

# Are All Doomed to Be Saved? The Rise of Modern Universalism

Timothy K. Beougher

**Timothy K. Beougher** is Billy Graham Associate Professor of Evangelism and Church Growth at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he has taught since 1996. Beougher co-edited *Accounts of Campus Revival* and *Evangelism for a Changing World*, and is the author of several scholarly articles. He is currently at work on a biography of Richard Baxter.

*With none to heed their crying  
For life, and love, and light  
Unnumbered souls are dying  
And pass into the night.*<sup>1</sup>

Or do they? Do people who die without acknowledging Christ as their Savior really “pass into the night”? Or should that hymn, which embodies orthodox Christian thought about the fate of those who die without Christ, be abandoned along with other “outdated” beliefs? Should traditional Christian teaching concerning the final judgment and an eternal hell be “brought up to date,” modified to fit the tolerant spirit of the times?

It has long been noted there are three possible positions concerning the extent of the salvation of humankind: (1) *none* will be saved; (2) *some* will be saved; or (3) *all* will be saved. The traditional Christian teaching concerning the hereafter has been the second option: only *some* will be saved. Within this position debates are ongoing as to exactly who will be saved (must one have explicit faith in Christ?) and what the final condition of the lost will be (will they suffer eternal conscious torment?). Previous *SBJT* articles have analyzed various challenges to traditional Christian teaching on these issues.<sup>2</sup>

This article seeks to explain and critique the third option: *all* will be saved, which is also known as the doctrine of universalism. Though it is presented in many forms, the basic teaching common to universalist systems is that God will eventually bring all people to salvation. The advocates of

this position may disagree on the timing and the means of this final salvation, but they all claim (either hopefully or dogmatically) that it will take place.

This article will begin by defining universalism and explaining its appeal. Then a brief survey of the history of universalism will be set forth. Next, the teachings of universalism (both in its “hope-so” and “dogmatic” forms) will be presented, followed by an evangelical critique. The article will end with concluding remarks and suggestions about where we go from here.

N. T. Wright maintains universalism is “perhaps the greatest unspoken premise of modern thought within the Christian church.”<sup>3</sup> While his sweeping assertion may be debatable, the importance of the issue is not. The doctrine of universalism involves more than a mere difference of opinion concerning eschatology. As Ronald Blue points out, this debate touches on several major doctrines of Christianity.<sup>4</sup>

## Defining Universalism: “Wide is the Road that Leads to Life”

Universalism may be defined as the teaching that though hell may exist it will eventually empty as God’s will to save all persons individually will finally triumph.<sup>5</sup> All human beings ultimately will be saved. Hell thereby becomes a “means of grace” where God’s love eventually wins everyone, even Judas (and some would say even Satan), back to Himself.

The doctrine of universalism has been presented differently by those who have

advocated it throughout the centuries. Some have claimed that no person is bad enough to be rejected ultimately. Recent universalism stresses that God's power and love is so great that it will secure eventually the salvation of the entire human race.<sup>6</sup> As Richard Bauckham notes, "Only the belief that ultimately all men will be saved is common to all universalists."<sup>7</sup>

How then does the universalistic position work out in practice? While there are varying versions, universalists generally agree that those who leave this world in unbelief will enter hell. But having entered, they will sooner or later come out, having been brought to their senses and seeing their error in not acknowledging Christ. While in hell they will make a positive response to Christ because their suffering will have opened their eyes to the truth. Thus hell is real, but is only temporary. All will be saved eventually and God's universal salvific desire will have come to pass. No one will be finally lost. Hell will end up empty.

### **The Appeal of Universalism**

Universalism has a strong appeal in cultures confronted by the pressures of pluralism. James D. Hunter notes that in the face of intense religious and cultural pluralism during the past century the pressures to deny Christianity's exclusive claims to truth have been "fantastic."<sup>8</sup> George Barna's 1993 survey of the beliefs of Americans (appropriately titled *Absolute Confusion*) found that nearly two out of three persons believe that all religions teach basically the same thing and no one is superior to the others.<sup>9</sup>

Even Evangelicals have not been immune from yielding to the pressure of pluralism. Using the results of his Evangelical Academy Project, Hunter notes that shifts

in the evangelical theological view of salvation are discernible.<sup>10</sup> He reports that one of three "Evangelicals" surveyed held the view that "the only hope for Heaven is through personal faith in Jesus Christ except for those who have not had the opportunity to hear of Jesus Christ."<sup>11</sup>

Hunter notes these numbers signify a dramatic shift from the perspective of historical orthodoxy:

The significance of all of this is plain. The introduction of these qualifications tempers the purity of the theological exclusivism traditionally held. Ultimate truth is not at issue here, only what people perceive to be ultimate truth. Thus, the existence of such a sizable minority of Evangelicals maintaining this stance represents a noteworthy shift away from the historical interpretations.<sup>12</sup>

This viewpoint is reflected in the comment made by former United States President and current Southern Baptist Sunday School Teacher Jimmy Carter: "I cannot imagine an innocent person being deprived of God's eternal blessing because they don't have a chance to accept Christ."<sup>13</sup> Leighton Ford aptly illustrates this cultural pressure in his article entitled, "Do You Mean to Tell Me that In This Modern, Humanistic, Pluralistic, Tolerant Society You Still Believe in Hell?"<sup>14</sup>

Another appeal of universalism is that it appeases our feelings about persons being lost. When someone we know dies with his or her relationship to Christ in question, we begin to wonder if perhaps God might decide to save everyone in the end. I once talked with a pastor who had adopted universalism for this very reason. This man's father had never been interested in spiritual things, had never darkened the door of a church, and yet was, in this pastor's words, "a good man." This

pastor told me, “The thought of my father being in hell was just too much for me to bear. The more I reflected on his situation, the more I became convinced that hell was a myth and that all would be saved.” His theological shift came not from careful study of the Scriptures but from his own subjective experience and feelings.

A third appeal of universalism relates to the struggles of the missionary task. Bernard Ramm argues that belief in universalism is on the rise because the “task of world evangelism seems so hopeless.”<sup>15</sup> With countless millions of people still unreached with the gospel, the concept of universalism appeals to many people. In other words, if you think you are losing, then simply change the rules of the game.

But all sentiment aside, is the position of universalism a viable option for the Christian? Do the universalists present a convincing case? Before the arguments for universalism are presented in greater detail, I will offer a brief history of universalism.

### **The History of Universalism<sup>16</sup>**

Church historians generally agree that universalism first appeared in the Alexandrian School, especially with Origen (A.D. 185-254). Based on his belief that God’s ultimate purpose is to restore the original unity in creation, Origen taught that all of the condemned and even the demons would eventually be brought, through a time of “purifying” punishment, into voluntary subjection to Christ.<sup>17</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, one of Origen’s followers, taught salvation for all (including Satan!). Universalism was eventually condemned by the Synod of Constantinople in 543.

The condemnation of “Origenism” discredited universalism in the theological

tradition of the East. In the West, the combined influence of Augustine’s writings against universalism and Origen’s heretical reputation insured that the Augustinian version of the doctrine of hell prevailed almost without question for many centuries.<sup>18</sup> During the Middle Ages universalism was propounded in the Platonic system of John Scotus Erigena (810-877).<sup>19</sup> During the Reformation period some of the radical Anabaptists and Spiritualists, notably John Denck, were universalists.<sup>20</sup> Others espousing universalism prior to 1800 included some among the Cambridge Platonists and a few of the German Pietists.

