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Ten Commandments Monuments Tied to 1956 Film

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This summer, the U-S Supreme Court is expected to rule on two cases involving the public display of the biblical Ten Commandments.

Christians, Jews, and Muslims believe that God gave Moses ten rules of behavior for mankind. Sometimes called the Decalogue, the commandments have been recorded and reprinted millions of times.

But ever since God's laws showed up in U.S. public buildings, passions have been stirred, as they were in 2003, when an Alabama judge refused to move a granite Decalogue from the rotunda of the state courthouse. The monument was removed -- and so was he, from his judgeship -- for his actions.

The current cases involve a Ten Commandments monument at the Texas State Capitol, and framed copies in two Kentucky courthouses. The Supreme Court has been asked to decide whether these displays violate the Constitutional separation of church and state.

And here's a fascinating footnote: Granite monuments to the Decalogue -- including the one in Texas -- date to 1951. That's when a Minnesota judge asked a defendant if he realized he'd broken the Ten Commandments. The young man said he had never heard of them.

Hollywood director Cecil B. DeMille learned of this and saw it as the perfect opportunity to boost his new movie, which just happened to be an epic version of The Ten Commandments story. DeMille and a fraternal group called [the Eagles](#) paid to install a couple hundred Decalogue tablets in important public spaces across America.

And DeMille sent the movie's star, Charlton Heston, around the country to promote the monuments and the film. Heston's character, fittingly, was . . . the prophet Moses.

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