



ONLY ONE WAY

J. C. RYLE (1816-1900)

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ONLY ONE WAY

Is there more than one road to heaven? Is there more than one way in which the soul of man can be saved? This is the question which I propose to consider in this paper, and I shall begin the consideration by quoting a text of Scripture:

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Act 4:12).

These words are striking in themselves. But they are much more striking if you consider when and by whom they were spoken. They were spoken by a poor and friendless Christian, in the midst of a persecuting Jewish council. It was a grand confession of Christ.

They were spoken by the lips of the Apostle Peter. This is the man who a few weeks before forsook Jesus and fled. This is the very man who three times over denied his Lord. There is another spirit in him now. He stands up boldly before Priests and Sadducees, and tells them the truth to their face: “This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Act 4:11-12).

In considering this solemn subject, I wish to do three things: First, to show you the doctrine here laid down by the apostle. Secondly, to show you some reasons why this doctrine must be true. Thirdly, to show you some consequences which naturally flow from the doctrine.

I. There is only one way.

First, let me show you the doctrine of the text. Let us make sure that we rightly understand what the Apostle Peter means. He says of Christ, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Now what is this? Very much depends on our clearly seeing this.

He means that no one can be saved from sin—its guilt, power, and consequences—except by Jesus Christ.

He means that no one can have peace with God the Father—obtain pardon in this world, and escape wrath to come in the next—except through the atonement and mediation of Jesus Christ.

In Christ alone God's rich provision of salvation for sinners is treasured up. By Christ alone God's abundant mercies come down from heaven to earth. Christ's blood alone can cleanse us. Christ's righteousness alone can clothe us. Christ's merit alone can give us a title to heaven. Jews and Gentiles, learned and unlearned, kings and poor men—all alike must either be saved by Jesus, or lost forever.

And the apostle adds emphatically, "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." There is no other person commissioned, sealed, and appointed by God the Father to be the Savior of sinners, except Christ. The keys of life and death are committed to His hand, and all who would be saved must go to Him.

There was but one place of safety in the day when the Flood came upon the earth, and that was Noah's ark (Gen 6:17-18). All other places and devices—mountains, towers, trees, rafts, boats—all were alike useless. So also there is but one hiding place for the sinner who would escape the storm of God's anger: he must venture his soul on Christ.

There was but one man to whom the Egyptians could go in the time of famine, when they wanted food. They must go to Joseph (Gen 42:6). It was a waste of time to go to anyone else. So also, there is but One to Whom hungry souls must go if they would not perish forever: they must go to Christ.

There was but one word that could save the lives of the Ephraimites in the day when the Gileadites contended with them and took the fords of Jordan (Jdg 11). They must say "Shibboleth" or die. Just so there is but one name that will avail us when we stand at the gate of heaven. We must name the name of Jesus as our only hope, or be cast away everlastingly.

Such is the doctrine of the text: No salvation but by Jesus Christ. In Him plenty of salvation—salvation to the uttermost, salvation for the very chief of sinners! Out of Him no salvation at all. It is in perfect harmony with our Lord's own word in John's Gospel: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Joh 14:6). It is the same thing that Paul tells the Corinthians: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1Co 3:11). And the same that John tells us in his first epistle: "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1Jo 5:11-12). All these texts come to one and the same point: no salvation but by Jesus Christ.

Reader, make sure that you understand this before you pass on. Perhaps you think this is all old news. Perhaps you feel, "These are ancient things: who

doesn't know such truths as these? Of course, we believe there is no salvation but by Christ." But mark well what I say; make sure that you understand this doctrine, or else by and by you will stumble and be offended at what I have yet to say.

Remember that you are to venture the whole salvation of your soul on Christ, and on Christ only. You are to cast loose completely and entirely from all other hopes and trusts. You are not to rest partly on Christ, partly on doing all you can, partly on keeping your church, partly on receiving the sacrament. In the matter of your justification, Christ is to be all. This is the doctrine of the text.

Remember that

heaven is before you, and Christ the only door into it;

hell beneath you, and Christ alone able to deliver you from it;

the devil behind you, and Christ the only refuge from his wrath and accusations;

the Law against you, and Christ alone able to redeem you;

sin weighing you down, and Christ alone able to put it away.

This is the doctrine of the text.

Now do you see it? I hope you do. But I fear many think so, who may find before laying down this paper they do not.

II. Why is there only one way?

Let me show you, in the second place, some reasons why the doctrine of the text must be true.

I might cut short this part of the subject by one simple argument: "God says so." "One plain text," said an old preacher, "is as good as a thousand reasons."

But I will not do this. I wish to meet the objections that are ready to rise in many hearts against this doctrine, by pointing out the strong foundations on which it stands.

A. Man's sin

Let me then say, for one thing, the doctrine of the text must be true because man is what man is.

