

You Shall Not Take the Name of Jehovah Your God in Vain.... (Love What is from God.¹)

The Second Commandment

- from -

Secrets of Heaven

Emanuel Swedenborg

SH 8882. *You shall not take the name of Jehovah your God in vain.* That this signifies profanations and blasphemings of the truth and good of faith, is evident from the signification of "the name of God," as being all in the complex by which the Lord is worshipped, thus all the truth and good of faith (see n. 2724, 3006, 6674); and from the signification of "taking in vain," as being to profane and blaspheme. By "taking the name of God in vain" is properly signified to turn truth into evil, that is, to believe that it is truth, and nevertheless to live in evil; and it also denotes to turn good into falsity, that is, to live holily, and yet not to believe. Both are profanation (n. 4601), for believing is of the understanding, and living is of the will; and therefore in those who believe otherwise than they live, the thought and will are divided. But as the will continually flows into the understanding, for the understanding is the form of the will; that is, the will manifests itself there in light; therefore it is that when a person believes in one way and lives in another, truth and evil, or good and falsity, are conjoined; thus the things that are of heaven with a person are conjoined with those which are of hell. This conjunction cannot be dissolved, and thereby the person be healed, except by a pulling asunder which carries away with it everything of spiritual life; and therefore these persons are sent into a hell the most grievous of all, where they are direfully tormented. [2] This is what is meant by the words of the Lord in Matthew:

All sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men; but the blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven to men. If any one shall say a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but he who shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age, nor in that which is to come (xi. 31, 32).

Also by these words in Luke:

When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, I will return into my house whence I came out. And if on coming he finds it swept and garnished, he goes away and takes seven other spirits worse than himself: and they

¹ Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christianity* 330

enter in and dwell there; and the man's last things become worse than the first (xi. 24-26).

[3] By these words is described the profanation of truth from the Lord; by "the unclean spirit when he goes out" is meant the acknowledgment and faith of truth; by "the house swept" is meant a life contrary to truths; by "his return with seven other spirits" is meant a state of profanation. These are the things which are signified by "taking the name of God in vain." That such a state with a person cannot be healed, thus cannot be forgiven, is signified also by the words which immediately follow, namely, "Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain," by which is meant that it cannot be forgiven. (For further information about the nature of profanation, and who are guilty of it, see n. 593, 1003, 1008, 1010, 1059, 1327, 1328, 2051, 2426, 3398, 3399, 3402, 3489, 6348, 6595, 6959, 6963, 6971, 8394.) [4] By "taking the name of God in vain" is also signified blasphemy, which takes place when those things which are of the Word, or of the doctrine of faith, thus which are holy, are held in derision, and are debased to unclean earthly things, and thus are defiled (see n. 4050, 5390). But by "taking the name of God in vain," relatively to the Israelite nation, which did not acknowledge any good and truth of faith (which are signified by "the name of God"), is meant the applying of the name of Jehovah, and also of the commandments and statutes which were commanded them, to the worship of idols, as they did in the wilderness to the worship of the golden calf, to which they not only offered burnt offerings and sacrifices, and ate of the things sanctified thereby, but also called the day of its celebration "a feast to Jehovah," as we read in Moses:

Aaron made of the gold a molten calf, and they said, These be your gods, Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it, and made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to Jehovah. And therefore they rose up in the morning of the next day, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought things eucharistic (Exod. xxxii. 4-6).

[5] That those who thus took the name of Jehovah God in vain could not be forgiven, which is signified by their "not being held guiltless," is evident from the words of Jehovah to Moses at that time concerning them, namely:

Him that has sinned against Me, I will blot out of My book. Nevertheless go, lead this people in to the place of which I have spoken to you; but in the day of My visitation I will visit their sin upon them (verses 33 and 34).

SH 8883. *For Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain.* That this signifies that these things cannot be forgiven, is evident from what has been unfolded just above (n. 8882).

You Shall Not Profane the Name of God. (Love What is from God.²)

The Second Commandment

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The Apocalypse Explained

Emanuel Swedenborg

AE 959:2-4. In the preceding chapter the first commandment of the Decalogue is treated of at the end of the several articles. In the following articles in this chapter the other commandments of the Decalogue will be treated of; and here the second commandment, "You shall not profane the name of God."

In the first place, what is meant by "the name of God" shall be told, and afterwards what is meant by "profaning" it. "The name of God" means every quality by which God is worshipped. For God is in His own quality, and is His own quality. His essence is the Divine love, and His quality is the Divine truth therefrom united with the Divine good; thus with us on earth it is the Word; consequently it is said in John:

The Word was with God, and God was the Word (i. 1).

