

Questions for study

1. J. I. Packer suggests that different eras in history debate different questions. Why, according to Packer, did evangelicals discuss revival in the early 1960s?
2. How does Packer define 'revival'? And how does this definition help him to clarify the extent to which God is involved in this process?
3. Why does Packer make such use of Jonathan Edwards? You will find it useful to learn something about the 'Great Awakening' to answer this question fully.
4. 'We can organize conventions and campaigns, but the only organizer of revival is God the Holy Ghost.' Locate this citation, and note its context. What point is Packer making? And who are the intended targets of this criticism?

Notes

1. Published in a slightly shortened form as 'Revival', *Christian Graduate* 24/4 (December 1971), pp. 97-100.

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THE PROBLEM OF UNIVERSALISM TODAY

(1969)

'Universalism' may be conveniently defined as the religious teaching that it is God's purpose to save every individual from sin or damnation through grace. Although universalism has been a significant viewpoint throughout the history of western culture, it became institutionalized in 1779, when John Murray became pastor of the first Universalist church in the United States. The basic beliefs of universalism are conveniently set out in *The Winchester Profession* (1803), which takes the form of three articles:

Article I. We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain a revelation of the character of God, and of the duty, interest and final destination of mankind.

Article II. We believe that there is one God, whose nature is Love, revealed in one Lord Jesus Christ, by one Holy Spirit of Grace, who will finally restore the whole family of mankind to holiness and happiness.

Article III. We believe that holiness and true happiness are inseparably connected, and that believers ought to be careful to maintain order and practice good works; for these things are good and profitable unto men.

It is the second of these three articles of belief which is of particular

importance in relation to the present discussion. If God is loving, why are some not saved? Is not the very idea that some will not be saved a denial of the love of God? These ideas are of considerable importance, and are reflected at many points in modern western culture. In the face of such a widespread assumption that all will be saved, how can Christians argue that only some will be saved?

It is these questions which Packer set out to address in his major address 'The Problem of Universalism Today', which took the form of a paper originally published in the *Australian Journal of the Theological Students Fellowship*. Packer had already given some considerable thought to this issue. In 1965, he delivered the Payton Lectures at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, on 'The Problem of Universalism Today'. The four lectures on this theme were never published; some of their themes, however, are incorporated in the article with the same title.

In this article, Packer drew a sharp distinction between two senses of the term 'universalism': the 'universal Christian claim' on humanity, grounded in Jesus Christ as the one and only Saviour, and the universal need for redemption; and as the universal restoration of humanity 'to the fellowship with God for which Adam was made, and from which he fell'. Packer notes that it is the first form of universalism which establishes the credentials of Christianity as a world religion, and establishes its missionary credentials; the second, however, threatens to erode the distinctiveness, authenticity and integrity of the Christian faith, and rob it of its evangelistic thrust.

Packer's discussion of the matter set out to achieve two major objectives. First, it aims to offer an explanation of why universalism has become so pervasive in modern western Christianity. Packer sets out four main considerations, which he believes cast light on the rapid advances made by this doctrine in recent years. Second, it aims to offer orthodox Christianity arguments which may be used to counter the rise of universalism. Packer remains one of the most solid evangelical defenders of the view that salvation depends on an explicit response to Christ in this life, and this article may be regarded as a brief yet precise statement of the classic evangelical position on this matter.

Related works by Packer

'Isn't One Religion as Good as Another?', in F. Colquhoun (ed.), *Hard Questions*, London: Falcon Press, 1967, pp. 16-19.

'The Way of Salvation: I. What is Salvation. II. What is Faith? III. The Problem of Universalism. IV: Are Non-Christian Faiths Ways of Salvation?' *Bibliotheca Sacra* 129 (1972), pp. 105-125; 291-306; 130 (1973), pp. 3-10; 110-116.

'What is evangelism?', in H. Conn (ed.), *Theological Perspectives on Church Growth*, Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976, pp. 91-105.

'The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ', *Churchman* 92 (1978), pp. 101-111.

'Good Pagans and God's Kingdom', *Christianity Today*, 17 January 1986, pp. 27-31.

'Evangelicals and the Way of Salvation: New Challenges to the Gospel', in C. F. H. Henry and K. Kantzer (eds.), *Evangelical Affirmations*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990, pp. 107-136.

