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# The Moral Peril of Taking Most COVID-19 Vaccines

April 15, 2021 by [GShep](#)



One of the great pleasures of this blog is the opportunity to present opinions from erudite scholars. The Orthodox Church is blessed with stalwart clerics who are not only erudite but possess a traditionalist *phronema*.

Fr Alexander F C Webster, PhD, is one such man.

Fr Alexander has had an illustrious career as an academic, author, and speaker. For more than twenty-four years he was an Orthodox chaplain in the United States Army, achieving the rank of colonel. In August 2019 he retired as Dean and Professor of Moral Theology Emeritus at Holy Trinity Seminary at Jordanville, New York.

One of the things that I respect about Fr Alexander is his ability to speak (and write) forthrightly. He has done so in the past on several different topics. Lately, he has come to the fore to address the issue of COVID-19 and many of its attendant issues.

In that vein, he has graciously submitted the following essay. Gail and I hope that you take the time to read it. As always, we invite you to read it for yourselves and of course to comment. I firmly believe that it will prove intellectually stimulating.

-Geo

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## The Moral Peril of Taking Most COVID-19 Vaccines

*Archpriest Alexander F. C. Webster, PhD*

The recent public statement by the Orthodox Theological Society in America (OTSA) released on March 8, 2021, with this unwieldy title—“Covid-19 vaccines: How they are made and how they work to prime the immune system to fight SARS-CoV2”—offers a seeming patina of legitimacy to an ethical argument that is abhorrent to any informed, devout Orthodox Christian. (See <https://www.otsamerica.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Covid19-VaccineTech.pdf>.) In this essay, I shall retrieve that gauntlet and offer what I hope is a compelling counterargument.

## I.

The OTSA statement declares boldly, “Most Church leaders have agreed that the many lives saved by vaccination are an important factor in permitting the use of these vaccines.” It provides, however, links only to two Roman Catholic documents and a Zoom video of the “Halki IV” summit sponsored by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in January 2021. For the latter, the OTSA document states timidly, “Metropolitan Nathanael touches upon this question.” However, the Greek Orthodox bishop of Chicago barely “touches” on the question and appears hesitant and uncertain of his own position.

On the other side of the question—and yes, two distinct, conflicting moral worldviews in the worldwide Orthodox Church are at stake—are four unequivocal documents produced by Orthodox hierarchs around the globe (boldface added for emphasis).

First, chapter 12, section 7, of the *Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* (AD 2000), a reliable, for the most part, a compendium of moral analyses of a multitude of issues approved by the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Moscow, includes this unequivocal position (boldface in original):

**“The Church believes it to be definitely inadmissible to use the methods of so-called fetal therapy** in which the human fetus on various stages of its development is aborted and used in attempts to treat various diseases and to ‘rejuvenate’ an organism.

Denouncing abortion as a cardinal sin, the Church cannot find any justification for it either even if someone may possibly benefit from the destruction of a conceived human life. Contributing inevitably to ever wider spread and commercialization of abortion, this practice (even if its still hypothetical effectiveness could be proved scientifically) presents an example of glaring immorality and is criminal.” [Source:

<http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/3/14.aspx>]

Second, a press release on “The Cloning of Embryonic Cells” by the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece on August 17, 2000, included this ringing denunciation of human cloning in the aftermath of the successful experimental cloning of a sheep in the United Kingdom named “Dolly” (boldface added for emphasis):

“The recent decision of the British Government to permit experimentation on human embryonic cells derived from cloning of the Dolly type triggered an intense political and medical dispute, which also reopens the need to emphasize **that the ethical criterion is incomparably higher than any scientific achievement.** . . .

“Whereupon:

**Brendan** on [Casting Lots and Coming up Snake-Eyes](#): “Apparently Dimitri Peskov’s son fought in the Wagner Group.”

Apr 22, 19:49

**George Michalopoulos** on [Casting Lots and Coming up Snake-Eyes](#): “I know! And one of his sons actually went to the Ukraine and fought as a mercenary.”