Now, what is man? There is one broad, sweeping answer, which takes in the whole human race: man is a sinful being. All children of Adam born into the world, whatever be their name or nation, are corrupt, wicked, and defiled in the

sight of God. Their thoughts, words, ways, and actions are all more or less defective and imperfect.

Is there no country on the face of the globe where sin does not reign? Is there no happy valley, no secluded island, where innocence is to be found? Is there no tribe on earth, where—far away from civilization and commerce, and money, and gunpowder, and luxury, and books—morality and purity flourish? No, reader, there is none. Look over all the voyages and travels you can lay your hand on, from Columbus down to Cook, and you will see the truth of what I am asserting. The most solitary islands of the Pacific Ocean—*islands cut off from all the rest of the world, islands where people were alike ignorant of Rome and Paris, London and Jerusalem—these islands have been found full of impurity, cruelty, and idolatry. The footprints of the devil have been traced on every shore. The veracity of the third chapter of Genesis has everywhere been established. Whatever else [people] have been found ignorant of, they have never been found ignorant of sin.*

But are there no men and women in the world who are free from this corruption of nature? Have there not been high and exalted souls, who have every now and then lived faultless lives? Have there not been some, if it be only a few, who have done all that God required, and thus proved that sinless perfection is a possibility? No, reader, there have been none. Look over all the biographies and lives of the holiest Christians. Mark how the brightest and best of Christ's people have always had the deepest sense of their own defectiveness and corruption. They groan, they mourn, they sigh, they weep over their own shortcomings. It is one of the common grounds on which they meet.

Patriarchs and apostles, fathers and reformers, Episcopalians and Presbyterians, Luther and Calvin, Knox and Bradford, Rutherford and Bishop Hall, Wesley and Whitefield, Martyr and M'Cheyne¹—all are alike agreed in

¹ **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) – German monk who led the Protestant Reformation.

John Calvin (1509-1664) – French-born Swiss reformer.

John Knox (c. 1514-1572) – Scottish reformer.

John Bradford (c. 1510-1555) – London preacher burned at the stake by Roman Catholic Mary I.

Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661) – Scottish Presbyterian theologian and author.

Joseph Hall (1574-1656) – English bishop and author.

John Wesley (1703-1791) – English cleric and evangelist; founded Methodism together with George Whitefield.

George Whitefield (1714-1770) – English evangelistic preacher, perhaps best-known of the 18th century.

feeling their own sinfulness. The more light they have, the more humble and self-abased they seem to be. The more holy they are, the more they scorn to feel their own unworthiness, and to glory, not in themselves, but in Christ.

Now, what does all this tend to prove? To my eyes it seems to prove that human nature is so tainted and corrupt that, left to himself, no man could be saved. Man's case appears to me a hopeless one without a Savior—and that a mighty Savior too. There must be a Mediator, an atonement, an Advocate, to make such poor sinful beings acceptable with God—and I find this nowhere except in Jesus Christ. Heaven for man without a mighty Redeemer, peace with God for man without a mighty Intercessor, eternal life for man without an eternal Savior—in one word, salvation without Christ—all alike appear to me utter impossibilities.

I lay these things before you and ask you to consider them. I know it is one of the hardest things in the world to realize the sinfulness of sin. To say we are all sinners is one thing; to have an idea what sin must be in the sight of God is quite another. Sin is too much part of ourselves to allow us to see it as it is. We do not feel our own moral deformity. We are like those animals in creation which are vile and loathsome to our senses, but are not so to themselves, nor yet to one another. Their loathsomeness is their nature, and they do not perceive it. Our corruption is part and parcel of ourselves, and at our best we have but a feeble comprehension of its intensity.

But this you may be sure of, if you could see your own lives with the eyes of the angels who never fell, you would never doubt this point for a moment. Depend on it, no one can really know what man is without seeing that the doctrine of our text must be true. There can be no salvation except by Christ.

B. God's greatness

Let me say another thing. The doctrine of our text must be true because God is what God is.

Now, what is God? That is a deep question indeed. We know something of His attributes. He has not left Himself without witness in creation. He has mercifully revealed to us many things about Himself in His Word. We know that God is

a Spirit,
eternal,
invisible,

Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562) – Italian-born Reformed theologian.
Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813-1843) – Scottish Presbyterian minister.

almighty,
the maker of all things,
the preserver of all things,
holy,
just,
all-seeing,
all-knowing,
all-remembering,
infinite in mercy, in wisdom, in purity.

But alas! After all, how low and groveling are our highest ideas, when we come to put down on paper what we believe God to be! How many words and expressions we use whose full meaning we cannot fathom! How many things our tongues say of Him, which our minds are utterly unable to conceive!

How small a part of Him do we see! How little of Him can we possibly know! How mean and paltry² are any words of ours to convey any idea of Him Who made this mighty world out of nothing, and with Whom one day is “as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Pe 3:8)! How weak and inadequate are our poor, feeble intellects to conceive of Him Who is

perfect in all His works,
perfect in the greatest as well as perfect in the smallest,
perfect in appointing the days and hours in which Jupiter, with all his satellites, shall travel round the sun,
perfect in forming the smallest insect that creeps over a few feet of our little globe!

