

# You Shall Not Covet....

## Overview

The commandment, *You shall not covet your neighbor's house*, and the commandment, *You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's*, are two distinct but related commandments. Because of their relatedness, they are dealt with together in Swedenborg's writings and also in this *Sourcebook*. Here are some of the things that are meant by coveting:

- Craving
  - Craving the goods of others
  - Any selfish or materialistic craving
- Desiring or longing to commit any of the evils contained within the Ten Commandments
- Self-centered governance, rule, or control; domination
  - Longing to control the way other people feel, think, and/or act
  - Longing to subject other people to your own authority or bidding
  - Longing to control your own life or your surrounding environment in a self-focused, self-centered way

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

- Greed, stinginess, selfishly withholding
- Envy
- Comparing yourself to others
- Self-absorption
- Etc.

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## Quick Reference

- from -

*Secrets of Heaven*

Emanuel Swedenborg

### Some definitions:

1. The word “coveting” means to will from an evil love, that is, from the [self-centered] love of self or the [self-centered] love of the world.<sup>1</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.”]
2. Jesus said, “If anyone looks on a strange woman so that he lusts after her, he has committed adultery with her already in his heart.”<sup>2</sup>
  - a. “Lusting after,” in this scripture, means to will, and unless fears held you back, to do.<sup>3</sup>
3. “Coveting” and “lusting after” have to do with desire and longing for evil and falsity.<sup>4</sup>
  - a. They are desire and longing the come forth from the self-centered love of self or of the world.<sup>5</sup>
  - b. They are what an evil love breathes forth.<sup>6</sup>
  - c. This desire and this longing also come from an evil will, thus from an evil heart.
  - d. Other things that come forth from an evil will/heart are murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, and false witness.<sup>7</sup>
  - e. “Coveting” and “lusting after” therefore have to do not only with desires and longings that come from the self-centered love of self and love of the world; they also have to do with all forms of evil that come forth from these loves.<sup>8</sup>

(Cont.)

### **Not coveting includes being wary of certain things:**

1. Beware of the self-centered love of self and love of the world, lest the evils that are contained in the preceding commandments of the Decalogue (especially murder, adultery, stealing, and bearing false witness against your neighbor) enter your will, and so come forth from there.<sup>9</sup>
  - a. Note: All evils (especially murder, adultery, stealing, and bearing false witness against your neighbor) come forth from the self-centered love of self and love of the world as from a fountain.<sup>10</sup>
2. Beware lest evils enter through your thought into your will and come forth from there.<sup>11</sup>
  - a. In other words, beware lest evil be received from your thought into your will, and go forth from there into speech and action.<sup>12</sup>
  - b. Notes:
    - 1) The things that enter only into the thought of a person, and not through the thought into the will, do not defile him or her. These things are said in New Testament Scripture to go out through the belly into the toilet. But the things that enter through the thought into the will, these things defile a person, because they become his or her own. They are said to enter a person's heart and to come forth from there.<sup>13</sup>
    - 2) Evil and falsity are injected into the thought of a person from hell, and they are sent back again to that place. These things cannot defile the person, because they are sent back. For people cannot stand apart from thinking evil, but from doing it. But as soon as they receive evil from their thought into their will, then it does not go out of them but enters into them, and this is called "coming forth out of the heart." The things that come forth from there defile a person, because what a person desires in his or her will goes forth into speech and action, to the extent that external bonds do not forbid, which are fear of the law, and fear for the loss of reputation, honor, gain, and life.<sup>14</sup>
3. Beware of "striving" and "motion" within yourself. In other words, beware of will and action.<sup>15</sup>
4. Beware of your underlying goals or "ends" in life.<sup>16</sup>
  - a. This caution is evident in the Lord's words, "Whoever looks on a strange woman in order to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart."<sup>17</sup>
5. Note: To do evil to a person is not only to do so in act, but also to *will* to do it.<sup>18</sup>

### **What is meant by a person's "house," and by the things within that house:<sup>19</sup>**

1. The things that are mentioned in the ninth and tenth commandments of the Decalogue, and that are not to be coveted, symbolically mean all the goods of love and truths of faith in one network, as follows:
  - a. "House" symbolically means all good in general.
  - b. "Wife" means all truth in general.
  - c. "Male servant" means desire or affection for spiritual truth.
  - d. "Female servant" means desire or affection for spiritual good.
  - e. "Ox" means desire or affection for earthly good.