Apr 22, 19:46

**George Michalopoulos** on [Military Service and Orthodoxy: The Present Dilemma](#): “I got this info from Redacted. Here’s the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXt3heeQAUk&t=1s>”

Apr 22, 19:44

**George Michalopoulos** on [How’s This for Freedom of Religion?](#): “Brendan, thank you for this brilliant expose! As a Greek-American, I had intuited from an early age something “peculiar” about...”

Apr 22, 19:41

**Brendan** on [More Beautiful Than a Faberge Egg! – Have a Blessed Pascha Everyone](#): “Joseph: “...the end result of single mother families is oftentimes those children being adopted by gangs and/or engaging in violent...”

Apr 22, 19:34

**Seraphim** on [Communique from the Assembly of Canonical Bishops](#): “Dang, that doesn’t sound good. I hope there’s something to this story that I don’t know. I know there are...”

Apr 22, 19:27

**Brendan** on [How’s This for Freedom of Religion? The American Civil War: The Celts’ Last Stand](#): <https://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2021/04/...>

Apr 22, 19:24

**Illumined** on [Communique from the Assembly of Canonical Bishops](#): “Seeing the sheer amount of passionate hate, vitriol, and straight up slander against Father Heers tells me all I need...”

Apr 22, 16:19

“a) Our Church expresses her **explicit opposition to conducting experiments on human embryonic cells. What is named thus implies the destruction of not embryonic cells but human embryos.**

“b) The position that the human person begins to develop from the 14<sup>th</sup> day after conception offers an alibi to British scientists, but this, having a scholastic derivation and not a scientific basis, consists of subjective belief and arbitrary opinion. The Church and Christian conscience accept the human being as a person [πρόσωπο] with an eternal and timeless perspective from the moment of conception.

“c) Differentiations [distinctions/discriminations] between people are continuously increasing. **Everything indicates that the course of our societies is clearly all the more “eugenics” and racist. An attempt, however, to improve life cannot pass through the destruction of millions of human beings of embryonic [fetal] age. . . .”**

[Source: [https://www.bioethics.org.gr/03\\_c.html#6](https://www.bioethics.org.gr/03_c.html#6); translation from the Greek original by Protopresbyter George A. Alexson]

Third, a section on “The Transplant of Organs” on the Official Site of the Romanian Patriarchate lists these mandatory “principles,” among others, for proper, moral utilization of human organs and tissues, which collectively point to a rejection of the harvesting of aborted baby cells for any purpose without the consent of the preborn child-victim—an obvious impossibility:

- “Because the extraction of organs implies the consent of the donor, extraction of tissues from an embryo is inconceivable given the fact that although alive, this one cannot give its consent.”
- “It is not admitted to causing mutilation or death through the extraction of organs, even to save the life of another person.”
- “The Church cannot agree with the transplant of the embryoid tissues which involves the risk to affect the good health of the fetus and neither with using the transplant of the organs of the acephalous or hydrocephalous newborn babies.”

[Source: <http://patriarhia.ro/transplant-of-organs-6021-en.html>]

Fourth, more recently on August 21, 2020, in a joint public letter to Scott Morrison, Prime Minister of Australia the Anglican Archbishop Glen Davies of Sydney, Roman Catholic Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Sydney, and Archbishop Makarios (Griniezakis), Primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, rejected, on moral grounds, any vaccines derived from “fetal cell lines” —that is, from aborted preborn babies (August 20, 2020). Here are the key points of their defense of those people of faith who will reject certain COVID-19 vaccines on moral grounds:

“Some will have no ethical problem with using tissue from electively aborted fetuses for medical purposes. Others may regard the use of a cell line derived from an abortion performed back in the 1970s as now sufficiently removed from the abortion itself to be excusable. But others again will draw a straight line from the ending of human life in abortion through the cultivation of the cell-line to the use for manufacturing this vaccine; even if the cells have been propagated for years in a laboratory far removed from the abortion, that line of connection remains. They will be concerned not to benefit in any

**Brendan** on [Communique from the Assembly of Canonical Bishops](#): “The Ecclesiastical Standing of Father Peter Heers  
Father Peter Heers  
<https://orthodoxchristiantheology.com/2022/04/22/ecclesiastical-standing-of-father-peter-heers/>  
Truglia: ‘ . . . What can be known with certainty about that . . .’

