

WHAT TO DO WITH THE ANTI-CORONA VACCINE?

One of the reasons why the debate regarding the Covid-19 vaccines has become so heated is the fact that political and ideological dispute overshadows scientific and moral discussion of the issue. For example, the claims that Covid-19 is in fact a mild cold that can be successfully cured with vitamin C and aspirin, or the claim that the large amount of deaths worldwide associated with Covid-19 is in fact a big lie, cannot be decided on political or rhetorical grounds. To make such claims that contradict results of rigorous examination of facts does not contribute to the scientific discussion but misrepresents facts. The moral aspect of the issue is similarly misrepresented, apart from such voices as the clear, sober and concise study by Professor Roberto de Mattei entitled [*On the Moral Liceity of the Vaccination*](#) (Fiducia, April 2021, available in different languages). To date, no one has refuted it. The only critiques that I am aware of (published on LifeSite and by Christopher Ferrara on *Catholic Family News*), are written largely from a political and polemical perspective. But I fear that by lending an unequivocal moral voice to the polemical political discussion these critiques will confuse and misinform their readers, as well as risk damaging the credibility of the pro-life movement, which has been so hard-earned over many years.

I was among those who initially took the view that vaccination against the Coronavirus is illicit because all currently available options have or seem to have been produced or tested with cell-lines derived from cells of fetuses aborted half a century ago. However, thanks to the focused analysis of Professor de Mattei regarding the moral liceity of the vaccines, I have come to change my mind.

Professor de Mattei examines thoroughly and convincingly the types and degrees of cooperation with evil, leading to a conclusion that it is untenable to consider the receiving of the vaccine today as cooperating in a crime that was committed years ago. He also explains how accepting the good that has come of evil, in order to fight a disease currently afflicting us, does not constitute any approval of the crime that lies at its origin. He rightly points to the logical inconsistencies in rejecting the vaccines against Covid-19 while making use of other vaccines that are also produced with cell-lines derived from aborted children but required from many states since a century and accepted by almost all critics of the anti-corona-virus vaccines. The reality that many commonly used medications, including antibiotics, insulin, or therapeutics for controlling high blood-pressure, are produced with fetal cell-lines, helps in putting in perspective and assessing the liceity of the vaccines against Covid-19. Logically, these vaccines can only be rejected on the grounds of being produced with fetal cell-lines if we also reject all commonly used medications produced in this way. De Mattei's sound analysis explaining that it is neither obligatory nor possible to avoid *all* forms of material cooperation with evil is, I believe, essential for people who are seeking to do the right thing but are being weighed down with rigorous moral demands that neither represent differentiated and true ethics nor authentic moral theology and Church Teaching, but contradict sound ethical insights and both the present Magisterium exercised by the Congregation for faith in consonance with the Pope, and that of three previous Popes who have declared themselves in the same sense as the present Magisterium.

Lack of consistency is also evident in taking the position that possible mandatory vaccination against Covid-19 is totalitarian, while accepting the mandatory vaccination of children against polio and other diseases in many Western countries, including Italy and Austria, for over a hundred years, thereby preventing the deaths that devastated Europe in the past due to these diseases.

Moreover, God can draw good from evil and consequently we benefit from many goods that have come about as a consequence of past evils. To accept these goods is licit, because as St Paul says: "In everything God works for good with those who love him" (Rom 8:28). And St Augustine explains: "Almighty God ..., because he is supremely good, would never allow any evil whatsoever to exist in his works if he were not so all-powerful and good as to cause good to emerge from evil itself" (*Enchiridion de fide, spe et caritate*, 11, 3: PL 40, 236).

God used the adultery and murder of king David to generate the human lineage of Christ; and he used the horrible sin of the murder of the God-Man to redeem us. There is no greater crime than the killing of Jesus Christ, and there is no greater benefit for humanity than what His Passion and death have wrought for us. The flesh and blood of our crucified Lord certainly draw the supreme benefit from the most atrocious of all crimes. And although Christ died for our sins, and did so willingly, he used atrocious crimes to do so. We are not participating in the deicide or approving of His murder in Jerusalem, by receiving the sacraments.

