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Alternative Social Projects of New Age Cults

Western sources on issues connected with sects have consistently defined the variety of mystical cults of recent period New Age. It is noteworthy that the notion of New Age is all too often equated with a wide range of phenomena that bear no resemblance to religious undertones. One of the most widespread concepts prevalent in authentic literature is "new thinking" which implies a definite kind of a "new age" person's mentality and a purported "new research methodology" alike. The 60s of the 20th century are considered to be the birth and development of New Age, although mass movements that developed a conception under identical name took place in the 19th century¹.

As a result of elaborative study of background sources dedicated to the social phenomenon in question, the following trends of research into New Age phenomenon can be traced: type and nature of human activity², peculiarities of creed³, and theological criteria⁴.

However, researchers, as we believe, deviated from the initial meaning of this concept, i.e., a "new" period in human history, which is called by the adherents of New Age "the era of Aquarius", "satti-yuga", the humanity of the 6th race. New Age adherents look upon themselves as founders and bearers of religion of this new time. In this connection we found it imperative to analyze models of this "new time" drawing on their numerous apologetic publications.

As we suppose, the understanding of New Age phenomenon is possible through their examination in the light of social and psychological aspects. This approach was exercised to analysis of authentic New Age sources and – as the outcome of our research – the following criteria of New Age as a religious phenomenon were

put forward: 1) contemporary man and society as the objects of criticism in New Age cults; 2) specific traits of the person of era to come which are consistent with New Age creed; 3) features that a person and community are purported to possess during the transition period according to New Age; 4) requirements to future community.

It is common knowledge that models of ideal social setup and ideal man have been created throughout history. In fact, these models are perpetuated in the dogmas of every religious cult. What makes New Age cults stand out from the rest is their inclination to globalization. In modern New Age cults these criteria are materialized into the following content.

1. The reason for negative development of the world is a man who developed one's mind without consideration for divine command and to the detriment of one's own spirituality and who created a destructive civilization which is doomed to perish. The emerged civilization makes the situation even worse and impedes human evolution in the proper direction. More often than not criticism in New Age is assailed on the following components of the modern world: science, technical progress, culture, religion, peculiarities of mentality and inner world of a person. Ideologists of New Age declare the following way out of this predicament. They claim that God (High mind, the Universe or any high energy of the same meaning) from time to time send a messenger to Earth (Christ, Buddha, Confucius, Lao-Dzy, Zoroastr, etc.). But they came too early and humanity was not mature enough to adopt "the high truth" and therefore religions that were modeled after them proved to be "wrong". But isolated sages assimilated "the truth" and handed it out to selected followers. In connection with the fact that humanity with its civilization drew to a deadlock, they found it necessary to enlighten people and deliver this knowledge to them. This is what is known to be by new ageist esoteric knowledge or religion of New Age.

2. According to New Age ideology, the mind of a "new" person should be all-embracing, that is "natural", "planetary", "cosmic". On the one hand, such mode of consciousness suggests care for the whole Earth and space, on the other hand, a specific mode of transcendentalism (or even mode of life) which rules out any reasoning, attachment of mind to body but incorporates a hypothetic "cosmic" or "natural" fullness. This "new" man of "the 6th race" must be blessed, to New Age ideologists, with supernatural abilities.

3. To become an evolutionary basis of a person of "the 6th race", a modern man must be an ardent follower of New Age, choose the way of "conscious evolution", and take a "mentor" who "knows the way". The role of "mentors" in spiritual perfection of a person is emphasized in all New Age trends. They are considered

¹ Истоки тайноведения: Справочник по оккультизму, Симферополь 1994, р. 394-398.

² В. А. Мартинович, Введение в понятийный аппарат сектоведения, Минск 2008, р. 25-35;

³ Э. Зудерманн, Оккультизм – взгляд под маску, Großwallstadt 2000, р. 19-32.

⁴ Л. Н. Митрохин, Религии "Нового века", Москва 1985, р. 9; А. Дворкин, Сектоведение: Тоталитарные секты. Опыт систематического исследования, Нижний Новгород 2002, р. 707-736.

⁵ Д. Маршал, Новый век против Евангелия, или величайший вызов христианству, Заокский 1995, р. 17.

to be endowed with "high knowledge" transcended to them from the mentors of "high order". The information on management and activity of the organization and its members is received by the "mentor" via contact with and "messages" from "high forces".

4. The ideal social community of the future is perceived by New Age ideology as a terrestrial "spiritual unity" or brotherhood that embodies a hierarchy of "mentors" who supervise the conduct and inner world of every person since the cradle⁵.

The same social and psychological aspects of New Age cults reverberate in masonry.

To give a definite example, they are examined in the works of Albert Pike (1809-1891), "the State Great Commander" of "Ancient and Adopted Scottish Statute of Masons" in the USA⁶.

The aforesaid ideas are typical of occult and mystical trends of New Age which can be summarized as theosophical. But at present New Age ideas are circulating in physicality version of occult and mystical trend and new pagan and oriental New Age trends.

In the "theosophical" version the highest sacral structure of the world represents a hierarchy suggested by Elena Blavatskaya and named as "Cosmic Hierarchy of Mentors" or "Great White Brotherhood", aimed at creating an "ideal" society. The so-called "earth level" reflects the hierarchy of present mentors called to bring into life messages of "mentors of humanity"⁷.

