

Sermon on the Mount  
The Beatitudes  
Emmet Fox

Summary of the whole Christian teaching. It is a spiritual, more than a literary synopsis, summarizing the spirit of the teaching rather than the letter. A general summing up, such as this, is highly characteristic of the old Oriental mode of approach to a religious and philosophical teaching, and it naturally recalls the Eight-fold Path of Buddhism, the Ten Commandments of Moses, and other such compact groupings of ideas. Jesus concerned himself exclusively with the teaching of general principles, and these general principles always had to do with mental states, for he knew that if one's mental states are right, everything else must be right too, whereas, if these are wrong, nothing else can be right. Unlike the other great religious teachers, he gives us no detailed instructions about what we are to do or are not to do; he does not tell us either to eat or to drink, or to refrain from eating or drinking certain things; or to carry out various ritual observances at certain times and seasons. Indeed, the whole current of his teaching is anti-ritualistic, anti-formalist. He had little patience at any time with the Jewish priesthood and its theory of salvation through the Temple observances. "The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . The hour cometh and now is when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is spirit and they that worship him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

The Pharisees, with their appalling code of outward detailed observances, were the only people towards whom he was really intolerant. A conscientious Pharisee of those days—and most of them were extremely conscientious, according to their lights—had an enormous number of outer details to attend to every day before he could feel that he had satisfied the requirements of God. A modern rabbi has estimated the number of such details at not less than six hundred, and as it is obvious that no human being could really carry out this sort of thing in practice, the natural result would be that the victim, conscious of falling far short of the accomplishment of his duties, must necessarily labor under a chronic sense of sin. Now, to believe yourself to be sinful is, for

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practical purposes, to be sinful, with all the consequences that follow upon that condition. The policy of Jesus contrasts with this in that his object is rather to wean the heart from relying upon outer things at all,

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either for pleasurable gratification or for spiritual salvation, and to inculcate a new attitude of mind altogether; and this policy is graphically set forth in the Beatitudes.

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Here, in the very beginning, we have to take into account a point of great practical importance in the study of the Bible, namely, that it is written in a peculiar idiom of its own, and that terms and expressions, and sometimes actual words, are used in the Bible in a sense that is distinctly different from that of everyday usage. This is quite apart from the fact, for which we have also to be on the lookout, that certain English words have changed in meaning since the Bible was translated.

The Bible is really a textbook of metaphysics, a manual for the growth of the soul, and it looks at all questions from this point of view. It is impossible to emphasize this point too much. For this reason it takes the broadest view of every subject. It sees all things in their relationship to the human soul, and it uses many common terms in a far wider sense than that given to them by common use. For example, the word "bread" in the Bible means, not merely any kind of physical food, which is the broadest interpretation that is put upon it in general literature, but all things that man requires—all physical things, such as clothing, shelter, money, education, companionship, and so forth; and, above all, it stands for spiritual things such as spiritual perception, spiritual understanding, and preeminently spiritual realization. "Give us this day our daily bread." "I am the bread of life." "Unless ye eat this bread. . . ."

Another example is the word "prosperity." In the scriptural sense, "prosperity," and "prosper," signify a very great deal more than the acquirement of material possessions. They really mean success in prayer. From the point of view of the soul, success in prayer is the only

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kind of prosperity worth having; and if our prayers are successful, we shall naturally have all the material things that we need. A certain quantity of material goods is essential on this plane, of course, but material wealth is really the least important thing in life, and this the Bible implies by giving the word "prosperous" its true meaning.

To be poor in spirit does not in the least mean the thing we call "poor spirited" nowadays. To be poor in spirit means to have emptied yourself of all desire to exercise personal self-will, and, what is just as important, to have renounced all preconceived opinions in the wholehearted search

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for God. It means to be willing to set aside your present habits of thought, your present views and prejudices, your present way of life if necessary; to jettison, in fact, anything and everything that can stand in the way of your finding God.

One of the saddest passages in all literature is the story of the Rich Young Man who missed one of the great opportunities of history, and "turned away sorrowful because he had great possessions." This is really the story of mankind in general. We reject the salvation that Jesus offers us—our chance of finding God—because we "have great possessions"; not in the least because we are very rich in terms of money, for indeed most people are not, but because we have great possessions in the way of preconceived ideas—confidence in our own judgment, and in the ideas with which we happen to be familiar; spiritual pride, born of academic distinction; sentimental or material attachment to institutions and organizations; habits of life that we have no desire to renounce; concern for human respect, or perhaps fear of public ridicule; or a vested interest in worldly honor and distinction. And these possessions keep us chained to the rock of suffering that is our exile from God.

