

# THE PHILOSOPHY OF JESUS

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John Macmurray

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# THE PHILOSOPHY OF JESUS

John Macmurray

I should begin with an apology, or at least an explanation. The title troubled me a lot. 'But Jesus was not a philosopher!' it will be objected. To which I must answer, 'Of course not. How could a Hebrew prophet be a philosopher?' Here the apology must shade into the explanation. But *I* am a philosopher. For some long time I have been seeking to reach a condition in which I can read the gospels as though I had discovered them for the first time. To do this I had to eliminate from my mind the traditional interpretations, such as those of philosophers like St Thomas Aquinas and St Augustine, working on Greek models; as well as other, more recent philosophical theologians, and the older Church tradition on which they had built. The most difficult task came later when I set myself to eliminate the influence of St Paul. It was at this point that it occurred to me that I could reach my end most simply and surely, if I treated the gospels, as I would in trying to understand a foreign philosophy, by searching for the key points of the teaching, and seeking to interpret them by themselves before putting them together. This worked, perhaps because it avoided any traditional *religious* formulation.

This will, I hope, explain how I came to think of a 'philosophy of Jesus'. To this I should add I had become suspicious of the influence of Greek philosophy upon the formulation of Christian doctrine from the earliest times—the times when a Greek convert, searching for the truth, could say 'Now I have discovered the true philosophy in the teaching of the Christians.' At the same time, in my own search for a satisfactory philosophy I found myself critical of the foundations of Greek philosophy, and so of all subsequent philosophy to date, and was reaching for a new philosophical form that would not exclude a belief in God, by making religion a matter of unjustifiable assertion.

One further preliminary remark may be useful. The result is bound to be something other than a confession of faith. I count myself a disciple of Jesus, and always have done, in spite of the necessity I am under to think thoroughly for myself, and the successive heresies into which it has tended to lead me. It is surely part of the dedication to philosophy that one cannot accept any dogmatic doctrine. I accept Jesus as saviour and master, for myself and for the world. But I accept him also as very man of very man, and this seems to me a sufficient justification for seeking to understand his thought and give an account of it which is not dependent

upon any religious commitment. As son of man, his understanding grew and changed. He made no claim to infallibility, and could not do so without falsifying his position. His full humanity can at most guarantee the integrity of his thinking, not its necessary correctness. Of course, the result of my effort is liable to the errors that are all but inevitable in any attempt to formulate in a philosophical fashion the essence of his teaching.

It may be objected that we know too little of the life of Jesus to guarantee the historical reliability of the biblical record. I fear I am not overimpressed with such conclusions, or at least with their relevance to what I propose to do. The Jesus of history, it seems to me, is not some dimly glimpsed historical figure, of whose life and work we have too little direct evidence to be sure what his teaching actually was. He is the Jesus of the four gospels. It is *this* Jesus who has set his mark on the past near two thousand years of our history. But how can we be certain of the correctness of the records? After all there are discrepancies in the accounts given in the different gospels. Of course, there are discrepancies. The gospels were written by different men, of different abilities and outlooks. What astonishes me is that they are so few and so unimportant. All were written by men whose lives had been transformed by the impact of Jesus upon them, in all cases probably an indirect impact through the witness of others who had known him directly. It would be unthinkable that these men who were responsible for the tradition had not been anxiously concerned to get it right and to keep it right. The character and personality of Jesus presented in the records, and the teaching for which he is made responsible, are all of a piece, and so unique, that there is little possibility and less likelihood of fabrication. And if we do find something that seems out of keeping or out of character, we need only leave it out of account.

One other matter I should like to add as part of my apology. Until quite recently, and from the beginnings of history or before, almost all men, including men of knowledge and culture, were believers in God. This is no longer so. Large numbers of our contemporaries, men of ability and integrity, have thrown religion over and see no meaning in religious language. If I talk about the teaching of Jesus in the language of philosophy, I have a hope that some of them may read what I have to say and decide to think again.

