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AND THE MODERN WORLD

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DIFFERENT FORMS OF RELIGIOSITY AND THE MODERN WORLD

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The Influence of Traditional and Modern Religious Movements on the Position of an Individual in the Modern Society

Abstract

Fragmentation, coexistence of myth and religion, man's alienation and the elements of popular culture dominate the literature of Modernism since they most faithfully express the turmoil and the state of chaos that pervaded the world in the break of the World War I. "The Waste Land", a poem by T. S. Eliot (1922), represents the author's artistic take on the post-war atmosphere and his attempt to introduce the new concept of religion that would eventually lead to the process of regeneration and rebirth. The aim of this paper is to identify and analyze religious allusions in the poem and offer a fresh perspective to their interpretation by introducing a modern understanding of religion that combines fragments of Christianity, Buddhism, Upanishads, ancient fertility cults and contemporary fortune tellers. By exploring the religious allusions that incorporate both hope and despair, we intend to show that a man who lost his goal in life could survive by adapting the religious rituals to his own needs, thus linking present and future, tradition and new practices. Another aim of this paper is to identify and explore new religious movements, and point out their importance in the 21st century. Though written 100 years ago, "The Waste Land" warns us against the threats of the 21st century and reminds us that, in the time of troubles, religion (traditional or in the form of new religious movements) is not something people should give up on easily.

Keywords: The Waste Land, religious allusions, new religious movements, Christianity, modern society

Introduction

■ T. S. Eliot's poetry is full of religious and mythical allusions combined with fertility rituals through which the poet endeavored to pass on the subtle message to the world devastated by the terrors of the First World War. This message was perhaps the most vividly expressed in *The Waste Land*, the poem that represents both the most alarming call for people to hurry up, since the end of the world is coming, and the most optimistic call for rebirth and regeneration through reunion of traditional and modern religious practices that would arm people with renewed faith. Eliot depicted his *Wasteland* as a microcosm of the war-stricken world and its panic-stricken people whose faith is lost or shaken, and whose land mirrors their poor physical and mental well-being.

Namely, in the war between 1914 and 1918 more than 10 million people lost their lives and over 2 million people were unemployed in England. By the end of 1918 much of the countryside in Western Europe that has been an inspiration for generations of poets, writers, artists, painters and musicians was in ruins. The prominent social theorists, literary and political figures such as Darwin, Marx, Freud and others were forcing people to accept that war has less to do with angry Gods than with angry humans. It became increasingly difficult to see the glory in the WWI. It was even more difficult for people to renew their faith in God. Therefore, the process of regeneration after the WW1 was a not an easy task.

Eliot suggests that the healing ritual should include restoration of human faith through people's submitting to the mixture of alternative religious practices, including the fragments of Christianity, Hindu chants, Buddhist speeches and pagan ceremonies. The religious universality is achieved through Eliot's respect for the literary tradition, traditional religious practices accompanied by the use of different languages in the poem (English, German, French, Sanskrit, and Latin), as well as his awareness of the modern religious tendencies and spiritual manifestations of the modern individual caught between the past (his security comfort zone) and the future, that shook the

determined premises of the past to its roots and envisioned stepping out of such comfort zone. As a result, the only things the present must have offered to the 20th century man were alienation, fear of unknown and constant questioning of his religious beliefs.

The 21st century is also marked with the similar doubts and questions that trouble the modern society; therefore, this poem composed almost a century ago could serve as a suitable intertext for all the negotiations of the modern man with life and death that appear as a result of all of his real and metaphorical struggles lead on behalf of religion, science or freedom (the war in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria; the initiation of the Arab Spring, immigrations, nuclear weapon threats, et cetera). It is a metaphor of the quest for something that is a counterpart to the Holy Grail, the quest for the self-knowledge and meaning of life. The question that bothers the citizens of the Wasteland who are devoid of faith is the same one that bothers a 21st century man - is there anything left to fight for? The people's realization that something is wrong is the first step to the restoration of their faith and acquisition of that self-knowledge.

