

Because eternal vigilance is still the price of liberty, the Church State Council works diligently in courts, legislatures, and through public education to promote your religious freedom.

Legal Services - The Council is a nationally recognized leader in providing legal services to those suffering religious discrimination or harassment and constitutional violations, especially in the workplace.

Legislative - The Council monitors legislation in its five-state southwestern territory – Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada and Utah. You can participate with us as part of our grassroots mobilization.

Education - The Council promotes Liberty magazine, the church's award winning magazine, provides speakers and training for Religious Liberty and Legislative engagement for local churches and actively engages on social media and in traditional media.

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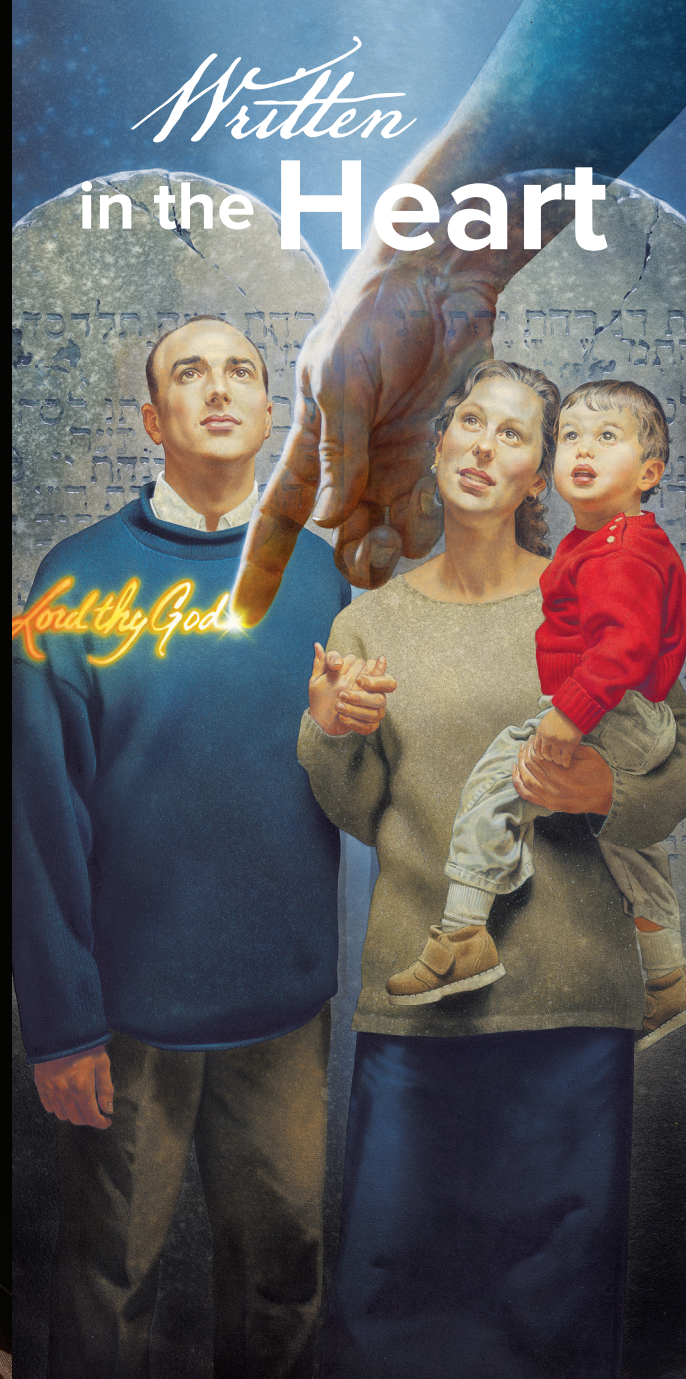
CHURCH STATE COUNCIL

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Roseville and Westlake Village, California
Scottsdale, Arizona | Provo, Utah

www.churchstate.org

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The state cannot change hearts:
only God can.

Written in the Heart

Beliefs Have Consequences

When asked what the British government could do to improve public morals, Harold McMillan replied, "I'm only the prime minister. Go ask the Archbishop." Although America has no archbishop, we still struggle with the difficult question of the role of government and morality. Where do our own beliefs fit in the big picture? Actually, law and morality have always been intertwined. Aristotle understood this concept four centuries before Christ. Our Founding Fathers emphasized the importance of moral citizenship in a democracy. The aphorism "you can't legislate morality" has always been ludicrous. Of course you can, and we do. The question is, whose morality? The American "culture war" is a battle over whose morality will prevail.

Since 9/11, the idea of moral relativism is vacuous. Even a hard-core post-modernist would have to concede that flying airplanes into buildings was evil. Good and evil, we all know, do exist. The hard question is, how do we define them? The toppled twin towers remind us that beliefs do have consequences. There was an ideology behind the terrorism; a definite system of belief.

Our nation is founded on a different belief—the belief that human freedom is a gift from God. Because we are created in the image of God, our individual rights precede our obligation to society as expressed in law and enforced by the state. Government's role is to protect our freedom. This is what our Founding Fathers meant when they affirmed that: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable

rights that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their powers from the consent of the governed."

