

THE
ONLY
SAVIOR

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

– Acts 4:12

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THE ONLY SAVIOR

“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.”

– Acts 4:11,12

This is an uncompromising, aggressive assertion by the apostle Peter before the leaders of Jerusalem, concerning their demand that he tell them by what power or name he had healed the man crippled from birth, a cripple who was a familiar figure because every day he had been placed at the gate called Beautiful.

Peter and John had been arrested and now stood before the rulers and elders of the people. Peter focused attention on Jesus and boldly declared that it was by His name that the miracle had been done. Those Jewish leaders were responsible for their part in His crucifixion. But He had been raised from the dead. Peter quotes Psalm 118:22-23 as finding fulfillment in Jesus. He was the stone they, the builders, had rejected. Now God had exalted Him to be the capstone.

Being so exalted to the highest place there was now no salvation to be found in any other person, no, not under heaven and not in the entire race of mankind.

Concentrating on the exclusiveness of the claim, “*no other name*,” I will proceed as follows:

1. The meaning of the text, “no other name,” within the context of Scripture, what it meant to the Jews then, and what it means for them today.
2. An exposure of Pluralism. There are many denials of Christ as the only Savior. Pluralism is the chief.

3. It is only as we comprehend the enormous dimensions of salvation that we appreciate that there simply is “no other name.”
4. The Scriptures portray Jesus as the God-man, the only possible Savior.

1. “No other name” - The meaning of the text within the context of Scripture, what it meant to the Jews then, and what it means for them today.

The Context

Luke is careful to name the leaders, the very same men of the Sanhedrin who had acted in a most disgusting and deplorable way in having Jesus violently abused in their presence (Mar 14:65; Mat 26:67). These leaders were looking for just the right stone with which to complete the edifice of Judaism. Jesus fulfilled the Messianic descriptions of the Old Testament. He was God’s man—but these leaders scornfully rejected Him. They showed their contempt for Him by giving Him over to crucifixion. They had pleasure in being rid of Him, but now were confronted by these disciples, who they noted had been familiar companions of Jesus (Act 4:13).

Peter boldly asserted that that same Jesus whom they had crucified was risen from the dead, and the proof of His living power was seen in the miraculous healing of the cripple. He whom they had despised had now been made the capstone of the building. The Acroterium was a most beautiful sculpture that adorned the apex of the front gable of the Parthenon. It was the capstone.

Not only was the despised Galilean, the Christ of Nazareth, God’s man, He was God’s salvation. That salvation which is the urgent necessity for every soul is found only in Him. Some who are uncomfortable with the dogmatic character of Acts 4:12 attempt to redirect its force by fixing attention on the fact that the cripple

was healed. It is not healing that Peter proclaims. He holds salvation high and declares we must be saved. The psalm from which the Apostle quotes has salvation as its theme (Psa 118:14, 21). The saving referred to is a saving from God's wrath (Rom 5:9). It is a full spiritual salvation which is to be proclaimed to the ends of the earth (Act 28:28). The salvation proclaimed to these Jewish leaders is the salvation expounded by Paul in Romans (Rom 1:16ff). It is the salvation which we must work out for ourselves with fear and trembling (Phi 2:12), and which we must never neglect (Heb 2:3).

The Whole of Scripture

As we look at Acts 4:12 and its meaning for us today, it is important to observe that this is not an isolated statement. There is what is called the "tyranny of single text quoting," using a single text to beat someone with when that text is out of context and inadequate. When we use Acts 4:12 to press home that Jesus is the only Savior, we are asserting that it is supported by Scripture as a whole. Note that Jesus Himself claimed to be the only way: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Joh 14:6). It is because Jesus is *the* truth and *the* life, that He is *the* way. There is therefore only one way, not many. The negative stress should be observed. *No one* comes to the Father except through me. The truth embodies the person and work of Christ which represents a unique provision, a propitiation¹ by an atoning sacrifice which alone satisfies divine justice. That is the reason why He is the only way to the Father.

Not only Jesus but His disciples claimed Him to be the one way of salvation. Not only Jesus but His disciples claimed that other ways of salvation are false. Thus Paul repudiates absolutely every other message of salva-

¹ *propitiation* – the appeasement or turning away of God's wrath toward sinners by the sacrifice of Christ.

tion: "But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal 1:8). There is only one foundation upon which to build (Mat 7:24-27; 1Co 3:11) and only one mediator by which to approach the Father (1Ti 2:5)

Demands a Response

The demand that there be a positive believing response to the only way of salvation is seen clearly in John chapter three. Faith in Christ is portrayed as an imperative (Joh 3:15). John 3:36 forms a fitting climax to the chapter: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." He who is unbelieving and disobedient has no other option, no other way of salvation. If he rejects God's Son then wrath remains on him.

