

You Shall Not Steal.

Overview

The commandment, *You shall not steal* has different levels of meaning. Here are some of the things that are meant by stealing:

- Taking what doesn't belong to you, either openly or secretly.
- Fraud; illegal methods of personal gain.
- Illegitimate gain.
- Craftiness; cunning.
- Passing judgment in a court of law based on friendship, relationship, reward, profit, etc.
- Doing your work unfaithfully or deceitfully.
- Pretense.
 - Pretending to be someone or something you're not.
 - Being an imposter.
- Deceit
 - Deceiving other people or yourself (self-deception).
- Doing things for the sake of attention, recognition, approval, honor, praise, reputation, etc.
- Impatience.
- Dishonesty.
- Worry, anxiety, self-centered fear, etc.
- Depriving people of their faith.
- Taking divine power from the Lord and claiming it as your own.
 - Ascribing God's goodness and truth to yourself or others, rather than to God.
 - Claiming credit for yourself or your actions.
- Functioning from yourself rather than from God.
 - Living on your own terms rather than God's terms.
 - Thinking from yourself rather than from God.
 - Loving and serving from self rather than from God.
- Trusting in yourself, not God.
- Believing in yourself, not God.

Here are some other things that may be meant by stealing:

- Unhealthy / debilitating guilt or shame.
- Selfish pride, arrogance, conceit, vanity.
- Perfectionism.
- Compulsion to be right.

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Quick Reference

- from -

Secrets of Heaven

Emanuel Swedenborg

Stealing defined:

1. Taking away spiritual goods from anyone¹
2. Notes:
 - a. Spiritual goods must not be taken away from anyone.²
 - b. By "spiritual goods" is meant the following:³
 - 1) Knowledge of good and truth.⁴
 - 2) All those things which are of faith and goodwill, that is, which are of spiritual life in a person.⁵
 - 3) These things are symbolized by riches and wealth in the Word of God.

Stealing further defined:

1. Ascribing what is the Lord's (that is, faith and goodwill)...⁶
 - a. To others
 - b. Especially to yourself
 - 1) Taking credit for the things you do
 - 2) Considering yourself to be righteous
2. Ascribing to yourself what belongs to the Lord⁷
 - a. Note: The things that belong to the Lord are not to be ascribed to self.⁸
3. Anyone who does these things "enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way."⁹
 - a. Scripture: The thief comes that he may steal, slay, and destroy.¹⁰

Stealing relates to the following:¹¹

1. Working a lie.¹²
2. Intellectual reasoning from falsity as if from truth.¹³
 - a. Scripture: Having an appearance like that of horses¹⁴
3. Reasoners.¹⁵
 - a. Scripture: Having an appearance like that of horsemen who run¹⁶
4. Doctrinal falsities.¹⁷
 - a. Scripture: They run as the sound of chariots on the tops of the mountains.¹⁸
5. The false doctrine itself.¹⁹
 - a. Scripture: They run to and fro in the city.²⁰
6. Basic (or elemental) falsity.²¹
 - a. Scripture: They run on the wall.²²

(Cont.)

7. Falsity which...
 - a. Enters a person's will.²³
 - 1) It takes possession of a person's will.²⁴
 - 2) Scripture: They climb up into the houses.²⁵
 - b. Enters by means of the intellect.²⁶
 - 1) It takes possession of a person's understanding / intellect.²⁷
 - 2) Scripture: They enter through the windows.²⁸
 - c. Takes away truth.²⁹
 - 1) Scripture: They enter like a thief.³⁰

Effects of falsity:

1. Love of the Lord no longer appears.³¹
 - a. Scripture: The sun is made black.³²
2. Faith in the Lord no longer appears.³³
 - a. Scripture: The moon is made black.³⁴
3. Knowledge of good and truth no longer has light from faith and love, thus from heaven.³⁵
 - a. Scripture: The stars withdraw their shining.³⁶
4. Desolation of the church³⁷
5. Truths are taken away by falsity.³⁸
 - a. Falsity (a lie) takes away truth like a thief.³⁹
6. Truths are destroyed.
 - a. Falsities (lies) break in and destroy truths.⁴⁰
7. There is no longer any truth.⁴¹
8. Falsities (lies) take possession of the whole person, both his or her will and understanding / intellect.⁴²
 - a. In this way falsity takes away all truth and good.⁴³
9. Falsities (lies) exist in the place of truth,⁴⁴
 - a. Based in a desire for evil and a consequent desire for falsity.⁴⁵