F. D. E. Schleiermacher was the first prominent theologian of modern times to teach universalism.<sup>21</sup> In *The Christian Faith*, Schleiermacher taught absolute predestination, rejecting any form of double predestination. All men are elected to salvation in Christ, and God’s desire to save all cannot fail. Schleiermacher argued against the traditional view of hell, claiming that the blessedness of the redeemed would be severely marred by their sympathy for the damned if the traditional teaching were true.

Nineteenth-century England saw a great deal of discussion on issues related to the future life. In 1853, F. D. Maurice was dismissed from his chair at King’s College, London, for teaching a theory of a “wider hope.”<sup>22</sup> In 1862, for a tentative assertion of universalism in *Essays and Reviews* (1860), H. B. Wilson was condemned in the Court of Arches, judged guilty of contradicting the Athanasian Creed.<sup>23</sup> F. W. Farrar denied eternal punishment in a series of sermons delivered in Westminster Abbey in 1877, which were subsequently published as *Eternal Hope* in 1878.<sup>24</sup> These sermons prompted a de-

fense of the traditional doctrine of hell by E. B. Pusey.<sup>25</sup>

Bauckham notes that dogmatic universalism was less common in nineteenth-century England than “a general uneasiness with the traditional doctrine of hell.”<sup>26</sup> Common to all these “wider hope” teachings was the assertion that death was not the decisive break which traditional orthodoxy had always taught:

Repentance, conversion, moral progress are still possible after death. This widespread belief was certainly influenced by the common nineteenth-century faith in evolutionary progress. Hell—or a modified version of purgatory—could be understood in this context as the pain and suffering necessary to moral growth.<sup>27</sup>

The universalist thesis does not belong to only distant history, however. Twentieth-century advocates of some form of universalism include Karl Barth, John A. T. Robinson, Nels Ferré, and a host of lesser known theologians. Packer is right when he asserts that universalism “has come to stay” as a guest of Christianity.<sup>28</sup> And it is becoming more and more of a welcome guest in many circles. It has progressed from being “*the* heresy” to a commonly held position.<sup>29</sup> Richard Bauckham claims that since 1800 “no traditional Christian doctrine has been so widely abandoned as that of eternal punishment.”<sup>30</sup>

### “Hope-so” Universalism

It is indeed a truism to note that the significance of Karl Barth’s theology in the history of Christian thought has been tremendous. Concerning the topic under discussion, most concur that Barth neither affirmed nor denied the theory of universal salvation. Nevertheless, with his reconstruction of the doctrine of election, Barth

has made many theologians suspicious about his opinion on the matter.<sup>31</sup> He appeared to teach the divine predestination of all human beings to salvation.

The Barthian doctrine of reconciliation has also led to the suspicion of universalism. Barth, speaking of Christ, says,

His death [includes] the totality of all sinful men, those living, those long dead, and those still to be born, Christians who necessarily know and proclaim it, but also Jews and heathen, whether they hear and receive the news or whether they tried and still try to escape it. His death was the death of all: quite independently of their attitude or response to this event....<sup>32</sup>

Bromiley detects in that doctrine “the trend toward an ultimate universalism.”<sup>33</sup> Barthianism can also give the impression that the world is already redeemed and that evangelism consists simply in making known this fact.<sup>34</sup>

Barth perhaps can best be described as a “hope-so universalist” (as opposed to a dogmatic universalist).<sup>35</sup> He refused dogmatically to expect universal salvation because of his desire to protect the sovereignty of God’s grace. Yet he still claimed that universal salvation “remains an open possibility for which we may hope.”<sup>36</sup> He asserts that we have “no theological right to set any sort of limits to the loving-kindness of God which has appeared in Jesus Christ.”<sup>37</sup>

Though Barth’s influence seems to have waned in recent years, his teaching at this point continues to have adherents today. Carl Braaten, for example, asserts,

We would teach a highly nuanced and qualified evangelical universalism. It is not a dogma, not a piece of knowledge, not something to which humans have a right and a claim. Yet, it is something for which we

may cautiously and distinctly pray and hope, that in spite of everything that seems to point conclusively in the opposite direction, God's mercy will not cast off his world forever.<sup>38</sup>

Braaten concludes his essay by claiming that

The scale is tilted decidedly [*sic*] toward the hope of universal reconciliation on account of Christ. We agree with Barth that it cannot be denied that eternal reprobation is a possibility, but in the light of God's verdict in the victory of Jesus Christ, it becomes an "impossible possibility."<sup>39</sup>

So "hope-so universalism," as I have defined it, argues that while one cannot proclaim dogmatically the certainty of universal salvation, it remains an open possibility for which one may hope.<sup>40</sup>

### **Dogmatic Universalism**

Others go beyond Barth and Braaten and assert with full confidence that all will be saved. According to this viewpoint, we can not only hope for universal salvation, we confidently can expect it to happen! In this section I will set forth key arguments used by those who argue for dogmatic universalism by first looking at biblical arguments, then moving to philosophical/theological arguments.

### ***Biblical Arguments***

The biblical arguments for universalism can be grouped into three major divisions: (1) The Saving Desire of God; (2) The Saving Provision of God; and (3) The Saving Promise of God.<sup>41</sup> Due to space limitations, each separate verse used by those who espouse universalism cannot be examined, but the central issues raised by the various grouping of texts will be answered in my critique.<sup>42</sup>

### ***The Saving Desire of God***

Paul says that God "desires all men to be saved" (1 Ti 2:4).<sup>43</sup> The apostle Peter also expresses the saving desire of God, writing that the Lord does not wish "for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Pe 3:9). Thus Glasson states,

And if God desires the salvation of every soul He has made, it is scarcely credible that the accident of death changes His attitude to His children. Does the Good Shepherd abandon His search for the lost sheep as soon as the border of earthly life is crossed, or will He ever cease to "go after that which is lost until he find it?"<sup>44</sup>

Universalists argue if God desires it, then it will happen ultimately.

### ***The Saving Provision of God***

Included under this heading are the biblical passages which highlight the apparent universal value of the work of Christ, such as John 12:32 ("draw all men"), 2 Corinthians 5:19 ("reconciling the world"), Titus 2:11 ("the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men"), Hebrews 2:9 ("He might taste death for every one"), and 1 John 2:2 ("for [the sins] of the whole world"). Such texts, claim the universalists, speak of Christ dying for *all* mankind. If Christ died for all, and His death effectively paid for the sins of everyone, then all eventually will be saved.

### ***The Saving Promise of God***

The third group of biblical texts used by universalists are those which deal with the consummation of God's plan of redemption in history. Among those frequently cited are Acts 3:21 ("restoration of all things"), 1 Corinthians 15:26-28 ("when all things [even death] are subjected to Him"),

Ephesians 1:10 (“the summing up of all things in Christ”), and Philippians 2:9-11 (“every knee should bow...”).

I will offer a summary critique of these arguments in the next section of the article, but first I will explain additional arguments universalists propose for their position, what I have called “philosophical/theological arguments.”

