

THE BEATITUDES AND THE THREE WAYS

*Note: this discussion was adapted from material provided by the School of Spirituality of the Episcopal Diocese of Dallas Church Renewal Center. Its author is **Father Rogers**. I have edited it slightly. It is intended to help you broadly outline the typical stages of a spiritual journey as an aid to understanding the possible meaning of events in your life. There are certainly more issues and stages in development and individual variations than listed here, so use this as a means to stimulate your thought and not form final conclusions.-----Troy Caldwell, M.D*

What I want to do is to share with you something that I have found extremely useful. I stumbled on it accidentally a number of years ago. The more I have lived with it, the more useful I find it, in understanding the whole process of spiritual growth, both in myself and in those whom I have been privileged to direct along their path.

Let me begin by saying that I do not pretend that this is what Matthew had in mind, much less what Jesus intended when He gave us the Beatitudes. Yet it is so tidy that it almost frightens me. You find things in life and scripture that dovetail like this in the Scriptures all the time. It is kind of spooky. It makes you think that maybe the Bible really is inspired.

Taking the Beatitudes as they are given in Matthew's Gospel, there are nine of them:

- (1) Blessed are the dis-spirited,
- (2) Blessed are those who mourn,
- (3) Blessed are the meek,
- (4) Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness,
- (5) Blessed are the merciful,
- (6) Blessed are the pure in heart,
- (7) Blessed are the peacemakers,
- (8) Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, and
- (9) Blessed are those who are persecuted for Jesus' sake.

These nine Beatitudes divide naturally into three groups of three each. I and others see a certain correlation between the three groupings and the three stages of the spiritual life that are defined in classical spiritual theology--the **Purgative**, the **Illuminative**, and the **Unitive** way. As we look at the Beatitudes, let's treat them not as parallel qualities to be expected of the Christian, like tall, dark, and handsome, but rather as stages through which we pass in our spiritual development. The use of the beatitudes in this way has ancient roots.

Let it be noted that in the primitive church the renunciation of the flesh, the world, and the devil was normally expected of the adult convert prior to baptism. I rather expect that the teacher preparing a person for baptism in the primitive church was looking for certain definite signs in the life of the convert to indicate that he was ready for baptism, and that these signs were the renunciation of the flesh, the world, and the devil, and that these were not just intellectual or even volitional acts by which one repudiates something alien to the Christian profession. They were rather in all probability vital experiences in the spiritual life. At least in my own ministry, in dealing with souls, and on looking into my own soul, I believe that these are indeed psychic events--experiences which radically alter the spiritual state.

The Purgative Way-

#1--The Renunciation of the Flesh

Beatitude #1 -- *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*

Note that it is not especially blessed to be poor in spirit; rather the blessing is attached always to the second part of the Beatitude, "for of such is the kingdom of heaven." This has nothing to do specifically with material poverty. Commentators have been misled by this, for Jesus certainly pointed to the danger of riches. The Greek is quite plain. Blessed are those who are poor in respect to things of the spirit, or better, to the dis-spirited, the woebegone, the melancholy. Poverty of spirit is what happens to a person who has renounced the flesh.

The flesh, [in Greek, "sarx"], of course, does not refer to the body. It refers rather to that entire psychic organization of the natural, unredeemed man. It goes something like this.

When we are born, happiness is mother's breast. Happiness is a bright red plastic rattle, a toy train, a tricycle. Happiness is a Honda, a new car, happiness is graduating from college, getting a good job, marrying the right girl, having a fine home in the suburbs.

Nobody tells us that this is what life is all about. It just seems sort of obvious. We discover it all on our own. This, the Bible calls sarx, the natural man in all his natural faculties and functions--body, mind, and spirit. And "the flesh" (*sarx*) is what the natural man seeks naturally for his own fulfillment. Let it be noted that the most compelling drive in every man is what has been called the "tendential nature of being", that inner dynamic by which every organism strives to actualize its potentialities, to fulfill itself, to achieve its own maturity. To the natural man it seems perfectly obvious that this is to be obtained through the possession of things, honors, power, and success.

Usually somewhere along about mid-adolescence it dawns on us that "that's not where it's at." There is an excellent example of this in contemporary society. There was a baby boom at the end of World War II, a bulge in the population profile, an unusually large number of teenagers in the late fifties and sixties. All of a sudden, several million young people simultaneously renounced the flesh. It took the form of turn in anger on the establishment, on the generation of their parents. They called them materialists, and they had all suddenly become very lofty idealists. They adopted the uniform of the poor, blue jeans and barefoot, and called themselves the flower children, hippies.

