

# You Shall Not Bear False Witness Against Your Neighbor.

## Overview

The commandment, *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor*, has different levels of meaning. Here are some of the things that are meant by bearing false witness against your neighbor:

- Lying
  - Forms of lying that are “against” your neighbor
  - Lying that looks to selfish or materialistic goals
- Falsifying the truth; banishing the truth
- Speaking from yourself rather than from God
- False accusation
- Believing that what is false is true, or vice versa
- Believing that what is unjust is just, or vice versa
- Believing that what is selfish is good, or vice versa
- Blaspheming the Lord and His Word

Here are some other things that may be meant by bearing false witness against your neighbor:

- Certain forms of “being in denial”
  - Note: Emanuel Swedenborg suggests that your “neighbor” is the person next door and also people in general. More specifically, your neighbor is any good, noble, or honorable *qualities* that exist in a person and help make them who they are, including yourself. From this perspective, “being in denial” is something that could be harmful to the “neighbor” within you, thus it could be a form of bearing false witness against your neighbor.
- Harsh forms of blame and accusation

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# You Shall Not Answer Against Your Neighbor the Witness of a Lie.

## Quick Reference

- from -

*Secrets of Heaven*

Emanuel Swedenborg

### Bearing false witness against your neighbor includes the following:

1. Not standing in the truth.<sup>1</sup>
2. Not speaking the truth.<sup>2</sup>
3. Lying.<sup>3</sup>
  - a. Lying and rapine<sup>4</sup>
    - 1) [Rapine is the violent seizure of someone's property.]
4. Being a liar.<sup>5</sup>
5. Teaching your tongue to speak a lie.<sup>6</sup>
6. Answering against your neighbor the witness of a lie.<sup>7</sup>
7. In the Word of God...
  - a. "A lie" means falsity of faith.<sup>8</sup>
  - b. "A lie" means the falsity and evil of faith.<sup>9</sup>
  - c. "The witness of a lie" means confirmation of falsity.<sup>10</sup>
  - d. "To answer against a neighbor" means to speak in such a way...<sup>11</sup>
    - 1) Against any one.
      - a) Specifically against anyone who is in good.
    - 2) Against goodness itself.
  - e. "The witness of a lie" (or "the witness of violence") means the confirmation of falsity...<sup>12</sup>
    - 1) Before a judge.
    - 2) Before anyone else.
    - 3) Before yourself by self-persuading (or self-coaxing).
8. Saying to anyone what is false, that is, saying that...<sup>13</sup>
  - a. What is good is evil.
  - b. What is true is false.
  - c. Or vice versa,
  - d. Especially if these things are done without conscience and without shame<sup>14</sup>
  - e. Calling the good which is of faith evil, and the truth of faith falsity.<sup>15</sup>
  - f. Notes:
    - 1) Good is not to be called evil, nor truth falsity.<sup>16</sup>
    - 2) Conversely, evil is not to be called good, nor falsity truth.<sup>17</sup>
9. Saying and persuading others that...<sup>18</sup>
  - a. What is just is unjust.
  - b. What is unjust is just.
  - c. Or vice versa,
  - d. Especially if these things are done without conscience and without shame

10. Speaking from yourself rather than from the Lord.<sup>19</sup>
11. Saying, "Jehovah has said," when Jehovah has not sent you.<sup>20</sup>
12. Lurking in falsehood [i.e., in lies].<sup>21</sup>
  - a. Falsity which is of the devil (also known as falsity of faith)<sup>22</sup>
13. Telling and prophesying "dreams of a lie."<sup>23</sup>
14. Speaking vanity.<sup>24</sup>

