

THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPLANTOLOGY AND ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

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INTRODUCTION

The dynamic development of modern biomedical science and the rapid introduction of innovative medical technologies into clinical practice have posed a number of fundamental ethical, legal and ideological challenges to humanity, requiring a rethinking of traditional ideas about the nature of human life, the limits of medical intervention in the processes of birth and death, as well as the relationship between individual rights of the individual and the collective interests of society. Transplantology, which gives a chance for life to thousands of patients through the transplantation of vital organs and tissues, and assisted reproductive technologies, which help infertile couples realize their parental vocation, have become vivid examples of the triumph of the human mind over biological limitations, while at the same time giving rise to acute bioethical dilemmas related to determining the moment of death, the status of the human embryo, the principles of fair distribution of donor organs, the admissibility of commercialization of the human body and the protection of the dignity of all participants in medical procedures. These issues become particularly acute in the context of the religious beliefs of billions of people around the world, for whom faith is not just a private matter of conscience, but the fundamental basis of a worldview that determines moral guidelines, life values, and criteria for the permissibility of certain actions, including medical interventions in the most intimate spheres of human existence.

Historically, the relationship between religion and science, in particular medicine, has gone a long way from open confrontation and mutual rejection to a gradual search for common ground, constructive dialogue, and opportunities for mutual enrichment in solving existential issues of human existence. While in the Middle Ages and early modern times the Church was often perceived as a brake on scientific progress, stifling the freedom of scientific research through dogmatism and fear of destroying the traditional picture of the world, in modern times the leading religious denominations demonstrate much greater openness to scientific achievements, striving to find a balance between unchanging spiritual truths and the changing realities

of technological progress. At the same time, this openness does not mean uncritical acceptance of all medical innovations – religious communities continue to insist on the need for ethical examination of new technologies from the standpoint of preserving human dignity, protecting the sacredness of life, adhering to the principles of justice and solidarity, as well as preventing the transformation of a person into an object of manipulation or a means to achieve utilitarian goals. Of particular note is the fact, confirmed by numerous clinical studies over the past thirty years, that an active religious and spiritual life of a person has a proven positive effect on physical and mental health, promotes faster recovery from illness, reduces the risks of depression and suicide, increases the level of life satisfaction and provides emotional support during life's trials, which makes religion not just a subject of academic study, but a real factor in medical practice that doctors must take into account when communicating with patients.

1. Religion and the human right to transplantology and the use of assisted reproductive technologies

1.1. Religion and medicine: a question of interaction

In the context of the topic of our study, it is worth, first of all, considering the issue of the relationship between such institutions as religion and medicine. So, A. Einstein said: “Science without religion is crippled, and religion without science is blind!”.

According to the conclusion of the scientific medical organisation Gallup and the results of a survey conducted by USA Today Weekend magazine and Time / CNN, religion remains and continues to be an important factor in the lives of many people. Patients especially seek to ensure that doctors take their religious feelings and spiritual practices seriously, and in some cases ask them to pray with them. And this is not without reason, since according to a Gallup survey, which has been conducted continuously for 35 years, it was found that 95% of Americans believe in God, 72% believe that the religion they practice greatly influences their lifestyle, 57% pray every day, and 42% regularly participate in Sunday services in their churches¹.

In addition, they note that the practice of the last 30 years, during which more than 400 clinical studies were conducted, indicates that 75% of respondents confirmed the positive impact of religious and spiritual practices on the health of the population. The conducted studies also confirm the fact that an active religious and spiritual life of a person:

¹ Dmytro M. Bielov, Myroslava V. Hromovchuk, Yaroslav V. Hreca, Vasył V. Tymchak. Essence of somatic human rights in the process of biomedical research. *Wiadomości Lekarskie*. Volume LXXIV, Issue 10, Part 2, October 2021. P. 2663.

- determines their high physical and functional status (believers tolerate certain diseases more easily, are less likely to be hospitalised, recover faster after operations and serious illnesses; collective prayer for the health of a particular person has a special effect);
- prevents the development of serious diseases;
- minimises the frequency of venereal diseases, depression, suicide, drug addiction, and alcoholism;
- contributes to a high level of well-being, a sense of happiness, purposefulness, satisfaction with life, family well-being, and a sense of self-confidence;
- increases the level of protective functions of the human body;
- provides emotional, spiritual and social support during life's hardships and tragedies;
- provides a state of security and comfort of existence, which positively affects the well-being and health of the individual².

If we consider the issue of the relationship between religion and medicine in the broad, comprehensive context of science, since it is medicine that acts as a bright and convincing representative of scientific knowledge, then when applying a pragmatic approach it becomes obvious that in modern conditions of rapid scientific and technological progress and cardinal transformations of public consciousness, the church as an institution is forced to significantly revise, rethink and adjust its traditional attitude towards science as such. This revision process is not a one-time or superficial one, as it reflects profound changes in the understanding of the role of religion in a secularised society and the need to find new forms of dialogue with the scientific community.

First of all, modern theologians, religious thinkers, and church ideologists are making significant intellectual efforts to systematically clarify the deep historical, philosophical, and socio-cultural reasons for the centuries-old confrontation between religion and science, as well as to objectively determine the true essence, nature, and character of this long-standing, sometimes dramatic confrontation that has been traced over the centuries – from the trials of Galileo to the modern debates on evolution and bioethics. It is important to emphasise that this desire to understand the past conflict is not of purely historical interest, but is aimed at building a constructive model of coexistence of religious and scientific worldviews in the future.

A peculiar interpretation of the conflict between religion and science in the past is given by the American theologian J. Barrett. He recognises the existence of religious teachings whose adherents are staunch opponents of science, but he excludes Christianity from such teachings. Thus, in particular,

² Singh, D. M., & Ajinkya, S. Spirituality and Religion in Modern Medicine. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 2012. 34(4), p. 399.

the researcher emphasises that Christianity as a whole has never opposed science, but, on the contrary, it was and remains a pro-scientific ideology. He also claims that Christianity has always sought to comprehend the achievements of science and bring them into line with its ideas. However, according to J. Barrett, this was not always possible to do in time. In such a situation, the conflict arose. But, from his point of view, it was not a conflict between science and religion, but between the new, not yet assimilated science and those religious ideas that included old scientific achievements. The scientist interprets various clashes between science and religion as a struggle of "old science against the new", but by no means as hostility of religion towards science³.

"The revolutionary discoveries made in both fields reject the nineteenth-century model of 'hostility' between science and theology. Both scientists and theologians are engaged in a common search for the same understanding.... They seek not simply to bring the two fields of inquiry closer together. Rather, scientists and theologians strive to increase knowledge, to actually advance human understanding of reality.⁴" It is as difficult to understand a scientist who rejects the presence of a higher Mind behind the universe as it is to understand a theologian who rejects the achievements of science.... Through science man tries to subdue the forces of nature around him; through religion he tries to control the forces of nature within himself and find the moral strength and spiritual path to fulfill the task that God has set before him⁵.

