

Section D

Quick References to the Ten Commandments: Harmful Habits, Traits, and Patterns Reflected in the Ten Commandments

Introduction

The process of life change and spiritual transformation that you are currently exploring is based on the Judeo-Christian scriptures as explained in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

There are four places in Swedenborg's writings (four different books) in which Swedenborg fully explains the Ten Commandments. These four books are (in chronological order):

- *Secrets of Heaven*¹
- *The Apocalypse Explained*²
- *The Doctrine of Life*³
- *True Christianity*⁴

In each of these books, Swedenborg explains any given Commandment on *three* levels of meaning. First there is the *earthly* meaning, or what Swedenborg calls the *earthly sense*. The earthly sense of a Commandment is its literal meaning. It has to do with outward conduct, also human feeling and emotion. Next, there is the *spiritual* meaning, or what Swedenborg calls the *spiritual sense*. The spiritual sense of a Commandment has to do with our relationship with the human spirit in other people and also in ourselves. Finally, there is the *heavenly* meaning, or what Swedenborg calls the *heavenly sense*. The heavenly sense of a Commandment has to do with our relationship with God.

As an example, consider the Commandment, *You shall not murder*. According to Swedenborg, the *earthly* meaning of this Commandment is that we are not to murder or maim a person's body, also that we are not to murder his or her reputation (character assassination). In addition, we are not to harbor feelings of resentment, hatred, or revenge. The *spiritual* meaning (or *spiritual sense*) is that we are not to murder a person's *spirit*, which happens when we turn him or her away from God, crush her spirit, or belittle the ideas or concepts that he believes in, cares about, and loves. And finally, the

¹ Volume 10 of that work, paragraph nos. 8853-8912

² Volume 5 of that work, the second half of paragraph nos. 932-1028

³ The full title of this work is *The Doctrine of Life for the New Jerusalem from the Ten Commandments*. It is found in a larger work by Swedenborg titled, *The Four Doctrines*. In *The Doctrine of Life*, Swedenborg explains the Commandments on *Murder, Adultery, Stealing, and Bearing False Witness*. He does not directly explain the other six Commandments in *The Doctrine of Life*.

⁴ Volume 1 of that work, paragraph nos. 282-335

heavenly meaning (or *heavenly sense*) is that we are not to hate God or wish to blot His name out of existence.

In addition, Swedenborg's understanding and explanation of the Ten Commandments developed and crystallized over time, such that the division of each Commandment into three succinct levels of meaning happens most clearly in his final work, *True Christianity*. For this reason, the first time you read Swedenborg's explanation of a given Commandment, you may wish to look at the explanation from *True Christianity* first, and proceed from there to earlier works. (Alternatively, you could go through Swedenborg's explanations in chronological order, knowing that understanding and clarity will develop as you go.)

In summary, Swedenborg explains each of the Ten Commandments on three levels of meaning—*earthly*, *spiritual*, and *heavenly*. These levels have to do with the literal meaning of a Commandment, our relationship with the human spirit in people, and our relationship with God. Swedenborg's explanations of the Commandments develop and crystallize as you proceed through his writings in chronological order.

As You Go Through the Process

Each time you go through this process of life change and spiritual transformation (specifically, each time you go through Step 2.1 of the process) you will be invited to compare what you've discovered about yourself in Step 1 (*Self-Examination*) to Swedenborg's explanation of *one* of the Ten Commandments. But reading Swedenborg's full explanation of any *one* Commandment (each time you go through the process) would be impractical. For this reason, a numbered outline has been created for each Commandment. Each outline (called a *Quick Reference*) gives a quick digest of *all* the information on a particular Commandment from the four books mentioned above. These *Quick References* are contained in this section of the *Sourcebook*.

The value of these *Quick References* is that they allow you to gain a complete overview of a particular Commandment in a matter of minutes. This helps you complete Step 2.1 of the process quickly, easily, and with pinpoint accuracy.

Here's an example of how a *Quick Reference* can be used: Imagine that you've just gone through Step 1 of the process (*Self-Examination*) for a habit of hurting people you don't like, or behaving in passively aggressive ways against them. When you get to Step 2.1 of the process, you're asked the following question:

Do the things you've uncovered during self-examination break any of the Ten Commandments? If so, which Commandment do they seem *most* to break, and what are one or two ways in which they break it?

