

## **THE COMMANDMENTS.**

*The Eighth Commandment:*

**Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.**

**1.** The things forbidden by this Commandment are (1) false evidence, (2) lies, (3) calumny or slander, (4) detraction or backbiting, and (5) rash judgments.

### **False Evidence.**

**2.** Here we refer only to untrue statements knowingly made in a court law.

**3.** It is always a mortal sin to give false evidence. He who gives it breaks also the Second Commandment by becoming a perjurer, since he is under oath to speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Also the false evidence may and often does result in injustice to individuals or even to a whole class, e. g., the condemnation of an innocent man, undeserved loss of property or reputation, unfair treatment of a particular class.

**4.** The perjurer is bound to repair as far as he can the wrong he has done.

**5.** Equally guilty with the perjurer is the man who produces such a witness, or who concocts false titles to property or special privileges, or, being himself in authority, sentences or procures others to sentence an innocent person.

### **Explanation of the Plate.**

**6.** *In the large picture* we see Our Lord taken by the Jews before Pilate, who is on his judgment seat. One of the Jews, pointing with one hand to Jesus, declares that he has heard Him tell the people that they ought not to pay tribute to Caesar. Now we know that this was untrue, for Jesus had on the contrary told them to « render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. (*Matt.* XXII, 21.)

**7.** Here is another instance of false evidence given, of which Our Lord was again the victim:

« And the chief priests and all the council sought for evidence against Jesus that they might put Him to death and found none. For many bore false witness against Him and their evidence were not agreeing. And some rising up, bore false witness against Him, saying: « We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple made with hands and within three days I will build another not made with hands. » And their witness did not agree. And the high priest rising up in the midst, asked Jesus, saying: « Answerest thou nothing to the things that are laid to thy charge by these men? » But He held His peace and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him and said to Him: « Art thou the Christ the son of the blessed God? » And Jesus said to him: « I am. And you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God and coming with the clouds of heaven. » (*Mark* XIV, 55-62.)

**8.** *In the small picture on the left* we see Jezebel, wife of Achab, king of Israel, being devoured by dogs. This wicked woman, wishing to put away Naboth who had refused to give up to Achab « the inheritance of his fathers », suborned two men to falsely swear that he had blasphemed against God and the king. Naboth was in consequence condemned and stoned to death. But Jezebel's crime did not go unpunished. Achab's successor, Jehu, who is shown in the picture on horseback, had her thrown down from the top of the palace and down her body was devoured by dogs. (*II Kings* XXI.)

**9.** A further instance is that of the Jews who gave false testimony against St. Stephen, as related in the Acts of the Apostles:

« And the word of the Lord increased and the number of the disciples was multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly. A great multitude also of the priests obeyed the faith. And Stephen full of grace and fortitude did great wonders and signs among the people. Now there arose some of that which is called the synagogue of the Libertines and of the Cyrenians, and

of the Alexandrians, and of them that were of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit that spoke. Then they suborned men to say, they had heard him speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God. And they stirred up the people and the ancients and the scribes, and running together, they took him and brought him to the council. And they set up false witnesses who said: « This man ceaseth not to speak words against the holy place and the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and shall change the traditions which Moses delivered unto us. » (*Acts*, VI, 7-14.)

**10.** *In the small picture on the right* we see Daniel, then only a boy of twelve. In front of him stands Susanna supported by her relations and friends. The two old men on the dais behind her had falsely sworn that they had surprised her in the act of committing an abominable sin, and she had consequently been condemned to death and was about to be led out to be stoned. It was at this point that the boy Daniel cried out that she was innocent. He proved that the two elders had given false testimony, with the result that it was they who were put to death. (*Dan.* XIII.)

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