### *Philosophical/Theological Arguments*

The first of these arguments is what could be called the argument from “Divine Love.” N. T. Wright explains the basic logic of this view, admittedly in abbreviated form: “There are two Biblical ways of looking at salvation. One says that only Christian believers will be saved; the other says that all men will be saved. Since the latter is more loving, it must be true, because God is love.”<sup>45</sup>

Nels Ferré advocates universalism in this manner by emphasizing *agape*. Ferré believes the Bible conveys three teachings concerning the eternal destiny of the “lost”: eternal damnation, annihilation, and universalism. He claims that only universalism is “finally consistent with God as *agape*.”<sup>46</sup> According to Ferré, God cannot condemn a human being to hell because that would violate His *agape*, which never fails.<sup>47</sup> Since God is sovereign, his *agape* will insure that all will be saved. Ferré writes,

The logic of the situation is simple. Either God could not or would not save all. If He could not He is not sovereign; then not all things are possible with God. If He would not, again the New Testament is wrong, for it openly claims that He would have all to be saved. Nor would He be totally good.... The total logic of the deepest message of the New Testament, namely that God both can and wants to save all, is unanswerable.<sup>48</sup>

Why then does Scripture say that some will be lost? Why does it refer to a literal hell?

Ferré says that the teaching about eternal damnation is in Scripture because “preaching is existential. To preach to sinners that all will be saved will not reach them on their level of fear and hate of God. It will only secure them in their sin and self-sufficiency. Therefore, headed as they are away from God, they must be told: Repent or perish!”<sup>49</sup>

John A. T. Robinson claims that the New Testament teaches two eschatological “myths”: universal restoration (universalism) and a final division into saved and lost. He asserts that they represent the two sides of the truth that is in Jesus: “Though both are the truth, one [universal restoration] is the truth as it is for God and as it is for faith the further side of decision; the other [heaven and hell] is the truth as it must be to the subject facing decision.”<sup>50</sup>

Robinson argues that hell is a reality in the existential situation of the person facing the challenge of the Gospel; therefore the seriousness of his or her decision must not be watered down by any discussion of universalism. But since universal salvation is the reality that God wills, it will therefore come to pass. Universalism will have the last word. Only universal restoration is consistent with God’s nature as omnipotent love. Robinson concludes, “Christ, in Origen’s old words, remains on the cross as long as one sinner remains in hell. This is not speculation; it is a statement grounded in the very necessity of God’s nature.”<sup>51</sup>

Universalists use strong language in their condemnation of the traditional doctrine of hell. Ferré asserts that to “attribute eternal hell to God is literally blasphemy, the attributing of the worst to the best.”<sup>52</sup>

David Edwards says bluntly, “I would rather be an atheist than believe in a God who accepts it as inevitable that hell (however conceived) is the inescapable destiny of many, or of any of his children, even when they are prepared to accept ‘all the blame.’”<sup>53</sup> Charles Duthie argues the conclusion of universalism is “inescapable [for] any serious grappling with the issue of man’s final destiny in the light of the revealed character of God.”<sup>54</sup>

A second philosophical/theological argument for universalism relates to God’s sovereignty. As I mentioned, proponents of universalism argue that if God is sovereign He can and will bring universal salvation to pass. God will use His sovereign power and love to ensure that all persons eventually will be saved.

In addition to the arguments from “love” and “sovereignty,” Duthie argues for universalism from what he terms “the witness of the Christian heart.” By that he refers to the aversion that sensitive Christians share concerning the thought of human beings suffering eternally in hell. Duthie argues, “Although the last word cannot be with the Christian heart, what the Christian heart feels in this and in other matters must have *some* importance, since it is itself in some measure shaped by the Spirit of God.”<sup>55</sup> To emphasize this “witness of the human heart,” Duthie cites Paul’s statement in Romans 9:3, “I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren.”<sup>56</sup> This “witness,” Duthie argues, adds powerful weight to the universalistic position.

## **Evangelical Critique of Universalism**

### ***Biblical Critique***

Space constraints prohibit a careful exegetical examination of each passage cited

by proponents of universalism, and that task has been accomplished quite competently elsewhere.<sup>57</sup> But in general one can safely say that there are not sufficient grounds for asserting that these verses teach universalism as explained by its adherents. Why? Several arguments can be set forth.

First, these verses all can be interpreted legitimately in a non-universalistic manner.<sup>58</sup> Second, and more important, the authors of each of the above statements clearly indicate that some persons will be lost.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, whatever these verses do mean, they cannot mean that ultimately *all* will be saved, for their contexts demand another interpretation. As Wright notes,

Frequent appeal is made [by universalists] to Paul’s use of the word “all” (e.g. in Rom. 5 and 11, and in 2 Cor. 5) with no apparent realisation of the different shades of meaning that must be understood in the particular contexts.... The word “all” has several clearly distinct biblical uses (e.g. “all of some sorts,” “some of all sorts,” etc.), and to ignore this frequently-noted fact is no aid to clear thinking.<sup>60</sup>

The basic problem with the universalists’ use of these texts is that they separate them from their *immediate* context. For example, Paul’s assertion that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Co 5:19), is separated from that which immediately follows: “Be reconciled to God” (v. 20). The exhortation is not for the Corinthians merely to *recognize* that they have been reconciled, but for them to *become* reconciled to God.

Finally, there is no biblical warrant to legitimize the notion of any subsequent pleading of God with persons after death. However one interprets 1 Peter 3:19, this verse does not provide a basis for “assert-

ing that there will be a preaching of our Lord after death to every soul in hell, nor does it provide a basis for saying that such preaching will be successful.”<sup>61</sup> Harold Lindsell notes the tremendous alterations universalists must make to the biblical text:

The universalist must change the Apocalypse of John into a love feast, the threats of the lake of fire into the sea of glass, and the fire of judgment into the waters of the river of life. Brimstone must become attar of roses, and blessing must be held out to those who are said to have no part in the final resurrection. The judgment of the great white throne, which witnesses to the opening of the book of life in which are to be found the names of men and ‘who-soever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire,’ becomes poetic imagery designed to frighten men into coming into the kingdom of God earlier, although their failure to come now will not keep them out later. And heaven, despite John’s contrary testimony, will be populated by liars, murderers, sorcerers, idolaters, the unbelieving and the abominable. The lake of fire is imaginary for it will be emptied of its occupants who will flood the corridors of heaven and mingle with the holy, the true, the righteous and the sanctified.<sup>62</sup>

Scripture clearly does not teach the doctrine of universalism.<sup>63</sup>

### ***Theological Critique***

How are we to evaluate the theological/philosophical arguments set forth by adherents of universalism? Perhaps the most common error made by universalists is their practice of judging God and His actions by their standards instead of by how God has chosen to reveal Himself in Scripture. Arthur Climenhaga says bluntly, “The issue of the new universalism is no longer ‘God hath spoken’ but ‘Man hath reasoned.’”<sup>64</sup> Glasson illus-

trates this tendency quite well when he argues, “To affirm that any [persons] are kept alive for ever in a state of misery, without hope of any kind, is indefensible and is an affront to the *human* conscience.”<sup>65</sup> Harold O. J. Brown summarizes this problem in universalism when he comments that

This view contains the arrogant hidden assumption that God, if he is really to be God, must conform to our expectations. This is one feature that universalism has in common with feminist theology: it redefines God in terms of its own ideas of what is acceptable in deity, regardless of what God has revealed about himself in Scripture.<sup>66</sup>

