

SPIRITUALITY AND PHYSICAL EXERCISE - PREVENTION FOR EPI(PAN)DEMIC COVID-A-19

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SUMMARY

It is an undeniable truth that in one period of today's people's lives, the COVID-19 epi(pan)demic was weaved. It is a period marked by suffering, pain and illness, as well as a significant disharmony of spirit, soul and body, which consequently influenced the fear of bared life and survival. The age of the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to the objective presence of a virus that has taken many lives, warns us that the world is facing infodemia, manipulative media propaganda, polarized profession, loss of basic human rights and other global plans diametrically opposed to the spiritual approach and whose primary goal is to spread fear among people. Such a situation has created a ground for positive and/or negative thinking of people regarding epi(pan)demics. The scientific approach to the concept of spirituality, although it has its roots in philosophy and psychology, is present in religion, and today we can say in quantum medicine, bioethics and other sciences. However, no matter how different the paths of spirituality may be, they have in common finding the hidden laws of nature and selflessly using their discoveries to improve the lives of others. The complexity and diversity of the concept of spirituality leads to the choice of the spiritual path and the development of each person individually. In an effort to better understand his inner life, an individual must go through a processes of introspection and self-knowledge in order to reach the virtues that enable him to have a wiser relationship with himself, the environment, the world. The aim of this paper is to consider some situations that may represent the foundation of a new (beneficial) path to human salvation, possible life in new circumstances.

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The complexity of the topic raises the question - how to achieve active work with results that will be beneficial for people in the new conditions of the pandemic? The results of the research indicate that the syncretism of spirituality and physical exercise creates conditions for meaningful reasoning, reflection, cognition and awareness of the understanding that this is a very important path to healing.

Keywords: COVID-19, fear, spiritual and physical development, religion

INTRODUCTION

Spirituality represents a very complex concept, but in addition to countless correct and at the same time different definitions, it unites general value postulates, that is, it implies the choice of spiritual, metaphysical, immaterial approach to life in relation to the transient, material. It also includes research into universal values - love, compassion, wisdom, meaning and purpose of life, life after death, etc¹. Although the general public believes that being religious implies that person's spirituality, this is not necessarily true, but religion can be considered as a form of spirituality whose foundations are the same or similar to other forms of spirituality in trying to understand the meaning of life and relations with a Force Majeure². The path to spirituality is not universal, but everyone should find and follow their personal path of spirituality.

The roots of the relationship between physical exercise and spirituality can be found in the ancient Greeks who established the development of general values in the education system in their high schools, as well as in competitions/games, the most famous of which were the Festivity games at Olympia³. The ancient Greeks taught and lived through agon - the urge to compete, to reflect for victory, not for material gain, but only for reputation and honour, for superiority and honour, for praise and glory⁴, then through aretes - which encompasses the meaning of excellence, goodness, chivalry, heroism, nobility and moral excellence. and finally, through kalokagathia - which refers to the classical education and upbringing of the ancient Greeks aimed at the parallel development of mind, body and spirit⁵.

¹ Beauty and the Beast blog, "What is spirituality? Everything you've ever been interested in about spirituality." August 18, 2021. <https://www.lepoticaizver.com/blog/duhovnost-spiritualnost>.

² Ivo Jirasek, Religion, Spirituality, and Sport: From Religio Athletae Toward Spiritus Athletae, *Quest* 67 (2015): 290-299. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00336297.2015.1048373>.

³ Violeta Šiljak, *History of Sports*. (Belgrade: Faculty of Sports Management, 2007).

⁴ Miloš Đurić, *Through Hellenic History, Literature and Music, Studies and Essays*. (Belgrade: Cosmos, 1955).

⁵ Jovo Radoš, *Philosophy of Education and Sports, Sportmont*, 10-11 (2006): 517.

Based on the research of contemporary authors, it can be noticed that the topic of spiritual health, sports and exercise psychology is still a current topic⁶.

When it comes to the COVID-19 pandemic, countless works have been written, both on the topic of the pandemic itself, and on its connection with physical exercise and sports. What we have been facing in the last two years is that the scientific truth about COVID-19 has not yet been made public. Of course, it is indisputable that the virus was, and it is announced that it will be present again, that it took many lives, that many true and false news and official reports could be read that were contradictory, that fear and panic were publicly introduced to a people that has been repeatedly abused in order to manipulate the masses. All this opened the space for a large number of researchers to deal with the topic of COVID-19 from several aspects: spiritual and mental health^{7,8}, its impact on human rights⁹, physical activity during the pandemic¹⁰, then wearing masks, sports business, deaths of athletes, sports tourism, etc. It is important to point out that a very small number of papers are available on the topic of consequences for athletes after receiving the vaccine. Thus, the results of the research of Batatinha et al.¹¹ which indicate that the effects of the vaccine affected the increased heart rate by 5 beats/min are very discreetly presented and are considered "minimal" effects of the vaccine, although it is clear to the entire medical and sports profession that it is not good when the heart rate increases by 1 beats/min, not for all 5 beats/min.

