

## Chapter 17

# The Beatitudes and the Three Journeys of Spirit

Verses 3 through 10 of the fifth chapter of Matthew are often called the Beatitudes. They are eight cryptic sayings each beginning with the word “Blessed” – which is sometimes translated “Happy.” These “sayings of Jesus” were probably augmented somewhat by his followers, but I am going to assume that these followers continued to express the same Spirit that Jesus embodied.

Fifty-four years ago I wrote my first theological paper; it was on these eight verses. Much water has passed under the bridge since my first encounter with the profound inwardness of Jesus’ teachings. I have come to see that a person’s understanding of Spirit and capacity to be Spirit presence can deepen over time. In the last three chapters, I have shared how I have come to discern three distinguishable stages in the journey of Spirit, three types of journey in the one journey of our lives.

Recently, I noticed that the eight Beatitudes also express that threefold journey of Spirit. The following prose poem shares how this has come together for me. In this poem I am translating the classical words of the Beatitudes into contemporary language that clarifies their Spirit depth.

**Journey I:** The journey **to** Spirit presence – the appearance of Awe or Spirit from beyond personality

B1. Blessed are those who experience their profound need, for they shall find the Commonwealth of Spirit.

B2. Blessed are those who experience sorrow, for they shall find unassailable comfort.

**Journey II:** The journey **with** Spirit presence – the identification with Spirit rather than personality

B3. Blessed are those who are detached from celebrity, status, ownership, and acclaim, for they have the entire natural realm as their inheritance.

B4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for Spirit realization, for they will be fully fed.

B5. Blessed are those who forgive everyone, for they shall be forgiven everything.

B6. Blessed are those who inquire with pristine honesty into the depths of Spirit, for they shall experience the Absolute Wholeness of Being.

**Journey III:** The journey **in** Spirit presence – the integration of Absolute Spirit with all aspects of living

B7. Blessed are those who integrate into the life of Absolute Peace all the conflicting aspects of living, for they are the vanguard of human history.

B8. Blessed are those who suffer human opposition to their manifestation of Spirit, for the Commonwealth of Spirit is their Eternal Home.

### Journey I

If “soul” is a term for our ongoing consciousness of consciousness, then we begin

our journey as a restricted soul. We are a soul confined in the box of our own personality. We think that this box of habits is who we are. The box may provide room for many pleasures and exciting activities, but sooner or later we become aware that we live in a box, that there is much more to living than what goes on in our box. The blessings of the initial journey of Spirit have to do with Spirit penetrations into our box.

### **Blessing 1**

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.<sup>1</sup>*

*Blessed are those who experience their profound need,  
for they shall find the Commonwealth of Spirit.*

Living exclusively in the box of personality sooner or later becomes a desert, lacking moisture, water, juice. Repeating old dry habits over and over ceases to be an alive and vital participation in life. Also, we begin to be more aware of the devilish quality of our own personality. It's addictions, defensiveness, reactive exaggerated behaviors, violence, meanness, bitterness, and despairs become a never absent pain that haunts our box. Soon life in this box becomes a meaningless life, a thing of dust, useless worthless dust, like some old discarded something found in an attic, so useless that we might as well be a corpse rotting in the grave. These are examples of that sense of profound need that the first Beatitude calls "blessed."

Such experiences are blessed because they indicate that the Commonwealth of Spirit is near, that the Kingdom of Full Reality is close by. The box of personality is being penetrated by a larger sense of Reality. This moment is blessed because the Reality that is seeping into our box is a moisture, a refreshment, an innocence, a vitality that we are missing and very much need. We can call this seepage Awe or Spirit, but whatever we call it, it is something more than living in our box. It is something from outside the box of personality. It is getting in touch with the Mystery and Fullness of death and life and change and transformation and surprise and newness. It is a new world, a Spirit Commonwealth, a Kingdom of Divine Reality.

*An autobiographical note:* While still in college I attended a lecture by an African American preacher who had written a novel about the life of Jesus. He made it plain that the power and courage of Jesus were possibilities for all human beings. He also made it plain that accepting this simple truth would be costly in terms of one's acceptability to others. In a private conversation, he chided me that I might not want to pay this price. For some reason, perhaps my own stubbornness, this chiding prompted me to push into the matter even more vigorously. I began to look beyond the box of being a mathematics scholar and teacher acceptable to my parents and expected by my friends. I began to become poor in spirit in the sense that I began to sacrifice my riches of approval by friends and family in order to open to radical qualities of awareness that most others found foolish and dangerous. But I experienced this openness as a blessing, a road to happiness.