Universalists claim that love is God’s essential attribute. This position has several problems. First, is it legitimate to take one single attribute and subsume all of God’s other attributes beneath it? Is any one single attribute superior in the divine essence? Second, even if it is acknowledged to be legitimate to focus on one attribute as superior, is love the best choice for the overarching attribute of God? Surely it would be just as possible, and in fact biblically preferable, to argue that holiness would be that attribute. When confronted by the living God (see Is 6 and Rev 4), worshipers do not cry out “loving, loving, loving!” but “holy, holy, holy!” Third, even assuming love to be the controlling characteristic, do the universalists really do justice to God’s love as it is revealed in Scripture? Wright notes that

the great majority of the ‘hard sayings,’ the passages which warn most clearly and unmistakably of eternal punishment, are found on the lips of Jesus Himself. This is the point at which the usual argument comes dangerously close to cutting off the branch it sits on. It says ‘God is love’:

but we know that principally (since it is not self-evidently true) through the life and death of Jesus Christ. We cannot use that life and death as an appeal against itself—which is precisely what happens if we say that, because God is love, the nature of salvation is *not* as it is revealed in the teaching of Jesus and in the cross itself, the place where God has provided the one way of salvation.<sup>67</sup>

The practice of judging God by human standards returns at this point. Harold Kuhn perceptively notes,

The supposed unthinkability of eternal punishment rests, in general, upon what we believe to be a faulty human analogy. Universalists tend to feel that the love of God must be like human love, raised to the *nth* power.<sup>68</sup>

Walter Martin adds that universalists “have set up their own standard of how God *must* act based upon what *they* believe is justice.”<sup>69</sup> Joseph Bettis summarizes this tendency by stating, “The real question must be raised not about the universalist’s premise that God’s love is good and sovereign, but about his conclusion that the best way to describe the sovereignty and goodness of God’s love is universalism.”<sup>70</sup>

Another problem with the doctrine of universalism is that it ignores the Bible’s emphasis on the decisive nature of this life’s decision (e.g. Gal 6:7; 2 Co 5:10; Mt 25:46; Lk 16:26). The author of Hebrews warns, “It is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment” (Heb 9:27). There is no suggestion of a “second chance,” much less of a successful one in these verses. Eternal destinies are decided in this life.

The doctrine also undercuts the significance of real moral choices in this life. Indeed, Herbert Jones argues that the spread

of universalism has precipitated a corresponding breakdown of morals.<sup>71</sup> He asks,

And—if we want to—why not? If Dr. [John A.T.] Robinson is right, if in some future state ‘the sinner must yield,’ if individual souls ‘must all of them ultimately reach heaven,’ if freedom is a delusion, if the law of consequence is nugatory, Why not? If it is all the same in the end, why not enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season? Why not fling to the winds all restraint? Why not, as so many are doing, go atheist all the way?<sup>72</sup>

Universalism also has difficulty explaining major parts of the preaching of Christ and the Apostles. They warned people to turn; therefore their preaching must be seen as either inept or immoral. Either they were wrong or they knew better but “did evil that good might come.”<sup>73</sup> Takunboh Adeyemo notes, “Unlike the Universalists, Jesus and the New Testament writers take the issue of man’s destiny seriously. They do not romanticise heaven and hell or exploit the doctrine merely to induce right action.”<sup>74</sup>

Finally, if everyone will eventually attain salvation, then there is no motivation to preach the gospel or to pray for the conversion of those who do not yet know Christ.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, “preaching” done by universalists often focuses on temporal issues. Note the following description of what is taking place in many churches:

People come to church seeking answers to their deep wonderings about life and death. But they hear sermons about the need to boycott certain brands of chocolate bars or grapes. They hear about the injustice of America’s economic system. Timely topics, to be sure. But what relevance have they to a man whose wife is dying of cancer, to a widow whose years are dwindling and is terrified by thoughts of approaching death?<sup>76</sup>

T. F. Torrance bluntly writes, “No doctrine that cuts the nerve of that urgency in the Gospel can be a doctrine of love, but only an abiding menace to the Gospel and to mankind.”<sup>77</sup> Well said.

### The Primacy of Scripture

I have attempted to portray accurately and critique carefully the doctrine of universal salvation. Universalism is clearly unbiblical in its assertion that all will be saved. Yet due to the pressures of pluralism, many people, even professed evangelicals, appear to be moving in the direction of belief in universal salvation. Hunter’s conclusion from his massive research project deserves careful scrutiny:

Overall, this cohort of Evangelicals has not, for all practical purposes, repudiated traditional Protestant theology on the matter of salvation. A dynamic is at work nonetheless. As with their view of the Bible, it minimally represents a softening of earlier doctrinal certainties. Of their own salvation, they are confident. It is with regard to the salvation of others that there is ambiguity and doubt. The certainties characteristic of previous generations appear to be giving way to a measure of hesitancy and questioning.<sup>78</sup>

But as attractive as universalism and other theories that challenge the traditional Christian teaching on heaven and hell might appear, they fail to answer fundamental objections to changing our belief in eternal punishment for those apart from Christ. Of these objections, the most powerful are the sayings of our Lord, sayings which leave no room whatever for the universalist’s position.<sup>79</sup> J. I. Packer notes,

All the language that strikes terror into our hearts—weeping and gnashing of teeth, outer darkness, the worm, the fire, gehenna, the

great gulf fixed—this is all directly taken from our Lord’s teaching. It is from Jesus Christ that we learn the doctrine of eternal punishment.<sup>80</sup>

Kenneth Kantzer echoes this sentiment when he writes that

So while I am deeply impressed by the arguments of brilliant thinkers like Schleiermacher, Tillich, and others, I prefer our Lord’s words to theirs. Those who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord cannot escape the clear, unambiguous language with which he warns of the awful truth of eternal punishment. No universalism, no annihilationism, no probation in the hereafter satisfies his word.<sup>81</sup>

The simple fact remains that if we cannot trust Jesus Christ when He speaks about hell and eternal punishment, then we cannot really trust Him when He speaks about heaven and eternal life.

How do we know that God is love? Through the person of Jesus Christ. No one knows more about God’s love than Jesus Christ. Do universalists dare presume they can teach Jesus Christ something about God’s love? The One who embodied God’s love spent more time talking about the horrors of hell than the glories of heaven. Hell is real, and hell is eternal. We have Jesus Christ’s word on that.

But what about the issue of justice? Is hell fair? Early in the biblical record Abraham asks, “Shall not the judge of the earth do right?” (Ge 18:25) That question was answered affirmatively. Revelation 16:7 adds, “Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.” No one will ever be able to say to God that He was unjust in His judgment. Every person receives one of two things from God: justice or mercy. No one receives injustice.<sup>82</sup>

We do not yet have the perspective of

eternity to see life as God sees it. When we do, we will join with the chorus of those around the throne and exclaim, “Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments” (Rev 16:7).