Apr 22, 16:04

**Kosta** on [Communique from the Assembly of Canonical Bishops](#): “If he concelebrating liturgy that means it’s the bishop of the jurisdiction acting uncanonically for allowing it or they view him . . .”

Apr 22, 15:55

**Jane** on [Communique from the Assembly of Canonical Bishops](#): “For the Assembly to contemplate deeply: converts get what you are doing. Yes, we get it.

Yes, we get it.

<https://youtu.be/2zTBm5yKX6c>”

Apr 22, 15:49

**Fred D** on [Communique from the Assembly of Canonical Bishops](#): “Background information situation:

<https://orthodoxchristiantheology.com/2022/04/22/ecclesiastical-standing-of-father-peter-heers/>

[https://www.youtube.com/live/L5ietoevT\\_U?feature=share](https://www.youtube.com/live/L5ietoevT_U?feature=share)”

Apr 22, 15:48

**Jane** on [Communique from the Assembly of Canonical Bishops](#): “Ah ha ha ha! Drive!! Worried about the holy canons are ye? I am rolling in laughter!”

Apr 22, 15:40

**Jane** on [Communique from the Assembly of Canonical Bishops](#): “Well really? I will take priest Peter Heers over the devilish pastors and priests bowing to satanic chaos in the . . .”

Apr 22, 15:38

**Mark E. Fiskus** on [Communique from the Assembly of Canonical Bishops](#): “There are plenty of other clergy whose canonicity is not in doubt and who say the same things as the . . .”

Apr 22, 15:00

way from the death of the little girl whose cells were taken and cultivated, nor to be trivializing that death, and not to be encouraging the fetal tissue industry.

“While we accept that the proposed vaccine may be sufficiently remote from the abortion that occasioned the derivation of the cell-line, we flag to you that any COVID-19 vaccine cultured on a fetal cell-line will raise serious issues of conscience for a proportion of our population. Those troubled by this may either acquiesce to the social and political pressure to use the vaccine, or conscientiously object to the use by themselves and their dependents; if the latter, they will suffer various disadvantages (e.g. denial of access to childcare, aged care, or employment) . . .”

The three archbishops then, noting that “other vaccine trials . . . do not involve the use of morally compromised fetal cell lines,” seek assurance from their Australian government that the latter will not compel those citizens who have “conscientious or moral” objections to take any vaccine connected to fetal cell lines and “will ensure that an ethically uncontroversial alternative vaccine be made available in Australia if it is achieved.” [Full text available at <https://www.9news.com.au/national/coronavirus-vaccine-archbishops-raise-ethical-concerns-over-foetal-cell-lines/bd212356-abef-44b7-853a-130b2ac648b2>]

## II.

In stark contrast to all the above is the recent OTSA statement. Here are the three most pertinent sections of that document with my interlinear comments and rebuttals. (All words in boldface are added for emphasis; my comments are in italics within brackets. *Full disclosure*: I resigned as a member of OTSA after a group “vote” in 1998 in favor of the Aleppo Statement calling for a “common Easter” among all Christians by AD 2001 that ignored the post-Passover timing in Orthodox tradition.)

1. Have the mRNA vaccines relied on fetal cells at any point? Answer: The Pfizer and mRNA vaccines (as well as the not yet approved Novavax and Inovio vaccines) were not made from fetal cells that came from aborted fetuses. The vaccines were **tested in culture against fetal cells to help ensure that they would not harm a fetus** [NOTE: *A disingenuous claim at best, since the harm to the “fetus” already occurred decades ago when her retinal cells were harvested for development of such vaccines, and, moreover, the process of development and production did, in fact, rely on such cells for “testing.”*] as well as **to ensure that the technology works in a human cell** [NOTE: *Hence the “necessity” to utilize human cells ultimately derived from an aborted preborn baby*]. These tests were done with cells derived from the 1960’s and 1970’s [Inaccurate dates: for HEK-293, a **kidney** cell line that was isolated from an aborted preborn baby in 1973 from an intentional elective abortion, and for PER.C6, a **retinal** cell line —that is, from the **eye** of the preborn child—that was isolated from an aborted preborn baby in 1985.] from so-called therapeutic abortions. [NOTE: *A weasel use of “therapeutic,” which presumes some kind of medical situation: the specific abortions were planned and elective and the aborted preborn children were old enough in the womb to enable “harvesting” of organs such as their liver or eyes. See: <https://www.lifesitenews.com/blogs/the-unborn-babies-used-for-vaccine-development-were-alive-at-tissue-extraction>.*] **No new fetuses have been sacrificed** since that time for any vaccine tests [NOTE: *A valid point but irrelevant to the sacrifice of the two aborted babies who provided the original KEK-293 and PER.C6 cell lines.*]. Different from the mRNA vaccines, many of the other Covid-19 vaccines (e.g. AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson) are grown using the same fetal cell line. To ‘grow’ the vaccine