### **Blessing 2:**

*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.<sup>2</sup>*

*Blessed are those who experience sorrow, for they shall find unassailable comfort.*

There is sorrow involved in saying goodbye to the particular person that we have been. To see an old box, an old self, die away is a sad experience, however crummy

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 5:3; Revised Standard Version

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 5:4 ; R.S.V.

that old self may be. "I don't know who I am anymore," is an expression of this sadness. In fact, the true depth of all sorrow is losing an old self. When someone we love dies or leaves us, the loss for us is losing the self we were with that person in our lives. If we lose our dog, we lose a self-with-dog, with one particular dog. We might find a new dog, but it won't be Skippy. Sorrow is always the sorrow of saying goodbye to something we have been and can no longer be. Every fragment of who we think we are is treasured by us, even if we also hate that same treasured aspect. We have identified with the fragments that we are losing. We can feel insecure and perhaps frightened about no longer being the person that we thought we were.

To call such sorrow blessed, is a transformation in our perspective. As a first impression, the challenge to be something more and different than we have been before may be frightening rather than encouraging. We might say, "Is endless and hopeless sorrow to be my lot?" Reality seems to smile back at this question with a firm, "Of course not." What awaits us beyond all our sorrowing is an unassailable comfort that can never be taken away from us and, therefore, about which no sorrow is possible. Life, beyond the box of who we thought we were, is more not less real. An enduring Great Self awaits us, and it can gather all our sorrow into itself as one of its lovely children.

*An autobiographical note:* My first quarter at a Christian seminary was in many ways a sorrowful experience. After viewing myself as the top student of my university in mathematics and physics, I now found myself taking a remedial philosophy course and making a "C" in my favorite theology course because my spelling and my typing were so poor. I was sorrowful over no longer being the smartest one in the room. I had never worked so hard for so little acclaim. This seems very minor to me now, but it was not minor at the time. Then, as a young pastor of a local church, a young man in my congregation shot and killed his buddy in a hunting accident. I discovered that I did not know how to talk with the friends and family facing sorrow in this event. I was in sorrow for my own self as a frightened and immature person. And this was only a beginning to the humiliations and sorrows that have happened to me over the last half century. Many are hard to tell briefly, such as the repeated discovery of a pattern of being lost in mental worlds of my own making and thus out of touch with my own feelings or with the here and now decisions required of me.

I lived through many such experiences before I heard this saying attributed to some Buddhist teacher: "Humiliation is the road to enlightenment." This saying illuminated a great deal of my life as well as the second Beatitude. Enlightenment is the comfort promised to the sorrowing. But enlightenment, Spirit Reality itself, is not sorrow; it is a type of happiness, a joy and a courage that can endure no matter how great the trials.

## **Journey II**

The first journey of Spirit can continue for many years. What characterizes those years is that our Great Self, our Spirit Self, our Awed consciousness of consciousness happens to us as if from the outside. We view our Great Self as a kind of "not me" because we still identify with our basic personality which we spent our entire life designing and defending. We sometimes speak of the experience of our Great Self as being "beside ourselves." What a wonderful metaphor! Spirit in the first journey of Spirit is becoming "beside ourselves," outside our ordinary selves, a trip to a land of Mystery, an experience of ecstasy or Awe that seems, at first, quite alien to our ordinary lives.

Spirit journey number two begins when we shift our identification from our personality to our Spirit Self. No longer am I a personality having Spirit experiences. I am a Spirit being who has been trapped in the stodgy habits of this particular box of personality." Our personality is "not me," except in the same rather distant way that my toes and my toenails are "me." This shift in identity is the beginning of a different quality of Spirit journey. This second journey includes moving deeper and deeper into understanding the specific patterns of our personality and how it restrains Spirit living. It includes moving deeper and deeper toward realizing what Spirit is like.

As we identify with and are willing to be our Spirit selves, we take the second journey of becoming our Spirit selves. The next four Beatitudes depict elements of this second journey.

### **Blessing 3:**

*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth.<sup>3</sup>*

*Blessed are those who are detached from celebrity, status, ownership, and acclaim, for they have the entire natural realm as their inheritance.*

In our customary flow of life we fill up the box of our personality with celebrity, status, possessions, and acclaim. Filling our box is the opposite of this Beatitude's challenge to be "meek." "Meek" does not mean being a Mr. Milquetoast who knuckles under to all challenges and opposition. "Meek" here means a sort of aggressive surrender to living life the way life actually is.

