

14:6 *Jesus Is the Way to the Father*

CHRIST IS THE WAY, AND THOSE WHO WALK IN HIM CANNOT GO ASTRAY. HULDRYCH ZWINGLI: Namely, when he is grasped by faith. Whoever walks in Christ cannot go astray, or be deceived, or die. As if to say, “O Thomas, you refuse to understand why I have come and on what basis the Father is establishing his kingdom. I have come into the flesh in order to open up the way to heaven, which for so many ages no one could enter; and this shall be accomplished through my death.... You understand everything as if it concerned a corporeal journey; I am speaking of your death, which for you is the gateway to life.” Christ is the way; whoever does not walk in him goes far astray and perishes. He is the truth; therefore, whatever is not from Christ must be a lie. He is the life; therefore, whoever is not in Christ is in death, and whoever seeks life elsewhere will never find life, but shall be lost in death. ON THE GOSPEL HISTORY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.³⁵

JESUS IS THE TRUE AND ONLY WAY, NOT MERELY A WAY. DESIDERIUS ERASMUS: It should be noted that the definite article is added to each of these terms ... so that we may understand that it is not any way, or truth, or life, but the true and only one. ANNOTATIONS ON JOHN.³⁶

JESUS IS THE WAY BY WHICH WE MUST GO. CARDINAL CAJETAN: He said “I am the way” in order to convince Thomas that, in knowing Jesus, he knew the way. But truly, he said “I am *the* way” because he, whether in doing or in teaching or in dying, rising ... is the way both by which he himself went and by which we must go. He

added that he was the truth and the life, so that we might not think him a mere human being, but at the same time that he is the way in human actions and suffering, he is also the truth—not any truth but the supreme truth, and likewise the supreme life, both of which belong to God alone. And these are joined to “way” to signify that this way is supported by truth and life, in distinction from human ways, which are either false or have some admixture of falsehood, so far as understanding is concerned, and which bring labor and death, or at least do not remove them. For the way of Christ is wholly full of truth and removes all labor and death, while the spirit of the one going on it is constantly restored more and more to life, and it leads finally to the life of blessedness of soul and body. COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPELS AND ACTS.³⁷

HOW CHRIST IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE. FRANCISCO DE TOLEDO: The Lord responds not only to the words of Thomas but also to the souls of his disciples. Because they were not confirmed in the promise of Christ, “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also,” he therefore declares the way and confirms the promise. “I am,” he says, “the way” through which it is necessary for faith to come. “I am the truth,” by which therefore I make the promise. “I am the life,” because even though you will die, and be killed, I will recall you to life, so that you may be raised to me when I come. This is a singular article in Greek. Moreover, it says that Christ is “the way”; for since he is the way through which from one end to the other that one would pass over through Christ from sin into righteousness,

³⁵ Zwingli, *In Evangelicam Historiam*, 334.

³⁶ Erasmus, *In Novum Testamentum Annotationes*, 6:256.

³⁷ Cajetan, *Evangelia cum Commentariis*, 238v.

and will truly come from this age in eternal blessedness through faith in him, and obedience of his commandments. Through him we have access in one Spirit to the Father. Wherefore Augustine rightly says in book eleven, chapter two of the *City of God* that there is a way for humanity to God through the God-man, who is Christ. “I am the truth.” Not only am I one who does not lie, nor do I deceive, but I fulfill what I promise; therefore, it is not why you doubt that I will come to you, and that you will therefore be raised to me, and you believe in me because I am the way, and certainly hope in what I promise, neither do you disagree that I am the truth; but somehow lest you are dismayed, when you see that you are slain and killed on account of me, saying, “How therefore will we go to you?” “I am the life,” who causes you to rise from the dead so that I may receive you to myself. For death cannot prevent you from coming to me because I am the cause of life. This is the sense we confirm, agreeing with Chrysostom, who arrived at this in his brief words in *Homily 72*: “‘I am,’” he says, “‘the way,’ because [they come to the Father] through me; ‘the truth’ because they will be without doubt, and in me there is no lie; ‘the life’ because death cannot keep you from coming to me.” Thus Chrysostom: By these words [Christ] instructs while teaching the way, confirms while establishing his promises; attracts to the way while assuring the way. COMMENTARY ON JOHN.³⁸

THE WORD OF CHRIST DRAWS US TO THE FATHER. PHILIPP MELANCHTHON: This is the meaning: No one is able to come to the Father by his own powers or his own merits. The law frightens

³⁸ De Toledo, *In Sacrosanctum Ioannis Evangelium*, 93–94; citing Eph 2.

away consciences from approaching the Father; the word of Christ, which justifies us with Christ’s own righteousness, draws us to the Father. ANNOTATIONS ON JOHN.³⁹

EVERYTHING BUT CHRIST SEPARATES US FROM THE FATHER. JOHANNES BRENZ: All things except for Christ frighten us away so that we do not dare approach the Father: first, human reason, because it is ignorant of God, and though it knows that God exists, especially because of his blessings, nevertheless it does not know how he is to be approached and how he is to be worshiped; then, sin and the law, which show us God in his wrath and accordingly terrify us so that we do not approach. Finally, the divine majesty is too sublime to be approached or attained by human powers. Only Christ, only the Word is the way and means for reaching the Father. And when we have come to the Father through faith in Christ, or in the Word, we declare that we have reached him in external works of love. EXEGESIS ON THE DIVINE GOSPEL OF JOHN.⁴⁰

NO OTHER RELIGIONS OR PATHS LEAD TO GOD. CASPAR CRUCIGER: This sentence is to be set against the religions of all nations that are outside of the gospel: the Elusinian, the Mahometan,[†] the Jewish religion—none of these leads to God. And even in the church (so-called), no monastic worship, no human works

³⁹ MO 14:1172.

⁴⁰ Brenz, *In D. Iohannis Evangelion*, 242v.

[†] The cult of Demeter and Persephone annually held secret initiatory rites in Eleusis known as “the Eleusinian mysteries”; see further Erasmus, *Adages* 2.5.66 (CWE 33:207). They were the most well-known of the secret religious rituals in ancient Greece. “Mahometan” is a reference to followers of Muhammad, or Muslims.

lead to God if true knowledge of Christ and trust in him are extinguished. Let us therefore remember this saying as the principal testimony to set against all religions outside of the gospel and all errors in the church ... but let us also hold fast to the affirmative proposition: that those who approach God in faith in Christ will surely be received by God and will surely be heard.... In all [our] life, in all action, in all prayer, let us keep in view this sentence, which holds salutary doctrine and consolation. INTERPRETATION OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.⁴¹

WE COME TO THE FATHER THROUGH CHRIST. OTTO VON BRUNFELS: For so many centuries, we passed over this with deaf ears and blind eyes and failed to understand it. But it is Christ through whom one comes to the Father—not the saints, not the Virgin Mary, not free choice. ANNOTATIONS.⁴²

TURN TO THE LIGHT WITHIN. MARGARET FELL: So, all that desire to know the living God, who desire to have the light of his countenance to shine upon them, turn to the light within you; this is the way, the truth, and the life, and there is no other way, nor name under heaven by which any shall be saved, or come to the knowledge of the true God, for God is light, and God is a Spirit, and God is the Word. A LOVING SALUTATION.⁴³

⁴¹ Cruciger, *In Evangelium Iohannis*, 299.

⁴² Brunfels, *Annotationes*, 148r.

⁴³ Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified*, 121.