

# Plain Guide to Universalism

## 2. What Do Universalists Believe?

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I. The sentiment by which Universalists are distinguished, is this : that at last every individual of the human race shall become holy and happy. This does not comprise the whole of their faith, but, merely that feature of it which is peculiar to them and by which they are distinguished from the rest of the world.

II. Universalists are not infidels. It is sometimes very indiscreetly said, that Universalism is but a species of infidelity, that Universalists are not Christians and cannot be so considered. We shall have no lengthened argument on this point, but, we desire one question settled touching this matter. If the doctrine of Jesus concerning the resurrection of the dead is not true, how is the doctrine of Universalism to be established? It evidently cannot be.

If the doctrine of Jesus concerning a future life fails, what becomes of Universalism? It is gone like a dream. Why, then, should Universalism be called infidelity?

If it cannot rest unless it rest on Christianity, is it not a very singular kind of infidelity?

It is just such infidelity as Jesus taught when He said the dead shall become as the angels of God in heaven, neither shall they die any more, but shall be the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

It is such infidelity as Paul cherished when he said, "God will have all men to be saved," -- "the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." "God shall be all in all;" such is the infidelity of Universalism.

It is the infidelity the angels were infected with when they came down and sung, "Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth, and good will to men."

It is just such infidelity as distinguished the patriarch Abraham when he trusted in God's promise that all the nations of the earth should be blessed in his seed, Christ.

Finally, it is the same infidelity that made the apostles so obnoxious wherever they preached and caused the people to say, "those who have turned the world upside down, are come hither also."

III. An attempt has been recently made to distinguish Universalists only by a disbelief in future punishment. Such an attempt is unjustifiable. They agree in the great doctrine of the final holiness and happiness of all men and they leave every man to form his own opinion in regard to the times and seasons when this great event shall transpire.

There has been some discussion, within a few years past, on the appellation Universalist. The question seems to have been, whether this word ought to be applied to all who believe in the eventual restoration of all mankind, or only to a particular class of them.

On this subject we have never had but one opinion, and that opinion we have frequently expressed, viz. that all persons, who truly believe in the eventual salvation of all mankind by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, are Universalists. This is the rule laid down in the "Modern History of Universalism."

For instance, Richard Coppin and Jeremy White, who both flourished in the time of Cromwell, are put down in that work as Universalists, although they differed much in opinion on minor points, the latter being a Trinitarian and a believer in future punishment, the former discarding that doctrine. So also Archbishop Tillotson and Dr. T. Burnet are put down as Universalists, who were both believers in future punishment. The same may be said of the Chevalier Ramsay and many others.

The rule which we prescribed to ourselves in the compilation of that work, we still adhere to, and always shall. All persons are Universalists who truly believe in the salvation of all mankind through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It makes no difference what are the individual's views concerning punishment, if he holds the doctrine above described.

There are some Universalists who hold to punishment after death, nevertheless, we are glad to hail them as Universalists. They agree with us in our views of the great consummation, -- all punishment, in their view, is disciplinary, and they denounce punishment, either in this world or the next, having any other object, as cruel and unjust.

Certain persons have endeavored to give a very narrow signification to the word Universalist, as signifying only those who do not hold to punishment beyond the grave, but, they have repeatedly been told, by Universalists of both classes, that such a restricted sense of the word could not be admitted.

We wish it distinctly understood, that Universalists admit of no distinction in the denomination, on account of difference of opinion on the subject of punishment. They are all one, -- they all go for one thing, and may God to all eternity preserve them one. Amen.

IV. Although Universalists do not believe in the authority of man-made creeds, it became necessary, in the year 1803, for them to make a public declaration of their sentiments.

The Supreme Court of New Hampshire had decreed, that Congregationalists and Universalists, in law, were one and the same denomination, and that, Universalists were therefore liable to be taxed to the support of Congregational parishes.

To meet this extraordinary state of things, the General Convention of Universalists, in the session at Strafford, VT., to show that Universalists differed widely from Congregationalists in their religious views. This committee, consisting of Z. Streeter, G. Richards, H. Ballou, W. Ferriss, And, Z. Lathe, reported at the session in Winchester, NH., the following year. On this committee were persons who believed in future punishment, and those who did not, but a majority, we think, of the former. They endeavored to frame their articles of faith in such a way, as that both classes of Universalists might cordially unite in them. The articles were drawn by the venerated Ferriss, himself a believer in future punishment, and were in the following words:

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## 4. Profession of Belief

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1. *We believe, that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain a revelation of the character of God, and of the duty, interest, and final destination of mankind.*
2. *We believe there is one God, whose nature is love; revealed in one Lord Jesus Christ, by one Holy Spirit of grace, who will finally restore the whole family of mankind to holiness and happiness.*
3. *We believe, that holiness and true happiness are inseparably connected; and that believers ought to maintain order, and practice good works, for these things are good and profitable unto men.*

Such then, in brief, are the sentiments of Universalists. But, lest some of our readers should object to the brevity of the above Profession, we shall introduce in this place a form of faith, designed to express the general sentiments of Universalists, drawn up several years since, by Rev. Dolphus Skinner, of Utica, NY., and first published in connection with his "Letters to Aikin & Lansing," Utica, NY., 1833.

