

# Honor Your Father and Your Mother....

## The Fourth Commandment

- from -

*Secrets of Heaven*

Emanuel Swedenborg

SH 8896. Verse 12. *Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged upon the land which Jehovah your God gives you.* "Honor your father and your mother," signifies love for good and truth, in the supreme sense for the Lord and for His kingdom; "that your days may be prolonged upon the land," signifies the consequent state of life in heaven; "which Jehovah your God gives you," signifies where the Divine is and the consequent influx.

SH 8897. *Honor your father and your mother.* That this signifies love for good and truth, in the supreme sense for the Lord and for His kingdom, is evident from the signification of "honoring," as being to love, for in the spiritual sense "to honor" denotes to love, for the reason that in heaven one loves another, and when he loves he also honors, for in honor there is love. Honor without love is refused in heaven, nay, is rejected, because it is devoid of life from good. From the signification of "father," as being good (see n. 3703, 5581, 5902, 6050, 7833, 7834), and in the supreme sense the Lord as to Divine good (n. 15, 1729, 2005, 2803, 3704, 7499, 8328); that the Lord in the supreme sense is the "father," is because He gives new life to a person, and thereby the person becomes a son and heir of His kingdom; and from the signification of "mother," as being truth (n. 3703, 5581), and in the supreme sense the Lord as to Divine truth, thus His kingdom, because the Divine truth which proceeds from the Lord makes heaven. That the Divine truth of the Lord makes heaven, is because the Lord as to Divine good is in the other life the Sun, and as to the Divine truth is the light. This Divine light from the Lord as the Sun is what illumines angelic minds, and fills them with intelligence and wisdom, and makes them to be angels of light. Divine good is within Divine truth, as heat from the sun is within the light in the time of spring and summer in the world.

SH 8898. *That your days may be prolonged upon the land.* That this signifies the consequent state of life in heaven, is evident from the signification of "to be prolonged," as being predicated of good and its increase (of which below); from the signification of "your days," as being states of life (see n. 23, 487, 488, 493, 893, 2788, 3462, 3785, 4850, 5672, 5962, 6110, 7680, 8426); and from the signification of "land," here the land of Canaan (because it is said to the sons of Israel "which Jehovah your God gives you"), as being the kingdom of the Lord (n. 1413, 1437, 1607, 1866, 3038, 3481, 3686, 3705, 4240, 4447). The reason why "to be prolonged" is predicated of good and its increase, is that length of days is duration of the time of life; and in heaven there is neither time nor space, but instead thereof state. Therefore as "to be prolonged" is predicated of state as to good, it denotes its increase. (That "length" is predicted of good, and "breadth" of truth, see n. 1613, 4482; and that in heaven there are no spaces, neither are there times, but instead

thereof states, n. 1274, 1382, 2625, 2788, 2837, 3254, 3356, 3404, 3938, 4321, 4814, 4882, 4901, 4916, 5605, 6110, 7218, 7381.)

SH 8899. *Which Jehovah your God gives you.* That this signifies where the Divine is and the consequent influx, is evident from the fact that these words are spoken of heaven, which is here signified by "the land" (see n. 8898); consequently "Jehovah God" denotes the Divine therein, and "to give" denotes influx; for heaven in general with all, and in particular with each one, is the reception of influx from the Divine. That such things are signified by the commandment about honoring parents, may seem strange, because they are remote from the sense of the letter. But be it known that the commandments of the Decalogue are rules of life both for those who are in the world and for those who are in heaven--the sense of the letter or the external sense being for those who are in the world, and the spiritual or internal sense for those who are in heaven--and consequently both senses, external as well as internal, are for those who while they are in the world are also in heaven, that is, for those who are in the good of life according to the truths of doctrine. That the commandments of the Decalogue are also for those who are in heaven, is plain from the internal sense of all things in the Word, and clearly from the fact that the things which Jehovah God (that is, the Lord) Himself speaks, are not only for people, or for the world; but are also for angels, nay, for the whole heaven, because the Divine truth which proceeds from the Lord flows through heaven and passes through down to a person. This is the case with these ten commandments, which the Lord Himself spoke from Mount Sinai. [2] Inasmuch as these commandments were spoken not only for those who are in the world, but also for those who are in heaven, therefore they could not be perceived in the same way by both--as for instance this commandment, that they should honor father and mother in order that their days might be prolonged upon the land which Jehovah God would give them; for in heaven parents and children do not come together the same as on earth; and therefore for "father" there they have the Lord, and for "mother" His kingdom. Nor can it be said of those in heaven that their days would be prolonged, because they live there to eternity; nor can "land" be understood there as in this commandment to mean the land of Canaan, but instead the heavenly Canaan or heaven. As by "father and mother" are meant the Lord and His kingdom, therefore this commandment is the fourth in order, and surpasses in holiness those which follow. The commandment concerning the worship of Jehovah, that is, the Lord, is first and second, because the most holy one. Next comes the commandment concerning the Sabbath, because by this in the supreme sense is signified the union of the Divine Itself and the Divine Human in the Lord. After this follows the commandment concerning honoring parents, because by this is signified the love of the Lord and the consequent love of good and truth which are from the Lord. As these things are signified by this commandment, therefore contempt for parents is enumerated among the crimes which are signified by "shedding blood" (Ezek. xxii. 6, 7) and for this reason disobedient and rebellious sons were stoned (Deut. xxi. 18-21).