The question Eliot attempts to answer is the one asked by an old man who sits in an empty house in *Gerontion*, the poem composed two years before *The Waste Land*: "After such knowledge, what forgiveness?" (*Gerontion* 33) *Wasteland* offers no single interpretation of this question. There is no single truth because "son of man" knows "only a heap of broken images" (*The Waste Land* 21-22). Eliot addresses a modern individual who is cynical, learned and experienced enough to doubt all answers. Conversely, could man be optimistic enough to hope that they are all wrong, that there might be an answer after all? If fragments are all we have been left with, should we make the world out of these fragments? The concept of a human as an art-making animal is here evoked. But creation without acquiring self-knowledge and meaning in life is in vain. Eliot hoped to find the meaning beyond the disorder that is collective. He sensed that the world lacked order that could be re-established. Could that order be re-established by the emergence of new religious movements? Did he envision the rising of new

religious movements that would counterfeit traditional ones? Is the occurrence of new religious movements the result of people's inability and failure to establish firm connections with traditional religions? Would regaining of faith only be possible through people's embracing differences, modification of traditional religions, constant adjustments to the new age, blending of traditional and modern religious practices and glorification of shared values aimed at putting faith in humanity instead of waging wars for combating the people's differences? Would forgiveness be granted after the quest for the self-knowledge comes to its end and could the new world be created on the ashes of the previous one? Perhaps God could forgive, but is there God in *The Waste Land*, and more importantly, how could people find God in the 21st century?

Past and Present, Traditional and Modern

The author drew his inspiration from the old myth about the Fisher King whose health is directly connected to the well-being of his kingdom. The land is barren because its king suffers an injury to his genitalia. Conversely, the land loses its ability to regenerate since its people struggle with infertility problems. The Fisher king could be healed through the sacrifice of an effigy. The king is linked to the Holy Grail, the drinking vessel used at the Last Supper according to the legend, an important motif in Arthurian legend, and a symbol of an object or a goal sought after for its great significance. Both the king and the land could be saved if the quest for the Holy Grail turns out to be successful. The quest for the Holy Grail originates from pagan fertility rituals in which the grail was female sexual symbol used in accompaniment with its male counterpart the bleeding lands. The story of the Fisher King establishes the order and implies that beneath the broken images of the destroyed city, and the waste land, there is an old story that we all know even though it is now in fragments.

The poem composed of fragmented images begins with the fragment itself – an epigraph in Latin taken from Gaius

Petronius's work *The Satyricon*¹, a Roman manuscript from the late 1st century A.D. The epigraph is about the Cumaean Sybil, the prophetess and a gate keeper to the Underground (the gates of Hell), who was granted the eternal life. Sybil the prophetess guards the entrance to the *Wasteland*, foresees the future and wishes to die. The poem opens with the image of death in spring, the season that celebrates life and regeneration. However, the atmosphere is not that gloomy because the Cumaean Sybil also foretells the coming of a savior whom Christians identify as Jesus, so life could be still restored. The central protagonists cry for life and death at the same time. They are also sentenced to life. April, the living picture of the beginning of life and the month of Christ's resurrection, is the cruelest month for the citizens of the *Wasteland* since it reminds them of something they could no longer call life.

Eliot offers a picture of the 20th century Europe full of Russian immigrants - the internally displaced people - who flooded the Unreal City (London). However, the Unreal City becomes at the same time a universal metropolis of the Eastern and Western civilization. It represents all the things the man has built and created. In the Unreal City the people walk round in a ring, life and death go hand in hand and a barman in the pub informs the customers that it is time for them to go home. The people under the London Bridge who walk in circles are commuters who are leaving the City (London's financial district). These people resemble the people in Dante's *Inferno*, who are waiting in front of the gates of Hell. The modern consumer society is on the verge of falling into the abyss, since its people are condemned to alienation, loss of faith, lack of morality and absence of basic human values.

The unfortunate throng under the London Bridge visits a modern version of the Cumaean Sybil the prophetess - a clairvoyant, Madame Sososttris, who is "the wisest woman in Europe" (*The Waste Land*, 45). Madame Sososttris makes horoscopes and can tell the fortune to the citizens of the Unreal City from the

¹ Apart from being one of the most extensive witnesses to the Roman novel, *The Satyricon* is also regarded as useful evidence for the reconstruction of how lower classes lived during the early Roman Empire.