What Peter asserted that day to the leaders of the Sanhedrin was devastating for them. The implications were enormous. Up until then faith was expressed by offering sacrifices and trusting in God's provision of a deliverer. Peter was asserting that Christ was that deliverer. He was the sacrifice bringing to an end all sacrifices. From now on salvation was by faith in Jesus, God's Lamb. This was the end of an epoch. The book of Hebrews is an exposition of Acts 4:12. What Peter claimed in that one sentence is verified and explained in the letter to the Hebrews.

To continue in the old way when Yahweh had terminated it was to pursue a pathway of willful rebellion and take the way of, head-on collision with the Almighty One. The message given to the Jewish leaders that day is the message to be proclaimed to Jews today. There is no change. The message is the same.

There are at this time strong pressures exerted to discourage the evangelization of the Jews. The famous British newspaper, *The Times*, has bristled with this

issue, especially since Britain's best known satirist and journalist is Bernard Levin, a Jew. Unhappily some professing Christians have compromised miserably. For instance, Michael Latham, who claims to trust in Jesus for his own personal salvation, wrote an article in *The Times* (July 20, 1992) in which he said: "I cannot possibly accept that salvation is uniquely restricted to Christians or achieved solely through Christianity, however many texts are quoted in that regard." Typical of modern day ecumenism, Latham is a pluralist. He says he trusts Christ for his own soul but affirms at the same time the viability of other faiths.

2. "No other name" - There are many denials of Christ as the only Savior. Pluralism is the chief.

Contemporary Denials of Christ as the Only Savior

Universalism and Annihilationism on the one hand, and Pluralism and Inclusivism on the other, are on the march today.

Universalism is the belief expressed by the modernist C.H. Dodd: "As every human being is under God's judgment, so every human being is ultimately destined, in God's mercy, to eternal life." If that is true then there is no point in preaching salvation as an urgent necessity, for all will be saved anyway.

Annihilationism (and there are eight varieties!) is the idea that after the Great Judgment the wicked will be annihilated. That means that there is after all no eternal punishment. In this way the necessity of Christ as Savior for the wicked is removed. The wicked according to Annihilationism will miss eternal life but will only suffer the displeasure of the actual judgment day.

Pluralism

Pluralism is the idea that God saves souls through religions other than Christianity. *Inclusivism* is the notion that in some mysterious way souls are saved

through various religions by the work of Christ as Savior. *Exclusivism*, in contrast to Inklusivism, holds to the orthodox Christian view that only by a faith union with Christ can souls be saved and there is no other way. Since Pluralism is the principal denial of Christ as the only Savior and since it is increasingly relevant today, I will major on that.

W. Gary Phillips in an article “Evangelicals and Pluralism,”² grapples with the issue of those who have not heard the Gospel. Can they be redeemed? He quotes J.D. Hunter as follows:

For over nineteen hundred years missionary activity has hinged on this belief alone: that those who did not believe in the salvific capabilities of Jesus Christ had no hope of receiving eternal life. It follows that the unevangelized—those who lived without the knowledge of the claims of Christianity—would be damned to an eternity in hell. This exclusivism and finality of the Christian soteriology³ is the single most offensive aspect of Christian theology, the single most important source of contention between Christians and non-Christians. Yet without this particularity, there is no orthodoxy (historically understood).

Phillips goes on to remind us that “in the past an overwhelming consensus has affirmed this position. However a recent survey of evangelical college and seminary students showed that 32 percent and 31 percent (respectively) no longer hold these teachings.”

This tendency will probably escalate. Contradiction of the uniqueness of salvation in Christ is increasing due to the rise of Pluralism. Strong revisionist tendencies are at work, and these are bound to increase with devastating effects on missionary zeal. Historically, evangelical-

² W. Gary Phillips, “Evangelicals and Pluralism,” *Evangelical Quarterly*, July 1992.

³ *soteriology* – the doctrine of salvation: how God saves men from the just penalty for their sin.

ism has with great consistency and marked continuity maintained that without Christ the unevangelized are eternally lost.