The fact is that science and technology have helped people in various fields, but on the other hand, the "fast" way of life has created stresses and diseases that are increasing every day. God's gifts have multiple meanings and purposes. That gift should live in us and through us in order to transcend ourselves and become more spiritual beings. It is important that we open ourselves to people and nature

⁶ Dev Roychowdhury, *Spiritual Well-Being in Sport and Exercise Psychology*, Sage open (2019). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2158244019837460>.

⁷ Ilaria Coppola, Nadia Rania, Rosa Parisi, Francesca Lagomarsino, *Spiritual Well-Being and Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Italy*, *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 12 (2021). <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsy.2021.626944/full>.

⁸ Mustafa Durmus, Erkan Durar, *The Relationship between Spiritual Well-Being and Fear of COVID-19 in Individuals with Chronic Disease during COVID-19 Outbreak*, *Spiritual Psychology and Counseling*, 7 (1) (2022): 37-53. https://spiritualpc.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/03_durmus.pdf.

⁹ Aire Centra, Office. Biljana Braithwaite, Catharina Harby, Goran Miletić, *COVID-19 and its impact on human rights, Review of relevant case law of the European Court of Human Rights* (Civil Rights, Defenders, 2020). <https://www.rolplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/covid-guide-bcms.pdf>.

¹⁰ Institute of Public Health of Vojvodina, *Physical activity during the corona virus pandemic* (2020). <http://izjzv.org.rs/?lng=lat&cir=0&link=3-17-1753%3Ca>.

¹¹ Helena Batatinha, Forrest L. Baker, Kyle A. Smith, Tiffany M. Zúñiga, Charles R. Pedlar, Shane C. Burgess, Emmanuel Katsanis, and Richard J. Simpson. Recent COVID-19 vaccination has minimal effects on the physiological responses to graded exercise in physically active health people. *J. Appl. Physiol*, 132 (2) (2022): 275-282.

through universal love, because we are "natural beings". Unfortunately, today's situation of the COVID-19 pandemic requires us to close ourselves in space (various movement bans), in the house (life next to the computer - communication via Skype) and the like. In a word, instead of free, natural movement and communication, we got a ban on movement (sedentary lifestyle and work) and "close" communication.

However, such imposed mutual isolation of people gave room for many opinions and questions. Was the scale of COVID-19 epidemic or pandemic? Or maybe "plan-demics"? Is there censorship or responsibility for published misinformation? Has anyone dared to get sick from some other disease? How many people have died because of the health system ignoring for all other types of diseases? In what capacity does Bill Gates¹² announced and announces when and which pandemic will occur? Is vaccination really useful? Why is polarization created and fuelled between vaccinated and non-vaccinated? What is the number of deaths due to the vaccine received? How are the decisions of state governing bodies more important than the decisions of the medical profession? Why is the profession polarized? How do all decisions, protocols and measures affect the health of people, especially athletes who are exposed to additional physical effort? What are the consequences of vaccination in athletes? What is the real truth about pandemics and vaccines? Do we have the right to our lives and our choices?

All these issues, as well as those that are not listed here, and related to the topic, have given rise to one universal truth enlightened through our existence during the pandemic, and that is that we can best help ourselves. How? The answer is - in striving to have a healthy, happy and fulfilled life so that everyone can work and create in it. For that, it is necessary that there are spiritual, mental and physical capacities of the individual in his being. We must first recognize the need for spiritual, mental and physical development in order to create the conditions for the movement of creative energy, and later accept this development as an essential need for existence in this world.

SUBJECT, OBJECTIVE AND METHOD OF WORK

The subject of this paper is related to spirituality and physical exercise as a prevention for the COVID-19 epidemic. The aim of this paper was to consider some situations that may be the basis of a new/beneficial path to human salvation,

¹² In all media, both foreign and domestic, we have Bill Gates' statements about the announcement of the epidemic, the course of the epidemic, stagnation and its reappearance (sources are not listed because they are generally known and present and would take up more space than the paper itself).

possible life in new circumstances. The method of theoretical analysis is applied in the paper.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The spiritual fathers of all religions supported their people during the pandemic and pointed out that it was important to strengthen spirituality in order to overcome the pandemic. Thus, the Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Littoral, Joanikije, said about the pandemic that is the temptation "that care should be taken and adhered to the measures, and at the same time we need to strengthen ourselves spiritually in order to overcome this trouble¹³." However, the Archangel Seraphim from the Divljan Monastery connected, brought us closer and explained the connection between spirituality, health, COVID-19 and, as he stated, "spiritual" vibrations¹⁴.

