

Religious Security: The Coronavirus Pandemic and the Identification of New Contexts

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Summary

The coronavirus pandemic has led to reform in the religious security of the world as a whole. Existing research on the problem is based on approaches that are purely informational and non-systemic, which limits the possibilities of understanding the problem to the context of the “religion–person–state” system. Restrictions on visits to places of worship have to some extent diminished the importance of religious practices. Pandemic threats have called into question the authority of religion and religious figures. The proposed methodological tools make it possible to fully substantiate the criteria of both destructive (which under certain circumstances can be a threat to the national interests of the state, the stable development of society, the exercise of the rights and freedoms of citizens) and constructive cases (the emergence of new communication contexts in which ritual and cult practice can take place) for the development of religious security and its historical genesis in the context of the meaning-forming axis “sacred–profane”, “health–disease”. The coronavirus pandemic, firstly, encouraged religious organizations to adopt new adaptive forms for cult practices; secondly, it changed the approach to religious ministry in society, to the role of the priest in this process;

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thirdly, it raised the question of the implementation of sacraments and rituals in uncommon circumstances; fourthly, it has exacerbated the issue of ineffective relations between religious organizations both at the interfaith level and at the level of public administration; fifthly, it affected the modernization process of religious communication practices which are not a health threat to the people. These new trends made possible not only the expansion of the functionality of religious security, but also prompted the creation of a flexible, adaptive, open model, which would take into account the regulatory, institutional, resource, and information capabilities of the country, as well as the mentality of the people.

Key words: *religious security; COVID–19; mask; faith; humanity*

Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic created the tendency in today's civilization toward a change in interstate and interpersonal relations, introduced unprecedented restrictive measures and, by restricting the constitutional human right to freedom of religion and movement, reformatted its activities in the sphere of information capabilities and virtual space. It actualized the traditionally tragic discourse of the crisis era. The pandemic also had an impact on rationality, when often manipulative and affective rhetoric displaced the person's ability to criticize and reason. Nurses and doctors were faced with a real tragedy of choice, for they were forced to classify patients and decide who should be treated. Only those more likely to survive received medical care. At the same time, of all spheres of public life affected by the coronavirus, perhaps no other changes have proved as painful and contradictory as those in the practice of religion. The pandemic posed a difficult dilemma for religious organizations: to protect the health of believers or to remain faithful to established traditions despite all. Thus, in order to protect the health of believers, many governments were also faced with the delicate question of cancelling large gatherings which could provoke mass protests and insults to the religious feelings of those involved.

Undoubtedly, these changes, reflected in religious security, have catalyzed several problems inherent in the modern religious space (for example, in Ukraine, the reformatting of the Orthodox "landscape", the military conflict in the East, the lack of constructive partnership between religious organizations and the state, politicization of religion and religious denominations: all these increased the influence of religion on public authorities, and unregulated regulations in the field of interfaith and state–religious relations, etc.). The result is a rather wide variety of reactions by the denominations to the prevailing bans during the coronavirus pandemic as regards ritual and various religious practices, ranging from understanding and assisting the authorities to demonstrating disobedience and a deliberate violation of the quarantine regime. Among religious movements such as Al Qaeda and Islamic State, COVID–19 is even seen as an additional weapon against the infidels (RISU, 2020). Unusual events were observed in some regions

of Ukraine. For example, in Zaporizhzhia in early March, when the coronavirus had already begun to spread in Ukraine, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate initiated a protest against the quarantine regime by flying in a helicopter while reciting a prayer for deliverance from the disease (Zvonareva, 2020).

As history illustrates, religion, both ideologically and institutionally, performs an instrumental function quite successfully by consolidating and activating society. During the Revolution of Dignity (from November 2013 to February 2014) representatives of different religious denominations, realizing the threat to thousands of people and to the national security of Ukraine, acted as a united front. Religious organizations have demonstrated that they are above political orientations and confessional differences: their main mission is the salvation of man, his moral and spiritual sphere. »From general calls for non–violence, they moved on to solidarize with the values of the Maidan in deeds and words, realizing the kinship of its principles with Christian ones«¹ (Hovorun, 2015).