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## 5. Bible Creed

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1. **Concerning God and Christ.** We believe that the Lord our God is ONE Lord, -- that we all have ONE FATHER; ONE GOD hath created us, -- and hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth; -- that though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there are gods many and lords many,) yet to us there is but ONE GOD, THE FATHER, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and ONE LORD JESUS CHRIST, by whom are all things, and we by Him, (for God hath made him both Lord and Christ,) for there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29; Mal. 2:10; Acts 2:36 and 17:26; 1 Cor. 8:5,6; 1 Tim 2:5,6.
2. **Concerning the character of God.** We believe the Lord our God is Almighty, and of great power, -- that His understanding (or wisdom) is infinite, -- that He is love itself, -- good unto all, and His tender mercies over all His works, -- that He loves all the things that are, and abhors nothing that His hands have made, for He never would have created any thing to have hated it, -- that He is a just God and a Saviour, -- Who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, and Who works all things after the counsel of His own will, -- that in Him mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other. Gen. 17:1; Ps. 147:5; Ps. 85:10; Ps. 145:9; Isa. 45:21; 1 Tim. 2:4; Eph. 1:11; 1 John 4:8,16.
3. **Concerning the mission and mediation of Christ.** We believe God sent His Son to be the Savior of the World, -- that to this end, (as He loved both His Son and the World,) He gave all things into His hand, even power over all flesh, that He might

give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given Him, and that all that the Father gave Him shall so come to Him as not to be cast out, -- that, as He tasted death for every man, and is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, -- that as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive, -- that, having brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel, He shall continue to reign until death, the last enemy, is destroyed, and all things are subdued unto Him; till every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Him Lord, to the glory of God the Father, -- and, that then He will deliver up the reconciled kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all. 1 John 2:2; 4:14; John 3:35; 6:37; 17:2; Heb. 2:9; Isa. 53:11; 1 Cor. 15:22,24-28; 2 Tim. 1:10; Phil. 2:10,11.

4. **Concerning the Motive to Obedience &c.** We believe it is our duty to love God, because He first loved us, -- that, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another, -- that the goodness of God leads to repentance, -- that the grace of God, that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, and that those who believe in God ought to be careful to maintain good works; for these things are good and profitable unto men. 1 John 4:11,19; Rom. 2:4; Titus 2:11,12; 3:8.
5. **Concerning the reward of obedience.** We believe, that great peace have they who love God's law, and nothing shall offend them, -- they are like trees planted by the rivers of water, that bring forth their fruit in season; their leaf, also, shall not wither; and, whatsoever they do shall prosper, -- that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace, -- that she is a tree of life to them that lay hold of her, and happy is every one that retains her, -- that Christ's yoke is easy and His burden is light, and all who come to Him find rest to their souls, -- that, thought God is the Savior of all men, He is especially so of the believer, -- and, that whoso looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, and is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. Ps. 1:3, and 119:166; Prov.3:17, 18; Matt 11:28-30; Heb. 3:3; 1 Tim. 4:10; James 1:25.
6. **Concerning punishment for disobedience.** We believe the way of the transgressor is hard, -- that the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt, for there is no peace, says our God, to the wicked, -- that he that doeth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is no respect of persons, -- that God will render to every man according to his deeds, -- tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. Prov. 13:15; Isa. 57:20,21; Matt. 14:27; Rom. 2:6,9; Col 3:25.
7. **Concerning the limitation and remedial design of punishment.** We believe the Lord will not cast off forever; but, though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies, -- that he will not contend forever, not be always wroth, lest the spirit should fail before him, and the souls he has made, -- that, although he may apparently forsake his children for a small moment, yet with great mercies will he gather them, -- in a little wrath, he may hide his dace from them for a small moment, but with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on them, and heal them, -- that whom he loveth he chasteneth, (and he loveth and chasteneth all,) for their profit, that they may be partakers of his holiness, and be enabled afterwards to say, "before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." Lam. 3:31-32; Isa. 54:7-8, and 57:16-18; Heb. 12:7-11; Psa. 89:30-35, and 119:67.
8. **Concerning the Scriptrues, the doctrines they teach, and the duties they enjoin.** We believe, that all Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness, -- that the prophecy came

not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, -- that God hath spoken of the restitution of all things by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began, -- that the word, gone out of His mouth in righteousness, shall not return void, but shall accomplish that which He pleases, insomuch, that every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear, saying, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength. From the Scriptures, (which we take as the rule and guide of our faith and practice,) we are taught, that the whole duty of man is, to fear God and keep His commandments; to deal justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God; to do good to all men as we have opportunity; and that pure religion and undefiled before God and The Father, is this; to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep ourselves uncorrupted from the world. 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; Acts 3:21; Isa. 14:23,24; 55:11; Micah 6:8; Eccl. 12:13; Gal. 6:10; James 1:27.

We presume, that Universalists, in general, will agree to the doctrines here specified. They are all evidently drawn from the oracles of God; and the references, made at the end of each article, fully sustain the positions advanced in each.

But still, we desire that it should be remembered, that the distinguishing feature of their faith, **IS THE EVENTUAL HOLINESS AND HAPPINESS OF ALL MEN.** God has willed the salvation of all men; and has sent His Son to accomplish the transcendently great and glorious work. He has made a full revelation of Himself, and of the mission of His Son, and of His purpose to save all mankind, in his divine word, the true sense of which Universalists implicitly follow. The glory of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ, as manifested in the final holiness and happiness of all men, is the central sun of Universalism. This, with them, is the all-absorbing topic; the crowning excellence of revealed religion; the richest glory of God; the highest honor of Christ; the fullest joy of the saints; the sweetest answer to prayer; the strongest motive to praise; the most potent charm of Christian faith; a fountain of consolation in life; a holy triumph in death; the joy of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect. Such is the doctrine of the **ULTIMATE SALVATION OF ALL THE HUMAN RACE**