The Commandments XII
Exodus XX: 17
Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's.
The sword of the Spirit which is the "word of God" is very sharp at the point - very keen as the edge; it pierces to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and is a discerning of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

We have reached the last commandment of the Moral Law. From iniquity lying in action we have been led down to iniquity lying in expression and now the resistless blade with one divine thrust enters the very heart, lays bare the inmost habitations of man's mysterious life and shows us iniquity in intention or desire. It reveals to us the secrets from where
all sin begins to be, and where it takes a sensible form, and whence it comes forth into the world of action.

Man looketh upon the outward appearance: God looketh upon within the heart, and here in the searching words of the last commandment the finger of the Holy Ghost points us, into these recesses it bids us look; these secessions it tells us we must study.

Within this clay temple, malleable with flesh and bone and muscle, there resided a stranger creator. In secessions and silences as the moments pass it fashions immaterial substance, thought and
feeling. These as they leave their birthplace instinct with life, are embodied in mind or aer and thus incarnated pass in sensible forms into the outer world. These external forms of speech & deeds we with our short sightedness too often mistake for that inward intent & desire compared with which they are but as the body to the soul, form to being, shadow to substance.

God looks differently upon humanity. He sees that sin commences in the heart, takes shape in the mouth, proceeds from the heart. Its conception & inception are there, out of the heart flow the issues of life, the springs whose streams clear on
Turbid are human lives. Back to this fountainhead goes the law of God: casts salt in the waters. Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, and covetousness which is idolatry, for which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience. Matt XV. 19.

Coloss. III: 5-6.

Here in the heart the Spirit discovers to us the prevailing form of evil desire covetousness or avarice—the most general perhaps the most fruitful of the three; carnal lusts, appetite, ambition, avarice.
Thou shalt not covet. The word means to desire earnestly—to long for. Lust after. In the repetition of the Decalogue Deut V:21. the word is rendered desire. It cannot be imagined that in itself desire is sinful; it is natural, involuntary, and cannot be inherently wrong. Appetites God gave man—a moderate indulgence of them is right and necessary. Sin lies in their excessive gratification. Hunger must be satisfied; the sin is not in eating but in gluttony; thirst must be assuaged; the sin is not in drinking but in intemperance. Passion craves clamors for indulgence; the sin is not in its natural gratification but in sensual—
Man naturally loves money - the sin is not in the appetite for wealth but in avarice. So he has a naturally a desire for honor, the sin lies not the appetite for power or distinction, but in an inordinate ambition.

In all these cases the sin lies not in the desire which if not normal is natural but in the degree in which it exists or the manner in which it develops or both. If it becomes supreme, taking the position and usurping the place of some higher and holier aspiration, then man is setting up an object of desire as one of worship; he is elevating to a throne what ought to be a sub
jeer. Hence Paul says covetousness is idolatry, for it makes a God of Gain, just as glutony deifies the stomach or as Paul says to the Philippians "whose God is their belly--as intemperance makes a God of appetite, sensuality of lust, avarice of gold & ambition of power. It is the false elevation we give to the desire which makes it an idol.

Again a right desire may seek unlawful indulgence. In this case it is still not the desire but the manner of its gratification in which lies the sin. Here it is not idolatry in the same sense as before yet it is still idolatry for we make the claims of principle practically subordinate to it.
It matters but little what occupies the nominal throne of our hearts. Whatsoever we serve, that is our God. Hence Covetousness is idolatry because in seeking gratification it stoops to unholy means, thus really occupying the supreme place in power. Hence Covetousness may be defined as the love of money or possessions made an idol in the heart, so that it absorbs our thoughts, affections or leads us to take unrighteous means for its indulgence. It is a desire to possess as our own what is already the property of another, without regard to his harm or loss, or without reference to his compensation or consent.
In discussing this comprehensive command, let us just pause to point out an error so absurd as scarcely to deserve a remark—much less a refutation. We prefer to the Roman Catholic division of the tenth command into two. They combine the first and second, obscuring and often omitting the second which so obviously rebukes the current practices of their own church, and in order to make good the ten, divide the last. According to their reading the ninth commandment is: Thou shalt not covet the neighbors house, and the tenth embraces the remaining objects specified in what we reckon the tenth.
This arrangement appears so absurd that we can only wonder that Augustine, one of the noblest and most illustrious of the church fathers, should have authorized it by his own endorsement. It combines what are wholly distinct: it separates what are essentially one. The first commandment defines the one only object of supreme devotion: the second describes the manner of his worship. How clearly are these distinguishable one from the other.

