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University of Notre Dame  
Religious Bulletin  
March 20, 1945

Confessions every night  
at Night Prayer, at 6:30  
in Basement Chapel, after  
7:00 in Sorin and Cav.

### Hell! and Damn!

The language spoken by young men (and women) is not always the King's English. Strong phrases travel down corridors, descriptive exclamations sometimes trickle through open transoms, unholy remarks are frequently made about fumbled baseballs and dubbed shots in golf and the "tough" professor. Many GIs and workmen have a vocabulary that can't be found in Webster. And students have been known to show favor to certain words and phrases. Some of these are sins against the Second Commandment. Some are not. It's a common question for students to ask: "May I go to Holy Communion after using "hell" or "damn"? So this is not a bawling out, just an explanation -- but act accordingly if these lines awaken your conscience.

Hell! and Damn! can be as harmless as "Fudge!" and "Fiddlesticks!", they may not be sins at all. Some necessary distinctions must be made before a person can be declared guilty of sinful language. There has been a tremendous amount of SWEARING done since Pearl Harbor. Every GI can be accused of this deed. To swear means to take an oath, to call upon God to witness the truth of what is said. Swearing is an act of virtue, and there is no sin in the action unless one lies under oath or useless and unnecessary oaths are taken. A common mistake in the confessional is for the penitent to say, "I swore," when he means that he cursed or took God's name in vain.

Moral theology has a section on cursing. Here is where "damn" plays an important role in the language of some people. Those who use this expression are commonly known to have "cussed." The word "damn" could be used as a curse, a real wish that someone be condemned to eternal punishment, and the same can be said of "Go to hell!" One who would employ such expressions and sincerely mean them in regard to their neighbor would be guilty of mortal sin. Ordinarily, most people do not intend their imprecations to be taken literally, even when they damn inanimate objects, like golf balls, late trains and math problems. Hence, such language would not be a mortal sin. Cursing is usually prompted by anger or impatience. The sin is normally that of impatience, a venial sin, with the expletives only a manifestation of temper. In the confessional, the penitent guilty of this sin should say, "I cursed several times, through losing my patience." So the use of the words damn, hell, fudge or fiddlesticks is not always free from fault. He or she may be sinning through anger.

Some people know few adjectives, few expressions to employ for the sake of emphasis so they fall back on the national favorites "hell" and "damn" to give weight to their descriptions. This sort of emphasis does not constitute a sin in itself.

Another form of speech is VULGARITY. It is often miscalled cursing. Under vulgarity fall such terms and expressions that are coarse, uncouth and ungentlemanly. In themselves they do not constitute a sin. Nevertheless, they are often associated with impatience and suggestive talk; this would make them venial sins.

Sometimes one's words and phrases, though innocent in themselves, can be most offensive to companions and neighbors. Vulgarity cannot often walk about with a halo, for by frequency in its use it becomes most offensive. Uncharitableness is a venial sin.

The disrespectful use of the name of God, Christ, Jesus or Lord is PROFANITY or the TAKING OF GOD'S NAME IN VAIN. Deliberate acts of profanity are venial sins, not mortal sins, as some mistakenly believe. Though there may be no sin at all when profanity is used without reflection and intention, as happens from habit, one always has the obligation to correct his fault; it's a sin not to try... There are tongues now being purified in Purgatory. A venial sin is still sin and an insult to God. Something is wrong with your good will and purpose of amendment if you show no improvement after forty or fifty confessions a year and 365 nightly acts of contrition.

WHEN NO MORTAL SIN HAS BEEN COMMITTED, IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO GO TO CONFESSION BEFORE COMMUNION. FREQUENT COMMUNION WILL CORRECT YOUR BAD HABITS. TRY IT.