

Analyzing the claim of the Fundamentalist Christian that:

"The Bible Declares That Universal Salvation Is A Heresy Denying That Jesus Bought Them!" (2 Peter 2:1)

Although the above objection of the Fundamentalist might not be termed a "common" objection, it provides the basis for an enlightening investigation.

The objection arises from the English translation of 2 Peter 2:1: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them".

It has been known for a Fundamentalist Christian to use this verse to 'justify' his or her own belief as the only truth, whilst all other beliefs are heretical and therefore the people who hold such beliefs are worthy of 'eternal damnation'. However, this is an objection from the Fundamentalist determined to continue in his or her belief of a 'limited' salvation, despite overwhelming facts to the contrary.

For the sake of clarification for the casual reader of the charge made by the Fundamentalist that Universal Salvation is a heresy, a very brief explanation is necessary of both 'Universal Salvation' and also the 'limited' salvation which is advocated by the literalistic Fundamentalist.

Let us first take just one of the many scriptural declarations of Universal Salvation:

"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all* men to me" (John 12:32). This statement of our Lord claims that He will draw *all* men to Him if He is lifted up (on the Cross). This refers to all of mankind, not just a few members of mankind.

Our Lord said that, for some people, there would be "aionion kolasin (Matt. 25:46)" which, when translated according to contemporary New Testament times Greek, means "age-long pruning" (but it is, unfortunately, rendered by the Traditionalists as "[everlasting punishment](#)").

This is meant to refer to an age-lasting pruning/chastisement/correction of those with much evil in their souls, those who are evil in character. This is a purification of the soul of the evil within the soul, through suffering (which is effectively self-inflicted), and is a fulfilment of the teaching of our Lord that whatever is meted out will be meted back again (Luke 6:37).

Thus, the soul of each one, being purified of evil after the "age" necessary to achieve this condition, is now in a suitable state to, individually, approach the Holy One, the Pure One, the Christ. This is a preliminary cleansing process, an actual spiritual regeneration of the sick and wicked soul, a painful purification of the soul to enable it to resolve to a spiritual condition capable of drawing nearer to the Holiness of the pure Spiritual Christ.

The latter is a very brief summary of the mechanics of Divinely-created "Universal Salvation" (as taught in Greater World spiritual philosophy). This is what Jesus taught and this is what the

early Christians taught - that Christ had come to save the whole of humanity. This is the best news of all, and should be "glad tidings" ("euaggelion") indeed for every member of the human race.

The Fundamentalist, however, considers the matter quite differently. The Fundamentalist assumes that anyone who does not have the required religious *belief* during his or her lifetime will pass into a so-called "everlasting punishment", a torturing of the soul for eternity - an infinite punishment of the majority of mankind for the finite offence of failing to possess in the mind a certain religious tenet.

The unbiased reader will notice that there is a vast difference in the justice and morality of the theological positions of "Universal Salvation" and the limited salvation of the so-named "elect". Both positions claim to expound Divine Justice; however, only one position portrays Divine Justice to the truly impartial mind and the fairness and sensibilities of the loving heart.

Universal Salvation is demonstrative of the true love of God and declares that *all* of His children shall eventually receive the unimaginable fuller life that God has prepared for them without exception; anything less and God certainly could not truly be considered as being "Love". For to willingly create life with the foreknowledge that the majority of it should be subjected to a hideous torture eternally, violates all notions of decency and morality, let alone true love.

Now, having given that brief explanation, let us continue with investigating the charge of the Fundamentalist that Universal Salvation is a heresy.

The majority of the fathers of the first Christian theological schools in the first three centuries were proclaimed Universalists. Not a writer among those who describe the heresies of the first three hundred years of Christianity intimates that Universal Salvation was then a heresy because, naturally, it was held as a fact by a majority, and certainly by the greatest of the "fathers".

Hippolytus (A.D. 220), in "Philosophumena" or "Refutation of Heresy" enumerates and comments on thirty-two heresies, but Universal Salvation is not named among them. Whilst Clement of Alexandria, and Origen - Universalist fathers then living - were everywhere regarded as the great teachers of the Church, and their Universalist view of man's future destiny was generally prevalent, even according to Augustine, Jerome and others (who, later, were to preach something vastly different). Universal Salvation, then, could not, in those first few centuries closest to Jesus the Christ's original teaching, have been regarded as a "heresy" or Hippolytus would most assuredly have named it.

