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КОРОНАВИРУС И ВАКЦИНАЦИЯ: МЕДИЦИНСКОЕ, БИОЭТИЧЕСКОЕ И КОНФЕССИОНАЛЬНОЕ ИЗМЕРЕНИЯ

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Аннотация. В данной статье обсуждаются некоторые дискуссионные вопросы, находящиеся на стыке медицины, биологии, философии, теологии, религиоведения и биоэтики, возникшие в связи с коронавирусом и вакцинацией населения, которые по-разному решаются с позиций различных мировоззрений и конфессий. Показываются некоторые издержки в адаптации религиозных конфессий к регламентации жизнедеятельности во всех сферах в период коронавируса. Обосновывается, что одной из причин быстрого распространения вируса являются некоторые действия церкви, мечетей и синагог в направлении обеспечения эффективной самоизоляции и социального дистанцирования. Доказывается нежелательность и вредность некоторых публичных дискуссий по поводу стратегии и тактики жизнедеятельности в ситуации пандемии: об инфекционной безопасности обрядов причащения, крещения и др.; о халяльности противовирусных препаратов; о правомерности использования препаратов, воздействующих на ДНК индивида; о допустимости препаратов, изготовленных из abortивных и иных человеческих материалов.

Ключевые слова: коронавирус, религия, христианство, ислам, вакцинация, биоэтика, противовирусные препараты

Original article

CORONAVIRUS AND VACCINATION: MEDICAL, BIOETHICAL AND CONFESSIONAL DIMENSIONS

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Abstract. This article discusses some controversial issues at the intersection of medicine, biology, philosophy, theology, religious studies and bioethics, which have arisen in connection with the coronavirus and vaccination of the population, which are resolved in different ways from the standpoint of different worldviews and confessions. Some costs are shown in the adaptation of religious confessions to the regulation of life in all spheres during the period of coronavirus. It is substantiated that one of the reasons for the rapid spread of the virus is some actions of churches, mosques and synagogues in the direction of ensuring effective self-isolation and social distancing. It proves the undesirability and harmfulness of some public discussions about the strategy and tactics of life in a pandemic situation: about the infectious safety of the rituals of communion, baptism, etc.; the halal nature of antiviral drugs; on the legality of the use of drugs that affect the individual's DNA; on the admissibility of drugs made from abortive and other human materials.

Keywords: coronavirus, religion, Christianity, Islam, vaccination, bioethics, antiviral drugs

Introduction. The natural sciences, medical sciences, humanities, and social sciences are just beginning to formulate some of the patterns associated with the coronavirus. Religious studies, Islamic studies, and theology have also been involved in the study of the confessional experience of countering the pandemic. But some preliminary generalizations can already be made here. Confirmation is the international scientific and practical conference "Interfaith harmony is the key to post-COVID rehabilitation and spiritual revival of Russia", which was held on January 26–27, 2021 in Makhachkala on the basis of the scientific and health complex "Zhuravli", where methods

of restoring health for those who have suffered severe forms of coronavirus infection, based not only on a medical approach, but also on the restoration of the spiritual state of a person, were discussed. There, authoritative scientists and alims spoke about increasing the role of all religious communities in organizing counteraction to the spread of the virus. It was emphasized that in a stressful state, the human immune system weakens, which facilitates the introduction of the virus into cells and its spread throughout the body. Therefore, it is important that a person is psychologically stable and calm. Turning to the Almighty often helps in this [1].

The purpose of this research article is to analyze some significant changes in the strategy and tactics of religious activity in the context of the pandemic. The positive aspects and some shortcomings of the work of religious communities to counteract the epidemic are revealed.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the justification of the undesirability and harmfulness of public discussions around various aspects of coronavirus and antiviral vaccination, namely: the extent of the impact of drugs on the human genome; on the permissibility of their use from the point of view of Christianity, Islam and Judaism due to the use of prohibited ingredients, including abortion materials; on the infectious safety of communion and other religious rites, etc.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research is the main state and confessional documents that define the strategy and tactics of society in the situation of coronavirus, as well as the philosophical methodology that requires a concrete historical approach to the analysis of social phenomena, carried out taking into account the real conditions of life and activity of people, the basic principles of bioethics.