The starting point of the public mission of Jesus was his baptism by John. The occasion was decisive. It seems to have confirmed his conviction that he had a mission to fulfil, perhaps even that he was the Messiah. He retired to the wilderness for a lengthy fast, to be alone with his thoughts. Afterwards, when he had returned home, he commenced his mission by proclaiming the Baptist's message, 'Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' and so associating his own mission with that of John.

The only light that the records throw upon his meditations in the

wilderness is the story of the temptation. It seems entirely justified to interpret this as the rejection of certain methods of carrying out his mission. He would not bribe the people with bread, or dazzle them with spectacular feats, or even bring them under his sway in the secular fashion by military power—one thinks at once of the Roman formula *Panem, circenses, imperium* (Bread, circuses, dominion)—hoping that God would make good his limitations. He would stay within his powers as a man.

The reference to Rome is not out of place. Even if we did not have the story of the three temptations, we should have been certain that one of the subjects which he pondered in the wilderness was the Roman empire and the place of Israel in it. Without this he could not have stood within the tradition of the Hebrew prophets. And even though one were to think him in error in claiming to be the Messiah, one could not deny that he was one of the great Hebrew prophets. I cannot but assume that before he launched his mission he must have convinced himself that he was 'He that should come.' This is another question that we can be sure he thought over in the wilderness.

Knowing the situation he faced, we can make a fair guess at the issues that he thought over. His people, the chosen people of God, were now tributary subjects in the empire of Augustus. The Roman ascendancy, however, was fairly recent. It had brought to a close more than a century of struggles for freedom, beginning with the revolt of the Maccabees against the effort of the King of Syria to force pagan religion upon Judaea. Its success in its immediate object was followed by struggles for national independence. These, too, had temporary successes. But internal struggles for power led eventually to an appeal to the Romans, the siege of Jerusalem by Pompey and the annexation of Palestine in 65 bc. But the memory of the struggle was still alive, and attempts to throw off the Roman yoke were made, which came to nothing. If Jesus were to claim to be the Messiah, he would be expected by many Jews, perhaps a majority, to renew the military struggle. On this issue, he had to make a clear decision. His answer, as we have seen, was a decisive 'No'. The reason, stated later, was that 'they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.' To worship Satan by taking up the sword could result, even if its success were total, only in the founding of a Jewish empire on the Roman model. The kingdom of heaven could only be built on wholly different principles.

Jesus could well maintain that God, in his purpose to restore the kingdom of heaven on earth, had permitted the establishment of the Roman empire. 'Caesar has established justice, security and peace', he might say, 'over a great number of nations, and holds them together in a far-spread unity. Within it we Jews are free to live, within the empire, by the principles of human community revealed to us. This then is our task. If we take up arms and win, we may gain the whole world, but we shall lose our own soul in the process. A true community cannot be established by force, only by consent. The tribute is a small price to pay to Caesar

for the benefits he bestows. The only proper course is to live the true life of human community in the Roman empire and to transform it from within.'

Much more than this must have occupied his thoughts in the wilderness. But the major decisions are in the record. The essential one is the rejection of military force. It leaves him with the task of achieving a social revolution by peaceful means. The other two 'temptations' seem also to refer to his mission. He will accomplish it by means that lie within the scope of natural human powers.



What *is* the mission of Jesus? In the first part of this lecture I have referred to it as a social revolution. Surely, it will be said, Jesus was not a social reformer but a religious teacher. But how could any Hebrew prophet be the one except by being the other also. The distinction belongs to Greek, but not to Hebrew thought. His mission is to proclaim the good news of the coming of the kingdom of heaven on earth, and to offer himself to the people of Israel as their leader in this crisis. Jesus insisted that his mission was to the Jews only, but this was no symptom of a narrow nationalism. Rather he was taking his stand on the promise to Abraham, 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed'.