How little can our busy helplessness comprehend a Being Who is ever ordering all things in heaven and earth by universal providence,³ ordering the rise and fall of nations and dynasties, like Nineveh and Carthage⁴;

² **paltry** – inadequate.

³ **providence** – God’s works of providence are His most holy (Psa 145:17), wise (Isa 28:29), and powerful (Heb 1:3) preserving and governing all His creatures and all their actions (Psa 103:19; Mat 10:29). *Spurgeon’s Catechism*, Q. 11; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁴ **Nineveh and Carthage** – Nineveh, located in modern-day Iraq, was the capital of the Assyrian Empire that collapsed in the 7th century BC. Carthage in modern-day Tunisia was the seat of a loosely controlled “empire” that held extensive possessions and controlled trade in the Mediterranean Sea from roughly 500 BC to 150 BC.

ordering the exact length to which men like Alexander, Tamerlane, and Napoleon⁵ shall extend their conquests,
ordering the least step in the life of the humblest believer among His people,
all at the same time, all unceasingly, all perfectly, all for His own glory!

The blind man is no judge of the paintings of Rubens or Titian.⁶ The deaf man is insensible to the beauty of Handel's⁷ music. The Greenlander can have but a faint notion of the climate of the tropics. The Australian [native] can form but a remote conception of a locomotive engine, however well you describe it. There is no place in their minds to take in these things. They have no set of thoughts which can comprehend them. They have no mental fingers to grasp them. And just in the same way, the best and brightest ideas that men can form of God, compared to the reality which we shall see one day, are weak and faint indeed.

But, reader, one thing, I think, is very clear, and that is this. The more any man considers calmly what God really is, the more he must feel the immeasurable distance between God and himself. The more he meditates, the more he must see that there is a great gulf between him and God. His conscience, I think, will tell him, if he will let it speak,

that God is perfect, and he imperfect;
that God is very high, and he very low;
that God is glorious majesty, and he a poor worm;
and that if ever he is to stand before Him in judgment with comfort, he must have some mighty helper, or he will not be saved.

And what is all this but the very doctrine of our text? What is all this but coming round to the conclusion I am urging upon you? With such an one as God to give account to, we must have a mighty Savior. To give us peace with such a

⁵ **Alexander the Great** (356-323 BC) – Ambitious and unconquered in battle, this king of Macedon in Greece established the Greek Empire and expanded its borders as far east as India by the time of his death at 33 years.

Tamerlane (1336-1405) – Vicious founder of the Timurid Empire covering Central Asia and parts of Europe.

Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) – French statesman and military leader; through the Napoleonic Wars he controlled or influenced much of Europe and established the short-lived First French Empire (1804-1815).

⁶ **Peter Paul Rubens** (1577-1640) – Flemish Baroque artist and diplomat.

Titian, Tiziano Vecelli (c. 1490-1576) – Italian Renaissance painter.

⁷ **George Frideric Handel** (1685-1759) – Baroque composer, originally German, but later British.

glorious Being as God, we must have an almighty Friend and Advocate on our side—an Advocate Who can answer every charge that can be laid against us, and [Who can] plead our cause with God on equal terms. We must have this, and nothing less than this. Vague notions of mercy will never give true peace. And such a Savior, such a Friend, such an Advocate is nowhere to be found, except in the person of Jesus Christ.

I lay this reason also before you. I know well that people may have false notions of God, as well as everything else, and shut their eyes against truth. But I say boldly and confidently, no man can have truly high and honorable views of what God is and escape the conclusion that the doctrine of our text must be true. There can be no possible salvation, but by Jesus Christ.

C. The Bible—God’s revelation

Let me say, in the third place, this doctrine must be true, because the Bible is what the Bible is.

All through the Bible, from Genesis down to Revelation, there is only *one simple account of the way in which men must be saved*. It is always the same:

only for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ,
through faith,
not for our own works and deserving.

You see it dimly revealed at first. It looms through the mist of a few promises, but there it is (such as in Gen 3:15).

You have it more plainly afterwards. It is taught by the pictures and emblems of the Law of Moses, the schoolmaster dispensation⁸ (Gal 3:24-25).

You have it still more clearly by and by. The prophets saw in vision many particulars about the Redeemer yet to come (for example, Isa 53, 61; Jer 31; Dan 7:9-14).

You have it fully at last, in the sunshine of New Testament history: Christ incarnate, Christ crucified, Christ rising again, Christ preached to the world.

But one golden chain runs through the whole volume: *no salvation except by Jesus Christ*.

