



*The
Truth
About*

Universalism

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Introduction

In terms of religion, in a broad sense, universalism claims that religion is a universal human quality. This can be contrasted with non-universalist religions. Religion in this context is defined as "a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs."^[1]

In some sects of Christianity, universal reconciliation is the doctrine that all sinful and alienated human souls — because of divine love and mercy — will ultimately be reconciled to God.

Unitarian Universalism believes that religion is a universal human quality, emphasizing the universal principles of most religions and accepting other religions in an inclusive manner, believing in a universal reconciliation between humanity and the divine. Universalism has had a strong influence on modern Hinduism, in turn influencing western modern spirituality.

A community that calls itself *universalist* may emphasize the universal principles of most religions and accept other religions in an inclusive manner, believing in a universal reconciliation between humanity and the divine. For example, some forms of Abrahamic religions happened to claim the universal value of their doctrine and moral principles, and feel inclusive.

A belief in one common truth is also another important tenet. The living truth is seen as more far-reaching than national, cultural, or religious

boundaries. (This lends itself to rejecting absolute truth and leads to “New Age” philosophy.)

In Short...universalism is a theological doctrine that all human beings will eventually be saved: the principles and practices of a liberal Christian denomination founded in the 18th century originally to uphold the belief in “universal” salvation is now united with Unitarianism

Sketchy History

The history of Universalism is sketchy. However, here’s what I found. Belief in universal salvation is at least as old as Christianity itself and may be associated with early Gnostic teachers.

The first clearly universalist writings, however, date from the Greek church fathers, most notably Clement of Alexandria, his student Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa. Of these, the teachings of Origen, who believed that even the devil might eventually be saved, were the most influential.

Numerous supporters of final salvation were to be found in the postapostolic church, although it was strongly opposed by Augustine of Hippo. ***Origen's theology was at length declared heretical at the fifth ecumenical council in 553***

Universalist writers such as George T. Knight have claimed that Universalism was a widely held view among theologians in Early Christianity.

The first undisputed documented appearance of Christian Universalist ideas was in 17th-century England and 18th-century Europe and colonial America.

Gerrard Winstanley (England, 1648), Richard Coppin (England, 1652), Jane Leade (England, 1697), and George de Benneville (France and America, 18th century) taught that God would grant all human beings salvation. People teaching this doctrine in America became known as Universalist Church of America. (This teaching was quickly rejected.)

Its early leaders were Hosea Ballou, John Murray, and Elhanan Winchester. As a form of religious liberalism, it has had close contacts with Unitarianism throughout its history. The Universalist Church of America and the American Unitarian Association merged in 1961 to form a single denomination - the Unitarian Universalist Association

1997 Survey Reveals Theological Perspectives

According to a 1997 survey of almost 10,000 Unitarians gave their theological perspective as:

- Humanist at 46.1% is the most common perspective.
- 19% identify themselves as Nature or Earth centered religion (e.g. Wiccan, Druid or other Neopagan tradition).
- 13% describe themselves simply as Theist.
- 9.3% self-identify as Christian.
- 6.2% are mystic.
- 3.6% are Buddhist.
- Other perspectives listed are Jewish at 1.3%, Hindu at 0.4%, Muslim at 0.1% and other at 13.3%

It is obvious that the "glue" that holds congregations together is not a shared theological belief system, as it is in almost all other religious groups.

Their Belief On Salvation

Universalism is the teaching that all people will eventually be saved through the universal redemption of Jesus. Some universalists teach that even the devil, after a time of punishment, will be redeemed.

It is a false theological teaching.

The teaching of Jesus that He is the only way to the Father is overlooked, even though He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (**John 14:6**)

Here's a quote that depicts their confused view of Salvation. "Our faith is not interested in saving your soul. We're here to help you unfold the awesome soul you already have." — Andrea Lerner

Their Belief of Hell & Judgment

Because they believe that eventually all will be redeemed, they do not acknowledge and eternal Hell. Hell cannot be real if all are being saved. This

also means that, in their thinking, that there is no real judgment and a limited punishment.

Unitarianism The Chief Proponent Of Universalism

Unitarian Universalism affirms and promotes seven Principles, grounded in the humanistic teachings of the world's religions. Our spirituality is unbounded, drawing from scripture and science, nature and philosophy, personal experience and ancient tradition as described in our six Sources.

Here are the six sources: (Excerpts from the Unitarian Universalists Association)

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
- Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

This foundation is far from Biblical. It is comprised of all religions. That mean you can believe most anything you want and be accepted. In theory, that sounds good but in reality, it is a death trap. Can you imagine putting Pantheists, Islamic, Jehovah's Witness, Buddhists, Polytheist and Catholic in one room and tell them to get along? They all have different doctrines and

beliefs. It would be a disaster. However, Unitarians do just that. The only difference is that those who join their ranks are weak in their religion and unstable in their own beliefs.

