

Saturday, April 23, 2022—Grace School of the Bible Soldiers: STS Meeting—Why Universal Reconciliation Is a Dangerous Heresy

Introduction

- This afternoon I have been charged with addressing the subject matter of Universal Reconciliation and why it is a dangerous heresy.
- In order to accomplish this objective, I would like to cover the following points:
 - What is Universalism?
 - Biblical & Theological Arguments
 - Types of Universalism
 - Basic Tenants Universal Reconciliation According to A.E. Knock
 - Reasons Why Universal Reconciliation is a Dangerous Heresy
 - Practical Thoughts On Heresy in the *Eon* of YouTube

What Is Universalism?

- Universalism is the doctrine that all men will eventually be reconciled to God. A Universalist believes that the efficacy of the Atonement is not limited and therefore extends to all.
- Acts 3:21—derived from the Greek word rendered “restitution” in the King James Bible, Universalism is the belief that eventually everyone will be saved.
 - Romans 3:22—Paul teaches that the atonement is unlimited in its potential but is limited in its application.
 - I Timothy 2:4—God desires to save all but that he actually saves only some—those who believe.
- Historically, an early form of Universalism was first posited by Origen (c. 185-254). It was condemned at the Fifth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in AD 553 as heretical. (Geisler, 953-954)
- Universalists, regardless of stripe maintain some combination of the following four points:
 - The character of God (emphasizes God’s love) is incompatible with the idea of the eternal suffering of anyone; therefore, his grace extends to all eventually.
 - The Power of God is sufficient to restore lost humanity (some believe that fallen angels and Satan himself will be saved).

- God's sovereign will and purpose will be fulfilled when all are finally saved.
- Perfected souls in heaven could never experience eternal bliss knowing that souls were suffering forever.

Biblical & Theological Arguments

- To support their position, Universalists appeal to several passages of scripture as well as theological arguments.
- Universalist proof texts include:
 - Psalm 110:1—The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.
 - Acts 3:21—Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.
 - Romans 5:18-19—Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. 19) For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.
 - I Corinthians 15:24-25—Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25) For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.
 - II Corinthians 5:19—To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.
 - Universal Forgiveness a cousin to Universal Reconciliation also uses this verse as a primary proof text.
 - Ephesians 1:10—That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:
 - Philippians 2:10-11—That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11) And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
 - I Peter 4:6—For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

- As one can clearly observe the verses offered in support of Universalism are grossly taken out of context.
- Theological arguments for Universalism include the following:
 - Argument from God’s Love (Omnibenevolence)—“Universalism is usually based on the notion that a God of love would never allow any of His creatures to perish. Love never fails, and it never gives up [*Love Wins* by Rob Bell, 2011]. . . . An omnibenevolent God not only loves all but does so for all time, both in this life and in the life to come. However long it takes His love to reach all His rebellious creates, an all-loving God will take.” (Geisler, 960)
 - Argument from God’s Power (Omnipotence)—“Origen declared: ‘Nothing is impossible to the Omnipotent, nor is anything incapable of restoration to its Creator.’ This, of course, implies that God desires by His goodness to do so, a position supposed by many Scriptures (e.g., I Tim. 2:4; II Peter 3:9). If God wants to save all, and if He can save all (i.e., He is all-powerful), it would seem to follow that He will save all.” (Geisler, 961)
 - Argument from Paul’s Use of the Word Hell—“Did you ever stop to consider that Paul, our Apostle, never once used the word hell? . . . The plain and simple fact is that Paul was NOT negligent in his teaching ministry. Here is a passage that makes this clear. Paul said that he was “pure from the blood of all men,” because he had declared “all the counsel of God” – a counsel which obviously DID NOT include hell at all. Do we find ourselves perplexed that Paul, the Apostle, never use the word hell and yet was able to declare “all the counsel of God”? Are we amazed that he could have been “pure from the blood of all men” without even once using the word hell? Could our bewilderment here be because we have been steeped in the traditions of men, and not in the traditions of Paul. . . . Why not follow Paul in a pure Grace Gospel that has no place for, nor need of a religious hell?” (Pilkington)
 - Argument from the Reformatory View of Justice—“Origen also argued that God’s justice has in view reformation, not punishment [Rodney has recently argued similarly.] He claimed that “the fury of God’s vengeance is profitable for the purgation of souls. . . . The punishment, also, which is said to be applied by first, is understood to be applied with the object of healing.” (Geisler, 962)
 - Argument from God’s Wisdom—“Origen offered an argument for Universalism from God’s wisdom:
 - God, by the ineffable skill of His wisdom, transforming and restoring all things, in whatever manner they are made, to some useful aim, and to the common advantage of all, recalls those very creatures which differ so much from each other in mental conformation to one agreement of labor and purpose; so that, although they are under the influence of different motives, they nevertheless complete the fullness and perfection of one world, and the very variety of minds tends to one end of perfection. [For] it is one power which grasps and hold together all the diversity of the world, and leads to different movements towards one work, lest so