The Rich Young Man is one of the most tragic figures in history; not because he happened to be wealthy, for wealth in itself is neither good nor bad, but because his heart was enslaved by that love of money which Paul tells us is the root of all evil. He could have been a multimillionaire in silver and gold, and, as long as his heart was not set upon it, he would

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have been just as free as the poorest beggar to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. His trust, however, was in his riches, and this shut the gate. Why was not the Christ Message received with acclaim by the Ecclesiastics of Jerusalem? Because they had great possessions—possessions of Rabbinical learning, possessions of public honor and importance, authoritative offices as the official teachers of religion—and these possessions they would have had to sacrifice in order to accept the spiritual teaching. The humble and unlearned folk who heard the Master gladly were happy in having no such possessions to tempt them away from the Truth.

Why was it in modern times when the same simple Christ Message of the immanence and availability of God, and of the Inner Light that burns forever in the soul of man, once more made its appearance in the world, it was again, for the most part, among the simple and unlettered that it

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was gladly received? Why was it not the Bishops, and Deans, and Moderators, and Ministers, and Presbyteries, who gave it to the world? Why was not Oxford, or Cambridge, or Harvard, or Heidelberg, the great broadcasting center for this most important of all knowledge? And, again the answer is—because they had great possessions—great possessions of intellectual and spiritual pride, great possessions of self-satisfaction and cocksureness, great possessions of academic commitment, and of social prestige.

The poor in spirit suffer from none of these embarrassments, either because they never had them, or because they have risen above them on the tide of spiritual understanding. They have got rid of the love of money and property, of fear of public opinion, and of the disapproval of relatives or friends. They are no longer overawed by human authority, however august. They are no longer cocksure in their own opinions. They have come to see that their most cherished beliefs may have been and probably were mistaken, and that all their ideas and views of life may be false and in need of recasting. They are ready to start again at the very beginning and learn life anew.

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Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Mourning or sorrow is not in itself a good thing, for the Will of God is that everyone should experience happiness and joyous success. Jesus says: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Nevertheless, trouble and suffering are often extremely useful, because many people will not bother to learn the Truth until driven to do so by sorrow and failure. Sorrow then becomes relatively a good thing. Sooner or later every human being will have to discover the Truth about God, and make his own contact with Him at first hand. He will have to acquire the understanding of Truth, which will set him free, once and for all, from our three-dimensional limitations and their concomitants—sin, sickness, and death. But most people will not undertake the search for God wholeheartedly unless driven thereto by trouble of some kind. There is really no need for man to have trouble, because if he will only seek God first, the trouble need never come. He always has the choice of learning by spiritual unfoldment or of learning by painful experience, and it is his own fault if he makes the latter choice.

As a rule, it is only when health is broken down, and ordinary medical

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means have failed to afford relief, that people seriously set about gaining that spiritual understanding of the body as the true embodiment of Divine Life that is our only guarantee of overcoming sickness and, ultimately, death. Yet, if people would turn to God and acquire something of this understanding while their health is still good, they need never be sick at all.

Again, it is usually only when people are feeling the pinch of poverty very acutely, that is, when ordinary material sources of supply have dried up, that they turn to God as a last resort and learn the lesson that the Divine Power really is the Source of man's supply, and all material agents but the channels.

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Now this lesson has to be learned and thoroughly realized before man can pass on to any experience higher or wider than the present one. In our Father's House are many mansions, but the key to higher mansions is always the acquiring of complete dominion over the one in which we are. It is therefore a very blessed thing for us that we should be compelled to get right on the supply question at the earliest possible moment. If prosperous people will now, while they are still prosperous, acknowledge God as their true Source, and pray regularly for still more spiritual understanding on this point, they need never suffer poverty or financial trouble at all. At the same time, they must be careful to use their present resources well, not hoarding riches selfishly but recognizing that God is the owner, and that they are only the stewards or trustees for Him. The command of money involves a responsibility which you cannot evade. You must dispense it wisely, or take the consequences.