The spiritual crisis which occurs at this point is usually one of a sense of frustration, of having been deceived or lied to, and a sense of bewilderment, a kind

of metaphysical angst, of spiritual pain, which is aptly described by the term of the Beatitude, dis-spirited. It meant a kind of aimlessness, of alienation. They repudiated the goals of "the establishment" and formed a counter-culture, an alternative lifestyle. Parents saw it and called it lazy, irresponsible. Psychologists called it an identity crisis.

Such a person might go to Jesus and say, "I've got the blues," and Jesus might reply: "Lucky you, because everybody that gets into the kingdom of heaven has to go through this." Thus, the renunciation of the flesh, is the discovery that happiness does not come to us through worldly success of any kind, position, honors, wealth, college degrees, prestige, power, being chosen leader, or any of those lovely wonderful things that people strive for and think will make them happy and which the world calls success. When you have realized this and turned your back on it, you have renounced the flesh. Previous hopes and expectations are dashed, and one is left momentarily bereft of purpose, with nowhere to go. It produces the wistful, plaintive melancholy of the flower children. It is normally only temporary, but it conceivably can become so severe that one turns to dope or drink and winds up in the gutter because of the loss of all ambition and drive. This is the first major spiritual crisis.

Of course, it does not necessarily happen. A person may remain attached to "the flesh" for his entire life, in which case he becomes that superficial person who strives continually for more money, more power, more success, or failing in that ambition, they may turn sour and bitter and cynical. The flesh has to be renounced for there to be any spiritual growth.

The Purgative Way

#2- The Renunciation of the World

Beatitude #2 -- Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (strengthened).

Having renounced the flesh, a person normally turns to some kind of program which they believe will make the world a better place in which to live. You have all done this; I did this; my children did this; my parents and grandparents did this. Not all of us do it with the same degree of abandonment, but we all do it in one way or another. It is a normal part of youthful idealism. What a horrible mess is the world which the older generation is passing on to young people. In the late teens or early twenties there comes the realization that one is adult and must assume some responsibility for "the world." Our generation is going to straighten it all out. So we become crusaders for "the cause." Notice what happens. First, there were the flower children. This was a rather lovely and attractive stage of the youth rebellion. They were almost sweet; if you could stand the sloppy dress and want of regular bathing.

There is a strong Puritan streak in all this--the costume of Daisy Mae and Li'l Abner, no make up or jewelry. The New England Puritans also wore plain clothes and prided themselves on being plain people. Our children, in the hippie stage, were "plain people"-- anti-materialists. But in no time at all we found them marching on Selma and Montgomery, disrupting the Chicago Democratic Convention, burning R.O.T.C. buildings. They

had become advocates of civil rights, but as soon as the Blacks started shouting "Whitey, go home," they climbed on the cause of peace in Viet Nam; they had become crusaders and social reformers and revolutionaries, and if it wasn't one cause, it was another. They were going to save the world.

Now there is no doubt the world needs a lot of reforming, but it is not going to be reformed by a bunch of kids in late adolescence. Each generation has to go through this. But the world stubbornly resists all our efforts to save it.

This may take the form of social or political reform; it may be an ardent espousal of some already existing program. It can even take the form of religious zeal, a pouring of oneself into missionary activity, or some effort to reform the church. The Peace Corps and Vista were a natural response to this situation and utilized some of this reforming zeal in constructive ways. Notice that revolutions are almost always fought by young people.

Either the revolution succeeds, and then one discovers that the type of people required to pull off a successful revolution are not capable of governing the new establishment, or else the revolution fails, which is more likely, or there are partial successes and heartbreaking compromises. At any rate, **a disillusionment with the cause is inevitable. And this is the second great spiritual crisis, which commonly takes the form of a terrible sadness.** Blessed are those who mourn. So one goes to Jesus and says, "Jesus, look at the terrible poverty, the injustice, the discrimination, the exploitation, the corruption, and there doesn't seem to be anything now that we can do about it. All our efforts have come to nothing. I'm so sad." Jesus replies, "Lucky you. Hang in there and you shall be made strong. Out of this experience of sorrow and sadness you will be tempered and matured."

This is the renunciation of the world.

The Purgative Way

#3--The Renunciation of the Devil

Beatitude #3 -- Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth

What does one do next? This has been the second great spiritual crisis which one faces in his spiritual growth. One can want to stop the world and get off (drop out), or turn to dope or drink and wind up in the gutter. Or one can return to "the flesh," get a job, accumulate wealth, indulge one's appetite for consumer goods. But what if one refused to quit, or to turn back?