Influential voices are calling for an abandonment of the classic evangelical view in favour of a more generous view of non-Christian religions and what Clark Pinnock calls “an optimistic view of salvation.” Pinnock, in his book *A Wideness of God's Mercy* (Zondervans, 1992), calls for the placing of religious Pluralism on the agenda—just as social concern was placed on the evangelical agenda during the 1970s. In this work he describes the reasons which call for a consideration of Pluralism. Ethical Liberalism is portrayed as reasonable. How can eternal hell be fair for those who have never heard the Gospel? How can that ever be equated with justice? Peter Cotterell, former missionary to Ethiopia and Principal of the London Bible College, in his book *Mission and Meaninglessness—the good news in a world of suffering and disorder*, argues for a solution which will not outrage common sense and our common ideas of justice (page 83). Note the influence of Ethical Liberalism!

Pluralism is exceedingly ambitious and astoundingly unrealistic and naive. Pluralism can only work in the atmosphere of obscurity. Definition kills Pluralism stone dead. As soon as we define the person and nature of God, sin, wrath, the necessity of propitiation, union with Christ and the resurrection of the body, we see the emptiness of those religions which by their contrary teachings deny Christ as the only Savior.

Other Religions

An examination of Hinduism, Buddhism and Shintoism will illustrate what I have just asserted. *Hinduism* is a family of religious traditions developed over 4,000 years. A Hindu may believe in one God, a few gods, or in many gods. Reincarnation and an endless cycle of deaths and rebirths dominate Hinduism. This contradicts

absolutely the doctrine of personal responsibility in Christianity summed up in the text, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb 9:27). The prospect of becoming a cockroach, or a spider, or even a mountain goat or giraffe in the next life is not compatible with the Biblical truth of what the Bible says about the immortality of the soul.

Buddhism denies the teachings of Hinduism and consists of a system of thought by which it is claimed that the endless cycle of deaths and rebirths can be ended in “nirvana,” a kind of obscure ongoing state for which no definition of any clarity has been discovered. Hinduism and Buddhism do not come to terms with the human predicament of the guilt of sin before a holy God.

In *Shintoism* (the religion of Japan), the word *kami* means “god” or “deity,” but it has its own meaning. Persons and even animals can become *kami*. The *kami* (and there may be as many as 80 million of them) are beings who purportedly respond to sincere prayers of humans. There is no place in Shinto for the concept of an eternal, self-sufficient, creator God. Shinto—like Hinduism and Buddhism—is so abstruse that it can be exhausting to search for precision.

A cavalier attitude should be avoided when we are confronted with polytheistic religions. Paul was greatly distressed when he saw that Athens was full of idols. I remember feeling a deep sense of shock and distress when I saw the extent to which some Chinese people in the Far East have in their homes whole rooms full of ornate idols. Paul sought to show the Athenians the ludicrous nature of their idols and in particular pointed to the ridiculous nature of one altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. His method was to proclaim the One, eternal, personal God of all creation and urge the necessity of repentance (Act 17:16-34). Paul stressed the certainty of Judgment Day, the reality of

Christ's resurrection, and His coming again to be the Judge of the world.

It is difficult to say at this distance of time the extent to which the Greeks were held by the fantastic stories of their gods born of mythology. For instance, the god Zeus became pregnant in his brain and gave birth to the goddess Athena, who occupied the throne in the Parthenon. These stories are intriguing to listen to but are patently the invention of imaginative writers. What was sometimes extremely serious for the early Christians was the requirement to ascribe deity to Caesar. Refusal could end in martyrdom.

By far the most powerful non-Christian religion today is *Islam*. Because it is monotheistic and has origins that lie largely in fragments of Scripture, Islam requires that Christians respond with extra wisdom and knowledge. We learn from our fellow Christians who work among Muslims how best to respond. If we have not had time to become well-informed about Islam, we cannot err in seeking to persuade the Muslims we meet to read the New Testament, especially John's gospel. John MacArthur tells of an incident in which he interviewed a Muslim, gave him the New Testament, urged him to begin with the Gospel of John, and not to return until he knew who Jesus was. The man did return a believer. But we know that such instances are very exceptional.

Principle Flaws of Pluralism

I have called this section an exposure of Pluralism and will conclude it by drawing attention to its principal flaws.