In what sense can we talk about the relationship between the Christian religion and bioethics, writes the Spanish scientist J. Sádaba? Bioethics affirms the concept of human moral autonomy, his independence. This provision is inconsistent with the basic position of Christianity about the initial role of God in the creation of the world. According to the scientist, bioethics should not be based on the requirements and instructions of religion; it should be truly secular. This can be explained based on the requirements of any state, which is secular, and is also due to the general significance of a number of bioethical problems, such as cloning, euthanasia, and transplantation⁶.

³ Barrett, J.L. Exploring the Natural Foundations of Religion. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*. 2000. Vol. 4. P. 30.

⁴ Зречча, Е., Спаньйола А. Дж., П'єтро, М. Л. та ін. Біоетика / Переклад з італійської В.Й. Шовкун: Підручник. Львів: Медицина і право, 2007. С. 45.

⁵ Кемпбелл А., Джіллєтт Г., Джонс Г. Медична етика / пров. з англ.: навч. сел., 2004. С. 132.

⁶ Sádaba J. Dios ante el Fin-de-Siglo. Nomadas. Revista critica de ciencias sociales y juridicas. URL: <http://redalyc.uaemex.mx/src/inicio/ArtPdfRed.jsp?iCve=18100017&iCveNum=412>

The Spanish philosopher claims that, despite the interest in the development of science in general, religious institutions always point to the negative impact of biological and technical sciences, their inconsistency with the basic provisions of Christian doctrine. The bioethics of the future, as J. Sádaba argues, should be secular, justify a responsible attitude of man to life, and have a practical purpose as a uniting of all world cultures into a single whole. Bioethics is currently in demand as an opportunity for man to improve his life, and at the same time, warns him against the negative manifestations of society. In this sense, any religion, on the contrary, limits man, and can be the cause of inequality among people⁷.

According to the authoritative bioethicist, editor of the Encyclopedia of Bioethics, W. Reich, religion is one of the three most important factors (along with the growing vulnerability of mankind and globalisation) that determine the state of bioethics in the last decade. Religion today makes a great contribution to the development of political events in the world, the process of establishing social stability and justice. In search of the meaning of life and events, people are increasingly turning to both non-religious and religious spiritual sources. As for the study of religious prerequisites and foundations of bioethics, in the future, W. Reich believes that researchers should focus their attention on: 1) the difference between religious orthodoxy and surgery; 2) the boundaries of Christian ethics and the contribution of rationalistic theological thought to bioethics; 3) the "mechanisms" of work (despite limitations and formalism) of religious ideas in bioethics; 4) sociological analysis of the power of religious authority in solving bioethical problems; 5) the connection between postmodernity and religious bioethics⁸.

1.2. Religion and the human right to transplantology

Transplantology, as a branch of medicine that gives a person a chance for life through organ and tissue transplantation, inevitably intersects with fundamental issues of human rights, bioethics and religious beliefs. In the modern world, the right to organ transplantology is recognised as an integral part of the right to life and health protection, guaranteed by international and national legal acts. At the same time, the implementation of this right raises complex moral and ethical dilemmas related to determining the moment of death, the principles of donation, fair distribution of donor organs and protection of the dignity of both donors and recipients. These issues become particularly acute in the context of religious doctrines, which differently

⁷ Sádaba J. Dios ante el Fin-de-Siglo. Nomadas. Revista critica de ciencias sociales y juridicas. URL:<http://redalyc.uaemex.mx/src/inicio/ArtPdfRed.jsp?iCve=18100017&iCveNum=412>

⁸ Reich W. T. Encyclopedia of bioethics. 2nd ed. New York: Macmillan Library Reference, 1995. Vol. 1–5.

interpret the admissibility of interference with the integrity of the human body and the ethical boundaries of medical technologies.

It should be noted that religious traditions – from Christianity, Islam and Judaism to Buddhism and Hinduism – offer diverse, sometimes contradictory, positions on organ donation and transplantology. These differences affect not only the individual decisions of potential donors and their families, but also the formation of national transplantation systems, legislative regulation of organ removal and distribution procedures, as well as the level of public trust in medical institutions. In many countries of the world, including Ukraine, the legislator seeks to find a balance between respect for the religious beliefs of citizens and ensuring the constitutional right to health care and medical care.

Christianity, with its tradition of mercy for the suffering and miracles of healing, the appearance of Christ, in our time treats the idea of transplantology as "an imitation of the feat of the Savior, who gave His Life and flesh in the name of the redemption of our sins" (from a sermon by Pope John Paul II in June 1991)⁹.

"We should only talk about donation, not about sale," said Father Andrii Nahirniak, responsible for social service in the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Chairman of the Public Council for Cooperation between the Ministry of Health and the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations in 2015. "We also advocate that this be a conscious and voluntary decision of a person," emphasized the representative of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, commenting on the bill discussed on March 24, 2015 at a round table at the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, according to which every Ukrainian will be able to become an organ donor after his death, if he does not legally refuse during his lifetime. "Only a voluntary decision is moral. We advocate the "presumption of free will," because a person is endowed by God the Creator with freedom of choice, and the concept of the so-called "presumption of consent" deprives him of the right to choose. The example of the USA, where the "presumption of consent" is in effect and which is the leader in organ transplantology, shows that the "presumption of consent" is effective. And if it turned out to be ineffective in our country, this does not mean that it needs to be changed. " The introduction of such a provision of the law in Ukraine may be premature for another reason: "The level of legal awareness and legality in our society, unfortunately, is still far from what it should be. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to whether the introduction of the presumption of consent, when

⁹ John Paul II. Address of His Holiness John Paul II to participants of the First International Congress of the Society For Organ Sharing. URL: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1991/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19910620_trapianti_en.html

everyone who does not write a refusal agrees to the transplantation of their organs, will not cause any abuses due to the lack of legality in our society. We have some concerns about this.¹⁰

Eventually, the Church opposes the commercialisation of the donation process. This is morally unacceptable, since the body becomes an object of purchase and sale: thus, human dignity is humiliated. But selfless donation is quite possible, and the Church favorably views this. In addition, according to the priest, there is another point that the Church considers important – this is that this process of spreading transplantology, and even more so the introduction of the presumption of consent, should begin and be accompanied by various information and educational activities: explaining to a wide circle of the public what organ donation actually consists of, what its importance and moral value are. At the same time, we have reasonable reservations and serious doubts about the extent to which Ukrainian society is currently prepared, aware, and ready to implement such a radical legislative innovation as the presumption of consent for posthumous organ donation. Before adopting such laws that affect the deepest ethical, moral and ideological beliefs of citizens, it is necessary to conduct large-scale, systematic and thorough preliminary work with the population, covering all segments of society – from the urban intelligentsia to residents of remote rural communities. Society has the right and need to be informed in detail, comprehensively and in understandable language about the very concept of the presumption of consent, its legal consequences, implementation mechanisms, guarantees for the protection of the rights of the families of the deceased, as well as how the system of organ removal and transplantology will practically function in everyday medical practice.

