

Health Choices are Spiritual Choices

Pastor Wyatt Allen

People are being suspended and fired. Students are refused admittance.

Businesses are preventing entrance. Society is being segmented.

The catalyst for this new caste system in the United States and around the world is, of course, the new COVID-19 vaccines.

People are refusing to take the new shot for a myriad of reasons. Medical, personal, philosophical, and religious reasons have historically been respected in a free society; but we are in a new age where the believed “common good” or “greater good” trumps all. Even personal religious liberties.

In this article I will attempt to answer the question: do we have a fundamental right to refuse the COVID-19 shot on religious grounds? Even age-old stalwarts of religious liberty are divided on this question. They liken it to seat belts and feel there are compelling social and medical reasons to take it. But are they the same thing? I've never heard of a religious liberty argument challenging seat belts; but, as a pastor, I have now heard hundreds of sincere believers say that they are hesitant to take it lest it defiles their body temple.

“Body temple” is a reference to something the apostle Paul said in one of his epistles:

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise (1 Corinthians 3:16-18).

Christian believers have a special duty to their Creator to take care of their bodies. One might recall the story of Daniel and his friends that refused to eat what their captors fed them (Daniel 1). They said no to the meat and alcohol, and they put their lives on the line. Providentially, God provided for them, and even their captors were amazed at the results of their limited diet. Notice the words, “Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself... (v. 8). This was a conscientious decision that Daniel made to honor His creator.

Paul wrote a few chapters later: “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). God’s people have a religious obligation to make sure that what they eat and drink and “whatever” they do, they do it to God’s glory.

The Bible is clear that any substance that goes into our bodies is a religious choice. And our nation has historically protected the rights of its citizens to make religious choices.

To put it another way, *our health choices are spiritual choices*. For the Christian, we believe that we are a whole being: physical, spiritual, mental (1 Thessalonians 5:23). One affects the other. Every

decision we make is to be for God's glory (Colossians 3:17), and to force or compel a believer to go against his conscience is a high crime in God's eyes.

For the Seventh-day Adventist Christian, there are even more persuasive reasons for acknowledging the right to reject any vaccine as a religious right and matter of the conscience. I am just one pastor in this denomination and have personally heard many religious objections for not receiving the COVID-19 vaccines from my members, and even from fellow ministers. I will share the top concerns and why I agree.

1 – Health Laws are God's Laws

As shared above, Christians who defile their bodies face the most serious of God's punishments: they will be destroyed. This is one of the reasons that Adventists avoid all unclean animals, tobacco in all its forms, alcohol and caffeine, and drugs. In addition, many Adventists live a completely plant-based lifestyle because they have a spiritual conviction that their bodies belong to God and they want to honor their Creator by their health choices. Being forced to eat pigs, for example, would amount to forcing the conscience. Furthermore, Adventists hold the writings of Ellen G. White as speaking with the prophetic voice of authority. As such, we cannot ignore her words about God's health laws.

Every law governing the human machinery is to be considered just as truly divine in origin, in character, and importance as the word of God. Every careless action, any abuse put upon the wonderful mechanism, by disregarding his specified laws of the human habitation, is a violation of God's law. This law embraces the treatment of the entire being (Healthful Living, 80).

Our first duty, one which we owe to God, to ourselves, and our fellow men, is to obey the laws of God, which include the laws of health (Testimonies for the Church, Vol 3, 164).

It is just as much sin to violate the laws of our being as to break one of the ten commandments, for we cannot do either without breaking God's law (Testimonies for the Church, Vol 2, 70).

The human being who is careless and reckless of the habits and practices that concern his physical life and health, sins against God (Counsels on Diet and Foods, 43).

This is strong language that binds the consciences of the believers to make choices that they believe honor God. Choices to reject putting into their bodies anything they think will defile or hurt them.

Some have no conscientious belief that taking one of these new vaccines is wrong. But many do; and given the Scripture and Ellen G. White testimony above, it is not difficult to see why they feel that way. This belief should be respected without condemnation, and certainly without stripping away rights and privileges that others enjoy.

If something has the potential to cause harm, there should always be the liberty to choose. Have the COVID-19 vaccines been proven to be safe for every type of individual, both short-term and long-term? The very fact that there are injuries related to the vaccine reported by physicians every single day should be enough to give any rational person pause and an opportunity to evaluate whether it is right for them. If an atheist refuses the vaccine for health reasons, should not a believer who values health as a religious concern, not have two legitimate reasons for saying no?

