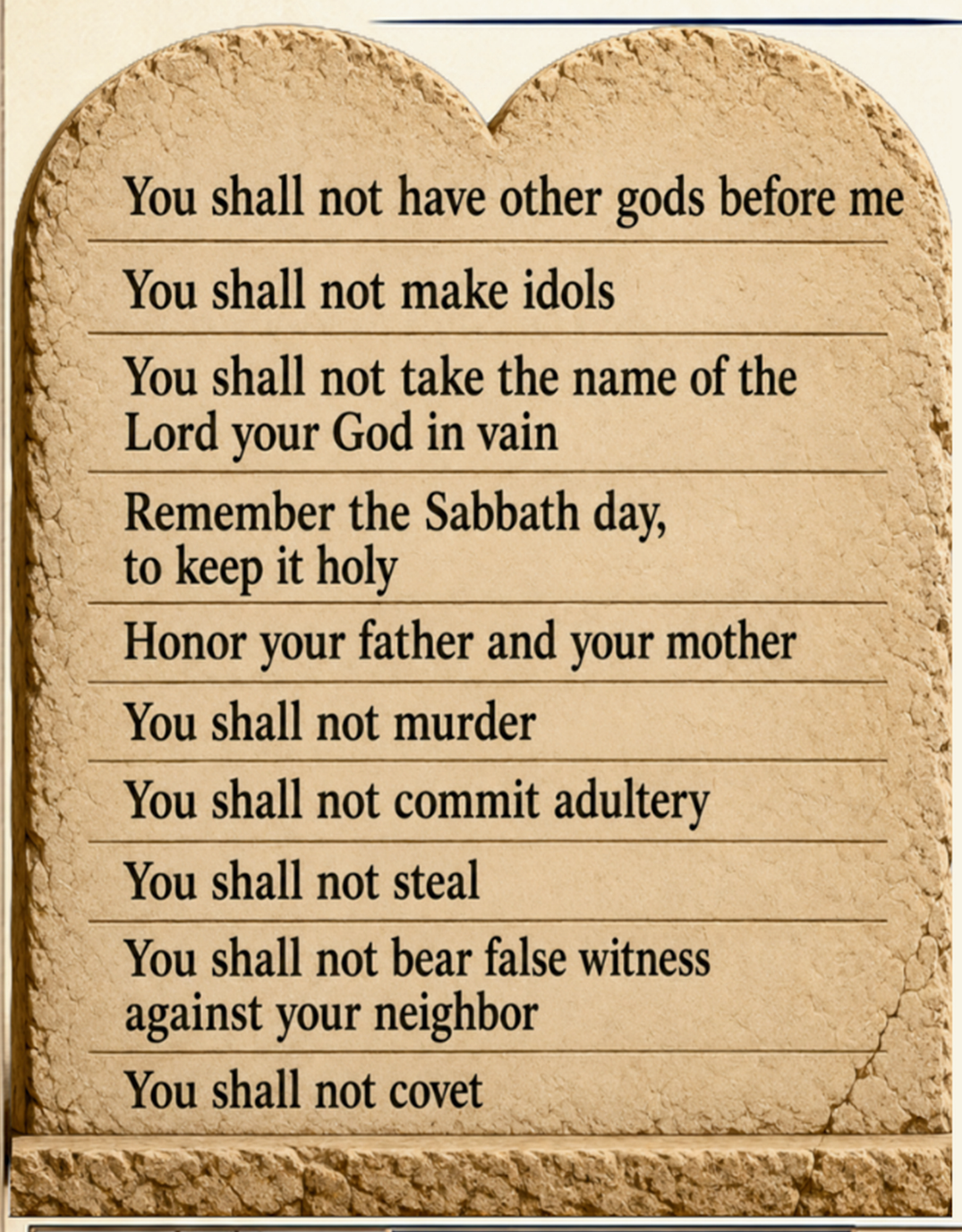
Historical Truths:
The Ten Commandments and America's Founding Documents



The Ten Commandments are a key part of the Judeo-Christian religious and moral tradition that shaped Western Civilization and ultimately the founding of the United States. There are many versions of the Ten Commandments. The one that follows is a common translation but not the only translation.

In 1813, future U.S. President John Quincy Adams wrote in a letter to his son that, "The Law given from Sinai" – in other words, the Ten Commandments – "was a civil and municipal as well as a moral and religious Code." He noted that many of its provisions "were of universal applications – Laws essential to the existence of men in Society, and most of which have been enacted by every Nation which ever possessed any Code of Law."

The Alabama Constitution provides that "no religion shall be established by law," and the State of Alabama specifically respects the rights of its public school students to be free from state-established religion. Recognizing that personal choice about matters of faith are left to students and their families, the purpose of this poster is simply to acknowledge the historical role of the Ten Commandments, and the broader Judeo-Christian tradition, in shaping American civil society.



The Mayflower Compact of 1620

The Mayflower Compact of 1620, America's first written constitution, contained a "covenant with 'Almighty God'" by pilgrims to America to "form a civil body politic."



The Northwest Ordinance of 1787

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 "extended the fundamental principles of civil and religious liberty" to the western territories becoming states and provided that "[r]eligion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."



The Declaration of Independence (1776)

The Declaration of Independence (1776) described all men as being "created equal" and acknowledged that they are "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights."



The United States Constitution (1787)

The Declaration of Independence (1776) described all men as being "created equal" and acknowledged that they are "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights."



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