Flaw number one. Pluralism rides over the reality of sin against our holy God. Pluralism at the same time romanticizes the state of humanity. The people of this world (and I include nominal Christian sectors) are eternally lost because they are born in sin, practice sin, love sin, and die in their sins. They are not the sweet innocent beings that pluralists make them out to be. Mis-

sionaries who go to primitive people find them animistic, craven, darkened, superstitious, and sometimes barbaric in cruel practices such as infanticide and cannibalism. As for the most highly civilized and enlightened people, we have witnessed this century a catalogue of total depravity ranging from the Holocaust born out of Germany; the Gulag monster, which was the child of the Soviets; Genocide in Cambodia and Africa; destruction in Lebanon; and most ghastly civil wars in the former Yugoslavia, Mozambique, Somalia and other countries.

Flaw number two. Pluralism confuses common grace with redemption. Yes, there are marvelous institutions of education, medicine, civil government, law, and compassion, but all by God's mercy (Rom 2:4). These provisions are not saving but designed to constrain repentance. God's wrath is poured out when mankind persists in rebellion as in the case of the Flood. Clark Pinnock, typical of Pluralism, attempts to rewrite history and change wrath into redemption. An example is found in his book, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, page 21, where he seeks to turn the doctrine of common grace into redemptive grace.

Flaw number three. Pluralism is rationalistic. It takes the form of arguing according to the dictates of human reason. Pluralism in its style builds up a position of judgment according to human fairness. It is argued that it is completely unreasonable to condemn to eternal punishment those who have never heard the gospel. Natural human reasoning talks back at God and tells Him what is fair and what is not fair. Pluralism speaks of the outrage of common sense. But the mind of fallen man is hostile to God. It is misguided to tell God what He can and cannot do because, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:9). When Martin Luther was wrestling with his own

anger at God, he rebelled at thoughts about the sovereignty of God. Later he referred to “that which appears iniquitous, cruel, and intolerable in God, by which very many have been offended in all ages.”⁴ If rebellious rationalists have their way they will put God Almighty in the dock⁵ and judge Him to be the sinner!

Flaw number four. Pluralism is vague. It claims that God is saving sinners through the main religions. But how is He saving through the main religions? We are not told. Christianity is practical. It says, “Without holiness no man will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). Jesus says to every man, and to every religious man like Nicodemus who is not joined to Him, “*Ye must be born again!*” (John 3:5-8). New birth is by union with Christ, a union which brings reconciliation with the Father, a union which results in a holy life, and a union which will eventuate in a glorious resurrection from the dead. Pluralism is obscure. It by-passes these realities. Pluralism is refuted by clear, practical, biblical, expository preaching which defines precisely who God is, what His wrath is, and what salvation is. To that we now turn.

3. “No other name” - It is only as we comprehend the enormous dimensions of salvation that we appreciate that there is simply no other name.

What Is Salvation?

As we have seen, when Peter refers to salvation and points to Jesus as the only source by which we must be saved, he means salvation in the same way as that understood in the New Testament. Peter himself employs the term in his letters. For instance, he speaks of receiving the goal of your faith, “the *salvation* of your souls” (1Pe 1:9; see also 1Pe 1:5, 2:2; 2Pe 3:15).

⁴ Bainton, *Here I Stand* (Mentor), p.44.

⁵ *dock* – the place where the accused sits in a courtroom during prosecution for a crime.

What then is this salvation? As derived from the testimony of Scripture, salvation can be set out as follows:

A. We need to be saved from God's wrath; such salvation can only be by propitiation and reconciliation.

His PAST work

B. We need to be saved from the power of sin; such salvation can only be by regeneration and sanctification.

His PRESENT work

C. We need to be saved from death and hell; such salvation can only be by resurrection and glorification.

His FUTURE work

Now where in the world can we find anyone who will achieve the essentials just described? Where under heaven will we discover a man who can make an atonement to propitiate God's wrath?—give us new birth and new life to overcome sin?—and when we die raise our bodies to live forever in the new world?

Paul gives us the answer in 1 Corinthians 1:30 when he says, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Human wisdom reached its apex in the Greek period, yet with all their genius they could not find salvation. In deriding the wisdom of the wise and the intelligence of the intelligent (1Co 1:19), God was pleased through the foolishness of preaching *to save* those who believe. And what was the center of salvation? It was one Man who combined in His person and work all that is needed for our salvation: a righteousness that justifies, a holiness that sanctifies, a redemption which brings believers, body and soul perfected, into the new world!

Preaching the Word of God

How will our children handle the rising tide of Pluralism? How will the next generation face apostasy

within professing Christendom when leaders like Clark Pinnock abandon the truth and advocate Pluralism? How will our preachers and churches respond to former evangelicals like John Hick, who now derides the incarnation as a myth? The answer surely is with bold and clear preaching. It is the message of the Cross proclaimed within the framework of biblical revelation that the Holy Spirit has always honored and prospered. We should regard the rising tide of Pluralism as a challenge which must be met with the spiritual weapons provided for us.

