

Victor Shnirelman

The End of the World or the Beginning of a New Cycle? Ideas of the End of Times in Christianity and Esoteric Beliefs¹

Eschatological expectations reached a very high pitch in Russia at the end of 2012. The state media found it necessary more than once to calm the citizens' agitation, and even President Putin took part in this. In the end the world did not come to an end, but this did not remove the actual idea, which is worthy of special analysis. Where did it come from, how did it survive to the present day, in what circles is it perpetuated, and, above all, how is it understood today? Having arisen in a religious context, it has received many interpretations and been borrowed from one religious tradition to another, receiving new forms and being expertly adapted to particular milieux in response to their expectations (see, for example, [De Laubier 2004; Bultmann 2012]). In essence, it is a broad, many-faceted problem which has disturbed people for two millennia and still troubles them today. Here I shall consider only how it is represented in the most popular Christian and esoteric doctrines — how they understand the end of the world, with what they connect it and whom they see as its agents, and, finally, wherein the differences between Christian and esoteric understandings of the historical process lie, and how the approaches of the main esoteric doctrines differ.²

Victor Shnirelman

Institute of Ethnology
and Anthropology,
Russian Academy of Sciences,
Moscow, Russia
shnirv@mail.ru

¹ The research was funded by the RGNF under the terms of research project 12-01-00312, 'Contemporary Religion: Tolerance or Radicalism?'

² At this level the subject has hardly been studied [Bokov 2010]. But as the Swiss author acknowledges, eschatology as a whole has rarely received specialist attention [De Laubier 2004: 8].

I intend to focus here on the eschatological concepts and attitudes that took shape or manifested themselves during the twentieth century. However, the elucidation of the meaning of some of the most important concepts and their evolution will necessarily require a consideration of earlier periods. It goes without saying that there is a great diversity of versions and interpretations of ‘the end of times’ within both Christianity and esoteric doctrines. Therefore within the context of the comparative historical analysis which forms the mainstay of the present work, firstly, stress will be laid on certain common features belonging to the majority of popular versions of the Apocalypse, secondly, only the most important of the said doctrines will be considered, and thirdly, within Christianity, Russian Orthodoxy will receive special attention. This all needs to be known in view of the ambiguous social and psychological role of mystical and esoteric doctrines, which have obtained unprecedented currency among the general public over the last twenty or twenty-five years, mostly thanks to the mass media [Rozin 1997].

In many contemporary religions the idea of the ‘end of times’ plays a major role. However, whereas Christians expect a complete end, culminating in the Last Judgment, for those esoteric writers who have adopted the Hindu view of the cyclical nature of time, it is a matter of the end of one age (*kali yuga*) and the transition to another (*satya yuga*). Nevertheless, the esotericism that has grown up on Western soil has not divested itself of Christian outlooks either.

The Revelation of St John the Divine

It will be remembered that the Revelation of St John the Divine contains prophecy about the times immediately preceding the Last Judgment. It speaks, firstly, of dreadful natural catastrophes (famine, earthquakes, poisoned rivers, plagues, etc.) and people perishing in masses, as a result of their sins, and secondly of the coming of the Antichrist and the cruel persecution of those Christians who have remained faithful to the doctrine of Jesus Christ. The Antichrist is represented as an earthly man acting at Satan’s prompting. Having a supple mind and exceptional gifts as an orator, he manages to draw the overwhelming majority of people over to his side, to become the lord of the world, and to introduce a single religion of his own. He succeeds in seducing even a large number of the hierarchs of the church, who transgress the Christian commandments, which is called the apostasy. All these horrors continue for three and a half years, after which the heavenly powers are victorious and the wrath of God descends upon the heads of the apostates. Babylon in particular, a sink of sin and abomination, is destined to perish. Finally the Saviour comes to earth, vanquishes the dragon (Satan) and puts him in chains. There follows the thousand-year reign of Christ, reserved for those

who have not worshipped the beast (Antichrist); they are resurrected, but the followers of the beast have to wait another thousand years. At the end of that time Satan is loosed from his chains, gathers his armies together and fights the last battle against God. God defeats all his enemies and condemns them to eternal torment. At the Last Judgment the dead receive 'according to their works': the righteous receive new life, and sinners end up in 'the lake of fire'. Then Jerusalem revives and becomes the abode of the redeemed.

The text of the Apocalypse is full of complex symbolic images, which at different times and on the lips of different authors have received the most varied treatment; this has prepared the ground for prophecies, which have become more active in times of crisis [Derevensky 2000a; 2007]. Eschatological expectations have been excited both by chronological landmarks derived from Holy Scripture (for example, the years 492 and 1492, which marked respectively six and 7 000 years from the creation of the world), and the ends of centuries and more particularly millennia, and by social and military cataclysms. The struggle between competing religions has also played a part (see, for example, [Belyaev 1898, II: 946–67; Filaret 1902: 3–5; *Konets mira* 1912: 8–10; Fomin 1993: 14–18; Shakhnovich 1996: 240–5; Trachtenberg 1998: 35–6; Derevensky 2000b: 12–13; Fast 2009: 64]. One modern author has counted no less than twenty historical periods when people were in fearful expectation of the apocalypse [Tsybin 2000: 55–90].

Christianity and the esoteric view of the historical process

Both the Christian and esoteric views of the historical process are based on the concept of involution, which presumes a movement from a golden age towards degradation and dissolution. But if the Christian chronotope assumes linear time, the esoteric gives greater significance to its cyclic movement. The Christian view looks back to an ancient piety and does not admit of any evolution, whereas the esoteric combines the notion of the decline and extinction of particular races with a belief in the evolution of humanity as a whole. Each new race proves incomparably more advanced than its predecessor. The Christian world awaits an absolute end, whereas for the esoteric the end is only the completion of a particular cycle, after which the life of humanity will continue, though under a new form. Therefore the Christian world-view is full of pessimism (see, for example [Kuraev 1999]), while the esoteric radiates optimism; Christianity lives in nostalgia for the good old days, and the esoteric presses on towards future delights. At the core of the Church's doctrine is Christ, but esotericism stresses mighty humanity and planetary messianism. For esoteric writers Christ is no more than a herald of the bright future [De Laubier 2004: 118, 124].

In Christianity 'the last times' are connected with natural catastrophes, but many Christians are afraid not of them, but of the Antichrist, since the spiritual catastrophe that his coming will bring, i.e. the abolition of Christianity, will eclipse all physical sufferings. With its veneer of scientism, esotericism allots a much greater role to natural and cosmic catastrophes. Here it is a matter of changes in the angle of the Earth's axis, switching of the magnetic poles, peculiar behaviour of the moon and, of course, dreadful geological cataclysms. All this is supposed to result in worldwide floods, which destroyed the legendary continent of Lemuria, and later drowned the no less legendary Atlantis. The destruction of the continents led to the extinction of the human races (the third and fourth respectively) associated with them. Esotericism has obviously taken the idea of the flood from the Old Testament, but whereas Christianity has long regarded it symbolically, the esoteric writers have tried to find a pseudo-scientific basis for it.

In Christianity, the primacy of the subject and of free will is paramount. Here people construct their own fates and are responsible for condemning themselves to perdition. The end of the world comes upon humanity because of its sins, and it may be delayed only by righteous living. Esotericism, on the other hand, appeals to science and to the operation of inexorable laws: each race is allotted a limited (though prolonged) number of years, after which it must inevitably cease to exist. True, righteous living is rewarded here too: the best of the old race do not perish, but merge with the new race. Esotericism has inherited the idea of reincarnation from Hinduism: the law of karma means that happiness is prepared for the righteous in their next birth. Therefore a righteous life is rewarded in either case.