The last command forbids covetousness and specifies six objects upon which covetous desire may center. Now silly fence - how infinitely below the digni
ty of the law of God to found a separation of what is essentially one command upon so slender a basis as the distinction between a man's house and wife. Is not the desire the same—"the sin the same in both cases. As well—nay better, divide any other injunc

lion upon the tables, than this. The Law of the Sabbath is much more capable of being cut in two, & such a decision could be much better defended.

Again if we compare this copy of the code delivered to Israel at Sinai with the oth
er transcription in Deut. V. we find a very slight difference in the reading. Here the Command runs "Thou shalt not covet"
thy neighbors house: thou shalt not covet thy neighbors wife. Then the order is reversed and wife precedes house, so that if the form given in Exodus be the true one, the Roman Church must accept as the 9th commandment "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbors house. If the form in Deuteronomy be the true one, that Church must allow the 9th command to be thou shalt not covet thy neighbors wife. Take the true position, regard the command as one, forbidding the general sin of covetousness, and it becomes a matter of no consequence in what order the specific objects of covetous desire may be arranged. (Bush 251.)
This command applies its test to thoughts. It lifts the veil which shuts out the external world from man's inmost soul, and shuts on the mysteries of his secret life: it reveals to him his heart of hearts. While all the commands virtually forbid the evil desire which initiates the wrong they formally prohibit, this leaves no chance for mis-construction or misapprehension. It points its very words to the thought of sin. It cure by probing deep; it cauterizes the very inmost heart of the disease whose external surface eruptions do not exhaust but only develop it and whose removal has but little to do with the cure of the inward soul.
Prof. Bush says this command is a safeguard around all the rest. I should say rather with in all the rest for its holding en circled the heart. Covetousness is the most general and multiform of all sins of the second table, for when Satan in the plains of Babylon sets up his image of gold, the whole world falls flat before it as the Aztecs when their wooden idol was mounted upon the Fiocallis. There is but here and there a solitary Shadrach, Meshach, or Abednego, who will not worship the golden god.

