



Physical culture and orthodoxy

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Abstract

Objective of the study was to reveal the attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church (its teachings) to physical culture and sports.

Methods and structure of the study. The included and non-participated observation of athletes, interviews of Orthodox priests, content analysis of the speeches of church hierarchs, and a sociological survey of 300 young people aged 17 to 23 involved in physical education at the Timiryazev Academy were used.

Results and conclusions. Various points of view on the problem under study are given, the role of physical culture and sports in the spiritual development of an Orthodox person is considered. The authors draw attention to the fact that physical activity, keeping one's body in an active state contribute to spiritual service, as well as the spread of Orthodox Christian values. The statement is substantiated that physical activity provides invaluable assistance in the spiritual life of a modern person. It is noted that Orthodox hierarchs say that by going in for sports, maintaining physical activity, a person not only takes care of his own health, but also helps his loved ones in social terms. The main scientific result is that the authors managed to prove that physical education is part of the path of a person's moral perfection and one of the ways to get closer to spiritual ideals that play a big role in the life of an Orthodox person. And at present, this is precisely the position of both the official

Keywords: *physical culture, Orthodoxy, church, sports, morality, spirituality.*

Introduction. Questions of spirituality and physical culture are increasingly linked within the framework of Orthodox discourse. The first work in which physical culture was considered from Orthodox positions was the monograph by Yu.B. Nikiforov [5]. This gave rise to some discussion, in which A.N. Golobokov began to assert that "the church is not fully engaged in the spiritual enlightenment of athletes, in connection with which many athletes are passionate about pagan worldviews" [3, p. 289]. At the same time, the point of view that sport "is able to bring a person closer to God" is defended by F.A. Ponomarev [7, p. 3]. The fact that "physical culture is the basis of a healthy lifestyle" is convinced by V.E. Kislykh and A.Yu. Evsyukov [4, p. 3]. The extent to which these judgments are justified remains to be examined in this article.

Objective of the study was to reveal the attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church (its teachings) to physical culture and sports.

Methods and structure of the study. In the process of working on the article, included and non-participated observation of athletes, a sociological survey of 300 young people aged 17 to 23 involved in physical education at the Timiryazev Academy, interviews of Orthodox priests, content analysis of the speeches of church hierarchs, in which questions were posed to identify how the Orthodox teaching, sports and physical culture are coordinated; what types of sports and motor activities have a positive or negative attitude; what changes in sports and physical education are approved by the church, what are not; how the church can participate in the physical education of children and youth, etc.

Results of the study and their discussion. Appeal to the topic of physical culture of an Orthodox person, and 75% of the respondents in the course of the study identified their belonging to the Orthodox faith, is quite natural.



There are several stereotypes around the attitude of Orthodoxy to physical culture and sports, that church hierarchs allegedly consider even sports itself to be something unnecessary, distracting parishioners from religion and church life. However, according to the social concept of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), such an idea is fundamentally wrong. The Church, realizing the importance of preventive measures for maintaining health, condemns only the “extreme degrees of commercialization” of sports and the emergence of the cult of pride associated with it [6].

As follows from the materials conducted as part of this interview study, Orthodox priests (in particular, the cleric of the Church of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Petrovsky Park, Priest Vladimir Alekseev) say that by playing sports, maintaining physical activity, a person not only takes care of his own health, but also helps their loved ones socially. In most cases, he will not be a burden for relatives in old age upon reaching old age and will be able to live his life on his own without outside help. You can also ask the Lord for health, but it is advisable to support these requests with your own active physical activity. Therefore, it is no coincidence that many ministers combine an active spiritual life with physical education. There are also athletes among them. For example, Archimandrite Sylvester is known for being the vice president of the martial arts union for the Yaroslavl region, the spiritual mentor of the Alpha special forces unit.

It's no secret that athletes give all their last strength to get the coveted medal. However, some begin to take drugs that adversely affect the internal processes of the body. And in these situations, the role of the Church becomes inexorable, when it is necessary not to cross the line where vanity, aggression, and painful self-interest begin to appear [2]. The ROC believes that it is important to maintain a balance between physical activity and the pursuit of the spiritual. Of course, sports and physical culture should not replace faith in God, they should not be absolutized and elevated to some kind of cult, but a reasonable combination of these principles - bodily and spiritual - is quite harmonious and worthy of an Orthodox person.

In the Russian Federation, under the auspices of the Russian Orthodox Church, various events are held that are aimed not only at physical development, but also spiritual. On July 9, 2010, an Agreement on joint activities was signed between the Novosibirsk Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Department

of Physical Culture and Sports of the Novosibirsk City Hall [4]. On June 6, 2018, the first meeting of the Patriarchal Commission on Physical Culture and Sports, consisting of 24 church hierarchs, took place in the Red Hall of the Cathedral Church of Christ the Savior [1]. In 2019, Moscow hosted the 7th annual cultural and sports festival "Orthodoxy and Sport". These examples speak of the unconditional involvement of the church in the sports sphere of society, where people need spiritual support.

The fact that physical education classes and wind practice do not contradict each other is also evidenced by the results of sociological surveys of students involved in physical education at the Timiryazev Academy. 85% of respondents are convinced that physical activity can provide invaluable assistance in spiritual life. 78% noted the fact that it is sport that helps to cultivate in a person such qualities as perseverance, patience, will, courage. 69% indicated the ability to work in a team and, importantly, the ability to overcome oneself, primarily their negative qualities (laziness, cowardice).

Conclusions. Thus, according to modern Orthodox canons, physical activity and sports contribute to maintaining a high degree of spiritual activity of a person. At the same time, the emphasis is on the fact that sporting achievements should not become an end in itself and be absolutized, the achievement of physical health and the preservation of an active lifestyle should be at the forefront. This position is reflected in the social concept of the Russian Orthodox Church and finds support in the activities of Orthodox priests. The same opinion is shared by the vast majority of believers involved in physical education.

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