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## THE PROBLEMS OF HUMAN EMBRYOS GENOME EDITING FROM THE POSITION OF CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

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The relevance of this work is due to the fact that the issues of bioethics connected with the intensive development of biomedical science in the XX–XXI centuries are new ethical problems to the human community. Various social groups have their own vision on topical issues of bioethics. In today's world, social institutions such as religious, scientific, political, economic, legal, etc. feel ambiguous about gene editing. This paper considers the attitude of the religious community to these issues in particular gene editing of human embryos on the example of Christian denominations.

Firstly, academic papers and published statements by religious figures and committees were used as a source of the study. Secondly, the positions of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches on the problem were considered under the study. Thirdly, such methods of research as comparative analysis, hermeneutic and analytical approaches were used.

In order to solve the bioethical problem of gene editing it is necessary to determine the problem of human essence, because the embryo has no generally accepted status. The religious view on this issue is unambiguous – the embryo has been a human since the merger of gametes. Accordingly, conducting experiments on gene editing of human embryos is equated with experiments on human. Two main issues arise from this. This is the permissibility of genome editing to treat genetic diseases and the permissibility of genome editing to improve humans.

The Russian Orthodox Church is very cautious about the use of new medical and genetic techniques. The main document «Foundations of the social concept of the Russian Orthodox Church» describes the attitude of the Church to new problems of bioethics. The Church supports the desire of doctors to cure hereditary diseases, but speaks of the danger of editing, which can «have unpredictable consequences in the form of new mutations and destabilize the balance between the human community and the environment» [1]. In connection with the statement of the Chinese scientist on the first birth of genetically modified children, the Church and Public Council for Bioethics declared the need to impose a moratorium on editing of the human genome and its modifications, in connection with the unresolved bioethical, philosophical and scientific discussions that arose in the world community [2].

For the Roman Catholic Church, the development of the scientific and technological process is a good thing, it is confirmed by the words of St. John Paul II «the nobility of the human vocation to participate responsibly in God's creative action». However, he warned that «we cannot interfere in one area of the ecosystem without having to pay due diligence to engage in the consultations». Also, he argued that the RCC values the contribution «from the study and applications of molecular biology, supplied by other disciplines such as genetics» [5]. Pope Francis's encyclical expressed the church's positive attitude to the research and the need to address bioethical problems through interdisciplinary research as «it calls for a comprehensive approach

which would require, at the very least, greater efforts to finance variable lines of independent, interdisciplinary research capable of shedding light new on the problem» [5].

For the Protestant world the point is also ambiguous. Nuances lie in the specificity of the hierarchical structure of churches, the country in which the community is located and the level of spiritual education. For example, most Russian Protestant churches are on the verge of survival due to traditional, narrowly focused religiosity. Therefore, the issues of biomedical ethics, which require some training in biology, philosophy and theological anthropology, are not raised professionally enough. There is a «social position of the Protestant churches of Russia» [3] describing all the problems the Russian Protestant community faces.

The things are different for Western churches. The level of theology, the percentage of educated clergy and flocks is much higher, which affects the instant reaction to the incoming ethical problems. Conditionally, on bioethics, Western Protestants can be divided into two camps: Augustinians and Irinians, where Augustinians are opposed to improvements in human flesh, and Irinians are in favour of modernization [4].

To conclude, the position of the main Christian denominations on the problem of editing the human genome is ambiguous. The prospect of further research is analysis of bioethical, philosophical and scientific discussions on this problem.

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