Actually, the Church opposes the commercialization of the donation process. This is morally unacceptable, since the body becomes an object of purchase and sale: thus, human dignity is humiliated. But selfless donation is quite possible, and the Church favorably views this. In addition, according to the priest, there is another point that the Church considers important – this is that this process of spreading transplantology, and even more so the introduction of the presumption of consent, should begin and be accompanied by various information and educational activities: explaining to a wide circle

¹⁰ Нагірняк Андрій, отець. Релігійне співтовариство України підтримує донорство органів і готове сприяти зміні ставлення суспільства до цього. URL: http://news.ugcc.ua/news/rel%D1%96g%D1%96yne_sp%D1%96vtovaristvo_ukraini_p%D1%96dtrimuie_donorstvo_organ%D1%96v_%D1%96gotove_spriyati_zm%D1%96n%D1%96_s_tavlennya_susp%D1%96lstva_do_tsogo_73347.htmcommercialisationl

of the public what organ donation actually consists of, what its importance and moral value are¹¹.

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The issue of the sequence and logic of legislative steps is critically important: shouldn't we have started with a comprehensive educational campaign, with the formation of public trust in the medical system, with a public dialogue between the state, the medical community, religious denominations and civil society? Instead, we observe the opposite, inverted algorithm of actions, when the bill is submitted to parliament without first creating the necessary informational, cultural and psychological basis in society, without a broad public discussion and without taking into account the deep religious and ideological traditions of the Ukrainian people. Such hasty, insufficiently thought-out legislation risks causing not the consolidation of society around the noble idea of saving lives, but, on the contrary, social tension, distrust of medical institutions and resistance from a significant part of the population, especially that guided by religious beliefs.

And another question that Fr. P. Balog draws attention to, which sometimes arises in believers: what about the resurrection then? What kind of body will be resurrected? To tell the truth, this question was asked long before the technical possibility of organ transplantation, because the Apostle Paul tries to answer it in his Epistles, and then the Fathers of the Church, one after another, try to describe the bodies of the resurrected. If we are honest, then this is the least of the problems: we are not worried that all the hair that was cut or fell out during life will not be resurrected, or that cut nails or lost

¹¹ Нагірняк Андрій, отець. Релігійне співтовариство України підтримує донорство органів і готове сприяти зміні ставлення суспільства до цього. URL: http://news.ugcc.ua/news/rel%D1%96g%D1%96yne_sp%D1%96vtovaristvo_ukraini_p%D1%96dtrimuie_donorstvo_organ%D1%96v_%D1%96gotove_spriyati_zm%D1%96n%D1%96_s_tavlennya_susp%D1%96lstva_do_tsogo_73347.html

baby teeth will not be resurrected together with the body. Similarly, with organs, as mentioned above, which do not constitute an integral part of a person's personality, there will be no problems during the resurrection. Just as there will be no problems at all when everything that was lost, including through illness, removal, shortening or surgery, is restored and integrated with the resurrected body. After all, it will already be, although the same body, but at the same time completely different, that is, not the same¹².

Today, the general view of the *Orthodox Church* on the problems of transplantology boils down to the following: 1) The Church recognises the removal of organs from a living donor "only on voluntary self-sacrifice for the sake of saving the life of another person." Informed consent to the explantation of organs from a living donor and "posthumous donation" become a manifestation of love and compassion; 2) The Church warns against possible abuses, errors in the conduct of transplantation, the following are unacceptable: shortening the life of one person in order to prolong the life of another; explantation that directly threatens the life of the donor; consideration of human organs as an object of purchase and sale; 3) The Church considers the presumption of consent unacceptable, since it "violates human freedoms"; 4) The Church condemns unscrupulous propaganda of donation.

Let us also consider the positions of other leading religions on transplantology. Most Christian theologians speak favorably about transplantology. The Catechism of the *Catholic Church* states: "Organ transplantology is in accordance with the moral law and can be commendable if the dangers and physical and mental risks incurred by the donor are proportionate to the desired good to be gained by the recipient. Donating organs after death is a noble and useful act and should be encouraged as an expression of generous solidarity. It is morally unacceptable if the donor or those entitled to it have not given their express consent. It is even more morally unacceptable to directly cause the mutilation or death of one person, even if it is in order to prolong the life of others."¹³

Protestantism. The issue of transplantology, for example, is difficult for Jehovah's Witnesses and is exacerbated by their refusal of blood transfusions. In this case, dialysis, plasma exchange, replacement of blood clotting factors or albumin, and treatment with erythropoietin are permitted." In the 1960s, the following understanding of the organ transplant process was common among Jehovah's Witnesses: "Those who undergo such an operation thereby live off the body of another person. This is cannibalism. However, by

¹² о. Петро Балага О.Р. Трансплантација органів з точки зору Церкви. URL: https://risu.ua/transplantaciya-organiv-z-tochki-zoru-cerkvi_n107842

¹³ Furton, E. J. Brain death, the soul, and organic life. *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly*, 2001. 1(4), p.460.

allowing man to eat animal flesh, God did not thereby permit people to perpetuate their lives through cannibalism.¹⁴ Today, this position has been revised, and cases of kidney transplantation are already occurring among Jehovah's Witnesses.

The *Jewish religious tradition* demonstrates a complex and balanced approach to the issue of organ transplantology, balancing the fundamental principle of preserving human life with ancient halakhic (legal) prohibitions on the treatment of the human body. Judaism fundamentally allows, recognises, and even encourages organ transplantology, but only in those cases and under those circumstances when it is a matter of directly saving the life of a specific person who is in critical condition and requires immediate medical care in the form of an organ transplant. At the same time, the Jewish religious and legal system contains an ancient, deeply rooted in the Torah and Talmud prohibition called "desecration of the dead body" which categorically prohibits mutilating, damaging, dismembering or in any way violating the integrity of the human body both during life and after death, since the human body is created in the image and likeness of God and therefore has a special sacred status that requires respectful, caring and dignified treatment even after the soul has departed.

This contradiction between the preservation of life and the prohibition on mutilation of the body is resolved in Jewish bioethics through the application of a fundamental hermeneutical principle, according to which almost all religious prohibitions and prescriptions of the Torah can and must be postponed, temporarily suspended or even violated if this is necessary to save human life, because "saving life nullifies the entire Torah." However, Jewish religious authorities – from Orthodox rabbis to Reform teachers – have established clear, detailed conditions and restrictions for transplantation: first, donation must be a completely voluntary and conscious decision of the individual or their family; second, organ removal is permitted only after the final, irreversible onset of death, as determined by halachic criteria (which has been the subject of intense theological debate over the acceptability of the concept of brain death); third, the recipient must be in an urgent, life-critical condition where transplantation is the only way to save his life; fourth, the medical procedure must be performed with maximum respect for the dignity of the donor, with minimal damage to the body, and with subsequent dignified burial of all removed tissues and organs in accordance with Jewish funeral rituals¹⁵.

