

# The Uniqueness of Jesus

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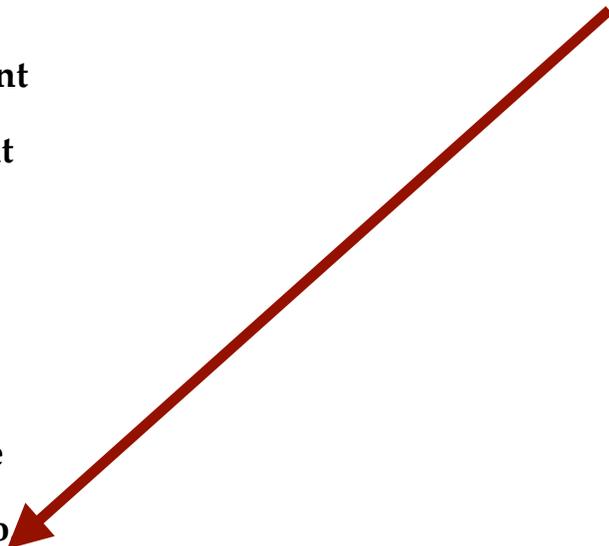
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n. 2. Uniqueness of Jesus



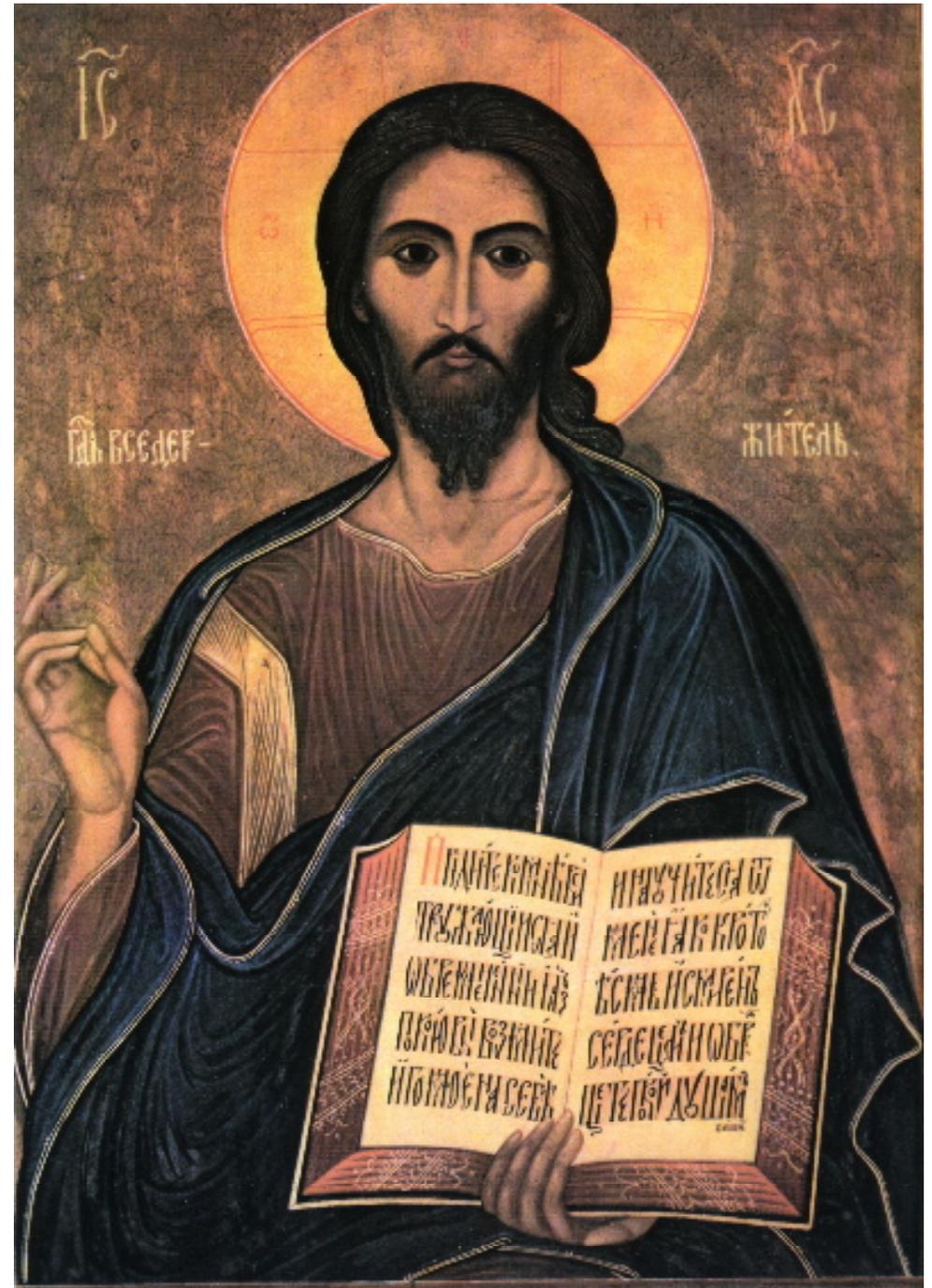
A genuine religious sentiment cannot be sectarian.