If God permits the murdered unborn to become instrumental to creating a far lesser benefit for humanity, he makes them a small image of His own sacrifice. And those who associate vaccination with cannibalism risk repeating one of the first accusations against Christians: that of anthropophagy for their eating of the flesh of the divine Lamb in the Holy Eucharist (S. Justin, I *Apologia*, 26; Eusebio, *Historia ecclesiastica* V, 1, Tertulliano, *Apologeticum* 4, 9).

The objections to Professor de Mattei's study, which I have seen, mainly focus on a section which deals with the right of the state to impose mandatory vaccination in order to protect the common good, illustrated with historic examples. While this is understandably a difficult concept for all those who have experienced many examples where state authority has been abused – nevertheless, based on the evidence he gives, I believe that Professor de Mattei's view is *in principle* correct, and widely accepted in many other cases. If a disease constitutes a grave threat to the common good, the state can (and all states do) institute certain measures to avoid harm as much as possible to its people, without thereby being totalitarian. This does

not mean that all state and Church measures against the Coronavirus have been good. On the contrary, some of them have been gravely wrong and indeed criminal. I particularly refer to the measures that prevented the dying from receiving the sacraments, or family members from visiting them in hospitals. But if the authorities mandated that priests administering to the dying in hospitals during the pandemic must be vaccinated, I believe, they would have a duty to obey. In principle, the state has the right to legislate what it believes to be in the interest of the common good. This right can be justly exercised and cannot be regarded as totalitarian as long as it does not contradict the natural law or the revealed divine law.

Equally, this does not mean that forced vaccination is acceptable or that individuals' discernment not to take the vaccine should not be respected.

The conclusions I have thus reached are the following:

1. To profit from good effects of crimes that occurred in the distant past is neither a formal nor a material cooperation with those crimes. At the most, it could be considered a lack of radical protest against past crimes. But we are not obliged nor able to protest against all past crimes in such radical fashion (see conclusion 2). In case of the Covid-19 vaccine the association with the past crime is extremely remote, because one cannot cooperate in a past abortion; we can only fail to give appropriate witness to the reality of the past crime of abortion. But we can publicly and privately express our disapproval of past abortion and many other past crimes in other ways, and no doubt Professor de Mattei does so in an exemplary fashion.
2. We are not even obliged to avoid any distant or less distant material cooperation with actual crimes: If we wished to avoid any remote material cooperation with abortion and other crimes, we could not buy products made in China or countries where slavery or forced abortion exist, pay taxes, nor buy medications from a pharmacy that sells abortifacients and contraceptives; nor buy books from bookstores or publishers who sell pornographic materials; needless to say, this list is far, far longer.
3. If we accept the mandatory vaccination of children against Rubella, Polio and other diseases, or take a vaccine in order to travel to, or from, tropical countries where dangerous diseases are spreading or may spread, we cannot, *in principle*, reject the right of the state to demand vaccination against Covid-19, even if we may challenge that decision on the grounds of the empirical and medical information available to us. Regarding the concrete anti-Covid measures, one should examine whether each of these is helpful, reasonable, unfounded, absurd, or totalitarian. But it cannot be said without such examination that all measures against Covid-19 (many of which are similar to the ones that have been practiced in other areas without much reaction) are totalitarian and impermissible.
4. Finally, I concluded that we may in good conscience, in order to protect our own life and health as well as that of others, accept to take a vaccine that has a 90% plus chance of protecting the health and lives of many, even though it used the effects of past crimes.

These are the most significant ones of the conclusion I have reached thanks to Roberto de Mattei's excellent and extremely thorough analysis. I hope there will be many others who will reach the same conclusions, not because they are followers of Professor de Mattei or me, but only because of the truth Professor de Mattei expounds in a masterful fashion. The way in which this Roman scholar contributes, as a thorough historian and moralist in the spirit of Tacitus, *sine ira et studio*, to shed light on this important debate, is exemplary: Without any unjust ad-hominem attacks and insults, all of us should pursue the sole purpose of finding the scientific, moral and religious truth about the vaccine and about the reasonable grounds of the important free decisions states and individuals have to take in this crisis.

