

# Paul : Introduction



Christian Belief  
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A u d i o   C D ' s   H o m i l i e s   A r t i c l e s

# Welcome to my site

## Index of Topics

Click on “New Testament” (left menu)

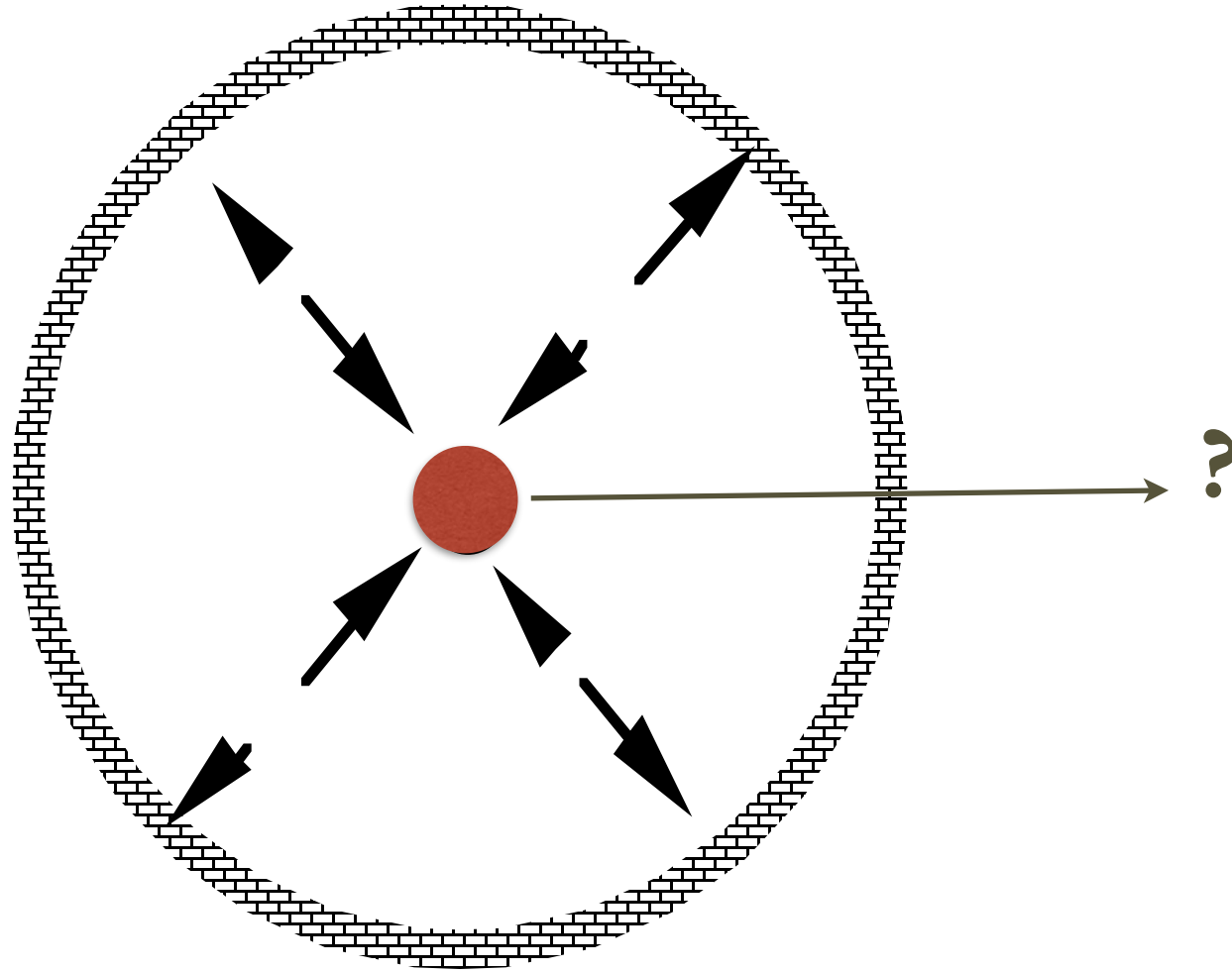


Then on “Paul”

Then on “3. Key Themes”

Religious

Experience



Religion   Re + ligare   To bind back

God Sanskrit **Ghu** ('called' 'calling') + **To** ('The one')