The bruising of the serpent’s head, foretold in the day of the Fall (Gen 3:15);
the clothing of our first parents with skins (Gen 3:21);
the sacrifices of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;

⁸ **dispensation** – age; period.

the Passover, and all the particulars of the Jewish Law, the high priest, the altar, the daily offering of the lamb, the holy of holies (entered only by blood), the scapegoat, the cities of refuge

—all are so many witnesses to the truth set forth in the text. All preach with one voice, “*Salvation only by Jesus Christ.*”

In fact, this truth appears to me *the grand subject of the Bible*, and all the different parts and portions of the Book are meant to throw light upon it. I can gather from it no ideas of pardon and peace with God, except in connection with this truth. If I could read of one soul in it who was saved without faith in a Savior, I might perhaps not speak so confidently. But

when I see that faith in Christ—whether a coming Christ, or a crucified Christ—was the prominent feature in the religion of all who went to heaven;

when I see Abel owning Christ in his better sacrifice, at one end of the Bible, and the saints in glory in John’s vision, rejoicing in Christ at the other end of the Bible;

when I see a man like Cornelius, who was devout and feared God, and gave alms, and prayed, not told that he had done all, and would of course be saved, but ordered to send for Peter, and hear of Christ (Act 10)

—when I see all these things, I say, I feel bound to believe that the doctrine of the text is the doctrine of the whole Bible. There is no salvation, no way to heaven, except by Jesus Christ.

Reader, I do not know what use you make of your Bible, whether you read it, or whether you do not—whether you read it all, or whether you only read such parts as you like. But this I tell you plainly, if you read and believe the whole Bible, you will find it hard to escape the doctrine [that Christ is the only way]. I do not see how you can consistently reject what I have been endeavoring to prove. Christ is the way, and the only way—Christ the truth, and the only truth—Christ the life, and the only life.

Such are the reasons which seem to me to confirm the truth laid down in our text. What man is, what God is, what the Bible is—all appear to me to lead us on to the same great conclusion. There is no salvation possible without Christ. I leave them with you and pass on.

III. If there is only one way...

And now, in the third and last place, let me show you some consequences which flow naturally out of our text. There are few parts of this subject which seem to me more important than this. The truth I have been trying to set before you bears so strongly on the condition of a great proportion of mankind, that I consider it would be mere affectation⁹ on my part not to say something about it. If Christ is the only way of salvation, what are we to feel about many people in the world? This is the point I am now going to take up.

I believe that many persons would go with me so far as I have gone and would go no further. They will agree to my premises. They will have nothing to say to my conclusions. They think it uncharitable to say anything which appears to condemn others. For my part I cannot understand such charity. It seems to me the kind of charity

which would see a neighbor drinking slow poison, but never interfere to stop him;

which would allow emigrants to embark in a leaky, ill-found¹⁰ vessel, and not interfere to prevent them;

which would see a blind man walking near a precipice and think it wrong to cry out and tell him there was danger.

I believe the greatest charity is to *tell the greatest quantity of truth*. I believe it is no charity to hide the legitimate consequences of such a text as we are now considering, or to shut our eyes against them. And I solemnly call on everyone who really believes there is no salvation in any but Christ—and none other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved—I solemnly call on that person to listen to me, while I set before him some of the tremendous consequences which the text involves.

A. Religion without Christ is useless.

I am not going to speak of the heathen, who have never heard the gospel. Their final state is a great depth, which the mightiest minds have been unable to fathom. I am not ashamed of leaving it alone. One thing only I will say, if any of the heathen, who die heathen, are saved, I believe they will owe their salvation, however little they may know it on this side of the grave, *to the work and atonement of Christ*. Just as infants and idiots¹¹ among ourselves will find in the

⁹ **affectation** – insincere love; false show of goodwill.

¹⁰ **ill-found** – unsound; not well-built or well equipped.

¹¹ **idiots** – mentally handicapped persons.

Last Day they owed all to Christ, though they never knew Him, so I believe it will be with the heathen, if any of them are saved, whether many or few. For this I am sure of, there is no such thing as creature merit.¹²

My own private opinion is that the highest archangel (though of course in a very different way and degree from us) will be found in some way to own his standing to Christ, and that things in heaven, as well as things on earth, will ultimately be found all indebted to the name of Jesus. But I leave the case of the heathen to others and will speak of matters nearer home.

One mighty consequence then which seems to be learned from this text is the *utter uselessness of any religion without Christ*.

There are many to be found in Christendom at this day who have a religion of this kind. They would not like to be called deists, but deists¹³ they are.

That there is a God,

¹² Many Bible scholars make a bolder denial of any person's being saved without God's special revelation of Christ's redemptive work, normally through the gospel as revealed in the promises of the Old Testament scriptures or in the accounts and teachings of the New.

RC Sproul offers the following summary of the guilt and spiritual condition of "those who have never heard":

"(1) All men know God the Father (Romans 1:18ff). The problem of the pagan who has never heard the gospel is the problem of our universal fallenness. We must emphasize that God has revealed Himself to all men. All men know there is a God. Thus, no one can plead ignorance as an excuse for denying God.