As for the *Islamic religious and legal tradition*, its attitude towards transplantation is based on the fundamental principles of Sharia and fatwas

¹⁴ Meilaender, G. *Bioethics: A primer for Christians* (3rd ed.). 2013. p. 122

¹⁵ Rosner, F. *Biomedical ethics and Jewish law*. 2001. p. 210.

(theological and legal opinions) of leading Islamic scholars and authoritative religious institutions. Transplantation of a human organ from one part of the body to another part of the same body is recognised as permissible and even desirable if the expected medical benefit from the surgical operation significantly and indisputably exceeds the possible harm, risks, negative consequences or complications for the patient's health. This conclusion is based on the fundamental Sharia principle of "extreme necessity", according to which, in critical life situations, it is permissible to do what under normal circumstances could be considered undesirable or questionable, as well as on the principle of "public benefit", which provides for the priority of preserving life and health over formal prohibitions¹⁶.

1.3. Religion and the human right to artificial insemination

First of all, we note that in modern society, the share of infertile marriages reaches 30%. In vitro fertilization (IVF) is one of the most promising methods for infertility treatment. However, its use in its modern form has a number of ethical problems that are incompatible with the moral sense of a Christian. Artificial insemination is a rather controversial topic in religious circles. Thus, many church representatives do not approve of this practice for a number of reasons, considering it sinful. Some ministers even write works on these topics, wanting to present IVF in a negative light. One of the main theological theses directed against IVF is that during artificial insemination, only some of the created embryos are used. The rest are supposedly destroyed. Moreover, each of them, again, supposedly has a soul¹⁷.

So, as we see, the religious problems that arise when using the IVF method are associated with several of its components: obtaining gametes, the lack of connection between conception and the natural idea of marital intimacy, obtaining an excessive number of embryos and manipulating them (elimination, reduction, freezing of embryos, preimplantation diagnostics), the use of gametes from third parties. At the same time, in vitro fertilisation can be morally justified by religion and an acceptable method of infertility treatment for an Orthodox Christian, if it does not kill embryos and does not violate the bond of the spouses "in one flesh" even at the level of gametes.

By 2000, through the joint efforts of Orthodox theologians, doctors, biologists and other specialists, a position was formulated that expresses the church's attitude to various medical and social problems of our time. However, taking into account a fairly significant period of time, it turns out that at the moment, the church's position on the issue of the admissibility of IVF is not formulated entirely unambiguously. On the one hand, it is declared

¹⁶ Sachedina, A. *Islamic Biomedical Ethics: Principles and Application*. 2009. p. 34.

¹⁷ Robertson, J. A. Embryo culture and the "Embryo as Person" debate in bioethics and law. *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics*, 2016. 44(3), p.420.

that "... ways to procreate that do not agree with the plan of the Creator of life, the Church cannot consider morally justified." On the other hand, the use of not every method of assisted reproductive technologies (ART) is sinful: "Morally unacceptable from an Orthodox point of view are also all types of extracorporeal (out-of-body) fertilization that involve the preparation, preservation and deliberate destruction of "excess" embryos."¹⁸

Let's consider the main issues that are unacceptable from the point of view of religion.

Killing excess embryos. The modern method of IVF is carried out in the so-called stimulated cycles, where the egg is taken away from the woman, all of which participate in the subsequent fertilisation. Thus, in the hands of the embryologist are found a multitude of human embryos, some of which they transfer to the woman, while the others must be either destroyed (eliminated) or frozen. That is why Orthodox anthropology, based on the Holy Scriptures and the patristic tradition, claims that the personality of a person appears from the moment of conception of a person. Therefore, any manipulations with embryos that deliberately lead to their death are murder. The process of freezing excess embryos can also be defined as murder, since the probability of having a child after freezing embryos decreases by three times¹⁹.

Even if the embryo is not directly fertilised, modern IVF technology allows the artificial fertilisation of an egg and its transfer to the woman's uterus, which is removed for ethical reasons at the legislative level. While for embryos created through IVF fertilisation, there is a concept of "surplus" embryos that are not used and not transplanted, they still remain embryos. This calls into question the moral and ethical permissibility of such a process, since embryos left in the laboratory have the potential to become living beings. The risk of death of embryos transferred to the uterus through IVF is higher compared to natural fertilisation, but they are still the object of scientific attention and research, because, according to the religious point of view, they are a "cell mass"²⁰.

A child appears in the world thanks to the grace of God, because the lack of a family's ability to have children is a serious problem related to its psychological and emotional state. In the process of fertilisation, several embryos are obtained in the laboratory, and only a part of them undergoes

¹⁸ Hared, M., & Gozlan, K. The ethics of in vitro fertilization: A comparative religious perspective. *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 2020. 48(3), p.461.

¹⁹ Royere D. Embryo characteristics and cryopreservation outcome / ESHRE Campus symposium Cryobiology & Cryopreservation of Human Gametes & Embryos Brussels, Belgium, 2004, p. 28. URL: <http://www.eshre.eu/~media/emagic%20files/SIGs/Embryology/Archive/Syllabus%20Brussels%202004.pdf>

²⁰ Gatrad, R. S., & Gatrad, A. Religion and reproductive technology: A review of ethical issues. *Bioethics*, 2005. 19(7), p. 631.

implantation, while the rest remain in the archive for storage. According to this theory, the idea of different sexual partners and the integrity of their spiritual integrity should not be violated. The only method of fertilisation that can be considered acceptable within the framework of the Christian faith is the birth of a child in marriage from both a man and a woman, since it is this correspondence that is considered the basis for the emergence of life in the mother's womb²¹.

Obtaining gametes. The next IVF-associated religious and ethical problem is related to the method of obtaining male gametes. The simplest, cheapest method is to obtain seed through masturbation “fornication”. This is a sin and cannot be permissible for an Orthodox person. In addition, the methods of obtaining male gametes are not limited to the above. The literature describes both medical manipulations to obtain seed and the collection of seed as a result of marital sexual intercourse²².

Third-party interference in the fertilisation process. The Roman Catholic Church insists on the special importance of this religious and ethical problem. One of the main ethical requirements of childbearing, in its view, is that it should be “the result of the union and personal relationship of the spouses”. Therefore, “the act of childbirth,” writes E. Sgreccia, “has no bodily expression; it remains devoid not of the biological factor (which is reproduced technologically during the transfer of gametes), but of interpersonal communication, which in all its completeness and unity can only be expressed in the body.”²³

Donation of gametes; surrogate motherhood. The concept of interference in the process of fertilisation of third parties can also apply to surrogate motherhood, as well as the use of gametes of a person who is not a husband or wife. That is why it is necessary to note the negative attitude of the Church here; these types of assisted reproductive technologies are ethically absolutely unacceptable. The use of foreign gametes actually destroys the marital union, making it possible to have an intimate connection with a stranger at the cellular level²⁴.