Generally speaking, life energy, "qi" energy (in Chinese), "prana" (in Indian), or "spiritual" as the Orthodox world calls it, flows through us and produces movement-vibrations. When this flow takes place slowly and rhythmically, we experience pleasure. Our feelings are perceptions of these involuntary movements that take place in the body, these vibrations in us. If we know that bioenergy was recognized as an alternative method of treatment by the World Health Organization (WHO), we can now say back in 1976, and if bioenergy/energy therapy is used worldwide today, and is called vibration or energy medicine, then we can ask - How is it that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the medical profession did not announce in the media and applied this type of therapy in practice¹⁵? Bioenergy therapy implies the application of natural energy processes and laws to awaken one's own immune system, which has weakened due to a disharmonious lifestyle, or has completely ceased to function. The healing process begins at the moment of self-awareness of one's own being.

¹³ CDM Vijesti, Joanikije: The corona virus pandemic is a temptation, we need to beware of diseases, but also to strengthen ourselves spiritually in order to overcome this trouble, from November 28, 2021. <https://www.cdm.me/drustvo/joanikije-pandemija-korona-virusa-je-iskusenje-treba-se-cuvati-bolesti-ali-i-duhovno-snaziti-da-bismo-ovu-nepiriliku-pobijedili/>.

¹⁴ Bašta Balkana, Archangel Seraphim from Divljan Monastery told how the spiritual vibrations of our feelings correspond to the current coronavirus, from April 21, 2021. <https://www.bastabalkana.com/2021/04/otac-serafim-i-duhovne-vibracije-koje-stite-od-virusa/>.

¹⁵ Physicians practicing bioenergy medicine also published the results of their research and pointed out the importance of the application of bioenergy medicine in the fight against COVID-19, such as Thibaud E. d'Oultremont, People Who Chose the Preventive Natural Bioenergetics (NB) COVID-19 Treatment Safely Experienced a Significant Reduction of COVID-19 Symptoms Compared to the General Population, *Cureus*, 13(7): e16277. DOI 10.7759/cureus.16277 (2021). https://assets.cureus.com/uploads/original_article/pdf/62946/20210808-3591-1q60apc.pdf.

A healthy man/human

What does it mean to be healthy? In essence, the focus should be on improving general health status, as disease prevention. It is natural for a person to take care of his body and maintain his health. But it is not natural or healthy to pay exclusive attention to the body, and to neglect the needs of the soul that resides in it. We should not lose sight of the fact that the human spirit also seeks its own food, care and the possibility of expression, in fact, something makes it sick and something healthy.

Many "teachers" (parents, teachers, coaches ...) advise "their students" - they mostly say *what needs to be done*, not *what needs to live (be) in a person*. Man is important to Orthodox Christianity, because "God loves man", and therefore there should always be a commitment to creating the state of a *healthy man*. So, a person's healthy interior from which he will behave in this way - "healthy behaviour" and "healthy doing". It is written in the Holy Bible that "from a good heart¹⁶" (think of a good man - ed.) and from a bad heart - bad deeds "(Luke 6:45¹⁷).

In the book *On the Virtue* St. Grigori Niski explained how good habits related to human health should be cherished:

"If we want to receive *goodness*, let us be the first to offer it; if we want to be recipients later, we care now for the poor; if we want to receive eternal abode from them, let us receive them now; if we want to get rid of our sins, we take care of their diseases. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5: 7) What benefit do we see in treating young or old, when people do not try to cultivate *good habits* related to the body? Probably none. But certain troubles, such as diseases and similar external sufferings, occur when polluted air or water strikes and pollutes the person who transmits them to others, because the cause of the disease itself spreads to other people. That is why accidents spice up inside the body; the blood is contaminated by the accumulation of bad habits that create disease. This fact teaches us valuable knowledge: do healthy habits turn into a disease if a person sincerely strives for healing? Of course not. It is most likely that the disease is not even transmitted from a sick person to

¹⁶ Father Thaddeus said: "It is important to keep the good in yourself and have confidence in yourself. Only in this way can a person look ahead, be healthy, benefit God, himself and others", Father Thaddeus, *Spiritual lessons to the Serbian people*, (Belgrade: Zlatousti, 2005, 83).

¹⁷ Luke 6:45

those in good health. If God's will, the commandment, is a precious means of preparation for the Kingdom of Heaven, and if bodily medicine has some value, what prevents us from keeping the commandment of love?¹⁸

The soul participates when a person has the feeling that something intense is happening in him, whether it is a strong desire (good, when he enjoys, or bad, when he is disappointed). Constant change of good and bad mood, creates some tension (stress) that affects the state of *good* or *bad health*. In each of these situations, all three powers of the soul are present - *sensitivity, mind and will*. When we say mind, we usually mean the brain (head), but according to the deeds of the Church Fathers, man's conscious part, his mind is located in the soul. This is what the Holy Fathers preach¹⁹.

Thoughts arise in the mind which is located in the soul²⁰, and from the soul they go to the brain for a kind of processing. He arranges and selects them, in order to make later a decision on the importance. It is necessary to take care of all thoughts (both good and bad). When it is said that one should take care of what one's thoughts are, it means that one should judge - if they are good, one should keep them, if they are bad, one should remove them immediately. Father

¹⁸ St. Grigori Niski, *On the Virtue*, (Belgrade - Šibenik: True, the Publishing House of the Diocese of Dalmatia, 2008: 104-105).