It is of the first importance to be clear that for Jesus his mission is an earthly one. He is concerned with the salvation of this world. His religious outlook is not centred on a hope of any life after death. It is true that he took his stand with the Pharisees, against the more conservative Sadducees, on the belief in an afterlife, but this is peripheral to his outlook and his mission. He taught his disciples to pray, 'Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven'. A religion which despairs of this world, and takes for its task to prepare men in this life for a blessed future in another world is not the religion of Jesus. However early it appears in the history of the church, it is one of the fatal effects of Greek philosophical dualism, and one which displaces the centre of gravity of his teaching. It replaces Christianity by dualism; and in reality the two are incompatible.

Though the mission of Jesus, in a broad sense, is to play a leading part in establishing the kingdom of heaven on earth, there is no attempt to describe it in concrete terms. To do so would be idealism. There is much, however, in the parables of the kingdom and elsewhere, about the conditions of its coming and the conditions of membership in it. Its beginning is small and unimpressive, like the mustard-seed or the leaven hid in the meal. It will grow and spread until it dominates the landscape, or until

the whole lump is leavened. It is for the man who prizes it above all else, like the pearl of great price; who sells all he has to possess it; who sets his claim upon him before that of father or mother. About the time of its coming, it is 'at hand' as John the Baptist said; it is indeed already here, in you, in your midst; yet no one knows when it will come, so we must stay on the watch. Such sayings may seem inconsistent, but as we shall see, are not. More important for the understanding of his outlook are the kinds of people who can be members of the kingdom and those who are excluded. The seed can only grow in congenial soil. So he excludes the 'good' people of his time, the obviously religious, the Scribes and Pharisees. 'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.' This has been a stumbling block for many; and yet it is clearly central for understanding him. They have a righteousness of their own, he agrees, but it is the wrong kind of righteousness; so the kingdom has no place for them. He has no use for them. They are his enemies, the last to accept him. We really ought not to find a difficulty here. Our own revolutionaries have no use for 'the Establishment' or the good people of the bourgeoisie. The righteousness of the kingdom was found in the man who prayed in the temple, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner'. Equally, Jesus was against wealth. It takes a miracle to get a rich man into the kingdom, though all things are possible to God. And in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the poor man goes to heaven and the rich man is cast out, and there is no suggestion that either of the two was good or bad. This underlines the realism of Jesus's outlook. The seed is sown broadcast, but if it falls among the thorns of wealth, the thorns will choke it.

The proclamation of the coming of the kingdom of heaven, for Jesus as for John the Baptist, is coupled with a demand for repentance. The implication is that something is wrong with the people of Israel. If they are to welcome the kingdom they require a change of mind and heart. Jesus was himself a great healer, and like any physician, it is the sick that interest him. So when asked why he associated with sinners, his reply was characteristic. 'They that are whole need not a physician but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' This does not carry its meaning on its face. There is surely an element of gentle sarcasm in the reply: for no one knew better that we are all sinners. The righteous are surely those who do not recognize that they are sinners, and who are proud of their own integrity. This is his judgment of the Pharisees. They are 'hypocrites', that is to say, they are 'play-actors' putting on a part, which is why they need an audience. So we must ask, 'as a healer, what is his diagnosis of the sickness that must be cured? What is wrong with us, that we need to be changed?'

A natural answer, of course, is that we are sinners and need to be saved from our sins. But it is the wrong answer. It is too easy. Jesus's answer to that is that sins are answered by forgiveness; that we

have a right to forgive sins, and that there should be no limit set to our exercise of that right. This is, perhaps, the most revolutionary of his teachings. He proposes to deal with sin by forgiving it, instead of by punishing it. So, in the end, when the people he set out to save put him to death in the cruellest fashion, he prayed 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Two of the records of the questioning by the Pharisees of his association with sinners tell us that he included in his answer this rebuke, 'But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice'. It seems that we must look deeper if we are to discover his diagnosis of the human predicament.