Instead of being meek, we are typically boastful. We promote ourselves, our finite selves, our personality, our habituated person. We surround our personality with defenses of all sorts. We assume that we need more wealth, more popularity, more friends, more things to do, more skills, more fun, more excitement, more, more, more. That is the opposite of being meek.

"Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the Earth." What a strange saying! To understand it we must look beyond the beliefs of our personality to the actual experiences of the Spirit Self. When we are meekly willing to be the Spirit being that we are, we do not need to pull into the box of our personality more and more and more support. As a Spirit being we already possess it all. The entire Earth is ours. The entire cosmos is ours. All of nature is our family, our mother, our father, our brothers, our sisters. We do not need to own nature in the sense of having a deed to certain pieces of it. All of nature is already ours as a gift. We cannot legally own the air, but we have it as a gift to breathe. We cannot legally own the water cycles of the planet, but we have water as a gift to drink. We cannot own and control the biological systems of the planet, but we have food to eat. And on this goes. Jesus says to the disciples, "Why are you anxious? Look at the birds. The Final Papa feeds them; are you not more valuable than they?" Indeed, everything, entirely everything belongs to the meek. There is no need to fill our box. When we are living outside the box, everything belongs us. That is, everything is on loan to us for the time we need it as we need it. It is also true that everything will be taken away from us, for it is only on loan. But even our losses belongs to us. Everything belongs to us. We need nothing whatsoever. As personalities we think we need everything. As Spirit beings we need nothing. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." "Blessed are the meek."

*An autobiographical note:* I have lived in times in which I had almost nothing of worldly goods or acclaim, and I have lived in times when I had more than I needed. In

<sup>3</sup> *Matthew 5:5 ; R.S.V.*

both situations I discovered the Spirit blessing of being detached from goods and acclaim. When without such things, I saw the blessing of foregoing anxiety or shame. I saw the wisdom of simply keeping on with my core tasks with little or no appreciation from others and with almost no clarity about how I would continue to be physically cared for. These times required disciplined attention to meager resources and doing without many things, but I was continually surprised at how abundant the cosmos continued to be in every way that was absolutely necessary to my vocation. In those times when I had more than I needed, again detachment proved a blessing. The anxiety over losing something can be as great as the anxiety over not having it. I have had to learn to become detached from my miserly styles that were appropriate in times of scarcity. I have had to learn the blessing of fearlessly spending a chunk of wealth for some important cause or training or benevolence. I have had to learn the blessing of being detached from my acclaim, so that I could fearlessly do the next thing that might be unpopular. The details of all these struggles can seem boring, but when that deep inner detachment is present, there is no doubt about the liveliness of this blessing, the lack of anxiety that characterizes the life of the meek.

#### **Blessing 4:**

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.<sup>4</sup>*

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for Spirit realization, for they will be fully fed.*

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for being a full manifestation of their Spirit beings. Most of us hunger and thirst for everything else. We know what hunger and thirst means. In these two strong words, we feel the power of our aggressive being. Blessed are those who are aggressive in their quest for Spirit realization. This hunger and this thirst will be satisfied. Spirit is there for us in absolute abundance. Going for it succeeds. This is part of the blessing. One might hunger and thirst for food and water and not get them. But those who hunger and thirst for Spirit shall be fed. Those who hunger and thirst to “be somebody” in the eyes of others may experience starvation. But those who hunger and thirst for Spirit shall be fed. I could go on with this, but this point is so simple it only needs to be tried to prove its validity.

*An autobiographical note:* My hunger and thirst to be a widely read author may never be satisfied. Even if this were to come to pass, I am quite sure this would not actually feed my Spirit. But the investments I have made in going to Spirit-quality classes, workshops, retreats, and conferences have certainly paid off in deep satisfaction. This is also true of the many hours I have spent reading Spirit books, meditating, writing in journals, doing reflective writing, and holding deep conversations with Spirit friends. It now seems to be that every movie, every TV news program, every bit of music or art or drama can be a time when this hunger and thirst for Spirit realization can come into play and can be satisfied. I can identify with the man in Jesus’ parable who found a very valuable treasure buried in a field, and then sold everything he had to buy that field.