**God** 'The Heart and the Beyond of Everything'(Teilhard)

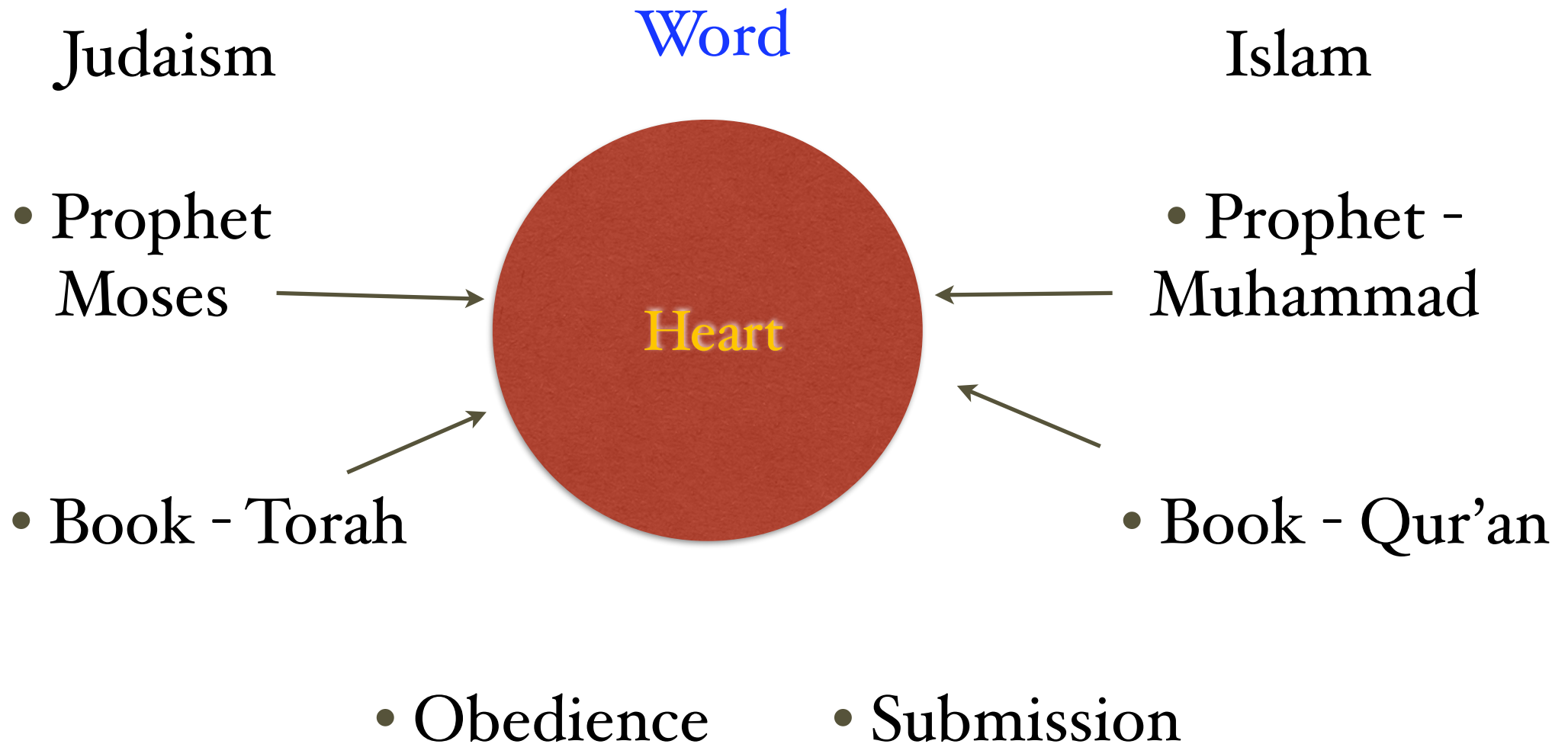
Sacred

Religious  
Experience is

God  
Centre – Heart

Experience of  
Communion with God

# The **Numinous** dimension of religious experience



# God is experienced

- in nature
- in people & events
- in movements of thought & feeling
- in words spoken & written
- in works of art

They reveal something of the truth, beauty & goodness of the transcendent & mysterious God

# God is revealed in

- the Vedas & Upanishads
- the sayings of K'ung-fu-tzu (Confucius)
- the sayings of Gautama the Buddha
- the oracles of the Hebrew Scriptures
- the Moslem Qur'an
- the mystics, poets, artists of all cultures

## John-Paul II Mission of the Redeemer, 1990

‘We must have respect for human beings in their quest for answers to the deepest questions of life, and respect for the action of the Holy Spirit in people ... Every authentic prayer is prompted by the Holy Spirit who is mysteriously present in every human heart’(n. 29).

