

The Ten Commandments

Week 5

The Seventh & Eighth Commandments



He who walks in justice and speaks uprightly;
he who despises oppression for gain,
who shakes his hands from holding a bribe;
who stops his ears from hearing bloods,
and shuts his eyes from seeing evil –
he shall dwell on high.

Isaiah 33:15-16

(with highlights)

Day One

Exod. 20: 15, Deut. 5:19. **Thou shalt not steal.**

Life 80. IN PROPORTION AS ANYONE SHUNS THEFTS OF EVERY KIND AS SINS, IN THE SAME PROPORTION HE LOVES HONESTY.

To “steal,” in the natural sense, means not only to commit theft and robbery, but also to defraud, and under some pretext take from another his goods. But in the spiritual sense to “steal” means to deprive another of his truths of faith and his goods of charity. And in the highest sense to “steal” means to take away from the Lord that which is His and attribute it to oneself, and thus to claim justice and merit for oneself. These are “thefts of every kind.” And they also make one as do adulteries of every kind and murders of every kind.... The reason why they make one is that they are one within another.

Life 81. The evil of theft enters more deeply into a man than any other evil, because it is conjoined with cunning and deceit; and cunning and deceit insinuate themselves even into the spiritual mind of man in which is his thought with understanding.

Life 82. That in proportion as anyone shuns theft as a sin, in the same proportion he loves honesty [*sinceritas*], is because theft is also fraud, and fraud and honesty are two opposite things, so that in proportion as anyone is not in theft, in the same proportion he is in honesty.

Life 83. Honesty is to be understood as including integrity, justice, faithfulness, and uprightness. No man can be in these [qualities] from himself so as to love them from and for themselves. But he who shuns as sins fraud, cunning, and deceit is in these [honest qualities], and therefore he is in them not from himself but from the Lord.... Such is the case with a priest, a magistrate, a judge, a businessman, and with everyone in his own office and his own work.

Life 86. Man possesses a natural mind and a spiritual mind. The natural mind is below, and the spiritual mind above. The natural mind is the mind of man's world, and the spiritual mind is the mind of his heaven. The natural mind may be called the animal mind, and the spiritual mind the human mind. Man is distinguished from the animal by possessing a spiritual mind. By means of this mind he can be in heaven while still in the world; and it is by means of this mind also that man lives after death.

Life 86:2. As to the *understanding*, a man is able to be in the spiritual mind and consequently in heaven. But as to the *will*, he cannot be in the spiritual mind and consequently in heaven unless he shuns evils as sins. And if he is not there as to his will, he is still not in heaven, for the will drags the understanding down, and causes it to be just as natural and animal as it is itself.

Life 86:3. Man may be compared to a garden, his understanding to light, and his will to heat. In wintertime a garden is in light but not in accompanying heat, but in summertime it is in light accompanied by heat. Just so, a man who is in the light of the understanding alone is like a garden in wintertime, whereas one who is in the light of the understanding and at the same time in the heat of the will is like a garden in summertime. Moreover, the understanding is wise from spiritual light, and the will loves from spiritual heat, for spiritual light is Divine wisdom, and spiritual heat is Divine love.

Life 86:4. So long as a man does not shun evils as sins, the lusts of evils block up the interiors of the natural mind on the part of the will, being like a thick veil there, and like a black cloud beneath the spiritual mind, and they prevent its being opened. But in fact, as soon as a man shuns evils as sins, the Lord inflows from heaven, takes away the veil, dispels the cloud, opens the spiritual mind, and so introduces the man into heaven.

Questions and thoughts for reflection

1. How many of these are examples of stealing:
 - Wasting someone's time
 - Stealing someone's enjoyment of their work by constant disapproval and fault-finding
 - Gossip, defamation or slander, that takes away a person's ability to function and improve
 - Lowering the dignity of someone's use by making jokes about him or his work
 - Stealing our children's future by giving them a lousy upbringing, or by deficit spending
 - Giving ourselves credit for work someone else did
 - Giving ourselves credit for work that really the Lord did
2. What other kinds of theft have you seen? (What other kinds of theft do you struggle against?)
3. Is sneaky, secret theft worse than armed robbery?
4. Why is it essential for us to shun taking other people's things **as a sin against God** rather than just as a matter of avoiding trouble?

