

You Shall Not Answer against
Your Neighbor the Witness of a Lie.
(Think and Say What is True.¹)
(Goodness²)

The Eighth Commandment

- from -

Secrets of Heaven

Emanuel Swedenborg

SH 8907. Verse 13. *You shall not answer against your neighbor the witness of a lie*, signifies that good is not to be called evil, nor truth falsity; thus conversely, neither is evil to be called good, nor falsity truth.

SH 8908. *You shall not answer against your neighbor the witness of a lie*. That this signifies that good is not to be called evil, nor truth falsity; thus conversely, neither is evil to be called good, nor falsity truth, is evident from the signification of “the witness of a lie,” as being the confirmation of falsity. (That “witness” denotes confirmation, see n. 4197; and that “a lie” denotes the falsity of faith will be plain from what follows.) “To answer against a neighbor” denotes to speak in such manner against any one; for by “neighbor” is signified every person, and specifically every one who is in good, and in the abstract sense, good itself (n. 3419, 5025, 6704, 6706-6711, 6818, 8123). Consequently “you shall not answer against your neighbor the witness of a lie,” in the internal sense denotes not to say to any one what is false, that is, to say that what is good is evil, and what is true is false, or the converse. [2] How the case herein is shall be briefly explained. All with whom there reigns the love of self or the love of the world, that is, who have as their end eminence, or honors, or wealth, or gain, do not hesitate to say and persuade others that what is just is unjust, and that what is unjust is just, and thus to act the part of witnesses of a lie. The reason why they are of such a character is that their will is wholly subject to these loves and their lusts, and is wholly occupied and possessed by them; and then the understanding, which is the other part of the mind, is indeed able to see what is just and what is unjust; but is not willing to see, because the will prevails over the understanding, and by means of influx persuades it, and at last also blinds it. These same persons neither have conscience, nor do they know that it belongs to conscience to call that just which is just, for no other reason than because it is just, that is, from the love of what is just. They who are of this character in the world are also of the same character in the other life, but with the difference that they do not then call what is just unjust, but the good which is of faith they call evil, and truth they call falsity; for what is

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just in the civil world corresponds to what is good and true in the spiritual world. And they do this without conscience and also without shame, because they have been inured and habituated to it in the life of the body. [3] Frequent mention is made in the Word of "a lie," and by this in the internal sense is everywhere signified the falsity and evil of faith, and by "the witness of a lie," which is also called "the witness of violence," is signified the confirmation of falsity, whether it be before a judge, or before any one else, or before one's self within the thought by self-persuasion (as in Exod. xxiii. 1, and following verses; Lev. xix. 11, 12; Deut. xix. 16-20). That in the spiritual sense "a lie" denotes the evil and falsity of faith, is evident from the following passages. In John:

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it (viii. 44);

"a lie" here denotes the falsity of faith; for the subject treated of is the Jews, that they were not willing to acknowledge the Lord. In the spiritual sense "the devil" here denotes falsity, and "the father of it" denotes evil; for falsity is from evil as a son is from his father. The falsity which is of the devil is the falsity of faith, and the evil is the evil of the love of self and the love of the world. [4] In Isaiah:

Moab is exceeding haughty, his pride, and his haughtiness, and his anger, his lies are not firm (xvi. 6);

"lies" denote the falsities of faith, because "Moab" denotes those who are in the evil of the love of self, and therefore falsify truths (see n. 2468, 8315). Again:

We have made a covenant with death, and with hell we have made a vision; we have made a lie our trust, and have lurked in falsehood (Isa. xxviii. 15).

This is a rebellious people, lying sons, sons that are not willing to hear the law of Jehovah (Isa. xxx. 9).

They mock every man his companion, and speak not the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak a lie (Jer. ix. 5).

I am against them that prophesy dreams of a lie, and tell them, that they may seduce My people by their lies (Jer. xxiii. 32).

O sword against the liars, that they may be foolish (Jer. i. 36).

They have seen vanity and divination of a lie, saying, Jehovah has said, when Jehovah has not sent them. Therefore thus said the Lord Jehovah, Because you speak vanity, and see a lie, therefore behold I am against you (Ezek. xiii. 6-9).

Woe to the city of bloods! it is all full of lying and rapine (Nahum iii. 1).

The remains of Israel do no perversity, nor will they speak a lie, neither shall a tongue of fraud be found in their mouth; they shall feed and be at rest (Zeph. iii. 13).

Without are dogs, and enchanter, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and every one that loves and makes a lie (Rev. xxii. 15).

In these as in many other passages "a lie" denotes the falsity and evil of faith.

