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## **The Newest and Orthodox Religion: Relationship Problems in Modern Ukraine**

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**Abstract.** The article is devoted to the problems of functioning (existing) of new religions in our society and especially to their relations with traditional beliefs. The spread of new religious movements is the result of deep processes, occurring in the society, and first of all, it is an effect of crisis of traditional religions. But traditional religions fail to notice the real reasons of their spreading and unjustly criticize all new religions. The author concludes that only tolerance to new religions and a constructive dialogue between representatives of different religious movements should become the methods of mutual understanding.

**Keywords:** *new religions, religiosity, tolerance, confrontation*

Numerous currents and latest trends of the religions that oppose the Orthodox Church is a phenomenon that is not new and even familiar today. New religions have made not organizational, but qualitative changes in the religious life and consciousness of society. Their distribution is the result of deep-seated processes in society, first of all as a consequence of the traditional religions crisis. Modern achievements of humanity have put forward many problems, especially social ones, to whom the Church with its conservative beliefs is simply powerless.

Although the new religious communities in Ukraine are only about 4% of the total religious network, they have become quite noticeable and important phenomenon in the spiritual life of the community. Many people are increasingly looking for the truth, the meaning of life, the way of salvation not only in traditional, but in the newest religions. The problem of new religious movements in Ukraine for a long time has not lost its *relevance*, because of our society's interest in it is extremely high, and the complexity and ambiguity of the processes taking place in the religious life of the country from year to year does not lessen. They need an objective approach, serious and careful research, whose goal is a comprehensive analysis of the problems of the society in such a complex and ambiguous phenomenon as the new religions. It could be particularly made from the standpoint of their coexistence with traditional religions and the problems that arise on this basis, as new religion first seen as a challenge to traditional beliefs.

In the XX century the positions of established religions were significantly reduced in the first place by the scientific worldview. Achievements in science and progress put forward many problems, especially social ones, where the official Church with its conservative beliefs was powerless. Many people, especially young people, are attracted by the calls from new religious movements to creativity that is rejected by the church dictatorship. In addition, people wish salvation now and here, not in the hereafter. Religiosity of the current era is fundamentally different from previous stages of its development. It creates a situation where the choice of a certain religious beliefs is an act of free decision of every member of society. Sometimes this religious pluralism leads to the fact that modern believers simultaneously participate in several movements or currents. Unlike the past times, the majority of the religious communities, especially the newest, does not require absolute loyalty to their followers.

New movements respond to the daily needs of persons: they satisfy her desire to know the Western world, or even to gain a degree or to learn a foreign language etc. At a

time when the historical Church does not hold an active missionary work, any attempt, even unobtrusive, to introduce a new doctrine almost always has a positive effect. Or, at least, it is an interest in a religious mission or preacher activity which is often also supported by charity. Therefore, an effective help to those who are in need not only spiritually, but also financially, is contributing to the alternative religions in Ukraine.

In addition, many people seek salvation right now and right here, not in the hereafter. The new movements can only offer that. In addition, if traditional religion strongly protects its uniqueness, the new religions are based on a single mystical experience in a merger with the Absolute and are open to new ideas. They rely on the one thing that unites all religions – the recognition of the existence of connection between man and the supernatural.

Most representatives of the Ukrainian Orthodox and Catholic churches have repeatedly recognized that the successful penetration of new religious movements into Ukraine spaces is a consequence of the formalism and indifference of their clergy, of losing Church's missionary enthusiasm, of unworthy deeds of clergymen, of interdenominational conflicts and so on. How can traditional Ukrainian Orthodox, claiming the status of a national religion, be trusted, if it is currently going through a crisis period, and on television keeps reporting about in-Church conflicts?

Because of this, religious search often leads a person not to the Church, but to the sect. However, analysing the causes of this phenomenon, orthodox theologians do not wish to notice the real causes of this situation and blame the faithful who, in their opinion, simply cannot properly assess the proposed occult teachings. Instead, they completely absorb any mystical poison offered to them by certain forces. The new doctrines are regarded as heretical, believers are called schismatic who are besotted by propaganda and psychological impact of charismatic leaders.

Similar estimates and opinions on the activities of new religions in Ukraine are not unique. Moreover, most of them are based on not deep and extensive research of the phenomenon of new religions, but they are subjective, biased. Hence, we have strong calls from traditional churches not only to limit but to totally ban of the new religious movements.

First of all the resentment of representatives of traditional religion to the existence of new religions is caused by a significant increase in competition in the interfaith area of Ukraine, and they were simply not ready for it.

Thus, it can be called a normal fear for their own "place in the sun".

In addition, it is worth noting that the vast majority of current new movements' supporters in the past were not associated with traditional religions and most of them had an indifferent attitude to religion, and thus they are not "defectors" from Orthodox camp to neophyte camp. But still traditional churches mindlessly count all new religious trends in the category of "totalitarian", "destructive" sects that violate public order, are harmful to human health, lead to mental disorders etc. As a result, not a good idea prevails in the mass consciousness as to new religious phenomenon, which is, moreover, "heated" by media as "zombification", "brainwashing" of new religious communities' members.

