

SMALL CATECHISM

You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not use his name to curse, swear, lie or deceive, or use witchcraft, but call upon God's name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

LARGE CATECHISM

[1] As the First Commandment has instructed the heart and taught [the basis of] faith, so this commandment leads us forth and directs the mouth and tongue to God. For the first objects that spring from the heart and manifest themselves are words. (*Concordia Triglotta*, p. 593-595)

[2] If, then, it be asked: How do you understand the Second Commandment, or what is meant by taking in vain, or misusing God's name? answer briefly thus: It is misusing God's name when we call upon the Lord God, no matter in what way, for purposes of falsehood or wrong of any kind. (595)

[3] Now, alas! it is a common calamity in all the world that there are as few who are not using the name of God for purposes of lying and all wickedness as there are those who with their heart trust alone in God. (597)

[4] For by nature we all have within us this beautiful virtue, to wit, that whoever has committed a wrong would like to cover up and adorn his disgrace, so that no one may see it or know it; and no one is so bold as to boast to all the world of the wickedness he has perpetrated; all wish to act by stealth and without any one being aware of what they do. Then, if any one be arraigned, the name of God is dragged into the affair and must make the villainy look like godliness, and the shame like honor. (597)

[5] But, the greatest abuse occurs in spiritual matters, which pertain to the conscience, when false preachers rise up and offer their lying vanities as God's Word. (595)

[6a] Besides this you must also know how to use the name [of God] aright. For when saying: *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain*, He gives us to understand at the same time that it is to be used properly. For it has been revealed and given to us for the very purpose that it may be of constant use and profit. (597-599)

[6b] For this end it is also of service that we form the habit of daily commending ourselves to God, with soul and body, wife, children, servants, and all that we have, against every need that may occur; whence also the blessing and thanksgiving at meals, and other prayers, morning and evening, have originated and remain in use. Likewise the practice of children to cross themselves when anything monstrous or terrible is seen or heard, and to exclaim: "Lord God, protect us!" "Help, dear Lord Jesus!" etc. Thus, too, if any one meets with unexpected good fortune, however trivial, that he say: "God be praised and thanked; this God has bestowed on me!" etc. (601)