‘Dialogue with those of other religions is demanded by deep respect for everything that has been brought about in human beings by the Spirit who blows where he wills’(n. 56).



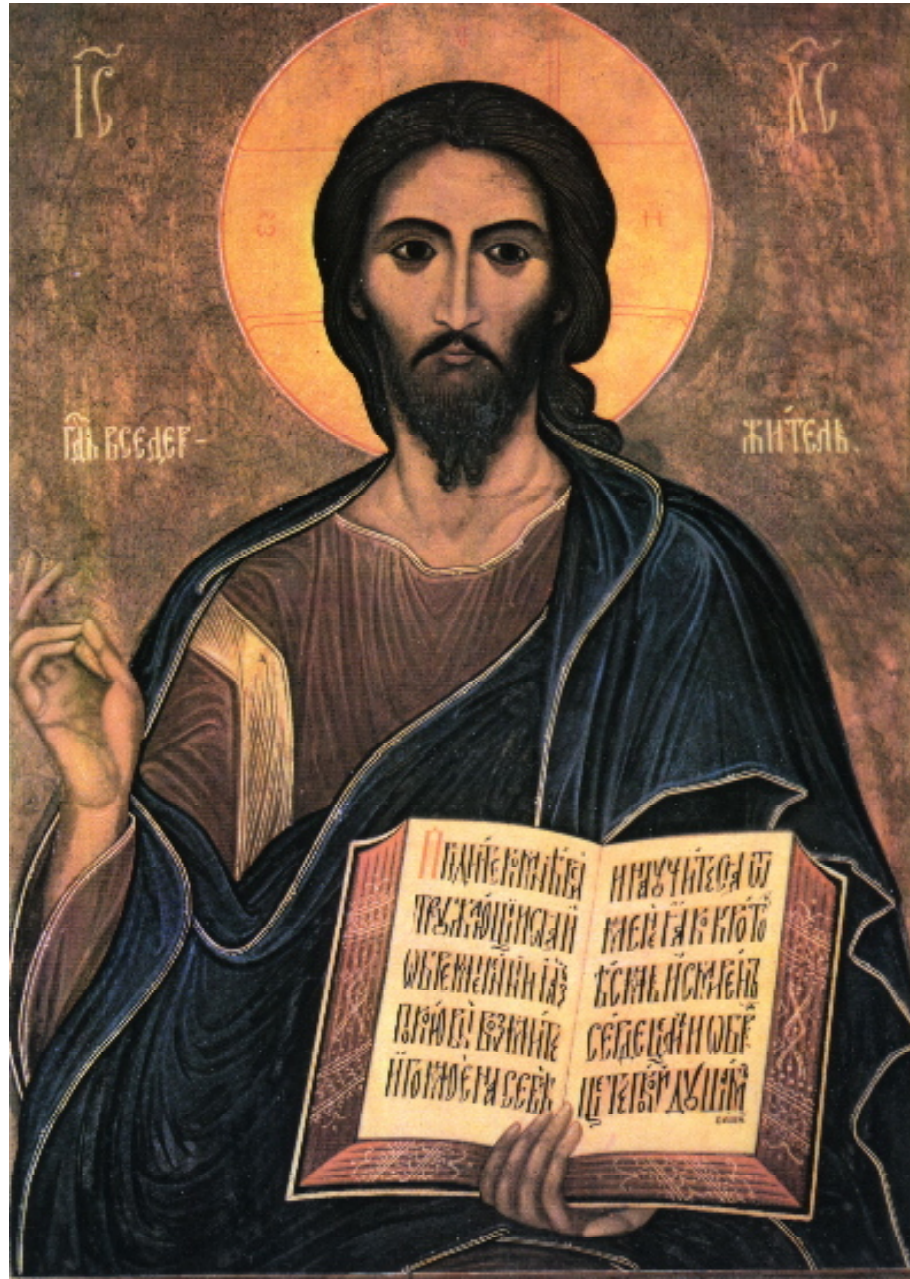
John 1:17

‘The Law [Torah] was given through Moses.’



# John 1:17

‘The gift of Truth came through Jesus the Christ.’







‘God called me through his grace and was pleased to reveal his Son in me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles.’

(Galatians 1:15-16).

‘Have I not seen the Lord’ (1 Corinthians 9:1).

‘He was seen also by me’  
(1 Corinthians 15:8).

## Acts 7:58-60

‘The members of the council dragged Stephen out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he died. And Saul approved of their killing him.’