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You Shall Not Bear False Witness.
(Think and Say What is True.³)
(Goodness⁴)

The Eighth Commandment

- from -

The Apocalypse Explained

Emanuel Swedenborg

AE 1019:2. The eighth commandment of the Decalogue, "You shall not bear false witness," shall now be explained. "To bear false witness" signifies in the sense nearest to the letter to lie about the neighbor by accusing him falsely. But in the internal sense it signifies to call what is just unjust, and what is unjust just, and to confirm this by means of falsities; while in the inmost sense it signifies to falsify the truth and good of the Word, and on the other hand to prove a falsity of doctrine to be true by confirming it by means of fallacies, appearances, fabrications, knowledges falsely applied, sophistries and the like. The confirmations themselves and the consequent persuasions are false witnesses, for they are false testimonies. From this it can be seen that what is here meant is not only false witness before a judge, but even a judge himself who in perverting right makes what is just unjust, and what is unjust just, for he as well as the witness himself acts the part of a false witness. The same is true of every person who makes what is right to appear crooked, and what is crooked to appear right; likewise any ecclesiastical leader who falsifies the truth of the Word and perverts its good. In a word, every falsification of truth, spiritual, moral, and civil, which is done from an evil heart, is false witness.

AE 1020:2. When a person abstains from false testimonies understood in a moral and spiritual sense, and shuns and turns away from them as sins, the love of truth and the love of justice flow in from the Lord through heaven. And when, in consequence the person loves truth and loves justice he loves the Lord, for the Lord is truth itself and justice itself. And when a person loves truth and justice it may be said that truth and justice love him, because the Lord loves him; and as a consequence his utterances become utterances of truth, and his works become works of justice.

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against Your Neighbor.
(Think and Say What is True.⁵)
(Goodness⁶)

The Eighth Commandment
- from -
The Doctrine of Life for the New Jerusalem
from the Ten Commandments

Emanuel Swedenborg

*In proportion as any one shuns false witness of every kind as sin,
in the same proportion he loves the truth.*

Life 87. To “bear false witness,” in the natural sense, means not only to play the false witness, but also to lie, and to defame. In the spiritual sense, to “bear false witness” means to declare some false thing to be true or some evil thing good, and to persuade others that it is so; and the converse. And in the highest sense, to “bear false witness” means to blaspheme the Lord and the Word. These are the three senses of “bearing false witness.” That these make a one in the person who bears false witness, utters a lie, or defames, is evident from what has been shown respecting the three senses of all things of the Word, in the *Doctrine of the Holy Scripture* (n. 5-7, etc. and 57).

Life 88. As lying and the truth are two opposite things, it follows that in proportion as any one shuns lying as sin, in the same proportion he loves the truth.

Life 89. In proportion as any one loves the truth, in the same proportion he desires to know it, and in the same proportion is affected at heart when he finds it. No one else comes into wisdom. And in proportion as any one loves to do the truth, in the same proportion he is sensible of the pleasantness of the light in which the truth is. It is the same with all the other things spoken of above; with sincerity and justice in the case of one who shuns thefts of every kind; with chastity and purity in the case of one who shuns adulteries of every kind; and with love and charity in the case of one who shuns murders of every kind; and so forth. On the other hand, one who is in the opposites to these heavenly things knows nothing about them, although everything that is truly something is present in them.

Life 90. It is the truth that is meant by the “seed in the field,” of which the Lord said:

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A sower went forth to sow, and as he sowed some fell upon the way, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of heaven devoured it; and some fell upon stony places, and as soon as it was sprung up, because it had no root it withered away; and some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up with it and choked it; and other fell into the good ground, and sprung up, and bare fruit manifold (Luke viii. 5-8; Matt. xiii. 3-8; Mark iv. 3-8).

Here the "sower" is the Lord, and the "seed" is His Word, thus the truth; the "seed upon the way" exists with those who do not care for the truth; the "seed upon stony places" exists with those who do care for the truth, but not for its own sake, thus not interiorly the "seed in the midst of thorns" exists with those who are in the concupiscences of evil; but the "seed in good ground" exists with those who love the truths that are in the Word from the Lord, and do them from Him, thus who bear fruit. That these things are meant is evident from the explication of the parable by the Lord (Matt. xiii. 19-23, 37; Mark iv. 14-20; Luke viii. 11-15). From all this it is evident that the truth of the Word cannot take root in those who do not care for the truth, nor in those who love the truth outwardly and not inwardly, nor in those who are in the concupiscences of evil, but in those in whom the concupiscences of evil have been dispersed by the Lord. In these the "seed"--that is, the truth--takes root in their spiritual mind (concerning which above, n. 86 at the end).