Thence also, it is the doctrine of genuine truth and good from the Word; for worship is according to that. [3] Now as His quality is manifold, for it comprises all things that are from Him, so He has many names; and each name involves and expresses His quality in general and in particular. He is called "Jehovah," "Jehovah of Hosts," "Lord," "Lord Jehovih," "God," "Messiah or Christ," "Jesus," "Savior," "Redeemer," "Creator," "Former," "Maker," "King," and "the Holy One of Israel," "the Rock" and "the Stone of Israel," "Shiloh," "Shaddai," "David," "Prophet," "Son of God," and "Son of man," and so on. All these names are the names of the one God, who is the Lord; and yet where they occur in the Word they signify some universal Divine attribute or quality distinct from the other Divine attributes or qualities. So, too, where He is called "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," three are not meant, but one God; that is, there are not three Divines, but one, and this trine which is one is the Lord. [4] Since each name signifies some distinct attribute or quality, "to profane the name of God" does not mean to profane the name itself but His quality. "Name" signifies quality for the reason that in heaven every one is named according to his quality; and the quality of God or the Lord is everything that is from Him by which He is worshipped. For this reason, since no Divine quality of the Lord is acknowledged in hell, the Lord cannot be named there; and in the spiritual world His names cannot be uttered by any one except so far as His Divine is acknowledged; for there all speak from the heart, thus from love and consequent acknowledgment.

² Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christianity* 330

AE 960:14, 15. Since “the name of God” means that which is from God and which is God, and this is called the Divine truth, and with us the Word, this must not be profaned, because it is in itself Divine and most holy; and it is profaned when its holiness is denied, which is done when it is despised, rejected, and treated contemptuously. When this is done heaven is closed and a person is left to hell. For the Word is the only medium of conjunction of heaven with the church; therefore when the Word is cast out of the heart that conjunction is dissolved; and because the person is then left to hell he no longer acknowledges any truth of the church. [15] There are two things by which heaven is closed to the people of the church. One is the denial of the Lord’s Divine, and the other is the denial of the holiness of the Word; and for this reason that the Lord’s Divine is the all of heaven, and the Divine truth, which is the Word in the spiritual sense, is what makes heaven; which makes clear that he who denies the one or the other denies that which is the all of heaven, and from which heaven is and exists, and thus deprives himself of communication and thence of conjunction with heaven. To profane the Word is the same as “blaspheming the Holy Spirit,” which is not forgiven to any one, consequently it is said in this commandment that he who profanes the name of God shall not be left unpunished.

AE 962:11. As the Divine truth or the Word is meant by “the name of God,” and the profanation of it means a denial of its holiness, and thus contempt, rejection, and blasphemy, it follows that the name of God is interiorly profaned by a life contrary to the commandments of the Decalogue. For there is profanation that is interior and not exterior, and there is profanation that is interior and at the same time exterior, and there can be also a kind of profanation that is exterior and not at the same time interior. Interior profanation is produced by the life, exterior by the speech. Interior profanation, which is produced by the life, becomes exterior also, or of the speech, after death. For then every one thinks and wills, and so far as it can be permitted, speaks and acts, according to his life; thus not as he did in the world. In the world, for the world’s sake and to gain reputation, a person is wont to speak and act otherwise than as he thinks and wills from his life. This is why it has been said that there is profanation that is interior and not at the same time exterior. There can also be a kind of profanation that is exterior and not at the same time interior. It can come from the style of the Word, which is not at all the style of the world, and for this reason it may be to some extent despised from ignorance of its interior sanctity.

AE 963:2. He who abstains from profaning the name of God, that is, the holiness of the Word, by contempt, rejection, or any blasphemy, has religion; and such as his abstinence is such is his religion. For no one has religion except from revelation, and with us revelation is the Word. Abstinence from profaning the holiness of the Word must be from the heart, and not merely from the mouth. Those who abstain from the heart live from religion; but those who abstain merely from the mouth do not live from religion, for they abstain either for the sake of self or for the sake of the world, in that the Word can be made to serve them as a means of acquiring honor and gain; or they abstain from some fear. But of these many are hypocrites who have no religion.

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True Christianity

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*You are not to take the name of Jehovah your God
in vain, because Jehovah will not hold guiltless
someone who takes His name in vain.*

TC 297. In its *earthly meaning*, which is the literal meaning, taking the name of Jehovah God in vain includes abusing his name in various types of talking, especially in lies and deceptions, in swearing and oath—taking for no reason or to avoid blame; and using his name with evil intent, which is cursing, or in sorcery and magic spells.

To swear by God or by his holiness, by the Word or by the Gospel during coronations, inaugurations into the priesthood, and confirmations of faith is not taking God's name in vain, unless the people who take the oath later reject their promises as impossible or pointless.

Furthermore, because it is holiness itself, the name of God is used constantly in the sacred activities of the church, such as in prayers, hymns, and all aspects of worship, as well as in sermons and books on church-related topics. The reason is that God is in every aspect of religion. When he is ritually called forth by his name, he is present and hears. In these activities the name of God is kept holy.

The name of Jehovah God is intrinsically holy, as you can see by the fact that after their earliest times the Jews did not dare, nor do they now dare, to say the name Jehovah. Out of respect for the Jews, the Gospel writers and apostles did not want to say the name either. Instead of "Jehovah" they said "the Lord," as you can see from passages from the Old Testament that are quoted in the New Testament but use "the Lord" instead of "Jehovah," such as Matthew 22:37 and Luke 10:27 that quote Deuteronomy 6:5, and so on.