"wicked pack of cards" (*The Waste Land* 46). Paradoxically, she warns the protagonist of the *Wasteland*, a sailor whose life is water, to fear death by water. She also sees the one-eyed merchant who carries on his back something she is "forbidden to see" (*The Waste Land*, 54). The merchant is a modern individual who is unable to tell what troubles him. Madame Sosostriis cannot find "the Hanged Man" (*The Waste Land*, 55), an allusion to Jesus. We learn that the land is 'waste' because it represents a world without God.

Our faulty interpretation of Christianity has led us to the illness that pushes us closer to the spiritual death (Nikolić 2013, 114). The dualism of body and soul, our misperceived concept of sin, odd interpretation of love between man and woman, the questionable concepts of purity, chastity and morality are the causes of spiritual failure (Nikolić 2013, 114). In such world it is expected that death gives birth to a new life. The unnamed protagonist poses a question: "That corpse you planted last year in the garden, / Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?" (*The Waste Land*, 71-72) Surely, it is both tragic and absurd to expect from a dead body to become alive. The answer to the question whether God exists might be hidden in the following lines: "O keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to man, / Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!" (*The Waste Land*, 74-75) If we assume that 'Dog' is read backwards as God, then people lost their faith by God and that God would not let life be recreated. The blooming of the corpse is prevented by its digging up. Therefore, God does not function as a creator of life. The people are spiritually dead regardless of their social position.

The second part of the poem entitled "The game of Chess" is about different forms of violence against love, fertility, and life in general. We are shown that in the world without God, a husband and a wife lead Beckett's dialogue – they are unable to communicate. The woman tries in vain to drag her partner into a conversation and get him back to the real world (*The Waste Land*, 121-123), but he is unable to connect with his wife. However, there is no world and life she could offer him for a change. Her threats and questions directed towards him are both banal and doom-laden:

'What shall I do now? What shall we do?'
'I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street
'With my hair down, so. What shall we do tomorrow?
'What shall we ever do?'

(*The Waste Land*, 131-134)

These ordinary and dreadful questions occupy the minds of people that belong to both higher and lower classes. Tomorrow is no different than today: we will continue "pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door" (*The Waste Land*, 138). Barmen's last call in the pub 'HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME' (*The Waste Land*, 141) is also Eliot's announcement that the civilization is about to seize to exist. It is a death sentence to the civilization in general and the announcement that it's time for a new world to come into existence.

The absence of dialogue between husband and wife is then replaced with the dialogue between two friends: Lil, whose husband "got demobbed" (*The Waste Land*, 139), and her friend who criticizes her for looking "so antique" (*The Waste Land*, 156). Lil's friend advises her to "make herself a bit smart" for the husband who "has been in the army for four years" and who now "wants a good time" (*The Waste Land*, 148). This dialogue reveals the true nature of female friendship and husband-wife relationship. Lil had spoilt her good looks by using the birth control pills²: "It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said. / (She's had five already, and nearly died of young Georg)" (*The Waste Land*, 159-160). Her friend calls her a "proper fool" (*The Waste Land*, 162) and wonders why she got married if she did not want children. The final lines imply that the friend got use of the situation and ended up with Lil's husband. The images of violence against fertility, nature, love and human life are also present in the stanzas to come.

Religious Allusions in the *Waste Land*

The religious allusions apparent in the poem come from both western and eastern teachings. There are numerous references to the Holy Bible, the New Testament, Buddhist sermons,

² The Birth control movement developed in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Upanishads, God, Jesus Christ (the Hanged Man), St. Augustine, the Gospel of Luke, pagan fertility cults, the Last Supper, the Apocalypse, the quest for the Holy Grail, Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. These allusions serve as a fertile ground for triggering both optimistic and pessimistic ideas about the possibility of man's salvation, thus shedding light on the ambiguous nature of the open-ended poem.

The events depicted in the poem took place in April, the month of Christ's resurrection (*The Waste Land*, 1). Christ, the Hanged Man (*The Waste Land* 55) at first not found in the Wasteland (*The Waste Land* 53-54) reappears later in the scene echoing the one from the Gospel of Luke (*The Waste Land* 340-346). The words "HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME", that appear five times throughout the poem suggest the apocalypse - the world's end should come any time soon and make sure you are prepared for it (*The Waste Land* 141, 152, 165, 168, 169).