## Acts 9:3-6, 17-19

‘As Saul was approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” He asked, “Who are you, Lord?” “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” ...

## Acts 9:3-6, 17-19

‘Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus.’

# The **Mystical** dimension of religious experience

**Spirit**



**Enlightenment**





## Romans 5:5

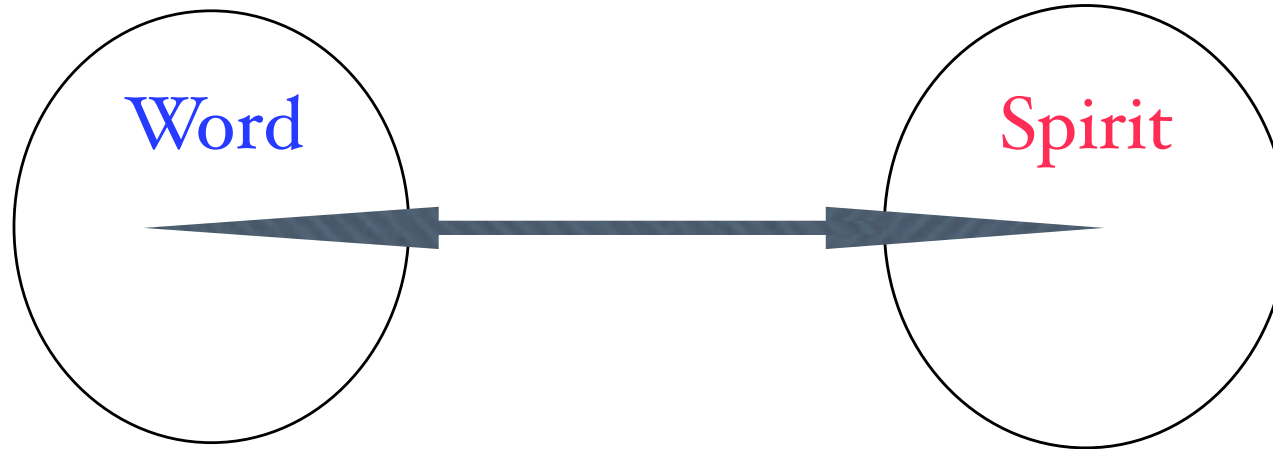
‘God’s love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.’