At the same time, the ability of religion to mobilize facilitates potential conflict in the socio–political sphere, which not only exacerbates contradictions in the field of religious (in)security but also gives rise to the emergence of destructive eschatological mindsets, promotes new strategies for interaction between humanity and society, between religious denominations and the state. What is religious security, what are its main essential characteristics?

1. Semantic connotations of the “religious security” phenomenon

1.1. The mythological worldview

Knowledge on the origin of security can be traced back to mythology, religion, philosophy, that is, generally speaking, to the history of science. In order that the idea of security might be understood, it was first presented in the form of myth which expressed the main ideas on security in primary form and at the same time was a mechanism for ensuring it. In myths man dealt with living beings on whom his existence depended and the study of security meant “knowledge” of them. For example, Securitas (Latin “Securitas” means “serenity”, “security”) is a Roman deity that embodied the peace and security of the state and its citizens. This sacred symbol first appeared on Nero’s coins, which was associated with a failed conspiracy against the emperor. This is the reason why Securitas was designed to protect Nero from danger.

To better trace the semantic nuances of the concept of “security”, we shall focus on the Slavic mythological character — Pек (Pekun, Pek–Osyna, Shchezby), who is the bloodthirsty son of Chornobog and Mary, a cunning and insidious devil of bloody battle and all manner of strife. Pек is depicted as a huge figure. He lives deep underground, sits on a throne that rises above hell and carefully watches how the souls of sinners fall into hell and are tormented by devils. It is

1 Translated from Ukrainian to English by Olena Predko.

enough for Pek to strike with his stick, and pekelniks, his obedient servants, instantly appear. He gets the most pleasure out of seeing his wards torture sinners. Then Pek laughs contentedly, patting himself on his sagging stomach. The infernal “performance” continues constantly, and so the wicked, in order to please their idol, always come up with more and more new tortures for human souls. Although Pek is very ruthless, he is nevertheless timid and also extremely afraid of the life-giving light of the sun god and of Chur (hence the ancient proverb: “Chur to you, Pek!”). Hence, the word security in the Ukrainian language consists of two parts — the prefix meaning “without” and the root “Pek”, meaning ‘to be safe’, that is, far from this terrible character, a great distance away.

Chur (Tsur, Shur, Schur) is one of the oldest and most popular among the ancient Ukrainians’ “domestic” gods: guardian of the hearth, of warmth and comfort. He is the god of prosperity, the good spirit of the house and protector of the family. He was sometimes imagined and depicted as a fire burning in a furnace. The image of Chur was carved in wood and embroidered on towels. It is believed that in appealing to Chur one was protected from evil. »It seems that Chur should be understood in connection with the ‘line’ or ‘border’ symbolizing a dichotomy: ‘one’s own — another’s’, ‘safe — dangerous’, ‘closed — open’. On the one hand, Chur is a call for help to the forces of the patron, on the other — an incantation against hostile forces. Being the deity of ‘our own’ living space, Chur is intolerant of competitors, and he expels all unclean spirits. This is why, when an evil spirit appears, just mentioning its name causes it to disappear immediately«² (Markin, 2009, 60). As we can see, Chur, in addition to his function as an amulet, strives to maintain the purely human significance of a borderline situation. Ukrainian researcher D. Predko notes: »In experiencing borderline situations, a person acquires new values, new meaningful guidelines for life. In this case, the experience rises to a level whereby a process is generated, and, by actualizing its meaning, a way out of the critical situation is planned«³ (Predko, D. Y., 2018, 118).

Thus, in the mythological worldview, security was associated with protection and the personifications thereof, and so, even in their borderline position they strived to protect man — to prevent the action of evil forces. Amulets-protectors reduced human anxiety, gave one a sense of stability, integrity and thus contributed to the creation of stable myth-and-ritual institutions, served as an important factor in organizing the stable functioning and development of society.