The problem of universalism today

By universalism I mean the expressed hope, the professed certainty, that all men, past, present and future, from Adam right up to the end of time, will be found at the last in the kingdom and the enjoyment of God. It is the doctrine of which the Greek name is *apokatastasis* - 'the restoration'. It's based upon another sort of universalism about which there is no dispute, and which we all of us will take as our starting-point for thinking about this *apokatastasis* doctrine. The universalism which we all accept is the sum total of those qualities which make New Testament Christianity a faith for the whole world, i.e. the universal claim that is essential to Christianity, based upon proclaiming one Creator, one humanity, and one Redeemer. You remember how Paul at Athens affirmed the reality of the one God, and the one humanity, and the one destiny for the whole world, namely, to stand before God to be judged - 'he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world by that man whom he has ordained'. Many scriptures could be added to this to show how the universal Christian claim upon mankind is based on redemption - on the doctrine, that is, that there was one Saviour of the whole world, and one atoning transaction in virtue of which forgiveness is freely offered to the world. One thinks of Romans 5, the Adam-Christ parallel; one thinks of 2 Corinthians 5:19, 'God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself', or John 1:29, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.' From this the New Testament writers draw the conclusion, the corollary conclusion, that there is in fact only one people of God - the seed of Abram has become a world-wide community; Gentiles are invited to join, as it were, by receiving Jesus Christ, and becoming Abram's heirs in him. And the Christian claim is that no other faith can stand

beside it: by being an inclusive claim demanding response from all men in the world it becomes an exclusive claim insisting that all other faiths must be abandoned in order to worship God as we should and honour Christ as we ought.

'The gospel', says Paul in Romans 1:16, 'is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.' There is universalism for you. But to respond to it means as he said to the Thessalonians, 'to turn from idols to serve the living and true God'. There is a universal mission committed to the church to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. 'Go and make disciples of all nations,' said our Lord in Matthew 28:18. The message preached is the call of God for the whole earth and by virtue of creation and redemption (those basic facts) God claims a response from every man to whom the message comes.

Now this sort of universalism which makes Christianity into a world religion is not in dispute; and we take it as our starting-point. The question for us is whether any of this implies a doctrine of universal salvation, the restoration, literally, of all men to the fellowship with God for which Adam was made and from which he fell.

Now the title of this paper speaks of universalism as a problem today. Why is it especially a problem? There are four reasons:

Reason 1

Universalism is rapidly advancing throughout Protestantism. This is a new situation. Universalism was first broached by the Greek Father Origen: and it was condemned, and he was condemned for teaching it – this of course subsequent to his death in the fifth century. That condemnation reperussed in Christendom for centuries: universalism was regarded as a condemned minority eccentricity. In the days of the Reformation, the Anabaptists took it up (some of them), and the Reformers repeated the patristic condemnation against the Anabaptists. And this is how things were in Protestantism until the nineteenth century. Then in the nineteenth century the status of universalism began to change. The father of German liberalism, Schleiermacher, and many liberals following him, and English divines like the Anglican Andrew Jukes and the Baptist Samuel Cox, and various North American divines, the Scotsman Erskine and others, began seriously to argue universalism. The poets of Britain began to express it in their verses; Browning and Tennyson, Coventry Patmore, and in North America in poets like Whittier and Walt Whitman. And by the twentieth century universalism had established itself as an undoubtedly respectable position and in our time we see it literally carrying all before it. I think it would be true to say that the majority of

theologians and missionary leaders active today are at least sympathetic, and in many cases actually committed, to universalist teaching. I quote Bishop John Robinson, 'It is impossible to ignore a consensus of contemporary names such as Nicholas Berdyaev, the Russian Orthodox; William Temple, Anglican; John Baillie, Church of Scotland; C. H. Dodd, Congregationalist; Charles Raven, another Anglican; Herbert Farmer, an English Presbyterian, all of whom have come out more or less in favour of this doctrine.' And Robinson's own name can be added to the list; so can that of the Swiss theologians Michaelis and Karl Barth, who if he did not actually commit himself to universalism, was clearly very sympathetic towards it, and the American Nels Ferré and John Hick. Universalism it seems has come to stay. It is going to be advocated during our lifetime by very able men. We cannot ignore this. What are we going to think about it? What are we going to say?