Epiphanius, bishop of Constantia in Cyprus (A.D. 367) was "a narrow-minded, credulous, violent-tempered, but sincere man". He bitterly opposed Origen on many points but never once does he so much as hint that his views of Universal Salvation were objectionable to himself, or to the Church. In Epiphanius' book against heresies, "The Panarion," this "hammer of heretics" names eighty heresies but Universal Salvation is not among them.

It is a plain fact that Universal Salvation was accepted as part of original Christ teaching, because not one of those who wrote against the heresies of their times ever named Universal

Salvation as a heresy. Hippolytus mentions thirty-two. Epiphanius wrote his Panarion and epitomizes it in his "Anacephalaeosis" or "Recapitulation", but not one of those who identified heresies includes Universal Salvation in his damnations. Can there be stronger evidence than this fact that the doctrine was not heretical?

"The state of opinion on the subject of Universal Salvation is shown by the fact that though Ignatius, Irenaeus, Hippolytus and others wrote against the prevalent heresies of their times, Universalism is never named among them. Some of the alleged errors of Origen were condemned, but his doctrine of Universal Salvation, never. Methodius, who wrote A.D. 300; Pamphilus and Eusebius, A.D. 310; Eustathius, A.D. 380; Epiphanius, A.D. 376 and 394; Theophilus, A.D. 400-404, and Jerome, A.D. 400; all give lists of Origen's errors, but none name his Universalism among them. Besides, some of those who condemned his errors were Universalists, at the school of Antioch. And many who were opponents of Origenism were mentioned by Origen's enemies with honor notwithstanding they were Universalists, as Clement of Alexandria, and Gregory of Nyssa" (Universalism: The Prevailing Doctrine Of The Christian Church During Its First Five Hundred Years, Dr. J.W. Hanson D.D.)

Pamphilus, A.D. 250-309, copied most of Origen's manuscripts himself for the great library in Caesarea. Pamphilus wrote an "Apology" and defence of the Christ-like Origen, with whom he was in full sympathy. Eusebius, "the father of ecclesiastical history", wrote the biography of Pamphilus in three books. The "Apology" contained "very many testimonies of fathers earlier than Origen in favour of restitution" (Routh, Rel. Sac., iii, p. 498. Oxford ed., 1846). Origen was born 90 years after the death of St. John, therefore this should leave no doubt to a reasoned mind that Universal Salvation, being the prevailing thought among the schools of Christian Theology, derives its roots from the apostolic age.

Dr. Hanson states that there are copious references "that might be made from the most celebrated of the Alexandrine school, representing the type of theology that prevailed in the East, during almost four hundred years. They are not from a few isolated authorities but from the most eminent in the church, and those who gave tone to theological thought, and shaped and gave expression to public opinion. There can be no doubt that they are true exponents of the doctrines of their day, and that man's universal deliverance from sin was the generally accepted view of human destiny, prevalent in the Alexandrine church from the death of the apostles to the end of the Fourth Century. And in this connection it may be repeated that the Catechetical school in Alexandria was taught by Anaxagoras, Pantæus, Origen, Clement, Heraclas, Dionysius, Pierius, Theognostus, Peter Martyr, Arius and Didymus, all Universalists, so far as is known. The last teacher in the Alexandrine school was Didymus. After his day it was removed to Sida in Pamphylia, and soon after it ceased to exist. (Neander, Hist. Christ. Dogmas, I, p. 265) "

The historian Gieseler records that "the belief in the inalienable capability of improvement in all rational beings, and the limited duration of future punishment, was so general, even in the West, and among the opponents of Origen that, whatever may be said of its not having risen without the influence of Origen's school, it had become entirely independent of his system". This means, no less, that the aforementioned doctrine of Universal Salvation may be said to have prevailed all over Christendom, East and West, among "orthodox" and heterodox alike during the first four hundred years A.D.

Dr. Beecher declares (Univ. Asser.): "I do not know an unworthy, low, or mean character in any prominent, open, and avowed Restorationist of that age of freedom of inquiry which was inaugurated by the Alexandrine school, and defended by Origen. But besides this it is true that these ancient believers in final restoration lived and toiled and suffered, in an atmosphere of joy and hope, and were not loaded with a painful and crushing burden of sorrow in view of the endless misery of innumerable multitudes."