Day Two

John 10:1, 10: **He who does not enter by the door into the sheepfold but climbs up some other way is a thief and a robber. The thief does not come but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.**

TCR 317. In the natural sense, this commandment means, according to its letter, not to steal or to rob or to commit piracy in time of peace; and in general, not to take away anyone's goods secretly or under any pretext. It also extends to all swindles and illegitimate gains, usuries, and extortions; and again, to frauds in paying taxes and duties and in repaying debts. Laborers transgress this commandment when they do their work unfaithfully and deceitfully; merchants, when they practice deceit in their merchandise, in weight, in measure, and in their accounts; officers, when they deduct from the soldiers' wages; judges, when they are influenced in their judgments by friendship, bribery, nepotism or other reasons, so perverting laws or investigations, and depriving others of the lawful possession of their goods.

TCR 318. In the spiritual sense, to steal means to deprive others of the truths of their faith, which is done by means of falsities and heresies. Priests who minister solely for gain or from a lust for honor, and teach what they see or could see from the Word to be untrue, are spiritual thieves, since they take away from the people the means of salvation, which are the truths of faith. Such are called thieves in the Word in the following passages:

[See John 10:1, 10 above.]

Do not lay up treasures on earth, but in heaven, where **thieves** do not come in and **steal** (Matt. 6:19, 20).

If **thieves** come to thee, if **robbers** by night – how thou art cut off – will they not **steal** what is enough for them? (Obad. verse 5).

They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up on the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a **thief** (Joel 2:9).

They have committed falsehood, and the **thief** comes in, and the troop spreads itself outside (Hos. 7:1).

TCR 319. In the celestial sense, thieves mean those who take away from the Lord His Divine power; also those who claim for themselves His merit and justice. These, even if they adore God, still do not trust in Him but only in themselves, and also do not believe in God, but only in themselves.

TCR 320. Those who teach what is false and heretical and persuade the common people that it is true and orthodox, although they read the Word, and from it may know what is false and what is true, also those who by fallacies confirm falsities of religion and seduce men thereby, may be compared to impostors and their swindles of all kinds. And because such swindles in the spiritual sense are essentially thefts, such persons may be compared to counterfeiters who strike false coins and gild them or give them outwardly the color of gold, and pass them off as pure coins; then again to those who know how to cut and polish crystals skillfully and harden them, and who sell them as diamonds; also to men who carry apes or monkeys, clothed like men and with veiled faces on horses or mules through cities, and proclaim that these are noblemen of an ancient stock.

They are also like those who put on false faces smeared with paints of various colors over the living and natural face, concealing its beauty; and they are also like men 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.

They may also be likened to those who by theatricals lead men away from true Divine worship, or from churches to playhouses. Those who establish all kinds of falsity, regarding truths as of no moment, and who discharge priestly functions solely for gain and a lust for honor, being thus spiritual thieves, may be likened to those thieves who carry keys with which they can open the door of any house; also to leopards and eagles, that with sharp eyes search for the fattest prey.

Questions and thoughts for reflection

1. John 10:1, 10: How might we be led at this day to “climb up some other way” toward heaven or spiritual life, instead of approaching the Lord directly, who is the Door of the sheepfold, and the Good Shepherd?
2. TCR 317 mentions “frauds in paying taxes and other duties.” Some people feel that since taxes are so high, and what the government does with them is so wrong, it is okay to evade paying taxes wherever you can, including by illegal means (provided you can avoid getting caught). What is your view? Why?
3. TCR 319: Most people at times have trouble with trusting in the Lord, while proudly or anxiously ascribing success or failure to themselves. Is this stealing from the Lord?
4. Were theft and swindles a major factor in causing the current recession?
5. TCR 320: Some people see signs in our General Church of people being led away from true Divine worship to mere theater. How can we avoid such a thing happening in Kempton? Where is the line between true, spiritual worship having elements that appeal to our natural affections, versus deteriorating into mere entertainment?

Day Three

Exodus 21:16

He who steals [i.e., kidnaps] a man, and sells him... if he be found in his hand, dying he shall die.

AC 8905. **Thou shalt not steal**, signifies that no one's spiritual goods must be taken away from him, and that those things which belong to the Lord are not to be attributed to self.

AC 8906. ...That this is signified by "stealing" is because riches and wealth in the spiritual sense are the knowledges of good and truth, in general all those things which are of faith and charity, that is, which are of spiritual life in man. Therefore, to take these things away from anyone is "to steal" in the spiritual sense. And because all spiritual goods, that is, all things of faith and charity are from the Lord alone, and absolutely nothing from man, therefore by "stealing" is also signified to attribute to oneself what belongs to the Lord.