immense and undertaking as that of the world should be dissolved by the dissensions of souls.” (Geisler, 963)

- Universalism is not “new.” It is not a “further advancement in Pauline truth” as some are currently asserting. An early form of Universalism was taught in the 2nd and 3rd centuries by Origen of Alexandria. To what extent others beyond Origen, in the ancient church, taught Universalism is the topic of some debate among church historians. More certain is that that advance of theological liberalism during the 19th century resulted in an increase of those espousing the tenants of Universalism.

Types of Universalism

- There is a shade of difference meaning between Universalism and Universal Reconciliationism, according to Charles F. Baker author of *A Dispensational Theology*:
 - “Universalism, the teaching that all intelligent beings will finally be saved. Universalism bases its claims, not upon Scripture, but simply upon the belief that God is too loving and kind to punish sinners in hell, and that He will therefore take everyone to heaven and, what is usually held, that He will do this apart from any provision which has been made by the death of Christ [See the Theological Arguments above.]. Universal Reconciliationism, on the other hand, holds to the necessity of the death of Christ, claiming that it was in the design of that death to save every fallen being, whether man or angel. This latter doctrine is usually associated with one particular religious sect which bases its teaching upon what is called the [*Concordant Version*](#) of the Scriptures, edited by Mr. A. E. Knoch.” (Baker, 347)
- Therefore, there are two different forms/sources of Universalism that one needs to be aware of:
 - Mainline Evangelicalism—Karl Barth, Rob Bell
 - Dispensational—A.E. Knoch of the *Concordant Publishing Concern*
- It is the Knochian form of Universalism that poses the real threat the Bible believers, according to Baker.
 - “There is another form of Universalism which has had a much greater appeal to Bible-believing Christians, which is known as Universal Reconciliation. On the surface this system of teaching claims the utmost accuracy in its translation of the Scripture (*The Concordant Version*), pretends to be the only one that truly exalts the work of Christ (by showing that through his death all without exception will be reconciled to God), and has the further appeal that a dispensational approach to the Scriptures is employed.” (Baker, 611)
 - Influenced Clyde Pilkington and Rodney Baeulieu
 - Knock’s works are sold on Pilkington’s website studyshef.com

- The name, Universal Reconciliation, comes from Mr. Knock's translation of Colossians 1:20 in early renditions of the *Concordant Version* reads: "through Him to reconcile the universe to Him. . ."
- The 6th edition from 1976 has altered the reading.
- Since it is Knock's position that has wreaked the most havoc upon our dispensational brethren, we will devote the bulk of our time to understanding Universal Reconciliationism.

