

simply do not accept the inerrancy and inspiration of the Bible. They believe that God is so full of love that He simply *cannot* send anyone to eternal hell fire. It would be against His infinite love. They want God to forgive all, even those who openly reject Him and die cursing Him. That however is just not what the Scriptures teach! (See Vol. 9, Issue 7 of *Diligence* at the web address listed below concerning how “love” is being used as a weapon to destroy Truth).

If we find ourselves in any of those three bullet point groups listed on page 2 of this article, we need to ask ourselves if we believe and practice the Gospel of the Bible, or a “different gospel” (Galatians 1:6-9)? Influential Universalists like Richard Beck and Rob Bell all quote Scriptures that *seem* to support their view. Space here will not allow us to address each of those Scriptures and discuss them *in their proper context* but Universalists either remove them *from* context in order to support their position or in *some* cases, simply *ignore* Scriptures that clearly *oppose* their position. We must always remember the rule that “*no part* of Scripture can ever be interpreted in such a way that renders it to be in conflict with what is *clearly* taught elsewhere in Scripture.” And Scripture *clearly* teaches that there is a heaven and there is a hell. Scripture *clearly* teaches that not everyone will go to heaven. Scripture *clearly* teaches that there is *one* way to gain eternal life in heaven.

The *Barna Group* research that we mentioned earlier also found that 48% of all adults in the study *agreed* with the statement — “if a person is generally good or does enough good things for others, they will earn a place in heaven.” That’s not what the Bible says! But that *is* what a Universalist/Emergent would say.

Will there be a Universalist or Emergent Church “member” sitting next to *you* in the pew next Sunday? Worse yet, do you have a youngster attending a Christian college and being *taught* Universalism? We saw earlier in this article that there is a person at a christian college in a position of influence *teaching* young people a “different” gospel — a gospel different from the one in the Bible — and Dr. Beck isn’t the *only* one doing that. We *also* saw earlier in this article that there is an *extremely* popular author writing books and making *really good* short films — films that are *extremely* moving and “spiritual” in nature — but he’s *teaching* a “different” gospel — a gospel different from the one in the Bible.

It doesn’t matter whether or not *I* think it’s unfair or unloving for God to send people to hell! The Bible clearly states that He *will!* Any other belief is simply not founded on Scripture. A good working knowledge of the Word is our best defense against false teachers teaching “different” gospels. Without that knowledge — we may not *realize* that a Universalist or Emergent wrote the book we’re reading or is teaching our kids at a christian college or maybe even sitting in the pew beside us next Sunday.

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DILIGENCE

“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11

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Universalist/Emergent/A Different Gospel

Over the past several years, we have mentioned the emerging church in *Diligence* on various occasions. We’ve even gone into *some* detail concerning its practices and beliefs — or perhaps we should say, the lack thereof, since it would be easier to nail jello to a wall than it would be to describe exactly what the emerging church is. There’s actually *no way* to define it since it’s a moving target — each of its “members” will give a different answer when asked the very same question. The bottom line then is that one can feel very comfortable in regard to doctrine and believe *whatever* one *wishes* to believe. This then, naturally drifts into feeling no need to *tell* anyone that his or her belief might not be according to what the Scriptures teach because — well — everyone believes something different anyway — and that’s just fine. Holding such a belief would probably — even just by itself, qualify that individual to be considered emergent.

The unique characteristic of the emerging church is that it isn’t really a *church* — *even though* there *are* groups of like-thinkers that might meet regularly at a Starbucks, a donut shop, a local park, etc. But generally speaking, it’s more likely to be just a way an individual believes. That means emergent church members are quite possibly sitting in a pew beside you next Sunday morning. And *that* — is what makes the emergent church so dangerous to Christianity.

Since doctrine is non-existent with emergents, Universalism is a *common* belief among them. What’s Universalism? Well, *Christian* Universalists believe that all people — even the sinful and unbelieving dead — will eventually find reconciliation with God so that *nobody* will spend eternity in hell. A wide variety of beliefs is therefore *acceptable* because it really doesn’t matter anyway. Hence — there *is no hell* — only heaven. And *many* emergents and universalists believe that heaven will be *here* on earth — but *that’s* another topic for a different time.

Even though its not *new*, Universalism has re-inserted its way into today’s society as well as into *the Church* since the *nature* of mankind makes it a convenient belief to hold. For example, have you ever been to the funeral of a non-believer — or watched a funeral of someone famous on television — and *not* heard a phrase similar to “We know he’s up there looking down on us” — or — “She’s in a far better place now.” Most non-believers assume that everyone who dies is going to go to heaven. They give little if any thought to the fact that each individual must take some sort of action if he or she expects heaven to be their destination. Generally speaking — anyone with *any* decency at *all* is considered to be heaven bound in our current society.

