In *Capitol Square Review Bd. v. Pinette*,[237] the Court distinguished privately sponsored from governmentally sponsored religious displays on public property. There the Court ruled that Ohio violated free speech rights by refusing to allow the Ku Klux Klan to display an unattended cross in a publicly owned plaza outside the Ohio Statehouse. Because the plaza was a public forum in which the state had allowed a broad range of speakers and a variety of unattended displays, the state could regulate the expressive content of such speeches and displays only if the restriction was necessary, and narrowly drawn, to serve a compelling state interest. The Court recognized that compliance with the Establishment Clause can be a sufficiently compelling reason to justify content-based restrictions on speech, but saw no need to apply this principle when permission to display a religious symbol is granted through the same procedures, and on the same terms, required of other private groups seeking to convey non-religious messages.

Displays of the Ten Commandments on government property occasioned two decisions in 2005. As in *Allegheny County*, a closely divided Court determined that one display violated the Establishment Clause and one did not. And again, context and imputed purpose made the difference. The Court struck down display of the Ten Commandments in courthouses in two Kentucky counties,[238] but held that a display on the grounds of the Texas State Capitol was permissible.[239] The displays in the Kentucky courthouses originally "stood alone, not part of an arguably secular display."[240] Moreover, the history of the displays revealed "a predominantly religious purpose" that had not been eliminated by steps taken to give the appearance of secular objectives.[241]

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[237] 515 U.S. 753 (1995). The Court was divided 7–2 on the merits of *Pinette*, a vote that obscured continuing disagreement over analytical approach. The portions of Justice Scalia's opinion that formed the opinion of the Court were joined by Chief Justice Rehnquist and by Justices O'Connor, Kennedy, Souter, Thomas, and Breyer. A separate part of Justice Scalia's opinion, joined only by the Chief Justice and by Justices Kennedy and Thomas, disputed the assertions of Justices O'Connor, Souter, and Breyer that the "endorsement" test should be applied. Dissenting Justice Stevens thought that allowing the display on the Capitol grounds did carry "a clear image of endorsement" (id. at 811), and Justice Ginsburg's brief opinion seemingly agreed with that conclusion.

[238] McCreary County v. ACLU of Kentucky, 545 U.S. 844 (2005).

[239] Van Orden v. Perry, 545 U.S. 677 (2005).

[240] 545 U.S. at 868. The Court in its previous Ten Commandments case, Stone v. Graham, 449 U.S. 39, 41 (1980) (invalidating display in public school classrooms) had concluded that the Ten Commandments are "undeniably a sacred text," and the 2005 Court accepted that characterization. *McCreary*, 545 U.S. at 859.

[241] 545 U.S. at 881. An "indisputable" religious purpose was evident in the resolutions authorizing a second display, and the Court characterized statements of purpose accompanying authorization of the third displays as "only . . . a litigating position." 545 U.S. at 870, 871.