

Letter to Editor, Contra Costa Times

March 12, 2005

By Burt Bogardus

The following letter was printed with a few modifications in the Contra Costa Times "Saturday Forum" of Saturday, March 12, 2005. The question posed was "Does displaying the Ten Commandments in a public building violate the principle of separation of church and state?"

Religious Right leaders have bamboozled their very gullible followers into believing that the Ten Commandments form the foundation of America's legal system.

This preposterous claim would be instantly dismissed by anyone who actually opened his Bible and read Exodus, Chapter 20.

Only three are in any way relevant to modern American law: The sixth (don't kill), the eighth (don't steal) and the ninth (don't lie). Furthermore, the ancient Hebrews were hardly the first society in history to recognize the wisdom of proscribing murder, theft and perjury.

Seven of the ten are merely moral or religious guidelines: Don't follow other gods, don't make idols, don't insult God, respect the Sabbath, honor your parents, don't commit adultery, don't envy your neighbor. Seventy percent of the Decalogue is irrelevant to our current legal system!

Why are there no commandments condemning wars of aggression? Genocide? Slavery? Torture? False imprisonment? Abuse of women? Child abuse? Aren't these more important than coveting thy neighbor's ox or ass?

The Decalogue, crosses, menorahs and other religious symbols have no place on tax-supported public property, and should be immediately removed.

Burt Bogardus