In the spiritual realm the Word of God is our weapon. We must major on the major doctrines. If we look at the three points I have suggested as the constitution of salvation, we can begin with the nature and attributes of God. Who is God? Let us turn to the Westminster Confession, the 1689 Baptist Confession, or the answers given in the Westminster Larger or Shorter Catechism. Modern Pluralism withers when we proclaim the One Living, eternal, and unchangeable God, omnipotent, most wise, perfectly holy, Triune, most merciful and gracious, a God of love and wrath.

The theological renewal of the last twenty or thirty years, known as the Reformed Faith, has come in time to rescue evangelicalism from the weakness of Arminianism.⁶ It has served to re-equip the Church both with sound teaching and boldness in the Holy Spirit. Mere academic and intellectual prowess is inadequate. With a Reformed theological renewal in doctrine we must rediscover the revival of the Holy Spirit experienced by the Puritans of the 17th Century and subsequently by successive generations of revival preachers.

⁶ *Arminianism* – the system of doctrine which holds that man cooperates with God in his salvation by exercising his own free will to “make a decision for Christ.”

A. *The Truth of Propitiation and Reconciliation*

To return to my outline you will see that in Part A I refer to God's wrath and Christ's propitiation and reconciling work at the Cross. It was Martin Luther who both by example and exhortation urged that we be faithful to the truth where that truth is most under pressure and attack. Pluralism avoids or denies the reality of God's wrath and the concept of propitiation. C.H. Dodd argued against wrath and propitiation. An adequate answer has been provided by Roger Nicole⁷ and Leon Morris.⁸ I mention this because we need to be clear on these issues. We tend to presume that we know basic truths but when gifted preachers arrive and open up themes like wrath and propitiation, we realize that we hardly know the Biblical references and where to locate them, let alone the dimensions and majesty of these centralities.

Reconciliation is an example of a cardinal truth we presume we know. Reconciliation (Rom 5:10, 2Co 5:18,19, Eph 2:16, Col 1:20-22), when properly analyzed, involves vastly more than that which appears at first sight to be the case. Reconciliation in human affairs so often fails because that which has caused alienation is simply not properly clarified. Puritan writers such as Jeremiah Burroughs in his treatise on sin, *The Evil of Evils* (Soli Deo Gloria), and Ralph Venning in *The Plague of Plagues* (Banner of Truth) effectively exposed the appalling nature of sin. Humanity believes that the worst possible thing is to *suffer*, whereas these writers show that the worst possible thing is to *sin*. To remove the alienation caused by sin requires propitiation. We must be ready to explain that the reconciliation achieved by Jesus to remove the alienation caused by our sin is a work which is unique. We extol and worship

⁷ *Westminster Theological Journal* 17:117-157.

⁸ *New Testament Studies* 2:33-43 and *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, chapters 4-5.

our Savior as only He, the God-man, could achieve this reconciliation.

B. The Truth of Regeneration and Sanctification

Again to return to the outline, you will see that in Part B I refer to Christ's *present* work. It is from Christ as Savior that the Holy Spirit proceeds when He regenerates and sanctifies. In the present climate of easy-believism,⁹ the notion has been propagated that a person can be a Christian without holiness. Books by Charles Ryrie and Zane Hodges have promoted the notion that one can have Christ as Savior but not as Lord. That is the same as saying we can be saved without holiness. We respond to that by affirming the truth: *no holiness, no heaven!* "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb 12:14).

Again, the Puritans help us to be clear. Question 75 of the Westminster Larger Catechism affirms the nature of holiness:

Question: What is Sanctification?

Answer: "Sanctification is a work of God's grace whereby they whom God hath, before the foundation of the world, chosen to be holy, are in time, through the powerful operation of his Spirit applying the death and resurrection of Christ to them, renewed in their whole man after the image of God; having the seeds of repentance to life, and all other saving graces, put into their hearts, and those graces so stirred up, increased, and strengthened, as that they more and more die to sin, and rise to newness of life."