This general principle applies to every one of our difficulties, not merely physical or financial troubles, but all the other ills to which flesh is heir. Family troubles, quarrels and estrangements, sin and remorse, and all the rest, need never come at all if we will seek first the Kingdom of God and Right Understanding; but if we will not do so, then come they must, and for us this mourning will be a blessing in disguise, for through it we shall be "comforted." And by comfort the Bible means the experience of the Presence of God, which is the end of all mourning.

The orthodox churches have too often taught a crucified Christ finishing on the cross; but the Bible gives us the Risen Christ Triumphant.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

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On the surface, this Beatitude seems to have very little meaning, and what there is seems to be obviously contradicted by the plain facts of everyday life. No sensible person on looking about the world or studying history could sincerely accept this saying at its face value, and most honest Christians have passed it by in practice with a regretful feeling  
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that no doubt that is how things ought to be, but that they certainly are not so in fact.

But this attitude will not do. Sooner or later the soul reaches a point where evasions and sophistries have to be discarded once and for all, and the fact of life faced squarely at whatever cost.

Now, either Jesus meant what he said, or he did not; and either he knew what he was talking about, or he did not. And so, if this saying is not to be taken seriously, we are driven to the position which no Christian will care to accept—either that Jesus was saying what he did not really believe, as unscrupulous people do, or that he was talking nonsense. We have to face up to this situation at the very beginning of our study of this Sermon on the Mount. Either Jesus is to be taken seriously, or he is not to be taken seriously, in which case his teaching should be dropped altogether and people should cease to call themselves Christians. To pay lip service to his name, to say that Christianity is the divinely inspired Truth, to boast of being Christians, and then quietly to evade in practice all the definite implications of his teaching, is hypocrisy and weakness of the most utterly fatal kind. Either Jesus is a reliable guide, or he is not. If he is to be relied upon, then let us pay him the compliment of assuming that he meant what he said, and that he knew best about the art of living. The trouble and sorrow that humanity suffers are really due to the very fact that our mode of life is so opposed to the Truth, that the things that he taught and the things that he said seem to us at first sight to be foolish and wild.

The fact is that when correctly understood, the teaching of Jesus is found to be not only true but exceedingly practicable; indeed it is the most practicable of all doctrines. We find then that he was no sentimental dreamer, no mere dealer in empty platitudes, but the unflinching realist that only a great mystic can be; and the whole essence of his teaching of its practical application is summed up in this text.

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This Beatitude is among the half-dozen most important verses in the Bible. When you possess the spiritual meaning of this text you have the Secret of Dominion—the secret of overcoming every kind of difficulty. It is literally the Key of Life. It is the Jesus Christ Message reduced to a single sentence. This gnomic saying is actually the Philosopher's Stone of the Alchemists that turns the base metal of limitation and trouble into the gold of "comfort" or true harmony.

We notice that there are two polar words in the text—"meek" and "earth." They are both used in a special and highly technical sense, and they have to be unveiled before the wonderful meaning that underlies them can be found. First, of all, the word "earth" in the Bible does not mean merely this terrestrial globe. It really means manifestation.

Manifestation or expression is the result of a cause. A cause has to be expressed or manifested before we can know anything about it; and, contrariwise, every expression or manifestation has to have a cause. Now you learn in Divine Metaphysics, and particularly in the Sermon on the Mount, that all causation is mental, and that your body and all your affairs—your home, your business, all your experience—are but the manifestation of your own mental states. The fact that you are quite unconscious of most of your mental states does not signify; because they are there, nevertheless, in your subconscious mind, notwithstanding the fact that you have now forgotten them, or never were aware of them at all.

In other words, your "earth" means the whole of your outer experience, and to "inherit the earth" means to have dominion over that outer experience; that is to say, to have power to bring your conditions of life into harmony and true success. "All the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." "His soul shall dwell at ease, and His seed (prayers) shall inherit the earth." "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." So we see that when the Bible talks about the earth—possessing the earth, governing the earth, making the earth glorious, and so forth—it is referring to the conditions of our lives from our bodily health outwards

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common speech, because the thing does not exist except for those who are upon the Spiritual Basis of the Jesus Christ teaching; but if we desire to inherit the earth we must absolutely acquire this "meekness."