Research results and their discussion

The majority of the population, believers and clergy were sympathetic to the significant changes in the regulation of all life activities during the pandemic. Although it must be said that these changes in the metric of religious life did not always go smoothly. For example, the actions of all faiths without exception, especially during the initial period of the pandemic, were not very prompt, and they joined the state policy of self-isolation and refusal of public events rather late. So, for example, in Dagestan at the end of March last year, when the epidemic was already raging in full, more than a thousand people still gathered for Friday prayers in the Juma Mosque of Makhachkala, and in Kizilyurt about 3,000 people. This shows that the leadership of the muftiate joined the state policy of self-isolation and refusal of public events rather late.

Many signs of boycotting the state policy of countering the pandemic, considering it as an attempt by the state to interfere in religious life, took place in the initial period in all faiths. For example, as the Polish newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* notes, from the point of view of faith, there is nothing more important on earth than the service of Mass, and for the eternal life of a person – nothing more important than receiving Holy Communion. Just as hospitals treat diseases of the body, so churches treat spiritual diseases, so it is inconceivable that people would not pray in our temples. And the Austrian pastor Christian Sieberer, in an open appeal to the state authorities, asks: can it be true that for the first time in the history of Austria, people will not be allowed to come to mass to celebrate the death and resurrection of our Lord? After all, even during the plague epidemic and during the war, under the rule of the Nazis and the Stalinist occupation, such a ban never existed [2].

Now it has become clear that one of the main reasons for the rapid spread of the virus was mass worship services in churches, mosques, synagogues and other events of

a religious nature. For example, the South Korean authorities have officially confirmed that as of March 2020, out of 8,200 cases of COVID-19, more than half are attributed to followers of various churches. And in Malaysia, out of 238 cases of infection, 77 were associated with the holding of an Islamic religious festival in Kuala Lumpur from February 27 to March 1, 2020 [3]. An even more obvious picture was observed in Israel, where many Jewish communities, especially those who lived in Palestine long before the emergence of Israel, and recognize their relative autonomy from the state, as well as some representatives of Muslim minorities, boycotted and continue to boycott official anti-epidemic policies and ideology.

We also consider it important to state that some discussions involving many believers and clergymen of all religious denominations without exception were imposed on the community artificially, and most importantly – untimely, and they did not and do not contribute to increasing the effectiveness of countering the pandemic. We will point out some undesirable vectors of these discussions.

For example, we consider untimely the theological discussion about the infectious safety of the rite of communion, which was raised in the media by some representatives of the Christian clergy. So, the archpriest of the church of St. Nicholas in Galutvin and the rector of the Chinese patriarchal metochion in Moscow, Igor Zuev, directly stated: "There is no danger of infection from communion from one cup. It cannot be, because in the cup there is not just bread and wine, but Christ himself" [4].

Confirmation that such statements in the period of mass epidemics are fraught with serious consequences is the well-known in Russian history "plague riot" in the XVIII century, when as a result of the ban on mass prayers at the Bogolyubskaya Icon of the Mother of God, located at the barbarian gates of Kitay-gorod (China-town), excited by some initiators, the crowd of rioters who did not want to obey the ban, killed the Moscow Archbishop Ambrose and organized pogroms.

We also consider it inappropriate, untimely and harmful to discuss the issue of halal antiviral drugs, especially the discussion in the media on this topic in the context of the pandemic itself. This includes appeals from authoritative Islamic bodies and individuals, such as the Council of Theologians of the Muslim spiritual board of Russia, the Muftiate of Tatarstan, and others to the Gamalei and Vector centers with a request to disclose the composition of vaccines in order to make a theological decision on its permissibility [5].