1.2. A religious form of worldview

The emergence of a religious form of worldview has given rise to some adjustments to our understanding of security. Security now begins to be realized as an absolute good, which, for example, in Buddhism is called nirvana, and in Islam and Christianity is personified in the concept of an almighty God — the bearer and source of security. However, God is also able to mete out punishment, there-

2 Translated from Russian to English by Olena Predko.

3 Translated from Ukrainian to English by Bohdana Nosenok.

fore, fear of God protected man from wrongdoing, and religious faith played a major role in creating a world that is safe for human life, since the phenomenon of faith contains the component of trust which is manifested as an intimate individual process of living contact with the personified Absolute Subject. Moreover, »trust can arise both in the form of trust in God and trust in religious institutions, in sacred texts and saints. Trust in God is primarily a sacred, higher form of trust than institutional«⁴ (Kozhemiakina, 2010, 271).

Furthermore, scientists have long been focusing on the neurobiological aspect of prayer. It appears that during prayer, four areas of the brain are involved which usually are active during human communication (Spilka & Ladd, 2012). From the point of view of science, this means that Christians perceive God as a specific person with whom a trusting relationship is formed. Trust is a certain venture beyond subjectivity which requires the subject of religious knowledge — the feeling of the constant presence of the Supreme Being — to be open to dialogue with God. Trust as the beginning of faith is manifested in the disclosure of the deep qualities of man, his free activity, the ability to generate new meanings, thus overcoming the stereotypes of repetitive behavior. Trust concerns only issues within the competence of human cognition. Furthermore, trust is manifested as an appeal to the Other within a certain social space, while confidence is an appeal to the Other in oneself.

The phenomenon of religious faith necessarily involves hope. In fact, it does not have to do with hope itself, but with the very process of realization of this hope. Faith–hope gives the subject of religious knowledge confidence in its need and necessity, in its uniqueness and irreplaceability. »However, if we compare belief as confidence and faith in terms of giving our life a sense of meaning, we can say that the first answers the question of how to live, how to save lives by performing a goal–setting function, and the second answers the question of why you need to live, ‘subtilizing’ the problems of human existence, its sense–orientation«⁵ (Predko, O. I., 2017, 46). Thus, religious faith protects a person from the various vicissitudes of life, serves as a talisman that not only protects but also affirms the meaning of life and life itself. We are impressed by the balanced position of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who thanked all those struggling with the consequences of the pandemic, urged the faithful to be patient with the restrictions imposed by the authorities to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. »He denied that radical measures to contain the pandemic undermined the Christian faith and stressed that it was not faith but human life that was at stake. He also expressed confidence that scientists would find ways to overcome the coronavirus and called on the faithful to stay at home and intensify their prayers«⁶ (Malko, 2020).

4 Translated from Ukrainian to English by Olena Predko.

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6 Translated from Ukrainian to English by Bohdana Nosenok.

1.3. *The aspects of public consciousness*

As regards its functionality, faith contains significant psychotherapeutic potential, which allows for both the safety of the person and of society as a whole: it integrates society, acts as a compensatory and meaningful factor. After all, »faith seems to move mountains in the sense that religion is associated with positive health outcomes« (Hvidt et al., 2017, 294). It is owing to this faith that man overcomes existential tension, the fear of death, which makes the idea of immortality possible. Moreover, optimal fidelity to one's faith (internal perspective) and maximum openness to other religious traditions (external aspect) do not exclude each other. Such a functional manifestation of faith, on the one hand, opens opportunities for believers to stay in a one-denominational community even if its members have different points of view, different understandings of one or another aspect of a doctrine, and on the other hand, it opens a space for the coexistence of different religious paradigms, namely, the space for the ecumenical paradigm, which is, after all, focused on the unity and security of religious communities, on understanding among them. The Conference of European Churches, which unites 114 churches from all over Europe has stated the following: »As we all brace to fight COVID–19, being a fellowship of European churches, we reaffirm our common Christian faith based on the certainty that life is stronger than death, that Jesus Christ overcame death and the fear of it. Our faith holds us together, that is our strength« (CEC, 2020).