"(2) All men distort and reject true knowledge of God; [therefore] they are not innocent.

"(3) There are no innocent people in the world. People who die without hearing the gospel will be judged according to the knowledge they have. They will be judged guilty for rejecting God the Father...

"(4) Idolatry as a 'religion' does not please God but adds insult to injury to the glory of God (see Isa. 42:8). Idolatry does not represent man's search for God but rather man's flight from God." R.C. Sproul, *Objections Answered*, extract available at <https://www.monergism.com/what-happens-person-who-never-heard-jesus-dr-r-c-sproul>. Also see Steven Lawson, "Those Who Have Never Heard, Romans 2:12-16" (audio sermon), transcript available at <http://www.onepassionministries.org/transcripts/2017/11/28/those-who-have-never-heard-romans-212-16>, and John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, especially Book 3, Chapter 14, Arg. 2.

¹³ **deists** – those who hold the belief that God exists but is distant and does not manage the world's affairs through His providence in accordance with His decree; He created the universe but then left it to run its course on its own, following certain "laws of nature" that He had built into the universe.

that there is what they are pleased to call Providence,
that God is merciful,
that there will be a state after death

—this is about the sum and substance of their creed. And as to the distinguishing tenets of Christianity, they do not seem to recognize them at all.

Now I denounce such a system as a baseless fabrication. Its seeming foundation is man's imagination. Its hopes are an utter delusion. The god of such people is an idol of their own invention, and not the glorious God of the Scriptures. He is a miserably imperfect being, even on their own showing, without holiness, without justice, without any attribute but that of vague, indiscriminate mercy.

Such a religion may possibly do as a toy to live with, but it is far too unreal to die with! It utterly fails to meet the demands of man's conscience. It offers no remedy. It affords no rest for the soles of our feet. It cannot comfort, for it cannot save. Reader, beware of it, if you love life. Beware of a religion without Christ.

B. Religion in which Christ has not first place is folly.

Another consequence to be learned from the text is *the folly of any religion in which Christ has not the first place*. I need not remind you how many hold a system of this kind. The Socinian tells us that Christ was a mere man; that His blood had no more efficacy than that of another; that His death on the cross was not a real atonement and propitiation for man's sins; and that after all, doing is the way to heaven, and not believing.

I solemnly declare that I believe such a system is ruinous to men's souls. It seems to me to strike at the root of the whole plan of salvation which God has revealed in the Bible, and practically to nullify the greater part of the Scriptures. It overthrows the priesthood of the Lord Jesus, and strips Him of His office. It converts the whole system of the Law of Moses, touching sacrifices and ordinances, into a meaningless form. It seems to say that the sacrifice of Cain was just as good as the sacrifice of Abel. It turns man adrift on a sea of uncertainty, by plucking from under him the finished work of a divine Mediator.

Beware of it, reader, no less than of deism, if you love life. Beware of the least attempt to depreciate and undervalue Christ's person, offices, or work.¹⁴ The

¹⁴ See Free Grace Broadcaster 183, *Christ the Mediator*; Free Grace Broadcaster 219, *The Person of Christ*; and Free Grace Broadcaster 225, *The Work of Christ*, all available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

name whereby alone you and I can be saved is a name above every name, and the slightest contempt poured upon it is an insult to the King of Kings. The salvation of your soul has been laid by God the Father on Christ, and no other; and if He were not very God of very God, He never could accomplish it. There could be no salvation at all.

C. Adding anything to Christ is a great error.

Another consequence to be learned from our text is *the great error committed by those who add anything to Christ as necessary to salvation.*

It is an easy thing to profess belief in the Trinity and reverence for our Lord Jesus Christ, and yet to make some addition to Christ as the ground of hope, and so to overthrow the doctrine of the text as really and completely as by denying it altogether.

The Church of Rome does this systematically. She adds things over and above the requirements of the gospel, of her own invention. She speaks as if Christ's finished work was not a sufficient foundation for a sinner's soul; and as if it were not enough to say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Act 16:31). She sends men to penances and absolution, to masses and extreme unction, to fasting and bodily mortification, to the Virgin [Mary] and the saints—as if these things could add to the safety there is in Christ Jesus. And in doing this, she sins against our text with a high hand. Let us beware of any Romish hankering after additions to the simple way of the gospel, from whatever quarter it may come.

But I fear the Church of Rome does not stand alone in this matter. I fear there are thousands of professing Protestants who are often erring in the same direction, although of course in a very different degree. They get into a way of adding, perhaps insensibly, other names to the name of Christ, or attaching an importance to them which they never ought to receive. The ultra-Churchman in England, who thinks God's covenanted mercies are tied to episcopacy¹⁵; the ultra-Presbyterian in Scotland, who cannot reconcile prelacy¹⁶ with an intelligent knowledge of the gospel; the ultra-Free-kirk-man by his side, who seems to think lay patronage¹⁷ and vital Christianity almost incompatible; the

¹⁵ **episcopacy** – church government by bishops, as in the Anglican church.