- f. "Donkey" means desire or affection for earthly truth.
- 2. These are the things that are "not to be coveted," that is, which are not to be taken away from anyone, or to which harm must not be done.
  - a. Note: Not coveting includes not taking away the goods and truths of faith from anyone, and not doing harm to anyone.

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# You Shall Not Covet....

## Quick Reference

- from -

*The Apocalypse Explained*

Emanuel Swedenborg

### **“Coveting” (in general) includes the following:**

1. Coveting the houses of others.<sup>20</sup>
2. The love and consequent lust for possessing the goods of others.<sup>21</sup>
3. Notes:<sup>22</sup>
  - a. There are two forms of love from which all lusts arise and flow forth, like streams from their fountains. They are:
    - 1) The self-centered love of the world (ninth commandment) and
    - 2) The self-centered love of self (tenth commandment).
  - b. These loves are the starting points of all lusts.
  - c. Lust is defined as love continually desiring, longing for, and willing.
    - 1) Specifically, lust is the love of evil continually desiring, longing for, and willing.

### **In general, not coveting includes the following:**

1. Not longing or willing to possess and divert to yourself the goods of others against their will.<sup>23</sup>

### **Coveting a neighbor’s house includes...**

1. Lust that belongs to the [self-centered] love of the world.<sup>24</sup>

### **Not coveting a neighbor’s house includes...**<sup>25</sup>

1. Not coveting his or her goods, which in general are possessions and wealth.
2. Not taking them to yourself by evil arts, that is, by cunning.

### **What is meant by the things within a person’s house:**<sup>26</sup>

1. The things within a person’s house, (namely, the wife, male servant, female servant, ox, and donkey) symbolically mean the things that are the person’s own, as follows:<sup>27</sup>
  - a. “Wife” symbolically means desire or affection for spiritual truth and good.
  - b. “Male servant” means desire or affection for rational truth that serves the spiritual part of the person.
  - c. “Female servant” means desire or affection for rational good that serves the spiritual part of the person.
  - d. “Ox” means desire or affection for earthly good.
  - e. “Donkey” means desire or affection for earthly truth.

(Cont.)

**Coveting a neighbor's wife, male servant, etc. includes the following:**<sup>28</sup>

1. Longing to possess the desires or affections of others.
2. Lusting for those desires or affections.
3. Note: Lusting for the desires or affections of others relates especially to a love of ruling over them (or dominating them).
  - a. It is by means of this love and its lust that people make what belongs to others to be their own.
4. Willing and eagerly desiring to subject a person to your own authority or bidding.
  - a. Note: Coveting the desires or affections of others means to will and eagerly desire to subject a person to your own authority or bidding.

**Not coveting a neighbor's wife, male servant, etc. includes the following:**

1. Not desiring or longing for these things.<sup>29</sup>
  - a. Such desire and longing are the same as lust for what is a person's own, that is, for the things that belong to him or her.<sup>30</sup>
2. Not willing to rule over others.<sup>31</sup>
3. Not willing to subject others to yourself.<sup>32</sup>

**Notes on the relationship of lust to love:**<sup>33</sup>

1. All lusts come forth from [self-centered] love.
2. [Self-centered] love is what covets.



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## Quick Reference

- from -

*True Christianity*

Emanuel Swedenborg

### **The ninth and tenth commandments teach and urge the following:<sup>34</sup>**

1. Evils must not be done.
2. Evils must not be lusted after.
3. Note: He or she who abstains from doing evils and yet lusts to do them, still does them.
4. A person ought to be cleansed of "Pharisaic internals," which are lusts for things forbidden in the prior commandments, as follows:<sup>35</sup>
  - a. You shall have no other gods before My faces.
  - b. You shall not take the name of Jehovah your God in vain.
  - c. You shall not murder.
  - d. You shall not commit adultery.
  - e. You shall not steal.
  - f. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
5. The things forbidden in the commandments prior to the ninth and tenth commandments are not to be lusted after.
6. Lusts are to be removed.