Thus, in the public consciousness, the phenomenon of “security” is identified not so much as the “absence of threats” as with the condition, feelings and experiences of people (Roshhin & Sosnin, 1995) in which religious faith plays a significant role. Thus, the concept of “security” is associated with the state of an absence of anxiety, insecurity, and fear. Usually, the emotion of fear arises as a result of real or imagined danger that threatens the life of the individual, or the values (ideals, goals, etc.) in which he believes. The famous Ukrainian philosopher G. Skovoroda distinguishes between the fear of God and the fear of man. The fear of God is reverence, love of God, and the particular spirit of God in Man. On the other hand, human fear oppresses man and paralyzes his will. It is a certain reaction to a definite and immediate danger, which seems to form a closed space in the human psyche. G. Skovoroda depicts several factors that overcome fear: »The most important feature of wisdom is the knowledge of God. I do not see him, but I know and believe that he is there. When I believe, then I am afraid — afraid to anger him — I look for what is good in his eyes. Here is love! Knowledge of God, faith, fear and love for the Lord comprise the following chain: knowledge is in faith, faith is in fear, fear is in love, love is in keeping the commandments, and keeping the commandments is in loving one's neighbor, love is not jealous, etc.«⁷ (Skovoroda, 2011, 180). Thus, religious fear is eliminated, overcome by love, and this enables the process of eliciting positive behavior and protects a person in the trials of life.

7 Translated from Ukrainian to English by Yevhen Kharkovschenko.

1.4. *The Christian semantic aspects*

Let us remember that the first epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians is a hymn of true love: »Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, it always trusts, it always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails« (Holy Bible: New International Version, 1 Corinthians 13: 4–8). Affirming love as the highest Christian virtue, the apostle John addressed the people: »Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God... Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love« (Holy Bible: New International Version, 1 John 4: 7–8). Thus, love is at the core of perfection, the semantic centre of man.

Undoubtedly, it is love as the “invisible fire” that can neutralize fear. It is in this context that we will be dealing with the phenomenon of fear as understood by S. Kierkegaard, namely, as a deep fear (Danish “angest”, German “angst”) to which the existential changes of human existence can be traced, the pleasure of transcendent experience and self-development of the spirit. Deep fear is not caused by the world around us; rather, deep fear means that »when awake, the difference between myself and my other is posited; sleeping, it is suspended; dreaming, it is a nothing vaguely hinted at« (Kierkegaard & Lowrie, 1957, 38). This is the reason why such fear attracts a person and captures him, causing ambivalent emotions. For Kierkegaard, this state is the freedom that inherently evokes a feeling of fear — because an unknown future is frightening. In this context, we fully agree with the opinion of the religious philosopher L. Shestov: »Kierkegaard insists that the fear of the first man must be distinguished from fear, apprehension and other similar mental states, always caused by some specific reason: this fear is, as he puts it, the reality of freedom as possibility before possibility. In other words, Adam’s fear was not motivated by anything — and yet it proved insurmountable«⁸ (Shestov, 2000). Thus, fear allows a person to assert himself within his existential existence and so destroy the depressing routine of life. No wonder the Bible states »The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction« (Holy Bible: New International Version, Proverbs 1: 7).

1.5. *The methodological basis for the study of religious security*

However, in many religious traditions, it is not only God who maintains the status of security. Man also has a share in the responsibility for this phenomenon. Security is made possible by the dialogical communication between man and God. This dialogue is enhanced by the implementation of certain instructions by man, by his following certain guidelines. Therefore, in this context, security

8 Translated from Russian to English by Mariia Nesterova.

is always an assessment of a person's situation within which his existence or the existence of the Other is not threatened.