SH 8900. That by "father" is meant the Lord, and by "mother" His kingdom, has been shown just above (n. 8897). But lest perchance the mind be in doubt whether by "mother" in the internal sense is meant the kingdom of the Lord, that is, heaven, I may add the following to what was said above. In the Word by "mother" is meant the church (see n. 289, 4257, 5581), which also on this account is at one time called "the bride," and at another "the wife," of the Lord; and as the kingdom of the Lord is the

same as the church, with only this difference, that the kingdom of the Lord on the earth is called "the church," therefore this also is signified by "mother." For this reason the sons born of this mother are truths, and are called "the sons of the kingdom" (Matt. xiii. 38; n. 3373). Moreover to all those who are therein the Lord's kingdom is their country, and one's country is "mother" in a natural sense, as the church is "mother" in the spiritual sense.

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# Parents Must Be Honored.

The Fourth Commandment

- from -

*The Apocalypse Explained*

Emanuel Swedenborg

AE 966:2. The fourth commandment of the Decalogue is, that parents must be honored. This commandment was given because honor to parents represented and thus signified love to the Lord and love towards the church, for “father” in the heavenly sense, that is, the Heavenly Father, is the Lord; and “mother” in the heavenly sense, that is, the heavenly mother, is the church; “honor” signifies the good of love; and “length of days,” which they will have, signifies the happiness of eternal life. So is this commandment understood in heaven, where no other father but the Lord is known, and no other mother but the kingdom of the Lord, which is also the church. For the Lord gives life from Himself, and through the church He gives nourishment. That in the heavenly sense no father in the world can be meant, and indeed, when a person is in a heavenly idea, can be mentioned, the Lord teaches in Matthew:

Call no man your father on earth; for one is your Father who is in the heavens (xxiii. 9).

That “Father” signifies the Lord as to the Divine good may be seen above (n. 32, 200, 254, 297). That “mother” signifies the Lord’s kingdom, the church, and the Divine truth, may be seen in *Secrets of Heaven* (n. 289, 2691, 2717, 3703, 5581, 8897). That “length of days” signifies the happiness of eternal life (n. 8898); and that “honor” signifies the good of love (n. 8897, and above, n. 288, 345). All this makes clear that the third and fourth commandments involve secrets relating to the Lord, namely, the acknowledgment and confession of His Divine, and the worship of Him from the good of love.

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# Honor Your Father and Your Mother....

## The Fourth Commandment

- from -

*True Christianity*

Emanuel Swedenborg

*Honor your father and your mother  
so that your days will be prolonged  
and it will be well with you on earth.*

TC 305. So reads this commandment in Ex. xx. 12; Deut. v. 16. In the *natural sense*, which is that of the letter, "to honor your father and your mother" means to honor parents, to be obedient to them, to be devoted to them, and to return thanks to them for the benefits they confer, which are that they provide food and clothing for their children, and so introduce them into the world that they may act in it as civil and moral persons; and introduce them also into heaven by means of the precepts of religion, thus providing both for their temporal prosperity and their eternal happiness. All this parents do from a love which they have from the Lord, in whose stead they act. In a relative sense it means that if parents are dead, guardians should be honored by their wards. In a broader sense, to honor the king and magistrates, is meant by this commandment, since these provide for all in general the necessities which parents provide in particular. In the broadest sense this commandment means that people should love their country, since it supports and protects them, therefore it is called fatherland from father. But to country, king and magistrates honor must be rendered by parents and by them be implanted in their children.