The subtitle of the third section of the poem, *The Fire Sermon*, is the Buddhist sermon that carries the implications of purification (*The Waste Land* 173). It stands as a bridge the author seeks to establish between the East and the West, thus bridging the gap between different religious practices and offering to the 20th and 21st citizen an optimistic message of everlasting acceptance of differences and triumphant embracing of shared values. Namely, the final lines of this section of the poem with the reference to Buddha and St. Augustine, the two representatives of eastern and western asceticism, that is, to the Buddha's Fire Sermon which consists of repetition "Burning burning burning burning" (*The Waste Land* 308) and St. Augustine's *Confessions* "O Lord Thou pluckest me out" (*The Waste Land* 309) read more optimistic meanings to the poem. The world has sinned a lot. It needs repentance, purification and forgiveness. The mere realization and acknowledgement of existence of the sin is a precondition for the creation of a new life.

The salvation is possible if the Eliot's protagonist takes the identity of the Christ the Sufferer who was crucified: "He who was living is now dead/ We who were living are now dying" (*The Waste Land* 328-329). The Christ suffers on the behalf of his own and the sins of the whole world. The idea of man's

reuniting with God is suggested through the man's touching bottom that is, his facing the worst possible state or condition. Man is literary and symbolically thirsty. He desperately needs water and knowledge, but no such things are available to him in the Wasteland, at least not until he goes through the whole process of purification through suffering: "Here is no water but only rock" (*The Waste Land* 331); "If there were water we should stop and drink/Amongst the rock one cannot stop and think" (*Waste Land* 335-336); "If there were only water amongst the rock" (*The Waste Land* 338); "If there were water/ And no rock/If there were rock/And also water/And water" (*The Waste Land* 346-350); "If there were the sound of water only" (*The Waste Land* 353); "Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop/ But there is no water" (*The Waste Land* 358-359). There is no water in the place where the man is now. There is only desert and the fevered mind, moving to and fro between two worlds, the mind that begins to hallucinate.

The possibility of man's communication with God is echoed in the passage depicting the Biblical episode from the Gospel of Luke:

"Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
But who is that on the other side of you?"

(*The Waste Land* 360-366)

This scene described in the Gospel of Luke takes place on that first Easter Sunday, when two of Christ's downtrodden disciples, while on the road to village some seven miles from Jerusalem, discuss catastrophic events and witness Jesus's sudden presence. It was only later when the disciples did recognize Jesus.

The Fire Sermon skillfully combines the above-mentioned elements of Christianity with Hinduism and ancient fertility rituals

depicted in *What the Thunder Said*, the final section of the poem. These elements may have been brought together for issuing a warning about the end of the (old) world and suggesting a possibility of creation of a new one. Eliot's religious references to Hindu holy books, the Upanishads, occupy the central place of the final section of the poem, where the phrase originating from these books ('DA') is repeated three times (*The Waste Land*, 401, 411, 418).

The Upanishads include a story about gods, demons and humans who ask Brahman, the highest deity, what the most important lessons for them to understand are. Each of them gets the same answer from the Brahman and it reads 'DA'. Demons interpret the word as 'compassion', humans as 'give' and gods a 'self-restraint'. Different meanings of 'DA' are the author's commentary on the human race as a whole. The ending of the poem coincides with the ending of the Hindu Upanishads, 'shantih, shantih, shantih' (*The Waste Land*, 434), translated as 'the peace that passeth understanding'. Unlike the previous sections of the poem that deal with death and the waste land, the last section relishes freedom and peace. Eliot refers here to Paul's words: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ" (Philippians: 4:7).

Shantih, Buddhist equivalent of peace, can be experienced but not understood and shared. The poem seems to suggest that the world has changed. Eliot laments for the loss of a shared value, something that might hold us together, be that freedom, peace or religion. Can *The Wasteland* be a poem of our time? By directly addressing the reader: "You! Hypocrite lecteur! – mon semblable, - mon frère", Eliot issues a warning that *The Wasteland* is something that also happens to the 21st century man who witnesses schisms of traditional religions and the rise of many innovative religious groups.