We believe that the methodological basis for the study of religious security, its essential characteristics, are the following dichotomies: “sacred–profane” (when a certain divine order is violated, when the phenomenon of sacredness shifts its semantic nuances, and, in entering the secular space, changes its functional orientation); “health–disease” (when the integrity of human existence is violated, when the existential opposition “life–death” falls under the pressure of problematization); “humanity–environment” (when »on the one hand, humanity and the environment are a single system, and on the other, there are constant contradictions between them, resulting in various global problems, one of which is a pandemic. During the systemic marking of a pandemic, this unity and contradiction cover the environment and humanity in such a way that the pandemic itself is the result of such unity and contradiction«)⁹ (Lukanova, 2019, 29). In this context, religious security is understood as the state of protection of the vital spiritual and religious interests of a person from internal threats, external interference and the corresponding system of social and political events that ensures this protection. In a broader sense the phenomenon of religious security is a state of stable functioning and original development of the dichotomy between “person–religion”, “state–religion” in terms of their quantitative and qualitative characteristics and has two interpretive scenarios: the first, harmonious, holistic (characterized by coherence, harmony between external and internal factors, contains a significant constructive potential which manifests itself in the production of ideas that can influence new trends within the system of religious relations; the second, destructive, unbalanced value–semantic dissonances. Undoubtedly, these functional models of religious security depend, first of all, on state–church, inter–church and intra–church relations.

2. Religious security in the context of a coronavirus pandemic

2.1. Legal documents on religious security

In 2019, the OSCE Office for Democratic Initiatives and Human Rights (ODIHR) released a document called “Freedom of Religion or Belief and Security: Guiding Principles”. It proposes to focus on strengthening the security of religious communities, on developing the capacity of civil society and relevant government institutions to understand and implement international standards of freedom of religion or belief; on identifying and countering hate crimes; on promoting interfaith dialogue, as well as dialogue among the government, civil society and religious communities.

There is no special law or recommendation on religious security in Ukrainian legislation, however, it was incorporated in part in the Law of Ukraine, titled

9 Translated from Ukrainian to English by Olena Predko.

“On the Foundations of National Security of Ukraine” where among the threats to national interests and national security were mentioned also the possibility of conflict in interethnic and interfaith relations, radicalism and manifestations of extremism in the activities of some national minorities associations and of religious communities, the threat of manifestations of separatism based on religious affiliation in certain regions of Ukraine. Later the Law was improved and national security has come to be regarded as involving the protection of the vital interests of a person and citizen, of society and the state, which in turn ensures the sustainable development of society, timely identification, prevention and neutralization of real and potential threats to national interests (Zakon Ukrainy, 2018). Therefore, as V. Masovets (2018) emphasizes, religious security is a component of national security.

Usually, in examining the essence of the phenomenon identified by the concept of “security”, attention is focused on: firstly, its praxeological aspects, when security is considered in the context of displaying certain needs in the life of an individual, society, state and the international community; secondly, its axiological aspects, where this phenomenon is “included” into the context of the problems involved in a person’s leading a meaningful life. It should be noted that the concept of “security” is directly associated with the concept of “danger”. This is due to the fact that every living creature strives to preserve itself, especially when its physical existence is threatened. Therefore, ensuring self-preservation encourages activities which promote self-protection, and these are expressed in one’s reaction to danger. Undoubtedly, the presence of danger can be associated with the ensuing negative consequences for the individual, with the violation of his living space, the termination of his existence. Therefore, it is understandable that a person will develop an appropriate attitude towards that what threatens his existence (Kharkovshchenko et al., 2020).

2.2. Pandemic threats questioned the authority of religion and religious figures

The outbreak of the infectious disease COVID-19 revealed the fragility of modern technological civilization by exacerbating the issue of security. Just a few weeks after the World Health Organization declared a pandemic and immediate action was taken by many national governments particularly in view of social distancing, humanity experienced to the full not only the fragility of current social structures, but it also realized that pandemic threats questioned the authority of religion and religious figures. At the same time, the experience of counteracting the current outbreak of the coronavirus infection has shown that, in principle, no one — no country, no international organization, individual or humanity in general — had been prepared for a proper response to a pandemic. Moreover, »Christian churches have shown themselves to be an active part of civil society. They quickly responded to the critical situation in a number of European countries (primarily Italy, Germany, Spain, Great Britain). Firstly, the churches again (as during the migrant crisis) have demonstrated their importance in society and in solving social problems. Secondly, it became apparent that church activity is in

fact one of the foundations of European unity, and that Christianity is the “soul of Europe,” as religious leaders have repeatedly stated¹⁰ (Lunkyn, 2020, 105).