For this reason it is hard to agree with V. M. Rozin when he states in absolute terms that religion is concerned with collective salvation, and esotericism with an individual road to salvation [Rozin 1996: 14]. This is contradicted, on the one hand, by the Christian position on free will, and on the other by Russian esoteric writers' enthusiasm for 'Russian cosmism', which is directed not towards individuals but towards peoples or towards humankind as a whole. It is easier to agree with Rozin's view that esotericism grants the primary role to self-awareness and self-perfection, calling for the construction of a comfortable, albeit illusory world [Rozin 2001: 116–25]. However, some doctrines, for example Gurdjieff's, are concerned not with the righteous, but with the 'adept'. Indeed, salvation in esotericism is connected not so much with right behaviour as with advancement along the road of self-awareness, and attention is given not to prayer, but to particular psychological techniques. Taking this into consideration, one must distinguish esoteric theory (cosmogony), which deals with populations *en masse*, from esoteric practice, directed towards personal self-perfection. Moreover, esoteric practices for

expanding consciousness are currently more in demand than theory [Balagushkin 2001: 238]. In the present article, however, it is with the theoretical constructions that we are concerned.

The Apocalypse in Christian tradition

Eschatological ideas about natural catastrophes relate principally to the distant past. When it is a question of the approaching 'end of times', both Christianity and esotericism pay much more attention to social processes. Many Christians expect the Antichrist, and are concerned about when he will come and where from, and who will be his army. At this point the Jewish question arises, and it is by no means by chance that antisemitic attitudes have accompanied apocalyptic expectations since early Christian times [Trachtenberg 1998: 30–41]. This was determined by rivalry, since not only Christians, but Jews too were awaiting the coming of their Messiah. For Christians the Jewish Messiah was unambiguously associated with the 'false prophet' who was to appear in order to turn people away from Christ and subject them to his wicked will. Is it surprising that this messiah was very early identified by them with the Antichrist as 'king of the Jews'? Moreover, some early Christian leaders thought of the coming of Antichrist as the temporary victory of the Jews, who thanks to him would be able to return to their homeland, restore their kingdom, rebuild Solomon's temple and obtain power over 'the nations'. All this was to be accompanied by persecution of Christians, for the Fathers of the Church had an unambiguous view of the Jews as the Church's worst enemies [Derevensky 2000b: 21–3].¹

The legend of the Antichrist was widely current among Christians in the later Middle Ages, but in modern times the West lost interest in the Antichrist [Bogoslovsky 1885: 275–86; Emerson 1981]. In Russia things took a different turn. At first the Old Believers identified the Antichrist with Patriarch Nikon, and later with Peter I [Panchenko 1984: 54–5; Guryanova 1988: 23–60; Zenkovsky 2009: 187–9, 256–7]. The next wave of interest in 'the last times' came in the second half of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth, when many people were expecting the beginning of a 'New Age', which looked more like the 'age of Antichrist' to conservatives. It was at this point that the mystic Sergei Nilus appeared with his 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion', which were nothing less than a programme for the coming of the Antichrist, allegedly put into practice by Jews and Freemasons [Partridge, Geaves 2007: 85; Hagemeister 2012]. No matter how much experts

¹ On the essential antisemitism of this approach see, for example, [Dudakov 1993: 143–7, 152–68; Laqueur 1994: 97–100; Bagdasaryan 1999; Hagemeister 1999; Derevensky 2000b: 21–4; Murav 2000; Rossman 2002: 200–1; Verkhovskiy 2003: 65–72; Hagemeister 2012].

unmasked this pamphlet as a forgery concocted by the secret police, its defenders constantly appealed to the assertion that world events were proceeding exactly as described in the 'Protocols'.¹

Whereas in the Middle Ages it was believed that the Antichrist would come from Babylon or Persia, some Russian priests developed the idea that the Antichrist could be expected to come from the West. How and why did this happen? These early ideas had been formed under the influence of Holy Scripture, which spoke of the ten tribes of Israel that had gone away far to the East. One of these was the tribe of Dan, with which the birth of the Antichrist was associated. But the period of romanticism, and of the nationalism to which it gave birth, changed all this. Now the efforts of various Russian priests to prove the truth of Orthodoxy in opposition to Catholicism or Protestantism coincided with the desire of Russian nationalists to set Russia apart from the West. The political confrontation harmonised with the religious rivalry. Twentieth-century events only gave fresh impulse to these attitudes and the efforts of the Western churches to improve their relations with the Jews were interpreted by the conservative Russian clergy as the first step on the road to apostasy and efforts to clear the way for the Antichrist.

There was a further underlying cause too. The long and vain wait for the Antichrist required an explanation. It was found in the Apostle Paul's reference to him 'who now letteth' (II Thess. ii 7), who was preventing the Antichrist from coming into the world. There has been considerable theological debate over the proper understanding of this entity 'who now letteth'. It has been seen as the Roman Empire, the Roman emperor, the Holy Church, the Holy Spirit, and so on. However, the idea that it was the Emperor of Russia became popular amongst Russian priests in the nineteenth century [Belyaev 1898, II: 473–646]. Indeed, the Roman Empire had fallen, Byzantium was no more, Christianity was riven by schism, and only the Russian Empire, as the 'Third Rome' with the Tsar at its head, manfully defended the principles of the 'true faith'.

However, these ideas were sorely tested in 1917, when the revolution not only led to the monarch's abdication, but to his being shot along with his whole family. During the years of the Civil War, and immediately afterwards, the apocalyptic atmosphere reached its highest pitch. But despite all the horrors of the revolution, the Antichrist still did not appear. Once again it was necessary to look for him 'who now letteth'. Some looked to the Mother of God, others to the Church, but the conviction gradually spread that it was none other than Russia itself and the Russian people

¹ For more detail on the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' see [Kon 1990; Burtsev 1991; Dudakov 1993: 140–68; Ben-Itto 2001; De Michelis 2006; Tagieff 2011].

[Hagemeister 2011]. During the Cold War these inclinations intensified, and in the post-Soviet period they coincided with a new wave of anti-Western sentiment. This once more assured the faithful that the Antichrist could be expected to come from the West, where, as many priests were teaching, there was a departure from the Christian faith and Satanism was spreading. There are whole tracts being published in Russia today proving that it is incompatible with the Western 'civilisation of the Beast' and that it resists it, while the West, in alliance with the chief agents of Antichrist, the Jews and Freemasons, dreams of doing away with Russia. In this situation Russia is presented as the saviour of the whole world, restraining the coming of Antichrist and of Satan. In this context the possible fall of Russia is understood as threatening the collapse of all humanity, which would in this case be left with no defence against the infernal powers. That really would be the end of the world (see, for example, [Nazarov 1999]).

The Apocalypse in the esoteric tradition

Esotericism has a completely different view of this, which originated in response to the turbulent social processes of modernisation which destroyed the traditional values inherited from the Middle Ages. It particularly reflects a disillusion with the slogans of the Enlightenment, which had promised the coming of the reign of reason and social justice, but led instead to a senseless race for power and wealth, to schisms and nationalistic conflicts, to dictatorships, horrendous world wars and genocide. Nor had science been any help, but had created its own myths with their attendant superstitions and prejudices. But people did not give up their belief in a bright future. All this helped to make esotericism popular as a sort of secret knowledge of laws invisible to the human eye, which revealed the meaning of social progress and promised to create a just society in the New Age. In other words, for many of our contemporaries esotericism has easily replaced the discredited ideas of communism. Moreover, paradoxical though it may be, the esotericism that used to call itself 'secret knowledge' destined for the chosen few has now turned itself into 'science for the masses' [Rozin 1996; 2002: 6–26; Fesenkova 2001c; Khen 2001; De Laubier 2004: 108–10; Balagushkin 2008].

Understanding the social prestige of science, many esoteric writers have attempted to synthesise science and religion, and make constant appeal to science [Kasavin 1990; Fesenkova 2001a; Pakhomov 2010: 84], and have sometimes even insisted that they are not religious. At the same time, the laws they deduced were founded rather on faith than on experimental science, and the scientific knowledge they employed turned out as a rule to be out of date, second-hand, and

therefore distorted [Zorya 2010].¹ Furthermore, in esoteric texts this knowledge lost the dynamism natural to science and looked more like frozen dogmas. Thus early esoteric writers took up the theory of polygenism, popular in the middle of the nineteenth century, and their followers have preserved it to this day, though it has long been disproved by science. The theory of cyclicism and ideas about involution, the origin of human races (or some of them at least) from other planets, the evolutionary replacement of one race by another, the law of karma and reincarnation, the universal flood, and ancient civilisations supposed to have existed in antediluvian times on drowned continents have proved equally durable esoteric dogmas.² All difficult problems are solved by esoterics by reference to the Great Teachers who are supposed to be in control of human development. And although no one has seen them, the myth of the Great Teachers practically replaces faith in God in esoteric doctrines. In essentially the same way, esotericism, which dreamt of a single planetary religion, has turned all the founders of world religions (Zoroaster, Moses, Christ, Buddha, Mohammed) into the prophets and bearers of a holy knowledge which is basically one and the same. Esotericism draws upon the Manichaeic doctrine of a struggle between the powers of light and the powers of darkness. It also accepts the belief in the construction of a just and prosperous society on earth, which the Church defines as chiliasm and regards as a heresy, since according to its teaching such a kingdom can only exist in Heaven.