Covetousness lies at the bottom of almost every other sin toward our neighbor if not toward God. There is not a command which it does not violate or may not infringe.
In its very essence it tramples upon the first—
for it is idolatry—setting gain before God. It
led Demetrius to desecrate the second in ma-
King silver shrines for Diana, for his argu-
ment was: by this craft we have our wealth.
It has led many a man manfully & blaspe-
mously to profane the third by buying him to
& day—leading him in view of gain to false
swearing. He leads with unholy feet upon
the Sabbath, changing it into a day of trade
& speculation; it is daily at the bottom of dis
obedience to parents and leads children to
withhold from aged fathers & mothers that am-
ple support due them. How often it induces
voluntary & deliberate violation of the sixth
command will appear when we reflect that murder oftener comes from avarice than malice. Does coverousness disregard the 7th. Ask the miserable millions who prostitute virile to the love of gain, ask the adulterer whose very crime is that he covets his neighbor's wife. Remember David, whose coverousness toward Uriah's wife led both to adultery and murder. Remember how it is daily leading to the encouragement of capricious divorce in all parts of our country. Does it violate the eighth? What but the love of money leads to the myriad forms of stealing however insidiously disguised. As to the ninth who ever bore false witness under oath save
for the love of money, and how many slander their neighbors in order to divert the current of trade that it may pass through their own purse. Thus covetousness leads to the violation of every command in the Decalogue. Do you wonder that Paul says the love of money is the root of all evil! What stalk may not spring up from it. Money is not the root of all evil—nay, is it not rather the root of very much that is good in society. But the love of money makes it a god and that idolatry itself a prime form of sin becomes a fruitful source of evil. Money may aid in millions of holy enterprises; it must not sway the soul. However, even with a golden scepter
The command names our neighbors peculiar possessions in its prohibition, for that is properly speaking covetousness, where desire centers upon what belongs to another. It specifies his house which may stand as a representative of his real personal estate. It specifies his wife, distinguished from adulterous desire in that it may not involve lust, yet involves adultery for there could be no way of lawfully obtaining our neighbors wife according to the Jewish law save by the husbands death or a divorce. Hence the desire to have a neighbors wife would involve a desire to have him and if one has a wife of his own also what then die or divorce her. So desire his death would
be inward murder to devise her divorce vir
dual adultery. For if divorced capriciously for
no adequate cause, she is really in Gods sight
still his wife and if for resentment for the ground
she cannot become another so that neither
case to marry her would be adultery.

The other specifications are our neighbors
manservant maid servant ox ass all
being in some sense his property either by a
proprietorship in their labor or themselves,
and all briefly summed up in this: nor any
thing that is thy neighbors. The command
is all comprehended in four words Thou sh.
not covet. Its first sphere of prohibition
applies the covetous desire to our neigh
bow possessions, forbidding all envy of the pros-
perity or happiness - all desire to attain the same
with damage or detriment. In this matter
again we are to love him as ourselves & regu-
late our conduct by the golden rule. We are to
wish well to all & rejoice in the success of all,
for there is room enough for all. We are not for-
bidden to desire moderately & in submission
to the will of God a similar estate, as good a
wife & servants & cattle as his, provided that
it be but an honest & honorable emulation.
But such a feeling is very widely separated
from that inselaneous envy which滋生
“uneasiness, mortification or discontent at
the sight of superior excellence, reputation or
happiness enjoyed by another—which refines at his success, frets at his elevation & sometimes hates him on that account." Emulation is very different from envy which often leads to malice and from malice to detraction & slander and thence to all forms of underhanded meanness if not of openhanded violence.

But the spirit of the command reaches its comprehensive circle of forbidden indulgence round all worldly good. It forbids us to indulge covetous desire after gain, ill gotten or inordinately loved. This form of covetousness has now precisely (properly the name of avarice), which is excessive desire of gaining a possessing wealth, greediness or insatiable
desire of gain. We sometimes express it all in one word greed. It involves discontent and dissatisfaction with what we have, and because others possess what we have not, takes the form of envy at their precedence and finally of covetousness. Hence I think avarice is the genus and covetousness the species—avarice the general sin—covetousness the particular form. Or to come back to inquisited words: The love of money—avarice—is the root of all evil—covetousness one of its many stalks. Of the iniquity of avarice the Bible is very plainly, repeatedly, emphatically a witness. Our Saviour names it as one of those iniquities which from within out of the heart proceed.
defile the man. It is shown to engross the heart to be vanity, unsatisfying & unsatisfied forever insatiable like the horseleech's daughters crying give, give, never saying it is enough. It is called the root of all evil & idolatry. It is rebutted as in consistent insaints and especially in a bishop. It is shown to lead to injustice & oppression in foolish and hurtful lusts and departure from the faith—apostasy. It is held up to our view in one of the parables—that of the Rich Fool—whom it led to forget 1. The true use of all temporal good, 2. The nature of real happiness, 3. The source of all blessing, 4. The uncertainty of life, 5. The day of Judgment. We see it leading Saban to injustice & wrong. It
ensnared Achan into the direct and fatal disobedience to God's injunction. Eli's sons under its influence desecrated the very altars of sacrifice, and Samuel's sons, judges in Israel, took tribes from Israel's judgment. At its entire voice Saul trampled upon God's decree of destruction, shared Agag the best of the sheep roxen. Ahab bowing to its iron sceptre, seized the vineyard of Naboth & murdered its owner, while it drove Jehazi into a land of exile acceptance of reward refused by Elijah and consequently lying. It caught in its net of wickedness the Jewish nobles & even priests—made the name of Balaam a representative of all who love the magos of unrighteousness, a synonym of synony...
It was the one effectual barrier to salvation in the lovely young man. It involved Ananias of Saphhira in a lie against the Holy Ghost, and Judas in the diabolical plot to betray with a kiss of love, for thirty pieces of silver the Lord of Glory.