The name of Jesus is also holy, as people generally know because the apostle said that at that name knees bend and should bend in heaven and on earth [Philippians 2:10]. For another thing, no devil in hell can pronounce the name Jesus.

There are many names for God that are not to be taken in vain: Jehovah, Jehovah God, Jehovah Sabaoth, the Holy One of Israel, Jesus, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

³ Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christianity* 330

TC 298. In the *spiritual meaning*, the name of God stands for everything that the church teaches on the basis of the Word—everything through which the Lord is called on and worshiped. Taken together, all these are names for God. Taking God's name in vain, then, means misusing any of these things for idle chatter, lies, deceptions, curses, sorcery, or magic spells. This too is abusing and blaspheming God, and therefore his name.

From the following passages you can see that the Word and anything from it that is used in the church or in any worship is God's name:

From the rising of the sun my name will be invoked. (Isaiah 41:25)

From the rising of the sun to the setting of it, great is my name among the nations. In every place incense is offered to my name. But you desecrate my name when you say, "Jehovah's table is defiled." And you sneeze at my name when you bring offerings that are stolen, lame, and sick. (Malachi 1:11, 12, 13)

All peoples walk in the name of their God; we walk in the name of Jehovah our God. (Micah 4:5)

They are to worship Jehovah in one place, the place where he will put his name (Deuteronomy 12:5, 11, 13, 14, 18; 16:2, 6, 11, 15, 16),

that is, where Jehovah will locate their worship of him.

Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20)

As many as received him, he gave them power to be children of God, if they believed in his name. (John 1:12)

Those who do not believe have already been judged because they have not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)

Those who believe will have life in his name. (John 20:31)

Jesus said, "I have revealed your name to people and have made your name known to them." (John 17:26)

The Lord said, "You have a few names in Sardis." (Revelation 3:4)

There are also many passages similar to these in which the name of God means the divine quality which radiates from God and through which he is worshiped.

The name of Jesus Christ, however, means everything related to his redeeming humankind and everything related to his teaching, and therefore everything through which he saves. "Jesus" means all his efforts to save the human race through redemption; "Christ" means all his efforts to save the human race through teaching.

TC 299. In the *heavenly meaning*, taking the Lord's name in vain parallels what the Lord said to the Pharisees:

All sin and blasphemy is forgiven people, but blasphemy of the Spirit is not forgiven. (Matthew 12:31, 32)

“Blasphemy of the Spirit” means blasphemy against the divinity of the Lord’s human manifestation and against the holiness of the Word.

In the highest or heavenly meaning, the “name of Jehovah God” stands for the Lord’s divine-human manifestation, as the following passages make clear:

Jesus said, “*Father, glorify your name.*” And a voice came out of heaven that said, “I both have glorified it and will glorify it again.” (John 12:27, 28)

Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, so that the Father is glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it. (John 14:13, 14)

In the heavenly sense the phrase in the Lord’s prayer “Your name must be kept holy” [Matthew 6:9] has the same meaning, as does the word “name” in Exodus 23:21 and Isaiah 63:16.

Since Matthew 12:31 and 32 says that “blasphemy of the Spirit” is not forgiven us, and this is what the heavenly meaning refers to, for this reason the following phrase is added to this commandment: “because Jehovah will not hold guiltless someone who takes his name in vain.”

TC 300. The nature of names in the spiritual world makes it clear that someone’s “name” does not mean her or his name alone but also her or his full nature. In that world, people all stop using the names they were given in baptism in this world and the names they received from their parents or their family. All there are named for what they are like. Angels get a name that indicates the moral and spiritual life they have. In fact, the Lord was referring to angels in the following passage:

Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. The sheep hear the shepherd’s voice and he calls his sheep by name and leads them out.” (John 10:3, 11)

The same holds true in the following passage:

I have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their clothes. Upon the person who conquers I will write the name of the city New Jerusalem and my new name. (Revelation 3:4, 12)

“Gabriel” and “Michael” are not the names of two people in heaven—these names mean all the angels in heaven who have wisdom about the Lord and who worship him. The names of people and places in the Word do not mean people and places either; they mean aspects of the church.

Even in our world a “name” means more than just a name—it also means what someone is like. People’s natures get attached to their names. We often say, “They’re doing it for their name” or “to make a name for themselves.” “Those are big names” means that those people are famous for characteristics they possess, such as creativity, scholarship, achievements, or the like.

It is common knowledge that people who insult or libel other people's names are in fact insulting or libeling the actions of the other people's lives. The two are conceptually linked. Such attacks ruin the reputation of people's names. Likewise, someone who says the name of a monarch, a duke, or a great person with disrespect also dishonors the person's majesty and dignity. It is equally true that someone who mentions anyone's name with a tone of contempt also disparages the deeds of that person's life applies to everyone. Every country has laws that forbid us to abuse, attack, or insult anyone's name (meaning anyone's nature and reputation).