¹⁶ **prelacy** – episcopacy, church government by bishops.

¹⁷ **lay patronage** – practice of appointing and supporting an ecclesiastical office, person, or building by a lay person (often a king or wealthy patron), common in "Christian" Europe. Free Church advocates considered lay patronage as an entanglement to the church.

ultra-Dissenter, who traces every evil in the church to its connection with the state, and can talk of nothing but the voluntary system; the ultra-Baptist, who shuts out from the Lord's table everyone who has not received his views of adult baptism; the ultra-Plymouth Brother, who believes all knowledge to reside with his own body, and condemns everyone outside as a poor weak babe—all these, I say, however unwittingly, appear to me to have a most uncomfortable tendency to add to the doctrine of our text. All seem to me to be practically declaring that salvation is not to be found simply and solely in Christ. All seem to me to be practically adding another name to the name of Jesus whereby men must be saved, even the name of their own party and sect. All seem to me to be practically replying to the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" not merely, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," but also, "Come and join us."

Now I call upon every true Christian to beware of such ultraism, in whatsoever form he may be inclined to it. In saying this, I would not be misunderstood. I like everyone to be decided in his views of ecclesiastical matters, and to be fully persuaded of their correctness. All I ask is that you will not put these things in the place of Christ, or place them anywhere near Him, or speak of them as if you thought them needful to salvation. However dear to us our own peculiar views may be, let us beware of thrusting them in between the sinner and the Savior. Let us beware, in short, of adding to the doctrine of the text. Remember, in the things of God's Word, addition, as well as subtraction, is a great sin.

D. Being satisfied with sincerity alone is absurd.

The last consequence which seems to me to be learned from our text is the *vile absurdity of supposing that we ought to be satisfied with a man's state of soul if he is only sincere.*

This is a very common heresy indeed, and one against which we all need to be on our guard. There are thousands in the present day who say, "We have nothing to do with the opinions of others. They may perhaps be mistaken, though it is possible they are right and we wrong. But if they are sincere, we hope they will be saved, even as we." And all this sounds liberal and charitable, and people like to fancy their own views are so.

Now, I believe such notions are entirely contradictory to the Bible, whatever else they may be. I cannot find in Scripture that anyone ever got to heaven merely by sincerity, or was accepted with God if he was only earnest in maintaining his own views. The priests of Baal were sincere when they cut

themselves with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out; but still that did not prevent Elijah from commanding them to be treated as wicked idolaters (1Ki 18). Manasseh, king of Judah, was doubtless sincere when he burned his children in the fire to Moloch (2Ki 21:6); but who does not know that he brought on himself great guilt by so doing? The Apostle Paul, when a Pharisee, was sincere while he made havoc of the church; but when his eyes were opened, he mourned over this as a special wickedness (Act 8:3; 1Co 15:9).

Let us beware of allowing for a moment that sincerity is everything, and that we have no right to think ill of a man's spiritual state because of the opinions he holds, if he is only earnest in holding them. On such principles, the Druidical sacrifices,¹⁸ the car of Juggernaut,¹⁹ the Indian Suttees,²⁰ the systematic murders of the Thugs,²¹ the fires of Smithfield,²² might each and all be defended. It will not stand. It will not bear the test of Scripture. Once allow such notions to be true, and you may as well throw your Bible aside altogether. Sincerity is not the Christ, and therefore sincerity cannot put away sin.

I dare be sure these consequences sound very unpleasant to the minds of some who may read them. But I tell you of them advisedly and deliberately. I say calmly that a religion *without Christ*, a religion that *takes away from Christ*, a religion that *adds anything to Christ*, a religion that *puts sincerity in the place of Christ*—all are dangerous, all are to be avoided, and all alike are contrary to the doctrine of our text.

You may not like this. I am sorry for it. You think me uncharitable, illiberal, narrow-minded, bigoted, and so forth. Be it so. But you will not tell me my doctrine is not that of the Word of God... That doctrine is salvation in Christ to the very uttermost, but out of Christ no salvation at all.

¹⁸ **Druidical** – relating to the Celtic Druid religious practices, traditionally believed to include human sacrifice.

¹⁹ **car of Juggernaut** – huge wagon bearing a Hindu god; a 13th century account of a Franciscan missionary described Hindus casting themselves down to be crushed under the wheels of such a wagon as an act of devotion.

²⁰ **Suttees** – former Hindu funeral practice of burning the deceased husband's widow on his funeral pyre.

²¹ **murders of the Thugs** – bandits of India, notorious in the 19th century for travelling in groups and dispatching their victims with deception and intrigue.

²² **fires of Smithfield** – Roman Catholic burning of 282 “heretical” protestants at Smithfield under English Queen Mary I (“Bloody Mary”).