The common bond that keeps them together is the promotion of Love for one's fellowman. All the other teachings are humanistic. This is confirmed in a clear published statement by Rev. Kathleen Rolenz who said, "Throughout history, we have moved to the rhythms of mystery and wonder, prophecy, wisdom, teachings from ancient and modern sources, and nature herself."

Who Are They? The Official Unitarian Answer

We need not think alike to love alike. We are people of many beliefs and backgrounds: people with a religious background, people with none, people who believe in a God, people who don't, and people who let the mystery be.

We are Unitarian Universalist and Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Humanist, Jewish, Muslim, Pagan, atheist and agnostic, believers in God, and more.

On the forefront of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer inclusion for more than 40 years, we are people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. (Taken directly from the Unitarian Universal Association website)

12 Major Errors of Universalism

1. They profess to be Christian. They are not.
2. They reject the "One Way" teaching of Christianity expanding it to all ways that man can think up. **John 14:6** will clarify the true Christian Doctrine.
3. They accept immorality as normal and include participants in their community without requiring repentance and faith.
4. They have no shared creed that bonds a group together.
5. They embrace diverse teachings from Eastern and Western religions and philosophies.
6. Few of them believe in divine judgment after death. The Universalist side of their tradition broke with mainstream Christianity by rejecting the idea of eternal damnation.

7. They have moved away from the Bible as the sole source of inspiration and revelation to a “living tradition,” that celebrates the spiritual insights of the world’s religions.
8. Their Concept of God is , “The Sacred” or any concept you feel is right, not what the Bible teaches.
9. They minimized and trivialized Sin as though it will make no difference in the ultimate scheme of things.
10. They refuse to call anything right or wrong, thereby canceling the need for, Christ’s redemptive sacrifice thereby ignoring the consequences.
11. They deny the doctrine of the Trinity.
12. They deny the incarnation of Christ and the person of the Holy Spirit.

Universalism & God

Unitarian Universalists have many ways of naming what is sacred. Some believe in a God; some don’t believe in a God. Some believe in a sacred force at work in the world, and call it “love,” “mystery,” “source of all” or “spirit of life.” We are thousands of individuals of all ages, each influenced by our cultures and life experiences to understand “the ground of our being” in our own way. Unitarian Universalists are agnostic, theist, atheist, and everything in between.

We join together not because we have a shared concept of the divine. Rather we gather knowing that life is richer in community than when we go it alone. We gather to know and be known, to comfort and be comforted, to celebrate the mystery that binds us, each to all.

From the beginning we have trusted in the human capacity to use reason and draw conclusions about religion. Influenced by experience, culture, and community, each of us ultimately chooses what is sacred to us.

A Living Tradition (Changes With The Wind)

You could say the world is our scripture. The tradition we share is a “living tradition,” meaning our sources of inspiration evolve over time as we do. In the nineteenth century the Bible was our main source of inspiration and guidance; in the twenty-first century it is one of many.

Spirituality

Unitarian Universalism offers diverse ways of connecting with the sacred. Whether we're sitting in Zen Buddhist meditation, listening for truth with Christian *lectio divina*, praying to the spirit of life, or chanting in a circle at winter solstice, our spirituality is unbounded.

Christian Universalism

The lie persist in our society that Christianity is a "Universal Religion," and is for people everywhere and in all times, is a statement that is disputed by very few Christians today. But, the full extent of the truth of its universality is not realized by the majority.

Many people today may understand the term "*Universalism*", as it relates to religion, as a word that designates the belief that "All religions are equally true, good, and that they all equally will lead to heaven, or to God." This definition of "Universalism" could better be described as "Pluralist Universalism" and could be equated with "secular humanism".

According to John Ankerberg, president and founder of The Ankerberg Theological Research Institute, says Unitarian Universalists followers have varying ideas about God. They "believe anything or nothing: one is free to be atheist, pantheist, polytheist, agnostic, deist, theist or even Satanist," Ankerberg writes in his website post at www.johnankerberg.org.

"Basically, it is spiritual humanism," explained Craig Branch, director of the Apologetics Resource Ministry, in an interview with The Christian Post. "All roads lead to God."

"God is usually defined as a more eastern mystical entity – an ultimate spiritual consciousness. It is difficult to nail down a specific nature of concept of God in UUA [teaching]," Branch said.

"They can believe in any gods, as long as they're not supernatural," agreed Fred Miller of True Light Educational Ministry in Shirley, N.Y.