"It may not be true that these results were owing mainly to the doctrine of universal restoration. It may be that their views of Christ and the Gospel, which were decidedly Orthodox, exerted the main power to produce these results. But one thing is true: the doctrine of universal restoration did not hinder them."

"If not, then the inquiry will arise, Why should it now?" "In that famous age of the church's story, the period embracing the Fourth and the earlier years of the Fifth Century, Universalism seems to have been the creed of the majority of Christians in East and West alike; perhaps even of a large majority and in the roll of its teachers were most of the greatest names of the greatest age of primitive Christianity."

"And this teaching, be it noted, *is strongest where the language of the New Testament was a living tongue*; i.e., in the great Greek fathers; it is strongest in the church's greatest era, and declines as knowledge and purity decline. On the other hand, endless penalty is most strongly taught precisely in those quarters where the New Testament was less read in the original, and also in the most corrupt ages of the church." (Universalism Asserted, p. 148).

The members of the great councils of the first five centuries, determined to expose heresy, did not even mention Universal Salvation, and so it is apparent that the members of those councils were on the whole upholders of the Christian doctrine of Universal Salvation - the reason being, naturally, that the original teachings of the Apostles of Christ embodied the salvation of all mankind in contradistinction to an endless punishment, thus this teaching was promoted by the majority of Christendom throughout those first centuries A.D.

The Council of Nice, A.D. 325, had, as an active member, an outspoken advocate of Universal Salvation (ultimate restoration), Eusebius, who was Origen's apologist; furthermore, the Council of Ephesus, A.D. 431, passed a declaration that the writings of Gregory of Nyssa, one of the keenest promoters of Universal Salvation of all time, were "the great bulwark against heresy".

J.W. Hanson D.D. explains: "The Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381, which perfected the Nicene Creed, was participated in by the two Gregoryses; Gregory Nazianzen presided and Gregory Nyssen added the clauses to the Nicene creed. They were both Universalists. Would any council, in ancient or modern times, composed of believers in endless punishment, select an avowed Universalist to preside over its deliberations, and guide its 'doctrinal transactions?' And can anyone consistently think that Gregory's Universalism was unacceptable to the great council over which he presided?" (Univ. prev. doc.).

Basil the Great was born in Caesarea, A.D. 329 into a Christian family; he founded the hospital Basiliads for lepers and he looked after his patients personally in defiance of contagion. Basil

states: "The mass of men (Christians) say that there is to be an end of punishment to those who are punished." (De Ascetics). This testimony as to the state of opinion at that time is valuable in informing us of the prevailing Christian belief on matters of eschatology.

Universal Salvation prevailed for more than five hundred years and, with the sole exception of Augustine, no opposition is known to have been levelled against it by any eminent contemporary Christian writer.

The existing proof that Universal Salvation was originally the major understanding in Christian thought and teaching, and that this was received from the apostles of Christ, would be multiplied many times over had it not been for the destruction of the library of Alexandria by the Arabs under Amru in A.D. 640. The library was the contemporary centre of the world for Christian theological works and it contained the precious Greek manuscripts of Origen and multitudes of others. Omar, sadly, ordered the books to be destroyed and they were distributed among the 4,000 public baths of the city, where they furnished the fuel for six months.

The irony is that the accusers of heresy are the heretics themselves; the Larger Hope absorbs the lesser hope, whereas the lesser hope denies the Larger Hope

There is another aspect to consider with all seriousness concerning the charge made by the Fundamentalist in 2 Peter 2:1 against the doctrine of Universal Salvation. And this involves the fact that Peter's reference to heresies was directed towards the Fundamentalist doctrine of everlasting punishment itself!

The Greek words: "...pareisago apoleia haireisis..." have been rendered by traditionalist translators as the English phrase: "...privily shall bring in damnable heresies..."

The actual available English words and phrases translated from the contemporary Greek are:

pareisago = to introduce or bring in secretly;
apoleia = destroying, utter destruction, a perishing, eternal misery/damnation;
haireisis = act of taking, choosing, choice, that which is chosen, a body of men following their own tenets (sect or party).

Thus, this could easily be rendered as:

"...introduce - destroying/perishing/eternal misery - heresies..."