The same kinds that stuck flowers in the muzzles of national guardsmen's rifles, smiling broadly, and who a few years later were setting fire to campus buildings and hurling curses at "pigs", all of a sudden were found studying Zen Buddhism and Transcendental Meditation and Transactional Analysis and nutrition. It seems that what happens is this: we say "the world may go to hell if it insists, but I don't have to go with it; so I'm going to make something of myself." So we undertake some kind of program whereby we can achieve some degree of self respect, some kind of "perfection" that we can live with. We seek "to find ourselves." Somewhere out there is an "identity" which is me. And I will, if I can, find it.

You will remember that the youngsters were wandering around in circles like a dog bedding down, muttering "Who am I?" There was an identity crisis. Everyone was searching for his or her self, for their own true self, their best self, their real self. This is a "do it yourself" search for sanctification, or at least for self-perfection. Now this is precisely what the devil offered Mother Eve in the garden--a short cut to holiness, indeed to god-like-ness. "You don't have to go God's hard way of obedience. You can become god-like with just a bite of this apple." But this doesn't work either. We soon discover that we cannot become holy by our own efforts. **This is the third great spiritual crisis--when a person abandons the effort to grow holy by his own effort, renounces the devil, turns his life over to God and says, "God, I can't do it; you do it."** Blessed are the meek. Meekness is simply obedience, the submission of the will to God, the yielding of ultimate control to a higher power. It is the moment in which the alcoholic admits that he is an alcoholic and his life is in a mess and begins the twelve step program to sobriety. It is the surrender to Jesus that the preachers have always talked about. At this point, in the primitive church, under the eyes of the careful catechist, the candidate would have been judged ready for baptism.

Since the fourth or fifth centuries, at least in Mediterranean countries, almost all the adults in town would have been baptized, and almost all baptisms were of infants. Since then the process of the triple renunciation has had to take place after baptism. So, in the middle ages, this process of shedding and shucking off the trammels of the flesh, the world, and the devil came to be called **the "way" of self-emptying, or purgation** - the purgative way.

Because all of these stages can occur after baptism they may wear Christian disguises. A person who is still locked in the flesh is the person who is very much enamored of the superficialities of the church, Bible study, or religion. He loves bright colored vestments, fancy imported religious artifacts, statues, incense, holy water, legalisms, knowledge, etc. He may be hung up on liturgical things or Biblical things, depending on his church heritage. He wants his worship to be sensual, he craves spiritual feel goods and is essentially self-centered in his practice of religion. Much adult confirmation instruction assumes that the class is at this stage.

The person who is in the worldly stage is the church politician or the reformer within the church. He cannot stand church politics. He is on a crusade to save the church from itself. He is the one who wanted to grab the church and drag it "kicking and squealing into the twentieth century." The militant advocates of the various church changes are probably in this stage. The bishops and priests who enthusiastically joined the exterior counter culture and insisted that the church become relevant were at this stage of the purgative way. As a lay person, this one **may have great high powered doctrine, but lack love and patience.** They have not yet renounced the world.

The person who is in the third stage, still locked in the devil's grip of self-seeking, is the person, God bless him, who may pray up a storm and go in for all kinds of Bible study and prayer tricks, and seek ecstatic experiences. In this stage, it is, "I love God for my sake." It

is not that this is evil; it is simply immature and inadequate. It is still a part of the purgative way and God will frustrate it as an act of mercy eventually.

The Illuminative Way

#4 - The Maturing of the Supernatural and the Virtue of Faith

Beatitude #4 -- *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.*

Let us assume that a person has discovered that even the subtle forms of materialism are not satisfying. That's not what one really wants. Let us assume that he has been disillusioned about his crusade. After a person has finally renounced the world and gone on to discover that the devil (do-it-yourself-sanctification) is a dead end, and he has now really turned his life over to God in meekness and obedience, he enters **the way of illumination.** In the primitive church, one of the effects of baptism that was much talked about was illumination. What was supposed to happen to you when you got baptized was that you became illuminated, enlightened. You were granted some kind of special insight, a kind of Christian wisdom. Enlightenment follows purgation.

What normally happens at the beginning of the way of illumination is that a person becomes very much interested in putting all the pieces together. He likes to say his prayers, enjoys going to church, reads books on theology, attends Bible classes enthusiastically, and tends to retire from overmuch activity. He is not interested, at the moment, in works of service or mercy (and should not be.) If he shows overmuch interest at once in becoming a church leader, he is probably still in the purgative way. The person at the onset of the illuminative way would rather stay at home with a good book. Or he may pester the pastor with lots of very astute theological questions. In all this, his or her meekness is evident. They are not assertive or pushy, but open and seeking. What they are doing is trying to bring the landscape of reality into focus so that they can see it through the eyes of faith, see it as God sees it--as it really is.

