English Terminology Newsletter #7
Oh My Gosh! Puritan English

Settled by Puritans in the 17th century, the United States remains a deeply-religious nation.

Almost three hundred years since its founding, its currency still bears the inscription "In God We Trust".

Americans learn early on to use religiously-sensitive language or face rebuke based on Exodus 20:7:

"*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.*"

I recommend this chart regarding *religiously sensitive* language for use with American colleagues:

Religiously-Offensive Term	Substitution	Example of Use	Exception(s), (if any)	Comment(s)
God	Gosh or Goodness	"My Gosh" or "My Goodness" instead of "My God" as an exclamation	Actual reference in a sentence in a religious context (example: "My God is very loving and forgiving")	Variations of "gosh" and "goodness" include: (**a**) "Gosh darn it" (instead of "Goddammit") (**b**) "For goodness sake" (instead of "for God's sake")
Damn	Darn	"Darn it!" instead of "Damnit!"	As "Damn" is rather strong, exceptions do not normally apply.	Variations of "darn" include: (**a**) "Darn it!" (**b**) "Goshdarnit" (**c**) "those darned critters"
Hell	Heck	"Aw heck!" Instead of "Oh hell!"	"Hell" is rather colloquial, albeit offensive. For example, "one hell of a time" (sometimes written as "one helluva time").	Variations of "heck" include: (**a**) "a heck of a time" (**b**) "what the heck" (instead of "what the hell") (**c**) "go to heck" sounds strange and is infrequent
Jesus	Geez/Jeez	"Geez" instead of "Jesus Christ"	Actual reference in a religious context ("Praise Jesus!")	Variations of "geez" include: (**a**) "Geez Louise" (because it rhymes) (**b**) "Holy begeezers!" (when expressing substantial surprise)
For Christ's sake	For crying out loud	"For crying out loud"	"For Christ's sake" is considered very insulting to religious Americans.	This term has no variations.