Life 91. It is a general opinion at the present day that to be saved consists in believing this thing or that which the church teaches, and that it does not consist in keeping the commandments (which are, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness) in both the restricted and the extended sense. For it is maintained that works are not regarded by God, but faith, when nevertheless the truth is that in proportion as any one is in these evils, in that same proportion he has no faith. (See above n. 42-52) Take counsel of reason and observe whether, so long as he is in the concupiscence of these evils, any murderer, adulterer, thief, or false witness is able to have faith; and also, further, whether the concupiscence of these evils can be shaken off in any other way than by refusing to will to commit them for the reason that they are sins, that is, because they are infernal and devilish. So that whoever imagines that being saved consists in believing this thing or that which is taught by the church, while himself remaining thus evil in feeling and in character, must needs be a "foolish man," in accordance with the words of the Lord in Matthew vii. 26. Such a church is thus described in Jeremiah:

Stand in the gate of Jehovah's house, and proclaim there this word: Thus says Jehovah of Armies the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings; do not trust in lying words, saying, The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, are these. Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered, while you do all these abominations? Is this house become a den of robbers? Behold, I, even I, have seen it, says Jehovah (vii. 2-4, 9-11).

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against Your Neighbor.
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(Goodness⁸)

The Eighth Commandment

- from -

True Christianity

Emanuel Swedenborg

You are not to bear false witness against your neighbor.

TC 321. In its most accessible *earthly meaning*, [this commandment against] “bearing false witness against our neighbor” or testifying falsely includes not being a false witness before a judge, or before others outside of a courtroom, against someone who is wrongly accused of some evil. We are not to make such false assertions in the name of God or something sacred, or base them on our own authority or on some expertise for which we are well known.

In a broader earthly sense, this commandment applies to political lies and hypocrisies of every kind that have an evil intent, as well as disparagement and slander of our neighbors to undermine the status, name, and reputation on which their whole good character depends.

In the broadest earthly sense, this commandment includes plots, deceptions, and evil intent against anyone for a variety of motives such as hostility, hatred, desire for revenge, envy, rivalry, and so on. These evils have false witness hidden inside them.

TC 322. In the *spiritual meaning*, testifying falsely refers to convincing people that a false belief is a true one and an evil life is a good one, and the reverse; but only if these things are done deliberately, not out of ignorance. Doing them deliberately is doing them after we know what truth and goodness are, not before. The Lord says, “If you were blind you would have no sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains” (John 9:41).

This falseness is what is meant in the Word by “a lie” and this deliberateness is what is meant by “deceit” in the following passages:

We are striking a pact with death; we are making an agreement with hell. We have put our trust in lying and have hidden ourselves with falsity. (Isaiah 28:15)

They are a people of rebellion, lying children. They do not want to hear the law of Jehovah. (Isaiah 30:9)

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Everyone from prophet to priest is acting out a lie. (Jeremiah 8:10)

The inhabitants speak a lie, and as for their tongue, deceit is in their mouths. (Micah 6:12)

You are to destroy those who speak a lie. Jehovah loathes a man of deceit. (Psalms 5:6)

They taught their tongue to tell a lie, to dwell in the midst of their deceit. (Jeremiah 9:5, 6)

Because “a lie” means a falsity, the Lord says, “The Devil speaks a lie from his own resources” (John 8:44). “A lie” also means falsity and deception in the following passages: Jeremiah 9:4; 23:14, 32; Ezekiel 13:15–19; 21:29; Hosea 7:1; 12:1; Nahum 3:1; Psalms 120:2, 3.

TC 323. In the *heavenly meaning*, testifying falsely refers to blaspheming the Lord and the Word and driving the actual truth out of the church. The Lord is truth itself, and so is the Word. On the other hand, in this sense “testifying” means speaking the truth and “testimony” means the truth itself. This is why the Ten Commandments are called the testimony (Exodus 25:16, 21, 22; 31:7, 18; 32:15, 16; 40:20; Leviticus 16:13; Numbers 17:4, 10). Since the Lord is truth itself, he says that he testifies concerning himself. For the Lord as the truth itself, see John 14:6; Revelation 3:7, 14; for his testifying and being a witness to himself, see John 3:11; 8:13–19; 15:26; 18:37, 38.

TC 324. There are people who say false, deliberately deceitful things and articulate them with a tone that emulates spiritual feeling. There are even some who cite truths from the Word as they do so, falsifying these truths in the process. The ancients had names for people like these: they called them magicians (see *Revelation Unveiled* 462) and also sorcerers, and snakes from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

These pretenders, liars, and deceivers are like people who talk in a pleasant and friendly way with their enemies, but while they are talking they have a dagger behind their back, ready to kill. They are like people who smear venom on their swords before attacking their enemies; or like people who put poison in a well and toxic substances in wine and pastries. They are like charming, attractive whores who carry a malignant sexually transmitted disease. They are like stinging plants that damage our olfactory nerves if we lift them to our noses to smell them. They are like sweetened poisons, or like dung dried out in the fall that gives off a pleasant aroma. In the Word they are described as leopards (see *Revelation Unveiled* 572).