There was a demand, in a society disillusioned with traditional religions, for esotericism, as it promised people redemption and salvation, which elicited a response particularly from intellectuals in times of disturbance and crisis. Therefore it is no accident at all that an interest in esotericism flared up twice: at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, and after the Second World War. The second wave reached Russia at the end of the 1960s and continued to grow until the very end of the twentieth century, when esotericism received powerful support from the media [Rozin 1997; 2002: 15].

In esotericism it is not a matter of the end of the world, but of a change of ages: the Age of Pisces must give way to the Age of Aquarius. This is nothing to be sad about, but quite the reverse, a joyful event. The new, young, sixth race is coming into being, and with it the world will be renewed. Esoteric writers expect this to result

¹ However, the question of the relationship between the rational and the irrational in present-day esotericism is debatable. In the words of one author, in Mme Blavatsky's teachings the rational was intricately combined with the irrational [Falikov 2007: 30], but other scholars suppose that there is a significant preponderance of the rational over the irrational in esoteric ideas [Fesenkova 2001b].

² The racial theory formulated by Mme Blavatsky in the nineteenth century retains its significance for esotericism even today: see, for example [Kolesov 2009: 21–5].

in the end of war, the coalescence of all peoples into a single humanity with a single world government and a single religion — that is, precisely what Christians are afraid of at the coming of Antichrist. By contrast, when they acknowledge and revere Jesus Christ as one of their prophets, many esoteric writers accuse the Church of distorting the true doctrines of Christianity and regard the two-thousand-year Age of Pisces as the last stage in the dark and cruel time of *kali yuga*.

There are many versions of the esoteric understanding of human history, developed by various representatives of this school of thought. The present article will give a review of the most significant doctrines, which have founded national traditions;¹ in Russia this basically means Helena Blavatsky and Helena Roerich.

Mme Blavatsky's Theosophy

Mme Blavatsky's contribution was particularly great; she presented Theosophy not as a religion, but as forgotten ancient knowledge. This knowledge, which was the same for everybody, was supposed to have been received by the fifth ('Aryan') race from some divine being. With the passage of time it became fragmented and distorted, and then the clergy tried to eradicate it altogether and replace it with a new religion [Blavatsky 1991, I: 22–31]. Thus began a dark age of the decline of morals and unprecedented wickedness, hatred and cruelty. This was not, however, provoked by the approach of the Apocalypse, but by the laws of nature. Following an Indian tradition,² Blavatsky was a supporter of cyclicism and believed that like a person, races and peoples went through stages of growth, development, ageing and death [Blavatsky 1991, II: 555]. In other words, evolution was a property of humanity as a whole, while each individual race was subject to involution. Blavatsky defined this as 'a double evolution in two opposite directions': progressive physical evolution is inevitably accompanied by a decline in the spiritual and psychic principle [Blavatsky 1991, II: 105, 134]. This is supposed to favour the coming of 'the Prince of Darkness', i.e. apocalyptic phenomena.

Blavatsky connected the development of each race with a particular continent, and its destruction was predetermined by natural catastrophes, above all the flood. However, according to Blavatsky, the waning of 'an enfeebled race' was accompanied by its physical extermination by the representatives of the new race, but these latter

¹ Although esoteric doctrines are profoundly individual, it is permissible, somewhat conventionally, to group them into national traditions which have certain common features and proceed from their founding teachers.

² According to researchers, Blavatsky significantly distorted Hindu and Buddhist ideas. Therefore, even if she did call for a synthesis of science and religion, science in her constructions was devoid of all common sense. See: [Falikov 2001: 175, 179; Fesenkova 2001c: 12–20].

bore no guilt for it — it was a matter of ‘karmic necessity’ [Blavatsky 1991, I: 345; 1992, II: 985–6]. True, races did not disappear either instantaneously or completely. Remnants of former races remained, but led a miserable existence on the margins of the new civilisation. This, according to Blavatsky, was the reason for the significant differences between the mental capacities of races. Therefore she saw nothing strange in identifying ‘inferior races’ that were supposed to be condemned to extinction by ‘the law of karma’. She even referred to them as ‘semi-animals’, the result of a ‘defect’ in the process of creation [Blavatsky 1991, II: 124, 198, 205–6, 235, 239–41, 390, 407]. All this reproduced a racist discourse of a traditional colonial type.

At the same time, in Blavatsky’s opinion, the remnants of the former race partly mingled with the younger race, since ‘sinners’ perished and ‘saints’ were saved. Consequently Blavatsky was not afraid of the processes of racial mixing which became problematic for her successors. But on occasion she referred to miscegenation as ‘an exception to the rule’ [Blavatsky 1991, II: 239, 351, 430].

She did not appear to be interested in the details of the transitional processes from one age to another. Therefore she even regarded the Great Flood as an allegory of an evolutionary jump [Blavatsky 1991, II: 170]. True, she acknowledged the existence of world floods, but did not apparently give them any apocalyptic significance, with the exception of the two which, according to her, had swallowed up Lemuria and Atlantis [Blavatsky 1991, II: 171–2, 176–8, 385]. Blavatsky connected the floods with changes in the angle of the Earth’s axis and accompanying geological shifts, that is, she provided completely earthly explanations for them. In her words, it was not a question of punishment for sins, but of a ‘periodic geological law’ [ibid.: 337, 385, 505]. True, she was obsessed by the mystic number seven, and maintained that over the entire course of human existence the Earth’s axis would shift seven times, which, according to the ‘law of karma’, would lead to the replacement of races [Blavatsky 1991, II: 404].

No less important, in her view, were the processes of decay and degradation to which races were immanently subject as a result of the same ‘law of karma’. It is notable that she regarded the Semites as a group of ‘Aryans’ who were spiritually decadent but materially perfected. At the same time she held that the origin of the Jews was in South India, where their ancestors were supposed to have been connected with the *Chandala* (‘Untouchables’) and were Brahmins who had been forced to flee from persecution to Chaldea and Iran [Blavatsky 1991, II: 244–5].¹ She kept the term ‘the Chosen People’ for the fifth, ‘Aryan’ race [Blavatsky 1991, II: 527].

¹ There is indeed a myth among the Chitpavans of Maharashtra that they have links to the Jews [Glushkova 1993], which was evidently used by Blavatsky, putting her own meaning on it.

The figure of Antichrist is completely absent in Blavatsky, and her understanding of Satan is completely different from the Christian one. As she tried to restore the 'lost knowledge', she maintained that the Devil had originally been regarded as 'the son of God', Lucifer, that is, the light that emanates from the Cosmos [Blavatsky 1991, I: 117–23; 1991, II: 36–40, 254–63, 278–98, 466–80]. In ancient religions she found a link between the Devil and divine wisdom and perfection, and also with rebirth and immortality, and suggested that the Jews, followed by the Church, had distorted his image in favour of their own doctrines. For Blavatsky Satan was a bright image, and therefore there was no place in her teachings either for the Apocalypse or for the Antichrist. She expected that in the New Age Christianity would be overcome and all humankind would merge into a single community with one religion and one language.