**Basil White** on [Communique from the Assembly of Canonical Bishops](#):

“So what brought this on? Me thinks our Rev Heers upset someone”

Apr 22, 14:50

**Misha** on [Military Service and Orthodoxy: The Present Dilemma](#): “I am not sure on the incident you report, George, but Pepe Escobar confirms it from sources in Brussels so...”

Apr 22, 14:43

**DigitalWarrior** on [Casting Lots and Coming up Snake-Eyes](#): “The West is winning the media war... in the West. Check out other foreign news sources, outside of Western Europe...”

Apr 22, 14:19

**GDunn** on [Communique from the Assembly of Canonical Bishops](#):

“This article makes the case that Fr. Heers’ has plenty of documentation supporting his ministry. He was accepted by several...”

Apr 22, 14:16

**Misha** on [Communique from the Assembly of Canonical Bishops](#): “In terms of character, I will rise to Fr. Peter’s defense. However, I do not know what is at the...”

Apr 22, 14:13

**Germanus** on [Communique from the Assembly of Canonical Bishops](#):

“I’m glad y’all are reporting on this. I’m sure heads are spinning, I know mine was yesterday! Taking no joy...”

Apr 22, 14:06

**Ella** on [Communique from the Assembly of Canonical Bishops](#):

“The confusion over Fr. Peter’s status is something you would think the Assembly of Bishops would want to be resolve...”

Apr 22, 13:28

in fetal cells is a term that scientists use because all viruses are dependent on cells for “growth”, which for a virus means to replicate, and thus, the production of viral vaccines will require cells for production. [NOTE: *Whether a vaccine was grown in, derived from, or tested with a fetal kidney or retinal cell is a distinction without a moral difference: the process is still ultimately connected to a heinous act of abortion.*] **Most vaccines** do not ‘grow’ well in adult cells, and therefore **require the use of fetal cells**. [NOTE: *Expedience is not a moral justification!*] Importantly, mRNA vaccines are synthesized without cells. Vaccine synthesis and vaccine production are two separate steps in the vaccine-making pipeline. Some vaccines (e.g. Rubella, chickenpox) used in the United States also come from viruses grown in aborted fetal cells (again, from those cells from the 1960s and 1970s). The United States government has banned the generation of any new cells or the sacrifice of any embryos for the purpose of investigation. **Nevertheless, it is recognized that some vaccines would not be possible without the growth of the viral vaccines in these fetal cells.** [NOTE: *Hence the moral argument against those vaccines.*]

