

June 25, 2024

A story trending in the headlines is proving Newton's third law of motion. Newton said that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. The action was last week's passage in Louisiana of HB 71, a law mandating the posting of the Ten Commandments in state-funded classrooms. The headlines this week are dominated by the opposition to this law.

On June 21 the Jewish newsletter Forward carried the article, "I'm a Louisiana Jew. The Ten Commandments Get Lost in Translation in the New Law." The author supports the teaching of the Ten Commandments, just not by public schools. His children receive their instruction at a private Jewish school. The author also has a complaint against the text of the Decalogue contained in HB 71: "In codifying a version of the Ten Commandments that is not from the Hebrew Bible, nor any recognized Christian translation, Louisiana lawmakers are haphazardly translating, to say the least, divine intent."

MSNBC contains many examples of HB 71's opposition. On June 21 MSNBC ran the op-ed, "Louisiana's New Mandate Is the First Step in a Sinister Vision for the Country." The author, an assistant professor from the University of Kansas, reminds his readers that in 1980 the Supreme Court declared such displays unconstitutional. The author asks, "How will atheist, agnostic or Hindu students interpret a state-mandated display that says, 'I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have no other gods before me?'" The author predicts these groups will perceive hostility towards their kind.

The Associated Press ran "Lawsuit Challenges New Louisiana Law Requiring Classrooms to Display the Ten Commandments" on June 24<sup>th</sup>. The article cites the comments of two different sets of plaintiff parents and their lawyers. The lawyers predict a ruling in their favor. Asked about a possible appeal by Louisiana officials to the Supreme Court, the plaintiffs' lawyers said, "We think this is already covered by clear Supreme Court precedent. We think under current law that we will prevail." The article concludes with the observation that the judge hearing the case against HB 71 was nominated to the bench by former President Obama.

More than abolishing the Decalogue was on the minds of people during Jesus' earthly ministry. In response to erasing the Old Testament, Jesus told his followers, "'Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt 5:17). Jesus expressed these precepts' timeless value two verses later, "Anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (v.19). Then Jesus took the Ten Commandments and made them even more stringent: "Long ago the people were told, 'Don't murder, and anyone who murders will be condemned.' I tell you . . . whoever calls someone a fool is in danger of hell" (Matt 5:21-

22). Jesus also taught that a lustful look, not just a completed act, was adultery (Matt 5:28). Newton's third law was operational in Jesus' day too. The pushback against Jesus' teaching is what took him to the Cross.

Regardless of the outcome of these cases against HB 71, let us all pray for the day when it will not take legislation to get people to follow God's precepts.