In the final analysis, the issue comes back to the integrity of Scripture.<sup>83</sup> Kantzer notes,

I wish I could say that God is too loving, too kind, and too generous to condemn any soul to eternal punishment. I would like to believe that hell can only be the anteroom to heaven, a temporary and frightful discipline to bring the unregenerate to final moral perfection.... On this all-important topic we have only two alternatives—dismal, helpless ignorance, or divine revelation.<sup>84</sup>

Can Scripture be trusted to give us the truth about God, man, and salvation? Is it not significant that a denial of eternal punishment has arisen during the same time as questions are being raised about the trustworthiness of the Bible? Yet, as history demonstrates, doubting God’s Word is the starting point for universalism. In Eden the serpent asked, “Has God said [you shall die]?” Then he told the woman, “You surely shall not die!”

The deceiver of mankind is still at work. His approach has not changed. Apparently, however, he is getting a greater audience today. “You surely shall not die!” is a message being propagated by many voices.

Yet against these many voices the voice of Scripture states that persons who have not trusted Christ are lost. John 3:18 says, “He who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Likewise, Peter declares, “There is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be

saved” (Ac 4:12).

## **Conclusion: Where Do We Go From Here?**

In closing, let me suggest three responses evangelicals should make to the doctrine of universalism. First, we must rediscover and preach “the exceeding sinfulness of sin.” G. K. Chesterton once said it is surprising that people have rejected the doctrine of original sin because it is the only doctrine that can be empirically verified. We live in a culture that tries to sidestep the issue of sin. In *Whatever Became of Sin?* Karl Menninger states, “[sin] was once a strong word, an ominous and serious word.... But the word went away. It has almost disappeared—the word along with the notion.”<sup>85</sup> If Menninger could write that in 1973, what would he say today?

I believe this is the crux of the problem of universalism and other challenges to the orthodox view of judgment. Could some persons have accepted the idea that people’s sinfulness is not serious enough to merit so severe a punishment as an eternal hell? John Stott apparently has, for he has recently argued for a brand of annihilationism that allows sinners to cease to exist after having suffered “appropriately” for their sins. In his response to David Edwards concerning the issue of eternal conscious torment, Stott asks, “Would there not, then, be a serious disproportion between sins consciously committed in time and torment consciously experienced throughout eternity?”<sup>86</sup>

Jonathan Edwards answered this objection forcefully in his powerful sermon “The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners”:

So that sin against God, being a violation of infinite obligations, must be a crime infinitely heinous, and so deserving infinite punishment.... The *eternity* of the punishment of ungodly men renders it infinite...and therefore renders [it] no more than proportionable to the heinousness of what they are guilty of.<sup>87</sup>

The lyricist Augustus M. Toplady summarizes well the biblical viewpoint with these lines from the hymn “Rock of Ages”:

Could my tears forever flow, could  
my zeal no respite know.  
All for sin could not atone; Thou  
must save and Thou alone.  
Nothing in my hand I bring. Simply  
to Thy cross I cling.  
Naked, come to Thee for dress;  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace.  
Foul, I to the fountain fly; Wash me,  
Savior, or I die!

Second, we must teach and preach on hell and judgment. Our commitment must be to tell the truth, however unpopular it may seem to some. Telling the truth is indeed the most “loving” thing one can do.<sup>88</sup> Public opinion must not be allowed to change truth. Phillips Brooks challenges preachers with these words:

Courage...is the indispensable requisite of any true ministry.... Courage is good everywhere, but it is necessary here. If you are afraid of men and a slave to their opinion, go and do something else. Go and make shoes to fit them.... But do not keep on all your life preaching sermons which shall say not what God sent you to declare, but what they hire you to say.<sup>89</sup>

Our culture disdains what is termed “fire and brimstone preaching.” But as the great Puritan pastor Richard Baxter emphasized in his ministry, “fear must drive, as love must draw.”<sup>90</sup> Both emphases are found in Scripture and both must be

preached. We must challenge people not only to flee *from* the wrath to come, but to flee *to* the One who bore that wrath for lost and guilty sinners. If in the past there was too much fire and brimstone preaching, today there is too little. The pendulum has swung too far in the direction of “love drawing” and many people do not understand the perils of being in a lost state. Some Christian leaders are telling us today that people already know they are sinners—all they need to know is how to be saved.

That statement is simply not true. A lot of people understand something is wrong, but they do not see themselves as guilty sinners under condemnation from a holy God. Most people think they are basically good. They throw out platitudes such as “If God grades on the curve, I’ll make it” or “I’m as good as the next person—I’ll take my chances.”

Baxter asks a question that we need to ask today: How shall they call on a Savior until they know they need one? Baxter maintains, “We persuade men to believe that they are sick, that they may go to the Physician.”<sup>91</sup> Baxter shares the following powerful illustration about the importance of people understanding sin and condemnation before they can understand grace and the gospel: “A man on the gallows will be glad of a pardon; but a stander-by, that thinks he is innocent, would not regard it, but take it for an accusation.”<sup>92</sup>

Imagine a man on the gallows, with a rope around his neck, moments from being hanged to death. A messenger from the king rushes forward and hands the man a paper, declaring, “The king has pardoned you! The king has pardoned you!” Would not that man receive that news gladly and with rejoicing?

But consider if that messenger were to

give that same message to a man in the crowd, an “innocent bystander.” How would that man receive the news of a pardon? That man most assuredly would revile the messenger. “What are you doing giving this message to me?” he might angrily ask. “Up there—on the gallows—he’s the guilty party. He’s the one who needs a pardon, not me.” A pardon offered to an “innocent” bystander in the crowd would be considered an insult to him.

This illustration points out the wisdom in the oft-quoted statement, “We must first get people lost before we can get them saved.” If any preacher needs more motivation to do this, he need only study the preaching of Jesus. Jesus talked more about hell than he did about heaven. For example, in Matthew 10:28 he warned, “Do not fear those who can destroy the body, but fear Him who can destroy body and soul in hell.” Jesus Christ was what some might call today a “fire and brimstone preacher.” He was not afraid of making people afraid.

C. H. Spurgeon recognized the importance of preaching on hell. He said,

We rob the gospel of its power if we leave out its threatenings of punishment. It is to be feared that the novel opinions upon annihilation and restoration which have afflicted the Church in these last days have caused many ministers to be slow to speak concerning the last judgment and its issues, and consequently the terrors of the Lord have had small influence upon either preachers or hearers. If this be so it cannot be too much regretted, for one great means of conversion is thus left unused.<sup>93</sup>

Because eternal judgment is part of the truth of God, we must proclaim it.<sup>94</sup>

Third, we must display a passion for lost souls. How will lost people hear the unique message of hope in Christ? Hu-

man agents must be raised up by the Lord to share the message. God has so willed it. As J. Herbert Kane points out, “There is not a single line in the book of Acts to suggest that God can save a human being without employing a human agent. On the contrary there are several examples of God’s going to great lengths to secure the active cooperation of one or another of His servants.”<sup>95</sup> If we truly believe in the reality of heaven and hell, we cannot say we love people if we refuse to share the gospel with them. This point is emphasized in a booklet titled “Tract Written by an Atheist”:

Did I firmly believe, as millions say they do, that the knowledge and practice of religion in this life influences destiny in another, religion would mean to me everything. I would cast away earthly enjoyments as dross, earthly cares as follies, and earthly thoughts and feelings as vanity. Religion would be my first waking thought, and my last image before sleep sank me into unconsciousness. I should labour in its cause alone. I would take thought for the morrow of Eternity alone. I would esteem one soul gained for heaven worth a life of suffering. Earthly consequences should never stay my hand, nor seal my lips. Earth, its joys and its griefs, would occupy no moment of my thoughts. I would strive to look upon Eternity alone, and on the Immortal Souls around me, soon to be everlastingly happy or everlasting miserable. I would go forth to the world and preach to it in season and out of season, and my text would be, ‘WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN IF HE GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD AND LOSE HIS OWN SOUL?’<sup>96</sup>

Our Lord’s commission constrains us to be faithful to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, beginning in our own neighborhoods.