There is only one God.

Everything and everybody is interconnected. We all belong, for we are all expressions of the one Source of all.

Disciples of Jesus recognise that love gives us our key insight into the sacred.

- God's self-communication throughout the whole of the created universe
- Value of the response found in the various religions of the world
- The conviction of Christianity that **God's self-communication and the response to it reached its perfect human form in Jesus of Nazareth.**

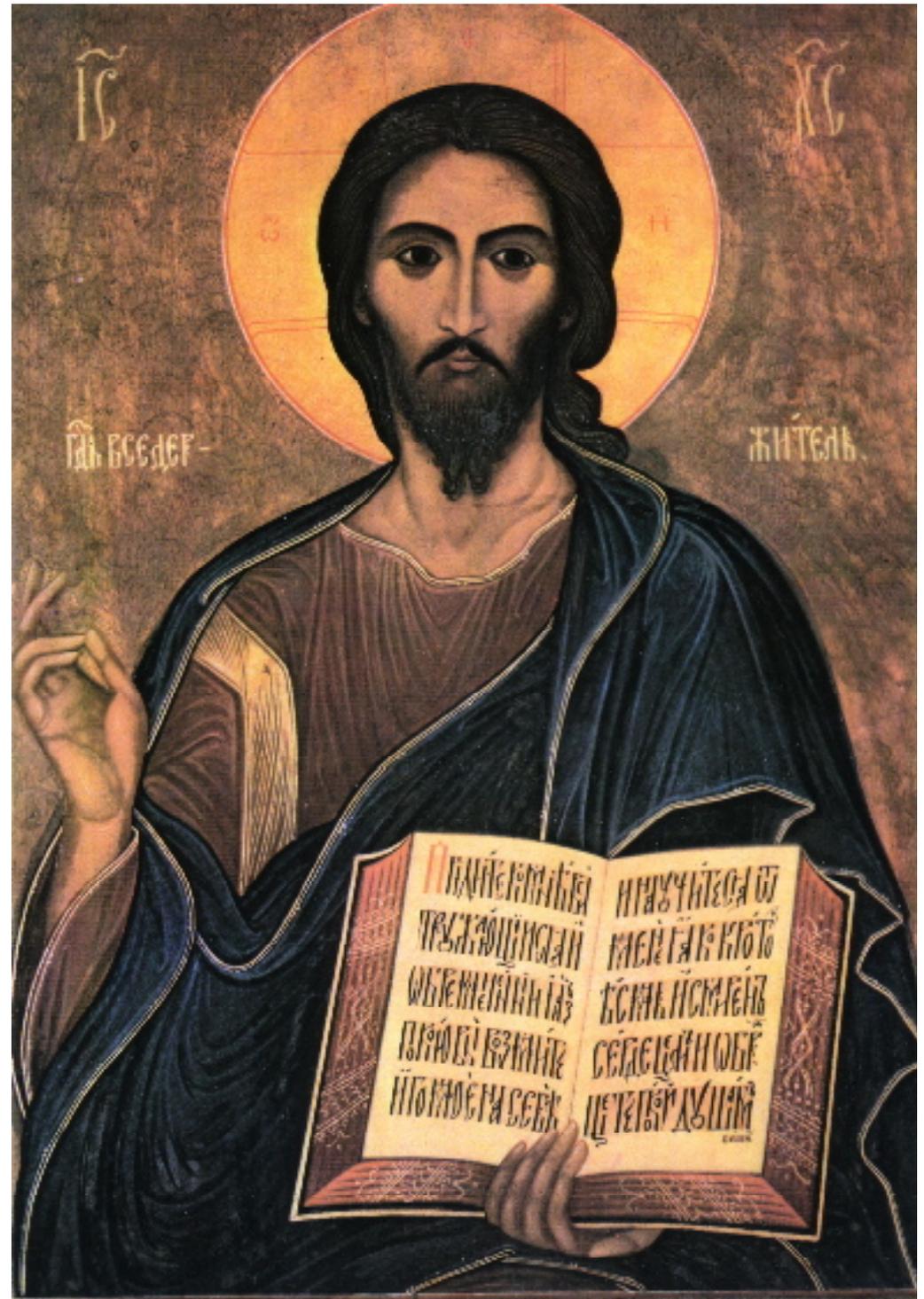


Colossians 1:14

‘In Christ the whole fullness of God was pleased to dwell.’

Hebrews 1:3

‘Christ is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, who sustains all things by his powerful word.’