Moses, who had such extraordinary success in prayer—he overcame the old-age belief to the extent of manifesting the physical body of a young

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man in the prime of life, when, according to the calendar, he was one hundred and twenty years old, and then transcended matter altogether, or, "dematerialized" without dying—was known preeminently for this quality—"as meek as Moses." Moses, we remember, apart from his own personal demonstration, did a marvelous work for his whole nation, getting it out of Egyptian bondage in the face of incredible difficulties (for the successful Exodus was the "demonstration" of Moses and a few advanced souls who were helping him) and influencing the whole subsequent course of history by his teaching and his deeds. Moses had an open mind, ready to be taught new things and new ways of thinking and working. He did not reject fresh revelation because it was novel and revolutionary, as most of his self-satisfied colleagues in the Egyptian Hierarchy would have done. He was not, in the beginning at least, free from serious faults of character, but he was too big for intellectual or spiritual pride, and therefore he gradually rose above these defects as the new truth worked in his soul.

Moses thoroughly understood that to conform oneself rigorously to the Will of God, far from involving the loss of any good, could only mean a finer and better and more splendid life. He did not, therefore, think of it as self-sacrifice, for he knew it to be the highest form of self-glorification in the true and wonderful sense of the word. The self-glorification of the egotist is the mean vanity that leads at last to humiliation. True self-glorification, the glorification that is really glorious, is the glorification of God—"The Father in me, He doeth the works." "I in Thee, and Thou in Me." Moses had a wonderful understanding of the power of the spoken Word to call forth good, which is scientific faith. He was one of the "meekest" men who ever lived, and no one, excepting our saviour, has inherited the earth to a greater degree.

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There is a marvelous Oriental saying that "Meekness compels God Himself."

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

"Righteousness" is another of the great Key Words of the Bible, one of those keys that the reader must have in his possession if he is to get at the true meaning of the book. Like "earth" and "meek" and "comfort," it is a technical term used in a special and definite sense.

Righteousness means, in the Bible, not merely right conduct, but right



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thinking on all subjects, in every department of life. As we study the Sermon on the Mount, we shall find every clause in it reiterating the great truth that outside things are but the expression (ex-pressed or pressed out) or out-picturing of our inner thoughts and beliefs; that we have dominion or power over our thoughts to think as we will; and thus, indirectly, we make or mar our lives by the way in which we do think. Jesus will constantly tell us in these discourses that we have no direct power over outer things, because these outer things are but consequences, or, if you like, resultant pictures of what goes on in the Secret Place. If it were possible for us to affect externals directly without changing our thought, it would mean that we could think one thing and produce another; and this would be contrary to the Law of the Universe. Indeed, it is just this very notion which is the basic fallacy that lies at the root of all human trouble—all sickness and sin, all strife and poverty, and even death itself.

The great Law of the Universe, however, is just this—that what you think in your mind you will produce in your experience. As within, so without. You cannot think one thing and produce another. If you want to control your circumstances for harmony and happiness, you must first control your thoughts for harmony and happiness, and then the outer things will follow. If you want health, you must first think health; and, remember, thinking health does not mean merely thinking a healthy

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body, important as that is, but it also includes thinking peace and contentment, and good-will to all, for, as we shall see later on in the Sermon, destructive emotion is one of the primary causes of disease. If you want spiritual unfoldment and growth in the knowledge of God, you must think spiritual thoughts—God thoughts—and give your attention, which is your life, to God rather than to limitation.

If you want material prosperity, you must first think prosperity thoughts, and then make a habit of doing so, for the thing that keeps most people poor is the sheer habit of poverty thinking. If you want congenial companionship, if you want to be loved, you must first think thoughts of love and good-will. Like begets like, is another way of stating the Great Law, which means that as a man soweth in his unseen thoughts, so shall he reap in that which is seen, "All things work together for good to those who love good," and to love good means to occupy oneself with thoughts of good.

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When people awaken to a knowledge of these great truths, they naturally try to begin to apply them in their own lives. Realizing at last the vital importance of "righteousness," or the thinking of harmonious thoughts, they, as sensible people, begin immediately to try to put their house in order. The principle involved is perfectly simple, but unfortunately the doing of it is anything but easy. Now, why should this be so? The answer lies in the extraordinary potency of habit; and habits of thinking are at once the most subtle in character and the most difficult to break. It is easy, comparatively speaking, to break a physical habit if one really means business, because action on the physical plane is so much slower and more palpable than on the mental plane. In dealing with habits of thought, however, we cannot, so to say, stand back and take a comparatively detached view, as we can in contemplating our actions. Our thoughts flow across the stage of consciousness in an unbroken stream, and so rapidly that only unceasing vigilance can deal with them. Again, the theatre of one's actions is the area of his immediate presence. I can act only where I am. I may give orders by letter, or telephone; or I may press a button and bring about results at a distance; but still, my action

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happens where I am, and at the present moment of time. In thought, on the contrary, I can range over the whole area of my life, including all the people with whom I have been or am in any way concerned, and I can soar away into the past or into the future with equal ease. We see, therefore, how much bigger the task of achieving all-around harmonious thinking, or true righteousness, is than appears at first sight.

