

***Synopsis:** What happens when a ‘christian’ company wins a SCOTUS case excusing them from providing contraception for female employees but carries century old artifacts out of Iraq?*

What Do Contraceptives And Centuries Old Tablets Have In Common?

Behind the happy facade of Hobby Lobby and the faux Christmas decorations starting to pop throughout the crafts store, lays an often sordid truth. The facts belie the look that his may be Santa’s workshop in training.

[Mart Green](#) is the founder and CEO of one of the country’s largest craft stores. His brother, [Steve Green](#), is President of Hobby Lobby as well as the founder and primary financial backer of the Museum of the Bible. Their sister, Darsee Lett is Hobby Lobby’s Creative Director..

The three call themselves “evangelical Christians.” Hobby Lobby is, by all definition, a ‘closely held’ company.

The big case that got everyone talking was [Sebelius v Hobby Lobby](#). Sebelius wasn’t a crafts person intent on having her way with the glue guns, bare wood bases waiting on custom staining. She was the [U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services](#) when the whole mess began. There was a name change to the case when she stepped down and Sylvia Mathews Burwell became the new U.S. Department Secretary.

Sebelius morphed into Burwell v. Hobby Lobby, but the players, the case and the issue all remained the same.

The question at hand that involved the crafts store was if the Department of Health and Human Services, HHS, violated the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) by forcing closely held businesses to pay for the health coverage of contraception which may violate a businesses’ sincerely held religious beliefs.

The Facts

The “Patient Protection and Affordable Care — “ObamaCare” — required employers with greater than 50 full-time workers to offer a group health plan or pay a healthy fine. As part of the minimum coverage required, preventative care and screenings for women were required. HHS decided that ‘preventive care’ for women would include all approved contraceptive methods including sterilization, patient education and counseling. The mandate also included four drugs which could trigger a spontaneous abortion.

Enter Hobby Lobby

The requirement got under Hobby Lobby’s corporate skin. The company, owned by ‘Christians,’ felt the ruling was against their belief, which includes a ban against abortion. Churches were exempt from the mandate as were other religious groups. HHS didn’t want these groups to have to pay for something that violated their religious convictions and beliefs.

What the ruling didn’t address was the idea of extending the guidelines to businesses.

In a [long and boring summation](#) of the case, America’s Supreme Court ruled to allow companies like Hobby Lobby to be “exempt from the regulation and required its owners” to be excused if there was a less restrictive means of furthering the law’s intent and interest.

Following the landmark SCOTUS decision, David Green, Hobby Lobby’s CEO told reporters he was “thankful for the billion dollar business, but wealth isn’t just about money — it’s about values.”

Someone May Want To Talk To The Green Offspring About Those ‘Values.’

If the siblings had their way, their idea of Christianity and capitalism would have been mashed between the Strip and scrambled eggs at any of the All-You-Can-Eat Buffets in Las Vegas.

A full-on assault to open The Museum of the Bible in “Sin City” was begun with a [six-episode commercial run](#) to sell the city’s Chamber of Commerce on the idea of getting behind the new display.

The series, called “Experience the Book,” aired on Las Vegas television, along with similar spots in Hawaii, Michigan and even Mexico.

Shortly after Hobby Lobby was given the court’s blessings to stick to their “christian values,” the company was forced to return more than 3,800 ancient Iraqi artifacts. The relics appear to be the newest items in the museum’s collection.

In July 2017, the U.S. Attorney’s office for New York’s Eastern District filed a civil complaint against the company. The collection was intended to become the core of the “Museum of the Bible” which opened in Washington in November 2017.

Through a long string of thieves and profiteers, Hobby Lobby was able to get its hands on 4,000-year-old Iraqi artifacts. Steve Green traveled to the UAE to inspect the goodies and approve the purchase of more than \$1.6 million. A dealer’s warning about the looting of the items was ignored. The company falsely labeled the shipping crates as “tile samples”.

The haul included ancient cuneiform tablets and cylinder seals. Many of the items came from the prehistoric city of Irisagrig in the time period known as the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods.

“State Attorneys throughout America have played a very significant part in having U.S. courts recognize the unique value of cultural objects,” said Nicholas Wooldridge, a [prominent Las Vegas attorney](#).

Green, the lead funder of Washington DC’s Museum of the Bible, said his company had made ‘regrettable mistakes’ before adding, “we should have exercised more oversight.”

The Takeaway

“Collectors who don’t pay attention to the artifacts they buy, as in the Hobby Lobby case, are complicit in the circle of spoliation, exploitation and violence perpetuated by the original looters,” said Wooldridge.