

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

Last week, the California Supreme Court ruled against two physicians who allegedly denied -- based on their religious opposition -- a legal medical treatment to a patient based on her sexual orientation. The decision was issued in a lawsuit filed by a lesbian against doctors in a Vista medical group who refused to artificially inseminate her. Did the ruling ban California citizens from having a moral conscience or did it free them from religious domination by others?

Being a “conscientious objector” has a time honored history here in the United States, usually in reference to service men and women during wartime and their unwillingness for moral reasons to participate in overt military action on the battlefield. We have long respected one’s right to enter the military as a medic or in some other non-combatant capacity. Their roles are no less needed or important than those who willingly enter the battlefield as combatants.

In taking the Hippocratic Oath, physicians in part promise to dedicate themselves to preserving the health and well being of their patients and so it should be. If a patient chooses what amounts to be an elective procedure and their health and well being is not an issue, I believe medical care personnel should be able to be “conscientious objectors”. No health care professional should be compelled by state or federal government to participate in a procedure in which they have moral objections, especially when there exists within the health care field others who are available and willing to do such procedures.

Perhaps the better question to ask is, do we want physicians and health care professional to be slaves of the state or federal government?

REV. PAUL HRUBY
Pastor
Incarnation Church
Glendale

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