# Revelation

Numinous

Mystical

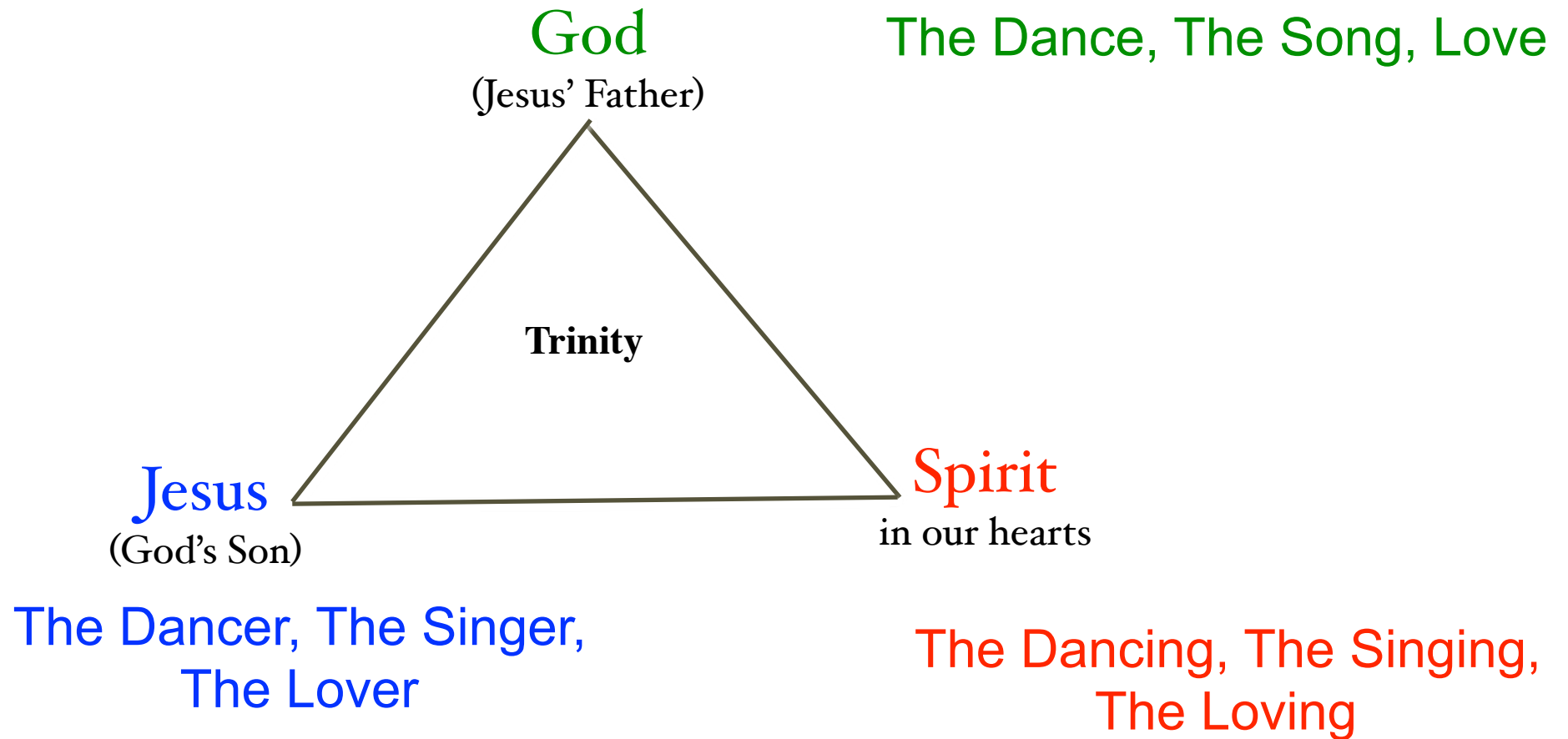


Heart

speaks to

Heart

‘I received the Gospel through a revelation of  
Jesus Christ’ (Galatians 1:12).



‘The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the hierarchy of the truths of faith.’ (Catechism n. 234)

# Jesus is looking to his Father

The Father is  
looking towards  
the Spirit



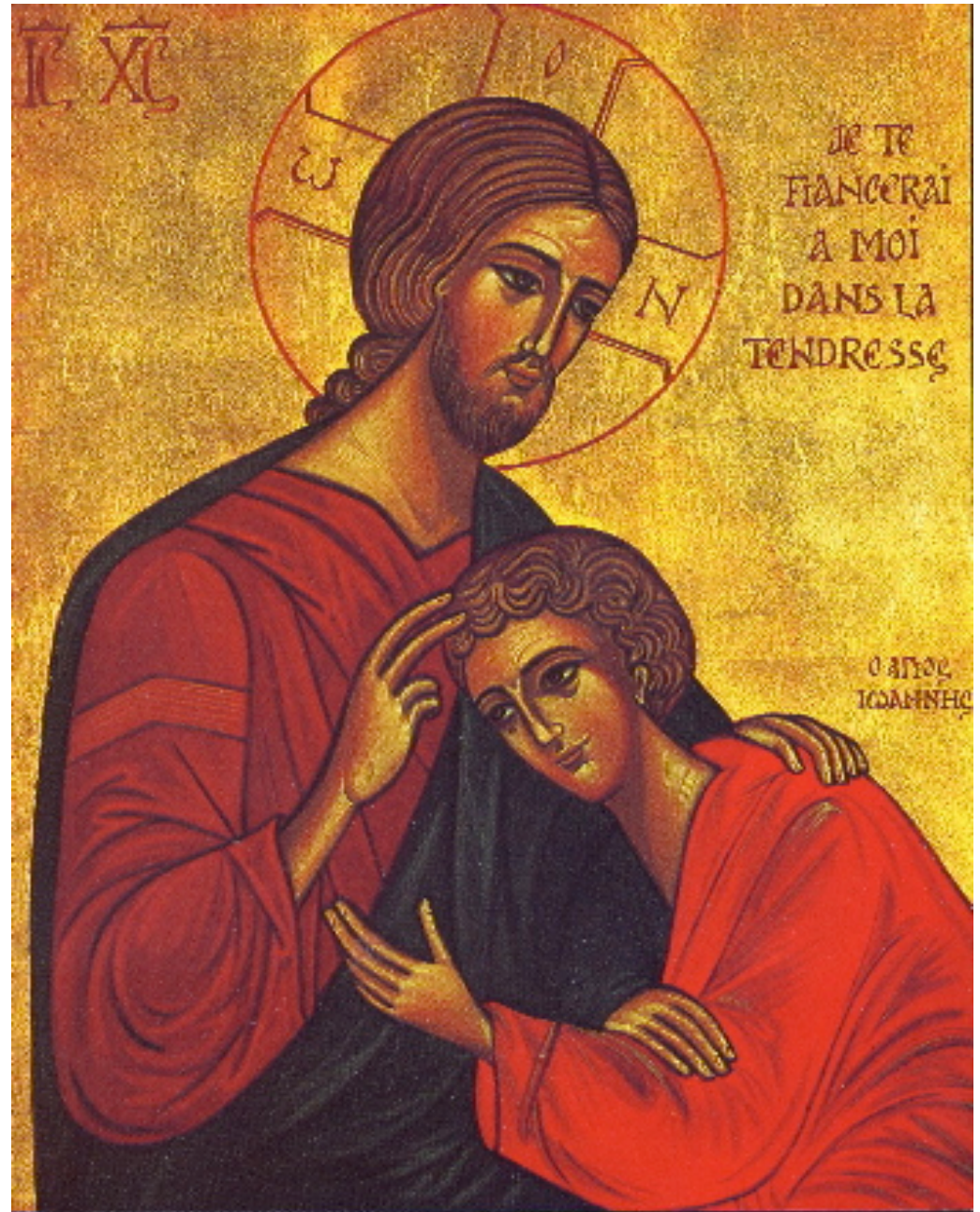
The Spirit is  
looking at the  
Eucharistic gifts  
on the table.