²¹ Schenker, J. G. Assisted reproductive practice: Religious perspectives. *Reproductive Biomedicine Online*, 2005. 10(3), p.310–319.

²² Royere D. Embryo characteristics and cryopreservation outcome. ESHRE Campus symposium Cryobiology & Cryopreservation of Human Gametes & Embryos Brussels, Belgium, 2004, p. 28. URL: <http://www.eshre.eu/~media/emagic%20files/SIGs/Embryology/Archive/Syllabus%20Brussels%202004.pdf>

²³ Згречча Е., Спаньйола А. Дж., П'етро М. Л. та ін. Біоетика / Переклад з італійської В. Й. Шовкун: підручник. Львів: Медицина і право, 2007. с. 71.

²⁴ Shenfield, F., Tarlatzis, B., Vaccino, G., Bounartzi, T., Frith, L., Pennings, G., Provoost, V., Vermeulen, N., Mertes, H. Ethical considerations on surrogacy. *Human Reproduction*, 2025. 40(3), p.423.

Fertilisation of single women using donor gametes or the implementation of the “reproductive rights” of single men, as well as persons with the so-called non-traditional sexual orientation, deprives the future child of the right to have a mother and a father. The use of reproductive methods outside the context of a family blessed by God becomes a form of theocraticism, carried out under the guise of protecting human autonomy and a distorted understanding of personal freedom²⁵.

Surrogacy, from the point of view of the Church, is unnatural and morally unacceptable even in cases where it is carried out on a non-commercial basis. This technique involves the destruction of the deep emotional and spiritual closeness that is formed between the mother and the baby during pregnancy.

Worth noting, in our opinion, are the proposals for legislation existing in the religious and legal literature, taking into account the attitude of the Church. Thus, in general, although the negative attitude of various religions to ART is traced, however, the problems that cause negative views of religions on ART can be regulated by including the relevant norms in the Law, namely: the number of embryos created cannot exceed what can be transferred in one IVF cycle; The possibility of concluding a surrogacy contract should only be possible on a free basis and only on the condition that the surrogate mother is a relative of the genetic mother or the woman who used the donor egg, or a relative of the husband of the genetic mother or the woman who used the donor egg.

2. Religious organizations as a factor in the formation of a culture of donation, as well as the development of transplantology and ART

2.1. Pastoral support for patients during various types of medical care, including transplantology

A key figure in the development of clinical pastoral education and hospital chaplaincy is the Reverend Anton Boisen, who in 1925 founded the first continuing education program at Worcester State Hospital in Massachusetts and attempted to bridge the gap between religion and medicine²⁶. Three hospitalizations in psychiatric institutions were a turning point in the formation of Boisen's conceptual views and allowed him to formulate a vision of future patient care: "I hope that the day will come when cases of mental disorders that have no organic etiology will be recognized as spiritual problems, and the church will train specialists whose work will be based on a thorough and systematic study of spiritual pathology."

²⁵ Gromovchuk M.V., Belov D.M Artificial insemination: religious and legal principles. *Visegrad Journal on Human Rights*. 2021. Issue 3. p. 34.

²⁶ Glenn H. Asquith Jr.,« Anton T. Boisen and the Study of "Living Human Documents" *Journal of Presbyterian History* (1962-1985) Vol. 60, No. 3 (FALL 1982), pp. 244-265

Guided by these ideas and the belief in their feasibility, Reverend Boisen laid the foundation for what has become the modern position of hospital chaplain. He was a pioneer in the development of pastoral care and placed patients at the centre of his teaching system, recognising that spiritual health and care for the soul of the patient are integral components of psychological well-being²⁷.

Chaplaincy in healthcare settings plays a key role in ensuring a holistic approach to patient care. By providing pastoral support, chaplains complement medical and psychological care with a spiritual dimension that is critically important for patients experiencing crisis, pain, or existential challenges during illness. This applies to various types of medical care, including transplantology.

In November 2000, at the Sixth Hospital Chaplaincy Conference at the Orthodox Academy of Crete, the European Network of Healthcare Chaplains (ENHCC) was founded. It is composed of representatives of Churches and national associations, based on Christianity, and its aim is to enable participants serving in the multidisciplinary field of healthcare to share experiences and develop common guidelines necessary to meet the needs of patients, relatives and staff, drawing on personal, religious, cultural and community resources, and to promote a high standard of quality in healthcare chaplaincy in Europe²⁸. At the same time, the ENHCC faces two main challenges: 1) the professional status of the chaplain in the medical community; 2) the preservation of patients' rights to spiritual care. Chaplains face challenges in articulating their role and the contribution they make, which in turn makes it difficult to understand their importance to the health care institution and the well-being of patients, families, and healthcare staff. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the role of the chaplain has transformed significantly: from simply conducting prayers and religious ceremonies, it has turned into a multifaceted profession. Today, chaplains must have competencies in crisis intervention, risk assessment, patient advocacy, working with cultural and religious diversity, bioethics, spiritual support at the end of life, accompaniment in grief and loss, and the integration of the patient's personal history into the context of one's faith. This knowledge and these skills should be especially important when applying transplantology as a special treatment method that combines not only medical, but also ethical and spiritual aspects. Chaplaincy support will accompany both the recipient and the donor family, helping to overcome fear, guilt, anxiety, experience loss and hope. It will facilitate informed decisions about donation and help find a new meaning in life after surgery. Thus, in the

²⁷ Curtis W. Hart, "Present at the Creation: The Clinical Pastoral Movement and the Origins of the Dialogue Between Religion and Psychiatry," *Journal of Religion & Health* 49, no. 4 (December 2010): 539-540, 545.

²⁸ European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy (ENHCC) <https://www.pastoralezorg.be/page/enhcc-information/>

field of transplantology, the chaplain will act not only as a spiritual guide, but also as a mediator between medicine, faith and human experience.

In 2002, the Seventh ENHCC Meeting was held in Turku, Finland, where the Principles of Chaplaincy in Health Care were adopted. Chaplaincy is provided by clergy and laity who have received professional training and pastoral care. They are authorised by their religious community and recognised by the health care system, and work as part of a multidisciplinary team. The way chaplaincy is organised in the EU varies from country to country. In most European countries, there are official chaplaincy organisations or associations of the main Christian denominations. Medical chaplaincy standards in some cases provide for the existence of associations that coordinate chaplaincy activities at a multi-confessional and multicultural level, while in other cases the national religious authority (metropolitan, bishop, etc.) directs spiritual health care²⁹. Developing uniform professional standards for chaplaincy and establishing the official status of chaplains as specialists in the pastoral care of patients is critically important. This will avoid legal and organisational misunderstandings, provide chaplains with a place in the structure of medical care, and guarantee the right of patients to full spiritual support in accordance with their beliefs and needs.