2. Are the vaccines unethical because of their use of aborted fetal cells? Answer:

Several significant factors lead to the conclusion that the vaccines present the best ethical option to promote health and life, despite their connection with the use of aborted fetal cells. These factors are: (1) The fetal cells in use today are derived from two or three therapeutic abortions performed several decades ago. The abortions were NOT for the purpose of the development of vaccines, [NOTE: *False! There is no evidence of the precise circumstances of the original abortions except that they were not natural miscarriages.*] and all parties (including the US government) have agreed that no new fetuses will be aborted or used for this purpose. [NOTE: Thank God for that, but the two “original sins” that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s remain in effect and continue to be exploited.] (2) Many vaccines (other than COVID) that we use in the US and worldwide are made from these cells, and other substitute cell lines have not proven to be effective for growing the vaccines; this has been the only alternative. (3) **Most Church leaders** [NOTE: *An unsubstantiated, gratuitous claim: is there any evidence of such a “poll” and, if so, which Church “leaders”?*] have agreed that the many lives saved by vaccination are an important factor in permitting the use of these vaccines. While it is a sad reality that the origin of these cell lines is from these very few therapeutic abortions, the **cell lines are already in existence**. [NOTE: *A non-sequitur that glosses over the original intrinsic evils.*] no new fetuses will be used, and as such, it is **far preferable** [NOTE: *Meaningless comparative: it is never licit and not even “necessary” in view of alternative vaccines without abortion pedigrees. See section IV of this essay below.*] to cure diseases as a result of the use of these cell lines than to totally forbid the use of these cell lines. The vaccines in no way legitimize or promote abortion; [NOTE: *A disingenuous claim at best: exploiting the consequences of an abortion, particularly cells extracted from the preborn baby, entails a sharing of the guilt for the original abomination and provides tacit approval for similar exploitations in the present.*] rather they combat disease and death, support health, and enable life—not death—to prevail, all of which are of the highest ethical value. [NOTE: *That argument fails to address the crucial moral question of profiting from the original abortions, whose preborn baby “donors” were unable to consent to the organ harvesting, and who were victims of objectively, intrinsically evil acts akin to similar abominations on a mass scale such as the slaughter of innocent beings in genocides including the Holocaust.*] More information regarding the morality of using these cell lines can be found at the following links: (1) Ecumenical Patriarchate – “Halki Summit IV – Covid-19 and Climate change: Living with and Learning from a Pandemic”. Metropolitan Nathanael [NOTE: *GOA, not OCA*] touches upon this question.

<https://www.facebook.com/ecumenicalpatriarchate/videos/900946820672806/> (2)

The Vatican – Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

[https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_a-vaccini-anticovid\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_a-vaccini-anticovid_en.html) (3) United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

<https://www.usccb.org/moral-considerations-covid-vaccines> [NOTE: *A very selective use of sources in agreement with OTSA's Statement: two can play that card! See the four Orthodox episcopal documents at the beginning of this article, which clearly trump the three cited by OTSA.*]

3. Some new COVID vaccines (such as Johnson and Johnson) are grown in fetal cells. Are these vaccines in particular unethical, and should we avoid them? Answer: No. Although the use of “more” fetal cells in one type of vaccine than another (for example, by growing the vaccine in the cells as opposed to simply testing them using the cell line) appears **to suggest that more fetal deaths occurred or that more fetuses were involved**, this is NOT accurate. [NOTE: *A deflection argument: no one I know is making that claim.*]. All the cells used are clones from the same original fetal cell lines, and whether a few cells or many are used, there are NO new fetuses involved [NOTE: *A mere repeat of the preceding sentence already rebutted.*] The ethics of taking one vaccine is essentially no different from that of another. [NOTE: *Audacious falsehood! OTSA fails to mention COVID-19 vaccines in development—such as CVnCoV, CureVac's mRNA-based vaccine candidate in Germany. See section IV of this article below.*]

### III.

A more systematic argument for the OTSA position in favor of all COVID-19 vaccines currently available and in production, though one which also fails the moral test, appears in the late Tristram H. Engelhardt's book, *Foundations of Christian Bioethics* (Beverly, MA: Scrivener Publishing, 2000),

Here is the pertinent section from chapter 5 (p. 261: *with boldface added for emphasis*):

“Under circumstances that allow the use of tissues and organs from persons who die accidentally, it is **appropriate to use tissues and organs from fetuses who die accidentally**. Under circumstances that allow the use of tissues and organs from persons who were murdered, it is **similarly allowable to use tissues and organs from fetuses who have been aborted . . .**, from ‘excess’ embryos stored in *in vitro* fertilization clinics, **or from embryos that have been formed to produce tissues and organs**. The same can be said of knowledge derived from embryo and fetal research. There is **no bar in principle against using for a good end something that has been acquired by heinous means, as long as one has not been involved in (1) employing these evil means, (2) encouraging their use, (3) avoiding their condemnation, or (4) giving scandal through their use.**

One can drink water from a well that was dug by unjustly forced labor.”