Basic Tenants Universal Reconciliation According to A.E. Knock

The Absolute Predestination of All Things (Eph. 1:11)

- "The absolute predestination of God. This means that everything that comes to pass is the direct will of God. God is the author and originator of sin." (Baker, 611)
- In his *Concordant Expositions*, a commentary on the *Concordant Version*, A.E. Knoch states the following about John 9:1-15:
 - "Why was this man born blind? The Jews took it for granted, as many do today, that all evil comes from sin, and that everyone is responsible for his own condition. This is absolutely false. Evil and sin are not outside of God's plan. They are essential to the highest happiness of the creature and the greatest glory of the Creator. This man's case was a concrete example. His healing was not because he was blind, but he was blind in order that he might recover sight, **and thus God's acts may be manifested and God Himself may become known. This is true of all evil and all sin.** God has introduced it into the world in order that He may display His attributes in coping with it and in removing it when its mission has been accomplished. The experience of evil and sin is transient; the memory of it will never pass away, but will always remain as the essential background apart from which God's goodness and grace never could be revealed. God's heart would always remain hidden apart from evil and sin." (Knoch, 155)
- Ephesians 1:11—Universalism extents this verse to the creation of Satan, a being created by God to introduced sin into the world. So that God could rescue these people and gain their affection.

Satan Was Created by God As An Evil Spirit (John 8:44)

- "Satan did not fall but was created by God as an evil spirit." (Baker, 611) Likewise, in his commentary on John 8:12-59, Knoch writes:
 - "The essence of God is love. It demands exercise. God must be made known. He will be a Saviour; His purpose demands the presence of sin. He makes a medium—the Adversary—to inject the virus into creation. He rescues His creatures and gains their affection. He banishes sin. Sin is His servant. He will justify all sin when He has made it a means of bringing His creatures into heart intimacy with Himself." (Knock, 154)

- Pastor C.R. Stam states the following about “Universal Reconciliation” in his book *Man: His Nature and Destiny*:
 - “In warm, tender phraseology it is explained that God planned sin and introduced it into the world as “ a gracious means to a glorious end,” so that He might finally reconcile all to Himself—even the devil. This, it is argued, will be the glorious consummation of God’s over-abounding grace. . .

If there is any such thing as moral wrong, then Universalism has led its followers into the most horrible and wicked blasphemy, for it attributes moral wrong to God.

The very basis of Universalist philosophy is that what we call sin—moral wrong—originated in the heart and mind of God, that He conceived it and brought it to pass for our good and His glory.” (Stam, 145)
- James 1:13
- Psalm 38:18
- Luke 10:18— Christ spoke of Satan's fall, which would have been impossible had Satan been created as a fallen creature.
 - Ezekiel 28:15— Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

God Is the Author of Sin

- “Since God is the author of sin, and since He created Satan as a devil and a deceiver, and since He sent Satan purposely to deceive our first parents and cause them to sin, God is directly responsible for the sins of all mankind. Therefore, God is responsible for saving all mankind, and even Satan himself. Although Mr. Knoch talks about salvation by Grace, his system requires that God save His creatures as a matter of justice.” (Baker, 612)
- But the great weight of Universalist argument lays sin directly at the door of God. Knock writes regarding John 4:28, 31:
 - “Sin is a necessary factor in the revelation of God to man and indirectly essential to the satisfaction of His love. Love cannot be lavished on those who are deserving. But to be undeserving presupposes sin and all its train of evils.” (Knock, 145)
- Does the God the Father love God the Son who never sinned? Knock answers as follows when commenting upon John 5:20:
 - “The Father's fondness for the Son is one of the most intimate and delightful revelations of Holy Writ. The fondness is not the love which flows out to those least deserving it, but the affection founded on the fellowship of purpose and of work, and agreeable association. It is liking rather than love.” (Knock, 147)

- John 3:35; 5:20—this is utter blasphemy! The scriptures emphasize that the Son is more precious than all else to the Father's heart.
- Romans 5:12—Knock argues that “. . . it is not true that sin is the source of death to Adam's descendants.” “Death it was that made [man] a confirmed sinner.” (Quoted in Stam, 154) Accordingly, Knock changes Rom. 5:12 in the *Concordant Version* is translated to support his Universalism.
 - “Therefore, even as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death, and thus death came through into all mankind, on which all sinned.”
- “Thus he [Knock] makes the verse teach that sin is the result of death, rather than that death is the result of sin.” (Stam, 154)

