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The 'Terrible Ten'

are the Ten Commandments 'religious'?

Activists in the United States continue to lobby for an end to the public display of the Ten Commandments. They offended the civil rights of atheists! But why so much opposition to this body of law? Is it indeed 'religious'?

by James McBride

The Ten Commandments, of course, are in the Bible, considered to be a religious 'holy book' (though in reality a practical manual for living) - listed, for example, in Exodus chapter twenty. Most in our western society have heard of them. And perhaps because they are termed "commandments" few obey them!

But just because they are in a so-called religious book, are they merely 'religious'? Can even secular society at large just ignore them? If we are of a faith that doesn't use the Bible should we be any less governed by "the terrible ten"?

Lawless Consequences

Even a superficial look at this concise body of law must stir some measure of agreement - whatever your religious faith or lack of it.

Would you, for example, quarrel with *You shall not steal*? All of us do our best to protect our personal property; we all like 'stuff'. We spend multiple billions on security! If this law were removed from the nation's statute book there would be massive insurrection. And if it were not human nature to *covet* another's possessions or to indulge in 'conspicuous spending', look at the cost savings! So - is this a "religious law"?

Then there's the instruction *Do no murder*. What would your reaction be to the abolition of this law? Is it 'religious'? And what about the commandment that forbids perjury ('*false witness*')? How much more smoothly would our justice system run if nobody lied in court - or received the just Biblical punishment if they did so! Again - is it "religious"?

How many husbands and wives have longed for a strengthening of another of those "obsolete Bible laws": *You shall not commit adultery*? Vast heartache would be saved if wife-swapping, secret trysts, open adultery and all forms of sexual aberration were outlawed - and dealt with. Imagine the huge benefits to society: divorce would

plummet, one-parent children would be rare, lawyers would diminish, billions of pounds be redirected to productive use.

Then there's that law the breaking of which has caused endless heartache: *Honour your father and your mother* with its direct promise that if this instruction were honoured the nation would thrive. Today? The elderly are despised and often abused, plundered, abandoned, murdered - even by their own children!

But what of the *first four* commandments? How do they relate to a secular society?

The Sovereign Creator

These four say: *No gods before the Lord. No images or worship of other gods. No distortion of the divinely-revealed religious practices and form of worship. No violation of the seventh day Sabbath.* Surely this is religion? Only if you don't believe there's a Creator God!

With Him, religion and life - the nitty-gritty of day-to-day affairs - are intertwined. A whole, seamless.

Failing to recognize His sole authority, His sovereignty - as outlined in the first four commands - over every aspect of our being destroys the individual, the family, the nation - and ultimately the world.

Indeed, apart from the Sabbath command all religions in their own way would agree even to these. Each faith is, of course, distinguished by its own day for corporate worship—Islam has Friday, Christianity has Sunday, Judaism and Biblical Christianity worship on the seventh day, Saturday.

Operating Manual

All ten of the Commandments originated when man was first created. They are the basis of the Manufacturer's *Operating Manual*. We were created by God with a specific physical, mental and psychological profile. His Law (Heb

The 'Terrible Ten'

torah = instruction) was the optimum way for us to live.

Look at the destructive effects of the clash between diverse religions within a nation. India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria - and increasingly, our western democracies - are rent by religious disharmony. Unity of belief - if it is God's revealed faith - unifies a nation. (Wherever a false religion is imposed on a nation it tends to become totalitarian and intolerant.)

God's Law is not "religious"! In reality there's no conflict whatsoever between law and true religion. Yet our nation's leaders show a strong distaste for it. And perhaps surprisingly many of our religious leaders are intent on doing away with the divine Law! So - no religious bias in any of these laws. Just plain common sense. Just sound regulation of human society.

Indeed that's what *The Ten* are. These Laws were imparted to humanity at our very beginnings. Observe them and we will live in peaceful harmony. Transgress them and we get hurt, because we are designed to function best as we live within them.

Plan B

Adam - mankind - chose a different path. Before long he began to walk his own way - a downward path that we have, with few exceptions, ever since followed. With disastrous results. Happily, our merciful Creator has a well-prepared 'Plan B'

God foresaw human unwillingness to follow the Manual. The 'egg was scrambled' and could not be restored by human ingenuity! Only a divine plan could reconcile us to our Creator.

Why on earth, then, are these practical laws - perfectly designed to regulate society - so opposed? Are atheists immune to burglary, muggings, murder, divorce?

The End of Civilization

Today we face the end of human civilization. Man has ignored the Manual and despised the Maker. The "machine" is disintegrating and is ready for the scrap-heap. Until the United Nations, Al' Qaeda, the IRA, other terrorist factions, our various national governments, our local councils, our families base regulate our lives by the Ten Commandments society will continue to decay - and will increasingly experience serious consequences.

Already the decay of our civilization is apparent to all in our overflowing prisons, feral youth, dysfunctional families, soaring incidence of STDs including HIV/AIDS—now almost pandemic.

A Personal Response

And until you personally base your life on this Law you will continue to suffer all that life throws at you. For the Ten Commandments define sin - again, not in truth a "religious" word!

Sin is the transgression of what the apostle Paul called "*the holy and just and good*" Law of God (Romans 7:12). But sin simply refers to all that's wrong with individuals and society. Ignore God's Law, destroy it or disobey it - the end result is the same - death. Death for every society, every culture, and for you.

Society will prosper, but only under the coming worldwide reign of Jesus Christ. *But not until then.*

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