New Religious Movements

Eliot's poem, composed after the WWI, envisioned the appearance and rise of the new religious practices of the 21st century. In the world where man's reliance on traditional

religion is on the verge to burst at the seams, one cannot but wonder whether new religious movements might be a powerful means to help man regain his faith. In his sociologist study entitled *Religious Sects* (1970), Brian R. Wilson discusses the origin of the new religious movements and their typology. The idea why they are formed coincides with the idea this paper relies on. Namely, the new religious movements (NRMs) are the result of instability and uncertainty that are omnipresent in people's lives, especially after the World War II (Wilson, 1970). The period after the WWII is marked by the great process of destabilization of religious structure in Serbia, too (Blagojević 2015: 109).

Eileen Barker's definition of NRMs also confirms the time of their expansion. Namely, Barker explains that „a NRM is new in so far as it has become visible in its present form since the Second World War, and that it is religious in so far as it offers not merely narrow theological statements about the existence and nature of supernatural beings, but that it proposes answers to at least some of the other kinds of ultimate questions that have traditionally been addressed by mainstream religions. Questions such as: Is there a God? Who am I? How might I find direction, meaning and purpose in life? Is there life after death? Is there more to human beings than their physical bodies and immediate interactions with others?“ (Barker 1999, 16). The end of the 60s and the beginning of the 70s of the 20th century is marked by the greatest expansion of NRMs. NRMs promote the sense of belonging, charismatic leaders, exotic origin, the new life style, and great participation of young people. At the core of new religious movements are the uniqueness of each human being, ethical, or moral reasons, and the expression of one's personality (Stojković-Zlatanović, Sovilj 2017, 182). Barker also includes the unambiguous clarity and certainty in the belief systems as wells as strong Them/Us and/or Before/After distinctions (Barker 1999, 20). Some NRMs developed from the eastern religions. However, there are also various Christian movements such as (Neo) charismatic Movement, Prayer Movement, Christian fundamentalism/ ecumenism/ Family Movement/ naturism/ Torah- submission/, Zionism, Evangelical movement, folk religion, etc. Brian Wilson provided a sociological

typology to analyze NRMs: Conversionist (Salvation Army and Pentecostalism), Revolutionist (Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses), Introversionist (Hutterites and Amish), Gnostic-manipulationist (Christian Science and Scientology), Thaumaturgical (Spiritualism), Reformist (Quakers), and Utopian (Oneida Community) (Wilson 1969, 1970, 1973).

Today, society and law rely on the same principle, the principle of securing humane, non-degrading and equal treatment of social groups and/or individuals who differ from the majority (Stojković-Zlatanović 2015, 388). NRMs differ from each other in their origins, beliefs, practices, organization, leadership, finances, life style, and attitudes to women, children, education and moral questions, so it is not so easy to generalize about them or to produce typologies (Barker 1999, 20). In the study *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life* (1984), Roy Wallis presented the typology based on the relationship each individual group has towards society in general. There are world-rejecting movements (Hare Krishna, God's Children, Peoples Temple, Manson Family), world-affirming movements (Scientology, Transcendental Meditation, Silva method, Soka Gakkai, New Age movement) and world-accommodating movements (Subud, Aetherius Society, Charismatic Renewal movement, Neo-Pentecostalism).

The world-accommodating movements are the closest to the traditional religion. Neo-Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit can be heard through the mediums that can speak incomprehensible worlds in the state of trance. The expansion of Pentecostal movement in the West is marked during the 60s of the twentieth century (Williams 1991, Đorđević 2007). Even though the first missionaries appeared in Serbia relatively early (Bjelajac 2003, 2010, Todorović 2011), the spirituality of the small religious communities was still under the influence of traditional religions (Todorović and Đorđević 2017). The largest number of Pentecostals has been traced in southeastern Serbia, especially with the Roma population as ethnic minority (Đorđević 2005, Todorović 2012).

