

## Personal health in the context of Christian worldview

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**Abstract:** The article presents the results of a theoretical study of human health. The ideas about the nature and criteria of personal health from the standpoint of modern humanitarian knowledge are generalized. The main approaches to the problem of personal psychological health are presented. The study of personal health was carried out from the standpoint of the Christian doctrine of man, formed in line with the Eastern Christian worldview, according to which human nature is a trinity of spirit, soul and body. The spiritual basis is considered as the main basis in man, which, in the normative type of his organization, has a transformative effect on his soul and body. Various characteristics of personal spiritual and moral health are given and their role in implementation of man's life mission is shown. The interrelations of spiritual, mental and physical health, as well as the causes of diseases and their spiritual meaning are investigated. Personal health is considered as an integral, complex, multi-level socio-cultural formation, including psychophysical, psychological, spiritual and moral characteristics of man.

**Keywords:** chastity, disease, mental health, psychological health, spiritual and moral health, sin

### RESEARCH PROBLEM

A characteristic feature of the modern era is the fundamental human ill-being. It manifests itself in the dehumanization of man, his depersonalization, oblivion of eternal spiritual and moral values and spiritual meanings of life. Value disorientation of man, reduction of his moral responsibility for actions is accompanied by the choice of violence, aggression as a way of solving personal and social problems, and, as a result, leads to criminalization of society, growth of drug addiction, alcoholism, suicidal behavior, destruction of family and erosion of socio-cultural identity of personality (Koteneva 2013; Reshetnikov 2015). The loss of fundamental values reinforces the

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negative trends in the individual life-mentally safe, effectively functioning at the level of cognitive processes, the individual can be deeply immoral, mentally and spiritually flawed personality, seeking to meet exclusively selfish needs (Shuvalov 2015).

Everything that happens to man acquires a decisive role in the dynamics of the modern world. That is why at present the study of spiritual and moral health of the individual as a condition of physical survival, as the basis for the formation of personality, the implementation of his purpose in life is of paramount importance. Appeal to the problem of spiritual and moral health of the individual involves the study of the nature of health, its characteristics, causes of health disorders, as well as the search for new theoretical and methodological approaches to its study.

#### APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF PERSONAL HEALTH

The phenomenon of health is the subject of discussion in medicine, psychology, philosophy, acmeology and religion (Ananyev 2006; Avdeev, Neverovich 2001). The concept of «health» is constantly enriched with new meanings and characteristics, criteria for assessing human health and personality.

In recent years, human health is not limited to freedom from disease, to mental health, but is rather understood as the psychological health of the personality. The leading criterion of psychological health of the person, in addition to the effectiveness of functioning in social terms and adaptation, is the self-realization of the person. This approach is most deeply developed in humanistic psychology. In this direction, psychological health is revealed through such concepts as maturity, activity, freedom, creativity (Maslow 1997). For a person to be healthy means the opportunity to realize his inclinations and abilities, to take place in the professional, creative and other spheres of life. These ideas are also actively developed in acmeology. A.A. Bodalev, V.T. Gangin and A.A. Derkach consider acmeological personality, or the personality, having reached the peak of mental and physical capabilities as healthy (2000). From this position, people who seek to realize their talents are healthier than those who, being not burdened by any physical and mental illnesses, do not have the slightest desire to create, work, develop themselves.

However, self-actualization must be subordinated to a deeper goal related to the meaning of human existence in this world, the understanding of the purpose of man (Chelyshev 2019, 10-11).

Otherwise it will come into conflict with the self-transcendence of human existence (Frankl 1900). B.S. Bratus quite rightly says about the possibility of a qualitatively different understanding of the health norm in the differentiation of the concepts of «man» and «personality», when «personality» is considered as an instrument, the instrument of acquiring human essence. The «normality» or «abnormality» of personality will depend on how it serves man, whether his position and orientation contributes to the communion with the generic human essence or not (1997). The model of healthy personality includes not only self-actualization, but also the orientation of man to acquiring the generic human essence, including aspects characterizing the spiritual life of man and his personal development. In modern psychology, the spiritual dimension is considered as the main thing in assessing the health of the individual, although it may not be directly related to the physical and mental well-being of a person. The spiritual dimension is understood differently in different areas of psychology. Thus, in transpersonal psychology, spiritual means the realization of spiritual possibilities, and the desire to gain transpersonal experience. In this case, spiritual experience covers those aspects of being that are transpersonal and are found in altered states of consciousness (Maslow 1997; Grof 2001). These transpersonal approaches to the study of health are based primarily on ancient esoteric, mystical, and religious traditions that are alien to the Christian concept of spirituality, spiritual experience, and spiritual goals. If in the Christian model the top of the value hierarchy of man is Christ, and spiritual experience is the experience of spiritual transformation of human nature by divine energy, then in transpersonal teachings we are talking only about the disclosure of the universal spiritual potential originally inherent in man or communion with cosmic energies.