- Jesus' Jewish contemporaries who became his disciples, saw him, not as abolishing Judaism, but as bringing it to its perfection (see Matthew 5:17).

- People from other religious traditions who have become disciples of Jesus could say the same about their religious heritage.

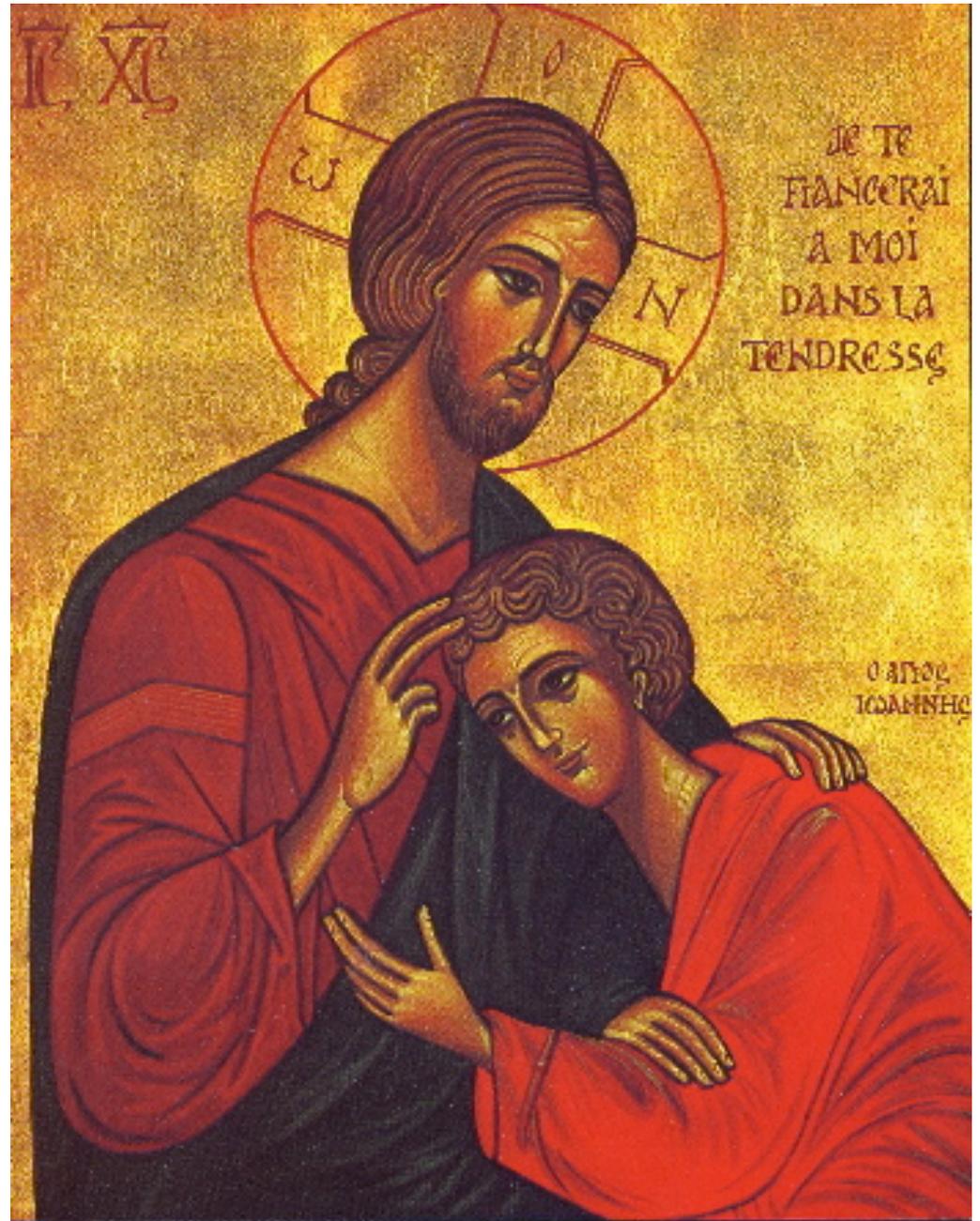
- God's self-communication is mediated to us, and so subject to all kinds of distortions.
- We human beings don't always pick things up properly or respond appropriately.
- Christians do not claim to be better than others.
- The Christian claim is about Jesus, not about how others have presented him to us or how we are responding.