#### **Blessing 5**

*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.<sup>5</sup>*

*Blessed are those who forgive everyone, for they shall be forgiven everything.*

Receiving mercy means being forgiven. Everyone has need of being forgiven. We often expect mercy for ourselves. But the mercy of the Final Papa/Mama is

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 5:6 ; R.S.V.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 5:7 ; R.S.V.

indiscriminate. It does not forgive some and not others. It does not forgive me but not those who have hurt me and rejected me and opposed me. Everyone is forgiven. If we do not grasp the universality of forgiveness, we do not grasp that we are forgiven, eternally forgiven. Most human beings will never forgive us, but we are eternally forgiven. The cost of accepting that forgiveness is accepting it for everyone. So if we are not merciful toward others, we are rejecting the mercy of God toward ourselves. And if we are willing to be merciful toward others, we have already accepted mercy for ourselves, a mercy that knows no limits and no end.

We need to reflect on how important this mercy is. For the second journey of Spirit, the need for mercy is especially deep. As we proceed on this journey, more and more awareness of our own personality comes into view. We never knew before how addicted we are, how selfish we are, how weak we are, how mean we are, how guilty we have felt, how numb we have become, how lame, how blind, how deaf, how dead to true living. As we partake of the second Spirit journey, we see that we have not known before how much our personality habits have constrained us. Now we know. Now we know our need for mercy. Now we know our need to be forgiven. Now we know not only more of what we need to be forgiven for, but also that there are still more unknown estrangements for which forgiveness will be needed. "Lord have mercy!" This is perhaps the key prayer for taking the second Spirit journey. And it is a wonderful prayer, for it is immediately answered. No matter what horrors come into view in our personality, we can say, "Lord have mercy!" and the Final Absolute Overallness answers back immediately, "OK."

*An autobiographical note:* I was laying on a divan listening to a tape while I was waiting for a heart operation in a few days. My heart was having a flutter problem, racing up to 120 beats a minute, and those beats were weak. If I exerted myself blood would not reach my head and I would get dizzy. So I had to take it easy in order not to have a heart attack before the operation could be done. Earlier during this period, I had had a very bad night after watching an NBA playoff game. That second overtime had been too exciting for me. So I was taking it real easy as I listened to this tape. The presenter on this tape was talking about the heart chakra as one of the seven Spirit energy places on the human body. She was saying how these energies either flow or get blocked, and how blocked energies could even affect the operation of the physical heart. This got my attention. She went on to explain how we block the energies of the heart chakra by not forgiving other people – that not forgiving other people is a strain, indeed a waste of energy. For the energies of the heart chakra to flow, a person had to give up grudges against other people. So I began to reflect on who I had grudges against, and two particular persons came to mind. Several decades ago these two persons had been close friends with whom I had worked closely for years. But when I was determined to divorce my first wife and marry my current wife, they had abandoned me. I recalled a particular event in which the two of them had taken me aside and asked me to leave a meeting claiming that I was a bad influence. Lying on my couch recalling this event, I realized that I still held a grudge against these two. I could see that it was true that this grudge was wasting energy, energy I needed. What did it matter as I now faced the prospect of my own death that these two men had betrayed me decades ago? I might as well forgive them. Perhaps that would indeed take away some strain, loosen the flow of my heart chakra, perhaps even aid me in making it to my heart operation. So I did. I simply gave up any right or need to hold grudges against these men any longer. And I did experience a profound relaxation. I felt warmer and more compassionate toward myself and all the persons who had given me a hard time. I don't know whether this helped me make it to my heart operation or to get through the trauma of it. But it certainly helped me feel differently toward

myself and toward all the persons who had ever misunderstood me, betrayed me, abandoned me, hurt me. I could see that mercy did indeed just flow through my life when I turned loose of my grudges. By being merciful, I received mercy.

### **Blessing 6:**

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.<sup>6</sup>*

*Blessed are those who inquire with pristine honesty into the depths of Spirit,  
for they shall experience the Absolute Wholeness of Being.*

Purity of heart does not mean something pious and sentimental. In the context of the Beatitudes purity of heart means dedicated and honest inquiry into the depths of being our Spirit being and into the depths of Reality.

Søren Kierkegaard wrote an entire book on purity of heart in which he suggested that the pure in heart are those who “will one thing.” Most of us most of the time are devoted to many objects of devotion. We are conflicted by the many meaning givers that we have chosen to give meaning to our lives. We are not willing one thing but many things. Those who have one meaning giver are those (and only those) who have chosen the Final Absolute Mysteriousness as their one all-consuming meaning. The pure in heart see God, but what do they see? They see the Final Absolute Mysteriousness, and they trust that the meaning of their lives is to be found in this Finality.