There is a constant rise of new religious movements in modern era. In Gordon Melton's *Encyclopedia of American*

Religions, originally published in 1978, religious groups are divided into families and 1,200 different religious organizations were identified. Amazingly, the number of entries has grown to more than 2,300 independent religious groups as of 2008 (Melton 2009). However, Melton excludes the human potential groups from his Encyclopedia (Barker 1999). In Japan the number of NRMs varied from 800 to a few thousand (Shimazono 1999, 3), while there were 10,000 new religions with 12 million more adherents in among the tribal peoples of Americas, Asia, Africa and the Pacific (Turner 1984, 232). However, these numbers are relative since untold numbers of new religions may be found in India; several hundred exist in South America, Australia, New Zealand, the West Indies, Korea, and the Philippines (Barker 1999, 16).

In 2004 Christopher Partridge presented a new typology of religions entitled *The Encyclopedia of New Religions: New Religious Movements, Sects and Alternative Spiritualities*. Partridge divided alternative religions into nine groups according to the basic religious traditions or ideologies in which their origins can be traced: new religions, sects and alternative spiritualities whose origins can be traced in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, etc. (Partridge 2006).

Stark and Bainbridge draw distinction between 'sects' and 'cults', whereby sects are likely to appear when traditional religions are strong, while cults emerge when traditional religions are weak (Stark and Bainbridge, 1987).

As Barker pointed out, it is difficult to make generalizations regarding NRMs. Almost all typologies have their flaws. Even though Roy Willis's typology provides relatively useful distinction of NRMs, it fails to help us to anticipate the "empirical characteristics that might follow from the *defining* characteristics of each category" (Barker, 1999, 20). Namely, Wilson's typology does not recognize some religious communities since they do not fit into any of the categories mentioned, while some of them may simultaneously be put into more than one. Wallis's typology is too broad, and it does not leave any room for differences in religious teachings and practices. Melton's classification, apart from overlapping of some categories, pays

too much attention to the family of the saints and leaves out numerous new African or Japanese religious movements. As the number and types of religious organizations are constantly changing, the question of re-considering the existing forms comes to mind.

NRMs can undoubtedly contribute to our understanding of the society (Barker 1999, 26). According to Barker, NRMs may function as “a barometer of at least what some members of a society feel they need but is not being supplied by other means” (26). Namely, NRMs offer enthusiastic rituals of worship and healing and acceptance of something because it is there rather than because it is sought. Barker also claims that it is the repressive nature of the regime that made people become attracted to NRMs (26). On the other hand, since cults and sects are on the rise together with people’s concern with certain negative aspects of their teachings, i.e. brainwashing, break up of the family, financial considerations, traditional religions may use the challenges of the NRMs to incorporate changes into their own practices.

The processes that occur within the movements and between them and the wider society, as well as the societal reaction to them are undoubtedly to be better studied and understood in the future.

Conclusion

In the last few decades religion has become a part of man’s private and individual sphere and the religious position that many people in the West hold boils down to the statement: “You don’t have to go to Church to be a good Christian”. The true religious man is aware of the contradictions that exist in different religions and knows that theology is the creation of both, man and God. Church is, therefore, God’s instrument given into man’s hands (Nikolić 2013, 114). Mainstream religious organisations have suffered significant losses of membership in most of Europe and, according to some, though not all, commentators, in the United States (Barker 1999, 16). Speaking of

religion in modern time means speaking of folk religion, that is subjective faith and the ways of strengthening and encouraging religious individualism, denominations, sects, cults and new religious movements. Modern man's religiosity has no fixed identity. One chooses on his own volition what he/she wants to accept from which traditional religion or new religious movement. Thus, man is in danger of falling into abyss of nihilism reflected in brevity of experiencing the sacred, emptiness, indifference and apathy. It might be quite difficult to expect and ask from the 21st century man to embrace traditional religion without its previous adjustment to his own needs, his sensibility and his own understanding. Man constantly changes, grows, adjusts to his environment, so is his religiosity. The foundations of a new life might be brought up against the ruins, as in *The Waste Land*. Drought and barrenness are behind the Fisher man, but what is in front of him? The three life principles in the end of the *Waste Land* are followed by the words in Sanskrit denoting peace that passes all understanding. Achieving peace is the core of religion and man's spirituality. Whether man is to achieve it through embracing traditional religions or new religious movements it is of no great importance. Understanding NRMs is, however, of crucial importance, since it can help us learn a lot about our society. It can also help us detect the problems the 21st century man faces but traditional religion somehow oversees.

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