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The Universalist view of salvation is becoming more *widely* accepted as many churches seek unity with other religions. A good many Christian faiths are *already* well on the road to ecumenism — which is the unity of *all Christian* churches throughout the world. Such unity is almost always at the expense of a doctrine that teaches there is only *one* path to salvation and that path is spelled out in the Bible and failure to *follow* that path *will* result in eternal damnation. When doctrine is sacrificed, it is a *false* unity based on unscriptural practices and beliefs. Such unity creates a Universalist view of mankind that eventually sees *all religions* (not just Christian) worshiping the same God — just in different ways.

Many Christians are unaware that they have *already accepted* Universalism.

Current research by *The Barna Group* found that —

- 40% of those who described themselves as “born again Christians” indicated that they believe Christians and Muslims worship the same God.
- 26% of those same “Christians” stated that it doesn’t matter what religion one follows because they all teach the same lessons.
- 25% of that same group (born again Christians) said that all people are eventually saved or accepted by God.

(To further clarify these statistics, “born again Christians” are defined by *The Barna Group* as “those who have made a commitment to Jesus Christ and who believe they are going to heaven because of their confession of sins and accepted Christ as their savior.” It is *not* based upon self-identifying with the label ‘born again.’

A prominent Universalist in the *New Testament Church* is a gentleman named Richard Beck. Dr. Beck is Chair of the Psychology Department at Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas. (We’ll leave it for *you* to decide exactly *how* Dr. Beck can hold a Universalist view and not only remain on staff but be *promoted* to *chair* of the Psychology Department of a “christian” college). On Beck’s blog — *Experimental Theology* — he has numerous articles under the general heading of *Why I Am A Universalist*. In one article, he references Romans 9-11 to illustrate “a universalist reading of the bible.” In support of his Universalist belief, he further states in his blog — “the influential early church fathers Origen (ca. 185-254) and Gregory of Nysaa (ca. 335-395) were not biblical illiterates. How did they read the bible and come up with universalism?” It’s too bad that Dr. Beck has relied on (and trusted the errant theology) of the *founders* of Universalism *rather* than relying on the Scriptures themselves. Also notice the dates referenced for Origen and Nysaa. It is likely that they were already *deeply* immersed in heresy by the time they were writing.

A prominent Universalist in *society* is Rob Bell. *Time* magazine referred to him as “a singular rock star in the church world.” Bell is the “Founding Pastor” of Mars Hill Bible Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Mr. Bell would probably *deny* the Universalist tag, however the phrase “if it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck...” certainly comes to mind when assessing his works. He is the author of *several* best seller books as well as a series of spiritual short films called NOOMA that are

extremely popular among young people. His most recent book, *Love Wins* has been on the best seller list since shortly after its release last March. One need not read very far into *Love Wins* to have Bell make his Universalist belief *more* than clear. On page viii of the *Preface* he states —

“This love compels us to question the dominant stories that are being told as the Jesus story. A staggering number of people have been taught that a select few Christians will spend forever in a peaceful, joyous place called heaven, while the rest of humanity spends forever in torment and punishment in hell with no chance for anything better. It’s been clearly communicated to many that this belief is a central truth of the Christian faith and to reject it is, in essence, to reject Jesus. This is misguided and toxic and ultimately subverts the contagious spread of Jesus’s [sic] message...”

Three pages later he states —

“Of all the billions of people who have ever lived, will only a select number ‘make it to a better place’ and every single other person suffer in torment and punishment forever? Is this acceptable to God? ... Can God do this, or even allow this, and still claim to be a loving God? ... How does a person end up being one of the few? Chance? Luck?” (pg.2)

It’s *astounding* to note that Rob Bell’s Mars Hill Sunday sermons are attended by 7,000 to 10,000 people — with a downloadable podcast reaching 50,000 more, yet he professes *this kind* of theology. How can even the most *casual* Christian fail to have *any* familiarity with *well known* Bible verses like these?

“Enter through the narrow gate. For *wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.*” (Matt. 7:13 NIV)

“They will throw them into the fiery furnace, *where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*” (Matt 13:42 NIV)

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘*Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels*’” (Matt 25:41 NIV)

“If anyone’s name was *not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*” (Rev. 20:15 NIV)

The *better* question to ask might be — how can *Rob Bell* completely *ignore* these verses? And how can he sell several million books and videos — mostly to those who *profess* to be Christians? Easily — it’s obvious in his books! Within the Universalism belief system, the concepts of hell and punishment are *rejected* as inconsistent with a loving God. People *often* want to do away with a concept that they cannot understand. But there are *many* things in the Bible that we can’t understand. That however, should not stop us from accepting the words of Christ Himself or the words from those who were *there* and recorded it for us inspired by the Holy Spirit. What we *can* understand from the Bible we can *know* is true — therefore it is not a blind leap to accept the things we may *not* fully understand. The conclusion one must therefore make is that Universalists