

A NOTE ON HOW TO USE THIS PETITION

Clergy Members:

This petition is for use by those with established religious credentials. We provide this document as a place for clergy members (including pastors and chaplains) to indicate their agreement that all those who claim a religious exemption as here described are, under God, rightly entitled to that exemption.

Please sign this petition only if you are a clergy member. After signing the petition, you will be prompted to leave a comment. Please use the comment space to provide your name and information about your qualifications and ordination to Christian ministry.

Laypersons:

Please note, this petition is intended to be signed by clergy members. The document itself and the signatures may be printed out and used by any person under pressure or threat to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

A PREFACE TO RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION FOR MANDATORY COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

Many religious exemptions have been made available online for those who wish to maintain autonomy over their body for whatever reason that accords to their conscience. Some of them, which seek to provide religious exemptions, are very good. Some, without a doubt, twist Scripture. Some go so far as to sell religious exemptions or trade them in exchange for online church membership, which earns our strongest rebuke.

Seeing these tragedies, including both the mandatory violations of bodily autonomy and the simony of sold religious exemptions, many of which are not doctrinally sound, I asked twelve (or so) of the best pastors and theologians I know to begin forwarding me their Biblical reasons for legitimate religious exemptions that do not twist Scripture, but use it appropriately. As the publisher of Gideon Knox Group, I have access to some of the best theologians in the world who happily agreed to send their thoughts, suggestions, and arguments for a Biblical case against forced vaccinations.

I then began to sort through the Scriptural argumentation for bodily autonomy, and have provided the best vaccine religious exemptions we could theologically muster.

Make no mistake about it; every human being is religious (whether that truth is suppressed or not), although not all are Christians. The religious exemption to follow is provided exclusively for evangelical believers of the Protestant religious tradition. I am aware of certain prominent evangelical figures, from Franklin Graham to Robert Jeffress, who have encouraged mandatory vaccinations and stated there is no historical argument for a religious exemption. It is not my job, in this preface, to correct their often-errant theology, and neither do I need to prove historical precedent. We are in unprecedented times.

In collating these religious arguments for bodily autonomy, we leaned heavily upon chapter-and-verse citation of the Holy Scripture, scriptural deduction, Protestant religious tradition, and logic – a gift of General Revelation given by God to all men that show his power and attributes.

In order to use this religious exemption, we ask that you sincerely hold to its Biblical attributes and do so with genuine intentions; it is not designed for the irreligious.

Many arguments can be made for bodily autonomy outside God's Special Revelation (IE the Holy Bible), including those provided by the U.S., state, or other Constitutions.

Furthermore, let me state that **this religious exemption has intentionally been kept short and easy to read for the layman**, presuming that employers with little religious training may place themselves into the position of judge to read it and determine its veracity (Matthew 7:6). It has, therefore, been kept on an elementary level for their benefit, rather than that of those using the religious exemption.

Let me provide one final caveat of rebuke to work management magisteria, human resources tribunals, or employers who seek to turn this exemption into a religious inquisition; **you – as a secular enterprise – are ill-equipped to determine the validity of the contents of this religious exemption.** Neither is it your place to judge the religious sincerity of the one who offers it. It is simply not within our legal tradition to provide a "religious test" to determine the validity or sincerity of religious beliefs.

Ultimately, we believe that the only thing one must really do to use their religious exemption is to say that they have one. Claiming a constitutional right – much like one might do with the 5th Amendment – is enough to use it. Shame on every secular workplace – let me repeat – shame on you – for thinking that the deeply held religious conviction of another person is for you to verify.

Many helped on this religious exemption. Citations will be made where appropriate.