Prof. Josef Seifert

POSTSCRIPT

A POSTSCRIPT TO MY ARTICLE ON THE LICEITY OF THE CORONA VACCINE AND ON THE DECLARATION OF THE IMMORALITY OF GETTING THESE VACCINES BY CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS OF RIGA JANIS PUJATS, ARCHBISHOPS EMER. TOMASH PETA AND JAN PAWL LENGA AND AUXILIARY BISHOP ATHANASIU SCHNEIDER (KASACHSTAN) AND BISHOP STRICKLAND OF TYLER (USA)

I wish to add some words on the deeply moving and magnificent document signed by Bishop Schneider (whom I hold in highest esteem for his prophetic words and mission) and other bishops. This document urges us, under threat of serious sin,

to refuse absolutely receiving vaccines that make use of cell-lines derived from aborted babies, because to do so would entail a material cooperation with the evil of abortion and fail to manifest a clear rejection of the terrible crime of abortion.

As I stated in my article, I agree a 100 % with all said in this document on the crime of abortion and the need to witness to the truth. I also agreed with their conclusions including the moral wrongness of the vaccine, until I studied Professor de Mattei's (a world-renowned champion for life) new book *The Liceity of the Vaccine*.

I do no longer agree with their conclusions that the use of the anti-Corona vaccine is sinful, however, for the following reasons:

1. To use a cell-line developed from a cell in the body of a murdered person is no cannibalism because a cell of his body is not the murdered person, and we do not even eat or use his cell but other cells developed from it. If I am murdered and a medical research team can develop from one of the cells of my body a vaccine, I shall be happy and not think that this has anything to do with cannibalism. Nor does such a good use of a cell from my body imply any approval of the crime to which mankind owes my cell.
2. One cannot cooperate in any way with a past crime formally or materially. Therefore, using this vaccine is no cooperation with abortion at all, also not the remotest material cooperation.
3. God often uses evils to create great goods, which is one sign of his omnipotence. This lies also at the center of divine revelation: God used the adultery and murder committed by King David to give mankind his descendants including Jesus Christ. To accept gratefully this good effect has nothing to do with a lack of rejecting the crime of adultery and murder.
4. God used the greatest of all sins, the murder of Jesus and the betrayal of Judas to give mankind the greatest gift of all gifts: redemption and the sacraments. To accept these gifts has nothing to do with approving the crime of Jesus' crucifixion.
5. It is incoherent to demand abstaining from this vaccine if we do not abstain from a large number of other vaccines and medications that have been developed from cell-lines of aborted babies and saved millions of human lives; we would demand that countless people die rather than using any of these vaccines that all of us got as children or drugs against high blood pressure and uncounted others.
6. It is impossible for man, and therefore no obligation at all, to abstain from *any* action that includes a remote material cooperation with evil, such as to buy drugs in a pharmacy that also sells abortifacients (practically all pharmacies do), or to buy a product made in a communist and murderous state such as China with its forced abortion, and millions of other cases. To demand such a radical protest against all evils and a radical stop of any, however remote, material cooperation with them is humanly impossible to fulfill and puts a load on people too heavy for any man to carry.
7. The Magisterial teaching of CdF and Pope Francis who signed this document, which affirms the moral liceity of using this vaccine is in keeping with documents and decisions taken by Pope Benedict and Pope John Paul II. Thus, to contradict this teaching of the present Magisterium that is in full harmony with previous Church Teaching is to create a kind of counter-magisterium and independent magisterium, which a Catholic should not do nor follow.
8. If this appeal to all men not to use the vaccine, as long as no others are available, may contribute to many deaths, it involves a grave responsibility for many lives lost for an incorrect ethical and religious reasoning.

Therefore, I invite the bishops who issued the moral verdict on the use of the vaccine to retract this statement, and I applaud again Professor de Mattei's superb book which taught me, through its careful and subtle reflections that are in full harmony with natural and revealed truth that many persons and I can in good conscience receive this vaccine and might even, for the sake of our own and many other lives, have a moral obligation to do so.

Professor Josef Seifert