

Modern Universalism in the Pentecostal Church Contrasting Views of Christ's Redemption

(OVERVIEW)

Kenneth Hammonds, M.Div., Ed.D.

Director of Discipleship Ministries, West Angeles Church of God in Christ

✿ Modern Day Universalism (A New Gospel of "Inclusion") ✿

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." – John 3:16 (New King James Version)

(NOTE: Understanding and believing this verse will solve many theological problems and questions.)

I. The Origin of Universalism

There is a view in Christianity among some that states EVERYONE is already saved or will be saved by God at the time of the end and that no one will be lost (perish) to a Christless eternity. This view is called **Universalism**. The Universalism view seems to raise its theological head throughout the history of the Church. However, it is rather "new" to the traditional Pentecostal Church and its off-shoots. Therefore, it has confused some and angered others. But, it is **not biblical**, even though it is well-intended that its proponents wish for everyone to be saved. The Universalist teaching is not found in Scripture as a teaching of Jesus or the apostles, but it does trace its roots to the early church scholar and philosopher, Origen (c.185-254).

Note on Origen: Origen is the first Christian philosopher of note to propose and actively teach the theological Universalism notion. Origen tried to blend Greek philosophy and Christianity. He had many "interesting" beliefs and actions. (Like castrating himself so he could be more pure and "holy.") Origen even believed Satan was not beyond repentance and salvation, a view for which he was condemned.

II. Modern Day Attempts to Rename It – "Gospel of Inclusion"

Today, the Universalism doctrine is in the Pentecostal camp under its new name: the *Gospel of Inclusion*. Of course, this new name greatly helps the teaching become socially acceptable because, who would want to teach a "narrow" doctrine? The spirit of this age and the intellectual climate of our times says, "Let's *include* everyone!" and it is in this spirit that this doctrine has cloaked itself in modern, non-offensive, "politically correct" language. Some modern day Universalists don't even use biblical terms like "lost." They declare, "People aren't *lost*; they are just *uninformed*, or *unknowing*." Today, the proposed 21st century "new revelation" is declared as a "*newer emphasis on Grace and Love*." But, it's the same old doctrine the Bible-oriented Church has rejected for more than 1,800 years.

III. The Importance of a Proper View of the Doctrine of Salvation

(Note: The theological term for the doctrine of salvation is: **Soteriology** – pronounced: so-ter-ree-AH-low-gee.)

A correct view of the doctrine of salvation IS important because it lies at the very heart of the Christian Message and the Work of Christ. It is what the Church is all about. If people are ALREADY saved, then we must throw away many biblical terms like *sinner, lost, son of God, and Christian*.

Even the meaning of salvation in the Universalist view is changed to mean: *knowing something you are*, instead of: *becoming something you aren't*. Other scriptural terms become so radically changed that they lose their salvic power. The Universalist's message proclaiming, "*You are already a Christian!*" (redeemed by Christ), might still be quite *offensive* to a Jew, Muslim, Sexual Perversion and Abuse Religious Groups, any persons of other religions, or even to a Satanist or an atheist. Universalism seeks to solve the problem of people not accepting Christ by **forcing Christ on everyone** – whether they believe or not. However, it is because of our great care and concern for the lost that we as the Church of Christ declare and present the love of God as shown through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Universalism in any form, ancient or modern, is a feeble and spiritually impoverished attempt to help God out in His salvic purposes for humanity. It's a devoted try and the motives are probably good, but it is still unbiblical and spiritually deceptive. It does not properly represent the judgment of God, the New Testament terms for salvation, the Savior Jesus Christ, or the role of belief in salvation as God's requirement for receiving eternal life.

A COMPARISON CHART OF SEVEN CONTRASTING STATEMENTS ABOUT BEING REDEEMED

Kenneth Hammonds, M.Div., Ed.D.

Director of Discipleship Ministries, West Angeles Church of God in Christ

UNIVERSALISM	THE BIBLICAL VIEW
1. You are already saved.	1. Believe and you shall be saved.
2. You are already redeemed.	2. Redemption is available. Accept it or be lost.
3. Realize that you are saved.	3. Repent and Believe the Gospel.
4. Paul taught this.	4. It got its prominence with the philosopher and theologian, Origen in the 2nd century.
5. You are already reconciled to God.	5. Be reconciled to God.
6. This is a <i>newer emphasis</i> on Grace and Love.	6. It's the same old Universalism error. But, Jesus said, "Ye must be born again to enter into the kingdom of God."
7. It's a teaching of the modern apostle of faith, E.W. Kenyon.	7. Kenyon taught that righteousness belongs only to those who accept Christ. He taught that the objective work of Christ brings him "no sense of reality" until he accepts Christ. But, the <u>real</u> question is: What does the Bible teach?

About Kenneth Hammonds

Dr. Kenneth Hammonds is **Director of Discipleship Ministries** (*Perfecting Believers*) at West Angeles Church of God in Christ, pastored by Bishop Charles E. Blake. The Discipleship Ministries include: *Discipleship Mentoring, Small Group Fellowships, Through the Bible Book-By-Book, and the Perfecting Believers Wednesday Night Bible Study Series*. He is also West Angeles Church **Adult Ministries Division** Sector Leader which consists of oversight of seven ministries: (*Discipleship, Christian Education, Prayer Ministries, Prison Ministries, Evangelism, and Evangelist Missionaries*). Dr. Hammonds has been a Christian Educator with an emphasis in Bible Theology and New Testament Greek for over 40 years.

Dr. Hammonds' West Angeles Church Contact Information: 3045 Crenshaw Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90016; 323-733-8300 Ext. 2349; Email: khammonds@westa.org