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## James R. Edwards, Is Jesus the Only Saviour?

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Is Jesus the Only Savior?, James R. Edwards, Eerdmans 2005, 264pp., \$16/£9.99 pbk.

This book is an impassioned and intelligent defence of the possibility of an intelligent Christ-centred theology grounded in scripture. The first half concentrates on the New Testament, whilst in the second, themes of current practical relevance become prominent: Christian faith in a global society, religious pluralism, moral relativism and postmodern social analysis.

Edwards' handling of the scriptural text is particularly insightful, employing non-canonical and classical writings as well as recent archaeological finds as supporting evidence. On some historical questions, like Herodian Jewish nationalism and the elite intellectual culture of the scribes, scripture turns out to be the most reliable source. Successfully negotiating the scepticism of historical Jesus critics and the Jesus Seminar—which has voted, for instance, that the Gospel of Thomas contains more authentic sayings of Jesus than the four canonical ones—Edwards builds a credible and accessible picture of what the texts can teach us about who Jesus is. Crucially, Jesus usurps functions previously attributed by Israel to God: forgiveness of sins committed against others, casting out of demons, divine sonship and the eschatological authority of judgment. He nevertheless suffers human limitation, particularly in his lack of knowledge of the Second Coming.

Several further strands of argument are adduced in support of Jesus's unique status as savior. The later epistle writers appropriate the vocabulary of the emperor cult to laud him as the '*manifestation of God, the savior, the redeemer, the epiphany of glory, salvation, and hope*' (p. 131). Edwards contests two-covenant theology, seeing the relation of Christ to Israel as being, in contrast, analogous to that which pertained in the superseded covenant between Israel and the animistic religions it supplanted. Pluralism is, in other words, no new phenomenon: faith in Christ has always been confessed in the face of alternatives, from which it is qualitatively distinct and against which it makes absolute demands. The personality of Jesus as the incarnate Son of God is also central, and Edwards is critical of what he sees as Enlightenment attempts to replace a sense of *who* God and Jesus are with ideas *about* them which can too easily be employed to buttress accommodationist creation theologies which baptise fashionable social trends and psychological vulnerabilities.

What of the question the book's title poses? The answer is, at one level, inevitably 'Yes'. Jesus rescues fallen humanity from its sin, but humanity's need of the salvation which only he can bring is announced in his judgment against that sin given on the cross which makes possible that salvation. But Edwards equally points the way to deeper, personal affirmation of this truth which will be of interest to a wide range of scholars, church workers and followers of the Way.

David Grumett