As John Stott has written,

Universalism, fashionable as it is today, is incompatible with the teaching of Christ and His apostles, and is a deadly enemy of evangelism. *The true universalism of the Bible is the call to universal evangelism in obedience to Christ's universal commission.* It is the conviction not that all men will be saved in the end, but that all men must hear the gospel of salvation before the end, as Jesus said (Matt. 24:14), in order that they may have a chance to believe and be saved (Romans 10:13-15).<sup>97</sup>

May we all prove to be thoroughgoing universalists in this sense.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> "We Face a Task Unfinished," lyrics by George J. Webb.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., D. A. Carson, "The Challenges of Contemporary Pluralism," *SBJT* 1/2 (Summer 1997) 4-37; A. B. Caneday, "'Evangelical Inclusivism' and the Exclusivity of the Gospel: A Review of John Sanders's *No Other Name*," *SBJT* 1/4 (Winter 1997) 24-39; and Thomas R. Schreiner, "Perseverance and Assurance: A Survey and a Proposal," *SBJT* 2/1 (Spring 1998) 32-62.

<sup>3</sup> N. T. Wright, "Universalism and the World-Wide Community," *Churchman* 89 (July-September 1975) 200. J. I. Packer laments, "I am afraid that many of us have slipped into the practice of living and behaving as if universalism were true, even though we would never subscribe to it in writing." See Packer, "All Men Won't Be Saved," *Eternity* 16 (November 1965) 16.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to eschatology, Blue lists theology proper, Christology, soteriology, biblical anthropology, hamartiology, and ecclesiology. See Ronald J. Blue, "Untold Billions: Are

They Really Lost?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138 (October-December 1981) 341.

<sup>5</sup> Fred Carl Kuehner summarizes the view as "all men are doomed to be saved." See Kuehner, "Heaven or Hell?" in *Fundamentals of the Faith*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969) 242.

<sup>6</sup> Someone aptly has summarized the shift in viewpoints as follows:  
Older forms of universalism: Man is too good for God to damn.  
Newer forms of universalism: God is too good to damn man.

<sup>7</sup> Richard J. Bauckham, "Universalism: A Historical Survey," *Themelios* 4 (1979) 49.

<sup>8</sup> James Davison Hunter, *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987) 34.

<sup>9</sup> George Barna, *Absolute Confusion* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993) 15.

<sup>10</sup> Hunter, *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation*, 35. The Evangelical Academy project was a 1982-1985 attitudinal survey of students and faculty at nine liberal arts colleges and seven evangelical seminaries.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 35. It must be noted, as Hunter does, that "it is important to recall that the majority still hold the traditional approach to the problem of salvation. Yet as the interviews suggest, even among these there is a pervasive uneasiness about the nature of hell and about who is relegated to it. It is an uneasiness which may portend a greater cultural accommodation." See Hunter, *Evangelicalism*, 47-48.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 38. A survey taken at the 1967 Urbana Missions Conference bears this out. Out of five thousand replies to over eight thousand questionnaires distributed, only 37 percent believed that "a person who doesn't hear the

gospel is eternally lost." Only 42 percent believed that "unbelievers will be punished in a literal hell of fire," and 25 percent believed that "man will be saved or lost on the basis of how well he followed what he *did* know." See Arthur P. Johnston, "Focus Comment," *Trinity World Forum* 1 (Fall 1975) 3.

<sup>13</sup>Jimmy Carter, quoted in "Power and Higher Power: Carter's Journey," *The New York Times* (December 15, 1996) 16. Note Carter's use of the term "innocent" in his quotation, implying a denial of the universality of sin and depravity.

<sup>14</sup>Leighton Ford, *Worldwide Challenge* (September/October 1983) 20. David Wells notes the doctrine of hell is being abandoned "not because of new light from the Bible but because of new darkness from the culture." See David F. Wells, "Foreword," in Robert A. Peterson, *Hell on Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1995) x.

<sup>15</sup>See Bernard Ramm, "Will All Men Be Finally Saved?" *Eternity* (August 1964) 22. Harold O. J. Brown makes this same point in "Will Everyone Be Saved?" *Pastoral Renewal* 11 (June 1987) 13.

<sup>16</sup>This is by no means a comprehensive history of universalism. For a more detailed presentation, see Richard J. Bauckham, "Universalism: A Historical Survey," *Themelios* 4 (1979) 47-54; Henri Blocher, "The Scope of Redemption in Modern Theology," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 9 (Autumn 1991) 80-103; and Alan M. Fairhurst,

"Death and Destiny," *Churchman* 95 (1981) 313-325.

<sup>17</sup>For a differing perspective on Origen which defends his orthodoxy on the doctrine of universal salvation, see Frederick W. Norris, "Universal Salvation in Origen and Maximus," in *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992) 35-72.

<sup>18</sup>Bauckham, "Universalism: A Historical Survey," 50.

<sup>19</sup>Note the description of Erigena's teaching in *Christianity Today* 31 (March 20, 1987) 39.

<sup>20</sup>Bauckham, "Universalism: A Historical Survey," 50.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. Bauckham notes that the judgment was subsequently reversed on appeal by the Lord Chancellor.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid. Bauckham notes that Farrar remained "agnostic as to the alternatives."

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. Pusey's work was titled, *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment* (London: James Parker and Co., 1880).

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>James I. Packer, "The Way of Salvation. Part III: The Problems of Universalism," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Jan-March 1973) 4.

<sup>29</sup>Herbert G. Jones, "Universalism and Morals," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 3 (1950) 27.

<sup>30</sup>Bauckham, "Universalism: A Historical Survey," 48. Those who argue in favor of universalism acknowledge their position is not

the historic one of the church. But T. F. Glasson dislikes the term "modification," preferring instead to say that "elements which have all along been present in the N.T. and in some parts of our Christian heritage have now come into their rightful place." See Glasson, "Human Destiny: Has Christian Teaching Changed?" *Modern Churchman* 12 (July 1969) 291. When he wrote this article, Glasson was Lecturer in New Testament Studies, New College, London.

<sup>31</sup>Note the article by Joseph D. Bettis, "Is Karl Barth a Universalist?" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 20 (December 1967) 423-436. Bettis argues that it is illegitimate to label Barth a universalist because Barth himself "consistently rejects universalism as a doctrine." Bettis also notes, however, that Barth leaves open the possibility that within God's freedom all men may indeed be saved. See Bettis, 427.

<sup>32</sup>Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV, Pt. I, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956) 295.

<sup>33</sup>G. W. Bromiley, "Karl Barth," in *Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology*, ed. Philip Hughes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966) 54.

<sup>34</sup>Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 164f. See also G. C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956) 292-296. Emilio Antonio Núñez says, "The least that can be said of Karl Barth is that in his teaching about election and reconciliation he opens himself dangerously to universalism." See Núñez, "Universalism," in *Walvoord: A Tribute*,

ed. Donald K. Campbell (Chicago: Moody, 1982) 173.