C. The Truth of Resurrection and Glorification

My last reference to the outline is to Part C, which points to Christ's *future* work as Savior. How

⁹ *easy-believism* – the term given to the false notion that sinners can become Christians without repentance and without holiness of life after conversion.

is it possible that by His command all who have ever lived will come literally and physically from their graves or from the oceans where their remains were last left? Here clearly we are confronted with the reality of Christ's Godhead. He is God Almighty. All power is His. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (Joh 5:28,29). From the dust, believers' bodies will rise to inherit the new world. That is the future phase of our salvation. That is what we look forward to. Only Christ our Savior can accomplish this stupendous miracle. That is surely why He is set before us in Scripture as the omnipotent Savior (Rev 19:6). To that issue we now turn.

4. "No other name" - The Scripture portrays Jesus as the God-man, the only possible Savior.

Increasingly, as we have seen, we are living in a religiously pluralistic world. We are living alongside people of other religions—not only at a distance as we see them on our TV screens, but in literal terms and especially so in our cities. For instance, in London, England, 170 different languages are spoken in the schools today. One's neighbors might be Buddhists, Hindus, Shintoists or Muslims. In such a situation it is especially important to hold together in the clearest, most compelling way possible the momentous nature of salvation, and the competence of Christ to achieve that salvation for us.

I find it extremely significant that five books of the New Testament begin with a description of the supremacy of Christ as the God-man who rules over all. Pluralism attempts to move the focus away from Christ and concentrate on a general view of God. Holding the Trinity in balance is the first requisite of healthy Christian-

ity; and within the framework of the Trinity, the next essential is a clear, biblical appreciation of Jesus Christ as truly man and yet God over all. He is everything that a perfect man is and everything that God is, the only one equipped to save us from our sins.

Observe the directness and detail with which He is introduced as the God-man in John's gospel, 1 John, Hebrews, Colossians, the Revelation, and Philippians.

John 1:1-18. Christ is from the beginning the Word, Who is God, the Creator of the universe (vv. 3 & 10), the Source of life, the One who gives believers the right to become the children of God (v.12). He is the One and Only, Who is at the Father's side and Who has come from the Father (vv. 14 & 18). As to His manhood, He was coming into the world (v.9) and became flesh to witness to His own people the Jews (v.14), who mostly failed to recognize Him. As the God-man, He is the Only Savior.

1 John 1:1-4. In similar style, John begins his first letter referring to Jesus as the eternal One, "that which was from the beginning." John then focuses beautifully upon Jesus' humanity, that majestic Person whom the apostles watched and heard and touched.

Hebrews 1:1-3. It is remarkable that the first three verses of this important letter provide the main ingredients for all that is to follow. The whole message concerns God's Son in whose person God's revelation as a whole now finds its focus. Before His advent, revelation came at different times over a period of about 1,500 years. All that revelation now finds fulfillment in Him. As for His being, He is the exact representation of the Father. As for His power, He is not only the Creator of the universe but is its Sustainer. As for His work, He has provided purification for our sins. As for His present role, He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. All power in heaven and on earth is His. The qualification of high priesthood, whereby He is able to

apply to His people the benefits of His atoning work, forms the main theme of the letter. The emphasis of Christ's present role as our Mediator and High Priest is not always appreciated and enjoyed by us as it should be. He has not only achieved salvation on the Cross for us in the past but is in the present actively applying that salvation to us.

Colossians 1:15-20. No sooner has Paul greeted the Colossians and prayed for them, but he introduces the main theme of his letter, which is the supremacy of Christ. That Christ is God is firmly established by the fact that He is both the Creator of all things in heaven and on earth and the present Sustainer of the universe. The passive form "were created" (*eklislthe*) in verse 16 indicates God the Creator, a fact that is reiterated later in the verse when the clause declares that "all things were created through him and for him" (*eklislai*). In the first instance the Greek aorist tense is used to draw attention to the historical act, while in the second the perfect tense is employed to focus on creation's continuing existence. Such a Person, who both made the universe and upholds it, is equipped to be our Savior in the final act of calling us out of our graves and creating our glorified bodies suitable for the new world. He is the only one equipped to save. There is no other name.

Revelation 1:12-20. Immediately John is confronted with the divine Christ, the first and the last, Who alone is able to save because He holds the keys of death and Hades. This introduction is appropriate since in graphic style, the Revelation describes the redemption through tribulation of the Church from every nation, tribe, and language (Rev 5:9). He who bought His people with His own blood is controlling history and opening iron doors to forward His purpose (Rev 3:8). He, the God-man, is the Only Savior.