The one looking at the icon is  
invited to join them at the table.



‘There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved’(Acts 4:12).

‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’(John 14:6).



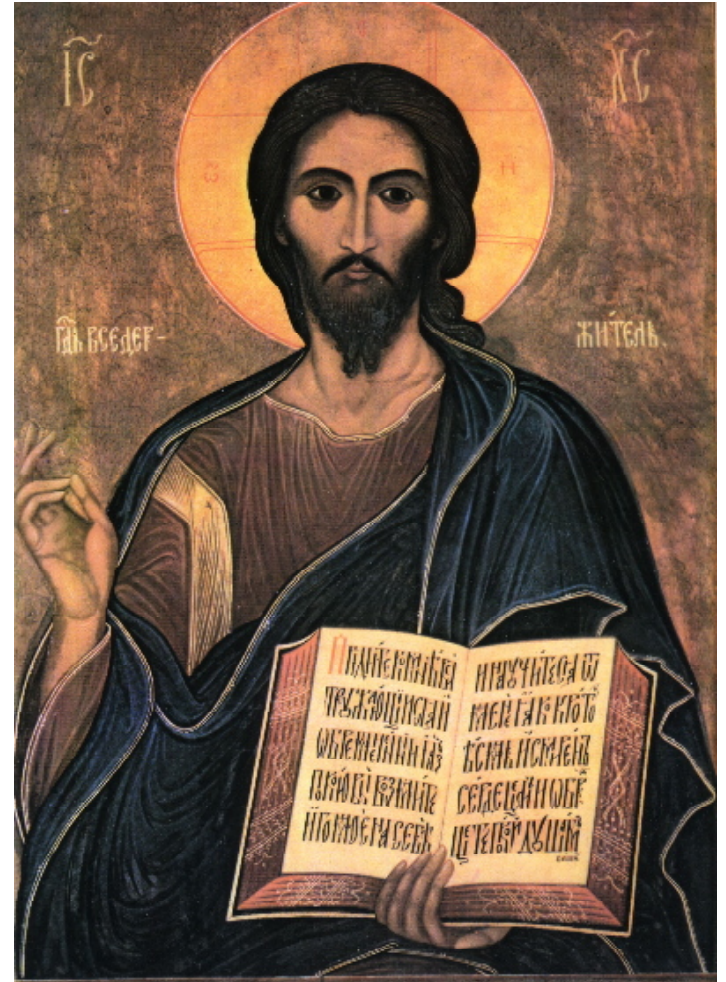
A genuine religious sentiment cannot be sectarian.

There is only one God.

Everything and everybody is interconnected. We all belong, for we are all expressions of the one Source of all.

Every genuinely religious person recognises that love gives us our key insight into the sacred.

- God's self-communication throughout the whole of the created universe
- Value of the response found in the various religions of the world
- The conviction of Christianity that **God's self-communication and the response to it reached its perfect human form in Jesus of Nazareth.**





Colossians 1:14

‘In Christ the whole  
fullness of God was  
pleased to dwell.’