### **Not coveting, in the spiritual sense, includes the following:<sup>36</sup>**

1. Not lusting against the spirit.<sup>37</sup>
  - a. Note: The ninth and tenth commandments forbid all lusts that are contrary to the spirit,<sup>38</sup>
    - 1) Thus, all lusts that are contrary to the spiritual things of the church.
      - a) The spiritual things of the church relate chiefly to faith and goodwill.
2. Not walking after the flesh in lust.<sup>39</sup>
  - a. Note: Unless lusts are subdued, the flesh let loose would rush into every wickedness.<sup>40</sup>
3. All things that have been presented in the spiritual sense of the prior commandments must not be lusted after.
4. Likewise, all things that have been presented in the heavenly sense of the prior commandments must not be lusted after.

### **Notes on lusts of the flesh and desires of the spirit:<sup>41</sup>**

1. The lusts of the flesh, the eye, and the other senses, separated from the affections, desires, and delights of the spirit are completely like the lusts of beasts. In themselves they are beast-like.

2. The lusts of the flesh may be compared to the following:
  - a. Shriveled and dried up grapes and wild grapes.
  - b. Stables where there are donkeys, goats, and swine.
  - c. Dross
    - 1) [Dross is something that is worthless; rubbish.]
  - d. Limestone.
  - e. Coral.
3. By comparison, the affections and desires of the spirit may be compared to the following:
  - a. Juicy and delicious grapes;
    - 1) Also the taste of the wine that is pressed from them.
  - b. Stables where there are noble horses, sheep, and lambs.
  - c. Gold.
  - d. Silver.
  - e. Rubies.
4. To the extent that anyone indulges the lusts of the flesh, he or she is a beast and a wild beast.

**The connection between lust and action (or behavior):<sup>42</sup>**

1. Lust and action are connected...
  - a. Like blood and flesh.
  - b. Like flame and oil.
2. Lust is within a person's behavior...
  - a. As air from the lungs is within breathing or speaking.
  - b. As wind is in a sail when a ship is moving.
  - c. As water is on the wheel that gives motion and action to machinery.

# Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> SH 8910:1  
<sup>2</sup> SH 8910:4  
<sup>3</sup> SH 8910:4  
<sup>4</sup> SH 8910:1,5  
<sup>5</sup> SH 8910:1,5,6  
<sup>6</sup> SH 8910:1,5,6  
<sup>7</sup> SH 8910:1,5,6  
<sup>8</sup> SH 8910:1,5,6  
<sup>9</sup> SH 8909-10  
<sup>10</sup> SH 8910:6  
<sup>11</sup> SH 8910:2,3  
<sup>12</sup> SH 8910:3  
<sup>13</sup> SH 8910:2,3, Matt. 15:11,17-19  
<sup>14</sup> SH 8910:3  
<sup>15</sup> SH 8911  
<sup>16</sup> SH 8911  
<sup>17</sup> SH 8911, Matt. 5:27-28  
<sup>18</sup> SH 8911  
<sup>19</sup> SH 8911 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>20</sup> AE 949:3  
<sup>21</sup> AE 949:3  
<sup>22</sup> AE 1021:2 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>23</sup> AE 935:2  
<sup>24</sup> AE 1022:3  
<sup>25</sup> AE 1021:2 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>26</sup> AE 1022:2 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>27</sup> See also AE 935:2, 949:3.  
<sup>28</sup> AE 1022:2 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>29</sup> AE 1022:2  
<sup>30</sup> AE 1022:2  
<sup>31</sup> AE 935:2  
<sup>32</sup> AE 935:2  
<sup>33</sup> AE 1022:3 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>34</sup> TC 326 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>35</sup> See also Matt. 23:25-26, Exod. 20:3-7,13-16.  
<sup>36</sup> TC 327 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>37</sup> See also Gal. 5:17.  
<sup>38</sup> See also Gal. 5:17.  
<sup>39</sup> See also Gal. 5:17, James 1:14-15, 2 Epis.  
2:9-10.  
<sup>40</sup> See also Gal. 5:17, James 1:14-15, 2 Epis.  
2:9-10.  
<sup>41</sup> TC 328 unless otherwise noted  
<sup>42</sup> TC 328 unless otherwise noted