Or, quite simply, is the following the intended meaning of the passage:

"...introduce heresies of everlasting damnation..."? Indeed, a prediction and an utter condemnation of the Fundamentalist doctrine of everlasting punishment! It is a Divine mercy that our Fundamentalist friends, as yet unrealised by themselves, are in the all-encompassing nets of God's collective plan of redemption.

The aforementioned issue under consideration then, is that what, in fact, Peter was warning against, was not a doctrine of Universal Salvation at all, but rather the opposite, that not only

were there doctrine expounders both within and without the early Christian community who spread heresies, but that these heresies also included the *denial* of Universal Salvation - that our Lord had saved *all* mankind (1 Tim.2:6). Peter warned that there were to come those teachers who would corrupt the beautiful Christ-given Gospel of which, as open-minded research shows, Universal Salvation was a prominent feature based on Divine Love - and instead introduce separatist and disuniting teachings - teachings that taught a heartless and calculated utter destruction of God's own creations (the "doctrine of annihilation"), or a hideous eternal torment (the "doctrine of everlasting punishment"), which hinged upon choosing to accept a mere metaphysical concept alone to escape eternal torture in Hell.

Now, there were, in fact, heathen and Pagan-influenced - and later - politically motivated teachers, who did in fact change the teaching of the Divine gift of Universal Salvation taught by Christ into one of an extremely limited salvation.

This limited salvation claimed that those of God's children who went into "aionion kolasin" (which is meant to be "age-long pruning/correction") were either in this place and tormented eternally ("doctrine of everlasting punishment") or they were eventually annihilated after being tormented ("doctrine of annihilation"), and this would happen to the majority of humankind. These dogmas basically claimed that a person went either to an eternal Hell or a punishment in Hell until annihilation, through the non-acceptance of a religious belief alone.

Hence, at least two different dogmas have been introduced - but dogmas which meant that the teaching that Christ "who gave Himself a ransom for *all*, to be *testified in due time*" (1 Tim.2:6) was corrupted.

pareisago *apoleia* haireisis (2 Peter 2:1)

= introduce *destroying/damnation* heresies

= introduce heresies of *eternal perishing/damnation* even denying the Lord (or Master) that bought them.

These false teachers and their dogmas *denied* that the Lord was a "ransom for *all*" (that He has bought them *all* back) - because they said that the Saviour of the world was *not* going to save them *all*. They denied that He would eventually "draw *all* men" to Him.

From the beginning of Christ's Ministry of Universal Salvation, there was the yeast of the Jewish priests to reckon with, as at the time of Christ they entertained the unscriptural dogma of eternal torment.

Dr. Thomas B. Thayer, D.D. writes: "It is allowed on all hands that the Jews in our Savior's time believed the doctrine of future endless punishment; that it was a part of the common faith. Of course, as the doctrine is nowhere to be found in their Scriptures, the question arises, where did they find it? At the close of the Old Testament Scriptures they did not believe it; at the beginning of the New they did".

"Between these two points of time there was an interval of some four hundred years, during which there was no prophet in Israel. Malachi was the last of the Hebrew prophets, and from him

to Christ there stretches this waste period of four centuries, when the Jews were without any divine teacher or revelation from heaven. And all this while they were in constant and close intercourse with the heathen, especially the Egyptians, the Greeks and Romans, who held the doctrine in review as part of the national faith. From these, therefore, they must have borrowed it, for it is certain that they could not have obtained it from any inspired source, since none was open to them during this period".

"Beside, they were, all this time, as one might infer from their previous history, departing further and further from the law, and growing more and more corrupt; till at last they had, as the Savior charges upon them, utterly made void the law of God by their traditions (Mark 8: 9, 13)." (Origin And History Of The Doctrine Of Endless Punishment).

Brucker says that "after the times of Esdras, Zachariah, Malachi, and the inspired men, the Jews began to forsake the sacred doctrine, and turned aside to the dreams of human invention (*humani ingenii somnia*); though up to this time they had preserved pure the Hebrew wisdom received from the fathers". (Hist. Philos. Judaica. Tom. 2-703).