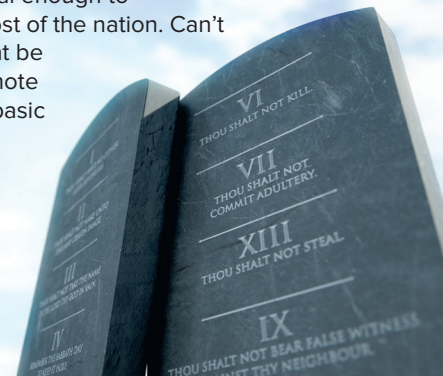
Think about that. The consequences of this belief are enormous. Before the American Revolution, public morality was determined by the church, or by the king. Now, it's up to "we the people." The "culture war" is a witness to the legacy of freedom bequeathed to us by those who conceived of freedom as God's gift to humanity.

*Government's role is to
protect our freedom.*

The 10 Commandments

The battle over public morality is even more intense when religion is involved. What many do not realize is that religious values are invoked on both sides of almost every issue. For example, both sides in the abortion controversy invoke religious values, either about the value of human life, or about a woman's right to choose. Religious values cannot be divorced from political debate, no matter how earnestly people may try.

Today, the cultural battle is not merely over morality, but over religion itself. The display of the Ten Commandments by the state on public property has become a passionate flash point in the culture wars. The Ten Commandments seem harmless enough, general enough to encompass most of the nation. Can't the government be trusted to promote something so basic and universal?



Whose version of the Ten Commandments should the state approve?

Unfortunately, it's not that simple. Public displays of the Ten Commandments typically abridge the Bible. There is profound disagreement among Protestants, Catholics, and Jews about how the Commandments should be numbered and summarized. *Whose version should get the stamp of approval?*

Who Decides What is Truth?

The genius of the First Amendment is that religion belongs to the people, not to the state. We decide what to believe, how to worship, or whether to believe and worship at all. The state has no authority to interfere. We do not subject religion to majority vote. Majorities are no more reliable than kings in deciding whose beliefs are right.

The respectable religions of today were all once persecuted. The Puritans who founded New England were jailed in old England, as were Baptist and Methodist preachers in colonial Virginia. Our Founding Fathers believed that religion was an essential ingredient of a free democratic society. Yet, in order for religion to flourish, they also understood that religion must be voluntary. As John Locke wrote: "I may be cured of some disease by Remedies that I have not faith in; but I cannot be saved by a Religion I distrust, and by Worship that I abhor."

As Americans, we have always insisted on deciding about religion ourselves. We do not need or want the state telling us what to believe about religious matters. Our Constitution deprives the state of authority to take sides when it comes to religion, either to promote or to restrict religion. The state fulfills its duty to religion by protecting religious freedom.

Quick Fix

So ... do the Ten Commandments require government support? Does the Almighty require a helping hand from Uncle Sam?

Many Americans are convinced our nation needs to recognize and obey the Ten Commandments. Many worry about our country's moral collapse and long to see a spiritual and moral revival. Harold McMillan understood this to be a problem for the clergy, not the politicians. The Protestant idea goes one step further in that all believers are priests. We can't pawn off the problem of moral decay on the preachers or politicians: it is our responsibility.

Running to the government to solve our moral ills has proven about as effective as running to a quack to be cured of cancer. Even if the Supreme Court allows for the placing of the Ten Commandments on public property, the public display of God's law anywhere—from court houses to bumper stickers—will not solve America's moral and spiritual crisis.

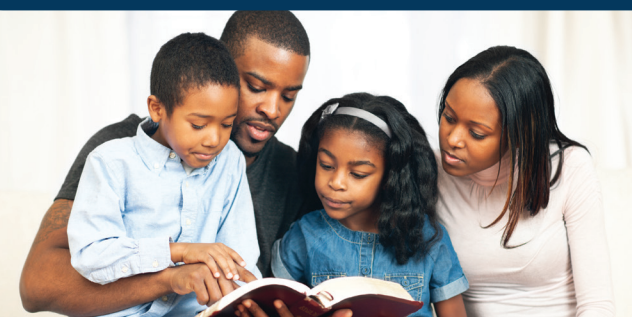
It's human nature to look for the quick fix. In an age of rapidly changing technology, it's the equivalent of a spiritual lunch—at McDonald's.

Ten Commandments Exodus 20:1-17

And God spoke all these words, saying: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. "You shall have no other gods before Me. "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor [b]serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting[c] the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you. "You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

Written in the Heart

The New Testament speaks about a New Covenant with God writing His law in our hearts, the only place it can really bring about the kind of change needed to turn our lives around, and also, our nation. We must experience the life-changing power of God, who alone can reshape our values, attitudes, and behavior. It's an inside job, something the government cannot do. When we understand the New Covenant, we also realize why government must stay out of the religion business. **The state cannot change hearts; only God can.**



We need to experience the law written on our hearts.

Americans battle over whether the state can publicly display the Commandments, yet we have failed to exercise our First Amendment freedoms to publicly display the Commandments ourselves—in our homes, in our businesses, or in other public places. If we lived them more in our lives, maybe there would be less need to place them on walls.

It's embarrassing that American churches have suffered such a spiritual decline that we now look to the state to promote the Ten Commandments. Legislative battles will never solve what is a spiritual problem. We need to experience the law written on our hearts. Until then, the public display of the Ten Commandments, whether constitutional or not, will no more solve our moral dilemma than a picture of a hamburger will fill an empty stomach.