We will not deny that the activities of some of the newest religions (such as the Great White Brotherhood and Satanic movements) actually manifested antisocial orientation and the above examples really take place. However, we should not therefore have a narrowed approach to the analysis of all the new religion for us, because this requires a thorough analysis of each case. One can undoubtedly claim that fraud, deception and all sorts of perversion is the exclusive feature of new religions. It is not a secret any more that these phenomena occur among the clergy and traditional churches.

Prejudice and intolerance on the part of orthodox religions often find support and in government, as some officials believe the established religions to be the only spiritual integrator of Ukrainian society. Public bodies often stepped on the path of interference in new religious movements, which violates the law and democratic rights.

This resistance to the spread of new religions by the state, church and community structures is to some extent understandable. Ukrainian society has reason to be dissatisfied with the activities of religious groups that do not take into account the religious traditions of our people, in the form of a power impose this or that doctrine and consider their values to be higher than traditional Ukrainian ones. But the new religious movements also have many claims to our society, including cause by intervention in their activities that has been mentioned before and creating their negative image among the population. Yet, the fact of the appearance and existence of such a phenomenon as new religious movements and the fact that new religious communities find their supporters and sympathizers shows the specific functions that they are designed to perform in our society.

Despite the intolerance towards themselves, almost 85% of members of new religious communities express their loyalty to the government and a positive attitude towards the followers of other faiths. So before making conclusions the society should try to understand why a person is associated with a particular faith or not. Various new religious movements are different, as well as their members. "Attacking" new religious communities, condemning them and threatening them, one can push them to greater isolation.

The problem of new religions is a serious social, socio-political and socio-cultural problem. New religions in their efforts to attract believers are based on worldwide integrating processes, internationalism and developed multi-channel communications. However, there still

dwells a strong negative opinion in the public consciousness about the new religious phenomenon and destructive influence of new religion onto society. To determine the boundaries of these trade-offs, we should also explore the forms of the new religions in modern society and their coexistence with the latter.

Under the form of the relationship, we understand a certain characteristics of new religious organizations functioning in modern society, which represents the degree of interaction with it and perception or rejection of the surrounding situation that objectively exists.

In the analysis of new religious movements (NRM) activities one can distinguish those who deny the outside world with all its established rules; movements that take a modern transformation and even contribute to them; and movements that just have to adapt to modern conditions. As a result of this study it can be concluded that the majority of new religions that had already crossed the threshold of confrontation with society now are increasingly going through institutionalization. Although perhaps two main forms of their existence still remain possible as well as their activity: isolationist (when the new religious movements do not conflict with society, but still coexists within their "subculture") and adaptive (original adaptation strategy, which aims to ensure new religions' survival in the complex environment of modern socio-religious and inter-religious relations).

Thus, an important condition for the normal functioning of new religions in society is also moderate support or at least neutrality from the authorities. It is impossible not to notice that some authorities in addressing the rights of citizens to freedom of religion actually violate their rights, strongly limiting the activities of new religious movements and providing benefits to traditional religions, and thus provoke conflict and confrontation between members of different faiths. All sorts of negative evaluations and conclusions of some officials are mostly not based on deep and extensive research of the phenomenon of new religions, and are subjective, biased, as some officials believe only traditional religions, or one single religion, which they like the most, to be the spiritual integrator of Ukrainian society. Hence, the strong appeals not only to the limitations, but also to the total ban of the new religious movements take place.

Therefore, perhaps, it is worth stopping to evaluate unconventional moves from the position of "good – bad" or "useful – harmful" for the traditional churches and representatives, and all of us, because their appearance is not accidental. It is the society that always generates these forms, which are obviously required. This means that new religions are an integral component of religious life in the world in general and in Ukraine in particular.

Therefore, for the principle of religious tolerance in our society real enforce, it is not necessary to bring the case to a confrontation between supporters of traditional and non-traditional faiths. Tolerant relations and dialogue should be the means of achieving understanding.

The democratic state cannot take repressive measures to limit displays of religious art as such, and it should not consider religious pluralism a threat to its existence. Even when the national state, which Ukraine occasionally calls to construct, protecting their identity, uses various forms of legal regulation of historic churches and non-traditional

religions. Its relation to new religions, however, may be accompanied by repressive policies. The very fact of membership to a new religious formation has stopped to be the world's sign of disloyalty to the state or the existing social and political order.

Obviously, it is advisable to return the public mood concerning new religions from attempting their destruc-

tion, which is simply impossible, to efforts for their integration into society, to adapt to modern social conditions, activities in the legal field, which is acceptable for a democratic state. The best way of control is the most complete and objective information that the vast majority new movements are ready to give of themselves, unless this is used against them.

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#### **Ювсечко Я.В. Новейшая и ортодоксальная религиозность: проблемы взаимоотношений в современной Украине**

**Аннотация.** Статья посвящена проблемам функционирования новых религий в современном украинском обществе и, особенно, их взаимоотношениям с традиционными верованиями. Распространение новых религиозных движений является результатом глубинных процессов, происходящих в обществе, и прежде всего, это результат кризиса традиционных религий. Но традиционные религии не желают замечать реальные причины распространения неорелигий и поддают несправедливой критике все без исключения новые верования. Автор приходит к выводу, что только толерантность к новым религиям и конструктивный диалог между представителями различных религиозных движений могут стать реальными методами к взаимопониманию в религиозной среде.

**Ключевые слова:** новые религии, религиозность, толерантность, противостояние