What this means is that the Universal Salvation taught by the earliest followers Christ was threatened by the heretical doctrine of eternal torment taught by the main Jewish priests, the Pharisees - a doctrine which cannot be found in their own scriptures - the Old Testament. It should be now very plain to see why Jesus Christ told His disciples, including Peter, to beware the yeast of the Pharisees - not merely because of their hypocrisy (when they taught but did not follow what they taught with action), but because they taught a heretical doctrine of everlasting punishment that was derived from heathens, in contradistinction to the loving teaching of ultimate restoration.

Then there was, for instance, African-born Tertullian (A.D. 160), who helped the corruption along with his heathen-born theories which he preferred to the Pagan education he had received, the combination of which he wished to introduce into prevailing Christian doctrine: "The heathen doctrines he retained rendered his spirit harsh and bitter". Tertullian's personal theology was dreadfully fragmented but Christianity was strong enough at that early time to force him to tone down much of his lurid theology for general consumption (and omit it completely from an earlier form of the so-called Apostles' Creed) and yet it still had its secretive impact at that time and infiltrated Christianity via his followers.

Tertullian was the first of the Africo-Latin writers to attract and direct the faith of the general public. He Latinised a large number of sacred writings, the earliest of those many Latin versions were studied by Augustine and were the major source upon which Jerome derived his vulgate. The source was therefore African. "Africa, not Rome, gave birth to Latin Christianity". A learned writer states in Oxford Tracts for the Times (xvii): "His own authority is small, he was not a sound divine, became heterodox, and fell away into one of the heresies of his times".

Tertullian declares in a most emphatic manner the influence and effect of the doctrine he advocated with his fiendish and jubilant exclamations over the future torments of the enemies of the Church; he demonstrates the poisonous thought which was to be seized upon with unrestricted fervour by future Church powers when he expresses with fiendish glee: "How I shall

admire, how I shall laugh, how exult to see the torments of the wicked." "I shall then have a better chance of hearing the tragedians call louder in their own distress; of seeing the actors more lively in the dissolving flame; of beholding the charioteer glowing in his fiery chariot; of seeing their wrestlers tossing on fiery waves instead of in their gymnasium, etc." (De Spectaculis, xxx.).

Such is the attitude of this Africo-Latin father, who provided the first Latin translations of the Greek writings, and to which future Church heads would turn for their doctrinal source - thus the original merciful, forgiving and loving Greek thought which prevailed, through time, became utterly corrupted.

Indeed, the Latin fathers, according to German philologist Max Muller, could do none other than corrupt the Greek Christian teachings because Latin was devoid of even words to express the Greek. For example, Tertullian has to use two words, *verbum* and *ratio*, to express Logos. "Not having Greek tools to work with" he says, "his verbal picture often becomes blurred".

"The fountain of Paganism", states the Rev. J.W. Hanson D.D. (Univ. Prev. Doc.), "in the heart of Tertullian discharged its noxious waters into the larger reservoir in the mighty brain of Augustine, and thence in the Sixth Century it submerged Christendom with a deluge that lasted for a thousand years, now happily subsiding, to give place to those primal Christian truths that were in the hearts of Clement and Origen. Tertullian and Origen were as unlike as the churches they represent - the Latin and the Greek. Narrow, Pagan, cruel, un-Christian, the dark path of the Tertullian-Augustine type of Christianity through the centuries is strewn with the wrecks of ignorance and sorrow. He retained his heathen notions and gave them a Christian label. He makes the Underworld, like the heathen, divided by an impassable gulf into two parts. The abode of the righteous is *sinus Abrahae*, that of the wicked *ignis* or *inferi*. Tertullian was probably the first of the fathers to assert that the torments of the lost will be of equal duration with the happiness of the saved. 'God will recompense his worshipers with life eternal; and cast the profane into a fire equally perpetual and unintermitted (Apol., cap. 18).'"

"The one school out of the six in Christendom that taught endless punishment was in Africa, and the doctrine was derived by Latins from misunderstanding a foreign language, through mistranslations of the original Greek Scriptures, and was obtained by infusing the virus of Roman secularism into the simplicity of Christianity. Maine in his "Ancient Law" attributes the difference between Eastern and Western theology to this cause. The student of primitive Christianity will see that Tertullian, Cyprian, Minucius Felix, down to Augustine, were influenced by these causes, and created the theological travesty that ruled the Christian world for dark and sorrowful centuries." (Univ. Prev. Doc.).