**They are anti-Christian.
Everything we believe in, they don't.**

Misrepresentation

Universalists often use the most negative terms to represent historic positions they disagree with. For example, regarding the damnation of the unsaved, instead of saying that historic Christianity teaches that those who reject Christ will suffer eternal damnation, they frequently say that historic Christianity teaches that "God can't save everyone and wants to torture most of humanity forever." Or, it is often implied that God will not torture people forever because "God is not sadistic enough to send people to hell."

Such emotionally slanted words reveal a hostile bias against historic doctrines and is an unfair description of those beliefs. It is a surprisingly common tactic among universalists which demonstrates their lack of objectivity and sheds an automatic cloud of doubt upon their observations.

The Unity Church

Unity Church followers believe in the divinity of Jesus, but only in the sense that all humans are the children of God and share that divine potential. They believe that Jesus was a master teacher of universal Truth who expressed this divine potential and sought to show others how to do the same by following him. Unity uses the term "Christ" to mean the divinity in all people. For them Jesus is the great example of the Christ in physical form.

Unity Church teaches that we are all individual, eternal expressions of God, and that our essential nature is divine and therefore inherently good. Unity followers believe our purpose in life is to express our divine potential as demonstrated by Jesus, and that the more we awaken to our divine nature, the more we can do this. Salvation, in the Unity view, is found in conscious understanding of one's innate divinity and then putting that knowledge into practice in everyday life.

This is a gross distortion of the truth. The bible tells us that when we are, "**Born Again**" we possess the Holy Spirit and He brings Christ into our lives to be Lord and Savior. It also tells us that there is no divinity in man that is not Born Again for that is the reason we are to be born again in the first place. (See Romans 5:12, John chapter 3 and John 14:6)

Bible Verses That Expose Universalism As Heresy

Briefly stated are some (but not all) of the reasons why **universalism should** be flatly rejected. (By Dan Corner)

1. History before it happens is found all throughout the Scriptures. One such relevant verse is what the Lord said he will say to some people:

“**Depart from me**, you who are cursed, into the **eternal fire** prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41).

2. Jesus could not have been more clear in stating that some people will end up in *eternal fire*. This should be enough to refute universalism, but there are many other proofs as well:

Then they will go away to **eternal punishment**, but the righteous to eternal life (Matt. 25:46).

Though disturbing such people have the opposite of *salvation*. They clearly will not enter God's paradise kingdom, which he prepared for those who *love* him (the righteous), 1 Cor. 2:9; James 2:5.

3. Revelation chapter 20 is one of the most stirring chapters in the Bible. In it we read:

“And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev. 20:10).

Hell Warnings Destroy *Universalism*

Jesus often warned people of hell. If they could never go there, such warnings would be misplaced and would adversely reflect upon the Lord. Some of those hell warnings were directed at those who were following Jesus at that moment of time. Besides Mt. 10:28 and others, we have the following:

- If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have

two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell (**Matt. 18:9**).

- The fact that the Lord warned the disciples (his spiritual family) of hell because of wickedness implies there is no truth to the teaching of *eternal security* (also known as *the perseverance of the saints*). If that doctrine was true, then it would be impossible for the disciples of Christ to be thrown into the fires of hell over sin. We know that is possible because Jesus gave a true warning to them. Hence, it is a real possibility.

Again we have Scriptural evidence that there is no such thing as salvation for everyone (or *Universalism*).

- By the ultimate authority himself, Our Lord Jesus, we have the following:

“This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”
(**Matt. 13:49, 50**).

Jesus declared that the *wicked* will be thrown into the fiery furnace and there experience weeping and gnashing of teeth. The *wicked* are also shown to have a different fate from the *righteous*. Every person will not, in the end, have salvation.

- **Raging fire** will consume the enemies of God (**Heb. 10:27**). This pertains to those who were never Biblically saved as well as those who once had true salvation and afterwards became *enemies of God* by backsliding, as mentioned by James:

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God (**James 4:4**).

- Repeatedly the Bible refers to the saved and the lost, even at the very end of the last book of Scripture:

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood (**Rev. 22:14,15**).

Notice there will be those that go through the gates into the city and another group that is *outside* the city. (Where outside the city is not shown there, but is in the aforementioned verses.) If we compare Scripture with Scripture, we can easily see that the ones thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur are described as committing the same types of sins:

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death (**Rev. 21:8**).

Resurrection To Damnation Can't Be Universalism

Another time that Jesus showed the truth of God to be the anti-thesis of universalism is at **John 5:28,29**:

“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned” (**John 5:28,29**).

Jesus taught there will be a resurrection to life (for the righteous) and one to condemnation (for the wicked). Paul taught similarly:

”I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man” (**Acts 24:15,16**).