It has led men to the lowest meanness possible. Judas the arch traitor only leads on the van of a vast host whose general in chief is the love of money. See the French nation half a century ago tearing the Raphaelian Tapestries and Cartoons from the panels of the Vatican— and selling them. Some one purchasing an image of Christ ornament with work in precious metals burned it to ashes for the gold and silver...
he hoped to get from it (S. B: 1: 106.) I cannot but recall the withering sarcasm of Mr. H. N. 
Howe who said "Avarice makes men electro-galvanically plated with gold, and so they walk 
through life, and fall into their coffin with a chink."—meremetallic men.

Only look at the influence of Covetousness in 
the Church of Rome. transforming an eclec-
tistical hierarchy into a huge monster of lust 
resemblity. Witness one array of facts, the 
history of Indulgences. Alexander VI's 
Invented in the 13. Century a system which has 
ever since poured a stream of revenue into 
the Papal Church. A Bull of Clement VII. de 
clared it an article of faith. What was it.
Christ shed more blood than necessary for man's reconciliation with God. The Saints by works of supererogation have increased the treasure which confided to the Church may be dealt out for a proper compensation for sins committed after baptism. You need not inflict the penance due your sin. For a seven weeks past said Reginald pay 20 pence of rich linen unless wealthy, three pence for me, and so on for other matters. Hence too came the doctrine of Purgatory and the release of souls from its purifying fires by friends living who pray money for masses over their dust. Later, probably under John XXIII. they invented the tariff of indulgences. Indeed if not deleted was to cost five groats six if
Known: Murder, infanticide, adultery, perjury, burglary all weighed out at a fair valuation for the annihilation of the offence. Boniface VIII added to the system of inequity. In 1300 by a bull he declared that every hundred years all who made a pilgrimage to Rome should receive a plenary indulgence. In one month 200,000 visited Rome as Pilgrims, of course brought each his offering to papal coffers. And so Roman avarice fixed the Jubilee years at each half hundred, then at each quarter century and finally, in consideration of so much money paid at your own door to the Papal agent you could have the plenary indulgence with out the weary pilgrimage. Daubigne 1: 56-8.
It was but five years ago that a Roman Catholic church in N.Y. was publicly consecrated. To each fortunate attendant upon the service was sold a medal, whose possession entitled the holder upon each anniversary of the occasion to the privilege of indulgence in all venial sins.

O covetousness! thousand of the devil, how hast thou foisted thy filthy garments about the church of God! What wonder does are denounced against thee that God hates thee? man is bitten of thee to be rare!

The corrective of covetousness is content and its true devotional expression is the prayer of a-guru. Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me. Let me be full and deny the day who is the Lord, or less I
be poor and steal all in the name of my God in vain. So subtlety is avarice that very often our prayers for temporal blessings are its offspring. Be careful how you ask for riches. I, for one, do not make such a request, and much prefer, "Feed me with good convenient for me. Set your eye on spiritual blessings." Remember that godliness with contentment is great gain etc. First, lest the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take heed of covetousness, for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. One thing you may covet, without sin toward God or man. Covet earnestly the best gifts.
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