The sources of the French esoteric tradition

Mme Blavatsky's younger contemporary Alexandre Saint-Yves d'Alveydre took a completely different approach to these questions, and retained the idea of the coming of Antichrist and the Last Judgment [Saint-Yves d'Alveydre 1884]. While Blavatsky was hostile to Christianity, Saint-Yves d'Alveydre regarded himself as a faithful Catholic and stressed the connexion between Christianity and Judaism. He extolled the Jews and the Talmud for preserving the ancient 'secret (esoteric) knowledge' which they had once received from the 'black race' that had preceded them. He admired Moses, regarding him as the bearer of universal truth, and saw the Jews as servants of a universal mission and accused Christian despots of persecuting them. At the same time he rejected polytheism and 'ethnic cults' for assisting the disintegration of the original ancient empire. He called for all humanity to unite under the aegis of the single Truth, which was supposed to be contained in all the main religions. He dreamt of a single democratic world state where justice would triumph. This was what he saw as the counterweight to the Antichrist.

In other words, while Blavatsky shared the colonial paradigm and allowed that in some cases a native population might be exterminated, Saint-Yves feared an uprising in Asia and advised the 'white race' to mitigate its regime of domination and to seek an alliance with the peoples of Asia and Africa [Saint-Yves d'Alveydre 1915: 85–6]. In fact he spoke out against colonialism and saw an alliance of all the peoples of the Earth as leading to victory in the fight against the evil emanating from the Antichrist. In the Jews and the Freemasons he discovered not servants of Antichrist, but, on the contrary, the incarnation of a universal principle capable of uniting humanity. His pupil Papus (Gérard Encausse) on the whole maintained the same

positions, as did Édouard Schuré. True, Schuré disapproved of racial mixing. He saw it as an inevitability, which led to degeneration, and thence to decline. This was precisely what he observed in the ‘Aryans’ (‘the white race’), who had once been able to found high civilisations. Whereas when Saint-Yves had spoken of the emergence of the Jews from the mixing of the black and white races he had viewed it positively — for the Jews had been able to adopt the wisdom of the more ancient black race and pass it on to the whites — Schuré, who attributed such an origin to all Semitic people, saw it as the basis for the fundamental differences between Semites and Aryans. Admittedly he suggested that truth arises out of the combination of such opposing qualities and that this is precisely what modern people possess [Schuré 1914: 19–29].

Austrian Ariosophy

Whereas the thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, from Rousseau to Gobineau, had only reasoned about the connexion of purity to power and energy, for their successors at the beginning of the twentieth century this left the realm of abstract concepts and became an object of actual practice. To their way of thinking, which flowed out of racial theorising, inner moral qualities were closely connected with external physical appearance, and now the fair-haired, blue-eyed ‘Aryans’ were endowed with a nobility, sense of honour and courage that set them apart from ‘inferior races’ [Goodrick-Clarke 1995: 13].

This was enthusiastically welcomed in Germany and Austria where, in answer to modernisation and the beginnings of globalisation, Austrian Ariosophy began to branch off from Theosophy, identifying Germanism with Protestantism and protesting against a world-wide ‘Catholic conspiracy’. Ariosophy was informed by social Darwinism, and unlike Theosophy was concerned for racial purity and rejected the idea of the unity of humanity. Its originator, Guido von List, made large use of Mme Blavatsky’s constructs, but he replaced her ‘Aryans’ with ‘Aryo-Germans’, whom he understood not only as a biological race, but as a ‘master race’. He identified them with the ‘fifth race’, rejecting any idea of the brotherhood of peoples or the unity of humankind. List retained the idea of the empire, but it was to be pan-Germanic and be organised on a hierarchical principle, where non-Aryans were to be enslaved by Aryans. Sharing the idea of involution, List envisaged the history of races and peoples as a movement from the Golden Age to complete degradation. This had the appearance of a conspiracy of the Christians, who undermined the laws and moral spirit of the ‘Aryo-Germans’ in every possible way, including their rules of sexual morality. For this very reason, according to him, Christianity had eradicated the former Teutonic

religion, cruelly persecuting its priests and destroying its runes and sanctuaries. List constantly stressed the connexion between Christianity and Judaism, which inevitably made the Jews active participants in the conspiracy. In describing the age of ultimate decline, to which he linked all the ills of the society of his day, List used apocalyptic motifs. He blamed 'the Great International Conspiracy', the incarnation of Satan, for everything. But the idea of cyclical time allowed him to overcome the Christian idea of 'the last times', and look forward to a renewal after the end of the current cycle [Goodrick-Clarke 1995: 77–102].

His younger contemporary Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels went even further, directly identifying the blue-eyed, fair-haired Aryans with the principle of good and order, and people with dark eyes, hair or skin with the principle of evil and chaos. He explained all the ills of contemporary Europe as the result of racial mixing, and attributed to Jesus Christ the mission of the salvation of the 'Aryan race'. He shared List's apocalyptic forebodings, but saw the Aryans as the community least affected by racial mixing. He saw not only the 'lower races' but also the 'lower classes' (whom he also imagined as 'lower races') as their enemies. Lanz regarded the 'humane eradication' of the 'lower races' by means of sterilisation and castration as an effective method in the struggle against this peril. In the 'Order of the New Temple' which he had founded they sang hymn and psalms to Christ, praying that he would save the 'higher race' and abolish the 'lower' ones. Moreover, Lanz believed that the Aryans would achieve world domination and that the whole planet was fated to become a German colony, where the lower sorts of people would be subordinate to the higher. Both List and Lanz saw the First World War as a real battle between good and evil, the harbinger of a new, happy age that would follow a period of dreadful trials. List foresaw the appearance of a strong national leader and even managed an almost accurate prediction of the year of the foundation of the Third Reich, but Lanz deferred the onset of the Apocalypse until later, at the end of the twentieth century. Then the Last Judgment was to take place, to be followed by a new Golden Age, with an aristocratic Aryan state and a new Church of the Holy Spirit. In other words, salvation was to come not to humankind, but to the elect 'Aryan race' [Goodrick-Clarke 1995: 102–38].

The teachings of Alice Bailey

Most esoteric writers reject any divisions within humanity, including its divisions into peoples and nations. But in this context the Jews present a problem for them, as they do for Christians. While Christians were disturbed by Jews not wanting to acknowledge Christ, certain types of esoteric writers were upset by Jews anxious to

maintain their ethnic identity. This is most clearly evident in the opinions of the American Alice Bailey, whose concepts, elaborated in the 1930s and 1940s, quickly became popular. Bailey was, in Steven Sutcliffe's words, 'a post-theosophical theoretician', and one of the founders of the New Age movement [Sutcliffe 2003: 46–9], (see also [De Laubier 2004: 117]). She proclaimed that our times were the end of the Age of Pisces, which was to give way to the Age of Aquarius. The world would be at one, and by 2015 its entire population would join together in a single state ruled by 'the spiritual hierarchy'. Wars and calamities would cease, and there would be peace and the conditions for true evolution. Whereas the Age of Pisces had been the age of humanity's disintegration, authoritarian power and religious schism, the Age of Aquarius was to be quite the opposite [Bailey 1994a: 163].

Bailey connected the crisis observed during the Age of Pisces with a natural chaos, which was soon to be replaced by order. But to achieve this the world must solve four most important problems, one of which Bailey called 'the Jewish question'. Seeing the Jews as a separate 'race', Bailey derived them from three 'fallen angels', that is, highly evolved people who had separated themselves from the rest while still in Lemuria because of disagreements with the 'Planetary Hierarchy'. Furthermore, drawing in the Masonic legend of Adoniram, she accused these schismatics of murdering the Master,¹ that is, she associated the origins of the Jews with the sins of treason and murder. In this way they were set against the rest of humanity and by their schismatic activities they prevented the peoples of the world from uniting [Bailey 1994b: 363–70].

Bailey gave the highest praise to the Age of Aquarius, expecting it to spread a universal religion and the world unity of humankind, the knowledge of the One Truth and the beginning of genuine fraternity. It is noteworthy that Bailey expected the new magical religion to come from Russia. She spoke against isolationism and any form of racial superiority. But despite all her allusions to the apocalypse, she expected no natural disasters. The transition from one age to the next was to take place under the leadership of the Great Teachers and prophets, who were to help people to change their religion, and, at the same time, the social order.