In recent decades, some scientists point to the need for a comprehensive approach to the study of the phenomenon of health in the context of the spiritual formation of man, his self-realization, ability to adapt and bodily functioning (Vasilyeva, Filatov 2001). The main meaning of these models lies in the appeal to oneself and the search for a fulcrum in oneself as a necessary condition of health and full existence. Such models cannot explain the health of man who is spiritually ascending to God.

The religious faith for many people is an important sphere of existence (Ciuraru 2015; Ismail & Deshmukh 2012). Man's religiosity is one of the fundamental qualities that characterize his attitude to God,

to the world and to himself. For many people, spiritual or religious beliefs and goals are central to their lives (Aflakseir 2012; Chokkanathan 2013; Ismail & Deshmukh 2012; Saleem & Saleem 2017). Religious beliefs and values have a strong influence on the psychological security, psychological, mental and physical health, well-being (Janssen-Niemeijer, Visse, Leeuwen, Leget & Cusveller 2017; Abdel-Khalek 2013; Weaver & Flannelly & Case 2004; Townsend & Kladder & Ayele 2002). This factor should be taken into account when building health models.

A holistic understanding of health in modern scientific consciousness also involves the consideration of a person in the unity of spirit, soul and body (Koteneva 2013; Shuvalov 2015). A fundamentally important point is the recognition of the multidimensionality of human reality by scientists, the need to study it in the context of human existence: his creation, his fall and his salvation (Slobodchikov 2007).

A positive shift in solving the problem becomes possible in the study of personal health in the context of the ultimate meanings of human existence, understanding its nature and structure, place in the universe. Such a comprehensive study can be fully implemented by introducing the experience and ideas about health of Christian anthropology, which some researchers call medical science and psychotherapy (Vlachos 2004), into the scientific paradigm. Orthodox psychotherapy is based on the works of the Church Fathers, in particular, Saints Gregory Palamas, John Chrysostom, Basil the Great and Reverend Father Simeon The New Theologian. One such source containing the Christian doctrine of health is the «Philokalia», a collection of texts on mystical theology, silent life, and intelligent prayer by the Holy Fathers (Philokalia 1895).

## IDEAS ABOUT HEALTH IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

The concepts of health and disease in the Christian tradition, their values for a person and methods of recovery are undoubtedly connected with the understanding of the meaning and goals of human life. Paramount importance for a Christian is achieving these goals - the salvation of the soul and the personality spiritual transformation. But salvation of souls and spiritual transformation are impossible without healing a person. What kind of healing and health are we talking about? The analysis of theological texts allows us to distinguish several meanings of the concept of «health» in the Christian tradition.

*The first value of health:* The category of health, first of all, refers to metaphysical concepts that characterize the quality of human relations with God and other people. «Man is by nature destined to *be near God and in God*. Not to be in God means not to be at all, means not to have life and to pass from being to non-being. We can *live, move and exist* only by God» (Korzhevsky 2004, 243). Hence, the understanding of the spiritual health of a person includes two indicators.

First, spiritual health means a special spiritual state called a state of Grace. Being healthy means living in God, in the Holy Spirit, in Grace. Therefore, the ideal state of this understanding of health is sanctity.

Secondly, the manifestation of the spiritual health of a person is his desire to acquire grace and restore a genuine relationship with God, a life by faith and divine commandments. Violation of such relations with God is the main cause of damage to human nature (Vlakhos 2004). So, the first understanding of health means, first of all, spiritual health.

*The second meaning of health:* Health is a state of integrity and harmony of spirit, soul and body. The concept of chastity most accurately reflects this state of man, open to God and His grace. The word «chastity» combines the meaning of such concepts as whole, integrity, wise and wisdom. The concept of wisdom has always included ethical and moral aspects, implying the connection of the highest truth and moral perfection. To be wise is not enough to be intelligent, to have knowledge. One must be a highly moral person. If the category of «knowledge» refers to rational concepts that allow quantitative and qualitative assessments, the category of «wisdom» – to the ethical and moral concepts that have deep national roots.