On September 9, 2025, the Ministry of Health of Ukraine approved Order No. 1407 “Regulations on chaplaincy activities in the field of health care”, which determines the features of chaplaincy activities in health care institutions. The order stipulates that it is carried out by chaplains in health care (hereinafter referred to as chaplains) and assistants to chaplains in health care (hereinafter referred to as chaplain assistants) in order to meet the spiritual and religious needs of patients, their family members and employees of health care institutions, rehabilitation institutions. Meeting spiritual and religious needs in the field of health care provides for a system of measures aimed at ensuring the implementation of the constitutional right of patients, their family members and employees of health care institutions, rehabilitation institutions, to freedom of worldview and religion by providing spiritual (pastoral) care³⁰.

Chaplains play an important role in the comprehensive care of patients, particularly those awaiting or undergoing transplantation. Chaplains work within a multidisciplinary team, complementing medical care with spiritual support.

²⁹ Standards for health care chaplaincy in Europe. 7th Consultation, Turku, Finland 12-16 June 2002 https://ec.europa.eu/health/archive/ph_overview/co_operation/mobility/docs/health_services_co33.pdf

³⁰ Наказ Міністерства охорони здоров'я України 09 вересня 2025 року № 1407 Положення про капеланську діяльність у сфері охорони здоров'я

2.2. The role of religion in shaping public acceptance of organ donation

As noted in the article by P. Cotrau: “The official position of a religion towards organ donation and transplantology plays an important role in convincing the community in accepting organ donation for transplantation³¹”.

The number of organ donors in Spain has increased dramatically, which has allowed this European country to become a world leader in terms of the number of donors per million population. Thus, in the period from 1998 to 2005, this figure increased from 14 to 35.1 donors per million population. For comparison, in the USA, this figure is 25.5, which speaks of the seriousness of Spain’s success³².

This example shows us that the increase in the level of donation is clearly not a random phenomenon, but is associated with cultural and religious factors that form public trust in the transplantation system.

This example shows us that the increase in donation rates is clearly not a random phenomenon, but is related to cultural and religious factors that shape public trust in the transplantation system.

R. Herrero-Saenz has investigated the question of how institutionalised religions overcome the moral contradictions that were caused by the development of innovations in the field of health care. Her research is based on the discourse of the Catholic Church in Spain on organ transplantology in the second half of the 20th century. The author concludes that organ transplantology posed a choice for the Catholic Church in Spain between its altruistic teaching and the belief that the human body is sacred. The solution to this dilemma was the emergence of a doctrine that supports organ donation. This became possible due to the activation of altruistic elements and the relegation to the background of the sacred meaning of the body, which allowed organ donation to be reconciled with Catholic values of generosity and brotherly love³³.

Therefore, it was religious reorientation and a new interpretation of doctrinal principles that became an important prerequisite for the social acceptance of donation in Spain.

This moral-religious shift partly explains why Spain has such high transplant rates, even compared to other European countries. Importantly,

³¹ Cotrau P., Hodosan V., Vladu A., Daina C., Daina L. G., Pantisa C. Ethical, Socio-Cultural and Religious Issues in Organ Donation. *Maedica*. 2019. Vol. 14. No. 1. P. 13. <https://doi.org/10.26574/maedica.2019.14.1.12>.

³² Gil-Diaz C. Spain’s Record Organ Donations: Mining Moral Conviction. *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*. 2009. Vol. 18. Is. 3. P. 256. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963180109090410>.

³³ Herrero-Saenz R. An Interpretive Approach to Religious Ambiguities around Medical Innovations: The Spanish Catholic Church on Organ Donation and Transplantation (1954-2014). *Qualitative Sociology*. 2023. Vol. 46. P. 77. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-022-09525-3>.

Spain also stands out in terms of the number of transplants performed, even compared to England. For example, in 2022, England performed 51.3 organ transplants per million population, while in Spain this figure was 122.1. This is partly due not only to the effective work of transplant coordinators, but also to the deep cultural acceptance and trust, in the formation of which religious leaders have certainly played an important role³⁴. Religious legitimisation of donation contributes to the fact that society perceives transplantology not as a violation of the integrity of the body, but as an act of mercy that gives others a chance at life.

Important for raising awareness about organ transplantology and donation is the participation of religious leaders in this process. Research shows that such educational interventions can increase awareness and change attitudes among participants. In a Swedish educational course, one of the speakers was the chief imam for western Sweden, who gave a talk on religion and its impact on organ transplantology. After completing the course, all 36 participants who identified as Muslim reported a change in their thinking about the religious aspect of organ donation, in particular, overcoming the prejudice that Islam as a religion allows organ donation not only to family members but also to people of other religions. As a result, all participants changed their attitudes and expressed their willingness to become donors after the course. This is why involving religious leaders (in this case, an imam) to provide authoritative, faith-based information about organ donation is extremely effective in changing attitudes and increasing willingness to become donors³⁵.

A similar approach is also actively developing at the interfaith level. An example of an effective interfaith initiative that plays an important role in popularising organ donation is the National Donor Sabbath – an interfaith initiative that is implemented every year (usually in November) and involves discussing the need for organ transplantology during church services. This three-day event allows leaders of different religious communities (from Christianity to Islam and Judaism) to jointly convey to their followers their religious approval of the act of giving life through organ transplantation. Such an initiative directly encourages believers to consent to donation, which

³⁴ Rees K., McLaughlin L., Paredes-Zapata D., Miller C., Mays N., Noyes J. Qualitative Content and Discourse Analysis Comparing the Current Consent Systems for Deceased Organ Donation in Spain and England. *Transplant International*. 2024. Vol. 37. Article 12533. P. 3-4. <https://doi.org/10.3389/ti.2024.12533>.

³⁵ Krupic F. The Impact of Religion and Provision of Information on Increasing Knowledge and Changing Attitudes to Organ Donation: An Intervention Study. *Journal of Religion and Health*. 2020. Vol. 59. P. 2084-2085, 2089. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-019-00961-0>.

shows how churches and religious leaders can influence people's decisions regarding organ transplantation³⁶.

The experts' general recommendations for systematic improvement of organ donation systems note the positive role of additional involvement of pastoral care and religious representatives as needed, if requested by the family or if the transplant coordinator or intensive care physician deems it necessary or beneficial, and should be available in all hospitals³⁷. This demonstrates the recognition of the religious factor as an important part of the health care sector, where spiritual support directly stems from the humanistic nature of medicine.

Ultimately, a strategy to increase organ donation requires the involvement of religious leaders in joint work, as well as broad debates to build active support for this practice at all levels of society³⁸.

