

**THE UNIVERSITY OF  
CHICAGO. THE  
THIRD COMMANDMENT. A  
DISSERTATION**

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**FULTON JOHNSON COFFIN & JOHN D. ROCKFELLER**

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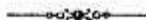
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THE  
THIRD COMMANDMENT.

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTIES OF THE  
GRADUATE SCHOOLS OF ARTS, LITERATURE, AND SCIENCE,  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF  
PHILOSOPHY (DEPARTMENT OF SEMITIC LAN-  
GUAGES AND LITERATURE).

BY

FULTON JOHNSON COFFIN.



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## VITA.



I, Fulton Johnson Coffin, was born in the Province of Prince Edward Island, Dominion of Canada, on the 25th of July, 1864.

My early education was received in the public schools of my native place and by private instruction. In 1878 I entered the Prince of Wales College, where I remained for three years in preparation for the University. In October, 1882, I matriculated at Dalhousie University, Halifax, N.S., from which I graduated as B.A. in 1886, with Honors in the departments of History and English Literature.

During the session 1886-7 I studied theology at the Presbyterian College, Halifax, N.S., and during the years 1887-9 continued my studies in the Theological Seminary at Princeton, N.J. In 1889 I also received the degree of M.A. from Princeton College, by examination in the department of Philosophy.

During the years 1890-3 I was connected with the Canadian Presbyterian Missions in Trinidad, B. W. Indies, as instructor in Biblical History and Theology in the College of that Mission.

From 1894-8 I was Fellow in the Department of Comparative Religion in the University of Chicago. During these years I devoted my attention especially to the study of Comparative Religion, Ancient History, and Old Testament Language and Literature.

In the Prince of Wales College I studied under Drs. Anderson, Alexander, and others; in Dalhousie University my chief instructors were President Forrest, Professors Alexander (now of Toronto University) and Schurman (now President Schurman of Cornell University); in Princeton, President McCosh, Professors Green, Hodge, Patton, Warfield, Orris, and others; in the University of Chicago, President William R. Harper and Professor G. S. Goodspeed. To all whom I have named, I owe sincere gratitude for their kindness and helpfulness; but very especially do I feel indebted to Professor Goodspeed for his deep interest and assistance, and to President Harper for direction and counsel and many acts of helpfulness during my residence in the University.

## The Third Commandment.

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### I.

**The History of Interpretation.** — The most important renderings of the third commandment in ancient and in modern times are as follows:

Septuagint: οὐ λήμψῃ τὸ ὄνομα Κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ σου ἐπὶ ματαίῳ. οὐ γὰρ μὴ καθάρῃσθαι Κύριος ὁ θεός σου τὸν λαμβάνοντα τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ ματαίῳ. Origen: ἐπὶ ματαίῳ (*temere*). Aquila: εἰς εἰκῆ.

Graecus Venetus: οὐκ ἄρεῖς τοῦνομα τοῦ ὄντοιοῦ του θεοῦ σου εἰς τὸ ψεῦδος: οὐ γὰρ ἀθωώσει ὁ ὄντοιος ὅς ἂν ἄροι τοῦνομά οἱ εἰς τὸ ψεῦδος.

Syriac (Latin translation, Walton's Polyglott): *Ne jures per nomen Domini Dei tui cum mendacio; quia non justificat Dominus eum qui jurat per nomen suum cum mendacio.*

Samaritan (Latin translation, Walton's Polyglott): *Non accipies nomen Dei tui in vanum, non enim impunem dimittet Dominus eum qui acceperit nomen ejus in vanum.*

Arabic (Latin translation, Walton's Polyglott): *Ne jures per nomen Dei Domini tui falso, quoniam Deus non justificat eum qui jurat per nomen ejus falso.*

Vulgate (Jerome): *Non assumes nomen Domini Dei tui in vanum, nec enim habebit insontem Dominus eum qui assumpsit nomen Domini Dei sui frustra.*

Targum Onkelos<sup>1</sup>: לֹא תִימֵי יְת שְׁמָא דִּי אֱלֹהֵיךָ לְמַגְנָא אֲרִי לָא יִזְכֵּי יְיָ יְת דִּימֵי בְּשִׁמְיָהּ לְשִׁקְרָא:

Jerusalem Targum (Etheridge's translation, p. 485): "Sons of Israel, my people, no one of you shall swear by the name of the word of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord in the day of His great judgment will not acquit anyone who shall swear by His name in vain."