Those who do this are also called "thieves and robbers" in John 10:1, 2, 9, 10 [quoted in yesterday's reading]. "To enter by the door into the sheepfold" is to enter by the Lord, for the Lord is the "door," as He Himself says; "the sheep" are those who are in charity and thence in faith. These enter by the Lord when they acknowledge that everything of faith and charity is from Him, for then faith and charity flow in from Him. But to attribute them to others, especially to themselves, is to take them away, thus "to kill and to destroy." Those who attribute to themselves what is the Lord's also place merit in works, and make themselves righteous....

AC 8906:3. [In Hosea and Joel, quoted yesterday], the last state of the church is called "a thief who will climb up into the houses, and enter in through the windows." [That is,] falsity... will then take possession of the whole man, both of his will and of his understanding, and thus will take away all truth and good. Something similar is meant by a "thief" in Obadiah... and Matthew [also quoted yesterday].

AC 8906:4. ...If a man be found who has stolen a soul of his brothers of the sons of Israel, and has made gain on him while he sold him, that thief shall be killed, that thou mayest put away the evil from the midst of thee (Deut. 24:7).

In the internal sense, “the men of the sons of Israel” mean those who are in the truths and goods of faith. Thus in the abstract sense they mean the truths and goods of faith.... And therefore “to steal a man of the sons of Israel” is to take these [truths and goods] away, and “to sell him” is to cast them off, and also to make them serve. For the truths and goods of faith, being from the Lord, are in a free state, and serve the Lord alone. But when they are cast off, they then come into a servile state, for they serve any evil of the love of self or of the love of the world, thus any bodily lust. Hence comes the derivation and correspondence of the above law. And as then from being free, the truth and good of the church become servile, thus from being alive they become dead, therefore the penalty, which is the outcome, is “death.”

AC 1798:3. Take only the Precepts of the Decalogue. The first of these is to worship the Lord God. He who has the life of love or of charity worships the Lord God, because this is his life. Another precept is to keep the Sabbath. He who is in the life of love, or in charity, keeps the Sabbath holy, for nothing is sweeter to him than to worship the Lord, and to glorify Him every day. The precept, “Thou shalt not murder,” is altogether of charity. He who loves his neighbor as himself shudders at doing anything that injures him, still more at killing him. So too the precept, “Thou shalt not steal;” for **he who has the life of charity would rather give of his own to his neighbor than take anything away from him.** And so with the precept, “Thou shalt not commit adultery:” he who is in the life of charity rather guards his neighbor’s wife, lest anyone should offer her such injury, and regards adultery as a crime against conscience, and such as destroys conjugal love and its duties. To covet the things that are the neighbor’s is also contrary to those who are in the life of charity, for it is of charity to desire good to others from oneself and one’s own. Such therefore by no means covet the things which are another’s.

Questions and thoughts for reflection

1. AC 8906 says, "...Riches and wealth in the spiritual sense are the knowledges of good and truth, in general all those things which are of faith and charity, that is, which are of spiritual life in man." Do you feel rich or blessed in having knowledge of the Word and of spiritual life? How might someone steal this knowledge away from you? How can you protect yourself against such spiritual (identity) theft?
2. Perhaps we see spiritual theft or robbery going on in the "selling" of the common falsities that the natural world is all there is; that cohabitation is just as good as marriage, or is an important test before you get married; that happiness comes from material things and status in society; and so forth. What other examples come to mind?
3. AC 8906:4. What might be an example of a truth or a good—something good the Church stands for—being kidnapped and made to serve some selfish purpose? Once someone accused Swedenborg of making up the whole concept of conjugal love and its blessings to lure people into the New Church (see CL 82:1). If that accusation were true, that would be an example of spiritual kidnapping. What are some other examples?

Day Four

Malachi 3:8-10

Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me. But you say, In what have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this, says Jehovah of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it.*

AC 6203. In regard to the origin of the influx of evil from hell, the case is this. When a man first from consent, then from purpose, and at last from the delight of affection, casts himself into evil, then a hell is opened which is in such evil (for the hells are distinct from one another according to evils and all their varieties), and there afterward takes place an influx from that hell. When a man comes into evil in this way, it clings to him, for the hell in the sphere of which he then is, is in its very delight when in its evil. And therefore it does not desist, but obstinately presses in, and causes the man to think about that evil, at first occasionally, and afterward as often as anything presents itself which is related to it, and at last it becomes with him that which reigns universally. And when this takes place, he then seeks for such things as confirm that it is not an evil, and this until he wholly persuades himself. And then, so far as he can, he studies to remove external bonds, and makes evils allowable and clever, and at last even becoming and honorable—such as adulteries, thefts effected by art and deceit, various kinds of arrogance and boasting, contempt for others, slanders, persecutions under an appearance of justice, and the like. The case with these evils is like that with downright thefts, which when committed of set purpose two or three times, cannot be desisted from; for they continually cling to the man's thought.

