

Garry Wills on HHS mandate controversy

Tom Roberts | Feb. 16, 2012 NCR Today

The incomparable Garry Wills, in the *New York Review of Books*, on the current flap over religious liberty and contraception.

Here's a taste:

"The bishops' opposition to contraception is not an argument for a 'conscience exemption.' It is a way of imposing Catholic requirements on non-Catholics. This is religious dictatorship, not religious freedom. ...

"The opposition to contraception has, as I said, no scriptural basis. Pope Pius XI once said that it did, citing in his encyclical *Casti Connubii* (1930) the condemnation of Onan for 'spilling his seed' rather than impregnating a woman (Genesis 38.9). But later popes had to back off from this claim, since everyone agrees now that Onan's sin was not carrying out his duty to give his brother an heir (Deuteronomy 25.5-6). Then the 'natural law' was fallen back on, saying that the natural purpose of sex is procreation, and any use of it for other purposes is 'unnatural.' But a primary natural purpose does not of necessity exclude ancillary advantages. The purpose of eating is to sustain life, but that does not make all eating that is not necessary to subsistence 'unnatural.' One can eat, beyond the bare minimum to exist, to express fellowship, as one can have sex, beyond the begetting of a child with each act, to express love."

[Read the entire article here.](#) [1]

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