¹⁹ St. G. Palamas uses his inner experience conditionally, so he says: "Man is dual in nature: one is external, i.e. body, and the other is internal, i.e. soul. The soul, containing the body with which it is created together, is everywhere in the body, not only in one particular place in the body, and also not as transcended, but as one that contains and transcends the body, and all in the image of God. The soul itself is three-part and is seen in three forces: *thoughtful, irritable and willing*. All her forces became ill and Christ, her doctor, began to heal from the last one, i.e. willing. Not only the body is multi-part, but also the soul, i.e. in other words, the soul also seems to have limbs: the ability to grow, the willing, passionate and rational ability". (Archimandrite Cyprian Kern, *Anthropology of St. Gregory of Palamas*, Kraljevo: Diocesan Board of Directors of the Diocese of Žiža, 2012, 363).

²⁰ St. Maximus the Confessor explains how, and in what way, the holy Church of God is the image and depiction of the soul itself: "*The soul* possesses two abilities: one contemplative, and the other active. He (the old man) called the contemplative mind, and the active reasonableness, as the basic forces of the soul. And again, he called the mind - wisdom, and reason - prudence, as the basic energies of the soul (mind is ability, and wisdom is a manifestation of that ability). And he spoke again in more detail, that souls belong, according to its mental part: mind, wisdom, contemplation, knowledge, unforgettable knowledge, and their end is the Truth. According to the rational part, the souls belong to: reasonableness, prudence, activity, virtue, faith, and their end is Good. Truth and Goodness show God" (St. Maximus the Confessor, (Selected Works; 400 Chapters on Love, Mystagogy, Prizren: Diocese of Raska and Prizren, 1997: D 3, 179-180). The mind driven by wisdom reaches contemplation, and through contemplation - into knowledge, through knowledge - into unforgettable knowledge, and through unforgettable knowledge - into the Truth. Around the Truth, the mind finds the limit of its movement, and the truth determines its essence, power, state and activity (Ibid., D 8, 182)... Likewise, reasonableness driven by prudence arrives in action, through action in virtue, and through virtue in faith, in truth, firm and unwavering belief in (things) of the divine. Reasonableness first acquires it by the power of prudence, then shows it by the activity of virtue, by manifestation in deeds, because: "without works of faith, something is dead" (cf. James 2:20). (Ibid., D 10, 183-184).

Thaddeus "irradiates" the people through spiritual lessons, so he says about health: "*What thoughts we deal with, such is our life*²¹." And this is supported by the words of the Apostle Paul: "*It is not spiritual first, but soul, then spiritual*" (1 Cor 15:46²²).

The human soul, in addition to sensitivity, has a *cognitive part* as well as *the power of will*²³. All three represent the unity of diversity. For example, if a person's cognitive part has one topic with which feelings do not agree, or if feelings and mind agree on one thing and will does not, then *the soul is divided*, which consequently develops an unstable personality. These contradictions are also present among today's Orthodox Christians. As this paper also contains the issue of the exaltation of man, it is considered that there are unstable personalities in his environment who need a Christian approach to people, in eliminating what is not good, i.e., what harms health.

It is known that sin is the one that affects the disunity of the soul, which directs the mind towards material things. Correction of the existing mistake is possible if a person would bring all parts of the soul into a position of unbreakable unity towards achieving the same goal. Then the conditions for creating the state of a *healthy person* would be created.

As the focus of this work is on the upliftment of man in the field of *spiritual, mental and physical health*, it would be desirable to rely entirely on God's providence that gives birth to his inner "voice of reason" not to deviate from the "right path".

Man changes with an active attitude towards his body, and thus himself in general. Just as the fact that "it is not exercise, but the soul that shapes the body", so the body is the best indicator of *human health* - weakening/increasing its functional abilities, or changing morphological structure, indicates the process of good/bad functioning of the body.

²¹ Father Thaddeus, *Spiritual Lessons*, 83.

²² 1 Cor 15:46.

²³ The issue of teaching about the will was also dealt with by St. Maximus the Confessor. Kern states that Maximus, in addition to the human will and the Divine will, introduces new terminological definitions: "natural will" and "gnomic, judicious will". He says that Maximus takes the position that there is a "*natural will*" - the aspiration (desire) of being towards good and that this aspiration in man is performed "by nature" and in accordance with the plan of the Creator. He explains that in parallel with this will, in man, after work, caused by reasoning, the reasoning, *gnomic will* acts, not as a simple will, but as a desire for something specific. Maxim says that this gnomic will represents a certain hesitation, a struggle of motives, the inner work of thoughts and desires, and that it is a purely human imperfect will, which is why it is often sinful. He believes that if by nature man always strives for good, by obeying this judicious voice, he can choose evil. He concludes that in the Savior there was only a natural will to good, while there were no gnomic fluctuations of sinful nature in Him (Archimandrite Cyprian Kern, *Anthropology of St. G. Palamas*, 266-267).