Paul Repeated That Concept Again In The Following Passage About Salvation

“To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism **(Rom. 2:7-11).**”

Not everyone will receive glory, honor and peace after they die. That is only for those who persist in doing good, according to true grace teaching. All others will experience God's wrath and anger. Christians must sow to please the Spirit of God to reap *eternal life*:

“The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” **(Gal 6:8,9).**

Misused Texts Cited For Universalism

One of the most commonly misused passages cited for support of universalism is:

This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance (and for this we labor and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe **(1 Tim. 4:9,10).**

It is argued by proponents of Universalism that Jesus is the *savior of all men*. Hence, *all* will be saved and universalism is (supposedly) true. The problem for the proponents of Universalism is that the rest of this passage says *especially of those who believe*.

In other words, even though Jesus died for all people that would ever live, as stated elsewhere **(1 John 2:2)**, he is only the savior of all who would become true *believers* in the Lord Jesus.

Jesus' death on the cross was enough redemption-wise for all people to find salvation, but only those who *follow* Jesus will benefit with personal salvation by his infinite death. There is nothing in **1 Tim. 4:10**, or elsewhere-in Scripture, to justify a belief in universalism, which is so explicitly refuted in many other passages.

Another Passage Universalists Mishandle Is... *John 12:32*

But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, **will draw all men to myself (John 12:32).**

Jesus spoke that *to show the kind of death he was going to die (John 12:33).* Hence, Jesus' draws all people to himself for salvation, even those who will choose to reject him and perish. A corroborating passage is found in 2 Peter:

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (3:9).

That passage not only proves a person must repent (turn from wickedness) to be saved, but it also declares that God wants all people to be saved. See also 1 Tim. 2:4. Since other verses reveal that many will *not* be saved, then we know man's will can override God's will for the individual. Hence, John 12:32 shows Jesus draws all people to himself—not that all will enter God's kingdom. (That passage also refutes Calvinism by showing no one is predestined to go to hell.)

In Romans, Paul wrote:

For God has bound all men over to disobedience **so** that he may have mercy on them all (**Rom. 11:32**).

God's will is to have *mercy* on all people and forgive them, but some people can and do refuse to repent to find salvation and receive God's mercy. One such example is also found in Romans:

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed (Rom. 2:5).

Elsewhere the same is evident:

Will they not return to Egypt and will not Assyria rule over them because they refuse to repent? (**Hosea 11:5**).

They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved (**2 Thess. 2:10**).

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing (**Matt. 23:37**).

Another passage that has been misunderstood in support of universalism is this one:

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive (**1 Cor. 15:22**).

Salvation is only found in the Lord Jesus (**John 14:6; Acts 4:12**; etc.). We must first get *in him*, but many refuse to *repent* and *love the truth* and therefore remain on the road to hell. Others find salvation (get *in Christ*), then later go back as a *dog returns to its vomit* (**2 Peter 2:20-22**). They too are on the road to hell and will go there unless they turn back to God as the prodigal did (**Luke 15:24,32**). (King David turned back to God after backsliding, but King Solomon never did.)

While God *loves* all people, even the unsaved (**John 3:16; Mark 10:21**; etc.), he will still send the spiritually dead to the fiery lake of burning sulfur because of their sins. Hence, again there is no Universalism! Ponder the following facts about God's *righteousness* and *justice*:

On the wicked he will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot. For the LORD is righteous, he loves justice; upright men will see his face (**Psa. 11:6,7**).

God is not just a loving and merciful God. He has other attributes such as being *righteous* and *just*. These will cause the wicked to be punished with fire beyond the grave.

Conclusion

Universalism is the teaching that all people will be saved. Some say that it is through the atonement of Jesus that all will ultimately be reconciled to God. Others just say that all will go to heaven sooner or later, whether or not they have trusted in or rejected Jesus as savior during their lifetime.

This universal redemption will be realized in the future where God will bring all people to repentance. This repentance can happen while a person lives or after he has died and lived again in the millennium (as some "Christian universalists" claim) or some future state. Additionally, a few universalists even maintain that Satan and all demons will likewise be reconciled to God.

Nevertheless, both facets of universalistic belief are in serious error. People **will** suffer eternal damnation (**Rev. 14:11**) and the demonic forces have no redeemer.

However, there are those within the universalist camp (who claim to be Christian) who also deny the doctrine of the Trinity and, thereby, the incarnation of the Word of God as God the Son. They also deny the personhood and deity of the Holy Spirit. Usually, these denials are held by Unitarian Universalists, though others who are not of the Universalist camp also deny the Trinity. Those who deny these essentials cannot be classified as Christians.

So, universalism is not really a doctrine that identifies a group. Rather, it is a doctrine of different, even contradictory groups, who all claim universalism.

In any event, we, as "Born Again" believers are to reject this false teaching, with all of its followers and keep ourselves from being snared by devil who seeks to capture and torment us.