



BEATITUDES AND JEREMIADS

D. Brock Hornby

I

Blessed are lawyers who speak loudly in court, for they shall be heard.

Blessed are judges who write short opinions, for they shall be read.

Woe unto judges who do not decide promptly, for they shall delay justice.

Woe unto lawyers who advertise tastelessly, for they shall demean the profession.

II

Blessed are lawyers of few words, for their words shall count.

Blessed are judges who embrace practical rules in their decisions, for their opinions shall be influential.

Woe unto judges who let law clerks write their opinions, for they shall belabor the obvious.

Woe unto lawyers who speak too quickly, for their records on appeal shall be unintelligible.

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III

Blessed are lawyers who are honest and reliable, for they shall increase trust in the profession.

Blessed are judges who are open to change, for their court processes shall remain current.

Woe unto judges who fancy themselves academics, for they shall say more than they ought.

Woe unto lawyers who do not recognize a losing argument, for they shall lose their credibility as well as the argument.

IV

Blessed are lawyers who are good listeners, for they shall instill confidence.

Blessed are judges who treat everyone with dignity, for their courtrooms shall be called fair.

Woe unto judges who ridicule lawyers or litigants, for they shall be deemed arrogant.

Woe unto lawyers unskilled in courtroom technology, for they shall try the jury's patience.

V

Blessed are lawyers who serve others at the expense of acquiring riches, for their job satisfaction shall be full.

Blessed are judges who show humility and compassion, for they shall be venerated.

Woe unto judges who are bombastic and pontificate, for they shall be mocked.

Woe unto lawyers who bill excessively, for their souls shall belong to Mammon.

Beatitudes and Jeremiads

VI

Blessed are lawyers who are realistic in their goals, for their clients shall enjoy lower fees.

Blessed are judges who prepare more than the lawyers before them, for they shall promote respect and emulation.

Woe unto judges who are slothful, for they shall lose the esteem of even their law clerks.

Woe unto lawyers who fail to keep their clients informed, for they shall receive bar discipline complaints.

VII

Blessed are lawyers who grasp their clients' risk tolerance, for they shall understand when to settle and when to go to trial.

Blessed are judges who reassure young and inexperienced lawyers in their courtrooms, for they shall nurture the future of the profession.

Woe unto judges who debate public policy outside the decision-making process, for they shall cast doubt on judicial neutrality.

Woe unto lawyers who denigrate judges and juries to excuse an undesired outcome, for they shall reduce confidence in the institutions of government.

VIII

Blessed are lawyers who have succession plans for disability and retirement, for their clients' interests shall be protected.

Blessed are judges who retire before their intellectual capacity diminishes, for they shall further the perception of justice.

Woe unto judges who stop learning, for their decisions shall be reversed.

Woe unto lawyers whose legal skills and knowledge atrophy, for they shall commit malpractice.

IX

Blessed are lawyers who are kind and collegial to their opponents, for they shall receive the same in return (usually).

Blessed are judges who rule from the bench, for they shall expedite the resolution of disputes.

Woe unto judges who contemptuously deride an argument, for they and their conclusions shall be called unfair.

Woe unto lawyers who think a lawyer's chief talent is aggressiveness, for they shall find themselves surrounded by it.

X

Blessed are lawyers who defend the indigent accused, for their challenges to prosecutorial power shall ensure the integrity of the system of justice.

Blessed are judges who engage and educate jurors about civics, for informed jurors become informed citizens.

Woe unto judges who are inconsistent, for their lack of predictability shall increase litigation and uncertainty.

Woe unto lawyers who make unrealistic requests at sentencing, for their entreaties shall have no influence.

XI

Blessed are lawyers who provide free legal services to the needy, for they shall promote justice.

Blessed are judges who follow the law despite personal opinions or public sentiment, for they shall be called guardians of democracy.

Woe unto judges who seek personal recognition, for they shall lessen respect for the rule of law.

Woe unto lawyers who cannot be trusted, for they shall destroy us all.