It is useful to get acquainted with the following advice of St. Maximus the Confessor who speaks of *knowledge* and *health*:

"Knowledge is *good by nature*, similar to *health*, but for many it has benefited more from the opposite. Because, knowledge is not good for the vicious, even if it is good by nature, as it was said. Similarly, they do not benefit from health, wealth or joy, because they do not use them for their own benefit. Isn't it the opposite more useful for them then? Therefore, the opposite is not evil in itself, although it is thought to be evil".²⁴

It often happens that while a person is young and healthy, he does not think of God, soul or death, but thinks that he is omnipotent (that he is powerful, that no one is equal to him, that everything is allowed to him, so he behaves that way), and this may be the cause of the doom of the soul. Later, when injuries, illness and the like appear, he becomes aware of his helplessness, realizing that he is not long-lasting. Then he usually turns to God and cries out for help, seeks forgiveness of sins, strives for a *virtuous life* and *salvation of the soul*. It follows that even our folk saying, which reads: "*Health is the greatest wealth*" is not well thought out. That is why it is desirable to obey to the teaching of St. Maximus the Confessor: "*Who protects his body from pleasure and disease, has him as a collaborator in the service of better (things)*"²⁵.

In the book *The Republic*, Plato pointed out that when mental and physical education are in harmony, that is, when there is the integrity of man in the mental and physical aspect, then there is no need for a doctor²⁶. It is worth noting the position that Vlahos takes when he talks about Orthodoxy as a healing science:

"Today's man feels that he needs treatment. Along with the awareness of this fundamental need, I notice every day that Christianity, and especially Orthodoxy, which preserves the essence of Christianity, greatly uses psychotherapy, or that, in other words, Orthodoxy is mostly a therapeutic, healing science. Every means which is used, as well as its essential goal, implies man's healing and bringing him to God. In order to enter into communion with God and reach the blessed state of

²⁴ Sv. Maximus the Confessor, Chapter on Love, One Hundred and Two, Chapter 77, 77.

²⁵ St. Maximus the Confessor, Chapter on Love, One Hundred First, Chapter 21, 39.

²⁶ Plato, *The Republic*, (Belgrade: Belgrade Publishing and Graphic Institute, 2002: 410 b, 93): "And when such a mentally educated person receives physical education at the same time and in the same way, then he will certainly be able to achieve that he does not need medical skills, except in exceptional cases."

worship, we must first be healed. That is why, among all other interpretations, *Orthodoxy is primarily a 'therapeutic', healing science and procedure*. This is clearly different from other psychiatric methods, because it is theanthropocentric (God-man-centered), and not anthropocentric. Besides, it does not end its work with the help of human methods, but with the help and actions (*ενέργεια*) of divine grace or, in essence, through *the cooperation (συνέργεια) of human and divine will*".²⁷

When it comes to human health, it would be good to use the wise words in life practice: "Who keeps himself, God protects him." But, we should not lose sight of the fact that a man who lives his life in goodness, justice and love is close to God - he is healthy. A sick man who is spiritually blind, deaf, dumb, lame ... is possessed by an "evil spirit". That is why a spiritually blind man does not recognize God, a spiritually dumb man does not hear God, a spiritually lame man cannot reach God, and a man who is possessed by an "evil spirit" resists the Truth.

And what kind of person is *a man who "does not protect himself"*? One of the cultural / sociological deviations in the evolution of society and sports (as part of society) is the *phenomenon of violence*, which is increasingly taking an ascending course. Typical examples are the so-called "Reality" programs of various televisions, hooliganism of sports fans, various street riots and others, which strongly influence the expression of negative passions. Is there alcoholism, drugs, doping in sports and the like in the background? Do people prone to violence know that such emotions weaken the body? The results of research in the field of medicine have shown that prolonged negative thinking can lead to damage to the following organs:

- anger weakens the liver,
- stress weakens the heart and brain,
- sadness and pain of weak lungs,
- care for a weak stomach,
- fear weakens the kidneys,
- shock can cause serious consequences for the heart (heart attack) and kidneys.

Therefore, all of the above weakens human immunity, and thus creates a suitable ground for the development of various diseases, which includes the epi(pan)demic of COVID-19.

²⁷ Hierotheus Vlahos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy: The Science of the Holy Fathers*. (Belgrade: Orthodox Missionary School at the Church of St. Alexander Nevsky, 2010: 13).

From the beginning, believers have known the power of prayer, which has been shown in all life circumstances - in diseases, joys, sufferings, celebrations ... Precisely because of this property, prayer has become the subject of scientific research. It is known that a person feels peace and spiritual strength after prayer. Lazorik examined what happens then on the bodily level, especially with human blood²⁸. After conducting an experiment that lasted 15 years, he made a significant scientific discovery: "I grew up in a family of believers, and I never questioned the power of prayer. However, as a scientist, I had to prove it in experiments. It is known that a person feels peace and spiritual strength after prayer. However, what happens on the physical level, especially with our blood? That's what I wanted to examine"- says the scientist.

