

What is universalism?

In its broadest sense, universalism means that all human beings share the same fate – everyone is saved. It is the opposite of particularism, which means that God selects those who will be saved, as in Calvinism. Many religions are universalistic, such as Zen Buddhism or various Hindu sects; any religion that has no hell is essentially universalistic.

Universalism can express itself in two chief ways:

1. **Man is good – universal righteousness:** The denial of hell and punishment for sin, thus there is no salvation necessary and the destiny of all men is the same because man is essentially good. This often forms part of a general denial of any formal doctrines.
2. **God is good – universal salvation:** The acceptance of a temporary future punishment (or designed for demons) but balanced by the claim that everybody is ultimately saved and goes to heaven. This is usually because God is good and loves everyone and saves in a vague moral or mystical way (as in Socinianism) [citing: Rm 5:12, 8:19-24; Col 1:19, 20; Eph 4:10, 1:9-10; 2 Tim 1:4]. Or that Christ died to pay the price for everyone equally [citing: 1 Thess 5:10; 1 Cor 15:3; Rm 5:6; 1 Pt 3:18; Jn 1:29, 3:16-17; 1 Jn 2:2; Heb 3:9]. Some claim that though there is some individual punishment after death, God's mercy soon brings this to an end and perfects the sinner [citing: 1 Jn 3: 8; Jn 1:29; Matt 1:21; Ps 8:5, 6; Heb 2: 6, 9; Phil 2:9-11; 1 Cor 15:24-29].

While universalism does not have an ounce of support from the Bible, there are many supposedly 'Christian' sects and cults that are universalistic. The foundation of most of these was anti-Trinitarianism. The largest formal, historic, universalistic institutions were Unitarianism in England and the Universalistic churches in America. Although there have always been anti-Trinitarian universalistic cults throughout history, the Unitarian movement arose from heretical Anabaptist groups in Poland and Hungary during the Reformation, later spreading to England and the USA. The first English Unitarian chapel appeared in Essex in 1774. They rejected any doctrinal conformity, particularly the doctrine of Christ and the Trinity, and championed reason. The Universalistic Church began in 1779, based on congregationalism and rejection of creeds; it merged with the Unitarians in 1961. Today Unitarianism stresses the brotherhood of all men and the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount.

So universalism, as a principle, is the idea that all men are saved equally; there is no eternal punishment. Those who support the Arminian interpretation of the 'universalistic texts' fail to realise that this utterly supports universalism and leads to this heresy (see 'What about the universalistic texts?').

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