In the initial stages of the illuminative way, what is being matured is the supernatural characteristic of Faith. (Faith, Hope, and Agape love (charity) are sometimes said to be given initially in baptism; they are developed and perfected, however, in the illuminative way.) The experience of a person in this stage is one in which he frequently says, "Ah, now I see; that's what that means." Little by little, they are being led by God to a vision of reality which is God's view of creation, God's notion of man and man's place in creation, and man's relation to God. The supernatural virtue of Faith, which matures the intellect, is the first thing which is ordinarily achieved at this stage of one's spiritual growth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. There is an appetite of the soul to know the things of God.

This may go on for several weeks, months, several years, or longer. In some cases it may last a lifetime. It shouldn't. I would say that ordinarily somewhere between six months and thirty-six months is the length of time a person will spend at this stage. If it lasts more than five years, the person needs particularly careful spiritual

direction.¹ Ideally, seminarians should be at this stage of their spiritual growth.

The person at this stage is putting things together and seeing how it all fits in; they are enjoying this increasingly clear vision of reality, this God's eye view of themselves and the world. However, it can become a self indulgence, and if a person is not moved on to the next stage, things will grow boring and they will know a dreadful dry period.

The Illuminative Way

#5 - The perfection of the supernatural virtue of Hope

Beatitude #5 -- *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

Usually, without their seeking it, God now sends our pilgrim other people to care for. She finds herself involved, almost against her will, in the spiritual and physical works of mercy and service. He will be asked to teach Sunday School, or given some other job in the work of the church. People begin to pester him for advice and counsel. More likely she is going to find obnoxious people, disagreeable fellow parishioners or neighbors who have troubles, or needs, who come to her and see in her a person who can solve their problems and minister to their needs. This is not sought. One is driven to it by circumstances, by obedience. The Lord's words often come to mind, "inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me," and they therefore obey. They may resist, but they cannot avoid it.

I find this Beatitude particularly interesting. Jesus did not say, "Blessed are the kind, and the helpful," or "blessed are the generous, or the considerate." No. Blessed are the merciful. The people who are in trouble and come to you for help are often (though happily not always) not very nice people. They are likely to be people whose troubles are the result of their own personality and character defects. They may bore you, disgust you, irritate you, impose upon you. There is no way you can possibly put up with these people except by remembering that you, too, are a sinner and need mercy. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

A person at this stage of his spiritual journey may find himself interested in the same kind of thing that concerned him when he was reforming the world; he may join organizations for the promotion of this or that social good, but there is a very important difference. The person who is still in the purgative way thinks abstractly, theoretically. He is concerned with justice and equal rights. He is concerned about "the poor." A person in the illuminative way is concerned with this poor person. He desires to correct this concrete act of injustice. The terrorists, for example, are in the purgative way and are still trying to save the world. The Symbionese Liberation Army wanted Daddy Hearst to feed the poor. The revolutionaries do not love the poor; like Judas, they hate and envy the rich. But in this second stage, the illuminative way, you find yourself up to your eyes in the

¹ Father Rogers is not saying the Illuminative Way is this short-lived. He would be out of step with most teaching on the subject. I think he means here that the self-absorptive withdrawal should be more time-limited. --TC.

physical and spiritual works of mercy. It is on a one to one, individual basis. This concrete particular scoundrel needs my aid and assistance. He may interfere with and interrupt and frustrate the good and holy things I want to do, but God sends him to me to care for.

I keep talking as if the persons needing help are not very attractive. This is doubtless somewhat exaggerated, but for a purpose. Notice what is happening here. In the previous Beatitude, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness," at the initial stage of the illuminative way, what is being perfected is our Faith. We come to know and understand what righteousness is. It really sinks in, and we get a vision of what ought to be, how people really ought to live and treat one another, what the truth about mankind under God really is. We understand the virtues with the intellect. However, our character has not yet been conformed to our understanding. Old habits of thought and action die hard. So God goes to work in us to perfect our character by giving us an opportunity to practice and exercise those virtues so well understood in the intellect. There is a difference between knowing something in the intellect and knowing it by experience. What is being perfect here is the will. And this is the supernatural virtue of Hope--perseverance in obedience in the face of obstacles, disappointment, and frustration. It is doing what is right at the cost of whatever pain and discomfort and inconvenience, day after day, month after month, year in and year out. It is bearing our own particular cross, forming the habits of love. It is the building of Christian character. I believe that one is likely to remain at this stage of the spiritual life longer than any other. It may go on for years and years, because our stubborn wills are so reluctant to be subdued.