Statutes:

1. Some of the statutes commanded the children of Israel by the Lord make reference to the following:⁴⁶
 - a. Stealing an ox and selling it.⁴⁷
 - b. Stealing a sheep and selling it.⁴⁸
 - c. Stealing a man and selling him.⁴⁹
 - d. Stealing a soul of your brethren and making gain in him while selling him.⁵⁰
2. Notes:
 - a. In the above references from the Word of God, "the men of the sons of Israel" symbolize the following:⁵¹
 - 1) Those who are in the truths and goods of faith.
 - 2) The truths and goods of faith themselves.
 - b. "Stealing a man" in Scripture symbolizes taking away the truths and goods of faith, casting them off, and making them serve.⁵²
 - c. When these are cast off they come into a servile state.⁵³
 - d. In that state they serve any evil that comes forth from the [self-centered] love of self or of the world, thus any bodily lust.⁵⁴

- e. Thus from being free and alive the truth and good of the church become dead.⁵⁵
- f. The penalty, which is the effect, is “death.”⁵⁶
- g. [Editorial note: Emanuel Swedenborg suggests that there is a good and healthy form of self-love, also a good and healthy form of love for the things of the world. He also suggests that if love for ourselves and love for the things of the world become *more important* to us than loving our neighbor and loving God / the Lord, these two forms of love tend to become selfish, self-centered, and hateful of others and the Lord. Most often, when Swedenborg talks about these two forms of love (which he refers to as “love of self” and “love of the world”) he is talking about the selfish forms of these loves. For purposes of this outline, then, the words “self-centered” are added, to make it clear that it is the *selfish* forms of these two loves that are being talked about, not the good and healthy forms. For a fuller explanation of this, see the *BNL Sourcebook*, section B (*Starting Assumptions*), assumption #4, titled, “There are four universal kinds (or levels) of love.”]

Obligation:

1. According to the statutes commanded the children of Israel by the Lord, people who had stolen were obliged to put away the evil from the midst of themselves.⁵⁷

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Quick Reference

- from -

The Apocalypse Explained

Emanuel Swedenborg

Stealing defined:

1. Thefts⁵⁸
2. Frauds⁵⁹
3. Illegal gains⁶⁰
 - a. Illegal methods of gain and also usury⁶¹
 - 1) [Usury is the illegal action or practice of lending money at unreasonably high rates of interest.]
 - b. Illegal gains through fraud and craft⁶²
4. Thefts that are obvious and those that are not, such as...⁶³
 - a. Usury and gains...
 - 1) Effected by fraud and craft,
 - a) Under various pretenses,
 - b) To make them appear legal,
 - 2) Or done clandestinely,
 - a) So as not to appear at all,
 - (1) [I.e., so as to be invisible, undetectable]
5. Such gains are commonly made, for example, by...⁶⁴
 - a. Judges:⁶⁵
 - 1) Not doing judgment and justice.⁶⁶
 - 2) Selling judgments, and thus...⁶⁷
 - a) Making justice available for purchase.⁶⁸
 - 3) Handing down judgments for the sake of...⁶⁹
 - a) Rewards.⁷⁰
 - b) Favors.⁷¹
 - c) Friendship or favor.⁷²
 - d) Note: These are forms of personal profit and gain.⁷³
 - 4) Passing judgments in which there is more or less of a regard for friendship, favor, or personal gain.⁷⁴
 - 5) Doing justice with personal profit as the goal.⁷⁵
 - 6) Using justice (which is a divine attribute) as a means to an end of personal gain.⁷⁶
 - 7) Perverting the right of the poor, the needy, the fatherless, the widow, and the innocent.⁷⁷
 - 8) Not abstaining from evils because they are sins, but only because of fear of punishment under the civil law and also the loss of reputation, honor, and office, thus of personal gain.⁷⁸