It is also worthwhile to note that the restrictions imposed on religious gatherings have to some extent diminished the importance of religious practices. As a result, it was not so much religion and the pandemic itself as it was religious activity — the constitutional human right to freedom of religion and movement — and quarantine measures that entered the conflict. On the other hand, a point of intersection occurred between the carrying out of religious activities and quarantine requirements/pandemic restrictions, namely, assistance in the distribution of medicine, assistance to the government in carrying out epidemic measures, promoting epidemic safety (including revision of rules of conduct in the sanctuary and volunteering (as in the purchase of medicines). Therefore, the implementation of new forms of communication between believers of different denominations (on–line worship, on–line sacraments, etc.) naturally indicates the need for a different perspective on the religious practices of religious organizations, which, in the context of the pandemic, undergo transformational changes in the “safety–danger” system, the semantic nuances of which vary from the degree of the population’s religiosity, religious tradition, the degree of trust in the church hierarchy and authorities, the number of patients, the rate at which the coronavirus spreads, etc., and the individual perception of the situation.

Moreover, the pandemic has actualized religious discourse seeing as religious leaders have turned to their religious texts and to theology to find answers for the community and encourage the faithful to carry out religious practices without endangering their health. Religious organizations have also gained new experience in adaptation to life during a pandemic. This experience inevitably affected the traditional practice of worship and, generally speaking, the approach of religious organizations to their ministry in society. Pope Francis was the first to set an example for believers — he decided on remote religious services and the virtual reception of pilgrims. In addition, in St. Peter’s Square in Rome, the Roman pontiff celebrated Mass alone (Lunkyn, 2020, 106).

In general, religious organizations in Ukraine supported government proposals for sanitary and hygienic measures in places of worship during the coronavirus pandemic. They have restricted the practice of worship, although some churches have expressed their dissatisfaction and even violated quarantine rules. Nevertheless, several religious organizations are involved in charitable activities aimed at helping medical staff, people in need and people in isolation during the coronavirus pandemic.

In November 2020, Ukraine introduced “weekend quarantine”. Worship in churches was not banned, but the faithful were asked to adhere to social distancing rules and the mask regime. However, several churches in Kyiv violated even these restrictions. Certain incidents occurred on November 15 during services at the St. Volodymyr’s Cathedral and St. Michael’s Golden–Domed Monastery.

10 Translated from Russian to English by Olena Predko.

Quarantine regulations specify that a church may hold up to twenty people, however, approximately sixty faithful attended the service at the St. Volodymyr's Cathedral and fifty people were present at St. Michael's Cathedral.

In 2020 the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations drew the attention of the Ukrainian government to the disproportion resulting from quarantine restrictions, in that large churches and places of worship were left empty and should not have been. After all, the faithful need pastoral care and spiritual consolation. The All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations proposes that the Ukrainian Government ensure the constitutional right to freedom of religion, despite quarantine restrictions, as follows: 1) on weekdays, to provide for the possibility that religious buildings continually remain open and adapted to the need for prayer, provided that the stationary seats available are not more than 50% full; 2) it is expedient to limit religious activities in rooms without stationary seating and open air services in accordance with the requirement that a safe physical distance of at least 1.5 meters between those in attendance be observed, rather than limiting the number of persons who can occupy the space (Admin, 2020).

2.3. *The phenomenon of "the mask"*

During a pandemic, the phenomenon of "the mask" acquires a new philosophical and semantic overtone. K. Tikhomirova sees the mask as representing cultural meanings which change depending on the historical context. »Subjective meanings of the mask are associated with the fact that only the individual himself predetermines what will be a cultural representation for him in each specific situation«¹¹ (Tikhomirova, 2016, 18). In general, the mask was used as a prop for cultic activities. From ancient times, many tribes and peoples of the world used masks to communicate with supernatural forces or to intimidate evil spirits. Actually, the mask was a kind of "pass" into the mysterious world of spirits.