This exemption was written primarily by Pastor Jordan D. Hall of the Fellowship Baptist Church of Sidney, Montana – a church formed in 1980. I was licensed to Gospel Ministry by the Black Rock First Baptist Church of Black Rock, Arkansas in 2000, and the license can be verified by the Lawrence County Courthouse, Book E Page 435. I was ordained to the Gospel Ministry by a presbytery hosted by the Pleasant Grove Missionary Baptist Church in Annieville, Arkansas in 2001 (the head religious figure of that ordination process is still the pastor of this church, and you are free to contact him concerning my credentials) and culminated in the issuing of papered credentials and the 'laying on of hands.' I hold a B.A. in Religious Education from Williams Baptist University in Walnut Ridge Arkansas and an M.A. in History from Arkansas State University. I have been a pastor for 23 years.

Cumulatively, those who have contributed to this religious exemption exceed 600 years in Christian ministry in organized, Biblically-structured churches. Their words should be well-heeded.

Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees – Isaiah 10:1

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A RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION FOR MANDATORY COVID-19 VACCINATION FOR USE IN THE WORKPLACE, GOVERNMENT ENTITIES, THE ARMED SERVICES, OR OTHERS WHO FEEL THEMSELVES POSITIONED TO JUDGE AS EXPERTS THE RELIGIOUS SINCERITY OF OTHERS.

We, the writers of this exemption, ask that all who use it are committed followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, in keeping with the Protestant and Evangelical Christian tradition, who are actively engaged in local congregations and regular private and public worship of Jesus Christ.

A STATEMENT OF RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION

I, _____, hereby declare a religious exemption to mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations based primarily upon my sincerely held religious beliefs. If forced, I will defend these beliefs before your secular magisterium, but do so under protest. Secondly, I declare a religious exemption under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution which reads...

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, **or prohibiting the free exercise thereof**; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; **or the right of the people peaceably to assemble**, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances

ARGUMENT 1: THE BIBLE COMMANDS CHRISTIANS TO UPHOLD OUR GOVERNING JURISDICTIONS

*Let every person be subject to the governing **authorities**. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God (Romans 13:1).*

This word, authorities, in the Greek tongue – the language in which the Bible was inspired, is ἐξουσία.^[1] It means, in English, jurisdictions. All government authorities have jurisdictions, and it is my intention as a Christian to obey them so long as they do not disobey God (Acts 5:29).

Note that the U.S. Constitution is the highest law in the land, and it is our highest governing authority. Not only is this demonstrated by 237 years of American legal precedent, but those in the Executive Branch of government (named so because they are to execute laws, which are passed by legislators), take an oath to uphold the Constitution which reads...

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."^[2]

All in the Executive Branch, military, and even local police take a similar oath. The lesser does not pledge an oath to the greater, but the greater pledges an oath to the lesser.

Bluntly put, President Joe Biden's statements at a press conference on September 9, 2021 do not constitute a law passed by Congress. His orders, yet to be put into writing by his Administration, do not constitute a law passed by Congress. If his order ever comes to fruition in writing (and it has not yet), it will have directly contradicted the United States Constitution, which does not permit the Federal Government to mandate forced drugging of the Citizenry.

By resisting President Biden's orders, we are obeying God. We are submitting to our highest earthly authority (the U.S. Constitution), which is required of us by our highest ultimate authority, the Holy Bible.

Furthermore, President Biden's orders violate the jurisdictional authorities of our three branches of government. Biden's orders prohibit or could potentially prohibit the free exercise of religion (more on that to follow) and our right to peacefully assemble (for example, at our workplace, travel centers, or churches).

Simply put, I deny any Biblical reason one might suggest to obey a tyrannical mandate over established law.

ARGUMENT 2: MY BODY IS A TEMPLE, AND NEITHER THE GOVERNMENT NOR THE WORKPLACE HAVE JURISDICTIONAL AUTHORITY OVER MY BODY.

They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's (Matthew 20:21).

The question to Jesus is clear. Does the government have the right to tax the people? Within limitations, so long as it is not to redistribute that wealth to others (a violation of the 8th Commandment), yes. However, Jesus ordered the people not to render unto Caesar that which belongs to God. Our bodies belong to God.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own...(1 Corinthians 6:19)

The framers of our Constitution recognized that we do not merely have a right to worship which can be confined to a place, but a right to religion (as they phrased it), which is accompanied with us everywhere we go. This is because, as the Scripture above indicates, our bodies belong to God. Because the Holy Spirit dwells in us, our bodies are temples. A temple is merely a word meaning, "Where God dwells."