Helena Roerich and twentieth-century Russian esotericism

Overall, it was the ideas of Theosophy and the French occult tradition, rather than those of Austro-German Ariosophy, that were developed in twentieth-century Russian esotericism. Amongst

¹ On the Masonic version of 'the murder of the Master' see [Chernyak 1987: 39–40; Robinson 2000: 315].

known modern Russian esoteric writers only a few, including Alexander Dugin, gravitate towards the latter, relying on an apocalyptic logic that gives the Jews a peculiarly negative place in the picture of the end of the world, when they are to be the main bulwark of Antichrist, the terrible persecutor of the Christians [Shnirelman 2014; 2015]. Only now the place of the Christians is taken by the Aryans (or Slavo-Aryans), the age of the end of times is extended to an indefinitely long period of several millennia, and from being the servants of Antichrist the Jews are transformed into an independent subject of world evil. It is noteworthy that the popularity of this myth is not confined to esoteric writers: it has been taken up by several new religious movements [Falikov 2007: 234–5; Akhmetova 2010].

Russian esoteric writers ascribe a particular role to Russia in the transition to the Age of Aquarius, because, as astrologers have calculated, Russia itself is under the sign of Aquarius. This was reflected in Mme Blavatsky's Theosophy, which predicted that the new cosmic age would be opened by the Russians, who were fated to unite all the nations of the planet into one family.

The doctrine of Living Ethics, elaborated by Helena Roerich in the 1920s and 1930s, had a great influence on Russian esotericism. She believed in the laws of evolution, which, in her words, were established by Higher Powers connected with the Cosmos; the plan of human evolution had been created by the Brothers of Humanity (the Arhats) [Agni Yoga 1992, II: 234, 252].

Roerich said comparatively little about the change of ages, though she did share the theory of cyclical time. Naturally, she knew Blavatsky's doctrine well, but very seldom made any mention of Lemuria or Atlantis, the ancient civilisations and their destruction, or the 'end times' and the persons active in them. About Antichrist she said nothing at all. All her thoughts were about the future: she saw 'the quaking of the old world' and prophesied the coming of the new. Therefore she called on people to take an active part in building it, and the keyword of her six-volume work was 'evolution'. Roerich argued that the evil age of *kali yuga* was close to its end and that soon the new sixth race must appear. She understood this as the coming of the 'Aquarius cycle' in place of the 'Pisces cycle', though according to her teachings these two cycles must co-exist for a certain time, that is, the change was to be an evolutionary, not a revolutionary one, and this allowed her to do without painful cataclysms [Agni Yoga 1992, IV: 20].

Nevertheless Roerich did expect Armageddon, and cataclysms, and these were not far off. She was not the only person to think so: in the 1920s and 1930s the theme of Atlantis and its destruction was becoming ever more acute, and people spoke more and more often of the nearness of the new age [Agni Yoga 1992, V: 102; Lindenberg

1997: 76–85]. Therefore the image of a desperate struggle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness recurred to Roerich with increasing frequency. By the middle of the thirties she was already convinced that dreadful events were on their way. In her words, Armageddon would begin in 1931, and the key events would take place in 1942 [Agni Yoga 1992, V: 109, 190, 211].¹ She foresaw the completion of a cycle, which is usually associated with high energies and leads to destruction, necessarily followed by the building of the new. Roerich noted the high tension in the world, and, what is remarkable, was expecting the New World to arrive from the north. In this way the apparent triumph of Darkness was to be replaced by the growth of ‘fiery justice’ [Agni Yoga 1992, III: 303, 351; IV: 35, 110, 127, 164, 192–4]. For, as Roerich wrote, the house must be cleared of rubbish and ‘rotten roots’ from time to time, and this is what must happen at Armageddon [Agni Yoga 1992, V: 165; VI: 258].

Roerich understood that nothing new could be built without resistance and struggle. Therefore she paid great attention to the confrontation between the forces of light and the forces of darkness, or the ‘whites’ and ‘blacks’, and believed that in our days this conflict was becoming more acute, because the age of *kali yuga* and its vices was coming to an end. She taught that the ‘blacks’ were responsible for the world’s having come to the ultimate point of its fall, people were divided, hatred reigned amongst them, and endless wars had begun. Although the forces of darkness were doomed, a hard battle remained to be fought against them, and the conditions of polarisation of Good and Evil demanded that people should come together around the Teacher, or Lord [Agni Yoga 1992, III: 31–42, 303, 326]. In this difficult struggle the Hierarchy would be the protector of the people, but it demanded that they should show a high spirit [Agni Yoga 1992, III: 55–6]. Roerich understood the Hierarchy to be a just leadership, founded on co-operation and forbidding violence and oppression.²

On the other hand, she ascribed to the ‘Black Brotherhood’ lies and inhuman cruelty, passion and greed, selfishness and treachery. With it she connected the ‘false prophets’ and ‘black lies’ operating at Satan’s instigation, whom Roerich, unlike Blavatsky, understood in the traditional Christian sense. Acknowledging that the ‘black lies’ kept their secrets jealously, she called on people to unmask Satanism and actively struggle against it.

¹ Nowadays one might think that this was about a premonition of the coming war, but it seems that Roerich had in mind the political repressions taking place in the USSR at that time [Shaposhnikova 1996: 448–9].

² Nevertheless, some analysts have concluded that on closer inspection this doctrine turns out to be the road to ‘a global cosmic prison’ and ‘cosmic GULag’, where the will of the ‘Higher Reason’ would leave no room for individual human freedom [Fesenkova 2001c: 31].

At this point the question of the ‘change of races’ arises, though, remarkably, Roerich paid its mechanism even less attention than Blavatsky. Of course she mentioned that one race must leave the stage of history and be replaced by another. She regarded people’s attitude to religion as a symptom of the approach of this threshold: the spread of unbelief spoke to her of the approach of ‘the Lord’s harvest’ [Agni Yoga 1992, I: 165]. Besides, the ‘rising people’ dreamt of a hero, while the ‘declining people’ had no need of one; the old world rejected the World Mother, while the new world began to sense her [Agni Yoga 1992, II: 20, 22]. Roerich also reproached the existing ‘race’ for the stagnation of its thought and its unwillingness to recognise the new [Agni Yoga 1992, II: 66–7]. She emphasised that ‘races’ that deviated from the road of evolution were regularly removed from the world stage [Agni Yoga 1992, II: 209]. According to her doctrine, the ‘new race’ would be born simultaneously in different parts of the world, and first in outlying regions.

It seems that Roerich did not distinguish strictly between race, people and nation. She wrote about the decline of peoples and of wicked nations, in a state of degeneracy, which was visible in their physical type. This was to be the fate of anyone who did not follow the Light and did not accept the Baptism of Fire [Agni Yoga 1992, IV: 111].

It is noteworthy that although she uses the term ‘peoples’, nowhere in all her six volumes does Roerich refer to any people by name. She found a single humanity much more important than individual peoples. Therefore she connected the idea of ‘culture’ with humanity as a whole, and regarded the cultures of particular peoples as ‘customs’ [Agni Yoga 1992, VI: 28]. She preferred to discuss ‘the personal, the planetary and the cosmic’, but not the national [Agni Yoga 1992, VI: 67], and wanted the peoples to learn to think of the common good [Agni Yoga 1992, VI: 228].

Like Blavatsky, Roerich by no means rejected Christ, and even appealed to ‘Christ’s religion’, but pointed out that great crimes had been committed in his name. In her words, the meaning of Christianity had been changed over time, and today it was ‘hard to wash the image of Christ clean’ [Agni Yoga 1992, I: 126]. Roerich dreamt of a future unity of humanity, faith in one God and the building of a single Temple. In the founders of the world religions she saw only prophets, or Teachers, and the various religions’ scriptures as coming from a single source.

However, in constructing her own doctrine Roerich relied more on Indian traditions than on Christianity. And she looked for the coming, not of Christ, but of Maitreya, whose mission it was to hasten and complete the building of the New World [Agni Yoga 1992, III: 9–10]. In this world love would reign, people would leave

the cities and go back to nature, and they would be overwhelmingly disposed towards co-operation [Agni Yoga 1992, III: 304].