We assume that under normal conditions, theological arguments about the halal or non-halal nature of medical drugs have a right to exist. And the theological prohibition to be vaccinated can be connected with the use in the production of drugs of components recognized as non-halal: alcohol, pork, dead meat, blood and everything that is not killed with the name of Allah, as well as with the lack of chemical processing in the technology of their manufacture, in which the substances lose their natural properties. But in the current situation of the pandemic, we believe that

such discussions and appeals only bring harm and do not contribute to the unity of the Ummah in the fight against danger.

In conditions when a significant part of the population is not yet sure of the effectiveness of the drugs, many people doubt whether to be vaccinated, such statements and appeals of authoritative Islamic leaders, especially through the media, can be decisive in refusing to vaccinate.

Moreover, the Koran and Sunnah clearly allow the use of non-halal food and medicines in extreme conditions that threaten life itself. "If someone is forced to eat the forbidden *without disobedience* and without transgressing the limits of what is necessary, then there is no sin on him. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful" [6] (italics are highlighted by the authors, because of the importance of this point). According to the letter and spirit of the Koran, a person, his physical and spiritual health are the highest value, and he is obliged, first of all, to take care of saving his own life – a priceless gift of Allah.

It is also impossible to recognize the useful tone of the statements of some believers and religious ministers, where the epidemic is considered as "God's punishment", a lesson, punishment, and that it is another proof of Divine omnipotence. To prove his power, God does not need to resort to such extreme measures, condemning people to suffering and the loss of loved ones. After all, He has other, more effective means of influencing people and educating them to worship God, high morals and spirituality. This is on the one hand. On the other hand, we consider it unacceptable and methodologically incorrect to transfer postulates that have symbolic and spiritual significance to real life, including medicine, biology, etc. The consequences of such attitudes, condemning people to inaction and waiting for a miracle, are not difficult to imagine.

Indeed, as it is written in the Quran, "and no misfortune will befall you except by the Lord's permission; and the heart of everyone who believes in the Lord will be guided by Him to the right path. Allah is All-knowing of all things" [6]. That is, any virus, disease, epidemic, natural disaster does not arise and occur by itself, but is created only by Allah and by His will. In the light of this interpretation of divine omnipotence, it turns out, as Abu Hureira said, "there is no transmissible disease and there is no bad omen..." [7]. When, objecting to this, the Bedouin asks: haven't you seen how a camel with scabies, coming to us, infects everyone? To which the Prophet asks an answer question: "Who infected the first camel?" [7].

In this dialogue, we are interested in the ideological and theological meaning of the above polemic, which means that the omnipotence of God also extends to acts that have serious hardships, sufferings and trials as a result. Of course, in the modern medical and biological sense, such statements are not correct and even absurd, since they focus only on the divine hope and rejection of modern science (including medicine) and practice.

Representatives of religious denominations have very different views on vaccination. Some, perhaps the majority of them, support the official state anti-covid policy and

make calls for clergymen and laypeople to be actively vaccinated. Others, on the contrary, based on bioethical and canonical considerations, call for abstaining from vaccinations against coronavirus. At the same time, some arguments are given, including that it is believed that such vaccination involves interference with human DNA, which is unacceptable according to religious and moral canons. This is confirmed by the popular in virtual reality interview with Protopresbyter Andrey Aleshin, to which he encloses a translation from the Greek language and comments on the famous article by the English researcher Anthony Patch, which proves that anticovid vaccination is a direct intervention in the human genome for the purpose of its further programming that can never be approved by religion at all [8].

It should be noted that such a wide range of opinions among ministers of worship and believers in general reflects the presence of different approaches among domestic and foreign geneticists, virologists and microbiologists. The official Russian position on this issue was expressed by the director of the Gamalei Research Center for Epidemiology and Microbiology, Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences Alexander Gintsburg, that "the Russian Sputnik V vaccine does not affect the human genome. It has no effect on the nucleic acid, nor on heredity, nor on any other things related to the change in our hereditary material". And that the drug does not multiply in the human body, so it cannot integrate and interact with DNA. In his opinion, the human genome can only be affected by what can be integrated into it or in some way affect the structure of DNA. This vaccine is produced on the basis of a non-dangerous human adenovirus with an embedded section of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus genome, which provokes an immune response [9].