The physicality version of modern occult and mystical trend has no evident hierarchy. The highest force here is "High Mind" that embodies immaterialistic substance. It manages the world and people with a help of different material "forces" and "energies". The popular idea remains that of existence of special physical fields ("biological field", "soliton", "lepton", "torsion" and "energy-informational" field, etc.) which work as "miracles"⁸. Scientifically-biased organizations of this

kind speak of themselves as scientific teams. Organizations of this kind have their own "interacademic assessment commission", granting "scientific degrees" to its followers. They have their body registering "scientific" discoveries in New Age sphere⁹.

In contemporary oriental versions there are similar ideas. For example, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar declares that "New Age" is renaissance of Golden Age of Ancient India. So his technique of meditation contributes to creating new man and society¹⁰. According to supporters of Sahaja Yoga, salvation of the world and creation of a new type of civilization depends on ideology and yoga exercises by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi¹¹.

A new pagan movement can be categorized into three trends: national paganism, nature-oriented paganism and paganism based on cult practices of the Orient and Ancient Egypt.

The ideology of national paganism draws on arbitrary reconstruction of ancient Slavonic pagan denominations and social set-up. To apologists view at prehistoric time in Eurasia there was a Slavonic civilization which was later destroyed by "Christian expansion"¹². Social projects of the future of "Slavonic world" as viewed by this trend of New Age are connected with renewal of this ancient religion and hierarchical structure of society. At the same time there are extreme groups and organizations in national paganism.

Petrov's studies contain a blend of occultism, national paganism and denominations of Ancient Egypt. According to this conception, the power should be concentrated not in the hands of secular governor (Pharaoh), but priests who keep the mystery of structure of the universe¹³.

The most utopian models of social set-up are inherent in nature-oriented versions of new paganism practicing veneration and worshipping nature. According

мальных явлений: материалы Всесоюзного Комитета по проблемам энергоинформационного обмена в природе", Москва 1989, vol. 2, p. 132-143; В. Ю. Рогожкин, *Эниология. Энергоинформационный обмен*, Ростов-на-Дону 2003, 544 p.; И. Серов, *Феномен Сознания и парадоксы матричной голографии: Аналитическое программирование информационно-обменных процессов активных биологических форм*, Санкт Петербург 1999, 21 p., etc.

⁹ See: В. Судаков, *Феномен тысячелетия Григорий Грабовой*, Москва 1999, 556 p.

¹⁰ Шри Шри Рави Шанкар, *Мудрость нового тысячелетия*, Санкт Петербург 2003, 176 p.

¹¹ Йоги Махаджан, *Новое тысячелетие исполнит древние пророчества*, Новосибирск 1999, 64 p.

¹² See: В. М. Демин, *От ариев к русичам: от Древней Арии до России*, Москва-Омск 2003, 320 p.; Ю. А. Шилов, *Истоки протославянской культуры: государство Арата*, "Славянское Вече-2" Минск 2003, p. 355-368; Д. А. Тюленев, *Сказ от Пафнутия*, "Аркаим" 2003, no. 91, p. 1-14.

¹³ К. Р. Petrov, *Lectures on management theory. Management of global and regional processes of social and economic development*, Tumen 2004 (videosccripts, 20 lectures).

⁵ See: А. В. Клюев, *Свое Дело от смерти*, Москва 2002; Г. Роусс, *Тайна космического "Я"*, "Тайны Мироздания" 1999, no. 1, p. 11-13; *Аналитическое программирование информационно-обменных процессов активных биологических форм*, Санкт Петербург 1999; В. А. Поляков, *Манифест новой общественно-экономической формации*, "Эволюционное Содружество" 2002, no. 19, 23 p.; Ли К. Крайон, *Алхимия человеческого духа. Руководство по переходу человека в Новую Эру*, Москва 2005, etc.

А. Пайк, *Мораль и Догма Древнего и Принятого Шотландского Устава*, Москва 2007.

⁷ See: *Чистые зерна: Послания из Мира Светлинаты*, Москва 1999, 24 p.; *Уведомление Майтрейи*, Москва 1999, 26 p.

⁸ See: Г. И. Шипов, *Физический вакуум, торсионные поля и Сахаджа Йога*, Воронеж 2001, 37 p.; В. П. Казначеев, *Антропокосмизм и биофизика*, "Исследование неотожествленных ано-

Artykuły

to these models, a man ought to live not in civilian but natural conditions. He or she can obtain everything for survival and spiritual development¹⁴.

In modern times, we are witnesses of polarizing religions of the world. This polarization manifests itself in participation of religious figures in politics, using religious motives in political and economical competition. At present New Age movement is a new political reality. "Spiritual practices" it suggests have social undertones. Neglecting conceptions of a new society and new man which are being elaborated within its framework is fraught with new social cataclysms.

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STRESZCZENIE

Lata 60 ubiegłego stulecia uważane są za początek rozwoju ideologii New Age, choć ruch masowy, który rozwinął się pod identyczną nazwą, znany już był w XIX wieku. Autorka wychodzi z założenia, iż zrozumienie fenomenu Nowej Ery jest możliwe poprzez jego przebadanie przez pryzmat czterech aspektów o charakterze psychospołecznym: współczesny człowiek i społeczeństwo w świetle krytyki ze strony kultów New Age; cechy specyficzne człowieka wedle doktryny New Age; znamiona człowieka i społeczeństwa w okresie przejściowym zapowiadającym nastanie nowego porządku; warunki życia w przyszłym społeczeństwie Nowej Ery.

¹⁴ See: works of V. Megre of the series *Anastasia*; Л. Стаховцов, *Tales, stories, instructions, riddles and other texts (materials of the so-called Scherbovskoe brotherhood)*.