TC 306. In the *spiritual sense*, "to honor father and mother means to reverence and love God and the church. In this sense, God who is the father of all, is meant by "father" and the church by "mother." In the heavens little children and the angels know no other father and no other mother, since they are there born anew of the Lord through the church. Therefore the Lord says:

Call no man your father on the earth; for one is your Father, who is in the heavens (Matt. xxiii. 9).

This was said with reference to children and angels in heaven, and not of children and people on earth. The Lord teaches the same thing in the common prayer of the Christian churches, "Our Father who are in the heavens, hallowed be Your name." In the spiritual sense, "mother" means the church, because as a mother on earth nourishes her children with natural food; so does the church nourish her children with spiritual food, and this is why the church is frequently called "mother" in the Word, as in Hosea:

Plead with your mother; she is not my wife, and I am not her husband (ii. 2, 5).

In Isaiah:

Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? (l. 1; Ezek. xvi. 45; xix. 10).

And in the Gospels:

Jesus stretched forth His hand towards His disciples, and said, My mother and My brethren are these who hear the Word of God and do it (Matt. xii. 48-50; Mark iii. 33-35; Luke viii. 21; John xix. 25-27).

TC 307. In the *celestial sense*, "father" means our Lord Jesus Christ, and "mother" the communion of saints, which means the Lord's church spread throughout the whole world. That the Lord is the Father, is evident from the following passages:

Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given. His name is God, Mighty, Father of eternity, Prince of Peace (Isa. ix. 6).

You are our Father; Abraham knows us not and Israel does not acknowledge us; You are our Father, our Redeemer from everlasting is Your name (Isa. lxiii. 16).

Philip said, show us the Father; Jesus says to him, He that sees Me sees the Father; how do you say then, Show us the Father? Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me (John xiv. 8-11; also xii. 45).

That "mother" in this sense means the Lord's church, is evident from the following passages:

I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband (Apoc. xxi. 2).

The angel said to John, Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb; and he showed me the city, the holy Jerusalem (Apoc. xxi. 9, 10).

The time of the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready: Blessed are they that have been called to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Apoc. xix. 7, 9). (See also Matt. ix. 15; Mark ii. 19, 20; Luke v. 34, 35; John iii. 29; xix. 25-27. )

That "the New Jerusalem" means the New Church which the Lord is at this day establishing, may be seen in the *Apocalypse Revealed* (n. 880, 881); this church, and not the preceding, is the wife and the mother in this sense.<sup>1</sup> The spiritual offspring which are born from this marriage are the goods of charity and the truths of faith; and those

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<sup>1</sup> [Editor's note: In the theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, "the New Church" does not refer to a church organization, but rather, to all people who pattern their lives after genuine truths of religion.]



who are in these from the Lord, are called “sons of the marriage,” “sons of God,” and “born of God.”

TC 308. It must be kept in mind that a Divine-heavenly sphere of love continually goes forth from the Lord toward all who embrace the doctrine of His church, who are obedient to Him, as children are to their father and mother in the world, who devote themselves to Him, and who wish to be fed, that is, instructed by Him. From this heavenly sphere a natural sphere arises, which is one of love towards infants and children. This is a most universal sphere, affecting not only people, but also birds and beasts and even serpents; nor animate things only, but also things inanimate. But that the Lord might operate upon these even as upon spiritual things, He created a sun to be in the natural world like a father, the earth being like a mother. For the sun is like a common father and the earth like a common mother from the marriage of which all the vegetation that adorns the surface of the earth is produced. From the influx of that heavenly sphere into the natural world, come the marvelous developments of vegetation from seed to fruit, and again to new seed. It is from this also that many kinds of plants turn, as it were, their faces to the sun during the day, and turn them away when the sun sets. It is from this also that there are flowers that open at the rising of the sun and close at his setting. It is from this also that the song-birds sing sweetly at the early dawn, and likewise after they have been fed by their mother earth. Thus do all these honor their father and mother. They all bear testimony that in the natural world the Lord provides through the sun and the earth all necessities both for animate and inanimate things. Therefore it is said in David:

Praise Jehovah from the heavens; praise Him, sun and moon; praise Him from the earth, you dragons and all deeps; praise Him, fruitful trees and all cedars; beasts and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl; kings of the earth and all peoples; young men and maidens (Ps. cxlviii; 1-12);

and in Job:

Ask, I pray, the beasts and they shall teach you; or the fowls of the air, and they shall tell you; or the shrub of the earth, and it shall teach you; and the fishes of the sea shall declare to you. Who does not know from all these things that the hand of Jehovah has wrought this? (xii. 7-9).

“Ask and they will teach,” signifies to observe, study, and judge from these things that the Lord Jehovah created them.