We read that Jesus was driven to chide his disciples for their stupidity, for their blindness and failure to realize the spirit that should control them, and for other failings; but I cannot remember any occasion on which he condemned them for sin. Above all, what grieved him most in them was their lack of faith. It is something he finds it hard to understand. 'Why is it', he asks, 'that ye have no faith?' Since the term 'faith' is characteristic of his teaching, it is important to understand as clearly as possible what he means by it. One of our own commonest uses of the word is in contrast with reason, as the source of all knowledge which is beyond the grasp of reason. Derivation from this is the content of a 'confession of faith', that is, a compendious statement of the beliefs to which, as Christians, we adhere. This usage seems to me to be wholly foreign to the gospels. There are two characteristics that provide a clue to its meaning for Jesus. The first is that it is regularly used without any reference to an object of belief; the second that it is constantly used in a contrast with 'fear'. For example, he addresses his disciples as 'Ye of little faith'. 'If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed . . . nothing shall be impossible unto you'. Or, 'Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?' To the woman who had anointed his feet with ointment, he said, 'Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace'. When his terrified disciples in the storm woke him, crying 'Master! Master! we perish', he said to them, 'Where is your faith?' and on another occasion, 'Fear not, only believe'.

The second point, the contrast of 'fear' and 'faith', gives the clue to the meaning. 'Faith' is the opposite of 'fear'. Like fear, then, it is an emotional attitude in living. It might, perhaps, be better translated, 'trust'. As a general characteristic of a man, it will mean that he is not on the defensive, but full of confidence. This, too, explains why the term can be used so often without reference to any 'object of faith' and equally why it can naturally have such an object on occasion, since persons are main subjects both of our fear and of our trust. In a general sense faith is trust in life, the conviction that there is nothing to be afraid of. It is important, I believe, to recognize that for Jesus it is fear itself that must be cured, and not the occasions of fear. Perhaps all religion seeks to guarantee, to its devotees, that 'there is nothing to be afraid of.' So often, however, this merely means that the sincere observance of one's

religious duties will guarantee that what we are afraid of will not happen to *us*. Jesus is not subject to such idealistic illusions. He warned his disciples of the persecution that awaited those who followed him. Their lot would be unusually hard. But this was nothing to be afraid of.

This then is the healer's diagnosis. What in man must be cured is fear. It must be replaced by its opposite, faith; and faith means trust or confidence. It is worth while noting, in passing, that the same diagnosis has at last been reached in our own day by the psychiatrists. But to diagnose a disease is not to cure it, even though it be a necessary starting point. The problem that remains for Jesus is how fear in man is to be overcome.



It will be useful to remind ourselves of the character of the Hebrew tradition of which Jesus is the heir, and which he cherishes. Now the Jews are *the* religious people of history. All peoples, in their earliest stages, are religious in the same sense, because religion is the only form of their reflection, and includes every aspect of their communal life. In their development, however, they become secular societies, and religion takes its place as one of the aspects of social life, so that the mature society *has* a religion, but has ceased to be, in its essence, religious. This secularization did not happen to the Jews. The threat was there, but also the resistance. There were setbacks and failures. But in the end the threats were overcome. In the time of Jesus, and indeed until nearly our own time, the Jews remained a religious people, capable of retaining a distinct unity among the nations, without even a homeland. The core of their existence as a people was 'the law and the prophets.'

Certain corollaries of this uniqueness of Hebrew development should be noted. One is that their development itself must be a development of religion, so that in the process of Hebrew history the understanding of religion is deepened, unified and made more accurate. It begins as a narrow tribal religion, and ends in a full universality. Its conception of its God to begin with is crude, with its central stress on power used mainly in the interest of its own people; this primitive conception is moralized and made more adequate, until in the end love becomes the central characteristic of the deity. The instruments of this development are the prophets, whose main task seems to have been to interpret historical situations in terms of their religious traditions, and to recall the people to their religious obedience. Thus Hebrew thinking is characteristically empirical, and rooted in history. It is a remarkable fact that the most religious people in history never developed a belief in or indeed an imaginative interest in a life after death, and when it did arise, it took the form of a belief, not in the immortality of the soul but in the resurrec-

tion of the body. Thus any interpretation of religion, such as the Marxist, which finds its centre in the promise of happiness in another world to atone for the miseries of this life is totally refuted by the existence of classical Judaism; unless, indeed, its proponents are prepared to maintain that the Jewish people were not religious at all.