In some Evangelical traditions one is expected to go down to the front of the church and take the preacher's hand and publicly confess Jesus as Lord. This is that surrender to Jesus, the initial act of turning your life over to Him. It is a conversion experience. It is theoretically the beginning of the way of illumination. But you have to go on doing this again and again every day for the rest of your life. Just about the time you think you have made a complete surrender of your life to God, He reveals to you that you have given Him maybe fifteen percent, and he asks for another portion of it. You give him that, reluctantly and barely, and then you find you have to give him yet more, and yet more, and this goes on and on as God winnows and chastens and subdues your will and finally brings your will into conformity to the understanding which faith has brought to the intellect.

The Illuminative Way

#6 - The Perfection of the Supernatural Virtue of Agape

Beatitude #6 -- *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

Finally, after perhaps years of bitter struggle with our wayward wills, we learn to love doing what is right. At this stage of the game we achieve what the moral theologians call "the integration of the faculties," and all in the world that means is that the intellect and the will and the affections are in harmony. You know the truth; you will the truth; you love the truth. It is at this stage that we

can do as Augustine says; "Love God, and do as you please." Up until this point perhaps you'd better not. But when this finally happens, there is a relief from internal stress, and the game of serving God and loving our fellowman becomes much easier. This person is, of course, quite advanced in the spiritual life.

Jesus said, "where your treasure is, there shall your heart be also." It would seem to the natural man that he has this backward. Everyone knows that what you love you work at. So we should first try to love God and then seeing and obeying him will come naturally. Not so. The reverse is true. Jesus was right. What you work at, you will come to love. A number of examples from nature will indicate this. We will mention only one. The mother first invests herself in the life of the child and her fierce love of that child comes as a result of this investment. The church is right. First there must be faith, trust in God. Then comes obedience. Only afterward comes the flowering of charity. Some authors distinguish between what they call effective charity and affective charity. Effective charity is what we have been talking about in the discussion of Hope. It is doing charitable things, prompted by the virtues of Faith and Hope. But charity is not mature until it becomes affective, and at this point love flows easily and naturally from within the soul.

There is an old Puritan notion that the harder and more disagreeable an act of charity is the more merit there is in it. In one sense this may be true, but surely it is better to love without any interior resistance of the will. The sober alcoholic may be making more heroic efforts than the man who is not tempted to drink, but he'd change places with him in a minute.

Blessed are the pure in heart, those whose will and affections and intellect are in perfect harmony and agreement.

The Unitive Way

#7 - The Peacemakers

Beatitude #7 -- *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.*

At this stage we are ready to enter into the Unitive Way and everything that God has been doing to us and in us and through us up until now has been for our sakes, for our sanctification. Sure, in feeding the hungry, a lot of hungry people get fed. When the Symbionese Liberation Army forced Mr. Hearst to give away three million dollars worth of groceries, lots of poor people (and probably lots of the not so poor) got a lot of free groceries and ate high on the hog for a week or two. Lots of distressed people get comforted, lots of bewildered people get wise counsel. But the primary motive has been our sanctification; perhaps it is just as well that we do not realize this.

Now when we enter into the unitive way we begin for the first time to be really useful to God. He does have a purpose of redeeming the world. God's design for His creation is not simply that souls shall be snatched into heaven out of a fallen world. Even considering that end, the environment which is just and humane should be an advantage to the purpose of growing souls. This world is full of stress and strife. Blessed are the peacemakers. They shall be recognized as the children of God--members of God's household and family, doing God's work.

There are three ways, it seems to me, that one is a peacemaker. In the first place, the person at this stage of the spiritual life makes peace because he does not make waves. Peace is that harmony that is the by product of justice, of order; and a person who lives a life of justice is going to make peace. Peace is the natural product of the way he conducts his affairs from day to day. Not only that, he makes peace because at this stage of his life he has acquired a holy wisdom. He knows what things are for. He has a divinely given insight, and he is sought after for counsel, and when people accept his counsel and advice and live in terms of the justice which he inculcates, then they, too, live justly and produce peace.

The third way that a person makes peace is the result of the profound interior peace within him or her. There is a presence, a charisma, and just being with such a person - if you'll reflect, you've known one or two people like this--just being with such a person somehow, unaccountably, mysteriously, makes you certain that everything is going to be all right. Browning said, "God's in his heaven; all's right with the world." Better would be, "God is in his saints; all's right with the world." You may be distressed and worried and upset and anxious and fearful and you can spend thirty minutes in the presence of this holy person, and without his having solved a single problem, you go away feeling that everything is going to be all right. All your worries disappear. Your anxieties and fears are gone. Just having touched this person's life briefly, somehow, you experience peace inside yourself.

