

1. Definitions, Sources, Methods

By the term "Spirit," in the title which I have selected for this series of studies, I mean the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, of the Bible (except, of course, in instances in which I deal with the "spirit" that is in man: e.g., Job 32:8, Eccl. 12:7, Gen. 2:7). By the term "cosmos" I mean the entire "natural" world, including what is designated in Scripture the "natural" man.

1 Cor. 2:14—Now the natural [*psychikos*, literally "soulish," rendered "natural," "sensuous," as distinguished from *pneumatikos*, "spiritual,"] man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. 1 Cor. 15:44—It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Gen. 2:7—And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul!¹

"Man," writes Lecomte du Nouy, "is part of an immense cosmos and is capable, alone amongst the animals, of observing nature, of experimenting and of establishing relationships and laws between facts." A scientist is reported to have said, "From the point of view of astronomy, man is just a speck upon a speck of the totality of being." To which reply was made, "Yes, but from the viewpoint of astronomy, man is still the astronomer." Man is, in fact, the only "frame of reference" to whom the fact of being-in-general could have any meaning.

I choose to treat man, as he is presently constituted, as an integral part of the cosmic environment generally designated as "nature," even though he does transcend it in many of his activities. (We should always keep in mind the fact that "nature" is not an entity, but only the name we give to observed phenomena.)

2. Christianity's Great Dynamic

Christianity is the world's unique religion in many respects. Its finality cannot successfully be contradicted. Both etymologically and literally it is the only system truly worthy of being designated a *religion* (from *religo*, *religare*, "to bind back," or "bind anew"): as Christians we are ready to defend the thesis at any time that the Christian Faith is the only true system of

1. For the sake of uniformity and clarity I am not enclosing in quotes, in the material in smaller type and extending from margin to margin, either passages from the Scripture or excerpts from the works of human authors. Personal comments I put in brackets, C.C.

2. *Human Destiny*, 12.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Divine-human reconciliation known to man (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-21, John 14:6).

It is unique in that it has at its heart and center the world's unique Personage, Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God; Immanuel, the God-Man, *Theanthropos*; the Incarnate Word; the Mystery of Godliness; our Prophet and Priest and King. There are just two things to consider in Christianity: first, the Person; then, the System; and the System stands or falls with the Person. For Christ is Christianity, and Christianity is Christ.

Again, Christianity is unique in that it provides an adequate Atonement (Covering) for sin (John 1:29); an Atonement sufficient to vindicate the Absolute Justice of the Author of the moral order and to sustain the majesty of the divine law violated by human transgression (1 John 3:4). "To reconcile the forgiving goodness of God with His absolute justice," writes W. Robertson Smith, "is one of the highest problems of spiritual religion, which in Christianity is solved by the doctrine of the atonement."¹

In the third place, Christianity is unique in that it displays before the world the challenge of the empty tomb. It is the only religion which claims an ever-living Person as its Founder, Head and Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ is as truly alive today as when He trod the storied hills of old Judea two thousand years ago. Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, Zoroaster, and all the others, died—and death terminated their careers. But the Lord Jesus was raised up from the dead and is seated at the right hand of God the Father, alive forevermore (Rom. 8:34, 1 Pet. 3:22). This is the fundamental claim of the Christian religion, as stated by the Apostle Peter in his great sermon on the day of Pentecost: "This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all [i.e., the Apostles] are witnesses" (Acts 2:32). And this is the claim affirmed by the risen Christ Himself: "I am the first and the last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (Rev. 1:17, 18). The *living* Creed of the *living* Church of the *living* God is the *ever-living* Christ.

We Christians make no pilgrimages to any shrine wherein molder the bones of the Founder of our faith. We worship a living Christ, who was raised up the third day from Joseph's new tomb, and made to sit at God's right hand in the heavenly places, "far above all rule, and authority, and power, and do-

1. W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites: Fundamental Institutions*, 62.

THE ETERNAL SPIRIT — HIS PERSON AND POWERS

minion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:20, 21). We have an Intercessor *there*, at God's right hand; and we have also an Intercessor *here*, within our hearts, who "maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26). The Intercessor *here* is the Holy Spirit. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!" (Rom. 11:33).

Finally then, in this connection, Christianity is unique in that it provides for all obedient believers a spiritual Dynamic who is precious beyond compare. That Dynamic is the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God it is who energizes the Word, who vitalizes the Church, who indwells and strengthens the Christian with a spiritual might far transcending his own (Eph. 3:16). There is no Holy Spirit in Hinduism, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Mohammedanism, or in any of the falsely so-called "world religions." True it is that in some of these esoteric cults we encounter the concept of "spirit" as what might be called a *metaphysical* influence or force of some kind—a strictly pantheistic notion; but in none of them do we find even an intimation of the *Holy Spirit*, that is, any suggestion of ethical or spiritual import attaching to the term. The Bible, however, is literally the Book of the Spirit: from first to last it bears the *imprimatur* of the Spirit of God. Had the Bible never been written, without doubt we should be in the same blind condition as those disciples whom Paul found at Ephesus, who confessed that they had never so much as heard "if a Holy Spirit is" (Acts 19:2).

The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the Bible distinguishes it, sets it apart, from all other books. Scripture is *God-breathed* literature. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel sets it apart from all human messages, and makes it in truth "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the Church of Christ sets it apart from all human institutions. The Holy Spirit does not indwell the club, the fraternal order, the ethical society, or any other community of human beings associated for human ends. The Spirit indwells the Church and the Church only. The Church alone is the "habitation of God in the Spirit, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:19-21). Because the Spirit comes to

indwell every obedient believer (1 Cor. 3:16-17, 6:19-20; Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:2-3), these obedient believers are said to be "living stones, built up into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:1-5).

The Holy Spirit is not a derivation from philosophical speculation nor from scientific theory. All branches of purely human wisdom are as silent as the grave with respect to His existence, His being, His presence and power. What we know of the Holy Spirit and His work we must learn from one, and only one Book—the Bible. The Bible is the Book which He Himself has given us. It is pre-eminently the Book of the Spirit.

Little wonder, then, in view of all these superlative excellences of the Christian faith, that Christianity is pre-eminently *the religion of joy*. At the background of its realism (it declares unequivocally that man is in sin, and in need of salvation, without which he is perishing in this world and in the world to come; never does it deceive him one whit) there is always the final optimistic note: "after the tribulation . . . then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven . . . and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30). Whereas philosophical cults and Oriental mysticisms uniformly reek with pessimism, Christianity declares that *faith* is the victory "that hath overcome the world" (1 John 5:4).

Cf. Luke 2:10 [the words of the angel of the Lord to the shepherds], Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people. John 15:11—These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. John 16:24—Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be made full. Acts 8:8—And there was much joy in that city [Samaria]. Acts 15:3—They passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles, and they caused great joy to all the brethren. 2 Cor. 7:4—I overflow with joy in all our affliction. Col. 1:11—strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy. 1 Thess. 1:6—having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit. 1 Pet. 4:13—but inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy. 1 John 1:4—And these things we write that your joy may be made full. [Cf. Acts 2:46, 47; Rev. 12:10-12; 19:6-8.]

3. The Book of the Spirit

God has written two Books—the Book of Nature, in which He has recorded the evidences of "his everlasting power and