

Cooperation Activities of Uzbekistan and the World Community against Missionary and Proselytism

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Abstract: At the core of any manipulative actions lies the clear goal of diverting a certain people or nation from one path to another, changing their thoughts, religion, worldview. Among such goals, there are actions to deviate the representatives of a religion or confession from their faith, such actions are mentioned in the science under the names of missionary and proselytism. This article analyzes the negative consequences of missionary and proselytism, as well as the preventive measures aimed at eliminating them.

Key words: missionary, proselytism, manipulation, interstate cooperation, interreligious tolerance, threats, politics and religion.

Introduction

The XXI century, called the information age, presents some inconsistencies along with its unique opportunities in human life. Speaking of opportunities, there are no barriers to access or dissemination of information. After all, whoever has information today is characterized by the presence of a large resource in his hands. Also, inconsistencies are related to the growing information space. The role of the information factor is incomparable in making certain peoples and nations deviate from the right path and follow another path. Therefore, correct assessment of the power of information, correct interpretation and prevention of manipulation of society members by external forces are among the main tasks. In this regard, special responsibility and activity is required from mass media of our country. According to the words of the head of our country, Sh. Mirziyoev, "Today, Uzbekistan is entering a new stage of development in all areas. In solving important and urgent tasks which stands in front of us like to further strengthen the atmosphere of peace and harmony in our country, to increase the creative potential of our people, their confidence in their own strength and tomorrow, to ensure the priority of law and justice in our lives, public control over the activities of state agencies. I believe that the mass media will continue to take active steps in exercising control, in a word, in becoming a real defender of the people's interests." [1]

At this point, we consider it permissible to comment on the concept of manipulation. Spirituality: in the explanatory dictionary of the main concepts, "manipulation" is defined as "(lat. Manipulus - hand movement) hand exercise, hand movement, including the demonstration of focus based on manual skills, to achieve a goal by deception, extortion, fraud." [2] Attempts to manipulate the human mind have been around for thousands of years. At the core of any manipulative actions lies the clear goal of diverting a certain people or nation from one path to another, changing their thoughts, religion, worldview. Among such goals, there are actions to deviate the representatives of a religion or confession from their faith, such actions are mentioned in the science under the names of missionary and proselytism.

Materials:

Missionary is the spreading of a particular religion among believers of other religions or non-believers. In the National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan, "missionary - (from the word mission)

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manifestation is the promotion of another religion among peoples who believe in one religion. Missionary is essentially related to Christianity. It originated from the IV centuries. In the XIII-XVI centuries Christian missionary entered to India, China and Japan. Missionary activity in the Catholic Church intensified after the formation of the Spanish and Portuguese empires (XV-XVI centuries). Missionaries greatly helped the Roman Empire to bring new lands under its influence. There is information that Pope Gregory XV founded the Congregation for Religious Propagation in 1662 to lead Catholic missions. [3]

In foreign sources, missionary work is shown as a characteristic of all religions. Nevertheless, missionary history shows that this trend is mainly related to the history of Christianity. "The early church did not have a formal missionary institution, but the first missions are already described in the New Testament. In the apostle Paul's appeal to all nations, the most powerful method of exhortation to become Christians is preaching. Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came to the apostles and gave them the ability to speak "about the great works of God" in the languages of different nations, was a symbol of the universality of the Church. The work of the apostles and subsequent missionaries of Christianity already spread throughout the Mediterranean in the 1st century, and by the 4th century - throughout the territory of the Roman Empire and in some countries before it: the Caucasus, northeastern Africa, large Christian communities existed in Mesopotamia, Persia. Traders, as well as Christians who visited foreign territories as captives or exiles, played an important role in preaching the Evangelion. Missionary success depended on the prestige and power of the empire. The spread of Christianity with state support continued until the middle of the 7th century. [4]

"In Western Europe in the 5th century, St. Patrick and his successors spread Christianity in Ireland, so Irish missionaries, Saints Aidan, Columban, and others made a real breakthrough in the direction of religiousization of barbarian peoples. As a result of the efforts of Irish and Italian missionaries in the VI-VII centuries, the Anglo-Saxons in England converted to Christianity." [5]

"Catholic missionary. After the end of the Christianization of Western and Central Europe in the 12th and 14th centuries, missionary practice almost stopped for several centuries. A new rise in missionary activity occurred during the Great Geographical Discoveries. This period is characterized by the formation and strengthening of the Catholic Church. [6]

In the formation of Protestantism, there is also a great influence of missionary work. Only, Protestantism was formed somewhat later. It is known that missionary efforts in Protestantism have been widespread since the 18th century. According to the sources, Protestant missionaries achieved great success in Africa, North America, Australia and Oceania, and in a number of countries in Latin America and Asia in the XX century.