These messianic hopes have made themselves felt particularly in connexion with the new dawn of esotericism in the last twenty or thirty years. Moreover, Russian esoteric writers agree with Russian theologians in their evaluation of Russia's place in the world process. While the theologians see Russia as the power 'who now letteth' and argue that it will remain an island of 'true faith' even in the time of Antichrist, the esoteric writers call it the centre of the 'white (Aryan) race' which has brought the world the moral and ethical laws of the Cosmos. For example, the astrologer Pavel Globa sees Russia, placed as it is between East and West, as the most important centre from which the Aryans, whose vocation is to maintain the world's equilibrium (that is, practically, those 'who now let'), were dispersed. In the 1990s he predicted a great future for Russia, and that in the Age of Aquarius (that is, after 2003) it would experience a renaissance and prosperity. This is where the Saviour would come, which would make Russia 'the centre of the spiritual rebirth of humankind' [Globa 1995]. Globa connected the transition to the new age with social crises (the intensification of the political struggle, wars, rebellions) and even with the coming of Antichrist, but left this without any detailed discussion [Globa 1998: 18–19]. He sought the reasons for these crises not in human society, but in the disposition of the stars.

However, no 'change of races' ever took place, and Globa was forced to make substantial corrections to his predictions [Globa 2012]. He announced that the reordering of the world had begun in 2011 with the revolutionary events in North Africa and the Middle East. He foretold the restoration of the Russian Empire, the coalescence of the former Soviet states around Russia and even its transformation into the last bastion of Christianity, where the believers would find salvation from the 'Islamic revolution' in Europe and the Chinese attack from the East. In his imagination the Christians were transformed into 'Indo-Europeans', who did not only find refuge in Russia, but were returning to their 'ancestral homeland' under pressure from 'conquerors of all colours'. In other words, although Globa avoided using the word 'race', he remained true to the esoteric racial theory — it was just that the 'Aryans' had become 'Indo-Europeans'. But instead of expecting a sixth race to come and replace the fifth (the Aryans), Globa insisted on the necessity of saving this latter from the pressure of certain other races; while retaining the idea of a cosmic influence on earthly processes, he rejected that of an extraterrestrial origin for particular races, and saw Armageddon not as a clash of abstract forces of light and darkness, but of Christian and Arab civilisations. He followed the Austrian Ariosophists in bestowing essential

positive and negative qualities on real historico-cultural communities. In this way he broke with the tradition of classical esotericism and took up the banners of modern European racists.

Some other Russian esoteric writers continue to predict the appearance of the new sixth race on Russian territory, and in their opinion the unification of humankind must take place on the basis of the Russian language. Some of them, while they retain the idea of the age of Antichrist, identify it with the Christian era, that is, the Age of Pisces, and are impatient for its replacement by the Age of Aquarius and its 'new race'. There is, however, no clear notion discernible among the esoteric writers of what the change of races means. Some of them stress earthly evolution, supposing that the new race is formed from members of the old race who have miraculously escaped destruction, others are convinced that the forefathers of the new races came from other planets, and yet others attempt to combine these two approaches [Shnirelman 2015, I: 314–32]. All esoteric writers connect the change of races with catastrophes, but while some emphasise social convulsions, others are concerned with natural and cosmic disasters, while others count on the 'energy flows of the Age of Aquarius' which will emanate from the Cosmos and purify the Earth of selfishness and cruelty. Besides, modern esoteric doctrine can do without racial concepts altogether.

* * *

There is thus great variety in the interpretation of the Apocalypse both in Christianity and esotericism. Whereas for Christianity the Apocalypse is a unique event, for esoterics it is a regularly repeating cataclysm which naturally accompanies the transition from one age to the next. Whereas in the Christian version it is manifest in all the elements, be they natural (floods, earthquakes, etc.) or social (revolutions, wars, persecutions), esotericism discovers no such hard and fast connexions: sometimes it finds significance in natural catastrophes (the flood), sometimes social, sometimes cosmic. There is a tradition within Christianity ascribing the chief place among the supporters of Antichrist to the Jews. But there are also many theological versions of the 'end of times' where they play no part at all [Shnirelman 2013].

Even more diverse are the esoteric concepts represented by a number of national versions (French, American, Austro-German), which is no accident, because esotericism took shape during the period of nationalism and is one of its products. Many esoteric doctrines dealt with the problem of anthropogenesis and wrote about the origins and succession of races, although specialists are right to call this a profanation [Fesenkova 2001c: 23]. However, the esoteric writers had no interest in the pursuit of scientific truth. Their notion of the

succession of races was necessary to provide a foundation for the utopian ideas of the future world order and the road towards it.

The teaching of Saint-Yves d'Alveydre at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century retained a veneration for Catholicism, paid respectful tribute to the 'Semites', but regarded the 'Celtic' or 'Aryan' race as the standard-bearer of humanity and dreamt of the unification of all humankind in the New Age. Early twentieth-century Austro-German Ariosophy moved in the direction of racism and connected the future with the restoration of a social hierarchy at the apex of which would be the lords of the world, the Aryans, while everyone else was destined to be their slaves. Evil here was regarded as a conspiracy of Christians and 'inferior races', but an 'Aryan Christ', who appeared as a racist, was worshipped. And in the doctrine of Alice Bailey humanity was to unite in the middle of the twentieth century and build a just world community, but one of the obstacles to it was 'Jewish separatism'.

Thus Christianity was regarded positively by the school of Saint-Yves, with suspicion by Theosophy, and sharply negatively by Ariosophy. Saint-Yves' tradition had a high regard for the Jews' contribution to the development of esoteric knowledge, they played a minor role in Theosophy, Bailey's doctrine saw them as a brake on the unification of humankind, and Ariosophy drew them as the enemies of humankind. All three approaches may be found in Russian esotericism (for more detail see [Shnirelman 2014]).

References

- Agni Yoga*. Moscow: Russkii dukhovnyi tsentr, 1992, vol. 1: *Listy sada Morii. Listy sada M. Ozareniye. Obshchina*; vol. 2: *Bespredelnost*; vol. 3: *Ierarkhiya. Serdtse. Mir ognennyi* (Ch. 1); vol. 4: *Mir ognennyi* (Ch. 2, 3). *Aum*; vol. 5: *Bratsivo. Nadzemnoe*; vol. 6: *Nadzemnoe*. (In Russian).
- Akhmetova M., *Konets sveta v otdelno vzyatoi strane* [The End of the World in One Country]. Moscow: OGI, 2010. (In Russian).
- Bagdasaryan V. E., *'Teoriya zagovora' v otechestvennoi istoriografii vtoroi poloviny XIX — XX vv.* [The 'Conspiracy Theory' in Russian Historical Writing in the Second Half of the Nineteenth and the Twentieth Centuries]. Moscow: Signal, 1999. (In Russian).
- Beili A. A., 1994a, *Sudba natsii*. Moscow: S.E.T., 1994. (In Russian). [Bailey A. *The Destiny of the Nations*].
- Beili A. A., 1994b, *Traktat o semi luchakh: Ezotericheskaya psikhologiya*. Moscow: Dvoynaya zvezda, 1994. (In Russian). [Bailey A. *A Treatise on the Seven Rays*].
- Balagushkin E. G., 'Ezoterika v novykh religioznykh dvizheniyakh' [Esotericism in new Religious Movements], L. V. Fesenkova (ed.), *Diskursy ezoteriki: Filos. analiz*. Moscow: Editorial URSS, 2001, pp. 214–39. (In Russian).