In this example, you might guess that a habit of harming people you don't like, or behaving in passively aggressive ways against them, breaks the Commandment on *Murder*. And you would be right. So you open up to Section D of the *Sourcebook*, and you go to tab #5—the *Quick Reference* on *Murder*. You read through it and discover ways in

which your behavior, thinking, intending, etc. break this particular Commandment. Any of the descriptions that most accurately describe what you've discovered in yourself get transferred and recorded on the worksheet for Step 2.1. Once you've recorded them, you'll have a clear, concise picture of how your pattern of behavior, thinking, and intending breaks the Commandment on *Murder*. Having these descriptions in mind will help you as you continue through the remaining steps of the process.

There are two more things to note about these *Quick References* to the Ten Commandments. First, any time you use one of them, **if you're using it in hard copy**, you may wish to *highlight* the descriptions that are most impactful to you. Then you transfer just one, two, or a few of them over to the 2.1 worksheet. Recording one, two, or a few descriptions (as compared to *many* of them) will make it easier to remember them later on—after you've finished this particular experience of the process. In addition, highlighting these descriptions in hard copy will make them more quickly accessible the next time you use this particular *Quick Reference*.

The second thing to note is that if you are unfamiliar with Swedenborg's explanations, you may not be sure which *Quick Reference* you should use for a particular habit you're working on. As an example, if you're working on an habit of *worry*, you may not know which Commandment this habit most clearly breaks. For this reason, each *Quick Reference* begins with a brief *overview* of that particular Commandment. The overviews can help you quickly determine which Commandment most closely relates to the habit you're working on.

Continuing with the example of *worry*, if you look at the overview for the Commandment on *Stealing* (see Tab #7) you'll see that worry is listed as something which (according to Swedenborg) breaks that particular Commandment. So the Commandment on *Stealing* is one you could use in Step 2.1 for a habit of *worry*.

But note: In this example of *worry*, you may end up realizing that worry is something that can break not only the Commandment on *Stealing*, but also the Commandment, *You Shall Have No Other Gods Before My Faces* (Tab #1), or the Commandment, *Remember the Sabbath Day to Keep It Holy* (Tab #3). Therefore, if you're working on a habit of *worry*, you could select *any one* of these *Quick References*; and you would discover that *any one of them* will help you with that particular habit!

The point is that any one habit you're working is likely to break *more than one* of the Ten Commandments. Your goal, therefore, is to select the Commandment which is most clearly broken by your habit, knowing that other Commandments might help you as well. Then use the Commandment you've chosen during Step 2.1 of the process.

One Additional Suggestion and One Observation

There is one additional suggestion and one observation that Swedenborg makes about the Ten Commandments that are useful to mention. His *suggestion* is that the Ten Commandments provide a summary of *all* forms of evil that have ever existed or will ever

exist. This is an interesting assertion. If it's true, it means that the Ten Commandments are a highly effective tool for recognizing the true quality of *any* evil you discover in yourself during Step 1 of the process.

Swedenborg's *observation* is that the Ten Commandments of Judaic scripture are broadened and deepened in the Christian scriptures. Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). This means that by His teachings and life on earth, Jesus showed us how to understand these Commandments more deeply and live them more fully than was possible before.

The biblical Ten Commandments first appear in Exodus 20:1-17. They are as follows:

1. You shall have no other gods before My faces.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
4. Honor your father and your mother....
5. You shall not murder.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's house.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife,...nor anything that is your neighbor's.

These same Commandments appear in the Christian gospels, and in the books of Romans and 1 John, as follows:

1. You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve. Matthew 4:10
2. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Romans 10:13
3. Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28
4. Honor your father and your mother. Matthew 19:19

(Note: It is commonly accepted that the first three and a half Commandments relate to our relationship with God—our heavenly “Father”. So Jesus’ command to “honor your father” can be understood as a command to obey all of the first *three* Commandments.)
5. You shall not murder. Matthew 19:18

He who hates his brother is a murderer. 1 John 3:15
6. You shall not commit adultery. Matthew 19:18

Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Matthew 5:28
7. You shall not steal. Matthew 19:18
8. You shall not bear false witness. Matthew 19:18

For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. John 18:37

9.&10. You shall not covet....

Matthew 19:21

Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he or she possesses.

Luke 12:15

In summary, Swedenborg's *suggestion* and *observation* underscore the value and importance of the Ten Commandments as a baseline tool for life change and spiritual transformation.

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Key to *Quick References*

- Non-bracketed words and phrases are quoted from Swedenborg's writings.
- Bracketed words and phrases [] have been altered to read smoothly in outline form, or inserted based on inference or a broader understanding of Swedenborg's thought.