E. I denounce the spirit of the day that acts as if everyone is right.

I feel it a duty to bear my solemn testimony against the spirit of the day you live in, to warn you against its infection. It is not atheism I fear so much in the present times as pantheism.²³ It is not the system which says nothing is true, so much as the system which says everything is true. It is not the system which says there is no Savior, so much as the system which says there are many saviors, and many ways to peace. It is the system which is so liberal that it dares not say anything is false. It is the system which is so charitable that it will allow everything to be true.

It is the system which seems ready to honor others as well as our Lord Jesus Christ, class them altogether, and hope well of all. Confucius and Zoroaster, Socrates and Muhammad, the Indian Brahmans and the African devil-worshippers, Arius and Pelagius, Ignatius Loyola and Socinus²⁴ are all to be treated respectfully; none are to be condemned. It is the system which bids us smile complacently on all creeds and systems of religion. The Bible and the Koran, the Hindu Vedas and the Persian Zend-Avesta, the old wives' fables of rabbinical writers and the rubbish of patristic traditions, the Racovian Catechism and the Thirty-nine Articles, the revelations of Emanuel Swedenborg and the Book of Mormon of Joseph Smith²⁵—all are to be listened to, none are to be

²³ **atheism...pantheism** – atheism claims no God exists; pantheism identifies God with the universe, or sees the universe as a manifestation of God, and therefore can allow that all religions communicate truth about God.

²⁴ **Confucius** (fl. 500 BC) – Chinese philosopher and politician who founded Confucianism.

Zoroaster (maybe c. 2000 BC) – founder of Zoroastrianism.

Socrates (c. 470-399 BC) – Athenian Greek philosopher.

Muhammad (c. 570-632) – Arab founder of Islam.

Brahman – member of Hindu priesthood caste.

Arius (c. 250-336) – Christian leader in Alexandria Egypt who opposed trinitarian doctrine.

Pelagius (c. 354-418) – early advocate of free will as the basis of salvation; doctrinal opponent of Augustine.

Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) – Roman Catholic founder of the Counter-Reformation Society of Jesus, or Jesuits.

Laelius and Faustus Socinus (fl. 16th century) – uncle and nephew responsible for the spread of Socinianism, which denied the Trinity and other doctrines.

²⁵ **Koran** – Muslim “holy book.” **Vedas** – Hindu “holy books” written in Sanskrit. **Zend-Avesta** – “holy book” of Zoroastrianism. **Rabbinical writers** – Jewish commentators on the Old Testament Law and Jewish tradition. **Patristic traditions** – early Christian writers. **Racovian Catechism** – antitrinitarian confession of faith from the 16th century.

denounced as lies. It is the system which is so scrupulous about the feelings of others that we are never to say they are wrong. It is the system which is so liberal that it calls a man a bigot if he dares to say, "I know my views are right." This is the system, this is the tone of feeling, which I fear in this day. This is the system which I desire emphatically to testify against and denounce.

What is it but a bowing down before a great idol, speciously²⁶ called liberality? What is it all but a sacrificing of truth upon the altar of a caricature of charity? Beware of it, reader! Beware that the rushing stream of public opinion does not carry you away. Beware of it, if you believe the Bible. Beware of it, if you are a consistent member of the Church of England [or any church of Jesus Christ].

Has the Lord God spoken to us in the Bible, or has He not? Has He shown us the way of salvation plainly in that Bible, or has He not? Has He declared to us the dangerous state of all out of that way, or has He not? Gird up the loins of your mind, and look these questions fairly in the face, and give them an honest answer.

Tell us there is some other inspired book beside the Bible, and then we shall know what you mean. Tell us that the whole Bible is not inspired, and then we shall know where to meet you. But grant for a moment that the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible is God's truth, and then I know not in what way you can escape the doctrine of this text: "Neither is there salvation in any other."

From the liberality which says everybody is right,
from the charity which forbids you to say anybody is wrong,
from the peace that is bought at the expense of truth,
may the good Lord deliver you!

I speak for myself. I find no resting-place between downright evangelical Christianity and downright infidelity, whatever others may find. I see no half-way house between them, but houses that are roofless, and that cannot shelter my weary soul. I can see consistency in an infidel, however much I may pity him. I see consistency in the full maintenance of evangelic truth. But as to a middle course between the two, I cannot see it, and I say so plainly. Let it be called illiberal and uncharitable; I can hear God's voice nowhere except in the Bible, and I can see no salvation for sinners in the Bible except through Jesus Christ. In

Thirty-nine Articles – statement of faith of the reforming Anglican church in the 16th century. **Emanuel Swedenborg** – 18th century Swedish mystic who reported sensational visions of heaven and hell. **Book of Mormon** – "holy book" of the Mormon cult.

²⁶ **speciously** – deceptively.