Unlimited Atonement

- “In order to satisfy justice God sent His Son to die for the sins of the world. The Son is not God but is the first being which God created. It is God's will that only a limited number of sinners be saved in this dispensation. The lost die in unbelief and are in unbroken oblivion until the great white throne. There they will be judged, then gently and painlessly lulled into oblivion again for the duration of the age of the new heavens and the new earth, after which they will be revived and reconciled to God, that God may be all and in all.” (Baker, 612)
- As proof of Knock's denial of the deity of Christ consider the following verses from his *Concordant Version*:
 - John 1:1-3—In the beginning was the word, and the word was toward God, and God was the word. This was in the beginning toward God. All came into being through it, and apart from it not even one thing came into being which has come into being.
 - John 1:18—God no one has ever seen. The only-begotten God, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He unfolds Him.

There Is No Revelation Concerning Eternity in the Bible

- “Basic to this scheme is the view that the Bible never speaks of eternity. The Hebrew and Greek expressions which are translated for ever and ever, and eternal are said to mean limited periods of time. Thus the so-called punishment of the wicked is only for a limited period, after which they will be saved.” (Baker, 612)
- Knoch and his disciples maintains that, “all time is comprehended in five *eons* or *ages*:
 - The *eon* of the original creation, from creation to the restoration of creation in Genesis 1:3-17.
 - The pre-Noahic *eon*, from Adam to the flood.

- The present evil *eon*, from the flood to the second coming of Christ.
- The millennial *eon*, the thousand-year kingdom.
- The *eon* of the new heavens and the new earth.
- “While Knoch admits that God and the creation will no doubt continue to exist after the end of the fifth eon, he denies that the Bible contains any revelation about eternity. What is usually called *eternal life*, he calls *eonian life*, or life for the age. He contends that wherever the Hebrew *olam* or the Greek *aionios* occur **we are to understand a limited period of time with a beginning and an ending**. It is upon this premise that he argues that everlasting or eonian punishment will come to an end. Of course, he does not believe that the unsaved will be suffering punishment all during the eon, for he teaches that the lake of fire is oblivion: rather, he holds that the unsaved will be in oblivion all during the fifth eon. He likewise holds that eternal or eonian life will come to an end, although he believes there will be some kind of existence after that. So also at the end of the eons God will cease to be the everlasting or eonian God.” (Baker, 613)
 - Matthew 18:8; 19:29; 25:41, 46
 - In his comments on the “lake of fire” Knock states the following:
 - Matthew 5:22—“Neither is it the lake of fire, which follows the great white throne judgment for the wicked. Its operation confined to the temporal judgments of the millennial kingdom. It does not fix destiny, for it disappears long before the consummation.” (Knock, 16)
 - Revelation 19:19-20— “The fact that the wild beast was once slain but was recalled to life by the dragon, and the fact that the false prophet imparted life to the image, seem to indicate that they cannot be killed as the rest, hence suffer in the lake of fire during the thousand years. Their fate is unique, and must not be taken as the lot of all who die out of Christ.” (Knock, 403)
 - John 3:15-16, 36
 - Romans 6:23
 - II Thessalonians 1:9
 - Jude 1:7, 21
 - Revelation 14:11; 19:3; 20:10
- Universalism attacks the attributes of God.
 - Romans 16:26

- I Timothy 1:17
- Revelation 11:15
- Every mention of “everlasting,” “eternal,” and “ever and ever” is expunged from the Biblical text in the *Concordant Version* even when speaking about the person and character of God.