Reason 2

The theological claim of universalism is momentous. The claim is that this teaching alone does justice to the love of God and the victory of the cross and the thrust of the Bible. Whereas, so it is claimed, any belief in the eternal loss, eternal torment, of any of God's rational creatures makes God out to be at the least a failure and perhaps even a devil. This is the kind of thing that is constantly said by universalist theologians. It is a tremendously far-reaching claim and one that we cannot ignore. Is this really true? If not, why not?

Reason 3

The pastoral implications of universalism are far-reaching. If all men are, in the title of the nineteenth-century tract, 'Doomed to be Saved', then it follows that the decisiveness of decisions made in this life, and the urgency of evangelism here in this life, immediately, are undermined. Other ways of loving your neighbour here in this life may now be considered as perhaps more important than seeking to win him to Christ. And it is no accident that keenness on the social gospel, so-called, and universalist theology, have gone hand in hand, viz. G. Müller wrote, 'almost all leading religious socialists have appeared as universalists in their theology'. This is true, from F. D. Maurice – a wishful universalist of the last century, to J. A. T. Robinson, who is a thorough-going socialist and a thorough-going universalist at the present time. You can see what the missionary implications of this teaching are going to be at this point. What is the main job of Christian missionary witness? To win men to

Christian faith? Or to do something else for them? In evangelical history there have been repeated movements of the Spirit, movements of missionary and evangelistic advance which have had at their heart earnest prayer offered by many good Christian souls, prayer that was made in terms of the belief that without Christ men and women were lost. This is not a question now of how they preached; it is a question of how they prayed. Were they right to pray that way? Such prayer was, literally, the powerhouse of the evangelical awakening in the eighteenth century and many spiritual movements since. Was it off the beam? – Uninstructed prayer? – Foolish and stupid prayer? Or did it reflect a true insight into how things were?

Reason 4

Its personal appeal is strong. I know that the historic evangelical attitude has been to regard universalism with what one book speaks of as 'something akin to hatred': evangelicals have said how morally weakening this doctrine is and how spiritually deadening it is. They have equated it with the first lie, the devil's lie in the garden of Eden, 'you shall not surely die'. They have seen it as a modern version of the first piece of armour the devil puts on Mansoul in Bunyan's *Holy War*, viz., 'the hope of doing well at the last what life soever you have lived'. This is what universalism is in practice, evangelicals have said, and it is a deadly thing. It is false hope. And yet in these days of our expanding world population when there are literally millions who have never heard of Christ and great political forces are now ranged in battle array to ensure that they never will hear of Christ, it is difficult for a person to be glib about a rejection of universalism. We would, all of us, in our hearts, like to be universalists; we find that the doctrine of eternal punishment for some is a very uncomfortable truth to live with and sometimes we find ourselves wishing that it was not there. Many pastors have, I think, succumbed to the temptation to live and preach and act as if it were not there. We ourselves will be exposed to the same temptation. Is it the ostrich temptation? Simply to hide your head in the light of God's facts? Or might it be that, after all, we are allowed in this day and age to jettison the doctrine of eternal punishment and take up universalism after all? Will the Bible let us?

The case for universalism

1. The biblical picture

Universalism is a thesis about human destiny argued, at least by its modern exponents, from the Bible itself. Now what the Bible has to say about the

destiny of the believer is not in question at all. The Bible is very clear and emphatic on this. You know the glorious doctrine of Christian hope which the New Testament proclaims:

'No condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.'
 'Neither life nor death nor anything in creation can separate us from the love that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'
 'Where I am, there shall my servant be.'

My knowledge of that life is small, my faith is dim,
 But it's enough that Christ knows all,
 And I shall be with him.

That is the Christian hope in a nutshell, as Richard Baxter formulated it 300 years ago.