The Rev. Edward Beecher, D.D. says (Hist. Doct. Fut. Ret.): "Two great facts stand out on the page of ecclesiastical history. One, that the first system of Christian theology was composed and issued by Origen in the year 230 after Christ, of which a fundamental and essential element was the doctrine of the universal restoration of all fallen beings to their original holiness and union with God. The second is, that after the lapse of a little more than three centuries, in the year 544, this doctrine was for the first time condemned and anathematized as heretical. From and after this point (A.D. 553) the doctrine of eternal punishment reigned with undisputed sway during the Middle Ages that preceded the Reformation."

"What, then, was the state of facts as to the leading theological schools of the Christian world, in the age of Origen, and some centuries after? It was in brief this: There were at least six theological schools in the church at large. Of these six schools, one, and only one, was decidedly and earnestly in favor of the doctrine of future eternal punishment. One was in favor of the annihilation of the wicked, two were in favor of the doctrine of universal restoration on the principles of Origen, and two in favor of universal restoration on the principles of Theodore of Mopsuestia."

"From two theological schools there went forth an opposition to the doctrine of eternal punishment, which had its ground in a deeper Christian interest; inasmuch as the doctrine of a universal restoration was closely connected with the entire dogmatic systems of both of these schools, namely that of Origen (Alexandrian), and the school of Antioch." "Three at least of the greatest of the ancient schools of Christian theology--the schools of Alexandria, Antioch and Caesarea--leaned on this subject to the views of Origen, not in their details, but in their general hopefulness."

"The school in Northern Africa favored the doctrine of endless punishment; that in Asia Minor annihilation. The two in Alexandria and Caesarea were Universalistic of the school of Origen; those at Antioch and Edessa were Universalistic of the school of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Diodore of Tarsus". "Decidedly the most powerful minds (300 to 400 A.D.) adopted the doctrine of universal restoration, and those who did not adopt it entered into no controversy about it with those who did. In the African school all this was reversed. From the very beginning they took strong ground in favor of the doctrine of eternal punishment, as an essential part of a great system of law of which God was the center." (Hist. Doct. Fut. Ret.).

Augustine (born in Tagaste, Numidia, A.D. 354-420), who admitted himself that he "learned almost nothing of Greek", and was "not competent to read and understand" the language, and also that he "hates Greek", and the "grammar learning of the Greeks" (De Trin. lib iii, Contra litteras Petiliani, lib II, xxxviii, 91. Migne, Vol. xliii), demonstrates clearly his sheer ignorance and total lack of interest in preserving the purity of the original Christ teachings which were in the native language of the earliest Church fathers (Christian Universalists who were heads of the first Christian theological schools). How absurd it is that religionists for centuries have sought inspiration from the poisoned discourses of Augustine as a prime source of direction instead of the early Christianity taught by those in whose native language the Scriptures are written. "Augustine transferred to God the characteristics of semi-Pagan kings, and his theology was a hybrid born of the Roman Code of Law and Pagan Mythology" (Univ. Prev. Doc.).

Jerome (A.D. 331-420) wrote in Latin, and was contemporary with the great corruptor of Christianity, Augustine. However, Jerome restrained himself from accepting all of the Pagan influences with which Augustine was swaying the masses as he wielded his considerable power. Jerome states in his homily on Jonah: "Most persons (plerique = very many), regard the story of Jonah as teaching the ultimate forgiveness of all rational creatures, even the devil." This demonstrates that Universal Salvation held the minds of many, as far as human destiny was concerned, in the Fourth Century A.D.

With the introduction of Augustine's stone-hearted teachings that stifle any thought of Divine Love, the dark Middle Ages were but around the corner. Augustine, with great cunning and skill, was the first writer to defend the doctrine of endless punishment and also to attack opinions or doctrines which differed from his hideous theological position. Augustine brought his theology with him from Manichaeism when he became a Christian, but he altered it by adding endlessness to the dualism that Mani made temporal. "The doctrine of endless punishment assumed in the writings of Augustine a prominence and rigidity which had no parallel in the earlier history of theology and which savors of the teaching of Mohammed more than of Christ." (Allen, Cont. Christ. Thought).