- _____, 'Predislovie' [Preface]. E. G. Balagushkin, A. R. Fokin (eds.), *Mistsizm: teoriya i istoriya*. Moscow: IF RAN, 2008, pp. 3–13. (In Russian).
- Belyaev A. D., *O bezbozhii i antikhriste: Podgotovlenie, priznaki i vremya prishestviya antikhrista* [On Godlessness and the Antichrist: The Preparation, Signs and Time of the Coming of the Antichrist], in 2 vols. Sergiev Posad: Tip. A. I. Snegirevoi, 1898. (In Russian).
- Ben-Itto Kh., *Lozh, kotoraya ne khochet umirat: 'Protokoly sionskikh mudretsov': stoletnyaya istoriya* [The Lie that Refuses to Die: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion: A Century of History]. Moscow: Rudomino, 2001. (In Russian).
[עתו: השקר מסרב למות: מאה שנות הפרוטוקולים של זקני ציון-הדסה בן]
- Blavatskaya E., *Tainaya doktrina: Sintez nauki, religii i filosofii*, vol. 1: *Kosmogenezis*, bk. 1. Moscow: Progress; Sirin, 1991. (In Russian).
- _____, *Tainaya doktrina*, vol. 2: *Antropogenezis*, pt. 1. Moscow: Andreev i synovya, 1991. (In Russian). [Blavatsky H., *The Secret Doctrine*].
- _____, *Tainaya doktrina*, vol. 2: *Antropogenezis*, bk. 4. Moscow: Progress, 1992. (In Russian). [Blavatsky H., *The Secret Doctrine*].
- Bogoslovsky M., 'Chelovek bezzakoniya: Istoriya tolkovaniya 2 Solun. II, 1–12' [The Man of Sin: a History of the Interpretation of II Thess. ii 1–12], *Pravoslavnyi sobesednik*, 1885, no. 7, pp. 261–97. (In Russian).
- Bokov G. E., 'Radikalnoe khristianstvo: teologiya "smerti Boga", "novyi mistsizm" i khristianskaya mistiko-eskhatologicheskaya traditsiya' [Radical Christianity: the Theology of the 'Death of God', the 'New Mysticism' and the Christian Mystical Esoteric Tradition], S. V. Pakhomov (ed.), *Mistiko-ezotericheskie dvizheniya v teorii i praktike*, St Petersburg: RKhGA, 2010, pp. 110–21. (In Russian).
- Bultmann R., *Istoriya i eskhatologiya: Prisutstvie vechnosti* [History and Eschatology: The Presence of Eternity]. Moscow: Kanon-plyus, 2012. (In Russian).
- Burtsev V. L., *V pogone za provokatorami: 'Protokoly sionskikh mudretsov' — dokazannyi podlog* [The Hunt for Provocateurs: the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' — a Proven Forgery]. Moscow: Slovo, 1991. (In Russian).
- Chernyak E. B., *Nevidimye imperii: Tainye obshchestva Starogo i Novogo vremeni na Zapade* [Invisible Empires: Secret Societies, Past and Present, in the West]. Moscow: Mysl, 1987. (In Russian).
- De Loby P., *Eskhatologiya*. Moscow: AST; Astrel, 2004. (In Russian). [De Laubier P., *L'eschatologie*].
- [Derevensky 2000a] *Uchenie ob Antikhriste v drevnosti i Srednevekovye* [Teachings on the Antichrist in Antiquity and the Middle Ages], B. G. Derevensky (ed.). St Petersburg: Aleteiya, 2000. (In Russian).
- [Derevensky 2000b] 'Antikhris: kvintessentsiya nenavisti i strakha' [The Antichrist: the Quintessence of Hatred and Terror], B. G. Derevensky (ed.), *Uchenie ob Antikhriste v drevnosti i Srednevekovye*. St Petersburg: Aleteiya, 2000, pp. 5–33. (In Russian).

- [Derevensky 2007] *Kniga ob Antikhriste: Antologiya* [A Book on the Antichrist: an Anthology], Derevensky B. G. (ed.). St Petersburg: Amfora, 2007. (In Russian).
- Dudakov S. Yu., *Istoriya odnogo mifa: Ocherki russkoi literatury XIX–XX vv.* [The History of a Myth: Sketches in Russian Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries]. Moscow: Nauka, 1993. (In Russian).
- Emerson R. K., *Antichrist in the Middle Ages: A Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art, and Literature*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981.
- Falikov B. Z., ‘Evropeiskii okkultizm i religii Indii’ [European Occultism and the Religions of India], L. V. Fesenkova (ed.), *Diskursy ezoteriki: Filos. analiz.* Moscow: Editorial URSS, 2001, pp. 169–85. (In Russian).
- _____, *Kulty i kultura ot Eleny Blavatskoi do Rona Khabbarda* [Cults and Culture from Helena Blavatsky to Ron Hubbard]. Moscow: RGGU, 2007. (In Russian).
- Fast G. *Tolkovanie na Apokalipsis* [Commentary on Revelation]. Moscow: Nikeya, 2009. (In Russian).
- [Fesenkova 2001a] *Diskursy ezoteriki: Filos. Analiz* [Discourses of the Esoteric: a Philos[ophical] Analysis], L. V. Fesenkova (ed.). Moscow: Editorial URSS, 2001. (In Russian).
- [Fesenkova 2001b] ‘Predislovie’ [Preface] in [Fesenkova 2001a: 5–7]. (In Russian).
- [Fesenkova 2001c] ‘Ezoterika o edinoi osnove religioznykh verovaniy’ [Esotericism on the Single Basis for Religious Beliefs] in [Fesenkova 2001a: 10–35]. (In Russian).
- Filaret (Drozdov), *O konchine mira* [On the End of the World]. Odessa: Tip. E. I. Fesenko, 1902. (In Russian).
- Fomin S. V., *Rossiya pered Vtorym prishestviem: Materialy k ocherku russkoi eskhatologii* [Russia before the Second Coming: Materials towards a Sketch of Russian Eschatology]. Moscow; Sergiev Posad: Izd-vo Sv.-Troitsk. Sergievoi lavry, 1993. (In Russian).
- Globa P., *Zhivoi ogon: Uchenie drevnikh ariev* [Living Fire: the teaching of the ancient Aryans]. Moscow: Vagrius; Yauza; St Petersburg: Lan, 1995. (In Russian).
- _____, *Kalendar zoroastriiskii. God Veprya: 21 marta 1999 g. — 20 marta 2000 g.* [Zoroastrian Calendar: Year of the Boar, 21 March 1999 — 20 March 2000]. Minsk: Arba, 1998. (In Russian).
- _____, *Astrologicheskii prognoz dlya Rossii na XXI vek: Konets sveta otnemayetsya!* [Astrological Predictions for Russia for the Twenty-First Century: the End of the World Has Been Cancelled!] Moscow: Eksmo, 2012. (In Russian).
- Glushkova I., ‘Chitpavany: reformatory, uchenye, terroristy’ [The Chitpavans: Reformers, Scholars, Terrorists], *Aziya i Afrika segodnya*, 1993, no. 6, pp. 54–9. (In Russian).
- Gudrik-Klark N., *Okkulnye korni natsizma: Tainye ariiskie kulty i ikh vliyaniye na natsistskuyu ideologiyu.* St Petersburg: Evraziya, 1995. (In Russian).