The cultural meaning of the mask is also indicated by the French ethnographer, sociologist and culturologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. In his work *The Way of the Masks* he traces the changes in the nuances of meaning in regard to masks as we move from one community to another. C. Lévi-Strauss emphasizes that »a mask does not exist in isolation; it supposes other real or potential masks always by its side, masks that might have been chosen in its stead and substituted for it« (Lévi-Strauss, 1988, 144). Thus, the mask, on the one hand, identifies a person, distinguishes him from others, and on the other hand, it acts as a cultural form representing certain meanings determined by that culture but which have universal significance.

The coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated that the mask has become a component of security. However, during the pandemic, the symbolic meanings of the mask have changed: it serves as a protective barrier for a person, a phenomenon that alleviates a person's psychological stress, gives him confidence and

11 Translated from Russian to English by Mariia Nesterova.

to some extent dispels insecurity and anxiety. Actually, the mask is beginning to perform a protective function, consistent with the ritual and cult in primitive communities. However, the power of the mask lies not only in social imperatives but also in those cultural traditions that have been shaped over the centuries. For example, today's experts report a relatively low number of infections and mortality rate from COVID in Japan (157,674 reported cases of coronavirus infection and 2,283 deaths) (the current statistics of December 6, 2020 on the coronavirus in a country with a population of over 126 million). In comparison, whereas Germany has a population of about 83 million, more than 1.18 million infections and 18,839 deaths were registered. Finally, in Ukraine, the population of which in controlled territories was estimated by the government at the end of 2019 to be 37 million people, more than 813,305 cases of infection were officially registered, and 13,588 with a confirmed coronavirus infection died (as of December 6, 2020).

Epidemiologists »suggest that the numbers in Japan are low because the country has a culture of cleanliness, which includes frequent hand washing, and also because people in formal situations bow instead of shaking hands or kissing the cheek. Besides, the wearing of masks in public places has been common in the country for over a century and is believed to have its roots in religious rites« (Rajoll, 2020). While masks are not the only method of protection against COVID-19, they reduce the risk of coronavirus infection. Furthermore, in Ukraine, there is a Law “On Amendments to the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offenses to Prevent the Spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19)”, which prescribes penalties for staying in public buildings, structures, public transport during quarantine without wearing personal protective equipment, in the form of a payment of a fine between 170 UAH and 255 UAH (Zakon Ukrainy, 2020).

2.4. The conceptual model of religious security

Today, some denominations have taken the position of corona-nihilism by inviting people to ignore quarantine restrictions. On the one hand, from the point of view of health protection, these measures are justified, and on the other hand, they affect social consolidation negatively, contribute to outbreaks of violence and misunderstandings, existential alienation and increasing psychological tension.

It should also be noted that in Ukraine there is a polarization of ideologemes and corresponding values in society. It is reflected in the different directions dictated by geopolitical interests and in differing visions of the country's further development. This polarization can lead to an imbalance in society. Therefore, today it is necessary for Ukraine to search for a peaceful ideology that will prevent violence, cruelty, destruction, bloodshed and hostility. It is religion and its institutions which put human life above aggressive pseudo-values and which are designed to humanize ideology, to give it a moral and ethical orientation.

Undoubtedly, the conceptual model of religious security should be characterized by flexibility, mobility, adaptability, openness, and should take into account the regulatory, institutional, resource, information capabilities, the mental and ideological guidelines of the state. We believe that the assessment of the effec-

tiveness of religious security, on the one hand, should include expert–analytical monitoring of the current state of religious security, identification of pandemic threats and risks in the system of interfaith and state–confessional relations and their prevention and neutralization, and on the other hand, its identification criterion should be both effectiveness and humanity.