The opposite position, which is quite widespread, including among believers, is based on the fact that anti-covid protection is fundamentally impossible without direct intervention in the human genome. So, according to the Nobel Prize winner Luc Montagnier (by the way, who received for the discovery of the immunodeficiency virus), the total genomic sequence of the SARS-Cov-2 virus contains 16 genetic fragments of HIV-1, HIV-2 and MIV (monkey immunodeficiency virus), which are present in all preparations without exception [10].

This is also due to a certain modification of stem cells (which are known to be able to transform into many types of cells of organs and tissues of the body). As a result, most of our somatic (non-reproductive) cells can be replaced by these genetically modified stem cells. This process leads to the transfer of genetic information to the germ cells, leading to mutations in all subsequent generations. Since this is a modification of sexual cells, not somatic cells, the new genetic material will be present in each individual cell of the offspring. Thus, there is a so-called insertion-a genetic mutation in which another DNA sequence is inserted into the DNA sequence, which will be detected in all generations of a particular person [11].

And another aspect of this problem, which opponents of vaccination pay attention to, has not only biological,

but also social and spiritual consequences. It consists in the fact that the vaccine contains marking components that indicate changes in the DNA. The vaccine contains an enzyme called luciferase, a fluorescent material that is invisible to the ordinary eye but visible to instruments, as well as so-called nanobots-molecules that can be programmed to perform a specific task. They function as biological sensors, communicating information from inside the body to outside, to the corresponding structures [10]. This leads to the well-known conclusions about total programming, "chipping" of a person, "the formation of a society of total control", which many people have recently been talking about.

We have highlighted only one side of the vaccination problem, which has biological, social, spiritual, bioethical and religious aspects. The other side, which is quite actively discussed by all faiths, is related to the problem of the presence of abortive materials in modern vaccines [12]. Although all Western and domestic experts, without exception, recognize the fact of the use of abortive cultures in the production of vaccines, there are significant differences in its assessment. According to the experts of the Center for Epidemiology and Microbiology. Gamalei, indeed, in the production of vector vaccines intended for the prevention of viral diseases around the world, the NEK 293 cell culture is used. It was obtained in 1973 by the transformation of an abortive culture of human embryonic kidney cells with adenovirus. It entered our Center in 1981 from the Institute of Genetics, University of Cologne, Germany. According to the Leonard Hayflick limit, all human cells dividing in cell culture die after about 50 divisions. Therefore, by 1981 all cells taken from the source material were absent in the cell line, and it is possible to speak about the connection of this line with the abortive material only in historical terms [9].

Based on such considerations, all the arguments of opponents of vaccination for religious and bioethical reasons are not justified, because after many transfers, nothing remains of live abortive material.

The above arguments of the Center's experts are quite convincing, but they do not take into account one very important amendment, which was made in 1971 by our scientist Alexey Olovnikov, who proved that the Hayflick limit is characteristic only for cells with uncirculated DNA, while bacteria with ring DNA multiply without restrictions on the number of divisions. He proposed the marginotomy hypothesis, which suggested that the limit of cell division with linear DNA is due to incomplete copying of the end sections of the chromosome at the time of cell division (just as the second car of the train will never reach a dead end and will stop at a distance equal to the length of the locomotive). As the cell prepares to divide, the enzyme DNA polymerase runs along the chromosome to make a copy of it. If the chromosome has a ring structure, the enzyme successfully completes a full circle, and the ends of the copy stick together to form a chromosome for a new cell, which can occur with an infinite number of divisions and transfers [13].

Thus, it becomes obvious that along with vaccination, the genetic fragments of other people – the parents of

aborted babies-are introduced into the body; secondly, through the matrix RNA constructor that edits the human genome, interference is carried out in the God-given nature of man; thirdly, it can be argued that a new, unprecedented, artificial species of humanity is being created. It is clear that none of these postulates fit into the canonical foundations of all world religions.

