

Exposition

In order to bring the reader to a deeper knowledge of the theological foundations of this study, a brief comment must be made regarding the interrelationship of the terms *kingdom* and the *beatitudes* in general. In addition, each chapter is prefaced by a more detailed explanation of the particular beatitude in question.

As we read the beatitudes we cannot fail to note how vitally and inherently they are ordered to the kingdom. The term *kingdom* as used here has both a present and future significance. In the present, the kingdom signifies the reign or rule of Christ which prepares the way for the possession of the future kingdom in glory. As such, this rule of Christ demands a continual conversion of heart, a total reversal of values resulting in an ever deeper experience of God's presence, enabling us to accomplish his will. Thus it is, that fidelity to the rule of Christ comes to be realized here and now by grace and later by glory.

It is very difficult within the limitations of this study to do justice to the richness of the theology of the beatitudes. We must then be content to offer a very simplified outline of their meaning. We hope they will become a guide to the readers as an appreciation of their implications in the development of the spiritual life of Mother McAuley and, consequently, of the vitality of the spiritual legacy she has left us.

In using the term beatitudes or blessings, Jesus was following the tradition of the Old Testament. In that context humanity's happiness was recognized as granted by God as a reward for human merit as it pertained to this life. (In this regard see especially Chapter 26 of Deuteronomy.)

In the New Testament Jesus uses the beatitudes as an introduction to the New Covenant. They are to be seen as qualities of mind and heart essential in the formation of a Christian disciple, the full rewards of which are both prospective and eschatological.

St. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Theologica* Ia, IIac, Q 69, calls them gifts by which a person becomes amenable to Divine Inspiration given in situations in which the promptings of reason are not sufficient. He also calls them acts by which a person possesses a kind of happiness which will be completed in the future life. For further elaboration see the chart in the appendix.

Suffice it to say, in the proclamation of the beatitudes, Christ is not offering a new code of ethics nor rewards for an accumulation of merits. Rather he is underscoring the actuality of the presence of the kingdom for those open to receive his power within them here and now as they journey toward its glorious fulfillment in the Father's house.