Reasons Why Universal Reconciliation is a Dangerous Heresy

- Universal Reconciliation is Contrary to the Nature & Character of God—the Bible says that God himself is “eternal.”
 - Deuteronomy 33:27
 - I Timothy 1:17
- Universal Reconciliation is Contrary to Dispensational Truth—the eternal God is going to set up an “everlasting kingdom.”
 - Daniel 4:3; 7:27—the God of heaven will set up an “everlasting kingdom.”
 - II Peter 1:11
 - Acts 28ism leads to all manner of extreme views on death and destiny of man.
 - Soul Sleep/Conditional Immortality
 - Annihilationism
 - Universal Reconciliation
- Universal Reconciliation is Contrary to the Image of God—“which includes the freedom to choose. In order to guarantee that everyone will be saved, those who refuse to love God would be forced to love him against their will, which is not freedom.” (Geisler, 964)
 - Genesis 2:16—“. . . freely eat:”—Universalism is a violation of the institution of volition.
- Universal Reconciliation is Contrary to God’s Love—“force love is not only contrary to freedom, it isn’t love at all, but hate. No one who is truly loving forces him or herself on another.” (Geisler, 964)
- Universal Reconciliation is Contrary to God’s Justice—“God is absolutely holy, and as such He must punish sin. Therefore, as long as people are living in sin and rebellion against God, He must punish them.” (Geisler, 964)
 - Isaiah 9:7

- Universal Reconciliation is contrary to the Biblical Teaching on Eternal Punishment—“once again the Scriptures teach that that not only is there a place of eternal flames prepared for the devil and his angels, but, tragically there will be people in it as well.” (Geisler, 964)
- Universal Reconciliation is Without Scriptural Foundation— “. . . universalism 1) is based on verses wrenched out of context, 2) ignores other clear passages that teach the opposite, or 3) requires a private translation to substantiate its doctrinal claims.
 - Makes God the author of sin.
 - Knock advanced the Concordant Version as the uncorrupted final authority. He stated the following in his Preface “To The Beloved Reader:”
 - “This plan gives the Scriptures to the people, and removes the necessity of relying on human learning or authority in matters of gravest moment, where it is of supreme importance that they procure the counsel of God, unclouded by creeds and traditions which corrupt the current texts. The version is intended to be *read*, the Interlinear and Concordance are for *reference*. When certainty becomes vital and imperative, the evidence is at hand. It is a supreme satisfaction to know that any fact in divine revelation can be checked at will.

A comparison of a few lines of the Concordant Version with other translations will reveal many minute points which excel in accuracy, and fresh rendering which throw a new light upon difficult, obscure, and misunderstood passages.

Only by carefully reading the following introduction will the reader be able to grasp the tremendous possibilities and immeasurable value of this plan, as a means of entering into the mind and heart of God.” (Knock, Unnumbered Preface)
- Universal Reconciliation is Based on Appeals to Emotion—“No loving person would want anyone else to suffer in hell forever, strong desire to the contrary seems to be a primary impulse in universalism thing, setting up and implausible and unbiblical system of belief.” (Geisler, 964)
 - Appeal to Emotion—“An appeal to emotion is an effort to win an argument without facts, logic, or reason, but instead by manipulating the emotions of the audience.”
 - What about the guy who never heard the gospel?
 - Can you image your loved ones suffering in fire for all eternity?
 - What kind of God would allow that?

Practical Thoughts On Heresy in the *Eon* of YouTube

- II Timothy 3:6—YouTube and social media have allowed for the literal fulfillment of this verse.
 - Anyone with internet access and a webcam can produce content outside of the framework of the local church.
- Ephesians 3:4, I Timothy 4:13, II Timothy 2:15—YouTube has replaced Bible reading and study for many believers.
- I Corinthians 2:13-16—YouTube algorithms feed people more videos to keep them engaged on their platform. People have their guard down because they perceive themselves to be in a “safe” grace space. People are consuming content at a record pace, there is a lack of discernment and individual study (Acts 17:11).
 - In the last 28 days people who viewed videos on the [GraceLifeBible](#) YouTube channel also viewed videos by folks who teach 1) Universalism, 2) Sonship Edification, and 3) that we deny the deity of Christ.
- Beware of angry superhero preachers!

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