AC 6204. Be it known further that the evil which enters into the thought does no harm to the man, because evil is continually

infused by spirits from hell, and is continually repelled by angels. But when evil enters into the will, then it does harm, for then it also goes forth into act whenever external bonds do not restrain. Evil enters into the will by being kept in the thought, by consent, especially by act and the consequent delight.

DP 296:4. That the delight of evil mounts up from strength to strength is well known from thefts, robberies, plunderings, acts of revenge, tyranny, unlawful acquisition of wealth and other evils. Who does not feel the exaltation of delight as he succeeds in them and as he practices them without restraint? It is well known that a thief feels such delight in thefts that he cannot desist from them, and what is amazing, that he finds more pleasure in one stolen coin than in ten that are given him as a gift....

AE 1167. Take for example the commandment not to steal. Those who resist, as if from themselves, the lust of stealing and thus the lust of gaining wealth dishonestly and unjustly, saying in their hearts that this must not be done because it is contrary to the Divine law, thus contrary to God, and is in itself infernal, thus in itself evil—people like this, after some brief combats, are withdrawn from that evil, and are led by the Lord into the good that is called integrity, and into the good that is called justice. And then they begin to think about these goods, and... to look upon integrity from integrity, and upon justice from justice. And afterwards as they shun and turn away from the evil of this lust, they love these goods, and do them from love and not from compulsion. Such goods are from the Lord, because they are goods that are good in themselves. It is otherwise when the lust of gaining wealth dishonestly and unjustly remains with man. Then he cannot act honestly from honesty or justly from justice, thus not from the Lord, but only from self. For he acts honestly and justly only so that he may be believed to be honest and just with a view to securing greater gain and honor.... Such good has evil in it, since its quality is from the purpose of making gains dishonestly and unjustly. Everyone can see that such good cannot become good in itself until the evil has been removed. It is the same with all the other commandments of the Decalogue.

Questions and thoughts for reflection

1. Malachi 3:8-10. In what ways might we rob God? What is the spiritual meaning of tithing? What kind of natural tithing or contribution of time, energy and money might this point to? How do we balance the uses of our homes with the uses of the church, our country, and our community?
2. AC 6203 is a scary passage! It so clearly presents the way we slide into evils: 1) Consent—it's OK; 2) Purpose—I mean to do it; 3) Delight—and now we're hooked. It explains how addictions take place.
3. AC 6203: What are some examples today of people trying to make evils look "allowable and clever, and at last even becoming and honorable"?
4. AC 6203e: How are we meant to take the last part, about a person becoming unable to desist from thefts? What other teachings might apply? What does this say about the notion of "once a thief, always a thief"? Compare DP 296 on the next page.
5. AC 6204: We are not blamed for evils that just enter our thoughts. It's the ones we give consent to that are serious.
6. AE 1167. See how important it is to do the combat against evils early, so that evils do not get out of hand!

Day Five

Exodus 20:16; Deuteronomy 5:20

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

TCR 321. “Bearing false witness against the neighbor,” or testifying falsely, means, in the natural sense nearest to the letter, to act the part of a false witness before a judge, or before others not in a court of justice, against one who is rashly accused of any evil, and to support the accusation by the name of God or anything else that is holy, or by oneself and by such things as belong to reputation of one’s name. In a wider natural sense this commandment forbids all kinds of lies and hypocrisies in civil life which look to an evil end; also criticizing and slandering the neighbor, to the injury of his honor, name, and fame, on which the man’s whole character depends. In the widest natural sense, the commandment forbids treachery, deceit, and premeditated evil against anyone, which spring from various sources, such as enmity, hatred, revenge, envy, rivalry, and the like. For these evils conceal within them the bearing of false witness.

TCR 322. In the spiritual sense, “bearing false witness” means to persuade that falsity of belief is true belief and evil of life is good of life, and the reverse, doing this from purpose, not from ignorance; that is, doing this after one has learned what is true and good, not before; for the Lord says:

If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, We see; therefore your sin remains (John 9:41).

In the Word this kind of falsehood is called a “lie” and the intent is called “deceit,” as in the following passages:

We have made a covenant with death, and with hell we have made vision, for we have made a lie our trust, and in falsehood we have hid ourselves (Isa. 28:15).

This is a rebellious people, lying sons; they will not hear the law of Jehovah (Isa. 30:9).

From the prophet even to the priest, everyone works a lie (Jer. 8:10).

