

*The Ten Commandments*  
*Exodus 19 & 20*  
*The Second Commandment*

**Family Talk:**  
**The Lord Will Not Hold Him Innocent**

by the Rev. Peter M. Buss

Why do the Ten Commandments contain only one severe warning like this: We are not to kill, or steal, or commit adultery, or lie; but “the Lord will not hold him innocent that takes His name in vain”?

Taking the Lord’s name in vain means using His names in angry, or violent, or even dirty speech. The Lord’s names are (among others) Jehovah, God, the Lord, Jesus, and Christ. They should be used in speaking about the Lord, in worshipping Him, and in praising Him. To use them in common speaking such as a swear word, or to express surprise, or anger, is to take His name in vain.

It is so common, isn’t it? People do it all the time. We find that there are people in the world who can’t talk without using the Lord’s names as swear words. Even religious people do it, and (sadly) some members of our own church may have done it. It happens so often that people tend to think it is a bad habit. It’s like smoking, or biting your nails—perhaps a bit worse. But everyone does it, so it’s not all that evil.

The Lord doesn’t say that. He said,

“You shall not take the name of the Lord Your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him innocent that takes His name in vain.”

In saying this, He ranks profanity—the abuse of the Lord’s names—as one of the most serious evils.

It is not just a bad habit. Perhaps with a very few people outside of the church, who have been brought up to think nothing of it and don’t know better, it could be a bad habit. But with most people, it is worse than that. Let us think of the fact that people take the Lord’s name in vain in front of religious people. This is not the way they behave normally. A person would not insult a friend’s wife, or mother, or father. He would know that is improper behavior. But he will insult that person’s God freely, without worrying how he feels. Why? Is that just a bad habit? Does he just do by habit what he knows offends the people who are listening?

It is a silly way to talk. To insult the Lord is childish. The Lord Himself isn't hurt by it, and people who put the Lord's names into their sentences all the time sound stupid, if you stop to listen to them. They think it makes them big, somehow – it is as if they are saying, "See how big I am, I can insult God." That is a stupid way to behave, yet people who are normally sensible and not stupid, do this all the time. Why?

If New Church people do this, it means they ignore the most holy teachings they have. They have been taught from childhood to think of the Lord in a holy way, and now they are "insulting" Him every time they speak His name in vain. How did they start? Did they just slip into a bad habit? Hardly. You don't start something so different out of a bad habit.

What we *must* realize is that every time – every time a person takes the Lord's name in vain, hell loves it, and gives that person a delight in doing it. This is the reason it is so common – not because of a bad habit, not because of people not knowing better – but because hell loves us to insult the Lord, and gives us a delight in it. This is why normally thoughtful people offend their friends in this way when they would never do it in any other way. This is why normally intelligent people try to "act big" and succeed in looking stupid by taking the Lord's name in vain. They do it because the hells love it – and the hells make them insensitive, and the hells make them feel big.

Let us start, therefore, by seeing this evil in its proper light. It is not a bad habit, or a "thing big people do." It is an evil, forbidden by the Lord, which the hells love us to do.