- Jesus' Jewish contemporaries who became his disciples, saw him, not as abolishing Judaism, but as bringing it to its perfection (see Matthew 5:17).
- People from other religious traditions who have become disciples of Jesus could say the same about their religious heritage.

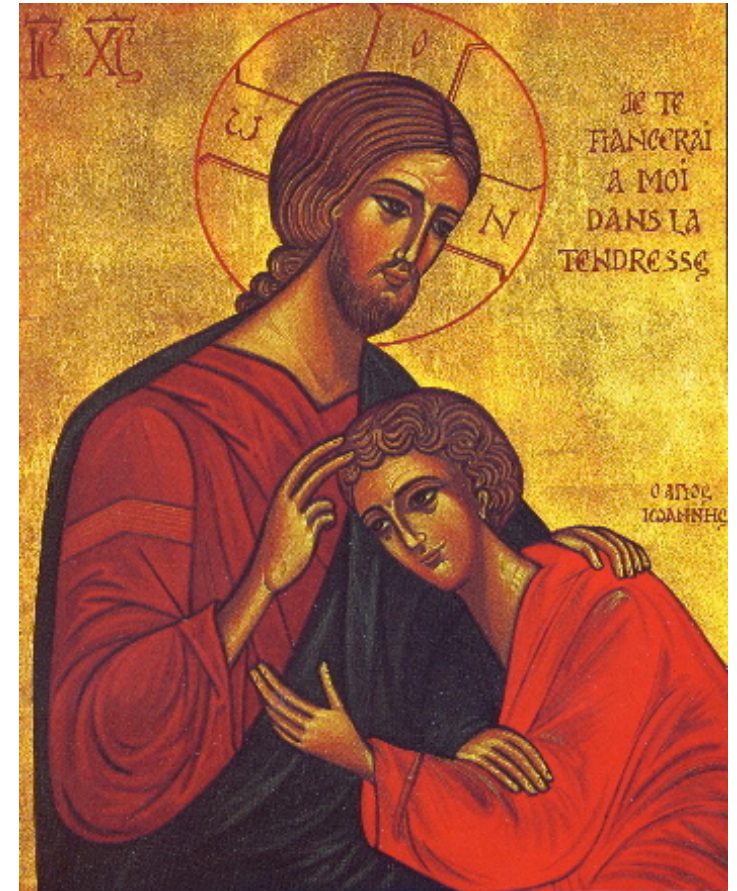


- God's self-communication is mediated to us, and so subject to all kinds of distortions.
- We human beings don't always pick things up properly or respond appropriately.
- Christians do not claim to be better than others.
- The Christian claim is about Jesus, not about how others have presented him to us or how we are responding.

- The NT is asserting that God alone can save.

- On the lips of Jesus in John's Gospel we hear the Divine Word.

- John is stating that we cannot achieve communion with God in any other way than in response to God's self-giving, God's Word, of whom Jesus is the perfect human expression.



I. Whom does God intend to come to him?

‘Everyone’.

‘God our saviour desires **everyone** to be saved  
and to come to the knowledge of the truth’(1 Timothy 2:4).

‘The grace of God has appeared  
for the salvation of **all**’(Titus 2:11).

## 2. How does God intend to draw everyone to God?

The gift of God's Spirit = God's Spirit as experienced by Jesus.

Jesus offers a share in his Spirit, his communion with God

Paul writes: 'God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us'(Romans 5:5).

To the Samaritan woman Jesus promised: ‘The water that I will give will become in you a spring of water gushing up to eternal life’(John 4:14).

Jesus promised that rivers of life-giving water would flow from the heart of those who believed in him.

John adds the following comment: ‘Jesus was speaking of the Spirit which those who believe in him were to receive’(John 7:38-39).

- The sacrament of the Spirit of Jesus' love, the place where Jesus' Spirit is powerfully effective, is the community of the Church, an extension in the world of Jesus' body.

- It is in a special way in and through the church that God communicates himself to the world.

From the beginning, the church was called ‘**catholic**’ for the very reason that it was committed to universality.

The church’s mission is to carry on the mission of Jesus from whose love no one is excluded, and, as Ignatius of Antioch wrote in the first years of the second century: ‘Where Jesus Christ is, there is the **catholic church**’(Smyrna 8.2).

## 1 Corinthians 1:2

‘To the church of God that is in Corinth,  
to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus,  
called to be saints,  
together with **all** those who in **every** place call on the  
name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.