The main problem in that analysis is two-fold: first, the surprisingly sanguine, even cavalier attitude toward “fetuses who have been aborted,” and, second, a false teleology—indeed, a strictly secular, un-Orthodox consequentialist argument focused exclusively on the supposedly good intentions of those who may wish “to use tissues and organs” from aborted preborn babies with total disregard for the intrinsically evil intent that led to the willful abortions in the first place and the needless, violent destruction of human persons that is the object of those abortions.

Engelhardt's confident proclamation that "there is no bar in principle against using for a good end something that has been acquired by heinous means" is, *prima facie*, a classic consequentialist mantra. His four conditions, as it were, for licit use of aborted baby cells toward the end of the excerpt above offer little nuance or value. The first seems to absolve anyone except the abortionists themselves and their collaborators who procured the desired cell lines; those who utilize and benefit by the product of abortion are deemed guiltless, even when they know the genesis of their bounty. The last three conditions are sophistries. Anyone who willfully benefits from such abortions provides a tacit *post-factum* encouragement of the original act and similar acts in the present and future. Facile "condemnation" of the original evil act does not absolve anyone from benefiting from that act. How anyone who utilizes aborted baby cells even for an ostensibly good end can avoid "giving scandal through their use" is beyond my comprehension: the "scandal" is inherent in the intrinsically evil act and the hands of anyone who exploits that act are also dirty.

Engelhardt also seems to contradict himself when he deems "appropriate" the use of any tissues and organs from "fetuses who die accidentally"—that is, natural miscarriages when, ironically, the fetal cells "needed" for the COVID-19 vaccines are likely to be useless due to the time-lapse before harvesting—and then expands the set of possible circumstances through his analogy to "murder," which is *not* accidental. Before the reader can ponder that dubious analogy (who among the living can consent in good conscience to the use of the murder victim's organs, if the victim is not already an official "organ donor"?), Engelhardt opens a Pandora's box of parallel abominations when he callously cites "excess" embryos—as if any human person is "excess" on this earth—and, more shockingly, human embryos generated precisely and solely for scientific/medical purposes such as the utilitarian production of "tissues and organs."

#### IV.

Thanks to the providence of God the Holy Trinity, conscientious Orthodox Christians do not confront a zero-sum decision between *any or all* COVID-19 vaccines, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, *no* COVID-19 vaccines. Several vaccines currently in development have no connections to aborted babies ("fetal cell lines"). The website of the Charlotte Lozier Institute provides a link (updated as recently as March 3, 2021) to a widely-circulated chart of which vaccines do and which do not utilize such cell lines and to what extent: <https://lozierinstitute.org/update-covid-19-vaccine-candidates-and-abortion-derived-cell-lines/>. The vaccines in development marked exclusively with green squares are potentially good moral alternatives to those unacceptable vaccines that OTSA and some other Orthodox have blessed.

To be sure, the virtue of prudence may preclude any vaccines produced in Communist China, above all the one in development at the infamous Wuhan Institute, the source of the COVID-19 virus in the first place. However, a vaccine from the Bharat Biotech/Indian Council of Medical Research in India appears to be ready for distribution, and the Zydus Cadila vaccine in India has completed stage 3 of its development. Both utilized monkey cells instead of preborn human baby cell lines. Two other vaccines still in the mid-phases of development also depend on monkeys instead of human cells: the vaccine from Osaka University—AnGes, Takara Bio—in Japan, and the vaccine from the Israel Institute for Biological Research (IIBR).

The most promising and imminent of the alternative vaccines is CVnCoV, the product of a collaboration between CureVac and Bayer AG in Germany and the GlaxoSmithKline

(GSK) pharma group in the United Kingdom. (That is the same Bayer pharmaceutical company that has supplied aspirins to American families for decades!) The CureVac COVID-19 has completed all phases of development and testing. Manufacture and initial distribution in the 27 member nations of the European Union will be conducted by CureVac (Germany) and Novartis (Austria) “probably in late summer 2021,” which is, of course only a few months away. For details see <https://www.biopharma-reporter.com/Article/2021/03/22/CureVac-on-track-to-apply-for-COVID-19-vaccine-market-authorization-in-Q2-2021> and <https://www.biopharma-reporter.com/Article/2021/02/03/GSK-and-CureVac-in-tie-up-to-address-multiple-emerging-variants-with-one-COVID-19-vaccine>.