**Some of the things that underlie the bearing of false witness against your neighbor include the following:**

1. Rebelliousness.<sup>25</sup>
2. Murder.<sup>26</sup>
3. Anger.<sup>27</sup>
4. Mockery of a companion.<sup>28</sup>
5. Fame, honors, wealth, or gain as a person's end in view.<sup>29</sup>
6. Arrogance ("haughtiness").<sup>30</sup>
7. Pride.<sup>31</sup>
8. [Self-centered] love of self and of the world reigning within you.<sup>32</sup>
  - a. [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."]
9. Falsifying truths from the [self-centered] love of self and the world.<sup>33</sup>
10. Your will being completely subject to the [self-centered] loves of self and the world and their lusts.<sup>34</sup>
  - a. Your will being completely occupied and possessed by these things.<sup>35</sup>
11. Your intellect (or the understanding part of your mind) indeed being able to see what is just and what is unjust, but being unwilling to do so.<sup>36</sup>
12. Your will prevailing over your intellect / understanding, persuading it, and finally, blinding it.<sup>37</sup>
13. Being unwilling to acknowledge the Lord.<sup>38</sup>
14. Being unwilling to hear the law of Jehovah.<sup>39</sup>
15. Loving and fabricating a lie.<sup>40</sup>
16. Making a lie your trust.<sup>41</sup>
17. Making a covenant with death.<sup>42</sup>
18. Having a "tongue of fraud."<sup>43</sup>
19. Seducing the Lord's people by lies.<sup>44</sup>
20. "Seeing" a lie.<sup>45</sup>
21. "Seeing" vanity [i.e., "seeing" what is false or futile].<sup>46</sup>
22. "Seeing" [or foretelling] a false future.<sup>47</sup>

# You Shall Not Bear False Witness.

## Quick Reference

- from -

*The Apocalypse Explained*

Emanuel Swedenborg

### General definition:

1. By “false witness” is meant any falsification of truth—spiritual, moral, or civil—when done from an evil heart.<sup>48</sup>
  - a. Note: Every falsification of truth—spiritual, moral, or civil—when done from an evil heart, is false witness.<sup>49</sup>

### Literal meaning of “false witness” in Scripture:<sup>50</sup>

1. False testimonies<sup>51</sup>
2. Lying<sup>52</sup>
3. Lying about your neighbor by accusing him or her falsely<sup>53</sup>
4. False witness before a judge<sup>54</sup>

### Internal meaning:<sup>55</sup>

1. Calling what is just unjust, and what is unjust just, and confirming this by means of falsities
2. Example: Judges who...<sup>56</sup>
  - a. Pervert what is right
  - b. Make what is just unjust, and what is unjust just
  - c. Make what is right to appear crooked, and what is crooked to appear right

### Deepest sense:<sup>57</sup>

1. Blaspheming<sup>58</sup>
2. Falsifying the truth and good of the Word of God
3. Proving a doctrinal falsity to be true
  - a. This is done by confirming the doctrinal falsity by means of...
    - 1) Fallacies,
      - a) [A fallacy is a mistaken belief, especially one based on unsound argument.]
    - 2) Appearances,
    - 3) Fabrications,
    - 4) Matters of knowledge falsely applied,
    - 5) Fallacious arguments (“sophistries”),
    - 6) And the like.
  - b. Note: The confirmations themselves, also the consequent persuasions, are false testimonies, thus they are false witnesses.
4. Example: Priestly leaders who...<sup>59</sup>
  - a. Falsify the truth of the Word
  - b. Pervert its good

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# You Shall Not Bear False Witness Against Your Neighbor.

## Quick Reference

- from -

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

Emanuel Swedenborg

**Earthly (literal) meaning:** In the literal sense, bearing false witness means...<sup>60</sup>

1. Playing the part of a false witness.
2. Lying.
  - a. Uttering a lie.
3. Defaming.

**Spiritual meaning:** In the spiritual sense, bearing false witness means...<sup>61</sup>

1. Declaring some false thing to be true, or some evil thing to be good,
  - a. And persuading others that it is so,
  - b. Or vice versa.

**Heavenly meaning:** In the highest sense, bearing false witness means...<sup>62</sup>

1. Blaspheming the Lord and the Word.

**“Bearing false witness,” in general, means the following:**<sup>63</sup>

1. Maintaining the general opinion that to be saved consists in believing this or that thing that the church teaches, and not in living (or “keeping”) the commandments (which are, *Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness*) in both their literal and deeper meanings.
2. In other words, believing that works are not regarded by God, but only faith (or “faith alone”).
3. Note: To the extent that people are in these evils they have no faith.
4. Imagining that being saved consists in believing this or that thing that is taught by the church, while remaining evil in feeling, desire, and character.
  - a. Trusting these lying words<sup>64</sup>
  - b. Stealing, murdering, committing adultery, swearing falsely, and then coming and standing before Jehovah and saying, “We are delivered.”<sup>65</sup>

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# You Shall Not Bear False Witness Against Your Neighbor.