Belief

Be love

Welcoming Grace

- Faith, in the whole biblical tradition, is a matter of listening to God's word, taking it seriously, and acting accordingly. The only kind of faith which Paul sought to inspire in people was 'faith working through love'(Galatians 5:6).

We are to 'do the truth in love'(Ephesians 4:15).

What of those who have never heard of Jesus?

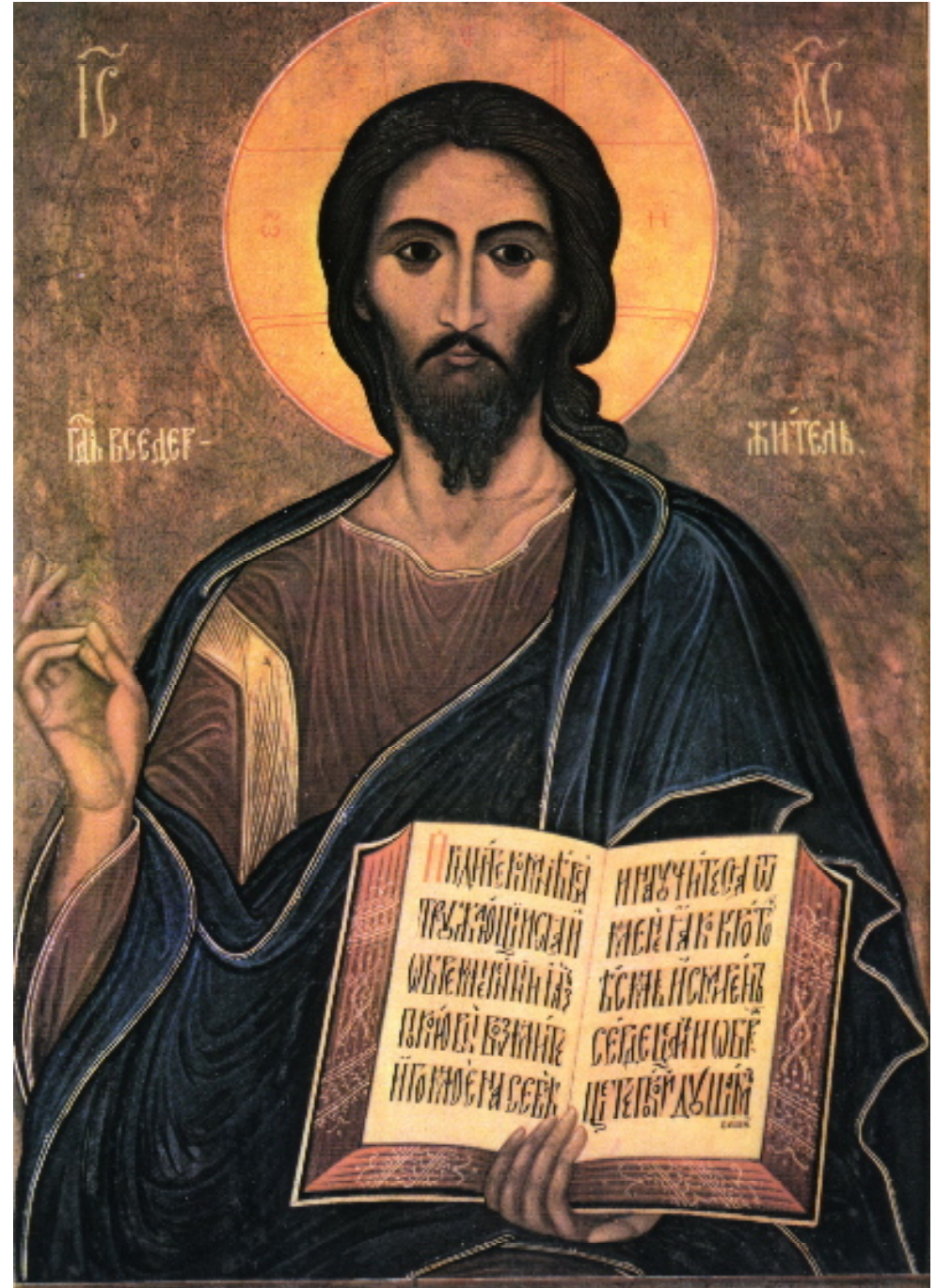
What of people who think they are rejecting Jesus, but are rejecting only the false Jesus that has been presented to them?

Must those who through no fault of their own have never had an opportunity explicitly to come to know and love the real Jesus miss out on the opportunity to respond to the Spirit of the risen Jesus and be drawn to the Father?

## Matthew 11:28-30

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.’





All I want