It may help us, at this point, if we abstract the structural thought which is included in Judaism, and express it in philosophical terms. Unlike the Greek and European philosophies, which are theoretical, Hebrew thought would yield a practical philosophy. Its central problem would be the problem of evil, not of knowledge. It would also be a personal philosophy, in which persons are agents, and since an agent must have an 'other', they are necessarily in relation. As persons in relation, they form communities which have a moral structure. The ultimate reality must be a personal infinite, that is, God; and in a philosophy of action, he must be the absolute agent. This means that he is the beginning and the end: as the beginning he is the creator, both of the finite agents and of the world in which they live: as the end, he is the personal unity of the achieved community of agents. Here we face the problem of evil. For the empirical world is not an achieved but a broken community. The process of history must then be the process of the fulfilment of the divine will for a united and harmonious community of all agents. The existence of evil may be a mystery beyond our comprehension. To understand it we would need to show why it is both necessary and at the same time really evil, and a negation, therefore, of reality. But some light can be thrown on the problem. Its reality must mean that history is the continuing creation of man, a creation which is not yet finished. It takes a long time for a child to become a mature agent; why should it not take mankind millions of years to become a true community? The necessity of evil we may look for, perhaps, in this, that the community to be must be the free choice of men. It cannot be imposed, yet it cannot be chosen until it is understood.

So the religion of the Hebrews is unique. It does not suffer from the conflict between the secular and the sacred. It is not theoretical. It is not a system of religious beliefs to be accepted; neither is it the mystical search of individuals for communion with the divine. It is a communal religion: the history of the children of Israel interpreted as the action of God in fulfilling his covenant with Abraham, and his promise that 'in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.' It is the religion of the law and the prophets, that remembers the past and judges the present and looks to the future for the realization of the divine purpose for which the people was chosen. It was a developing religion, and one of the decisive points in its progress was from a strict monolatry to a full monotheism, so that the God of Israel became the only God, the God of all the earth. For this not merely made the religion of the Hebrews a universal religion; but by implication, it linked the future of its people with the future of all the peoples of the world. It became possible, and in the end natural to

think that the purpose of God for Israel was to be the instrument for establishing a universal kingdom—the kingdom of God on earth.

When Jesus was challenged as a destroyer of the law and the prophets, he denied it emphatically. 'I came not to destroy but to complete them,' he said. He spoke as a Jewish prophet, knowing that the function of the prophet was to understand more deeply and to express more effectively the meaning of the prophetic tradition. One of the greatest of these 'completions' was his characteristic mode of addressing God as father. He refers constantly to 'my father in heaven,' and teaches his disciples to pray to 'Our father, which art in heaven,' and in talking to them he often calls God 'Your father'. The reference to God as father is rare though not unknown in the Old Testament. The last of the Old Testament prophets, Malachi, can say 'Have we not all one father?' But in Jesus' usage the personal pronouns make it much closer and more intimate, and because it is his usual reference to God, it stresses fatherly love as the characteristic attitude of God towards man. And this brings us back to his diagnosis of the human problem as the predominance of fear over 'faith' or trust and so to the question how fear in man is to be overcome.

The answer to fear is love. The reason is expressed in the First Epistle of John, 'There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear.' Love and fear are indeed the two primary personal motives, the one positive and the other negative. Life is a going out to the 'other' and this going out in interest and care is its positive content. Fear paralyses the flow and turns us back upon ourselves. The other becomes a danger against which we must defend ourselves. Such self-defence is the negation of personal life. This is the meaning and purpose of Jesus' 'new commandment' to his disciples to 'Love one another'.