Seeing God is a paradoxical seeing. The Gospel of John says bluntly (John 1:18) “No one has seen God.” I assume that this includes Jesus and Moses and everyone. In the same verse that says “No one has seen God,” the gospel of John goes on to say that Jesus, the offspring of God, has made God known. But the word “known” in this statement should not be interpreted to mean “imaged” or “understood” or “made part of a worldview.” God, even when known in the sense that Jesus knew God, remains unknown – the unknown Unknown, the unknowable absolute Mystery.

When the Gospel of John says that Jesus made God known, he did not mean that God was no longer Unknown; he meant that Jesus made God known as Love for us, as forgiveness. Indeed, this is the meaning of trust in God: that this Final Mysterious Power fosters our happiness by leading us to our Spirit greatness. This is what Jesus has “made known.” In virtually every one of his teachings, Jesus is making it known that the Final Papa is benevolent, forgiving, loving, the provider of profound aliveness, the treasure worth selling everything to possess, the only aliveness that cannot be taken away from us, the true home to which every prodigal needs to return.

Seeing God does not mean understanding the Mystery of Being with our minds. It means a direct experience of this transrational, transconceptual fullness of Final Mystery that we can never understand with our minds. If we are intent on putting the right doctrines or right theories in our hip pocket and using them to control our lives, seeing God may seem like an irrelevant blessing. But in the context of the Beatitudes, seeing God includes experiencing in full measure being the Spirit being that we essentially are. And it also means experiencing in full measure the essential nature of Reality.

So what is it like to experience the fullness of Reality? This question cannot be answered in words. It must be answered in actual experiences, in experiences that can only come to the pure of heart, to those who with wholehearted dedication and

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<sup>6</sup> *Matthew 5:8 ; R.S.V.*

honesty inquire into what is so and what is not so. Nevertheless, descriptions are possible, and those who have a direct vision of God can recognize the descriptions made by other visitors to this "PLACE." When we have been "THERE," then we can hear others speak about it. By "THERE " I mean the end of the second journey, the end toward which the second Spirit journey moves. To talk meaningfully about THERE, one has to go THERE.

*An autobiographical note:* So have I been THERE? Have I seen God? When have I been pure in heart? Most of what I learned from reading Søren Kierkegaard's book *Purity of Heart* was how I was not willing one thing, but was instead a scattered person willing many things. Nevertheless, I had some resonance with that image of willing one thing, that the Spirit life is singular, that the Spirit life embodies the Truth that unites all the little truths that life presents. In recent years this single-minded focus has been intensified by my experiences with Buddhist meditation; just sitting for hours focusing on the here and now of actual breathing brings this unity within the multiplicities of life into clearer focus. Also, in the Diamond Approach workshops I have attended, I have been further encouraged to push in single-minded contemplative inquiry into profound places. But have I been THERE? Have I seen God?

Rather than come up with specific times and places, my memory seems to focus on poetry that illuminates many experiences that I relate to this question. I have sensed, and can still sense, a spaciousness that is infinitely outside the box of my personality and of all my ordinary personal perceptions. Studying modern astronomy gives me a sense of this vastness, but the Infinite Vastness of seeing God is not the vastness of the cosmos nor the idea of vastness in the head of an astronomer; it is a direct experience, an experience that was vividly witnessed by human beings who lived thousands of years before modern astronomy. And this experience of Vastness is not an arms-length experience; it is a very personal experience in the living here and now. Here is a way to talk about it: my Spirit Being is a dialogue with this Vastness: my consciousness of consciousness stretches from the space/time position of my biological being to the Infinite Vastness and back again to the spot where I live. "Who I am?" "Who or What is this Vastness?" These are two aspects of the same question, and "Sheer Mystery" is the answer to both "Who am I" and "What is this Vastness?" Seeing this Sheer Mystery with the direct vision of my own consciousness is seeing God.

Seeing God is seeing that Infinite Blackness in which all illuminations occur. The mind cannot penetrate it. The human consciousness of consciousness reaches a boundary where consciousness becomes absorbed into a boundless Black Hole from which all consciousness comes and into which all consciousness returns. This Blackness is simply THERE and this Brilliantly Shining Blackness is God.