A robust Theology of the Body indicates that God Almighty is the sovereign King over what happens to our temple. **As the First Amendment indicates, neither the government nor the employer has a right to coerce our bodies to do that which we believe to be contrary to God's will.**

In short, forced vaccinations give the government jurisdictional power over the ecclesia, or church, or temple, which is our body. The Constitution gives the government no such power and, in fact, explicitly bans it from usurping such.

ARGUMENT 3: WE NEED NO EPIDEMIOLOGICAL ARGUMENT AGAINST THE EFFICACY OR USEFULNESS OF THE VACCINE; OUR RELIGIOUS CONSCIENCE IS SUFFICIENT

This religious exemption does not attempt to argue against the usefulness of the COVID-19 vaccine. We merely desire to emphasize the right of the Christian to act in accordance to his conscience.

Some may deny the vaccine because they trust God more than WHO, the CDC, or their employers. The Scripture warns us that what we ingest into our bodies is a matter of conscience.

"But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23).

Some Christians refuse to ingest material sacrificed to idols or demons (1 Corinthians 10:20), which we view to correspond to the atrocities of human abortion. Some vaccines, like the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine[3], use aborted fetal cell lines in testing and manufacturing. Our conscience may forbid this. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, for example, urge the use of other vaccines that do not require murdered children in their production.[4]

I do not make an argument in this exemption that God will heal, by providence or divine miraculous healing, all diseases. I am, however, bound by my conscience that requires that I trust an immutable God more so than the ever-changing "science" of consistently wrong health leaders.

In many religious circles, this is called "soul liberty," which is a hundreds or thousands of years-tradition in the Christian faith that leaves me solely responsible for the actions of my conscience as dictated by God.

ARGUMENT 4: I AM GRAVELY CONCERNED THAT COVID-19 HYSTERIA HAS BECOME A RELIGION

"You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:11)

The religious fervency of COVID-19 hysteria has unsettled me as a Christian. It is of my impression that this health panic has been catastrophized into a health-based religion. Men like Anthony Fauci have been considered as prophets. The CDC and WHO have been considered as sacred as denominations. Politicians have served as priests interceding between clergy and laity ("experts" and the rest of us). This pseudo-religious system promises to heal. Its devotion to certain mitigation efforts – many now proven false – borderline on superstition. Vaccination has become a sacrament. Religious exemptions from competing religions – like mine – have been mocked, overtly speculated, disrespected, and treated with contempt.

I HEREBY REFUSE TO TAKE THE VACCINE ON GROUNDS OF RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION

In no uncertain terms, if I am forced to take the vaccine, I believe that my civil rights will have been violated and my constitutional rights denied. If given the possibility, in the future, I will engage in whatever matter of recourse necessary to redress these grievances with the government and seek damages against my employer for violating my God-given rights.

I humbly ask that that you let me move along in peace and maintain my employment while I maintain responsible health protocols such as common-sense social distancing, consistent hand-washing, and self-quarantining upon the first sign of COVID-like illness, or in the event of being near those testing positive for COVID-19.

I pray for health for the sick. But I will not take part in that which denies my religious liberty or my conscience, as given to me by God.

CITATIONS

[1] Blue Letter Bible, accessed September 22, 2021, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g1849/kjv/tr/0-1/>

[2] Article II of the U.S. Constitution

[3] Cheryl Mercedes, "Does the Johnson & Johnson Vaccine Use Aborted Fetal Cell Lines? ," KHOU-11 News, last modified March 8, 2021, accessed September 22, 2021, <https://www.khou.com/article/news/verify/johnson-and-johnson-aborted-fetal-cells-verify/285-6d4fe5ba-3763-4d4e-ba32-294f3fa39020>

[4] <https://www.usccb.org/prolife>