In the unitive way, there are two kinds of union. There is first and most importantly the union with God, but there is also a reflected unity within the person, the unity of the faculties. The saint is a whole person. She radiates peace; her own peace is contagious. This is, of course, God's work in the soul. God intends that there should be justice and peace on the earth, and it is only when we have advanced to a rather lofty degree of union with God, so that our intellects and wills and affections are conformed to God, that we can avoid those dumb, stupid, ghastly mistakes that we make while we are still "on our way." As church history abundantly demonstrates, one saint is more productive of lasting results than a thousand hot headed social activists.

But there is more to come.

The Unitive Way

#8 - Redemptive Suffering

Beatitude #8 -- *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

God is a creator. It is as though when he had finished creating he had said, "Gee, that was fun. I'll bet my children would like to be creators, too." So he made us co-creators. And then God, when the world had been messed up by sin, redeemed the world, and invited us to become co-redeemers. This is a profound mystery. I will do no more than hint at how it operates.

I recently read an article in the magazine Psychology Today, an interview with Carl Menninger. He said that a criminal is a person who has a grudge against society. He is frequently a person who was a battered child, a disadvantaged child, and is taking vengeance

against society. In return, society takes a vengeance against him. But since he felt he was justified in himself, and whatever damage he did to others in getting even with society, he feels his punishment to be a further injustice, and he comes out of the pen all the more eager to take vengeance against society again, and when he does, society puts him back in the slammer with a longer sentence, and a more cruel and inhuman punishment (from the criminal's point of view), and so sin begets sin.

What the devil wants us to do is to be angry with those who get angry, be impatient with those who are impatient, intolerant of those who are intolerant, and thus sin multiplies. Jesus' method of reversing this is to absorb the pain of others' sins without sinning back. Without going into a long digression on the doctrine of the atonement, let me say just this much; the centurion who presided at the crucifixion detail did so with a perfectly clear conscience. This man Jesus had been condemned by Roman justice, and Roman justice was just, and it was not the centurion's business to decide whether the man deserved his punishment or not; that was Pilate's problem. "I'm just a simple soldier doing my job. I have nothing to worry about, because I trust in Roman justice."

But when Jesus had died on the cross --and the victory of the cross is precisely that he refused to sin back-- the centurion said, "Surely this was a just man." Now the unavoidable corollary of that is, "Surely Roman justice miscarried, and I've been engaged in the questionable business of torturing an innocent man."

Until a person is made aware of his own sin there is no way he can repent. The only thing in the long history of humanity which has ever made a person aware of his own sin (so apt are we to justify ourselves by projecting faults on our victims) is the suffering of the innocent. This is why God allows the innocent to suffer--because the suffering of the innocent in this life is less horrible than the lostness of the unrepentant.

Now just as God invites us to participate with him in creation, he invites us to participate with him in redemption. "Anyone who would be my disciple," says the crucified Savior, "let him take up his cross and follow me." And he told us explicitly, "If someone compels you to go with him a mile, don't get angry, don't get full of hostility and resentment, go with him two. If someone robs you of your coat, give him your shirt also. Resist not evil, but overcome evil with good. Absorb the pain and horror which are the result of others' sins, without sinning back, so that they may see themselves in their true light and come to repentance." When Jesus had died on the cross, he had confronted his generation at Jerusalem with the scandal of innocent suffering. He lives in his church in order to confront every generation, in every city of the world, with the scandal of innocent suffering. And calls upon us to do that. He wants to use our bodies to bear the pain of others' sins. And he wills to suffer in us and with us in our suffering. This is the testimony of the martyrs.

Blessed are ye when you are persecuted for righteousness' sake. This is a very lofty vocation. Notice the scriptures, "whosoever will live righteously shall suffer persecution." God did not say that everybody who suffers persecution is righteous, but he did say that everybody that is righteous is going to be persecuted, taken advantage of, imposed upon. Mama sends little Algernon to school in a nice velvet suit and a clean white silk shirt

and shining buckle shoes, and as sure as God made little green apples, the other boys are going to roll him in a mud puddle. There are two types of people society will not tolerate; the outstandingly evil, and the outstandingly good. The very bad make us aware of the hidden evil in each of us, and the very good bring to light the sham of our own pretended righteousness. We will persecute the righteous, but to the extent that they endure our persecution without sinning back, they are going to drive us ultimately to repentance. So the saint becomes a co-redeemer with Christ in bringing the world to its knees before God.

