



ARE COWS REALLY HOLY?

We love to express—with vigor, but when we exclaim “Holy Cow!” at any news or event—we demean what is Holy and that is “He Who Sits on the Throne.” There is none Holy, but our Lord and God. To make other things Holy by our proclamation, makes Him less Holy in our evaluation of things called Holy. We must re-evaluate our use of “God,” “OMG,” “Lordie,” “Oh my Goodness,” and so on, in order that those expressions and attributes of our Father—be shelved for worship or petition only. Careless use of these common diluted curses by Christians will dull our own spiritual sensitivity and will weaken our Christian testimony.

A visiting minister was asked to lead in prayer in Sunday School. When he had finished, a teacher heard someone in the class whisper, "Gosh, what a prayer!" The remark seems out of place when talking about a prayer to our Holy God. However, if you think about it, you will realize that "gosh" is not an appropriate word for a Christian to say on any occasion. When we look into the original meaning of this and other words, we may be surprised that even Christians are habitual users of expressions that the dictionary terms "euphemisms." A euphemism is used to substitute an inoffensive expression for one that may offend.

A commonly used word is "gee." In *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* it is given this definition, "A euphemism for Jesus." A few other frequently used words and their definitions are these: "Heck," which is a substitute for Hell; "Gosh" is a substitute for God, used as a mild oath. "Darn and darned" are used as substitutes for "damn and damned." Christians who allow their lips to utter "gosh darned" quite freely, would be shocked if they realized the real meaning of the words. "Doggoned" seems mild and harmless, but it also is another euphemism for the same thing.

A minister who is now a professor in a seminary was not allowed to use "goodness," "mercy," or "gracious" as exclamations when he was a child. He thought at the time that the restrictions were

because his parents were a little old-fashioned, but now he can see that it had a sound scriptural basis, found in the Ten Commandments. Exodus 20:7 reads "*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*" This would include the holy and reverent use of God's name, titles, and attributes. Certainly goodness, mercy, and graciousness are attributes of God.

The use of diluted curses is contrary to the spirit of the New Testament teaching. For example, our Lord Jesus said, "*But I say unto you, Swear not at all . . . But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil*" (Matthew 5:34-37). The phrase, "*Whatsoever is more than these*" suggests the use of an expletive, which is defined as "something added as a filling; a word or phrase inserted to fill a vacancy; one that is obscene or profane."

James, in writing his epistle, repeats almost exactly the words of Christ quoted above, but adds the warning, ". . . *lest ye fall into condemnation*" (James 5:12). That last word recalls our Lord's declaration, "*But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned*" (Matthew 12:36-37). We may try to excuse ourselves by saying that these exclamations slipped out through our lips

unawares. But we need to heed the Holy Spirit's warning in the Epistle of James, *"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain"* (James 1:26).

James seems puzzled by the same inconsistency that puzzles us, namely, the presence of diluted curses on the lips of Christians. Writing of the tongue as *"... an unruly evil, full of deadly poison,"* he said, *"Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be"* (James 3:8-10).

We can have victory in this matter of obedience to our Lord Jesus. We need to make the prayer of David our own daily prayer: *"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer"* (Psalm 19:14).

—George H. Seville (Adapted)

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