- 9) Loving the function of judging for the sake of personal gain, not for the sake of useful services to one's country.⁷⁹
- 10) Loving what is unjust as well as what is just.⁸⁰
- b. Managers (higher and lower managers of the goods of others):⁸¹
 - 1) Depriving people of their goods by fraud,⁸²
 - a) Secretly by means of cunning,⁸³
 - b) Under some pretense [i.e., for some false reason].⁸⁴
- c. Merchants:⁸⁵
 - 1) Making illegitimate gains.⁸⁶
 - 2) Practicing usury.⁸⁷
 - 3) Practicing fraud and craft.⁸⁸
 - 4) Note: Such works are done from the person him- or herself, not from the Lord.⁸⁹
 - 5) Coming up with skillful and artful strategies for overreaching your companions.⁹⁰
 - 6) Bringing such strategies into effect under the pretense of honesty, justice, and piety.⁹¹
 - 7) Taking delight in such things.⁹²
 - 8) Acting honestly and justly in order to acquire...⁹³
 - a) Reputation,
 - b) And wealth through reputation,
 - c) Even so as to appear to act from a love of honesty and justice.
 - 9) Seeking to steal through pretence of honesty and justice.⁹⁴
 - 10) Thinking about and devising nothing but sharp practices and robberies.⁹⁵
 - 11) Withdrawing yourself from those who are honest.⁹⁶
 - 12) Going either to forests or deserts (spiritually speaking) and devoting yourself to stratagems.⁹⁷
 - a) [A stratagem is a plan or scheme, especially one used to outwit an opponent or achieve an end.]
 - 13) Being inwardly dishonest and unjust.⁹⁸
 - 14) Practicing inner, hidden thefts, which are effected by craft and deceit.⁹⁹
 - 15) Becoming a robber.¹⁰⁰
6. Injustice¹⁰¹
7. Dishonesty¹⁰²
8. Using honesty and uprightness as a mask, disguise, and deceit¹⁰³
9. Works done from self, rather than from the Lord. Works done from self are like...¹⁰⁴
 - a. Tombs outwardly whitened, which are full of bones of the dead.
 - b. Platters and cups outwardly clean, but containing unclean things of every kind.
 - c. Fruits rotten on the inside, but with the outer skin still shining.
 - d. Nuts or almonds eaten by worms within, while the shell remains untouched.
 - e. A foul harlot with a fair face.
10. Claiming credit¹⁰⁵
11. Not looking to the Lord to be taught and led, but only to yourself¹⁰⁶

Effects of stealing on the person who does it:

1. Inflow from the Lord through heaven is intercepted.¹⁰⁷
 - a. Inflow from the Lord through heaven is intercepted by thefts of any kind.¹⁰⁸

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Quick Reference

- from -

*The Doctrine of Life for the New Jerusalem
from the Ten Commandments*

Emanuel Swedenborg

Earthly (literal) meaning: In the literal sense, by stealing is meant...

1. Theft.¹⁰⁹
2. Robbery.¹¹⁰
3. Taking goods from another under some pretext [i.e., for some false reason].¹¹¹
4. Fraud, cunning, and deceit.¹¹²
5. Being dishonest.¹¹³
6. Being in honesty, that is, in integrity, justice, faithfulness, and uprightness from yourself and not from the Lord.¹¹⁴

Spiritual meaning: In the spiritual sense, by stealing is meant...

1. Depriving others of their truths of faith and goods of charity.¹¹⁵

Heavenly meaning: In the highest sense, by stealing is meant...

1. Taking away from the Lord that which is His and assigning it to yourself,
 - a. Thus claiming righteousness and credit for yourself.¹¹⁶

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Quick Reference

- from -

True Christianity

Emanuel Swedenborg

Earthly (literal) meaning: In the literal sense, by theft is meant...

1. Stealing.¹¹⁷
2. Robbing.¹¹⁸
3. Committing piracy in time of peace.¹¹⁹
4. Taking away anyone's goods secretly or under any pretext [i.e., for any false reason].¹²⁰
5. All impostures and illegitimate gains, usuries, and exactions.¹²¹
 - a. [An imposture is an instance of pretending to be someone else in order to deceive others.]
 - b. [Usury is the illegal action or practice of lending money at unreasonably high rates of interest.]
 - c. [Exaction is the action of demanding and obtaining something from someone, especially a payment or service.]
6. Frauds in paying taxes and duties and in discharging debts.¹²²
7. Examples:¹²³
 - a. Laborers
 - 1) Doing their work unfaithfully and deceitfully¹²⁴
 - b. Merchants
 - 1) Practicing deceit in merchandise, weight, measure, and accounting¹²⁵
 - c. Military officers
 - 1) Deducting from soldiers' wages¹²⁶
 - d. Judges
 - 1) Passing judgment for friendship, reward, relationship, or other reasons¹²⁷

Spiritual meaning: In the spiritual sense, by stealing is meant...