Have we seen God? If we resonate with some of this poetry, perhaps we have.

### **Journey III**

Journey III is the journey of the Spirit person who has been THERE to the direct vision of God and now returns to the ordinary aspects of living, finding it needful to integrate these ordinary experiences with remaining THERE with God. We tend to hope that being THERE with God means that our journey is over. Indeed, being THERE is full of wonder, full of peace, full of satisfaction, full of joy, full of the unassailable power of Being. But the journey continues. Life goes on. And this continuing life goes on in the same body, with the same parents, having the same personality, having the same flaws, living in the same culture, living with the same people, facing the same challenges that existed before the Journey to THERE with God



took place. And this third journey is not an easy journey. However surprising, disagreeable, or disappointing continuing the Spirit journey may seem, taking the third Spirit journey is also characterized by blessings. And here are two of them:

### **Blessing 7:**

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.<sup>7</sup>*

*Blessed are those who integrate into the life of Absolute Peace all the conflicting aspects of living, for they are the vanguard of human history.*

Finite living is characterized by conflicts. There is a conflict between our inner life and our outer life. There is a conflict between our left brain and our right brain. There is a conflict between our feminine aspects and our masculine aspects. There is a conflict between our social being and our natural being. There is a conflict between our society and the natural planet. There is a conflict between our society and every other society. There is a conflict between our social class or group and every other class or group. And this is only the beginning of the innumerable conflicts that comprise our living.

The person who is living in the third phase of the Spirit journey can be described as returning from the Infinite THERE as a bringer of peace to all the conflicts of finite living. And the blessing promised to these peacemakers is that they shall be the vanguard of history (the sons and daughters of God), the ones who set the course of the future in potentially positive directions, the ones who provide the presence that can endure the conflicts and resolve them for this generation of humanity. This capacity for service is the blessing.

The peacemaker has already received the blessing of peace. Seeing God means finding peace, the peace that passes all understanding. Now the Peaceful One returns as peacemaker to all the conflicts of the ordinary realm of living. The Peaceful One makes peace between men and women, between society and nature, between upper classes and lower classes, between East and West, between humanity and all the other life forms of the planet, between minds and emotions, between finite sensitivities and Spirit awareness.

The peace made by the peacemaker may end some conflicts. Some conflicts are based on lies and can simply end when those lies are no longer told. Other conflicts are based on life polarities that never end – such as, masculine and feminine, nature and society. In this case, the peace made by the peacemaker does not end all tension between these ongoing poles of living. Rather, these basic polarities of life are blessed with the capacity of having respect for one another. The peacemaker reconciles and integrates masculine and feminine, nature and society back into the whole to which these parts belong. The Final Whole contains all these parts of Reality in a mutually enhancing harmony. How this reconciliation is to be accomplished in each instance is for the peacemaker to work out. He is capable of doing this because the vision of God enables this peacemaking. This is her authority and qualification. The peacemaker sees the Whole and is thus made capable of choosing new directions within the manyness of ordinary life. The peacemaker also has the power to make new directions take on actuality. This is the blessing offered the peacemaker: to be a blessing wherever and whenever and to whomever the peacemaker chooses to be a blessing.

Peacemaking can go on in every arena of living. The political left and the political right can come to see the limits as well as the truth of their respective positions and then build together a balanced vision for the future of a democratic, just, and ecologically

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew 5:9; R.S.V.

appropriate society. Persons who love the Bible in a conservative way can be reconciled with persons who love the Bible in a liberal way. Every instance of such peacemaking is complex and difficult even to talk about, but peace can be made when the members of any truth-seeking group are enabled to begin with the experience of THERE, the experience of the Wholeness in which all parts cohere. Those who make such peace are the sons and daughters of God. Why? Because only those who are experiencing the peace of THERE can make peace on Earth among the fragments of reality that conflict destructively.

*An autobiographical note:* I began my life as a mathematician, an abstract artist of the possibilities of the human mind. The human body and its emotional intelligence was relegated to secondary status. I was, as one therapist said to me, an expert at “feelingless verbosity.” I could talk about or around some of my feelings, but I was unable to express them plainly and openly and simply. I will not attempt to itemize all the therapies, workshops, humiliations, and illuminations it took to make peace between my emotional intelligence and my mental intelligence. I will simply report this: I have found peace within myself by becoming aware that the same God who made the mind also made the body with all its emotional wonders. Indeed, I came to see that every emotion is good, including anger, fear, terror, shame, and guilt as well as the more sweet, restful, exciting, satisfying feelings. All feelings are a gift from God; they are integral parts of the situation that God is giving to me. Some emotions may be showing me that my relationship with life is delusory, but that is a gift. Some emotions may be practical guidance, telling me something specific about my real self and my real situation.