<sup>35</sup>See Donald Bloesch, "The Legacy of Karl Barth," *TSF Bulletin* 9 (1986) 7. Note that Barth's view does not stem from man's participation in "religion," but from God's overwhelming grace.

Bauckham notes that this "hopeful" universalism has had more appeal to conservative Christians than dogmatic universalism, because it allows them to "hope for the salvation of all men without presuming to know something which God has not revealed." Bauckham, "Universalism: A Historical Survey," 52.

<sup>36</sup>Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV, Pt. III, 478. Thus my labeling of Barth as a "Hope-so Universalist."

<sup>37</sup>Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1960) 62.

<sup>38</sup>Carl E. Braaten, "The Meaning of Evangelism in the Context of God's Universal Grace," *Journal of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education* 3 (1987-88) 16.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>40</sup>Ajith Fernando utilizes the term "wishful universalists." See his *Crucial Questions about Hell* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991) 22.

<sup>41</sup>I am indebted to Emilio Núñez for this helpful grouping. See Núñez, 173.

<sup>42</sup>For an in-depth exegetical treatment of these texts from an evangelical perspective, see Fernando, *A Universal Homecoming?* (Madras, India: Evangelical Literature Service, 1982) and also his more re-

cent work, *Crucial Questions about Hell*. N. T. Wright makes an interesting observation concerning the universalists' use of Scripture, usually from the Pauline corpus. Wright says, "An odd inversion, this, of the old liberal position where Jesus was the teacher of heavenly truths and Paul the cross-grained dogmatic bigot." See Wright, "Towards a Biblical View of Universalism," *Themelios* 4 (1979) 55.

<sup>43</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the NASB.

<sup>44</sup>Glasson, "Human Destiny: Has Christian Teaching Changed?" 296.

<sup>45</sup>Wright, "Towards a Biblical View of Universalism," 54. Wright is not espousing this view, merely presenting it. Wright's article argues against universalism.

<sup>46</sup>Nels F. S. Ferré, "Universalism: Pro and Con," *Christianity Today* 7 (March 1, 1963) 24. Ferré criticizes P. T. Forsyth for making holiness God's dominant attribute, yet, as Kenneth Hamilton points out, Ferré's criticism can apply equally to his own view that love is God's dominant attribute. See Kenneth Hamilton, "Love or Holy Love? Nels Ferré versus P. T. Forsyth," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 8 (October 1962) 229.

<sup>47</sup>Ferré claims, "That such a doctrine [hell] could be conceived, not to mention believed, shows how far from any understanding of the love of God many people once were and, alas, still are!" See Ferré, *The Christian Understanding of God* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951) 228.

<sup>48</sup>Ferré, *Evil and the Christian Faith* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947) 118. Lindsell answers this "unanswerable logic" by saying, "When Ferré says that if God could not save all He is not sovereign, his own logic can be turned against him by saying that if God cannot send anyone to eternal perdition then He is also not sovereign! In either statement (Ferré's or its opposite), one is left with a finite God. Therefore there is a standoff. Assuming either argument, God is finite." See Harold Lindsell, "Universalism Today: Part Two," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 122 (January-March 1965) 32.

<sup>49</sup>Ferré, "Universalism: Pro and Con," 24. Apparently the logic of what this does to Ferré's concept of a loving God escapes him. Is it loving to deceive people deliberately to get them to act in a certain way? Blum notes, "The idea of scaring people with notions that God knows to be untrue even if it results in a good end is unworthy of God." See Edwin A. Blum, "Shall You Not Surely Die?" *Themelios* 4 (1979) 59.

<sup>50</sup>John A. T. Robinson, *In the End God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 130.

<sup>51</sup>Robinson, "Universalism: Is It Heretical?" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 2 (1949) 155. Packer correctly notes, "But it is a speculation, of course; all statements about 'the necessity of God's nature' which go beyond Scripture are speculative." See J. I. Packer, "Universalism and Evangelism," in *One Race, One Gospel, One Task: Vol. 2*, ed.

- Carl F. H. Henry and W. Stanley Mooneyham (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1967) 183.
- <sup>52</sup>Ferré, "Universalism: Pro and Con," 24.
- <sup>53</sup>David L. Edwards, *Evangelical Essentials: A Liberal/Evangelical Dialogue. With a response by John Stott* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988) 295.
- <sup>54</sup>Charles S. Duthie, "Ultimate Triumph," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 14 (1961) 168.
- <sup>55</sup>Ibid., 157.
- <sup>56</sup>Ibid., 169. Duthie has overlooked, however, the fact that Paul definitely believed people would be accursed if they rejected Christ! To use Paul as an example of a "universalist's heart" certainly gives back more than it takes.
- <sup>57</sup>See Fernando, "A Critique of Exegetical Arguments for Universalism," Unpublished Th.M. Thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1976.
- <sup>58</sup>Packer argues that the non-universalistic interpretation of these texts is "more germane to their context than the universalist one." See Packer, "All Men Won't Be Saved," 17.
- <sup>59</sup>E.g. John 5:28-29; John 10; Romans 2:9, 12; 2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 Corinthians 15:1; Ephesians 5:5; 1 John 5:14-15; 2 Peter 2. Note that some of these assertions are found within the same passage as that which supposedly teaches universalism! Harold Lindsell notes that an objective observer will be "struck by the amount of data against universalism when contrasted with the few references which seem to favor it." See Lindsell, "Universalism Today: Part Two," 36.
- <sup>60</sup>Wright, "Universalism and the World-Wide Community," 200.
- <sup>61</sup>Packer, "All Men Won't Be Saved," 17.
- <sup>62</sup>Lindsell, "Universalism Today: Part Two," 39.
- <sup>63</sup>Packer claims that many universalists have seen the futility of the above exegetical arguments, and that therefore they have moved from exegetical to philosophical/theological arguments. See Packer, "All Men Won't Be Saved," 17. Bauckham concurs, saying that in the twentieth century, "exegesis has turned decisively against the universalist case." See Bauckham, "Universalism: A Historical Survey," 52.
- <sup>64</sup>Arthur M. Climenhaga, "The New Universalism," *United Evangelical Action* 23 (December 1964) 18.
- <sup>65</sup>Glasson, "Human Destiny: Has Christian Teaching Changed?" 294 [emphasis mine].
- <sup>66</sup>Harold O. J. Brown, "Will Everyone Be Saved?" 13.
- <sup>67</sup>Wright, "Towards a Biblical View of Universalism," 55.
- <sup>68</sup>Harold B. Kuhn, "Universalism in Today's Theology," *Christianity Today* (September 16, 1957) 10-11.
- <sup>69</sup>Walter R. Martin, "Universal Salvation: Does the Bible Teach It?" *Eternity* 7 (September 1956) 39.
- <sup>70</sup>Bettis, "Critique of the Doctrine of Universal Salvation," *Religious Studies* 6 (December 1970) 336. Fernando critiques Barth's use of God's sovereignty as an argument for universalism: "Barth's point is that God will do as he chooses, and we have no right to make pronouncements as to whether all will be saved or not. Barth must be lauded for his emphasis on the sovereignty of God. But if the sovereign God has disclosed to humanity what he will do, then the appropriate response to his sovereignty is to believe what he has revealed. God has revealed unmistakably in the Scriptures that there will be some who will be lost eternally. Therefore, it is Barth who has been disrespectful of God's sovereignty by denying that we cannot know the answer to a question which God has answered for us." See Fernando, *Crucial Questions About Hell*, 121-122.
- <sup>71</sup>Jones, "Universalism and Morals," 27.
- <sup>72</sup>Ibid., 29.
- <sup>73</sup>Paul Helm argues that if "it is immoral to punish the impenitent in hell then it is immoral genuinely to threaten such punishment." See Paul Helm, "Universalism and the Threat of Hell," *Trinity Journal* 4 (Spring 1983) 43.
- <sup>74</sup>Tokunboh Adeyemo, "The Salvation Debate and Evangelical Response: Part Two," *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 2 (1983) 11. Packer notes that according to the Gospel of Universalism, Paul would have added to his assertion to the Philippian jailer: "And if you don't believe you will be saved anyway, but it will hurt badly, and I would like to spare you that." See Packer, "The Way of Salvation, Part III: The Problems of Universalism," 3.
- <sup>75</sup>Harold Lindsell argues statistics