The people who agreed to participate in the experiment were of different genders, levels of education, social status and professions. They suffered from various diseases: atherosclerosis, hepatitis B, rheumatism... Previously, Lazorik took samples of capillary and venous blood, and analyzed them, and then the respondent would get to read prayers lasting 15-20 minutes: "Lord's Prayer", "The Creed: The Symbol of Faith", "O Heavenly King", Psalm 50, tropar days. After the prayer, the analysis of venous and capillary blood would be performed again and the quantitative morphological and functional characteristics of blood cells would be defined. "Blood has become different at the cellular level!" I remember our first patient suffering from purulent hip inflammation and osteomyelitis after a serious accident. He had severe pain in his facial bones and it bothered him a lot. When I compared his blood count before and after prayer, I found that the level of one of the phagocytosis indicators was 6 times lower than before the experiment! This convinced me that we are on the right path", said Lazorik. All further experiments showed the same thing: after prayer, the level of infection in the body decreased. Especially when it comes to the acute phase of the disease, changes occur in all indicators, inflammatory processes calm down and gradually disappear. Significant changes in the values of individual blood cell parameters were read in each experiment, which indicates that prayer is a key factor that causes changes in the number, morphological and functional characteristics of blood cells, which is also stated at the statistical level. This is proof that prayer really affects the organism on a cellular and subcellular level. "Prayer is not just words. It produces oscillations of a certain frequency. It has long been proven that prayer changes the structure of water. After all, consecrated water is not a myth,

²⁸ Researcher, Dr. Mikhail Lazorik, assistant professor at the Department of Faculty Therapy of Uzhgorod National University, is the author of 166 patents and 15 licenses. Blog Localis, Scientifically proven: prayer changes blood. February 23, 2017. <http://lokalis.rs/sr-yu/globalis-top/508-naucno-dokazano-molitva-menja-krv.html>.

but a scientific fact. Man is almost 80% water and *prayer changes him at the cellular level, even if he reads the prayer in himself*. And when he says it out loud, he can hear sound vibrations that additionally affect the human body and cause changes in the blood picture, reduce inflammation, and have a healing effect! " - explains Dr. Lazorik.

The results of a 10-year study obtained at the Laboratory of Medical and Biological Technologies for Industrial and Marine Medicine (Moscow) have become very important for humanity, as scientists have experimentally proven that prayer and the sign of the cross kill microbes and change optical properties (density) of water.²⁹ Scientists have tested the effect of the "Lord's Prayer" and the sign of the cross on pathogenic bacteria. Various water samples were taken from wells, rivers and lakes. All samples contained Staphylococcus aureus and another still present type of bacteria. But it turned out that after reading the "Lord's Prayer" and shading the sample with the sign of the cross, that amount of harmful bacteria decreased by 7, 10, 100 and more than 1000 times. According to the condition of the experiment, in order to exclude the influence of possible smuggling, the prayer was read by both believers and non-believers, and in addition, the number of pathogenic bacteria in different environments (with different types of bacteria) decreased compared to control values. In all subjects, blood pressure stabilized and improved blood test results were in the direction of healing: hypotonic pressure increased and hypertensive decreased.

After shading the water with the sign of the cross, it was shown that the optical density of water increases in comparison with its normal value in a short ultraviolet spectral range. Scientists explain that this means that water seems to "distinguish" the meaning of the prayers said over it, "remembers" that influence and keeps it for a certain time, which can be seen by the increased optical density. It seems to be "*powered*" by light and becomes "pure water". The human eye cannot perceive these healing changes in the structure of water, but the spectrographer gave an objective assessment of that phenomenon.

Good deeds

The teachings of Saint Sava can significantly guide people today to act correctly in terms of using spiritual and physical *struggle in various fields* (medicine, ecology, sports, etc.). If we take the example of the fight in the field of sports, we will see the fact - the athlete in a different way strives to fight in the field of sports, for his country, for the flag, for the anthem, to win medals that will celebrate him,

²⁹ Telegraf, Every time you cross yourself, remember this: The Holy Cross and prayer have incredible power. November 26, 2016. <http://www.telegraf.rs/zanimljivosti/2480399-svaki-put-kada-se-prekrstite-setite-se-ovoga-casni-krst-i-molitva-imagju-neverovatnu-moc>.

to be a patriot in his soul... But, there are few who at the same time, through the harmonious relationship of sports struggle and spiritual struggle of approaching in Christ, influence the youth to accept it. As Saint Sava raised himself and the people in several fields at the same time, it would be desirable for today's youth to look up to him and appear with the idea of embodying their talent in the spiritual, sports, life and other fields, in order to approach to God and save themselves and their in the surroundings.