We would especially like to emphasize that religious security, for all its pitfalls, must, above all, have as its priority the values of human life, since humanity is at the core of efficiency and economic feasibility. In this context, the human dimension becomes a human value, the process of self–realization in the transcendent realm where the security of one’s self becomes the security of the Other — the security of the whole environment. Such self–transcendence is a breakthrough of the “Self” beyond one’s self, the creation of and replenishing with human meaning the human world using everything purely human and natural manifested in the world. The famous Georgian philosopher M. Mamardashvili noted: »becoming human is a very, very long effort. One must have the courage and patience for this effort; European challenges should be tested by its uncertainty and strength and wait — wait for our implementation in the same effort. I repeat: man is a long–term effort«¹² (Mamardashvili, 1988). We would add that it is not only a long–term effort but also many wonderful impulses and painful sufferings that inspire one’s faith in change, in resetting life strategies. In this context, religious security is the factor, the fulcrum, which affirms both one’s experience of self–identification as Man and the code of Civilization.

Conclusion

Thus, the conceptual model of religious security is an interconnected multilevel system of relations for the practice of a new format of communication which is possible only within a system of dialogue among “religious organizations–person–state–society” in the face of internal and external pandemic threats and heuristic opportunities which can influence new trends in the context of the coronavirus pandemic.

It was COVID–19 that gave rise to adjustments in the religious security of many countries which is evident in the following areas: first, in ritual and cult activities, in which new forms of communication were implemented on a large scale and new forms of the religious mission and church involvement were developed; secondly, as regards the legal dimension, the right to freedom of religion was limited, since it was necessary, first of all, to protect the highest value which is human life; thirdly, in the context of the “religion–person–state” system, in which the person is dominant, his health and his life have the highest value. These contextual meanings of religious security open promising opportunities for building a flexible, adaptive, open model, which would take into account the regulatory, institutional, resource, information capabilities and mental characteristics of the state.

12 Translated from Russian to English by Bohdana Nosenok.

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Religiozna sigurnost: Pandemija koronavirusa i identifikacija novih konteksta

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Sažetak

Pandemija koronavirusa dovela je do reforme religijske sigurnosti u svijetu u cjelini. Postojeća istraživanja toga problema temeljena su na čisto informacijskim i ne-sistemske pristupima, što ograničava mogućnosti razumijevanja problema u kontekstu sustava "religija-čovjek-država". Restrikcije posjeta u vjerske institucije u određenoj su mjeri smanjile važnost religijskih praksa. Pandemijska prijetnja dovela je u pitanje autoritet religije i predstavnika religija. Predloženi metodološki alati omogućavaju potkrjepljivanje u potpunosti kriterija destruktivnih (pod nekim uvjetima mogu biti prijetnja nacionalnim interesima države, stabilnomu razvitku društva, ostvarivanju prava i sloboda državljana) i konstruktivnih (pojava novih komunikacijskih konteksta ritualne i kulturne prakse) slučajeva za razvitak religijske sigurnosti i njezine povijesne geneze u kontekstu osi oblikovanja značenja "sveto — profano", "zdravlje — bolest". Pandemija koronavirusa je, kao prvo, potaknula je religijske organizacije da prihvate nove, prilagodljive oblike kulturnih praksa. Drugo, promijenila je pristupe socijalnim službama, uložila svećenika u tom procesu. Treće, postavila je pitanje podjeljivanja sakramenata i održavanja rituala u neobičnim okolnostima. Četvrto, negativno je utjecala na učinkovitost odnosa, kako između religijskih organizacija na međuvjerskoj razini, tako i na razini odnosa s državnim tijelima. Peto, utjecala je na proces modernizacije praksa religijske komunikacije koje neće ugrožavati ljude. Navedene inovacije omogućile su povećavanje funkcionalnih sposobnosti religijske sigurnosti, ali su također potaknule stvaranje fleksibilnoga, prilagodljivoga, otvorenoga modela, koji će uzimati u obzir regulatorna, institucionalna, materijalna, informacijska i mentalna obilježja države.

Ključne riječi: religijska sigurnost; COVID-19; maska; vjera; ljudski rod

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