bear this out quite well: “Perhaps the best way to show how dramatic the missionary retreat has been is to look at the percentage decline in the number of overseas missionaries among some of the major denominations between 1962 and 1979: Episcopal Church, 79 percent decline; Lutheran Church of America, 70 percent; United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 72 percent; United Church of Christ, 68 percent; Christian Church Disciples, 66 percent; United Methodist Church, 46 percent; American Lutheran Church, 44 percent.” See Lindsell, “The Major Denominations Are Jumping Ship,” *Christianity Today* 25 (September 18, 1981) 16. The article concludes, “Though many factors contributed to this decline, it is legitimate to reckon that these figures are a rough index of the depth of conviction about basic Christian doctrine—the nature of the gospel, the lostness of mankind apart from Christ, and the necessity of obeying biblical mandates calling for sacrifice and discipline for the sake of advancing the kingdom of Christ.” T. F. Glasson tries to counter such charges: “It used to be said that the very lever of missionary endeavour would be broken if there were any deviation from the old eschatology. But this has proved to be untrue. Our grandfathers were impressed with the horror that men should die without Christ. We are more concerned with the tragedy that they should live without Him.” See Glasson, “Human

Destiny: Has Christian Teaching Changed?” 292. Glasson’s argument is theologically and historically flawed.

<sup>76</sup>Charles W. Keysor, “What Has Become of Eternity?” *Pastoral Renewal* (April 1985) 132.

<sup>77</sup>T. F. Torrance, “Universalism or Election?” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 2 (1949) 318.

<sup>78</sup>Hunter, *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation*, 40.

<sup>79</sup>N. T. Wright notes that universalists approach these texts in one of three ways: (1) ignore them and base their theology on a supposed overview of the gospels or on philosophical ideas instead; (2) claim they were not the actual words of Jesus; (3) claim Jesus was mistaken in what He said about hell. Obviously, when someone adopts any of these three approaches, they have already departed from historic orthodoxy in their methodology, even before getting to their conclusion. See Wright, “Universalism and the World-Wide Community,” 202.

<sup>80</sup>Packer, “All Men Won’t Be Saved,” 156. William G. T. Shedd agrees: “Jesus Christ is the Person who is responsible for the doctrine of Eternal Perdition. He is the Being with whom all opponents of this theological tenet are in conflict.... The Christian ministry never would have invented it in all the Christian centuries.” See Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology: Vol. 2*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1953) 680.

<sup>81</sup>Kenneth S. Kantzer, “Troublesome Questions,” *Christianity Today* 31 (March 20, 1987) 45. See also

Kantzer, “The Claims of Christ and Religious Pluralism,” in *Evangelism on the Cutting Edge*, ed. Robert E. Coleman (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1986) 15-29.

<sup>82</sup>For an excellent discussion of this issue see R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1986) 38ff.

<sup>83</sup>William Hendriksen says, “The passages in which this doctrine of everlasting punishment...is taught are so numerous that one actually stands aghast that in spite of all this there are people today who affirm that they accept Scripture and who, nevertheless, reject the idea of never-ending torment.” See Hendriksen, *The Bible on the Life Hereafter* (1959; rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975) 197-198. Fernando argues that evangelicals do not generally *reject* the doctrine of eternal punishment, they simply *neglect* to mention it in their preaching and teaching. Fernando fears that if “one generation of evangelicals neglects these doctrines, it is quite likely that the next generation will reject it. People will grow up without the serious side of the gospel as part of their worldview.” See Fernando, “Rediscovering the Doctrine of Lostness—Part 1,” *World Evangelization* 13 (November/December 1987) 21-22.

<sup>84</sup>Kantzer, “Troublesome Questions,” 45.

<sup>85</sup>Karl Menninger, *Whatever Became of Sin?* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1973) 14.

<sup>86</sup>Stott, *Evangelical Essentials*, 318.

<sup>87</sup>Jonathan Edwards, “The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners,”

in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: Vol. 1* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974) 669. See also Edwards' sermon, "The Eternity of Hell Torments," *Works, Vol. 2*, 83-89.

<sup>88</sup>Roger Nicole observes, "If a person is struck with a deadly disease for which there is a known cure, it is neither wise nor loving to try and convince him that nothing is wrong." See Nicole, "Universalism: Will Everyone Be Saved?" *Christianity Today* 31 (March 20, 1987) 38.

<sup>89</sup>Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1877) 59.

<sup>90</sup>Richard Baxter, "The Life of Faith" (1669), in *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter, Vol. 3* (London: George Virtue, 1838) 665.

<sup>91</sup>Baxter, *Catholick Theologie: II* (1675) 221.

<sup>92</sup>Baxter, "Directions and Persuasions to a Sound Conversion" (1658), in *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter, Vol. 2* (London: George Virtue, 1838) 603.

<sup>93</sup>C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (1875; rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977) 339.

<sup>94</sup>Fernando wisely cautions that "because many have preached about hell in the wrong way, we must not avoid preaching about it. Misuse does not warrant disuse." See Fernando, "Rediscovering the Doctrine of Lostness—Part 2," *World Evangelization* 14 (January / February 1988) 14. For additional material in preaching on hell and judgment see John Blanchard, *Whatever Happened to Hell?* (Durham, England: Evangelical

Press, 1993); Tim Keller, "Preaching Hell in a Tolerant Age," *Leadership* (Fall 1997) 42-48; and Kenneth S. Kantzer, "Do You Believe in Hell?" *Christianity Today* 30 (February 21, 1986) 12.

<sup>95</sup>J. Herbert Kane, *Understanding Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974) 102. As G. C.

Berkouwer asserts, "The Church is not to speculate but to preach." See Berkouwer, "Universalism," *Christianity Today* 1 (May 13, 1957) 6.

<sup>96</sup>Norman P. Grubb, *C. T. Studd* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1982) 35-36.

<sup>97</sup>Stott, "Response to Bishop Mortimer Arias," *International Review of Missions* 65 (1976) 33 [emphasis mine]. J. I. Packer similarly describes "biblical" universalism in terms of its universal claim (Ro 1:16), its universal summons (Ac 17:30), and its universal mission (Mt 28:19). See Packer, "All Men Won't Be Saved," 15.