We see the wonderful and Divinely delivered teaching of Universalism take a foothold in the first few centuries, putting down most attempts of corruption by the lesser "limited salvation", but the rot had set in insidiously and attracted those parts of the collective consciousness that preferred anger, hatred and sadism to be attributed the God Who is Love: "By the days of Gregory of Nyssa it (Universalism), aided by the unrivalled learning, genius and piety of Origen, had prevailed, and had succeeded in leavening, not the East alone, but much of the West. While the doctrine of annihilation has practically disappeared, Universalism has established itself, has become the prevailing opinion, even in quarters antagonistic to the school of Alexandria. The church of North Africa, in the person of Augustine, enters the field. The Greek tongue soon becomes unknown in the West, and the Greek fathers forgotten. On the throne of Him whose name is Love is now seated a stern Judge (a sort of Roman governor). The Father is lost in the Magistrate." (Life and Resurrection and Letter to the Monk Olympius).

Referring to the martyr Origen, the last of the great Universalist fathers of the early Church from the majority tradition closest to the original Greek teachings of Christ, the Rev. Edward Beecher, D.D., declares, in his "History of the Doctrine of Future Retribution": "An evil spirit was developed at that time in putting down Origen which has ever since poisoned the church of all denominations. It has been as a leprosy in all Christendom. Nor is this all: measures were then resorted to for the suppression of error which exerted a deadly hostility against all free investigation, from the influence of which the church universal has not yet recovered". (Hist. Doc. Fut. Ret.).

Augustine advocated the persecution of religious opponents, a concept alien to the tolerance which permeated the Christian psyche found in the original religion of the Greek-speaking Christians who lived the teaching of its Author. Milman shares with us: "With shame and horror we hear from Augustine himself that fatal axiom which impiously arrayed cruelty in the garb of Christian charity." (Latin Christianity, I, 127). Augustine taught a twisted and fiendish dogma that children who are not baptised are damned in a Gehenna of fire (everlasting damnation), but conceded that their torments would be lighter (levissima) than those who had lived longer, and this was to be considered a blessing as it was better than not existing at all.

Augustine, driven by the wicked and evil spirit of his age, and enthusiastically driving the stake of everlasting punishment into every area of free Christian thought "was the first and ablest asserter of the principle which led to Albigenian crusades, Spanish armadas, Netherland's butcheries, St. Bartholomew massacres, the accursed infamies of the Inquisition, the vile espionage, the hideous bale fires of Seville and Smithfield, the racks, the gibbets, the

thumbscrews, the subterranean torture-chambers used by churchly torturers." (Farrar's Lives of the Fathers).

It was when Augustine was at his most powerful, that the theological system of the Latin church was developed: "differing at every point from the earlier Greek theology, starting from different premises, and actuated throughout by another motive". (Latin Christ. I). It was the point when the God Who is Love was replaced in the minds of men with something quite opposite, a powerful being who desired the endless torture of most of mankind for as little as not being present at a religious ceremony when a swaddling babe. And the influence of Augustine was to have an unshakeable grip for a thousand years following, and still manipulate others in a deep and fundamental way for hundreds of years after that.

It was in the sixth century that the half-heathen emperor Justinian, seizing upon the toxic river set flowing by Augustine, championed the doctrine of everlasting punishment, which was used to foist upon the populace a form of tyranny unknown in the previous five centuries.

Historian Milman tells us about the character and works of Justinian: "The Emperor Justinian unites in himself the most opposite vices, - insatiable rapacity and lavish prodigality, intense pride and contemptible weakness, unmeasured ambition and dastardly cowardice." "In the Christian Emperor seemed to meet the crimes of those who won or secured their empire by the assassination of all whom they feared, the passion for public diversions without the accomplishments of Nero, the brute strength of Commodus, or the dotage of Claudius." (Lat. Christ.)

Justinian received complete subservience to his plans to eradicate Universalism and introduce the doctrine of eternal woe from the weak pope Vigilus, who obsequiously gratified the changeable whims of the wicked emperor in every way. Justinian closed the Universalist schools in Athens, Alexandria and Antioch, and secured the abandonment of the great centres of Christian theological science that had once expressed the essence of Christ's teachings but which were already in a state of decline through inner subversion.