I have learned to see that each of us is supplied with an emotional intelligence that can enable us to sort out the meanings of our various emotions, and thus affirm them all. This intelligence is very different from the intelligence used by the mathematician or scientist. Scientific truth seekers have had to learn how to keep emotions out of their scientific work. The pure scientist is dedicated to objective mental work. The body and all its functions can be an object of our scientific investigation, but we do not count on the body’s emotions to assist us with our objective work. It is as if a war is going on within me and my society, between science and the more artistic and religious feeling-laden aspects of humanness. Nevertheless, I have made a rough sort of peace between my scientific mind and the emotional intelligence of my body. And this peace enables me to be a peacemaker in my associations with other people. Perhaps I first recognized the power of this peacemaking potential, while working through issues with my second wife and forging new relations with my adult children. But this peacemaking has also enriched my work as a teacher and writer within this still greatly estranged culture.

### **Blessing 8:**

*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.<sup>8</sup>*

*Blessed are those who suffer human opposition to their manifestation of Spirit,  
for the Commonwealth of Spirit is their Eternal Home.*

Estranged persons and estranged societies of persons will inevitably find ways to oppose the sons and daughters of God, the vanguard, the peacemakers, the visionaries who see the truth about life and witness to it, the activists who see what needs to be altered and choose to show how to do it. The eighth and last Beatitude says that these

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<sup>8</sup> *Matthew 5:10; R.S.V.*

sons and daughters are blessed, even though they are opposed by many and frequently suffer bitter persecution.

So what is the blessing? It is not that those who are persecuted today will be rewarded later with some heavenly blessing that compensates them for their hard times. No, like all the other blessings, this last blessing is operative in the living NOW.

Nor is the blessing the assurance that we are on the right track because we are being rejected and persecuted. Those who are returning from having seen the vision of God need no assurance that they are on the right track. Having been THERE is all the assurance needed. Being THERE and integrating THERE with all the ordinary challenges of daily living is the right track, and it remains the right track whether we are persecuted or not.

Furthermore, opposition from one's social peers can mean different things. It can mean that we are being an obstinate, tyrannical, self-centered bully. It can mean that we are being an unconscious nerd. Whatever the case, no assurance for the state of our Spirit life comes from being opposed or persecuted.

So what is the blessing associated with being rejected and persecuted? It is the same blessing offered those who are poor in their Spirit: participation in the Kingdom of God (Reign of Reality, the Commonwealth of Spirit). It is the same blessing that attracted us at the beginning of our Spirit journey. The blessing is participation in the Kingdom of God, communion with those who live, have lived, and will live from this place. Whether we are experiencing our Spiritual poverty or are being persecuted for our Spirit maturity, the blessing is participation in the Commonwealth of Spirit. This is our eternal home, our rest, our life. And this blessing is not lessened by being opposed or persecuted for our work in manifesting this Spirit sphere. Indeed, any opposition only intensifies the blessing.

Why is the blessing intensified by opposition? A deep paradox is revealed here. The opposition that the defenders of fallen living make toward the Spirit vanguard reveals or can reveal to these defensive persons what they need to know in order to be healed. Their irrational, compulsive opposition toward the true sons and daughters of God is itself God's judgment on their patterns of living, the patterns that are preventing their own blessedness. Experiencing such judgment is the first step in the process of Spirit healing, for it means realizing the unconscious layers of hatred toward Reality, toward authenticity, toward God, and thus toward God's servants. The second step in this healing is experiencing one's welcome home to Reality. This also is communicated to them by the Spirit vanguard. The Spirit vanguard manifest a witness to forgiveness for their own selves and all others. They are the ones who know, live, and thus communicate the truth that Reality is merciful, forgiving, accepting, welcoming to all prodigals. The third step in Spirit healing is accepting one's acceptance, choosing to be home. The Spirit vanguard by their very being, their words, their deeds beckon people to accept their acceptance. The Spirit vanguard are the walking breathing presence of the Kingdom of God. They are the "Home," the "Rest," the "Commonwealth" toward which all are called. Therefore those who persecute this "Home" may discover that it is their own home they are persecuting, and turn to be healed.