Health is a holistic wisdom that characterizes a person in terms of his spiritual and mental-physical purity, the highest state of moral perfection. This state of health is an indispensable condition for communion with God. If in antiquity, for example, the chastity was understood as the harmony of body and soul in unity with the moral Cosmos, then according to the Christian tradition, chastity is the divine integrity of human personality as the image and similarity to God. This category reflects the highest harmony of spirit, soul and body in human communication with God. In the Orthodox tradition, in a broad sense, the category of chastity means «a certain general structure of human nature, imbued with wholeness and purity in everything» (Horuzhy 1998, 84). In a narrow sense, chastity means purity of soul and body (Lestvichnik 1995, 122). The purity of the soul is a state in which there

are no sinful thoughts, feelings and emotions. Only that which comes from the heart, the organ of conscious psychic activity and the source of sin, defiles man. Chastity combines the virtues – «chastity is a comprehensive name for all virtues» (Lestvichnik 1995, 122). Health in this sense is the preservation of all the virtues of man in perfection and completeness. Health in the Christian tradition is always associated with the integrity, integrity of the spiritual-mental-physical organization of man, and disease – with the fault, the split caused by sin, separating man from God.

*The third value of health:* The understanding of health is related to the identification of specific types of health and diseases. In Christian anthropology on the basis of conceptions about three-component nature of the person (spirit, soul and body) distinguish the following levels of health – spiritual, soulful (mental) and bodily (Voino-Yasenetsky 1997; Koteneva 2013). A person can be spiritually ill. His soul may ache and various soul and mental illnesses may be detected, and his body may suffer. The spiritual diseases affect the human spirit, often the soul and the body. These three types of health are manifested in a variety of combinations in the individual, and their assessment depending on the angle of view will be very different. The medical norm, as a rule, consists in the absence of physical or mental symptoms, but the personal norm assumes the admissibility of the preservation of clinical manifestations of the disease. From a medical point of view a person can be healthy, but from a spiritual point of view is profoundly sick, and vice versa. For example, an intellectually developed and physically healthy person can be unspiritual. A spiritual person may have a state of physical malaise and illness.

Although these three levels are quite independent of each other, in the Christian tradition there is an idea of the norm of personal health, which sets the vector of their relations: spiritual determines mental, mental – bodily. In this unity the Holy Fathers see health and the norm of human existence. The person spirit should be directed towards God, and the soul and body should be governed by the spirit (Vlachos 2004). The highest level of personal health, responsible for the spiritual orientation of the person, the definition of the general meaning of life have a regulatory impact on the underlying levels, which are responsible for self-realization, adaptation of the individual at the social and psychophysical levels.

The study of negative spiritual and moral factors that have a profound impact on the psyche and behavior of a person undoubtedly

opens a new perspective in the understanding of personal health. The most significant spiritual and moral category is sin (Neverovich 1997). The Greek word for «sin» (ἁμαρτία) means «miss», «the goal no longer attainable». Moral theology understands sin as any deviation from the commandments of God and violation of the law of God by deed, word, thought (Belyaev 2002).

The experience of Orthodox asceticism shows that the cause of many mental disorders and diseases, in particular despondency, is sin. The moral state of a person is largely determined by such states as despondency, anger, irritability. Deep neurosis points to a moral ill-health, mental-spiritual disorder (Bocharov and Chernyshev 2004). It is spiritual reasons that cause the most common mental disorders and psychosomatic diseases (Avdeev, Neverovich 2001). But still, the connection between sin and disease is not unambiguous. Sin often either precedes certain psychopathological states, or acts through certain mechanisms, in particular, stress, intrapersonal conflicts, character traits, mental trauma, bad habits (Zorin 2003).

## CONCLUSION

Introduction to the philosophical and psychological discourse of Christian ideas and conceptions led to the understanding of personal health as a holistic, complex, multi-level formation, which includes the psychophysical, psychological, spiritual and moral characteristics of a person as a single whole. At the base of this system there is the physical and mental health necessary for human life, and at the top – spiritual and psychological health.

The highest, spiritual level of personal health has a transformative effect on the lower levels associated with adaptation, self-realization and personal growth of a person, as well as determines his mental and physical specificity.

Ideally, the health of the individual is a harmony of spirit, soul and body, holistic wisdom, in which the spiritual level of human existence transforms other levels of health. Personal health characterizes a person both in terms of the quality of his relations with the Creator and the people around him, his spiritual and mental-bodily «purity», the highest state of moral perfection, and his creative self-actualization, effective adaptation to the world around him, optimal psychophysical condition and absence of mental and physical diseases.

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