just given the list of suggested readings and left it at that. (I know this is just a matter of taste and expectations and not a flaw in the book per se). So chapter 3 onwards does a very fine job of outlining the various ways that EO has thought about and presented itself to the outside world, beginning with the Greeks and moving on to Islam, which was often very uninterested in any dialogue with Eastern Christians. Of course exceptions can be found in all camps (like St Gregory Palamas and St John of Damascus), but on the whole a militaristic offense/defense mentality prevailed. Not much else is really offered in the terms of history. Garvey then concludes with a general "how to approach others" piece that is useful to the extent that it soundly rejects relativism, as is so often proposed by others (not Orthodox, of course). He correctly asserts that we are all actually closer to each other when we hold fast to our deepest convictions, rather than trying to have a least-common-denominator approach, since at that point we are seeking truth, not compromise, and God is of truth. Although I would certainly not purchase this book again, that is owing to my misconception of what it would contain rather than any error or fault on the author's part. I would add that Orthodoxy has the luxury of not painting itself into a theological corner by declaring everyone else damned either by some predestination of God or by a "you never called upon the name" theory.

For Orthodox, salvation is not a game or magic, but the grace of God in the hearts of men, many of whom do not "claim the Name" in this lifetime, but are much holier than some who do. God loves all and calls all, and, as St Paul says in Romans, each will be judged according to their ability to know. Of course we believe that the EO is the fullness of God's revelation in Christ and the Spirit, but we are limited by the holy mysteries, God is not. If you have any suggestions for books along these lines, please let me know. One that I have found to be useful, although brief, is "Face to Face: A guide for Orthodox Christians Encountering Muslims" by Fr. Ted Pulcini. Of course, the perennial philosophy books have much to say as well.

Seeds of the Word, Orthodox Thinking on the Other religions, is a brief introduction to non-Christian religions. It has an interesting historical chapter (chapter 3), but the best parts are near the end where it summarizes differences that exist with other religions and Eastern Orthodoxy in particular (chapter 5). That made reading it worth the time. The book is a very brief overview, with little depth and only a few footnotes. It does give a firm introduction, and useful for starting interfaith dialogue. It is a quick read, and never stuffy or overly scholarly.

I liked that the book was not too long. It gave me just the information I needed to begin to understand how Orthodox Christians can relate to other religions. This is very timely given our country's increasing concerns about Islam. The book included a brief summary of the various major non-Christian religions which was helpful. Overall I found it very stimulating and challenging. It helped me appreciate in a deeper way the place of Christianity in the world. And it had quite a good zinger in the last paragraph. Well done, Fr. Garvey!

The book is somehow good when it comes to reviewing the world religions. However, is confusing the term of "tolerance" with "acceptance". The author is presenting the religions totally negative to Christianity in rosy terms and presents a potential perfect relation that it is not realistic in nowadays world. He reminds me of Mircea Eliade who praised all the esoteric religions despite his Christian background and upbringing. It is not worth spending too much money and time on this book.

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