The Unitive Way

#9 - The Martyrs And Confessors

Beatitude #9 - *Blessed are you when men shall revile you...and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely or my sake. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Finally and at last we come to the crown of the spiritual life. The church has always held that the martyrs are the normative Christians, the models the ideal. Not because the church has a morbid fascination with death and suffering, as some of its critics allege, but rather because the goal of the Christian life is the most perfect union with Christ. We are baptized into his death. Martyrdom is the fulfillment of baptism.

Jesus says of these blessed ones, "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." These are they who have joined the select company of God's great ones.

It is those in the eighth and ninth Beatitudes who extend the saving work of Christ throughout history and around the world. Each of us, in our own small way, are called to do this in our own church, our own place of work, our own neighborhoods, our own families.

SUMMARY

Let me summarize and recapitulate. The purgative way involves the progressive, successive renunciation of the flesh, the world, and the devil. This means the discovery, the gut level connatural knowledge, that happiness is not going to come to me through my relationship to other creatures or any sort of worldly success, through any effort I might make to right the world's wrongs, correcting evils, bringing about a more humane world, and that I cannot sanctify myself (mature or perfect myself) through any effort of my own, however noble or lofty may be my ideal.

Finally I surrender to God and enter the illuminative way and go through a stage of learning, study, reflection, meditation, introspection, and finally through advanced and developed faith come to understand what the world is really like in God's eyes. Then God takes me and puts me to work in a vigorous and active program of works of mercy (which has its negative side in a continued purgation of lingering self will), and finally harmonizes and unites the will, affections, and intellect in that integration of the faculties spoken of as "purity of heart."

Then I become a peacemaker because I live in peace; and finally, if God wills (we do not go out seeking this), I may be persecuted for righteousness sake, and perhaps even martyred and become the means by which the kingdom of God is extended heroically in my generation.

I offer two observations. I believe that we can, and do, go back and forth in this schema. I do not believe this is a steady progression in most souls. I think you can

backslide. You can enter the illuminative way and regress into the purgative again. Old habits die hard.

Secondly, one can progress through all these stages of growth in respect to certain virtues or aspects of one's character, and discover that one has to do it all over again at a deeper level (while holding the progress previously made.) This moving back and forth while still ascending has been called "the spiral path". May God be gracious to you as you travel it.--TC

The Purgative Way

Beatitude #1--Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for their's is the kingdom of heaven - the renunciation of the flesh

Beatitude #2--Blessed are those who **mourn**, for they shall be comforted - the renunciation of the world

Beatitude #3 --Blessed are the **meek**, for they shall inherit the earth - the renunciation of the devil

The Illuminative Way

Beatitude #4 --Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst after righteousness**, for they shall be filled - the perfection of the supernatural virtue of faith

Beatitude #5 --Blessed are the **merciful**, for they shall obtain mercy - the perfection of the supernatural virtue of hope

Beatitude #6 --Blessed are the **pure in heart**, for they shall see God - the perfection of the supernatural virtue of charity; the integration of the faculties