Justinian successfully introduced measures that ensured that the pre-Nicene teachings were buried for at least a whole millennium: "Henceforth, there was no longer a theological science going back to first principles." (Harnack - Outlines Hist. Dog., pp. 204, 8, 320, 323). The consistent influence of Pagan theology and the dictates of cruel Roman law affecting Christian doctrine, dominated Christendom, and the teachings and faith handed down to the saints and martyrs of the first few centuries were effectively obliterated.

Until the sixteenth century the Christ Who is Love was transformed in the mind of man into "the most-high Jupiter" of Dante's poetry, which sums up the crystallised effect of the teaching of the last thousand years, depicting an angry, arbitrary and tempestuously moody Christ staring with hatred upon His own creation; instead of the suffering Son of Man Who often held silence in place of speech, Who was the Gentle Stranger that walked into foreign towns with a message of kindness and compassion, Who taught about loving ones neighbour and ones enemy in the same manner by turning the other cheek when struck, the Christ Who took the bowl and washed the feet of His own followers, the Saviour Who displayed such exquisite humility that He did not

deem it unholy to leave His Godhead and become, on earth, as one of those whom He had created. But as Christ was killed in the flesh and arose, so we see now the resurrection of the wonderful teachings of the early church rising from death and finding their place in the hearts and minds of those who choose to seek Truth.

The first faithful followers of the original Universalist teachings of Jesus the Christ were wonderfully gentle, compassionate, virtuous and loving, unlike the cruel separatist expounders of everlasting punishment with their harsh, legalistic, heathen-ised and Roman-ised corruptions of the once beautiful Christ Teachings. The original Christian teachers followed Christ even in death and forgave their accusing enemies as their joints were being pulled from their sockets on the rack for holding the view that God is a true Redeemer and has ordained that all shall eventually know His love and what it brings. They died for Christ daily, and in true Christian Spirit, they poured compassion upon those who condemned them to death.

How grateful we should be to these true Christians for their utter devotion to the teachings of Christ and ensuring that we, today, are able to benefit from the beautiful Divine message of Universal Salvation.

NB: Many who believe in Universal Salvation also do not believe that there is a place (Hell or the hells) where those with much so-called evil in their souls receive a form of purification in order that they can live according to God in the Spirit. However, this is *not* the case of Greater World Christian Spiritualists, who most definitely believe in the existence of hells of varying evil where, through untold suffering and much effort, it is possible to traverse from one hell to another hell less "evil", and so on, explaining how God is "the Saviour of all men" and also how God shall indeed "draw all men" unto Him, and indeed how universal redemption has been ordained by God for each and every one from the very beginning. This is so very much in line with the private thoughts of the earliest Universalists such as Origen, who spoke of the "medicinal" value of the sufferings in Hell.

For those who wish to seek, Greater World Christian Spiritualism explains the mechanics and philosophy behind the restoration to holiness of all souls through the Christ, and it does this in a comprehensive and reasoned philosophical manner providing spiritual enlightenment, so that, after sufficient study, one is left with nothing but humbled awe at the wonder and generosity of the great Heart and Mind of our God and Saviour.

The Fundamentalist Christian who has ruled out all methods of Divine redemption other than his or her own, may retort that one who accepts the principles of Divinely inspired Universal Salvation is "[insulting God by throwing the gift of Jesus back at Him](#)". However, in this case, it is the Fundamentalist who is throwing God's gift of Universal Salvation through Christ back at Him (metaphorically speaking).

The Fundamentalist has failed to understand that God requires neither animal blood nor human blood to be offered to Him in order to assuage a so-called angry temper! But rather the God Who is Love required that He Himself came as Example and Pattern, and in that very Act of being born as Man amongst men - coming to live and suffer as one of His own creations - He revealed His true Nature and Divine Love for each and every one who is fallen from grace. Indeed, His

Blood shall draw all men to Him and acts like yeast that shall eventually cause the whole loaf to rise, and mankind shall be as one.

"Jesus Christ the righteous...is the propitiation for our sins; and *not for ours only*, but also for the sins of the *whole world*" (1 John 2:2), "...who gave Himself a ransom *for all*, to be testified *in due time*" (1 Tim.2:6), "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of *the world*" (1 John 4:14), "We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of *all men*, specially those that believe" (1 Tim.4:10), "The lord is long-suffering toward us, *not willing that any should perish*" (2 Pet.3:9), "...having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile *all things* unto himself..." (Col. 1:20), "The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to *all men*" (Titus 2:11).