

Summary of the Conference presentation

Mijo Nikić PhD (Republic of Croatia) – Psychologist, Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, Jesuits' University of Zagreb

Methods of Self Promotion used by Cult Followers and New Religious Movements

Hugo Stamm distinguishes five stages in the indoctrination process:

1st Stage: Recruitment - the victims of religious cults are mostly unstable people, i.e. people who suffer of a conscious or unconscious fear of independence. The newly recruited member is taken in with great care and love ("love bombing"), praised as a chosen one by the community he/she is joining. David Berg ("Moses David") introduced a method of a "flirty-fishing" - hunting and attracting souls for Jesus. He invites women to use their charms to draw people to God.

2nd Stage: Introduction to the doctrine of salvation (Intellectual bombing) - In the case where the individual rejects the ideas of the cult, a sort of "brainwashing" is applied, as much as possible in an environment of isolation, for the subject to abandon his/her old beliefs and old friends and siblings. In addition to forcing the adoption of a new doctrine, they seek to change the person's identity.

3rd Stage: The new member is required to devote his entire personality to the interests of the cult, exposing him/her to moral and often to physical pressure.

4th Stage: Isolation and alienation from their environment - Isolation is designed to protect the members of the cult from the "unpleasant" (unwanted) effects of the outside world, and makes them ready to promote the cult's objectives without reservation. This is why radical cults send their members abroad.

5th Stage: Fixing doctrine of salvation - Once self-defence mechanisms are overcome, the control of consciousness has been taken over and a new suggested identity is imposed by the cult. The endless repetition of a ritual (mantra) and unconditional obedience obstruct the identity of a person. One member of a cult described how, when in a state of fear and fatigue, he had to read texts of the cult founder describing the horrific fates of unfaithful followers.

Conclusion: The surge of new "religious" movements is a challenge to society and sometimes a real danger to the citizens, regardless of whether they are believers or non-believers. There are known cases of murders and mass suicides that occurred in some circles of cults. Each State should take all necessary measures to protect its citizens from destructive and dangerous ideas and cults regardless of where they come from.