There is a need for constant correction and purification of our concept of God. Christian tradition does this by focusing on the person and the life of Jesus, drawing on the experience of those of his contemporaries who found in him a perfect human expression of God. Their experience has been re-affirmed by the countless millions since who have looked to him, and committed themselves to live as his disciples.

While sharing in God's own respect for the genuine response to God of every person and of all cultures, Christians enjoy the immense privilege of knowing Jesus. Reflection on the life and significance of Jesus has been for Christians the richest source for their reflections on the meaning of God, and so for their reflections on the meaning of human experience.

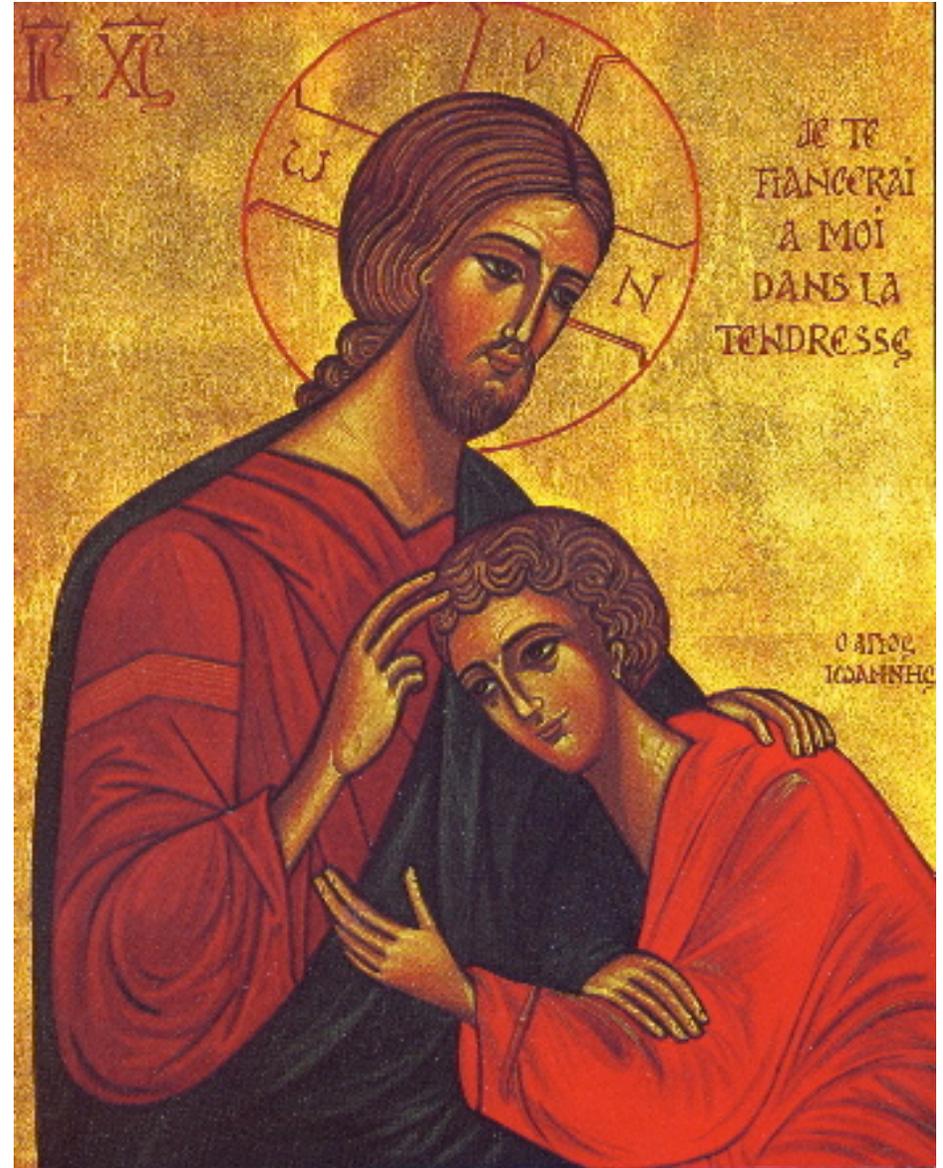
‘There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved’ (Acts 4:12).

‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’ (John 14:6).



One hears texts such as these being used in an attempt to prove that only those who are explicitly and consciously Christian can be saved. Such an interpretation is contrary to the teaching of the whole New Testament. The New Testament is asserting that God alone can save. On the lips of Jesus in John's Gospel we hear the Divine Word. John is stating that we cannot achieve communion with God in any other way than in response to God's self-giving, God's Word, of whom Jesus is the perfect human expression.

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The goal of our lives is communion in love with God. Christians have discovered that the way to the communion of love for which we are created is through Jesus.

They have found in Jesus the way to connect with their deepest yearnings, and the way to connect them with God. Jesus lives this communion.

He reveals the life-giving truth of God's love and, through the gift of his own life, he attracts us and enables us to share this divine communion.

I. Whom does God intend to come to him?

‘Everyone’.

‘God our saviour desires **everyone** to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth’ (1 Timothy 2:4).

‘The grace of God has appeared for the salvation of **all**’ (Titus 2:11).

## 2. How does God intend to draw everyone to God?

The gift of God's Spirit = God's Spirit as experienced by Jesus.

Jesus offers a share in his Spirit, his communion with God

Paul writes: 'God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us'(Romans 5:5).

To the Samaritan woman Jesus promised: ‘The water that I will give will become in you a spring of water gushing up to eternal life’(John 4:14).

Jesus promised that rivers of life-giving water would flow from the heart of those who believed in him.

John adds the following comment: ‘Jesus was speaking of the Spirit which those who believe in him were to receive’(John 7:38-39).

- The sacrament of the Spirit of Jesus' love, the place where Jesus' Spirit is powerfully effective, is the community of the Church, an extension in the world of Jesus' body.
- It is in a special way in and through the church that God communicates himself to the world.

From the beginning, the church was called ‘**catholic**’ for the very reason that it was committed to universality.

The church’s mission is to carry on the mission of Jesus from whose love no one is excluded, and, as Ignatius of Antioch wrote in the first years of the second century: ‘Where Jesus Christ is, there is the **catholic church**’(Smyrna 8.2).

Belief

Be love

Welcoming Grace

- Faith, in the whole biblical tradition, is a matter of listening to God's word, taking it seriously, and acting accordingly. The only kind of faith which Paul sought to inspire in people was 'faith working through love'(Galatians 5:6).

We are to 'do the truth in love'(Ephesians 4:15).

If we wish to be saved [= 'live to the full'], each of us, from where we now stand, must draw closer to full communion with the 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic church'(Creed of Nicene-Constantinople, 381AD), and be committed to a life of deeper faith, more trusting hope, and more perfect love.

It follows that to reject, positively and explicitly, belief in Jesus as the revelation of God is to reject God's Word, and to refuse to welcome God's offer of life: 'Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved; whoever rejects belief will be condemned'(Mark 16:16).

3. What of those who have never heard of Jesus?
4. What of people who think they are rejecting Jesus, but are rejecting only the false Jesus that has been presented to them?
5. Must those who through no fault of their own have never had an opportunity explicitly to come to know and love the real Jesus miss out on the opportunity to respond to the Spirit of the risen Jesus and be drawn to the Father?

Does not Paul say that Jesus ‘fills all things, completely, everywhere’ (Ephesians 1:23).

Jesus is the Word of God made flesh (John 1:13). This Word spoke in the prophets for centuries before the Incarnation (Hebrews 1:1). This same self-communication of God has been operative ‘since the beginning’ (1John 1:1), ‘enlightening everyone’ (John 1:9).

The risen Jesus is now drawing everyone to himself, drawing them in mysterious ways to ‘everything that is true, everything that is honourable, everything that is upright and pure, everything that we love and admire’ (Philippians 4:8).