2 – Prophetic Implications

Bible students worldwide have been alarmed as they see the world coming together with a united purpose: to cause as many as possible to receive the COVID-19 vaccines (which are still in clinical trials and have only received emergency use authorization). Some are concerned that compelling these vaccines will become the mark of the beast (it will not). However, others are concerned (me included) that the government overreach and social marketing are preparing the way for a worldwide system that will eventually enforce the beast's mark (more to come on that). Whatever one believes about the above, should not their beliefs be respected and their concerns protected?

From my studies, I have found that Revelation 13 predicts a time when religious freedom will be taken from the world and forced (compelled, coerced, pushed, mandated) worship and obedience to man-made laws will rule the day. God's faithful people who refuse to compromise their beliefs will be persecuted. Critics of the Bible have long mocked Christians for believing that the world would unite over anything and yet we are seeing the stage set for just that. We see the writing on the wall, so to speak.

Jesus has told us to watch and pray. He warned us that the last day deceptions would be extremely tricky and to be on guard. But surprisingly few voices have raised the alarm. I am convinced we are facing the biggest religious liberty threats in our nation's history and that it will only be overshadowed by the greatest one that is surely around the corner.

When the power players of this world join forces through the media, stars, and even religious leaders to oppress a class of people, we must take notice. This "class" of conscientious objectors, who are concerned about this vaccine, have been the subject of the biggest public marketing assault in history. These forces are attempting to force them to go against their sincerely held religious beliefs using shame ("you must not love your neighbor"), greed (the vaccine lotteries and other bribes), fear (constantly pumping the news with COVID fear, but ignoring the dangers of the vaccine), and even outright threats. They have been threatened with travel restrictions, shopping restrictions, school restrictions, job loss, humiliation, and now (I'm appalled to say) church restrictions.

Shall we not protest this movement to force vaccines on unwilling citizens using religious grounds? Even if they thought it was healthy for them, should we not defend their religious right to not participate in a government experiment and overreach? If we praise conscientious objectors who refuse to bear arms because their religious mission is to save lives, not take them, then why do we not stand behind the thousands of medical professionals who are sounding an alarm about the dangers of this vaccine because it is their mission is to save lives, not take them?

God never forces the will or the conscience; but Satan's constant resort—to gain control of those whom he cannot otherwise seduce—is compulsion by cruelty.

Through fear or force he endeavors to rule the conscience and to secure homage to himself. To accomplish this, he works through both religious and secular authorities, moving them to the enforcement of human laws in defiance of the law of God (The Great Controversy, p. 591).

3 – Questionable Ethics

Recent news has informed us about the true origins of the COVID-19 virus. The virus was the fruit of experimental gain of function research and the vaccines contain a replication in our own bodies of this same research. This research should have never been happening, based on the most basic ethical and moral standards. But to think we have allowed governments and corporations, without question or liability, to inject this research into us, should wake all of us up! Anybody striving to have the power of life and death, no matter the excuse, are, just like Satan, trying to be gods.

Two companies – Pfizer and Moderna – experimented on human fetal cells derived from elective abortions in an effort to make these vaccines work. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine actually used the very cell lines derived from this fetal tissue in their vaccine. This has ethical (thus spiritual/religious) implications for many believers.

Not all are agreed on how moral it is to use these cell lines, but please understand that no church or organization, no government or corporation—no human person—is supreme over an individual's conscience. If an individual has a conscientious concern for receiving a vaccine for this reason (or any reason), it should be respected, even if that concern isn't shared by everyone. We might not agree that women should wear a hijab, but we should defend the right of a woman who feels it is her duty to wear one. Religious concerns are, by nature, a matter of the conscience and protected by the First Amendment of the US Constitution and, more importantly, God's free-will-based government.

Conclusion

Martin Luther, the great reformer, once stood before the most powerful government and religious leaders of his day and pronounced these words at the peril of his own life:

Since your most serene majesty and your high mightinesses require from me a clear, simple, and precise answer, I will give you one, and it is this: I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the councils, because it is clear as the day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless therefore I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by the clearest reasoning, unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have quoted, and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the word of God, I cannot and I will not retract, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand, I can do no other; may God help me. Amen.

May God help us, His precious church, to take a stand for liberty and health in these last days of earth's history. When we stand before God's judgment throne, what shall it be said we have done for the cause of liberty? Who do we fear? Is it man or God?

One last question: Whom do we have faith in? Man or God? Perhaps you have recognized that our government and health leaders, however sincere, have, like the councils mentioned by Luther above, “frequently erred and contradicted each other.” Thus I will choose to put my faith in God, not them when it comes to my health choices, which, we have shown, are spiritual choices. And at the end of the day, that is what it is and must remain. A choice.

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