



Written by [James Heiser](#) on September 28, 2011

ObamaCare: “An Assault on Religious Freedom”

The USCCB’s objections to the pervasive program of socialized healthcare commonly known as ObamaCare is based in the administration’s plan to coerce healthcare providers — including those operated by the Roman Catholic Church — into providing birth control, abortifacient drugs, and abortions. According to an article for the *Catholic Review*:



“The mandate directly conflicts with the religious beliefs of individuals and institutions who have a moral objection to such practices,” the bishops wrote, “and who do not believe that such ‘preventative services’ constitute legitimate health care.”

The bishops said the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act had a “laudable goal” of “expanding access to genuine health care for all Americans, especially the poor.” They expressed concern, however, that the mandate “contradicts promises made to the American people that the new federal law would not include coverage for abortion.”

“By mandating coverage of all FDA-approved contraceptives, including the drug Ella, this policy would in fact include coverage not only for drugs that prevent pregnancy, but also for abortifacients with the capacity to terminate a pregnancy in its early weeks,” they said.

When the legislation was passed into law, it purportedly contained language specifically intended to serve as an exemption from requiring religious institutions to provide services that were fundamentally at odds with their principles. However, pro-life news outlets were already raising concerns in July that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) would push for a mandate for birth control and abortion being imposed on religiously oriented healthcare providers. At that time, a report from the Institute of Medicine that was commissioned by HHS which — [in the words of a report from LifesiteNews.com](#) — “touts the medical benefits of birth control drugs as ‘the ability to plan one’s family and attain optimal birth spacing,’ and secondarily, as treatment for conditions including menstrual abnormalities, ‘acne or hirsutism,’ and ‘pelvic pain.’”

Catholic leaders were unamused by what they saw as misleading language in the report; in the words of Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, “Most Americans surely see that abortion is not healthy or therapeutic for unborn children, and has physical and mental health risks for women which can be extremely serious. I can only conclude that there is an ideology at work in these recommendations that goes beyond any objective assessment of the health needs of women and children.”

Now, the regulations proposed by HHS Secretary Kathleen Sibelius are being seen by the bishops as an “unprecedented attack on religious liberty” because they would so restrict any “religious exemption” as



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to make it essentially meaningless. As the *Catholic Review* reports:

The bishops said a proposed religious exemption would be applicable “only to those institutions that serve only members of their faith community, exclude those of other faiths from their employment and focus solely on the inculcation of their religious beliefs.”

“In other words,” they said, “under the mandate a Catholic institution would only qualify if it hired only Catholics, served only Catholics and attempted to convert to Catholicism anyone who used its services.”

Given that the historic Christian practice of charity has extended to providing for those outside of the faith, Sebelius’ regulations would essentially require Christians to abandon a pattern of centuries of charitable service to their communities for a retreat into a virtual ghetto, if they are to avoid being coerced into practices which violate their church’s teachings.

Roman Catholic leaders are not hesitant to identify this choice — live in a ghetto or compromise the faith — as that which the Obama administration is deliberately imposing on their religious community. As Terence Jeffrey wrote in [a story for CNSNews](#):

The bishops point out that the “religious exemption” proposed in the regulation holds that a church organization is “not a religious employer if it (a) serves those who are not already members of the church, (b) fails to hire based on religion, or (c) does not restrict its charitable and missionary purposes to the inculcation of religious values.”

Under this rubric, the bishops said, HHS would have to rule that Jesus Christ did not qualify for a religious exemption.

“Under such inexplicably narrow criteria — criteria bearing no reasonable relation to any legitimate (let alone compelling) government purpose — even the ministry of Jesus and the early Christian Church would not qualify as ‘religious,’ because they did not confine their ministry to their co-religionists or engage only in a preaching ministry,” said the bishops. “In effect, the exemption is directly at odds with the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which Jesus teaches concern and assistance for those in need, regardless of faith differences.”

Under the regulation, the bishops said, Catholic hospitals, Catholic charitable institutions, and Catholic universities and colleges would be forced to choose between dropping all health-care coverage for their workers or paying for health-care services that violate the teachings of the church.

While not all conservative Christian denominations may share the views of Roman Catholics regarding birth control, they readily understand the principles that are at stake when government seeks to impose its agenda on various religious communities. What is at stake is fundamental religious freedom. As reported last year, the Obama administration quite pointedly abandoned a commitment to “religious freedom” in favor of the far less expansive concept of “[freedom of worship](#).” The implications of this crucial change in terminology are becoming more clear. According to HHS, Roman Catholics may have “freedom of worship” — their church may teach as it wishes regarding contraceptives and abortion (for now, anyway) — but not “religious freedom.”

When it comes to the program for collectivizing healthcare in America, no one’s religious principles or conscience will be allowed to interfere.



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