It is clear that these and some other ambiguously understood aspects related to vaccination have not only a narrow medical and biological dimension; they are also included in certain socio-ethical and spiritual-ideological meanings. It is no coincidence that recently the number of publications of opponents of vaccination and covid-dissidents has sharply increased. And the presence of the most contradictory information only scares off a part of the population, especially some priests, whose opinion people listen to, have a negative attitude to vaccination for the above and other reasons. For example, in February of this year, a round table meeting "All-Russian vaccination or a threat to national security" was held in Moscow, organized by the famous actress, covid-dissident, as she identifies herself, Maria Shukshina. It should be noted that although there were constructive ideas in the speeches, especially in terms of the popular explanation of the biological mechanisms of vaccination, but still a negative intonation in the evaluation of vaccination was evident. This is confirmed, for example, by the speech of the molecular biologist E. G. Kalle. On the one hand, she expertly and popularly explained the principle of the vaccine: the vaccine created on the classic platform carried the killed virus, and when it entered the body, our immune system recognized it completely. Since 2000, the virus platform has changed. Now the new vaccine is really a genetically engineered product based on a completely new principle – vector. Only one "detail" is taken from the virus, and our immune system must recognize the pathogen from it. And to do this, an instruction is written, which in the form of DNA is refueled in a vehicle, which is an adenovirus vaccine, and transferred to the cells. Moreover, this vehicle itself is equipped with a powerful mechanism for suppressing immune cells, which are our human defense system [14].

A person who is unfamiliar with genetics and molecular biology, and there are 99 % of people in our country, the deep mechanisms of vaccination will be incomprehensible, but the final part of the discourse, where we are talking about the destruction of the human immune system, will create a certain psychological dominant in the reader, which will finally form his attitude to vaccination (remember Stirlitz also drew attention to the fact that the last words and phrases are remembered). And until a person is explained in an accessible language the mechanisms and extent of the impact of vaccination on the immune system, he will not seek to make the coveted vaccination.

In our opinion, one of the reasons why a significant part of the population is rather inert about vaccination is the lack of clear information about such biological, bioethical and other aspects of this problem. In the modern information age, when everyone has access to the Internet, where there is a lot of the most contradictory information

about the coronavirus, a lot of publications of opponents of vaccination, only complete and reliable information from competent specialists can generate trust in a person. At the same time, such information should be voiced not only in specialized scientific journals, but also in the media and in the virtual space. Moreover, in genetics and microbiology, much is formulated only at a hypothetical level, it is not fully known, for example, how long a foreign gene acts, how many particles of coronavirus it produces in the body, it is not entirely clear whether the cells die or are embedded in the human genome. Instead of increasing awareness of the population about vaccination, about the mechanisms of its action, on the contrary, we have "restrictions on scientific discussions on vaccination issues" [11].

Conclusion

Thus, based on the results of the study, the following conclusions can be formulated:

- along with the important contribution of all faiths to the fight against the pandemic, it is necessary to note the untimeliness and harmfulness of some theological discussions that do not contribute to the overall success in countering the coronavirus and do not stimulate the desire for mass vaccination of the population;

- the pandemic should be seen not only as a medical and biological dimension, but also as a social, humanitarian, spiritual and moral dimension. Therefore, all theoretical and practical issues should be solved taking into account the domestic and foreign confessional experience, in compliance with the principles of modern bioethics.

In this article, we have tried to raise some well-known ideological, philosophical and confessional issues and rethink them in connection with the functioning of religion in the context of the pandemic. Many of them are quite scrupulous for the believer and the clergy. And the state authorities at all levels, ensuring the epidemiological safety of citizens, should show tact, remaining in the legal field, and the denominations should treat the measures implemented by the state with understanding. After all, both for the state and for religion, human life and health are the highest values.

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