"Missionary in the Russian Church. It was presented as a separate movement in the 10th-15th centuries and gradually spread its "good news" from the central regions of Russia to the Trans-Volga region and the north of Russia. Propagators of monasteries contributed to the success of the mission. In the 16th century, Russia annexed the Khanates of Kazan, Astrakhan and Siberia, and after the Nogai, the troops included many Muslim and pagan nations. In this regard, there was a need to further strengthen missionary activity." [7]

"At the end of the XIX century and the beginning of the XX century, dozens of peoples of the Russian Empire received writing, schools, synagogues, books and other equipment in their native language from the missionaries. At the same time, "internal" sectarian missionary work developed. Missionary societies were established in order to facilitate the spread of missionary activity among different nationalities of the country. [8]

"In the XIX century, views on the necessity of cooperation in missionary activities of various Christian denominations appeared, which began to be manifested in the activities of Bible societies and other youth movements. At the beginning of the XX century, the understanding of ecumenism was interpreted as cooperation in the business world and became widely used after the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh (1910). In 1921, the International Missionary Council was formed, which in 1961 became part of the World Council of this Church. [9]

Methods

From the abovementioned information, it is clear that missionary work can be seen not only as a means of promoting religion, but also as a means of realizing the geopolitical goals of various countries in the international arena.

Sources say that the concept of missionary is derived from the Latin word "missio", that is, "sending", "assignment". The main activity of missionaries is explained as proselytizing people who do not belong to any religion or, if not, non-believers. However, there are also sources that emphasize that there are clear political goals behind this concept. From the information given above, it is known that the missionary movement exists not only in Christian confessions, but also in some other religions.

The information presented above shows the need to consider the relevant aspects of the international norms and legislation in our country. Two articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations focus on this issue. Article 2 of the Declaration states that "Everyone, regardless of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, class or other status, shall have all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration." explained. [10]

Article 18 of the Declaration "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes the freedom to change one's religion or belief and the freedom to practice one's religion or belief, alone or in association with others, publicly or privately." [11]

Article 18 of the "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" adopted on December 16, 1966 states that "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes the freedom to have or practice the religion or belief of one's choice, and the freedom to manifest one's religion or belief, alone or in association with others, in the worship, practice and observance of one's religion or belief. "No one can be subjected to coercion that undermines the freedom to have or adopt a religion or belief of his choice." [12]

Also, Chapter VII of the "European Declaration of Human Rights" dedicated to freedom of conscience stipulates that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, is obligatory for all."Participating states must respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, without any objection. It is stated that it is necessary to recognize and respect the freedom of the citizens to believe in the religion or belief that the individual acts according to his conscience, alone or together with others, regardless of race, gender, language and religion. "[13]

The main directions of the principles that ensure religious and ideological freedom are presented in the final document of the Vienna meeting of representatives of the OSCE member states on January 15, 1989. In accordance with this interstate legal document, the following obligations are defined for the OSCE member states:

- recognition, implementation and use of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all spheres of civil, political, economic, social and cultural life, as well as ensuring mutual equality between believers and non-believers;
- formation of an environment of mutual tolerance and respect between believers belonging to different associations, as well as believers and non-believers;
- respect the rights of religious associations to establish freely accessible places of worship and assembly within the framework of their state's constitution at their request;
- enable the organization and acceptance of voluntary financial and other donations;
- conducting consultations with religious denominations, institutions and organizations to achieve a better understanding of the needs related to religious freedom;
- respecting the right of everyone to receive and receive religious education individually or together with others in the language of their choice;
- respecting the freedom of parents to educate their children religiously and morally according to their beliefs;
- allow personnel training in relevant institutions;
- respecting the right of believers and religious associations to purchase and use and own holy books, religious publications and other objects and materials related to religion or profession of faith in the language of their choice;
- allowing religious confessions, institutions and organizations to produce, import and distribute religious publications and materials;
- taking into account the interest of religious associations to participate in public communication, including through mass media. [14]

As can be seen from the above emphasized information, freedom of conscience is guaranteed as a political right in international organizations. Therefore, the concept of freedom of conscience as an objective phenomenon is characterized by the choice of a person's religious outlook, which includes the freedom of religious belief, and the determination of his own confessional path. Therefore, a reasonable question arises: doesn't missionary overshadow the principles of freedom of conscience? Why are sects and organizations that encourage people to change their faith not prosecuted by international organizations? What we want to say is that the absence of provisions aimed at prohibiting the activities of Christian missionary sects in the legal documents of international organizations does not contradict the above principles of freedom of conscience?