2.3. The role of church-based charities in helping patients

Religious organisations and charitable activities are inextricably linked. The church has historically been the cornerstone of many charitable efforts, playing a vital role in meeting social needs and developing the community as a whole, while leading a number of charitable initiatives³⁹. The point of view of N.I. Brovko that religion plays a special role in understanding charity, contributing to the formation of humanitarian values in society, is noteworthy, since for any religious movement, charity is an obligatory activity, manifested in care, concern, providing assistance to the sick, orphans, socially vulnerable segments of the population, and in general to those who need it. The scientist rightly notes that the Bible, Torah, and Quran condemn stinginess and, on the contrary, call for providing assistance to the needy, for compassion, and for sacrifice for the good of others⁴⁰. Charitable assistance from religious organisations in the medical field, in particular in the context of ART and transplantation, is no exception. Thus, scientists in the context of studying the religious and cultural aspects of organ donation draw attention to the fact that such major world religions as Christianity and Judaism consider organ donation as an act of altruism. Islam – an approving

³⁶ National Donor Sabbath. *The Alliance*: website. URL: <https://www.organdonationalliance.org/insight/national-donor-sabbath/>.

³⁷ Becker F., Roberts K. J., de Nadal M., Zink M., Stieger P. et al. Optimizing Organ Donation: Expert Opinion from Austria, Germany, Spain and the U.K. *Annals of Transplantation*. 2020. Vol. 25. P. e921727-9, e921727-11. <https://doi.org/10.12659/AOT.921727>.

³⁸ Cotrau P., Hodosan V., Vladu A., Daina C., Daina L. G., Pantisa C. See supra.

³⁹ The Church's Role in Leading Charitable Efforts. 2025. URL: <https://gmenation.org/the-churches-role-in-leading-charitable-efforts/>

⁴⁰ Бровко Н.І. Філософсько-правовий аналіз благодійності. *Правова держава*. 2024. № 53. С. 32–43. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18524/2411-2054.2024.53.300716>

act, Hinduism – a "virtuous act", and Buddhism – an important practice of generosity and compassion⁴¹.

The charitable work of religious organisations is important at all stages of society's development, but such assistance is especially important when such a society finds itself in "times of crisis." During a pandemic, natural disasters, or other emergencies, religious organisations provide immediate assistance, as their established presence in communities and the trust they enjoy make them excellent for quickly mobilising resources and providing volunteers⁴². As stated in the Charter for Faith-Based Humanitarian Action, which was approved in 2016 at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, religious communities and religious organisations have unique opportunities to provide spiritual assistance to people affected by conflicts and natural disasters⁴³.

The beginning of the full-scale russian invasion was no exception, where public and religious organisations played one of the key roles in providing humanitarian assistance, supporting victims, and are one of the most important elements of the resilience of Ukrainian society⁴⁴. Thus, as of the end of October 2025, there were 107 thousand public associations and 33 thousand charitable organisations operating in Ukraine, and since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of the russian federation, the growth of charitable organisations was 57%, and the peak of their increase fell precisely in 2022⁴⁵. Among charitable organisations, a significant share is made up of those created by religious organisations. Charitable organisations affiliated with churches, along with providing humanitarian aid and shelter to displaced persons, also ensure the creation of psychological support centres for the civilian population and the military, the delivery of food, medicines, etc⁴⁶.

⁴¹ Doerry K., Oh J., Vincent D., Fischer L., Schulz-Jürgensen S. Religious and cultural aspects of organ donation: Narrowing the gap through understanding different religious beliefs. *Pediatric Transplantation*, 2022. № 26(7). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/petr.14339>

⁴² Faith-Based Organizations and Their Role in Public Health Outreach. 2024. URL: <https://favs.news/faith-based-organizations-and-their-role-in-public-health-outreach/>

⁴³ Schwirner S. How faith-based organisations are promoting mental health. 2025. URL: <https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/churches-and-other-faith-based-organisations-are-performing-important-work-mentally-ill>

⁴⁴ Релігійні та громадські організації України відіграють ключову роль під час війни. 2024. URL: <https://sobor.com.ua/news/organizaciyi>

⁴⁵ Семенюта І. Кількість громадських організацій в Україні за час повномасштабної війни перевищила сто тисяч – дослідження. 2025. URL: <https://cs.detector.media/community/texts/186603/2025-10-29-kilkist-gromadskykh-organizatsiy-v-ukraini-za-chas-povnomasshtabnoi-viyny-perevyshchyla-sto-tysyach-doslidzhennya/>

⁴⁶ Релігійні та громадські організації України відіграють ключову роль під час війни. 2024. URL: <https://sobor.com.ua/news/organizaciyi> ;

O. Panko and S. Behei rightly note that religious organizations – Christian (Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Roman Catholic, Protestant, for example, "Caritas", operating under the auspices of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, "Eleos" under the auspices of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, etc.), Muslim, Jewish – have actively participated in solving urgent problems, including providing logistical support in the field of health care (delivery of medical equipment, technology, special equipment, medicines from abroad), and military priests and medical chaplains primarily ensure the psychological well-being of soldiers, have a positive impact on the psycho-emotional state of patients, their loved ones, as well as medical personnel⁴⁷. Other organisations created by religious organisations also provide charitable assistance, in particular, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)⁴⁸, the humanitarian initiative "Pope for Ukraine"⁴⁹, etc. In general, a number of studies point to the important role of religious organisations and their charitable foundations in health promotion and disease prevention, especially given their ability to reach low-income populations, citing the key role of such organisations in responding to the influenza pandemic (2009), Ebola (2014) and Zika virus (2016)⁵⁰, COVID-19⁵¹, and others.

Religious organisations and charitable foundations created by them have a significant impact on such areas of medical activity as transplantology and the use of additional reproductive technologies. Thus, scientists have repeatedly drawn attention to the role of religion (directly or indirectly) in various practices of ART, based on religious orientation, especially in the use of reproductive technologies from third parties⁵². In addition, Polish scientists rightly draw attention to the fact that the availability of organs for

⁴⁷ Панько О. І., Берег С. С. Соціальна робота церков та релігійних організацій в умовах війни в Україні. *Філософія та політологія в контексті сучасної культури*. 2023. Т. 15, № 2. С. 29-39. URL: http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/filipol_2023_15_2_7

⁴⁸ Благодійна організація ADRA незмінно надає підтримку для відновлення громад в Україні, де понад два роки триває війна. 2024. URL: <https://www.adra.ua/blagodijna-organizacziya-adra-nezminno-nadaye-pidtrymku-dlya-zczilennya-gromad-nezvazhayuchy-na-dva-roky-konfliktu/>

⁴⁹ Ворон О. Благодійність Римо-католицької церкви у форматі проведення гуманітарної ініціативи "Папа для України". *Наук. пр. іст. ф-ту Запоріж. нац. ун-ту*. 2019. Вип. 52 (т. 2). С. 165-169.