## Quick Reference

- from -

*True Christianity*

Emanuel Swedenborg

### Earthly (literal) meaning:<sup>66</sup>

1. In the earthly sense nearest the letter of Scripture, bearing false witness against your neighbor means...
  - a. Acting the part of false witness...
    - 1) Before a judge,
    - 2) Or before others not in a court of justice,
    - 3) Against a person who is rashly accused of any evil,
    - 4) And supporting the accusation by...
      - a) The name of God,
      - b) Anything else that is holy,
      - c) Or by your personal influence and the strength of personal reputation.
2. In a wider earthly sense, bearing false witness against your neighbor means...
  - a. All kinds of lies and hypocrisies in civil life which look to an evil goal.
  - b. Slandering and defaming your neighbor, to the injury of his or her honor, name, and reputation.
3. In the widest earthly sense, bearing false witness against your neighbor means...
  - a. Plots, cunning strategies, or premeditated evils against anyone.
    - 1) Note: These things come from various sources, such as resentment, hatred, revenge, envy, a desire to match or surpass (emulation), and the like.
      - a) These evils—resentment, etc.—conceal within them the bearing of false witness.

**Spiritual meaning:** In the spiritual sense, bearing false witness against your neighbor means...<sup>67</sup>

1. Persuading anyone that...
  - a. False belief is true belief,
  - b. And that evil of life is good of life,
  - c. Or vice versa,
  - d. Doing this from purpose or intent to deceive, not from ignorance,
    - 1) In other words, doing this after you've learned what is true and good, not before.
2. Working a lie.<sup>68</sup>
3. Speaking a lie.<sup>69</sup>

4. Teaching your tongue to speak a lie.<sup>70</sup>
5. False speaking.<sup>71</sup>
6. Speaking from what is your own, that is, speaking from yourself, rather than from the Lord.<sup>72</sup>
7. Lying with intent to deceive.<sup>73</sup>
8. Being a person of deceit.<sup>74</sup>
9. Note: A "lie" in Scripture means what is false.

**Some of the things that underlie the bearing of false witness against your neighbor include the following:**

1. Making a covenant with death.<sup>75</sup>
2. Making a vision with hell.<sup>76</sup>
3. Rebelliousness.<sup>77</sup>
4. Unwillingness to hear the law of Jehovah.<sup>78</sup>
5. Deceit.
  - a. Scripture: Their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.<sup>79</sup>
6. Intent to deceive.<sup>80</sup>
7. Making a lie your trust.<sup>81</sup>
8. Hiding yourself in falsehood [i.e., in lies].<sup>82</sup>

**Heavenly meaning:** In the highest sense, bearing false witness against your neighbor means...

1. Blaspheming the Lord and the Word,<sup>83</sup>
  - a. Thus banishing truth itself from the church.<sup>84</sup>
2. Speaking falsities from deceit or on purpose,<sup>85</sup>
  - a. Uttering them in a tone that imitates spiritual affection,<sup>86</sup>
  - b. And still more if a person mingles with them truths from the Word of God, which are thus falsified;<sup>87</sup>
  - c. In these ways, playing the part of what the ancients called a sorcerer, python, and serpent of the tree of knowledge of good and evil,<sup>88</sup>
  - d. Or in other words, being a falsifier, liar, and deceiver.<sup>89</sup>
3. Such things may be likened to the following:<sup>90</sup>
  - a. People who talk to those they hate in a bland and friendly manner, while taking hold of a dagger behind them with which to kill them.<sup>91</sup>
  - b. Those who poison their swords and thus attack their enemies.<sup>92</sup>
  - c. Those who mix hemlock with water.<sup>93</sup>
  - d. Those who poison with wine, confectionaries, or sweet tasting foods.<sup>94</sup>
  - e. Handsome and seductive harlots infected with venereal diseases.<sup>95</sup>
  - f. Stinging shrubs, which when brought near the nostrils hurt the olfactory fibers.<sup>96</sup>
    - 1) [Olfactory fibers are fibers related to the sense of smell.]
  - g. Sweetened poisons.<sup>97</sup>
  - h. Manure, which when dried emits a fragrant odor in autumn.<sup>98</sup>
  - i. Note: Such are described in the Word of God by leopards.<sup>99</sup>

# Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> SH 8908:3, Jn. 8:44  
<sup>2</sup> SH 8908:4, Jer. 9:5  
<sup>3</sup> SH 8908:3  
<sup>4</sup> SH 8908:4, Nah. 3:1  
<sup>5</sup> SH 8908:3, Jn. 8:44  
<sup>6</sup> SH 8908:4, Jer. 9:5  
<sup>7</sup> SH 8907  
<sup>8</sup> SH 8908:1,3  
<sup>9</sup> SH 8908:3-4  
<sup>10</sup> SH 8908:1  
<sup>11</sup> SH 8908:1 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>12</sup> SH 8908:3 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>13</sup> SH 8908:1 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>14</sup> SH 8908:2  
<sup>15</sup> SH 8908:2  
<sup>16</sup> SH 8907-8  
<sup>17</sup> SH 8907-8  
<sup>18</sup> SH 8908:2 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>19</sup> SH 8908:3, Jn. 8:44  
<sup>20</sup> SH 8908:4, Ezek. 13:6-9  
<sup>21</sup> SH 8908:4, Isa. 28:15  
<sup>22</sup> SH 8908:3  
<sup>23</sup> SH 8908:4, Jer. 23:32  
<sup>24</sup> SH 8908:4, Ezek. 13:6-9  
<sup>25</sup> SH 8908:4, Isa. 30:9  
<sup>26</sup> SH 8908:3, Jn. 8:44  
<sup>27</sup> SH 8908:4, Isa. 16:6  
<sup>28</sup> SH 8908:4, Jer. 9:5  
<sup>29</sup> SH 8908:2  
<sup>30</sup> SH 8908:4, Isa. 16:6  
<sup>31</sup> SH 8908:4, Isa. 16:6  
<sup>32</sup> SH 8908:2  
<sup>33</sup> SH 8908:3,4  
<sup>34</sup> SH 8908:2  
<sup>35</sup> SH 8908:2  
<sup>36</sup> SH 8908:2  
<sup>37</sup> SH 8908:2  
<sup>38</sup> SH 8908:3  
<sup>39</sup> SH 8908:4, Isa. 30:9  
<sup>40</sup> SH 8908:4, Rev. 22:15  
<sup>41</sup> SH 8908:4, Isa. 28:15  
<sup>42</sup> SH 8908:4, Isa. 28:15  
<sup>43</sup> SH 8908:4, Zeph. 3:13  
<sup>44</sup> SH 8908:4, Jer. 23:32  
<sup>45</sup> SH 8908:4, Ezek. 13:6-9  
<sup>46</sup> SH 8908:4, Ezek. 13:6-9  
<sup>47</sup> SH 8908:4, Ezek. 13:6-9  
<sup>48</sup> AE 1019:2  
<sup>49</sup> AE 1019:2  
<sup>50</sup> AE 1019:2  
<sup>51</sup> AE 935:2, 949:3  
<sup>52</sup> AE 935:2, 949:3  
<sup>53</sup> AE 1019:2

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- <sup>54</sup> AE 1019:2  
<sup>55</sup> AE 1019:2 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>56</sup> AE 1019:2 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>57</sup> AE 1019:2 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>58</sup> AE 935:2, 949:3  
<sup>59</sup> AE 1019:2 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>60</sup> Life 87 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>61</sup> Life 87 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>62</sup> Life 87 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>63</sup> Life 91 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>64</sup> Life 91, Jer. 7:2-4,9-11  
<sup>65</sup> Life 91, Jer. 7:2-4,9-11  
<sup>66</sup> TC 321 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>67</sup> TC 322 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>68</sup> TC 322, Jer. 3:10  
<sup>69</sup> TC 322, Mic. 6:12, Jn. 7:44  
<sup>70</sup> TC 322, Jer. 9:5,6  
<sup>71</sup> TC 322  
<sup>72</sup> TC 322, Jn. 7:44  
<sup>73</sup> TC 322  
<sup>74</sup> TC 322, Ps. 5:6  
<sup>75</sup> TC 322, Isa. 28:15  
<sup>76</sup> TC 322, Isa. 28:15  
<sup>77</sup> TC 322, Isa. 30:9  
<sup>78</sup> TC 322, Isa. 30:9  
<sup>79</sup> TC 322, Isa. 30:9  
<sup>80</sup> TC 322  
<sup>81</sup> TC 322, Isa. 28:15  
<sup>82</sup> TC 322, Isa. 28:15  
<sup>83</sup> TC 323  
<sup>84</sup> TC 323  
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