If we look at this process in the example of the Russian Federation, the legislation of the country does not prohibit missionary activities. "Representatives of a religious association must have a written permission of their religious organization to carry out missionary activities, the places for carrying out missionary activities are limited, it is forbidden to attract minors to the ranks of the religious association without the consent of their parents." [15]

Results

Continuing our opinion on the issue, we consider it necessary to dwell on some points in the training manual prepared by Dayanova E.M., Mikhailov M.V. The authors point out the following aspects of religious security:

- 1) the religious world is the main component of a civilized society, which implies that citizens of different confessions and their associations live peacefully and peacefully, based on the principles of mutual respect and cooperation, and does not allow discrimination based on common interests;
- 2) the existence of freedom of conscience and belief, which implies the freedom created for the collective recognition of religious or atheistic beliefs;
- 3) protection of the physical and mental health of citizens, their rights and interests protected by law from the moral aggression of representatives of destructive cultures and totalitarian currents;
- 4) creating normal conditions for the activity of religious associations, assuming that the state and other entities do not interfere in the legal activities of religious associations, and that they are not allowed to impose on them the functions of state bodies or local government authorities and other powers that are unusual for them;
- 5) legal regulation of missionary activity. One of the purposes of religious associations is to spread the faith. And one of the ways to achieve this goal is missionary work. In everyday life, missionary work is usually called one of the forms of activity of religious associations, which is aimed at converting non-religious people or representatives of other religions to their faith. [16]

It can be seen that in the Christian religion, missionary work is considered as a part of religious activity. In this process, the absence of a clear rule on the limitation of missionary activity in the international norms does not correspond to the interests of representatives of other religions and confessions related to freedom of conscience. And no one can guarantee that this will not cause conflict between religious denominations.

In our opinion, missionary and proselytism, regardless of whether it is carried out by representatives of any religion or denomination, is ultimately a factor that overshadows the freedom of belief of representatives of other denominations.

A. Alimjonov, who conducted research on the subject, gives the following information: "Missionaries openly or secretly participated in the conquest of the peoples of America, Asia, and Africa. The Catholic communities of Jesuits, Franciscans, Benedictines, Dominicans, and Baptists were engaged in missionary work. The Congregation for Religious Propagation, founded in 1622, led the Catholic missionaries. Missionaries practically monopolized the work of spreading enlightenment and providing medical care. After the Second World War, missionary work began to promote the new colonialism. The encyclicals "Fidei Donum" (1957) of Pope Pius XII, "Princeps postorum" (1959) of John XXIII, "Populorum progressio" (1967) of Paul VI are devoted to missionary work. In the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), missionary issues were discussed and a decree about it was approved. [17]

"Missionaryism has risen to the level of politics in many countries. Endless war efforts were made for these goals. Behind the marches known in history as the "Crusades" were the priests who mainly aimed at missionary goals. During the Crusades in the 11th-13th centuries, the Western European feudal lords, through the slogan of liberating the tomb of Jesus and the "Holy Land", the Christian priests were able to raise up all European Christians, and every Christian considered it an honor to participate in these campaigns and kill at least one Muslim. Crusades were organized 8 times. [18]

According to the author A. Kahramanov: "Missionary activity can be carried out for several purposes. For example,

- converting representatives of other peoples into their religion. Through this idea, people who believe in other religions will be economically, politically and spiritually brought under the sphere of influence of Western countries;
- to create doubts among certain peoples about their faith and gradually lead to abandoning their faith and thereby further expanding their ranks, etc.

To achieve these goals, missionaries are ready to use all methods and methods. In particular, they deliberately find people who have fallen into a serious mental state due to some physical illness (disability) and are facing some financial difficulties in life, and provide them with various forms of financial support. They try to please them in every way. With such "efforts", they create a positive opinion about themselves among the local population. [19]

In order to achieve their goals, the missionaries "...organize exhibitions of various works of art, sports competitions and distribute valuable gifts to the participants of these events, send qualified specialists to work in some medical and educational institutions, help others individually and sending entertaining letters to people in need, establishing mutual "cooperation" with youth organizations, organizing computer or foreign language teaching clubs, frequently providing financial incentives to those who join their ranks, and sending them on study or training trips to foreign countries, and helping them get a job." [20]