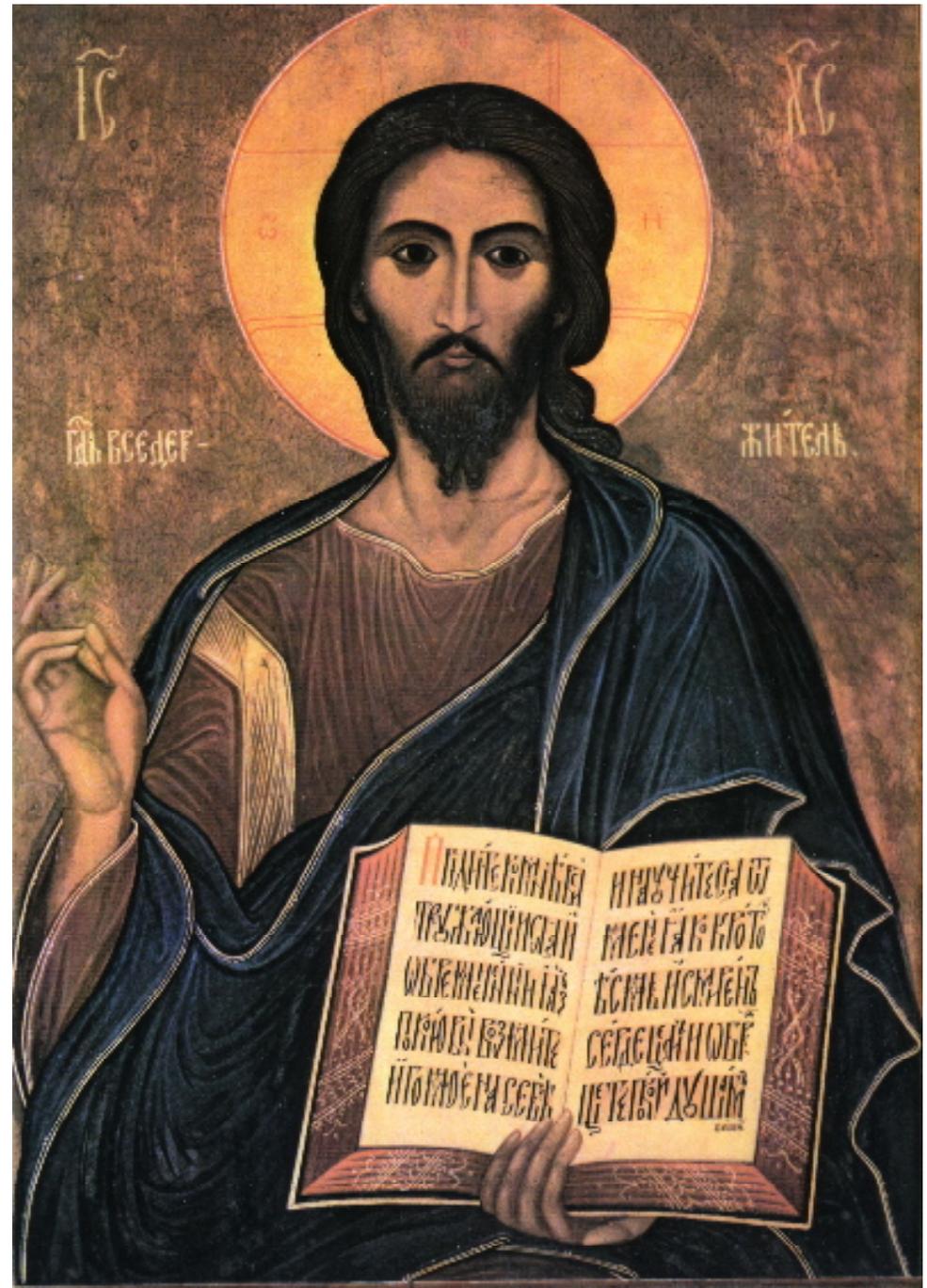
‘For those who aimed for glory and honour and immortality by persevering in doing good, there will be eternal life ... glory and honour and peace will come **to everyone who does good**’ (Romans 2:7,10).

Condemnation is only for those who sin ‘without excuse’ (Romans 1:20).

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For my yoke fits easily, and my burden is light.”



Matthew 11:28-30