1. Depriving others of the truths of their faith.¹²⁸
 - a. Note: This is done by means of falsities and heresies.¹²⁹
2. Example:¹³⁰
 - a. Priests, or those who discharge priestly functions,¹³¹
 - 1) Ministering only for personal gain, and/or from a lust for honor¹³²
 - 2) Teaching what they see (or might see) from the Word to be untrue¹³³
 - 3) Teaching what is false and heretical, and persuading the common people that it is true and orthodox, even though the priest reads the Word of God, and from it may know what is false and what is true¹³⁴
 - 4) Establishing all kinds of falsity¹³⁵

- 5) Confirming falsities of religion by fallacies, and seducing people by means of them¹³⁶
 - a) [A fallacy is a mistaken belief, especially one based on unsound argument.]
- 6) These take the means of salvation away from people.¹³⁷
 - a) The means of salvation are the truths of faith.¹³⁸
- 7) Thinking that truths are not important¹³⁹
- 8) Such priests “enter not by the door into the sheepfold, but climb up some other way.”¹⁴⁰
- 9) Scripture: They come not but to steal, to kill, and to destroy.¹⁴¹
- 10) They have committed falsehood [i.e., they have lied].¹⁴²
- 11) They may be compared to:¹⁴³
 - a) Impostors and their impostures of all kinds.¹⁴⁴
 - (1) Such impostures are basically thefts.¹⁴⁵
 - b) Counterfeiters who strike false coins, gilding them or giving them outwardly the color of gold, and passing them off as pure coins.¹⁴⁶
 - c) Those who know how to cut and polish crystals skillfully and harden them, and who sell them for diamonds.¹⁴⁷
 - d) People who carry apes or monkeys, clothed like people and with veiled faces, on horses or mules through cities, and proclaim that they are noblemen of ancient stock.¹⁴⁸
 - e) Those who put on false faces, smeared with paints of various colors, over the living and natural face, concealing its beauty.¹⁴⁹
 - f) People who exhibit selenite and mica, which shine as if from gold and silver, and try to sell them as coming from veins that are very precious.¹⁵⁰
 - g) Those who, by theatricals, lead people away from true worship of the Divine, or from churches to playhouses.¹⁵¹
 - h) Thieves who carry keys with which they can open the door of any house.¹⁵²
 - i) Leopards and eagles which, with sharp eyes, search for the fattest prey.¹⁵³

Heavenly meaning: In the highest sense, by stealing is meant...¹⁵⁴

1. Taking the Lord’s divine power away from Him.
2. Claiming for yourself His merit and righteousness.
 - a. [The word “merit” means the quality of being good or worthy, especially so as to deserve praise or reward.]
 - b. [When used as a verb, “to merit” means to be deserving or worthy.]
 - c. [Editorial note: Based on the above definitions, and from a theological perspective, the Lord is the only one who has merit (i.e., who deserves credit), or who truly merits anything, since He is the source of everything good, true, loving, and wise. If we do anything that has merit, or that merits anything, the merit (or credit) doesn’t belong to us, it actually belongs to the Lord, because it all comes from Him.]
3. Trusting yourself, not God.
4. Believing yourself, not God.