For this reason many people become discouraged with themselves and indulge in a great deal of self-condemnation because they do not very speedily change the whole current of thought over the whole area of their lives—destroy the old Adam, as Paul says—in a very short time. This, of course, is a capital mistake and, incidentally, self-condemnation being an essentially negative, and therefore unrighteous thought, tends to produce still more trouble, in the old vicious circle. If you are not progressing as fast as you wish to, the remedy is—to be still more careful to hold only harmonious thoughts. Do not dwell upon your mistakes or upon the slowness of your progress, but claim the Presence of God with you, all the more, in the teeth of the discouraging suggestion. Claim Wisdom. Claim Power, or prosperity in prayer. Have a mental stocktaking or a review of your life, and see if you are not still

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thinking wrongly in some section or other of your mind. Is there some wrong line of conduct that you are still pursuing? Is there somebody whom you have not yet forgiven? Are you indulging in any kind of political, or racial, or religious sectarian hatred or contempt? This is sure to be disguising itself under a cloak of self-righteousness, if it is there. If it is, tear off the cloak, and get rid of the evil thing, for it is poison in your life. Is there some kind of jealousy left in your heart—it may be personal or it may be professional. This odious thing is a good deal more common than would be readily admitted in polite society. If it is there, cut it out at any cost. Are there any sentimental regrets, or purposeless yearnings for the impossible? If so, reflect that, as an immortal being, the Son of God holding spiritual dominion, no good thing is out of your reach, here and now. Waste no more time repining for what is over and done, but make the present and the future a splendid realization of your heart's desire. Is there remorse for mistakes past and gone? Then

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remember that remorse, as distinct from repentance, is merely a form of spiritual pride. To revel in it, as some people do, is treason to the love and forgiveness of God, who says: "Behold now is the day of salvation." "Behold I make all things new."

In this Beatitude, Jesus tells us not to be discouraged because we do not overcome everything at once, because our progress seems to be slow. If we are not making any progress at all, then we cannot be praying in the right way, and it is for us to find out why, by examining our lives, and by praying for wisdom and guidance. Indeed, we should constantly pray for wisdom and guidance, and for the living action of the Holy Spirit upon us, that the quality of our prayers—our prosperity—may constantly increase. But if we are moving, if things are improving, although not very quickly it may be, we have no need to be discouraged. We need only to work on steadily, and provided we are truly wholehearted in our efforts, provided, that is to say, that we really are hungry and thirsting for righteousness, then, at last, we shall surely be filled. It could not happen that a wholehearted search for truth and righteousness, if persevered in, should not be crowned with success. God is not mocked, nor does He mock His children.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

This is a brief summary of the Law of Life which Jesus develops more fully later in the Sermon (Matt. 7: 1-5). As it stands, the Beatitude calls

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for very little comment, because the words employed bear the ordinary meaning which we still give them in daily life, and the statement as given is as clear and obvious in its meaning as the law in question is simple and inflexible in its action.

The point that the Scientific Christian needs to note is that, as usual, the vital bearing of the principle covered in this Beatitude lies in its application to the realm of thought. The thing that really matters is that you be merciful in your thought. Kind actions coupled with unkind thoughts are hypocrisy, dictated by fear, or desire for self-glory, or some  
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such motive. They are counterfeits and they bless neither the giver nor the recipient. On the other hand, the true thought about fellowman blesses him spiritually, mentally, and materially; and blesses you too. Let us be merciful in our mental judgments of our brother, for, in truth, we are all one, and the more deeply he seems to err, the more urgent is the need for us to help him with the right thought, and so make it easier for him to get free. You—because you understand the power of the Spiritual Idea, the Christ Truth—have a responsibility that others have not; see that you do not evade it. When his delinquency comes to your notice, remember that the Christ in him is calling out for help to you who are enlightened—so be merciful.