Does this take us any further? If fear is not cured by telling people not to be afraid; is love produced by telling people to love one another? No, it is not; yet the situation is not so hopeless in this case. Love is the fulfilment of life, and so is natural. Fear, the same Epistle tells us, has torment; and love offers an escape from the torment of fear. This is enough to make us wish to escape from fear, but not to deliver us. But there is a farther power in love that can. Love tends to call out its own response. If we are loved, we tend naturally to return the love, through the natural reciprocity which belongs to personal life in its positive manifestations. So Jesus adds something to the announcement of his new commandment. 'Love one another,' he says, 'as I have loved you.' And the answer is also in the record: 'We love him because he first loved us.' Indeed, to make it more sure, he links his command to the personal infinite, saying 'As the father hath loved me, so have I loved you. Continue ye in my love.'

This then is Jesus' answer to the problem of fear as a dominating human motive, which makes faith impossible. It must, of course, be experienced and accepted by the patient before the cure is effective. But once the

experience of love given and returned is complete, the dominance of fear is broken, and in place of fear there is trust.



In place of fear there is trust: it remains only to link this central insight of Jesus with the original theme of his mission, the coming of the kingdom of heaven. There was only one break in the course of his mission which made it necessary for Jesus to rethink his task. It was the discovery that he had been rejected by his own people, and that this would lead to his death. One might have expected this realization to be accompanied by a sense of failure, or at least of a need to think differently of the purpose of his mission. He might have been tempted to give it a more 'spiritual' interpretation, as his later followers have often done in similar circumstances, in face of the refusal of the world to accept him. I can find no trace of such an alteration in the character of his recorded teaching. It is still centred on the proclamation of the good news of the coming of the kingdom of heaven on earth, together with the demand for the transformation of human behaviour which this implies.

It would seem that in this situation Jesus accepted his death as a necessary part of his mission. But this meant that the future of the kingdom must be left to the small band of his disciples who had accepted him and had continued faithful, recognizing him as indeed the Messiah. By this token they represent the success of his mission. They are the nucleus of the kingdom of heaven which he proclaimed, provided they can survive the supreme and agonizing test of experiencing his death and accepting its necessity. In that event they would become the missionary community, his chosen ones, his church. History tells us that they rose to the occasion, and undertook the task.

This story, of course, lies beyond the scope of our present effort. What lies still within it is the teaching of Jesus about this community, which is his alternative to military conquest and power as the instrument for the transformation of human society. Under the influence of the Graeco-Roman social tradition to which we belong, modified in many ways, though not radically transformed by the influence of the Christian church, we tend to look to the gospel records for a Christian ethic, of universal application. I want to suggest that this is a mistake. It would be truer to say that Jesus was at pains to avoid such an interpretation of his mission. He took his stand on the Jewish tradition, in a way that implicitly rejected both the Greek and the Roman, which already were growing to dominance in his own time. In the Jewish tradition, when God took action for the salvation of the world, he chose a family and trained it to be different

from the nations round about. So when that people who had been so trained rejected him, Jesus chose a group of people who accepted him and trained them for the same purpose. Where the Greeks looked to ideas and the Romans to law and administration, backed in both cases by force, Jesus in the Hebrew fashion looked to people, and to people who would exhibit, in their way of living, the differences which are required for a transformed society. The reason, no doubt, is that men and women are fundamental, ideas and laws are for their sake. 'The Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath.'

Instead of taking Jesus as a moralist, in the Greek style, I have found it much more illuminating to think of him as a man with a mission, reflecting on the modes of behaviour which are necessary for carrying it out. Already we have interpreted the story of the temptation in the wilderness as revealing certain conceivable modes of carrying out his mission, which he rejected. We have considered his method of dealing with sin by forgiving it, a method which finds its fullest expression when on the cross he prayed for his executioners, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'. We have treated his contrast of fear and faith as a diagnosis of the human predicament, and his recognition of love as the instrument which could overcome fear so that faith may take its place. We might have added that he considered faith as the power for the transformation of the world, the alternative to the military power that built the Roman Empire, and which he had rejected.

