



# Blessed Be

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March 2022

Welcome to this edition of *Blessed Be*. Our next edition is in August and if you have something you would like to share please contact me at: [helenlmacauley@gmail.com](mailto:helenlmacauley@gmail.com)

*Like many people over the past month, my thoughts and prayers have been directed to the suffering and destruction of the Ukraine. I have consequently been thinking about peace and pacifism, focusing in particular on the Christian sect of the Society of Friends (Quakers) and on the ancient religion of Jainism.*

*The Quakers began in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century by George Fox, who found the traditional hierarchies of the established churches did not answer his needs. He saw the concept priesthood as not following the teachings of Christ, believing that ordinary people had the right to a personal relationship with God. He taught that all people were equal and refused to remove his hat or bow to those generally considered as socially superior. He espoused non-violence, and was persuasive enough to convince that he and his followers weren't about to overthrow the government, first of Oliver Cromwell, then later of Charles II. George Fox met with Oliver Cromwell on several occasions and discussed theology. Those meetings would have been fascinating to witness.*

I was moved of the Lord to write a paper to the Protector, Oliver Cromwell; wherein I did, in the presence of the Lord God, declare that I denied the wearing or drawing of a carnal sword, or any other outward weapon, against him or any man; and that I was sent of God to stand a witness against all violence, and against the works of darkness; and to turn people from darkness to light; and to bring them from the causes of war and fighting, to the peaceable gospel. When I had written what the Lord had given me to write, I set my name to it, and gave it to Captain Drury to hand to Oliver Cromwell, which he did.

*Autobiography of George Fox 1694*

I told [the Commonwealth Commissioners] I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars... I told them I was come into the covenant of peace which was before wars and strife were.

*George Fox Statement of 1651.*

Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone; whereby in them you may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you.

*George Fox, 1656*

I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness.

*The Journal of George Fox*

*Other notable Quakers include:*

*John Greenleaf Whittier, poet and anti-slavery advocate*

And so, I find it well to come  
For deeper rest to this still room  
For here the habit of the soul  
Feels less the outer world's control:  
The strength of mutual purpose pleads  
More earnestly our common needs:  
And from the silence multiplied  
By these still forms on either side,  
The world that time and sense have known  
Falls off and leaves us God alone.

*Author and philosopher, Rufus Matthew Jones 1863-1948*

There is no way to find yourself until you discover how utterly to lose yourself.

*Elizabeth Fry, prison reformer 1780-1845*

I believe there is something in the mind, or in the heart, that shows its approbation when we do right. I give myself this advice: Do not fear truth, let it be so contrary to inclination and feeling. Never give up the search after it: and let me take courage, and try from the bottom of my heart to do that which I believe truth dictates, if it leads me to be a Quaker or not.

*The founder of Pennsylvania, William Penn 1644-1718*

If we better studied and understood God's creation, this would do a great deal to caution and direct us in our use of it. For how could we find the imprudence to abuse the world if we were seeing the great Creator stare us in the face through each and every part of it?

*And Priscilla Hannah Peckover (1833-1931) who worked to build the pacifist movement. She established the Wisbech Local Peace Association which grew to 6,000 members. She was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize four times.*

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*Long before Siddhartha Gautama, later to be called the Buddha, was born over 2,500 years ago, the Jain religion existed in India.*

*It is believed that Parshvanatha, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Tirthankara (leader and teacher) lived in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE. In 599 Vardhamana (also called Mahavira meaning Great Hero) was born, a contemporary of the Buddha, and the 24<sup>th</sup> Tirthankara and last Tirthankara of Jainism. He is seen today as a reformer of Jainism. His version of Jainism has much in common with Buddhism (including karma and self-discipline), although the practice of asceticism in Jainism is a major difference. Like Buddhism there is an emphasis on non-violence. It is in fact one of the core tenets of the religion, and the devout will use a fallen feather to brush their path so that they do not inadvertently walk on any insects that might cross their path. Nor will they eat any root vegetables because the harvesting of these means both the death of the plants themselves and also any minute organisms attached to the roots. Ideally, they will eat only fruit and vegetables that have fallen or are about to fall from the plant. This is to prevent harm to these organisms but also to prevent harm to oneself, as harming other creatures prevents the soul from escaping the cycle of rebirth.*

*There are two major elements to Jain belief:*

- *Ahimsa means non-violence in action and the lack of desire to harm. All life is considered sacred and everything has a right to live without fear.*

- *Anekāntavāda is the concept that the ultimate truth is complicated, with multiple facets, and can't be expressed in a single statement.*

*There are 5 vows that Jains are expected to take:*

*Ahimsa (non-violence)*

*Asteya (non-stealing)*

*Apaarigatha (non-attachment)*

*Satya (truth)*

*Brahmacharya (chastity)*

*Here are some quotes from **Mahavira***

Kill not, cause no pain. Nonviolence is the greatest religion.

Do not injure, abuse, oppress, enslave, insult, torment, torture, or kill any creature or living being.

Anger begets more anger, and forgiveness and love lead to more forgiveness and love.

One who neglects or disregards the existence of earth, air, fire, water and vegetation disregards his own existence which is entwined with them.

In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self.

Can you hold a red-hot iron rod in your hand merely because someone wants you to do so? Then, will it be right on your part to ask others to do the same thing just to satisfy your desires? If you cannot tolerate infliction of pain on your body or mind by others' words and actions, what right have you to do the same to others through your words and deeds?

All breathing, existing, living, sentient creatures should not be slain, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor tormented, nor driven away.

Do unto others as you would like to be done by. Injury or violence done by you to any life in any form, animal or human, is as harmful as it would be if caused to your own self.

The most important principle of environment is that you are not the only element.

If one undertakes retrospection of the day's events, one must do it regularly at the appointed hour, not fitfully, not doing it today, neglecting to do it tomorrow and the day after and then taking it up again on the fourth day. Such irregular practice is not conducive to the confirmation of the habit of retrospection.

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There is the Music of Heaven in all things and we have forgotten how to hear it until we sing.

*Hildegard of Bingen*

*We have Alison Healey to thank for the following:*

**Set Us On Our Way**

Grant us the courage of Ruth,  
To leave the old and familiar behind,

The faith of Noah  
to begin again,

The hope of Jeremiah  
to invest in the future,

The unselfishness of Esther  
to take risks on behalf of others.

Spirit of the Living God, enter  
into us and set us on our way

*Author unknown.*

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As you smell the fragrance of a flower by handling it, or the smell of sandalwood by rubbing it against a stone, so you obtain spiritual awakening by constantly thinking of God.

*Sarada Devi*

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*And to finish, a blessing from Teresa of Avila:*

May today there be peace within.

May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.

May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.

May you use those gifts you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you be content knowing you are a child of God.

Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love.

It is there for each and every one of us.



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