<sup>1</sup> The Targum Onkelos translates אֲרִי לָא in first clause by לְמַגְנָא = 'in vain'; in second clause by לְשִׁקְרָא = 'for falsehood.'



Philo seems to refer the third commandment to false swearing. He urges men to be slow to take an oath; but, if necessary, then to swear truthfully. Thoughtless and profane oaths are likewise to be avoided. (See Yonge's translation, Vol. III. p. 155 ff.)

Josephus makes the commandment refer to the oath. We are not to swear by God in a false manner; but thoughtless oaths are also to be avoided. . . . ὁ τρίτος δ' ἐπὶ μηδενὶ φαύλῳ τὸν θεὸν ὀμνᾶναι. . . . (See *Antiquities*, Bk. III. 5.)

The Talmudists seem to refer this commandment both to false swearing and to profane swearing. According to *Berakoth*, I. 19, the taking of the divine name in vain is forbidden; while in other references the prohibition of false swearing is associated with this commandment. In the Jerusalem Talmud, in the treatise *Shebuoth*, both false oaths and adjurations are brought under the prohibition of this commandment, all such being regarded as sinful because a profaning of the divine name. The interpretation of Ex. 20<sup>i</sup> is made to refer to lying oaths, while Deut. 5<sup>ii</sup> is directed against swearing in vain. (See *Nedarim*, 3, 8; *Kabba* on Exodus, chap. 28.)

Barnabas says οὐ μὴ λάβῃς ἐπὶ ματαίῳ τὸ ὄνομα Κυρίου (Barnabas 19<sup>b</sup>). The same interpretation is followed by the other Apostolic Fathers.

In Wycliffe's Bible the following translation is given: "Thou schalt not take in veyn the name of the Lord God, for the Lord schal not have him guiltless that taketh in veyn the name of His Lord God." This translation is followed by Coverdale, Cranmer, the Bishops' Bible, and Thomas Mathewe (1549), and is retained in our authorized and revised versions. The revisers, however, as well as the editors of the new Variorum edition, give as a marginal reading "for falsehood."

Luther translates: *Du sollst den Namen des Herrn deines Gottes nicht missbrauchen; denn der Herr wird den nicht ungestraft lassen der seinen Namen missbraucht.*

De Wette translates: *Du sollst den Namen Jehovas deines Gottes nicht aussprechen zur Unwahrheit; denn nicht ungestraft wird Jehova den lassen der seinen Namen ausspricht zur Unwahrheit.*

Kautzsch renders: *Du sollst den Namen Jahwes, deines Gottes, nicht freventlich aussprechen; denn Jahwe lässt den nicht ungestraft, der seinen Namen freventlich ausspricht.*

Calvin makes the third commandment refer chiefly to false swearing, but also to all occasions when the divine name is mentioned. Accordingly, the prohibition is directed against any light or frivolous use of the name of God, as well as against false swearing. לִשְׁוֹא he

takes as meaning for falsehood, but a better rendering, he thinks, is to make it equivalent to  $\text{בַּיַּד} (frustra) = "in vain."$  (See *Harmony of the Pentateuch*, Vol. II. p. 408.)

Kalisch (*Com. in loc.*) translates  $\text{שָׁוְיָהּ} "for falsehood,"$  and makes the commandment a prohibition of false swearing. (Compare Gesenius's lexicon, 12th ed.)

Dillmann (*Com. in loc.*) regards the prohibition as directed against any sinful or unnecessary use of the divine name, as false swearing, profanity, *etc.*

Lange (*Com. in loc.*) makes the commandment a prohibition of the malicious use of the divine name. "The right apprehension of the name is presupposed, but the correctness of the apprehension is hypocritically employed by the transgressor in the interest of selfishness and vice."

From the above survey we are able to give a summary of the history of interpretation. There are no variations in the Hebrew text of the commandment, but various renderings are disclosed, which result from different interpretations of the Hebrew word  $\text{שָׁוְיָהּ}$ . The various interpretations we may classify as follows:

1. An interpretation is given which makes the commandment a prohibition of the use of the divine name for a bad or malicious purpose. Compare the word in Arabic from apparently the same root. (*sd'a* =  $\text{שָׂדָה}$  'to be bad.')

(Eth. *sa'a* = 'crime.')

This is the rendering of Kautzsch in his *Alt-Test., in loc.*, and Lange (*Com. in loc.*) seems to take this interpretation of the passage.