The lessons written in *The Studenički tipik* that Saint Sava sent to the abbot, priest and his brothers as *a spiritual zeal in doing good deeds* can be useful today and represent the spiritual zeal in the life work of man, which is a dynamic being in the function of necessity to overcome oneself accomplished in his existence, if he is *successful in his effort*. In his *Second Lesson to the Abbot and the Brotherhood*, Saint Sava points out the important factors that monks should adhere to in their transcendence: "Keep the faith and the part entrusted to your abbots, love each other and make sure that everyone *surpasses everyone with humility*³⁰, sympathizing with each other's troubles as one body limbs and filling each other's shortcomings³¹". And St. Ambrose of Optina also said that the only Judge of the living and the dead who knows the intentions of everyone *will give to everyone not according to deeds, but according to the intention* (with which) *deeds* are done³².

Stojanović believes that a person succeeds in *good intentions* only if reading "Orthodoxy" initiates creativity, and does not increase pessimism. He explains that this does not mean stepping into the impossible and non-existent, but transforming everything for the better, which is achieved only when a person asks himself what *he can do well* in the Church, as one who belongs to God's people, and not just helplessly accusing, wondering : What does the Church do?³³

As St. Justin Popovic said:

"God works here, man cooperates; God creates by man, man creates by God; here *the divine creation* continues, and it continues with man. Because of that, man brings out everything that is divine, puts it into action, into creation, into life. At the same time, in that creation, everything that is divine, not only in man but also in the world around man,

³⁰ Modesty - a name for virtue whose meaning includes humility, unobtrusiveness, ie through an effort not to emphasize one's own achievements.

³¹ *Tipik of Studenica*, Another lesson to the abbot and the brothers, (Belgrade: National Library of Serbia and the Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Aids, 1994: Chapter 41, 69a, 125).

³² St. Ambrose Optin, *Lessons about our salvation; Letters to Christians in the world* (Belgrade: Religious Charitable Guardianship of the Archbishopric of Belgrade and Karlovac, 2013, 143).

³³ Ljubivoje Stojanović, *Religious systems* (Vršac: "Mihailo Pavlov" College of Vocational Studies for Teacher Education, 2012, 12).

comes to expression, to action; everything that is divine works, everything that is human cooperates. But in order for a person to successfully cooperate with God, he must get used to himself: to think with God, to feel with God, to live with God, to create with God. And all that reveals the goal of Saint Sava's culture"³⁴.

These words indicate that man only manages to realize *his creativity* in cooperation with God³⁵. Thus, for example, when an athlete imposes free *effort* through (sports) spirit - voluntary to his body, the end result is *self-transcendence*, ie. moving the boundaries of bodily limitations. Your own physical effort is not only limited to a change in the body, but also to a change in the spirit of the performer. This new spiritual experience requires, in a way, that the athlete "comes out of himself", to surpass himself, and not only in terms of results more powerful, better, but in a way that can be described as a spiritual feat, which is characteristic of the spiritual act of sports self-transcendence.

There is a similar thing with a pious man who, with a willing encouragement, changes back into a being who has made an effort of a spiritual character so that he can do something good for the salvation of his soul and the glory of the name of God. One must overcome oneself in order *to manifest oneself*. In fact, only when a man "overcomes" himself, he can see what he "carried" in himself, that is, to discover what was given to him, without knowing it until then. But, in sports, it is also the job of a coach. That is how the coach of top athletes, Dragomir Petrović³⁶, once said: "I am not a great coach because I created top athletes. I just helped and did what was in them, that what they have in them, come out of them. It's a coach and it's a coach's mission. Because, in what way can a coach give someone e.g. speed, if he doesn't have it"?

When he talks about the talent of the athlete, His Holiness Patriarch of Serbia Mr. Porphyry similarly refers to the essence of the above:

"When we talk about sports, we are talking about a kind of talent, a kind of *gift from God* that someone received. So that talent is not ours, it is a gift we received. Whether someone will be honest or not will depend on our attitude, our activity and the use of that gift. Therefore, even someone who has a

³⁴ St. Justin Popović, *Svetosavlje as a philosophy of life* (Belgrade: Christian Thought, 2016, 25).

³⁵ Ljubivoje Stojanović, *Others and Me: Orthodox Answers to Contemporary Questions* (Belgrade: Gradac Monastery, 2010, 27): "God's call to man to create freely is not just a simple right to life without responsibility, but the *constant creative progress of a man* who knows the purpose of life and understands the meaning of existence."

³⁶ Dragomir Petrović, passed away full professor at the Faculty of Sports and Physical Education, University of Belgrade, trained over 120 record holders and champions of Yugoslavia in athletics.

gift for any kind of sport, he received that gift as his personal opportunity to glorify God and to serve another man. To fight at the same time, within that gift of his, against all the urges, weaknesses and passions that invade, and in parallel with that gift, to *develop virtue* at the same time, which is also something that likens him to God".³⁷

CONCLUSION

Man is constantly changing and evolving, but the question is how fast he is moving "for the better" or "for the worse". The fact is that a strengthened and harmonized body, soul and spirit can significantly help a person in the fight against many diseases, including the present epi(pan)demic of COVID-19. The life, creative work of man enables others to develop as well (eg the works of Tesla, Pupin, Milanković...). Good deeds create a fertile ground for a person to rejoice that he has done something good for others, but also for himself - a healthy interior that can withstand many negative influences from his environment, which includes the epi(pan)demic COVID-19. One of the desirable approaches for a person to successfully oppose this epidemic is to use the "cure" for this disease - spirituality and physical exercise. So, it can be said that in the light of the solution of the mentioned problem, spirituality and physical exercise represent the "real" natural remedy for a healthier and "longer" life.