M. Musaev, Doctor of Philosophy in Political Sciences, stated that "through strong political propaganda and campaigning, missionaries are using various methods to prove their religious teachings are correct among representatives of other religions on a global scale. Missionary organizations in particular insist on strict adherence to the rules of the organization by paying special attention to keeping the adept (new members accepted into the organization) under their supervision at all times. In the organization, it is important to cut off other sources of information or to provoke them, always insisting that they are right to the members of the stream. [21]

"Most missionary organizations operating worldwide today have their own Internet web pages. According to the analysis of the religious segment of the Internet, religious web portals have the following blocks: news, information about the basics of religious teachings, sermons in Mp3 format, biblical testimonies, photo exhibitions, articles, book texts, conferences, announcements, greeting cards, holidays, services such as Christian shops are operating. . In this place, the religious sites of most of the sects engaged in missionary activities have created conditions for their followers to communicate for guest books, blogs, and forums. [22]

According to A. Kahramanov, "today, no region, no country is free from the threats posed by missionary work. Unfortunately, only some countries have tried to prevent this evil, while others, on the contrary, have allowed missionary activity by law. For example, the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" (Article 8) prohibits proselytism, while the legislation of Ukraine and Belarus officially allows the activity of "missionary societies" as religious organizations. [23]

According to another Uzbek scientist B. Toraev, "One of the characteristics of missionary work in our republic is to try to conduct religious prayers in Uzbek and other local languages in Christian religious organizations. The second is the distribution and use of religious literature in Uzbek and other local languages among the local people. Those who carry out the most missionary activity of this kind, nowadays, are the representatives of the religious organization "Jehovah's Witnesses". Their representatives can be observed openly distributing their missionary literature in public places, streets and neighborhoods.

The mechanisms of influence in the "Jehovah's Witnesses" sect, which is actively engaged in missionary work, are clear and well-designed. This direction was created in the 70's of the XIXth century in the USA. Today, it has about 100 branches in different countries of the world. This organization is strictly centralized, and its managing chairman has unlimited power. [24]

Discussion

The logical continuation of the missionary flow and the concept used in scientific literature with it is proselytism. Proselytism is the desire to openly try to convert a member of another faith to one's religious faith, and the activity aimed at achieving this goal. As can be seen from the content, proselytism takes on a somewhat sharper scale than missionary work. We will try to analyze the general nature of proselytism below. In secular sources, proselytism is considered as a concept common to all religions.

"Proselytism is a component of missionary work. It is derived from the Greek word "proselitism" and means "stranger", "moving from one place to another", "converting from one's religious belief to another", as well as "a citizen who directly believes in one religion to renounce his religion and accept another religion" means to force. Today, missionary work and proselytism have become dangerous weapons of some geopolitical forces. It is a means of exerting political and economic influence, creating new colonialism or vassalage. Under the pretext of providing economic assistance, missionary organizations try to take possession of large capital and land properties, thus directly participating in the politics of their countries. [25]

"Christianity, especially in its early stages, was a religion of active proselytism. Baptism in Christianity can be simple and public. As a rule, a newly converted Christian immediately received the status of a full member of the Christian Church. In later times, when Christianity became the state religion, proselytism could sometimes take on a violent, sometimes mild, appearance. In a number of cases of forced conversion, large groups of "new converts" were not considered fully Christian and for a long time maintained a lower social status - Moriscos and Marranos in Spain, Tatarstan. [26]

According to the following source, there are also signs of proselytism in Islam: "...da'wah is a call to accept Islam. A person is considered to have accepted Islam from the moment he utters the shahada (I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I also bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah) in front of witnesses. In Islam, it is widely believed that all people are born Muslims, but sometimes those who have gone astray must be "brought back" to the true faith. Such ease of acceptance of Islam, along with the widespread practice of "mental reserve" among extreme Shiites, gives rise to reasonable arguments about the affiliation of certain religious sects to Islam. [27]

"Buddhism, the oldest religious and philosophical doctrine, is not an active proselytizing religion. At first, Buddhism was not really a religion, Buddha himself did not consider himself a prophet of God and demanded from his followers to investigate and understand his teachings, not faith. However, the new Buddhists traditionally "take refuge" in the oral formula of respect for the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha by a monk or equivalent. Buddhism does not forbid its adherents to perform rituals of other religions (in Japan - Shintoism, in China - Taoism and Confucianism, in the Himalayan nations - Bon or Hinduism). [28]

