
Is Jesus the Only Way?

An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip



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I have just finished a very fun three-part series, at the Sunday Dean's Forum, on that question, "Is Jesus The Only Way?" You can listen to the weekly podcasts for a review (see podcasts at stphilipscathedral.org/deansforum). But, meanwhile, here are two excerpts from my sermon of 20 April, 2008 (see stphilipscathedral.org/iamtheway), which previewed my remarks recently:

(From a story by Emo Philips:)

*I saw this guy on a bridge about to jump. I said, "Don't do it! Don't do it!" He said, "Why not? Nobody loves me."
I said, "Well, God loves you. Do you believe in God?"
He said, "Yes." I said, "I do, too. , Are you a Christian or a Jew?"
He said, "I'm a Christian." I said, "Me, too! , Protestant; or Catholic?"
He said, "Protestant." I said, "Me, too! , What franchise?"
He said, "Baptist." I said, "Me, too! , Northern Baptist; or Southern Baptist?"
He said, "Northern Baptist." I said, "Me, too! , Northern Conservative Baptist, or Northern Liberal Baptist?"
He said, "Northern Conservative Baptist." I said, "Me, too! , Northern Conservative Baptist, Great Lakes Region; or Northern Conservative Baptist, Eastern Region?"
He said, "Northern Conservative Baptist, Great Lakes Region." I said, "Me, too! ...
Northern Conservative Baptist, Great Lakes Region, Council of 1879; or Northern Conservative Baptist, Great Lakes Region, Council of 1912?"
He said, "Northern Conservative Baptist, Great Lakes Region, Council of 1912."
I said, "Die, heretic!" And I pushed him over.*

(And from my [sermon of 20 April, 2008](#)): "In my Father's house are many mansions. , The power of heaven, the power of God's house, is that God's saving grace is much larger, more spiritually spacious, than anything we can imagine. In my Father's house, are many rooms, many mansions, many places to stay and to reside.

What a beautiful image of heaven! What prevents us from getting there? Absolutism does.

The hindrance to heaven today is the tyranny of absolutism. We are tempted to think of political parties as either absolutely right, or absolutely wrong. We are tempted to think of political leaders as either absolutely right or absolutely wrong. We are tempted to think of countries as either absolutely right or absolutely wrong. We are tempted to think of different religions as either absolutely right or absolutely wrong. We are tempted to think of our neighbor as either absolutely good or absolutely evil.

Such all-or-nothing absolutism is dangerous. Exclusivist absolutism divides the world according to narrow human terms and not according to God's wide kingdom. Oh, I know there are absolutes in this world, but they will never be fully defined according to our human distinctions. There are absolutes in this world, only according to God's standards.

Let not our religion, then, become simply another player in our dangerous world of competing absolutes. The most serious dangers facing our world today are those resulting from all-or-nothing polarities, presented by everyone from politicians to preachers. Let not our Christianity be a player in that game.

Exclusivist faith is dangerous, whether that faith is conservative or liberal. (After all, we have our share of fundamentalist liberals as well as fundamentalist conservatives.)

Rather, let our faith be in Jesus the Christ. Jesus came to give us life""life above these absolutist polarities. Jesus came to give us truth""truth above these divisions. Jesus came to be the way""the way of saving grace that expands beyond our understanding. Jesus the Christ is the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through him." (from the [sermon of 20 April, 2008](#)).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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