Him I see abundance. Out of Him I see none. And as for those who hold religions in which Christ is not all, whoever they may be, I have a most uncomfortable feeling about their safety. I do not for a moment say that none of them are saved, but I say that those who are saved are saved by their disagreement with their own principles, and in spite of their own system. The man who wrote the famous line, “He can’t be wrong whose life is in the right,”²⁷ was a great poet undoubtedly, but he was a wretched theologian.

IV. Concluding exhortations

Let me conclude with a few words by way of application.

First of all, if there is no salvation except in Christ, *make sure that you have an interest in that salvation yourself*. Do not be content with hearing and approving and assenting to the truth and going no further. Seek to have a personal interest in this salvation. Lay hold by faith for your own soul. Do not rest until you know and feel that you have actual possession of that peace with God that Jesus offers, and that Christ is yours and you are Christ’s. If there were two, or three, or more ways of getting to heaven, there would be no necessity for pressing this matter upon you. But if there is only one way, you will hardly wonder that I say, “Make sure you are in it”!

Secondly, if there is no salvation except in Christ, *try to do good to the souls of all who do not know Him as a Savior*. There are millions in this miserable condition, millions in foreign lands, millions in your own country, millions who are not trusting in Christ. You ought to feel for them if you are a true Christian. You ought to pray for them. You ought to work for them, while there is yet time. Do you really believe that Christ is the only way to heaven? Then live as if you believed it.

Look round the circle of your own relations and friends. Count them up one by one, and think how many of them are not yet in Christ. Try to do good to them in some way or other. Act as a man should act who believes his friends to be in danger. Do not be content with their being kind and amiable, gentle and good-tempered, moral and courteous. Be miserable about them till they come to Christ and trust in Him—for miserable you ought to be.

Let nobody alone who is out of Christ, if only you have opportunities of reaching him. I know all this may sound like enthusiasm²⁸ and fanaticism. I wish

²⁷ **Alexander Pope** (1688-1744) – great English poet; this quote taken from *An Essay on Man*.

²⁸ **enthusiasm** – excessive religious emotion.

there was more of it in the world. Anything, I am sure, is better than a quiet indifference about the souls of others, as if everybody were in the way to heaven. Nothing, to my mind, proves our little faith, as our little feeling about the spiritual condition of those around us.

Thirdly, if there is no salvation except in Christ, *let us love all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity and exalt Him as their Savior, whoever they may be*. Let us not draw back and look shy on others because they do not see eye to eye with ourselves in everything. Whether a man be a Free-kirk-man or an Independent, a Wesleyan or a Baptist, let us love him if he loves Christ and gives Christ His rightful place. We are all fast travelling towards a place where names and forms and church government will be nothing, and Christ will be all. Let us get ready for that place betimes,²⁹ by loving all who are in the way that leads to it.

This is the true charity, to believe all things, and hope all things, so long as we see Bible doctrines maintained, and Christ exalted. Christ must be the single standard by which all opinions must be measured. Let us honor all who honor Him. But let us never forget that the same Apostle Paul who wrote about charity says also, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema” (1Co 16:22). If our charity and liberality are wider than that of the Bible, they are worth nothing at all. Indiscriminate love is no love at all; and indiscriminate approbation of all religious opinions is only a new name for infidelity.³⁰ Let us hold out the right hand to all who love the Lord Jesus, but let us beware how we go beyond this.

Lastly, if there is no salvation except by Christ, *you must not be surprised if ministers of the gospel preach much about Him*. We cannot tell you too much about the Name which is above every name (Phi 2:9). You cannot hear of Him too often. You may hear too much about controversy in our sermons. You may hear too much of men and books, of works and duties, of forms and ceremonies, of sacraments and ordinances. But there is one subject which you never hear too much of: you can never hear too much of Christ.

When we are wearied of preaching Him, we are false ministers. When you are wearied of hearing of Him, your souls are in an unhealthy state. When we have preached Him all our lives, the half of His excellence will remain untold. When you see Him face to face in the day of His appearing, you will find there was more in Him than your heart ever conceived.

²⁹ **betimes** – in a timely way.

³⁰ **infidelity** – atheism or irreligion.

Let me leave you with the words of an old writer, to which I desire humbly to subscribe:

I know no true religion but Christianity; no true Christianity but the doctrine of Christ: the doctrine of His divine person, of His divine office, of His divine righteousness, and of His divine Spirit, which all that are His receive. I know no true ministers of Christ, but such as make it their business, in their calling, to commend Jesus Christ, in His saving fullness of grace and glory, to the faith and love of men; no true Christian but one united to Christ by faith and love, unto the glorifying of the name of Jesus Christ, in the beauty of gospel holiness. Ministers and Christians of this spirit have been for many years my brethren and companions, and I hope shall ever be, whithersoever the hand of God shall lead me.³¹



³¹ **Robert Traill** (1642-1716) – Puritan Presbyterian pastor and author.