The inhabitants speak a lie; their tongue is deceitful in their mouth (Micah 6:12).

Thou wilt destroy those who speak a lie; Jehovah abhors the man of deceit (Ps. 5:6).

They have taught their tongue to speak a lie; their habitation is in the midst of deceit (Jer. 9:5, 6).

Because a “lie” means what is false, the Lord says:

That when the devil speaks a lie, he speaks from his own (John 8:44)

TCR 323. In the celestial sense, bearing false witness means blaspheming the Lord and the Word, thus banishing truth itself from the church. For the Lord is the Truth itself, as He is likewise the Word. On the other hand, to bear witness in this sense means to speak the truth, and testimony means the truth itself. For this reason, the Decalogue is called the “Testimony” And because the Lord is the truth itself, He says of Himself that He bears witness, that the Lord is the very truth... and that He bears witness, and witnesses of Himself....

TCR 324. Those who speak falsities from deceit or purposely, uttering them in a tone that imitates spiritual affection (and still more if they mingle with them truths from the Word, which are thus falsified), were by the ancients called sorcerers (see *Apocalypse Revealed*, n. 462), also pythons, and serpents of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These falsifiers, liars, and deceivers may be likened to men who talk to those they hate in a mild and friendly manner, and while talking hold behind them a dagger with which to kill. They may also be likened to those who poison their swords and thus attack their enemies; or to those who mix hemlock with water, or who poison with new wine and sugar icing. They may also be likened to charming and seductive harlots infected with a malignant contagious disease; to stinging shrubs, which when brought near to the nostrils, hurt the olfactory fibers; to sweetened poisons; and also to dung, which when dried emits in autumn a fragrant odor. Such are described in the Word by leopards (see *Apocalypse Revealed*, n. 572).

Questions and thoughts for reflection

1. Gossip is probably the most common form of bearing false witness. How do we distinguish false, evil gossip from information shared out of concern for someone in trouble?
2. TCR 321 says (halfway down): "In a wider natural sense this commandment forbids all kinds of lies and hypocrisies in civil life which look to an evil end." Does this imply that white lies, not for an evil end, are okay?
3. TCR 322: The differences between the spiritual sense of this commandment and the commandment against theft seem subtle. These two commandments are closely related. What makes deceit so dangerous is that we use self-deceit to excuse and confirm evils that we may have done rashly and might otherwise repent of. (AC 9013 is a scary passage on this.)
4. How can we help our children delay the onset of lying? How can we avoid setting them bad examples in discipline, etc.?
5. Flattery and too much praise is another form of deceit, dangerous both to the flatterer and the person flattered. When is praise useful and when is it not?

Day Six

Jeremiah 7:2-4, 9-11

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? Has this house become a den of robbers? Behold, I, even I, have seen it, says Jehovah.

Life 87. IN PROPORTION AS ANYONE SHUNS FALSE WITNESS OF EVERY KIND AS SIN, IN THE SAME PROPORTION HE LOVES THE TRUTH. 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 man 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 n. 57).

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

Life 89. In proportion as anyone loves the truth, in the same proportion he desires to know it, and in the same proportion he is affected at heart when he finds it. No one else comes into wisdom. And in proportion as anyone loves to do the truth, in the same proportion he is sensitive to the pleasantness of the light in which the truth is. It is the same with all the other things spoken of above:

with honesty 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, even though everything that is truly something is present in them.

Life 91. It is a common opinion at the present day that to be saved consists in believing this or that thing which the church teaches, and that it does not consist in keeping the commandments, which are, Do not murder, 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 anyone is in these evils, in that same proportion he has no faith.... Take counsel of reason and observe whether, so long as he is in the lust of these evils, any murderer, adulterer, thief, or false witness is able to have faith; and also, further, whether the lust 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, whoever imagines that being saved consists in believing this or that thing which is taught by the church, while himself remaining of such a character, must be a “foolish man,” in accordance with the words of the Lord in Matthew 7:26. Such a church is thus described in Jeremiah [on the facing page].

AC 8908:2. All with whom love of self or love of the world reigns, 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.

Questions and thoughts for reflection

1. The more we flee from deceit as a sin, the more we will love the truth. We are saved through the love of truth and the willingness to obey it, so we see how deadly deceit can be.
2. AC 8908:2 shows in part why evil people can be so convincing: they themselves are totally convinced that evil is good and vice versa, and are completely unwilling to look at the truth. See John 3:19-21:

And this is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were wicked. For everyone committing evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he who does the truth comes to the Light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they have been worked in God.