The final task, then, is the preparation of the band of his faithful disciples to stand together when he is gone and carry on the mission which he has begun, without him. This problem has two aspects. The first is the inner structure of the missionary community itself. The second is concerned with the relation of the community to the outside world.

The constitution of the community itself depends upon two inter-related factors, their relation to him, and their relation to one another. They are his disciples, and the task which they are to undertake is set for them by him. They have seen him and heard him carrying on his mission; and he has explained much of its meaning to them. Now they are to carry it on in his absence and in his name. In his love for them he has revealed the love of the Father. In this love they will continue: and the new commandment is that they now must love one another. They are to be a brotherhood, and their unity will be constituted and maintained by their mutual affection. They will be persecuted, and must be prepared, as he is now prepared, to go by the way of the cross. They will be rejected, as he has been rejected, but not wholly. There will always be others to take their places. The leaven will work in the meal; the seed that has been sown in good soil will grow. So the kingdom of heaven, which is in them, will continue to spread till it fills the earth. If there are failures, as there will be, there is forgiveness. If they fall, they will rise and begin again, and each will care for the other. So the mutual love of the brethren will fulfil

the work of love. It will overcome fear, and let the creative power of faith replace it.

This new brotherhood—may we now call it the Church of Christ?—so constituted, exists for the sake of the world outside it. It is a missionary brotherhood; and must fulfil the conditions demanded by its mission. If it lives for itself, however praiseworthy its conception of itself may be, it ceases to be the Church of Christ.

Consequently it must be an open society; since it aims at its own extension without limit, it must welcome to its membership anyone who wishes to join it, provided he understands its commitments and accepts its style of life. The latter is important, since Jesus thought of it as being 'our show', like a city on a hilltop or a lamp that is put on a lampstand to shed light around. 'Ye are the light of the world,' he said. 'Like the lamp ye must shed light among your fellows.' The attractiveness of the life of the brotherhood, their love of one another and trust in one another, is a major instrument for the extension of the kingdom, and particularly in its contrast with the life styles of the Pharisees or of the peoples of the Roman Empire. His disciples have nothing to conceal. The only exceptions are their religious intimacies and their private deeds of charity.

Just as in their community life they are to be men who live by the faith that overcomes fear, so in their relations with the world outside they are manifestly to be people not to be feared. In other words, the Church of Christ must never be on the defensive. This, it seems to me, is the meaning of the prohibition of punishment and the instruction to love your enemies. The desire to punish someone who has wronged us is an expression of fear, to use punishment results in perpetuating the situation of which we complain. A brotherhood whose function is to reconcile men can only do so by loving them first. It is a precondition of performing their task of enlarging the kingdom of heaven. It is a mere extension of the experience through which the brotherhood exists. 'We love him because he first loved us.' There is no guarantee of success. But at least we can aim at maintaining a position such that if hate is returned for love, it shall be, as in the master's case, without a cause. And if we fail, we can repent and be forgiven, and begin again.

In attempting, in this fashion, to indicate the nature of the Christian Church at the time of its institution; I take it that the use of force by or on behalf of the Christian community is wholly rejected; and it is rejected on the ground that it vitiates the purpose it is supposed to sustain. This may or may not imply pacifism, except in the fulfilment of the Christian mission. What I would prefer to stress in closing is that the original community was founded before there were theologies or creeds, as a way of life on earth, as an instrument for the salvation of a world gone wrong.

*Also by John Macmurray*

- SEARCH FOR REALITY IN RELIGION  
*1965 Swarthmore Lecture* 17½p
- TO SAVE FROM FEAR  
*four Lenten talks on the BBC in 1964* 4p
- 'YE ARE MY FRIENDS' 2p

*And with others*

- QUAKERS TALK TO SIXTH FORMERS  
*a series of broadcasts* by Kenneth Barnes, Kathleen Lonsdale  
and John Macmurray, with an introductory essay by Harold Loukes 17½p