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³⁷ Insert from the sermon of His Holiness Patriarch of Serbia Mr. Porphyry at the Tribune "Orthodoxy and Sports" in the Parish Home of St. Sava in Belgrade in 2012.

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ДУХОВНОСТ И ФИЗИЧКО ВЕЖБАЊЕ – ПРЕВЕНТИВА ЗА ЕПИ(ПАН)ДЕМИЈУ COVID -19

САЖЕТАК

Непоречица је истина да се у једном периоду живота данашњих људи уткала и епи(пан)демија COVID-19. То је период који је обележен патњом, болом и болешћу, као и знатном дисхармонијом духа, душе и тела, што је последично утицало да се појави страх за голи живот и опстанак. Доба пандемије COVID-19 поред објективног присуства вируса који је однео многе животе, упозорава нас да се свет сусреће са инфодемијом, манипулативном медијском пропагандом, поларизованом струком, губљењем основних људских права и другим глобалним плановима који су дијаметрално супротни од духовног приступа и чији основни циљ је ширење страха међу људима. Таква ситуација је створила тло за позитивно и/или негативно размишљање људи по питању епи(пан)демија. Научни приступ појму духовности иако има своје корене у философији и психологији, присутан је у религији, а данас можемо рећи и у квантној медицини, биоетици и другим наукама. Међутим, колико год могу бити различити путеви духовности, заједничко им је изналажење скривених закона природе и несебично коришћење својих открића за побољшање живота других. Сложеност и разноврсност појма духовности доводи до избора духовног пута и развоја сваке личности понаособ. У настојању бољег разумевања свог унутрашњег живота појединац мора проћи кроз процесе интроспекције и самоспознаје како би досегао врлине које му омогућавају мудрији однос према себи, околини, свету. Циљ рада је да се размотре неке ситуације које могу представљати темељ новог (благотворног) пута ка човековом спасењу, могућем животу у новонасталим околностима. Комплексност теме намеће питање – како у новонасталим условима пандемије остварити делатни рад са резултатима који ће бити благотворни за људе? Резултати истраживања указују да синкретизам духовности и физичког вежбања ствара услове за смислено расуђивање, промишљање, сазнавање и освешћивање схватања да је то врло значајан пут ка оздрављењу.

Кључне речи: COVID-19, страх, духовни и телесни развој, религија

ДУХОВНОСТЬ И ФИЗИЧЕСКИЕ УПРАЖНЕНИЯ – ПРОФИЛАКТИКА ЭПИ(ПАН)ДЕМИИ КОВИД-А-19

АННОТАЦИЯ

Невозможно опровергнуть тот факт, что на один из периодов жизни современных людей выпала эпи(пан)демия COVID-19. Этому периоду

свойственны страдания, боль и болезни, а также значительная дисгармония духа, души и тела, и, как следствие, возрос страх за жизнь и выживание. Пандемия COVID-19, помимо объективного наличия вируса, унесшего множество жизней, свидетельствует о том, что мир столкнулся с инфодеструкцией, манипулятивной пропагандой СМИ, поляризацией профессий, потерей основных прав человека и другими глобальными переменами, диаметрально противоположными духовному подходу, и преследует цель посеять страх среди людей. Такая ситуация создала почву для позитивного и/или негативного мышления людей в отношении эпи(пан)демий. Научный подход к понятию духовности, хотя и восходит из философии и психологии, отмечается и в религии, а сегодня находит отражение в квантовой медицине, биоэтике и других науках. Однако какими бы разными ни были пути духовности, их объединяет поиск скрытых законов природы и бескорыстное служение открытий на благо улучшения жизни других людей. Сложность и многообразие понятия духовности приводит к выбору духовного пути и развитию индивидуальности каждого человека. Стремясь лучше понять свою внутреннюю жизнь, человек должен пройти через процессы самоанализа и самопознания, чтобы достичь добродетелей, позволяющих ему быть в более мудрых отношениях с самим собой, с окружающей средой и миром. Цель данной статьи – рассмотреть некоторые ситуации, которые могут представлять собой основу нового (благотворного) пути для спасения человека, возможности жить в новых обстоятельствах. Сложность темы обуславливает вопрос: Как добиться в ходе активной работы достижений, которые будут полезны для людей в новых условиях пандемии? Результаты исследования показывают, что синкретизм духовности и физических упражнений создает условия для осмысленных рассуждений, размышлений, познания и осознания того, что это очень важный путь к исцелению.

Ключевые слова: COVID-19, страх, духовное и физическое развитие, религия

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