Because in deed and in truth we are all one, component parts of the living garment of God, you yourself will ultimately receive the same treatment that you mete out to others; you will receive the same merciful help in your own hour of need from those who are farther along the path than you are. Above all is it true that, in freeing others from the weight of your condemnation, you make it possible to absolve yourself from self-condemnation.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

This is one of those wonderful gnomic sayings in which the Bible is so rich. It is nothing less than a summing up in a few words of the whole philosophy of religion. As usual, in the Scriptures, the words are used in a technical sense and cover a far wider meaning than we attach to them in everyday life.

Let us begin by considering what the promise in this Beatitude is. It is nothing less than to see God. Now, we know, of course, that God has no corporeal form, and therefore, there is no question of "seeing" Him in

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the ordinary physical sense in which one might see a human being or an object. If one could see God in this way, He would have to be limited, and therefore, not God. To "see" in the sense referred to here, signifies  
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spiritual perception, and spiritual perception means just that capacity to apprehend the true nature of being which we all so sadly lack.

We live in God's world, but we do not in the least know it as it is.

Heaven lies all about us—it is not a distant locality afar off in the skies, but all around us now—but because we are lacking in spiritual perception, we are unable to recognize it; that is to say, we are unable to experience it; and, therefore, so far as we are concerned, we may be said to be shut out of Heaven. We do contact a very tiny fragment of it, and that tiny fragment we call the universe; but even that little bit, we see, for the most part, all awry.

Heaven is the religious name for the Presence of God, and Heaven is infinite; but our mental habit leads us to mould our experience into three dimensions only. Heaven is Eternity, but what we know here, we know only serially, in a sequence called "time," which never permits of our comprehending an experience in its entirety. God is Divine Mind, and in that Mind there are no limitations or restrictions at all; yet we see everything distributed in what is called "space," or spaced out—an artificial restriction which continuously inhibits the constant regrouping of our experience that is required by our creative thought.

Heaven is the realm of Spirit, Substance; without age, or discord, or decay; a realm of eternal good; and yet, to our distorted vision, everything is ageing, decaying, wearing out; getting born only to die, blossoming only to fade.

We are very much in the position of a color-blind man in a beautiful flower garden. All around him are glorious colors; but he is quite unaware of them and sees only blacks, whites, and grays. If we suppose him to be also devoid of the sense of smell, we shall see what a very small part of the glory of the garden exists for him. Yet it is all there, if he could but sense it.

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This limitation in us is known in theology as the "Fall of Man," and it arises from our using our free will in opposition to the Will of God.

"God has made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions."

Our task is to surmount these limitations as rapidly as may be, until we

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reach the point where we can know things as they really are—experience Heaven as it really is. That is what is meant by "seeing God," and seeing him "face-to-face." To see God is to apprehend Truth as it really is, and this is infinite freedom and perfect bliss.

In this wonderful Beatitude we are told exactly how this supreme task is to be accomplished and who they are who shall do it. They are the pure in heart. Again, we have to understand that here the words "pure" and "purity" must be taken in a very much wider sense than that which is commonly allotted to them. Purity, in the Bible, means a very great deal more than physical purity—vitaly important thought that is. In its full and complete sense, purity is recognizing God alone as the only real Cause, and the only real Power in existence. It is what is called elsewhere in the Sermon "the single eye," and it is the Master Key to life. It is nothing less than the secret of escape from all sickness, trouble, and limitation; the overcoming or reversing, in short, of the Fall of Man.

And so, our text might well be paraphrased something in this style: "Blessed are they who recognize God as the only real Cause, and the only real Presence, and the only real Power; not merely in a theoretical or formal way, but practically, and specifically, and wholeheartedly, in all their thoughts, and words, and actions; and not merely in some parts of their lives, but in every nook and corner of their lives and mentalities, keeping nothing back from Him, but bringing their own wills in every last particular into perfect harmony with His Will—for they shall overcome all limitation of time, and space, and matter, and carnal mind; and realize and enjoy the Presence of God forever."