The eighth blessing is that the beloved Kingdom, of which the persecuted ones are already members, is being expanded or spread by their persecution. The more vigorously they are opposed, the more quickly the opposers are absorbed into the beloved Kingdom. Ask not why this must be so, simply notice that this is the blessing! Like seed that falls into the Earth, the persecuted create a harvest of Spirit living and

thus many more seeds for still other harvests.

The sons and daughters of God are the peacemakers, the visionaries, the vanguard of Reality, servants of the Whole. Being opposed and persecuted is part of their service, part of what it means to take the third journey of Spirit and be blessed in doing so.

The gospel writer of Matthew expands on this last Beatitude in the verses that follow it:

How blessed you are when you suffer insults and persecution and every calumny for my sake. Accept it with gladness and exultation, for you have a rich reward in heaven (where "heaven" means the living NOW of holy Reality). In the same way they persecuted the prophets before you.

You are the salt of the world, and if salt becomes tasteless, how is its saltiness to be restored? It is now good for nothing but to be thrown away and trodden underfoot. (Matthew 5:11-13 New English Bible)

The salt spoken of here was probably salt-laced rock. The saltiness of such rock is being used as a metaphor for manifesting the sting or taste of Spirit. By actively being who they are, the sons and daughters of God are this saltiness. This is the character of the third Spirit journey, having moved away from the box of our habituated personality and social conditioning to the Final Source of all Spirit saltiness, we now return to the entire round of human experience within this estranged world to be the ongoing sting of saltiness.

*An autobiographical note:* I have experienced the truth of this blessing for a long time, but I am only recently seeing how profound this Beatitude is. Early in my life, I met rejection from my parents when I chose a religious vocation. I met rejection from my first congregation to whom I attempted to preach honestly. Later, I met rejection from dear friends who could not understand my need to reconstruct my marital life. Indeed, I have been and still am rejected by both friends and enemies in almost every organization to which I have or do belong. I have had many opportunities to learn all over again that the best way to live is to charge ahead with my best grasp of my own integrity and my own grasp of truth and simply let the chips fall where they may. But not until recently have I seen how important it is to intentionally provoke others into their rejection of the truth for which I stand. Strange as it may seem, rejecting me can be a way other people discover their own issues. It is almost impossible for people to know what their own issues are until they see themselves rejecting what is clearly true.

So I am now learning that the blessing of this last Beatitude has nothing whatsoever to do with my need for acceptance or my wish to avoid rejection. The issue, seen from the perspective of manifesting Spirit in this world, is always the other person or persons. My task is presenting truth to other persons, not in order that I can be proud about my correct behavior as a truth presenter, but so these other persons can hear the truth. And their rejection of truth or their acceptance of truth is interesting only as it pertains to them. Are the persons who are rejecting truth learning something thereby about themselves? Are the persons who are accepting truth learning something thereby about themselves? The blessing I am experiencing is the blessing of seeing other people move into better alinement with their own happiness, their own Spirit being, their own meaningful vocation, their own fellowship with other aware members of the Spirit Commonwealth. The more deeply and the more courageously I present truth, stand by truth, be truth in my every movement, the more rejection I am going to encounter. This is absolutely necessary. Truth must always fight its way through the defenses of those who do not wish to embrace it. In most situations my challenge is to

work harder at being rejected. I am not conducting a political campaign or a popularity contest. As a returnee from the THERE of seeing God face-to-face, my task is to tell humanity what I have seen and to be rejected for making this witness. This is what makes me the salt of the Earth. If people are learning who they are through rejecting me, I am being that salt without which Christianity or any other religion is good for nothing but to be trodden underfoot.

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All eight of these blessings and all three of these journeys of Spirit continue indefinitely. We never complete any of them. There is a progression from Journey 1 to Journey 3 and from Blessing 1 to Blessing 8, but the first of these continues being part of our lives. The progression in our Spirit journey might best be understood as how the focus of our Spirit journey changes over the years. But it does not matter where our focus happens to be at this time. Our current focus is given to us by God, and we are called to focus on that focus. Later, our focus will be different. Spirit is a journey, influenced by what we do, but fundamentally determined by God, a Power beyond our control.

And it is foolish and despair-producing to compare our journey with anyone else's journey. Each of us is uniquely assigned to journey the journey each is journeying. Blessed are the meek: blessed are those who surrender to journeying the journey that they are assigned to journey.