The Unitive Way

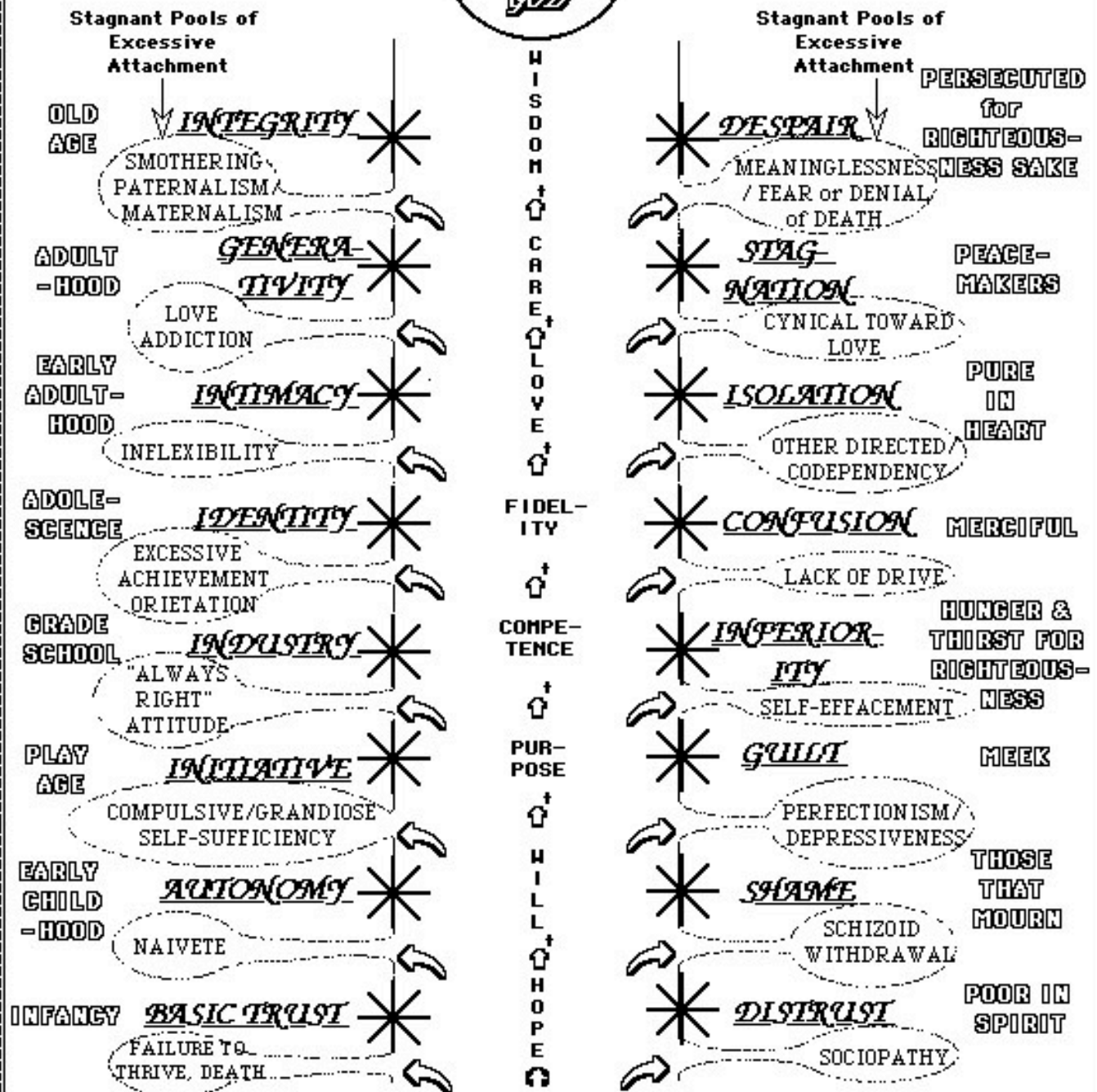
Beatitude #7--Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they shall be called children of God

Beatitude #8--Blessed are those who are **persecuted for righteousness' sake**, for their's is the kingdom of heaven - redemptive suffering

Beatitude #9--Blessed are ye when men shall **revile you** and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely **for my sake**, for great is your reward in heaven - the martyrs and confessors

Typical Age of First Development	Beatitude	Eric Erikson's Psychosocial Developmental Struggle/Paradox	Paradox Resolves to...	Fowler's Stages of Faith	Traditional Levels of Faith	The Three Ways
	Persecuted for Jesus/ great reward in heaven			6. Universalizing Faith	9. When God redeems, it's the best thing for God's plan and you and other people	Unitive
Old Age	Persecuted for Righteous-ness/ yours is the kingdom of heaven	Integrity vs. Despair	Wisdom		8. When God redeems, it's the best for others.	Unitive
Adulthood	Peacemakers/ shall be called the children of God	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Care	5. Conjunctive Faith (mid-life and beyond)	7. When God redeems, it is the best available for me under my circumstances. 6. God redeems in His time. 5. God redeems in His way	Unitive Illuminative Illuminative
Early Adulthood	Pure in Heart/ shall see God	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Love	4. Individuative-Reflective Faith	4. God redeems 3. God cares (loves me)	Illuminative Purgative
Adolescence	Merciful/ shall obtain mercy	Identity vs. Confusion	Fidelity	3. Synthetic-Conventional Faith	2. God is good	Purgative
Grade School	Hunger & thirsty for righteousness/ shall be filled	Industry vs. Inferiority	Competence	2. Mythic-Literal Faith (School Years)	1. God is	Purgative
Play Age	The Meek (teachable)/ shall inherit the earth	Initiative vs. Guilt	Purpose			
Early Childhood	Those that Mourn/ comforted	Autonomy vs. Shame	Will	1. Intuitive-Projective Faith		
Infancy	Poor in Spirit/ kingdom of heaven	Basic Trust vs. Distrust	Hope	0. Undifferentiated Faith		

LIFE CYCLE SUMMARY by ERIK ERIKSON with the BEATITUDES of JESUS



Original Person

† = Grief process & symbol of transformation