We note how clumsy any paraphrase of a Bible truth always sounds after the matchless grace and conciseness of the inspired text. It is a good thing for each one occasionally to paraphrase in his own language the

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most familiar texts of Scripture, for this will help him to make clear to his own mind exactly what meaning he is attaching to the text. It will often serve to draw his attention to important meanings which he has hitherto overlooked. Note that Jesus speaks of the pure in heart. The word "heart" in the Bible usually means that part of man's mentality which modern psychology knows under the name of the "subconscious mind." This is exceedingly important because it is not sufficient for us to accept the Truth with the conscious mind only. At that stage it is still a mere opinion. It is not until it is accepted by the subconscious mind, and

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thus assimilated into the whole mentality, that it can make any difference in one's character or life. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

Most people, and learned people especially, have all kinds of knowledge that does not in the least affect or improve their practical lives. Doctors know all about hygiene, but often live in an unhealthy way, notwithstanding; and philosophers, who are acquainted with the accumulated wisdom of the ages, and assent to most of it, continue to do foolish and stupid things in their own personal lives, and are unhappy and frustrated in consequence. Now, knowledge such as this is only opinion, or head knowledge, as some people call it. It has to become heart knowledge, or to be incorporated into the subconscious, before it can really change one. The modern psychologists in their efforts to "re-educate the subconscious" have the right idea, though they have not yet discovered the true method of doing so, which is by scientific prayer, or the Practice of the Presence of God.

Jesus, of course, thoroughly understood all this, and that is why he stresses the fact that we have to be pure in heart.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

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Here we receive an invaluable practical lesson in the art of prayer—and prayer, be it remembered, is our only means of returning to our communion with God. To the casual reader this Beatitude might sound like a mere conventional religious generalization, even a sententious platitude of the kind too often favored by people who are anxious to be edifying without having anything in particular to say. As a matter of fact, prayer is the only real action in the full sense of the word, because prayer is the only thing that changes one's character. A change in character, or a change in soul, is a real change. When that kind of change takes place, you become a different person and, therefore, for the rest of your life you act in a different way from the way in which you have previously acted, and in which you would have continued to act had you not prayed. In other words, you become a different man. The amount of the difference may be only very slight for each time that you pray: nevertheless it is there, for you cannot pray without making yourself different in some degree.

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If you should get a very strong realization of the Presence of God with you, it would make a very great and dramatic change in your character, so that, in the twinkling of an eye, your outlook, your habits, your whole life, in fact, would completely change in every respect. Many such cases are on record, both in the East and in the West; the genuine cases of what used to be called "conversion" being instances in point. Because the change caused by prayer is a radical one, Jesus refers to it as being "born again." Since it makes you into a different man, it is actually as though you had been born anew.

The word "prayer" should be understood as including any form of communion or attempted communion with God, whether vocal, or purely mental. It includes both affirmative and invocatory prayer, each of which is good in its own place; meditation; and the highest of all forms of prayer, which is contemplation.

In the absence of prayer, all that you can do is to express the character that you have, in whatever circumstances you find yourself. So much is  
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this the case that most of your friends would be prepared to predict beforehand what your conduct would be in various kinds of crises that could arise. Prayer, by changing your character, makes a new reaction possible.

The great essential for success in prayer—for obtaining that sense of the Presence of God, which is the secret of healing oneself and others too; of obtaining inspiration, which is the breath of the soul; of acquiring spiritual development—is that we first attain some degree of true peace of mind. This true, interior soul-peace was known to the mystics as serenity, and they are never tired of telling us that serenity is the grand passport to the Presence of God—the sea as smooth as glass that is round about the Great White Throne. This is not to say that one cannot overcome even the most serious difficulties by prayer without having any serenity at all, for of course one can. In fact, the greater the trouble one is in, the less serenity he will be able to have, and serenity itself is only to be had by prayer, and by the forgiving of others, and of oneself. But, serenity you must have, before you can make any true spiritual progress; and it is serenity, that fundamental tranquility of soul, that Jesus refers to by the word "peace"—the peace that passes all human understanding. The peacemakers spoken of in this Beatitude are those who make or bring about this true peace, or serenity, in their own souls, for it is they



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who surmount limitation and become actually, and not merely potentially, the children of God. This condition of mind is the objective at which Jesus aims in all the instructions which he gives us in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you . . . let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." As long as there is fear, or resentment, or any trouble in your heart, that is to say, as long as you lack serenity, or peace, it is not possible for you to attain very much.

Some degree of serenity is essential to the attainment of any true concentration.