- [Goodrick-Clarke N., *The Occult Roots of Nazism: The Ariosophists of Austria and Germany, 1890–1935*].
- Guryanova N. S., *Krestyanskii antimonarkhicheskii protest v staroobryadcheskoi eskhatologicheskoi literature perioda pozdnego feodalizma* [Anti-Monarchist Peasant Protest in Old Believer Eschatological Literature of the Late Feudal Period]. Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1988. (In Russian).
- Hagemeister M., ‘Apokalipsis nashego vremeni: Prorochestva sv. Serafima Sarovskogo o prikhode Antikhrista i kontse sveta’, *Stranitsy*, 1999, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 396–414. (In Russian). [Hagemeister M., ‘Eine Apokalypse unserer Zeit: die Prophezeiungen des heiligen Serafim von Sarov über das Kommen des Antichrist und das Ende der Welt’].
- _____, ‘Das Dritte Rome gegen den Dritten Temple: Der Antichrist im postsowjetischen Russland’, M. Delgado, V. Leppin (eds.), *Der Antichrist: Historische und systematische Zugänge*. Fribourg; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2011, pp. 461–85.
- _____, “‘The Antichrist as an Imminent Political Possibility’: Sergei Nilus and the Apocalyptic Reading of the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion””, R. Landes, S. T. Katz (eds.), *The Paranoid Apocalypse: A Hundred Year Retrospective on the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. New York: New York University Press, 2012, pp. 79–91. (In Russian).
- [Kasavin] *Zabluzhdayushchiysya razum? Mnogoobrazie vnenauchnogo znaniya* [Reason Gone Astray? Varieties of Extra-Scientific Knowledge], I. V. Kasavin (ed.). Moscow: Politizdat, 1990. (In Russian).
- Khen Yu. V., ‘Problema zla v ezoterike epokhi postmoderna’ [The Problem of Evil in the Esotericism of the Post-Modern Period] in [Fesenkova 2001a: 100–13]. (In Russian).
- Kolesov E., *Trinadtsat vrat ezoteriki: Istoriya ezotericheskikh uchenii ot Adama do nashikh dnei* [The Thirteen Gates of Esotericism: the History of Esoteric Doctrines from Adam to the Present Day]. Penza: Zolotoe sechenie, 2009. (In Russian).
- Kon N., *Blagoslovenie na genotsid: Mif o vsemirnom zagovore evreev i ‘Protokoly sionskikh mudretsov’* [A Blessing on Genocide: the Myth of the World Jewish Conspiracy and the ‘Protocols of the Elders of Zion’]. Moscow: Progress, 1990. (In Russian).
- Konets mira 25 marta 1912 goda* [The End of the World on the 25 March 1912]: [Novye tolkovaniya o budto by predstoyashchem kontse mira]. St Petersburg: Tipo-lit. K.I. Lingarda, 1912. (In Russian).
- Kuraev A., *O nashem porazhenii* [On our Defeat]. St Petersburg: Svetloyar, 1999. (In Russian).
- Laker U., *Chernaya sotnya: Istoki russkogo fashizma*. Washington: Problemy Vostochnoi Evropy, 1994. (In Russian). [Laqueur W., *Black Hundreds: The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia*].
- Lindenberg C., *Tekhnologiya zla: K istorii stanovleniya natsional-sotsializma*. Moscow: Enigma, 1997. (In Russian). [Lindenberg C., *Die Technik des Bösen. Zur Vorgeschichte und Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus*].
- Mikelis Ch. Dzh., ‘Protokoly sionskikh mudretsov’: *Nesushchestvuyushchii manuskript, ili Podlog veka*. Moscow: Kovcheg, 2006. (In Russian).

- [De Michelis C. G., *Il manoscritto inesistente. 'I Protocolli dei savi di Sion: un apocrifo del XX secolo'*].
- Murav H., 'The Beilis Ritual Murder Trial and the Culture of Apocalypse', *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature*, 2000, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 243–63.
- Nazarov M. V., *Tayna Rossii: Istoriosofiya XX veka* [The Mystery of Russia: Historiosophy of the Twentieth Century]. Moscow: Russkaya ideya, 1999. (Almanakh *Russkaya ideya*, no. 6). (In Russian).
- Pakhomov S. V., 'Spetsifika ezotericheskogo znaniya' [The Specifics of Esoteric Knowledge], S. V. Pakhomov (ed.), *Mistiko-ezotericheskie dvizheniya v teorii i praktike*. St Petersburg: RKhGA, 2010, pp. 73–85. (In Russian).
- Panchenko A. M., *Russkaya kultura v kanun Petrovskikh reform* [Russian Culture on the Eve of the Petrine Reforms]. Leningrad: Nauka, 1984. (In Russian).
- Partridge Ch., Geaves R., 'Antisemitism, Conspiracy Culture, Christianity and Islam: The History and Contemporary Religious Significance of the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion', J. R. Lewis, O. Hammer (eds.), *The Invention of Sacred Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 75–95.
- Robinson J. J., *Masonstvo: Zabytye tainy*. Moscow: Kron-Press, 2000. (In Russian). [Robinson J. J., *Born in Blood: The Lost Secrets of Freemasonry*].
- Rossmann V., *Russian Intellectual Anti-Semitism in the Post-Communist Era*. Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2002.
- Rozin V. M., 'Puteshestvie v stranu neprivychnogo znaniya' [A Journey to the Land of Unaccustomed Knowledge], I. T. Kasavin (ed.), *Znanie za predelami nauki*. Moscow: Respublika, 1996, pp. 5–18. (In Russian).
- _____, 'Misticheskie i Ezotericheskie ucheniya i praktiki v sredstvakh massovoi informatsii' [Mystical and Esoteric Doctrines and Practices in the Mass Media], *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost*, 1997, no. 3, pp. 44–54. (In Russian).
- _____, 'Ezoterizm kak forma individualnoi i sotsialnoi zhizni' [Esotericism as a Form of Individual and Social Life], [Fesenkova 2001a: 114–31]. (In Russian).
- _____, *Ezotericheskii mir: Semantika sakralnogo teksta* [The Esoteric World: the Semantics of the Sacred Text]. Moscow: Editorial URSS, 2002. (In Russian).
- Saint-Yves d'Alveydre A., *Mission des Juifs*. Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1884.
- Saint-Yves d'Alveydre A., *Missiya Indii v Evrope*. Petrograd: Novyi chelovek, 1915. (In Russian). [Saint-Yves D'Alveydre, *Mission de l'Inde en Europe, mission de l'Europe en Asie: la question du Mahatma et son solution*].
- Shakhnovich M. I., *Peterburgskie mistiki* [The Petersburg Mystics]. St Petersburg: Nevskii glashatai, 1996. (In Russian).
- Shaposhnikova L. V., *Mudrost vekov* [The Wisdom of the Ages]. Moscow: Mezhdunar. tsentr Rerikhov, 1996. (In Russian).

- Shnirelman V. A., 'Koleno Danovo: vozvrashchenie religioznogo antisemitizma' [The Tribe of Dan: the Return of Religious Antisemitism], V. V. Mochalova (ed.), *Nauchnye trudy po iudaike. Materialy XX Mezhdunar. ezhegod. konf. po iudaike*. Moscow: Tsentr Sefer, 2013. (Akademicheskaya seriya, no. 45), vol. 1, pp. 159–76. (In Russian).
- _____, 'Ezoterika i evrei: obraz drugogo' [Esotericism and the Jews: the Image of the Other], V. V. Mochalova (ed.), *Nauchnye trudy po iudaike. Materialy XXI Mezhdunar. ezhegod. konf. po iudaike*. Moscow: Tsentr Sefer, 2014. (In Russian).
- _____, *Ariiskii mif v sovremennom mire* [The Aryan Myth in the Modern World]. Moscow: NLO, 2015. (In Russian).
- Shyure E., *Velikie posvyashchennyye: Ocherk ezoterizma religii*. Kaluga: Tip. Gub. zemskoi upravly, 1914. (In Russian). [Schuré É., *Les Grands Initiés. Esquisse de l'histoire secrète des religions*].
- Sutcliffe S. J., *Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Tagieff P.-A., *Protokoly sionskikh mudretsov: Falshivka i ee ispolzovanie*. Moscow: Mosty kultury; Ierusalim: Gesharim, 2011. (In Russian). [Taguieff P.-A., *Les Protocoles des sages de Sion. Faux et Usages d'un faux*].
- Trakhtenberg D., *Dyavol i evrei: Srednevekovyie predstavleniya o evreyakh i ikh svyaz s sovremennym antisemitizmom*. Moscow; Jerusalem: Gesharim, 1998. (In Russian). [Trachtenberg J., *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Antisemitism*].
- Tsybin V. D., *Apokalipsis proshlogo, nastoyashchego i budushchego* [The Apocalypse of the Past, Present and Future]. Moscow: RITs MDK, 2000. (In Russian).
- Verkhovsky A., *Politicheskoe pravoslavie: Rus. pravoslav. natsionalisty i fundamentalisty, 1995–2001 gg.* [Political Orthodoxy: Russian Orthodox Nationalists and Fundamentalists, 1995–2001]. Moscow: Tsentr «Sova», 2003. (In Russian).
- Zenkovsky S. A., *Russkoe staroobryadchestvo* [The Russian Old Belief]. Moscow: Institut DI-DIK, Kvadruga, 2009. (In Russian).
- Zorya E. V., 'Avtoistoriya v okkultizme: istoriya fakticheskaya i istoriya mifologicheskaya' [Self-History in Occultism: Factual History and Mythological History], S. V. Pakhomov (ed.), *Mistiko-ezotericheskie dvizheniya v teorii i praktike*. St Petersburg: RKhGA, 2010, pp. 120–31. (In Russian).

Translated by Ralph Cleminson