"From the second half of the XX century, Buddhism became popular among the lower castes in India, because it does not imply caste division. Indian politician Ambedkar converted his followers en masse to Buddhism. In the same period, a large number of Buddhist communities appeared in Europe, North America and Australia. [29]

"The attitude to proselytism in Judaism has been historically ambiguous, including various forms of partial conversion, active proselytism at certain stages of development, and sometimes complete rejection of it. The Midrash says that a true proselyte is worth more to the Almighty than a person born a Jew. On the other hand, the Talmud (Tract Evamot, p 47) says that "Israel is as severe as the plague of proselytes." There are two interpretations of this statement in modern Judaism. An insincere proselyte who does not observe the commandments brings Judaism into disrepute, and a proselyte who observes the commandments more zealously than the local Jews insults them. [30]

"Missionaries and proselytism use religion as a cover for their activities based on well-thought-out plans. In the strategy of these actions, in certain countries, "fighting against hunger and poverty", "preventing the violation of human rights", "eliminating national conflicts", preventing humanitarian catastrophes, "introducing democratic freedoms", "teaching advanced cultural habits" supports slogans. While the missionary attracts hundreds of people to his work, the proselyte achieves that many people abandon their religion and convert to another religion in a short period of time. In order to achieve their goal, they organize events in public places, concert halls and stadiums, distribute religious literature, and carry out propaganda and propaganda using various methods and means, especially through mass media.[31]

It should be said that in the international experience of combating missionary and proselytizing, strong opinions against these ideas are a rare trend in scientific sources. That is, it is an unusual phenomenon that these concepts, which are mainly found in Christianity, are not seen as a serious threat in different societies.

We would like to quote the following information as confirmation of our opinion: Russian priest I. Kovalevsky noted that among the existing problems between Orthodox and Catholics, missionary is not the main problem. In his opinion, "...the problem of proselytism, it seems, will not be a constant destabilizing factor of inter-Christian relations in our country (Russia). His tension gradually weakens. First, the majority of the population of Russia today has made its own worldview and religious choice. Secondly, the religious and educational activities conducted by other denominations of the Russian Orthodox Church help to form more conscious and strong beliefs among its adherents, which gives them the necessary resistance to the influence of other religions. [32]

"John Paul II emphasizes that our Earth urgently needs religious freedom and dialogue based on mutual respect, interreligious tolerance and exchange of ideas and values for the well-being of all mankind and to eliminate the social consequences of terrorism. The Pope gives an important place to the unity of Christians. At the same time, the Pope emphasizes the inadmissibility of syncretism and proselytism. John Paul II emphasizes the need to strive for unity in truth and love, not in order to absorb or unify religions. [33]

Conclusion

Article 31st of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan states that "Freedom of conscience is guaranteed for everyone. Everyone has the right to believe in any religion or not to believe in any religion. Forced indoctrination of religious views is not allowed." [34]

On July 6, 2021, the Law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" aimed at ensuring freedom of conscience was adopted in our country. According to this law, responsibility is established for any attempt to influence the religious beliefs and views of citizens. The decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to fundamentally improve the religious-cultural activity" was accepted by the members of the society as a practical strengthening document of the law.

In the Law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" it is defined as "missionary is an activity of forcefully inculcating religious views and spreading religious teachings to a person (a group of persons) with the aim of converting a person (a group of persons) to his religion by exerting ideological influence aimed at a specific goal" [35] and this activity banned in our country.

Also, "proselytism is a form of missionary activity aimed at converting believers of one denomination to other denominations." [36] Proselytism is prohibited by law, as is missionary work.

We consider it necessary to express the following points while concluding the paragraph. As a result of our observations and scientific research, the main aspects of the world experience of combating missionary and proselytism and the practice of Uzbekistan are as follows:

- missionary and proselytism is used by some countries for geopolitical purposes. Missionaries are not only involved in spreading this or that religion, but there have been cases of studying the socio-political situation in the region they visited, collecting information, and trying to derail the political environment by influencing the religious situation;
- corporations, large organizations, associations that financially support the activities of missionaries are encouraged by certain countries;
- the missionary movement is not only a movement directed at religious propaganda, at its core lies the economic, socio-political goals expected by ideologically turning people from one path to another;
- propagation of citizens who do not have a religious belief or who believe in one religion to another religion is incompatible with universal principles;
- the free activity of 16 religious denominations in Uzbekistan is reflected in the legal norms. Conducting missionary and proselytizing activities by representatives of certain confessions in the country is contrary to the current legislation.

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