⁵⁰ Partnering with Faith-Based Organizations to Improve Public Health and Vaccination Equity. 2023. URL: https://www.apha.org/policy-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-briefs/policy-database/2024/01/16/faith-based-organizations?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁵¹ Tuczynska M, Matthews-Kozanecka M, Baum E. Religious affiliation and perceptions of healthcare access during and after COVID-19 in Poland. *Front Public Health*. 2025 № 13. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2025.1520575>

⁵² Sallam H. N., Sallam, N. H. (2016). Religious aspects of assisted reproduction. *Facts, Views & Vision in Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 2016. № 8(1). P. 33-48; Thoma M., Fledderjohann J., Cox C., Kantum Adageba R. Biological and Social Aspects of Human Infertility: A Global Perspective 2021. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190632366.013.184>

transplantation is influenced by several factors, including social, religious, psychological and cultural. Among them, raising awareness of organ donation and transplantology, as well as religious factors, play a particularly important role and are one of the key strategies for increasing the number of donors and expanding the field of transplantology in general⁵³.

In the field of health care, where trust and accessibility are of paramount importance, the charitable activities of religious organisations have become important allies. Given that more than 80 per cent of adults and children in the world profess a certain religion⁵⁴, religious organisations, which also actively cooperate with health care institutions and non-governmental organisations, play one of the key roles in educating communities on health care issues⁵⁵, in particular, in popularising such areas as ART and transplantology. In many cases, the role of charitable organisations under churches is associated with organising various activities to popularise the above areas (although in some countries, for example, in Iran, such charitable organisations directly participate in the transplantology process, helping, in particular, in negotiations or providing financial assistance to donors and recipients⁵⁶). For example, in Ukraine, the Charitable Foundation “Society – Together for Life” and the Ukrainian Charitable Foundation “For Human Dignity!” conduct a significant number of campaigns and events dedicated to family and reproductive health issues with a traditional Christian value orientation⁵⁷. The charitable foundation "International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development" (PaRD) also plays an important role, the activities of which unite, in particular, religious organisations, to use the positive impact of religions, faith and values on sustainable development and humanitarian aid.

A striking example is the experience of Spain, where, with the help of the explanatory work of the Catholic Church and its charitable organisations with the public on the issue of transplantology, it was possible to change the public's attitude towards it and a very positive mindset towards this process

⁵³ Zawierucha J., Piasecka J., Patelka A., Małyszko S.J., Małyszko, J.S., Małyszko J. How to Promote the Idea of Transplantation – Second Life Social Campaign as an Example of Successful Action in Poland – What Youth Is Used to, Adults Remember. *Healthcare* 2025. № 13, P. 1203. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare13101203>

⁵⁴ The Global Religious Landscape. 2012. URL: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>

⁵⁵ Faith-Based Organizations and Their Role in Public Health Outreach. 2024. URL: <https://favs.news/faith-based-organizations-and-their-role-in-public-health-outreach/>

⁵⁶ Siraj MS. How a compensated kidney donation program facilitates the sale of human organs in a regulated market: the implications of Islam on organ donation and sale. *Philos Ethics Humanit Med*. 2022. № 17(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13010-022-00122-4>

⁵⁷ Karpenko K., Guzhyva A. Attitudes of Major Religious Organizations in Ukraine to Abortion and Reproductive Medicine. *Occasional papers on religion in Eastern Europe*. 2022. № 42(6). P. 95-115. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55221/2693-2148.2372>

emerged⁵⁸ (Spain consistently demonstrates world leadership in organ transplantology, which culminated in record achievements in 2024, performing 6,464 transplants, including significant progress in kidney, liver and lung transplantation procedures⁵⁹).

CONCLUSIONS

The issue of religion and the human right to transplantology is at the intersection of fundamental constitutional rights – the right to life, health care, medical care, on the one hand, and freedom of conscience, religion and worldview, on the other. The main Christian denominations in Ukraine generally have a positive attitude towards the idea of posthumous and intra-life organ donation, considering it an act of mercy, love for one’s neighbour and imitation of Christ’s sacrifice. At the same time, religious communities categorically oppose the commercialisation of donation, recognising as moral only voluntary and unpaid organ donation, which does not degrade human dignity and does not turn the body into a commodity. The Church emphasises the “presumption of free will” – the right of a person to independently decide the fate of his own body after death without pressure from the state or medical institutions.

Religious factors have a significant impact on public attitudes towards transplantology. The example of Spain shows that the support of the Church, which has aligned donations with Christian values, has contributed to success in this area. Similar initiatives, such as the National Donor Sabbath, prove that spiritual education helps to overcome prejudice and increases people's willingness to become donors. Therefore, religious legitimisation of donation and the participation of spiritual leaders in educational activities are necessary for the development of transplantology, which combines medical, ethical and spiritual aspects to save lives.

Religious organisations play an important role in the field of charity and health care. They provide humanitarian, psychological and medical assistance, from humanistic values, strengthen trust and support social resilience in times of crisis. Their charitable activities contribute to the popularisation of transplantology and assisted reproductive technologies, as well as to strengthening the health of the nation.

⁵⁸ Нагірняк А. Релігійне співтовариство України підтримує донорство органів і готове сприяти зміні ставлення суспільства до цього. 2015. URL: https://archives.ugcc.ua/news/religiyne_spivtovaristvo_ukraini_pidtrimuie_donorstvo_organiv_i_gotove_spriyati_zmini_stavlennya_suspilstva_do_tsogo_73347.html

⁵⁹ Santiago Vispo N. Pioneering the Future of Organ Transplantation: Lessons from the Spanish Model. *Bionatura journal*. 2025. № 2(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70099/BJ/2025.02.01.1>

SUMMARY

Particular attention is paid to the positions of the main religious denominations – Christianity (Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Protestantism), Judaism and Islam – regarding the ethical admissibility of organ transplantology, determining the moment of human death, the voluntariness of donation and the inadmissibility of commercialisation of the human body.

The issue of legislative introduction of the presumption of consent for posthumous donation in Ukraine is considered through the prism of religious reservations regarding the insufficient preparedness of society, the need for large-scale educational work and adherence to the principle of "presumption of free will" as the inalienable right of every person to consciously choose the fate of their own body after death. Ways of harmonising the medical needs of society with the religious beliefs of citizens through improving legislation, ensuring transparency of medical procedures, developing interfaith dialogue and creating ethical commissions with the participation of representatives of religious communities are proposed. It has been determined that religious communities are not only a source of spiritual support but also important social partners of the state in the field of health care.

They contribute to strengthening trust in medicine, spreading the ideas of donation, disease prevention and a healthy lifestyle. Due to their authority, religious organisations influence public attitudes to ethical issues related to transplantology and assisted reproductive technologies.

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