Endnotes

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- ¹ SH 8906:1
² SH 8906:1
³ SH 8906:1
⁴ SH 8906:1
⁵ SH 8906:1
⁶ SH 8906:1
⁷ SH 8906:1
⁸ SH 8906:1
⁹ SH 8906:1, Jn. 10:1,2,9,10
¹⁰ SH 8906:1, Jn. 10:1,2,9,10
¹¹ The overall Scriptural reference for this section is Joel 2:1-10.
¹² SH 8906:2, Hos. 7:1-3
¹³ SH 8906:3
¹⁴ SH 8906:2, Joel 2:4
¹⁵ SH 8902:3
¹⁶ SH 8906:2, Joel 2:4
¹⁷ SH 8902:3
¹⁸ SH 8902:2, Joel 2:4-5
¹⁹ SH 8902:3
²⁰ SH 8906:2, Joel 2:9
²¹ SH 8906:3
²² SH 8906:2, Joel 2:9
²³ SH 8906:3
²⁴ SH 8906:3
²⁵ SH 8906:2, Joel 2:9
²⁶ SH 8906:3
²⁷ SH 8906:3
²⁸ SH 8906:2, Joel 2:9
²⁹ SH 8906:3
³⁰ SH 8906:2, Joel 2:9
³¹ SH 8906:3
³² SH 8906:2, Joel 2:10
³³ SH 8906:3
³⁴ SH 8906:2, Joel 2:10
³⁵ SH 8906:3
³⁶ SH 8906:2, Joel 2:10
³⁷ SH 8906:2
³⁸ SH 8906:2-3
³⁹ SH 8906:2-3
⁴⁰ SH 8906:2
⁴¹ SH 8906:3
⁴² SH 8906:2,3
⁴³ SH 8906:3
⁴⁴ SH 8906:2,3
⁴⁵ SH 8906:3
⁴⁶ SH 8906:4
⁴⁷ SH 8906:4, Ex. 22:1
⁴⁸ SH 8906:4, Ex. 22:1
⁴⁹ SH 8906:4, Ex. 21:16
⁵⁰ SH 8906:4, Deut. 24:7
⁵¹ SH 8906:4
⁵² SH 8906:4
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- ⁵³ SH 8906:4
⁵⁴ SH 8906:4
⁵⁵ SH 8906:4
⁵⁶ SH 8906:4, Ex. 21:16, Deut. 24:7
⁵⁷ SH 8906:4, Deut. 24:7
⁵⁸ AE 949:3
⁵⁹ AE 935:2
⁶⁰ AE 935:2, AE 978:3
⁶¹ AE 972:2
⁶² AE 973:2
⁶³ AE 967:3
⁶⁴ AE 967:3
⁶⁵ AE 967:3, 976:2
⁶⁶ AE 976:2
⁶⁷ AE 967:3
⁶⁸ AE 976:2, 967:3
⁶⁹ AE 979:2, 976:2
⁷⁰ AE 979:2
⁷¹ AE 976:2
⁷² AE 976:2, 979:2
⁷³ AE 976:2
⁷⁴ AE 976:3
⁷⁵ AE 976:2
⁷⁶ AE 976:2
⁷⁷ AE 976:2
⁷⁸ AE 976:2
⁷⁹ AE 976:2
⁸⁰ AE 976:2
⁸¹ AE 967:3, 977:2
⁸² AE 977:2
⁸³ AE 977:2
⁸⁴ AE 977:2
⁸⁵ AE 967:3, 978:2
⁸⁶ AE 978:2
⁸⁷ AE 978:2
⁸⁸ AE 978:2
⁸⁹ AE 978:2
⁹⁰ AE 978:2
⁹¹ AE 978:2
⁹² AE 978:2
⁹³ AE 978:2
⁹⁴ AE 978:2
⁹⁵ AE 978:3
⁹⁶ AE 978:3
⁹⁷ AE 978:3
⁹⁸ AE 978:2
⁹⁹ AE 978:3
¹⁰⁰ AE 978:3
¹⁰¹ AE 973:2
¹⁰² AE 973:2
¹⁰³ AE 972:2
¹⁰⁴ AE 974:2 unless otherwise noted
¹⁰⁵ AE 971:5

¹⁰⁶ AE 978:3, cf. TC 319
¹⁰⁷ AE 978:3
¹⁰⁸ AE 978:3
¹⁰⁹ Life 80
¹¹⁰ Life 80
¹¹¹ Life 80
¹¹² Life 80, 82-85
¹¹³ Life 84
¹¹⁴ Life 83
¹¹⁵ Life 80
¹¹⁶ Life 80
¹¹⁷ TC 317
¹¹⁸ TC 317
¹¹⁹ TC 317
¹²⁰ TC 317
¹²¹ TC 317
¹²² TC 317
¹²³ TC 317
¹²⁴ TC 317
¹²⁵ TC 317
¹²⁶ TC 317
¹²⁷ TC 317
¹²⁸ TC 318
¹²⁹ TC 317
¹³⁰ TC 318, 320
¹³¹ TC 318, 320
¹³² TC 318, 320
¹³³ TC 318
¹³⁴ TC 320
¹³⁵ TC 320
¹³⁶ TC 320
¹³⁷ TC 318
¹³⁸ TC 318
¹³⁹ TC 320
¹⁴⁰ TC 318, Jn. 10:1,10
¹⁴¹ TC 318, Jn. 10:1,10
¹⁴² TC 318, Hos. 7:1
¹⁴³ TC 320
¹⁴⁴ TC 320
¹⁴⁵ TC 320
¹⁴⁶ TC 320
¹⁴⁷ TC 320
¹⁴⁸ TC 320
¹⁴⁹ TC 320
¹⁵⁰ TC 320
¹⁵¹ TC 320
¹⁵² TC 320
¹⁵³ TC 320
¹⁵⁴ TC 319 unless otherwise noted