Philippians 2:5-11. This passage is not an introduction to the book, but rather Paul for pastoral reasons

employs the most exalted theology conceivable to impress upon the Philippians the necessity of humility and unity. From the supreme place of honour and co-equality with God the Father, Jesus came to take manhood to Himself. The humiliation He undertook was twofold. First, it was an awesome thing to travel from cosmic glorious rule to the manger at Bethlehem, where He was wholly dependent on Mary and Joseph. Second, it was awesome that He should humble Himself to the agony of the Cross. From the death of death and the hell of hells, God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name: "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Act 4:12).

Conclusion

There is a revisionist tendency today which seeks to repudiate the exclusive faith expressed by Peter in Acts 4:12. However, Peter's insistence that there is no other name that saves is consistent with the biblical testimony as a whole inasmuch as only Jesus the God-man is capable of redeeming His people through a faith union which guarantees propitiation, produces holiness, and guarantees the resurrection to come. Pluralism claims that common sense is outraged by eternal punishment for the unevangelized, and pleads other avenues of salvation through other religions. Instead of seeking to rewrite the evangelical agenda, an exercise which is futile, it is better to leave the coming judgment to God. Jesus said, "My judgment is just" (Joh 5:30). Our confidence is in our holy God, for we trust that "the Judge of all the earth [will] do right" (Gen 18:25). The question of salvation is urgent and agonizing, and we must exert all our energies and mobilize all our resources for evangelizing the unevangelized, proclaiming that, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"!



BIBLIOGRAPHY

The idea of Christ as the Only Savior is being challenged in subtle ways. It is important to know how and from where this challenge is coming.

Pinnock, Clark H., *A Wideness In God's Mercy* (Zondervan, 1992), 217 pp.

At the outset I will point out that the basis of Pinnock's reasoning is sheer humanism. The Reformed doctrine which we hold is described as intolerable and unfair, an assassination of God's character, and immoral and irrational (p. 23f). If taken to Romans 9:14, where it says, "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?" Pinnock would yell, "Yes, there is!" "Election," says Pinnock "has nothing to do with the eternal salvation of individuals but refers instead to God's way of saving nations" (p. 25). To Pinnock the doctrine of the Reformed faith, which he derides as "the fewness doctrine," is worse than that of religious liberalism (p. 44). Pinnock imagines that he is still an evangelical (p. 13), but he is traveling at speed down the road to join the anti-evangelical pluralists like John Hick and Paul Knitter. The claim on the back cover by Zondervan that Pinnock "maintains a rock-solid evangelical stance" is patently absurd. On the subject of hell Pinnock writes, "It is very probable that the biblical doctrine of hell does not entail everlasting conscious punishment. John Stott, Michael Green, Philip Hughes, John Wenham, and Stephen Travis, among other evangelicals, have concluded that the evidence points to an understanding of the nature of hell as annihilation" (p. 147).

How will a vast number be saved? The issue is discussed but not clarified. Pinnock is not even sure whether God Himself knows the outcome! "But what if God does not know free decisions ahead of time?" (p.

175). Pinnock is a “free-willer” with capital letters. It is not God who decides. That would be monstrously unfair. Man decides.

In dealing with Acts 4:12, Pinnock tries to steer attention to the physical healing of the lame man. In commenting on that text, he simply gets round the point by asserting Inclusivism—that souls are mysteriously saved through Christ even though it is not through the gospel. Inclusivism argues that ultimately “all truth is God’s truth,” and Christ must therefore include all that is true in other faiths.

Sanders, John. *No Other Name* (Eerdmans, 1992), 315 pp. Foreword by Clark Pinnock. An investigation into the destiny of the unevangelized.

In this book Sanders seeks to find a middle way between universalism and Pluralism. On Acts 4:12 (p. 62f), he maintains that Peter’s statement says nothing about the fate of the unevangelized. He urges that restrictivists “force the text to address an issue that is beyond its scope.” Readers of this booklet can judge that for themselves. What does salvation mean? What does it involve if it does not necessitate union with Christ? The problem with Sanders and all writers who explore the possibility of salvation for those outside of union with Christ is that they never do arrive at the place of explanation. Precisely how do the lost get saved? The only answer proposed is mystery—somehow the union is achieved without the gospel. But the Bible simply does not teach that!

Sanders cites John Wesley, C. S. Lewis, and Clark Pinnock as the champions of a wider hope. Concerning John Wesley we should note that he, like all of us, found it appalling to think of the terrible eternity of those who die in their sins. Hence, he made unwise statements of hope for some of the unevangelized, but without biblical substance. Sanders uses Acts 17:30 as a

basis to explore tribal religions for likenesses of understanding God (p. 247ff). He quotes Don Richardson as one who claims that Melchizedek is not the only one in whom God has worked savingly. But as I understand Richardson, he is asserting more the fact that there is sometimes preparation of peoples which draws them to hear and accept the gospel. There is a constant tendency both with Pinnock and Sanders to wishfully change common grace into effectual grace.