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Of course, to be a peacemaker in the usual sense of composing the quarrels of other people is an excellent thing; but as all practical people know, an excessively difficult role to fill. By interfering in other people's strife, it is ever so much easier to make things worse than to make them better. Personal opinion is almost certain to enter into your efforts, and personal opinion is exceedingly likely to be wrong. If you can get both of the people concerned to take a new view of the matter in controversy, that, of course, is well; but, otherwise, if you merely bring about a compromise in which they consent to agree from motives of self-interest or as the result of some kind of coercion, then the trouble has only been patched up on the surface, and there is no true peace, because they are not, both of them, satisfied and forgiving.

Once you understand the power of prayer, you will be able really to heal many quarrels in the true way; probably without speaking at all. The silent thought of the All-Power of Love and Wisdom will cause any trouble to melt away almost imperceptibly. Then, whatever arrangement will be best for all parties in the long run will come about under the influence of the Word thus spoken silently,

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

In view of what we know about the essential character of the teaching of Jesus, that the Will of God for us is harmony, peace, and joy, and that these things are to be attained by cultivating right thoughts, or "righteousness," this is a very startling statement. Jesus tells us again and

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again that it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom, and that the way in which we are to receive it is by cultivating serenity, or peace of soul. He says that the peacemakers who do this, praying in "meekness," shall obtain prosperity, inherit the earth, have their mourning turned into joy, and that, in fact, whatever they shall ask the

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Father in the manner of this teaching, that will He do. Yet, here we are told that it is blessed to be persecuted as the result of our right thinking, or "righteousness," for that by this means we shall triumph; that it is cause for rejoicing and gladness to be reviled and accused; and that the Prophets and great Illumined Ones suffered these things too.

All this is indeed very startling, and it is perfectly correct; only we have to understand that the source of all this persecution is none other than our own selves. No outside persecutor, but only our own lower selves. When we find righteousness or right thinking very difficult—when we are very strongly tempted to hold the wrong thoughts about some situation, or some person, or about ourselves; to give way to fear, or anger, or despondency—then we are being persecuted for righteousness' sake, and this is for us an extremely fortunate or blessed condition, for it is in such moments that we are really advancing. Every spiritual treatment or scientific prayer involves a tussle with our own lower self, which wishes to indulge the old habit of thought, and, in fact, persecutes and reviles us—if we like to put the thing dramatically in the Oriental way. All the great Prophets and Enlightened Ones of the race who ultimately overcame, did so by just such struggles with themselves, when they were being persecuted by their own lower natures, or the Old Adam. Jesus himself, "who was tempted in all respects like as we are," had to meet this "persecution" more than once; especially in the Garden of Gethsemane, and, for a few moments, on the Cross itself. Now, since these combats with the lower self have to be fought out sooner or later, then the sooner they are over and done with the better, and so, relatively speaking, they are great blessings.

Note carefully that there is no virtue or advantage whatever in being persecuted or annoyed by other people. Nothing can come into our experience unless it finds something in us with which it is attuned; and so, to have trouble and difficulty is only a sign that our own mentality needs clearing up; for what you see at any time is nothing but your own concept. There is at this point a grave danger for weak, or vain, or self-

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righteous people. Because others do not treat them just as they would  
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like to be treated, because they do not get consideration that they probably do not deserve, they are often inclined to claim that they are being "persecuted" on account of their spiritual superiority, and to give themselves absurd airs on this ground. This is a pathetic fallacy. In consequence of the great Law of Life, of which the whole Sermon on the Mount is an exposition, we can get only what belongs to us at any time, and nobody can prevent our getting that; and so all persecution and hindrance are absolutely from within.

Despite the sentimental tradition which clings about it, there is no virtue in martyrdom. Did the martyr but possess a sufficient understanding of Truth, it would not be necessary for him to undergo that experience. Jesus was not a "martyr." He could have saved himself at any time had he wished to avoid the crucifixion. It was necessary that someone should triumph over death, having actually died, to make that demonstration possible for us. But he deliberately chose to do a certain work for us in his own way, and was not martyred. We must not in any way depreciate the splendid courage and devotion and heroic self-sacrifice of the martyrs of all ages; but we have to see that their understanding was incomplete, or they would not have been martyred. If you fix your attention on martyrdom, regarding it, as so many did, as the highest good, you will—as with anything upon which you fix your attention—tend to bring it to yourself. While we may well envy them the moral and spiritual heights which they did attain, we know that, had the martyrs "loved" their enemies sufficiently—loved them, that is to say, in the scientific sense of knowing the Truth about them—then the Roman persecutor, even Nero himself, would have opened the doors of their prison; and the fanatic of the Inquisition would have come to reconsider his cause.