There is a catch, however. The quantity of those vaccines may be limited to 100 million doses per annum with only 50 million available through 2021. (See <https://www.curevac.com/en/2021/03/30/celonic-and-curevac-announce-agreement-to-manufacture-over-100-million-doses-of-curevacs-covid-19-vaccine-candidate-cvncov/>.) Moreover, CureVac intends to include areas around the globe without alternative COVID-19 vaccines. That would appear to exclude the United States for the immediate future. Perhaps direct appeals to the CureVac authorities by those of us in the United States and Canada with profound religious objections to the current batch of vaccines might persuade the German company to provide for us, at cost, their morally acceptable vaccine as an exception to their current policy. Nonetheless, “hope is on the way” for us conscientious objectors to the morally objectionable vaccines currently available—if we can stay the course and resist the temptation to settle now for instant medical mammon.

## V.

To summarize my moral case against all the COVID-19 vaccines currently available and most still in production, I offer the following reflections as one Orthodox moral theologian—no more, no less.

We must reject, on moral grounds, all COVID-19 vaccines that have *any* connection to aborted preborn baby cells (especially those babies who were “kept alive” long enough for scientists to extract the kidneys or retinas from which they derived the desired “material.”) Time and distance are irrelevant to profiteering from such abominations for any reason, even life-saving in the present or future. According to traditional Orthodox moral theology (as opposed to revisionist variations so common today), certain actions (“means” to “ends”) are objectively, intrinsically evil under *any* “circumstances”—most notably, abortion, rape, incest, child abuse, physical torture, and deliberate targeting of non-combatants in war.

Otherwise, we fall into a utilitarian or, worse, the consequentialist temptation that justifies anything however repellent and abominable for the “greater good” that one may have as his intention. The New Testament, the *consensus patrum*, and our own Orthodox-informed consciences all testify to the uncontestable moral maxim that we may not do evil to achieve good. There is no “lesser evil” that is tolerable to achieve, ostensibly, a “greater good.” If the means or action toward even a good end is intrinsically evil, the *entire* decision must be deemed immoral and unacceptable in all circumstances. A “lesser evil” decision process cloaked in “greater good” language is sophistry, *prelest*, and sheer moral evil.

Is our own bodily health, including likely immunity via vaccination from a pandemic that, despite the toll of deaths—each one tragic and unnecessary—is only one of many



other, some more deadly pandemics in human history, worth compromising an informed moral conscience by benefiting in any way from the abomination of abortions?

Ultimately, our unbroken faith and hope in God the Holy Trinity and in the life in the world to come will sustain us in this present biological trial. It will take that—as well as courage—to eschew tempting but immoral medical solutions to the COVID-19 virus while waiting for a truly moral alternative.

May our Lord grant us the strength to do so.

Filed Under: Uncategorized

## Comments

Brendan says

[April 15, 2021 at 6:41 pm](#)

Thank you, Fr Alexander for this clear, cogent analysis.

Before I read your essay, I read the OTSA offering.

I took issue with each of the three parts of the answer given to the very first of their questions:

**“Answer:** The goal of all vaccines is the same: **to activate the immune system to be prepared to fight** against the actual infectious agent (e.g. a virus) should the individual become infected.”

*A strong immune system is already prepared to fight, and natural immunity is always stronger than vaccine induced immunity and lasts longer.*

*Why not use this God-given shield as first preference.*

**“If we take the approach to never miss an opportunity to vaccinate,** we will more easily end this pandemic.”

*The replacement of wild strain polio by vaccine strain polio rather gives the lie to this argument.*

**“Because vaccines are a safe way** to prevent viral infections...”

*Congress in 1986 and the U.S. Supreme Court in 2011 declared vaccines to be ‘unavoidably unsafe’ and shielded drug companies from all product liability.*

*If vaccines were safe, drug companies would not need shielded from liability.*

On the horror of profiting from abortion (murder) and the theological arguments against, I am wholly on your side, Father.

PS: OTSA seem not to have heard of Antibody Dependent Enhancement, which in itself somewhat lessens the value of their assurances.

Mikhail says

[April 15, 2021 at 7:29 pm](#)