Sullivan, Francis A. *Salvation Outside The Church?* (S. J. Geoffrey Chapman Publishers, 1992), 224 pp. Tracing the history of the Catholic response.

This is a fascinating book tracing the astonishing change in the Roman Catholic Church since Vatican II. During 1964 Pope Paul VI was able to promulgate *Lumen Gentium*, a momentous document which in effect changed *Extra Ecclesiam nulla Salus*—No Salvation outside the Church. The Bible consistently asserts that there is no salvation outside Christ. (There is a vast difference between Christ and the mixed body of a huge number of mostly nominal believers constituting the Roman Catholic church.) The idea that the Roman Catholic church does not change is exploded by the fact that the doctrine *No Salvation Outside the Church* has been set aside in favor of inclusivism in which it is held that people can be saved through the major faiths such as Islam and Judaism. Sullivan describes RC theologian Karl Rahner who on the basis of Vatican II propounds the theory of “Anonymous Christians” (p. 171ff). Rayner is an inclusivist in holding that salvation is only in Christ but mysteriously that many in non-Christian religions are really believers without knowing it, and thus are saved. This is wishful thinking at a super unrealistic level!

Sullivan, who taught theology for many years at Gregorian University in Rome, was stirred to write this

book when Leonard Feeney was excommunicated for refusing to account to his superiors concerning his uncompromising commitment to the centuries old dictum *Extra Ecclesiam nulla Salus*. These words are inscribed on his tombstone at Still River, Massachusetts. We can admire Feeney for sticking to his guns!

Netland, Harold A. *Dissonant Voices* (Eerdmans, USA, & Apollos, UK), 322 pp. Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth.

Harold Netland teaches religion in Tokyo Christian University. He studied under John Hick at Claremont, California. John Hick is famous (infamous?) for his contribution to the book, *The Myth of God Incarnate*. Hick is a leading pluralist. Netland faces up to the challenge of Pluralism, the notion that God saves through all the major religions.

After an initial discussion of the problem facing the Church, Netland examines carefully the claims of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Shintoism. He demonstrates that not only are these religions incompatible with each other, they are utterly incompatible with Christianity.

Chapter seven is an important chapter since it deals with the conflicting Christologies which the inter-faith process has produced.

Crocket, William V. & James G. Sigountos, *Through No Fault of Their Own: The fate of those who have never heard* (Baker, 1991), 278 pp. 21 essays. This is an important book. There is a seven page bibliography.

Kantzer, Kenneth S. and Carl E. H. Henry eds. *Evangelical Affirmations* (Academie Books, Zondervan, 1990), 535 pp. J. I. Packer's chapter on Salvation extends from pages 107 to 131.

Jim Packer¹⁰ describes four tendencies at work today to pressurize evangelicals to revoke their belief about the necessity of the gospel and faith in Christ for salvation. He states the position *ad hominum* as follows:

1. The question of salvation is less *urgent* than evangelicals have thought. This contention raises the issue of universalism, and the destiny of those who have never heard the gospel.

2. The question of salvation is less *agonizing* than evangelicals have thought. This contention raises the issue of conditional immortality, and the annihilation of unbelievers following the last judgment.

3. Justification by faith is a less *central* doctrine than evangelicals have thought. It is contended that for Paul, its chief expositor, justification was only significant for anti-Jewish polemic, and the heart of the gospel was elsewhere.

4. Faith is a less *substantial* reality than evangelicals have thought.

If the pseudo-evangelicals are allowed to make their revisions and rewrite what we believe, then the above outline would apply. But Packer shows that evangelicals must reject all these proposals. He refutes Universalism and Annihilationism completely, showing that the Scriptures simply will not support these theories. Also he places justification by faith firmly back into the center of biblical revelation where it belongs.

¹⁰ The author admires J.I. Packer's knowledge of the Puritans, but has never agreed with his ecumenism, especially his compromise with the ECT (Evangelicals and Catholics Together).

The Only Savior is a clear and concise exposé of modern trends in Christian circles which, in the name of “tolerance” and “acceptance” among religious ideas, have led to the abandonment of the Gospel truth: there is only one way to Heaven, and that through faith in Jesus Christ as the only Savior of men.

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