2. In the second division may be classified those interpretations which give the meaning of  $\text{שָׁוְיָהּ}$  as 'in vain, thoughtlessly, profanely,' *vis.* The Septuagint and other early Greek versions, Samaritan Pentateuch, Vulgate (Jerome), Barnabas, and the other Apostolic Fathers, early English versions, authorized and revised versions, *etc.*

3. In the third division we comprehend those who interpret  $\text{שָׁוְיָהּ}$  by 'falsely or for falsehood,' including those who make it a specific command against perjury or false swearing, *vis.* Graecus Venetus, Syriac version, Targum, Arabic version, De Wette, Kalisch, *etc.*

4. Some interpret  $\text{שָׁוְיָהּ}$  as including both 2 and 3, *vis.*, the Talmud, Philo, Josephus, Luther, Calvin, Strack, Dillmann, and others.

## II.

**An inductive study of the word  $\text{שָׁוְיָהּ}$ .**—The word occurs in the following passages in the Old Testament:

1. Ex. 23<sup>1</sup>: "Thou shalt not raise a false report." Here the prohibition is clearly directed against not merely an empty report, but one with evil intent. Dillmann says "a harmful report" (*Com. in loc.*). This is clearly what gives point to the prohibition. It is not mere inadvertence, or even thoughtless repetition, but wilful intention to harm.

2. Deut. 5<sup>21[30]}</sup>: This is parallel to Ex. 20<sup>16</sup>, where we read דָּבַר שֵׁקֶר for שֵׁקֶר דָּבַר of this verse. This would seem to indicate the meaning of שֵׁקֶר as 'falsehood' in our ordinary sense of the word. (See Driver, *Inter. Crit. Com. in loc.*)

3. In the Book of Job, the word שֵׁקֶר seems to have a like significance. Job 7<sup>3</sup>, "mouths of vanity," clearly signifies mouths of nothingness or emptiness. (So Delitzsch *in loc.*) So also 11<sup>12</sup>, "For he knoweth vain men," clearly means 'men of impiety' (compare Ps. 26<sup>4</sup>), *i.e.* 'men devoid of principle,' or 'empty' in the moral sense. The meaning is the same in 15<sup>11</sup>, where in the first clause שֵׁקֶר means 'waste' or 'empty in mind'; in the second, 'empty in fortune' (compare Hos. 12<sup>2[11]}</sup>, and see Davidson and Delitzsch *in loc.*). In 31<sup>6</sup>, "If I have walked with vanity," the idea seems to be 'emptiness under a concealing mask, falsehood,' in the sense of 'hypocritical pretence.' So also 35<sup>13</sup>, "surely God will not hear vanity," *i.e.* 'emptiness,' in the sense that God will not hear mere motion of the lips, which is lacking in the essentials of true prayer.

4. The significance of שֵׁקֶר in the Psalms is similar to that in Job. See Ps. 12<sup>2</sup>, "They speak vanity one with another," *i.e.* they speak deceitful, hypocritical, empty words under a disguise that conceals their true nature. (See Delitzsch *in loc.*) The same idea is present in 41<sup>7</sup> 144<sup>8,11</sup>. Ps. 26<sup>4</sup>, "I have not sat with vain persons" (compare Jer. 15<sup>17</sup>, Job 11<sup>11</sup>, *etc.*), *i.e.* with 'unreal men, men of emptiness,' as opposed to those who are filled with the fulness of God, and hence are morally good (see Delitzsch *in loc.*). The phrase "lying vanities" (שֵׁקֶר לִיְהוָה) in 31<sup>7</sup> is similar in meaning. The reference is evidently to false gods, *i.e.* beings that have no reality (see Cheyne, *Com. in loc.*, and Hitzig *in loc.*). The same idea is found in 89<sup>47[47]}</sup> 127<sup>1,2</sup>. (See Delitzsch, De Wette, Hupfeld, *etc.*, *in loc.*)

5. In Prov. 30<sup>8</sup> שֵׁקֶר has the same significance as in Job or Psalms, *viz.*, 'emptiness, unreality.'

6. Is. 1<sup>13</sup>, "vain oblations," *i.e.* 'hypocritical offerings, such as have nothing behind them corresponding to what they pretend to express.' (See Cheyne and Delitzsch *in loc.*) Dillmann says "the meal offering of emptiness," *i.e.* lacking in moral dedication.