The question is not about the destiny of believers, it is about those who go through life and leave the world as unbelievers: those who in this world (cf. Paul, Eph. 2:12) 'are without God and without hope in the world'. The New Testament seems very clear at first sight about the hopelessness both in this world and in the world to come of unbelievers. Remember how in Romans, Paul draws out and dwells on the wretchedness of the unbeliever at this point, how he is under the law, obliged to keep God's requirements perfectly, and is exposed to judgment if he breaks the law: And he is also under sin. So that he lacks in him the power to keep the law; all men, Jews and Gentiles, are under sin (Rom. 3:9). And says Paul, 'Therefore all men are under God's wrath' – for disobedience. This is worked out in Romans 1 – 2 (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10 – 'receives the things done in the body' – the past comes straight back at us in the form of retribution. 'Whether those things be good or whether they be evil'). This is the meaning of the wrath of God: it stands for the first retributive judgment of the Lord upon those who have transgressed his law. This means that unbelievers are subjected to death; under law, under sin, under wrath, under death. Death had reigned over all men who have lived without Christ. 'The wages of sin is death' (Rom. 3:23), and death in the New Testament does not mean annihilation or extinction, but rather what indeed it means in the Old Testament, too, separation from that which makes for true and complete life, the loss, that is, of something that is essential to your fulfilling your own destiny. That is how it is that you can have a living death; the thought is not biological, but the thought is of a spiritual relationship that has gone wrong. 'And she that liveth in sin is dead while she lives' (Paul, in the Pastorals). 'You were dead in trespasses and sin' – the death in this case is the death of a

broken and spoiled relationship with God, which means that something essential for which you were made is missing from you – you are separated from your own true and complete life. That is death here, and that will be the essence of death hereafter. In Romans 8, Paul says, 'to be carnally minded is death' (that is in the present) and he says, 'Then if you live after the flesh you shall die' (that is future). But the essence of death in both texts is the same. Here is a non-relationship with God where it should be a positive relationship. Consequently loss of true life, something essential for which you were made, missing – continued unhealthy existence. Under law, under sin, under wrath, under death. This is all that the New Testament seems to be saying about unbelievers. And we might add to this the fact that there are two texts (quoting Oliver Quick, the Anglican divine) which seem to be quite explicit for continued existence in the experience of retribution beyond this life. The one that he quotes is Matthew 25:46 at the end of the parable of the sheep and the goats. The one group, those hailed as blessed by the Father, go away into eternal life (*zōē aiōnios*), and the others go away into *kolasin aiōnios*, translated in our Bibles 'eternal punishment', 'chastisement'. What does *aiōnios* mean here? Well, we know the basic meaning of *aiōnios* in the New Testament is 'that which relates to this world to come as contrasted with that which relates to this aeon. Thus it stands for fixity and finality', and so comes by that root of meaning to denote endlessness, just because the age to come is the last age. And thus it must be held to mean 'eternal' in the old naïve sense of 'endless-continuous'.

The second text that Quick quotes is the picture text at the end of Revelation 20:10, 15 which refers to the lake of fire, where the beast and the false prophet are, and where those who are rejected at the great white throne at the judgment will also be. The torment there goes on for ever and ever, says the writer of Revelation. The torment presumably being the knowledge of one's own ill desert and God's displeasure, and of the good that one has lost. This is the witness of the New Testament. This was the doctrine of the synagogue and the apocalyptic writings in the days of the New Testament and for a century before. This doctrine appears to have been enforced by Jesus Christ throughout his ministry. W. G. T. Shedd, the last-century Presbyterian divine, says very forthrightly, 'Jesus Christ is the person who is responsible for the doctrine of eternal perdition.' And you remember some of the fearsome pictorial language which he used and which, *prima facie*, is expressing precisely this idea: the weeping and gnashing teeth, the outer darkness, the worm dying not and the fire not being quenched. His use of the picture of Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom, outside of Jerusalem where they burn the rubbish, as a picture of the final destiny of some; the reference to the great gulf fixed between the place

where Dives is and the place where Lazarus is. And this text we have quoted from Matthew 25 takes its place among a whole group of texts. E.g. that text in which he says, 'depart from me, you cursed, into the place of eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'. One has to say, soberly I hope, and reverently, how could the Lord have made the fact of eternal punishment for the impenitent clearer than he did? What more could he have said to make it clear if passages like this do not make it clear? It is, to be sure, a fearful doctrine but it is there in the Gospels, and we must take it as seriously as we take any other elements of our Lord's teaching. This is the consistent teaching of the New Testament to the destiny of those who live and die without faith. It is observable that the New Testament is not in the least troubled about this. Rather the insistence all the way through is that the final punishment of the impenitent is right, and is a manifestation of God's glorious justice and something for which the people of God should praise him. It is a bit breathtaking, this, in the New Testament. Read the exposition of the principle in Romans 2:5–6, 'the righteous judgment of God'; and the way in which the judgment on Babylon is regarded (in Rev. 18:20 and 19:2) as a matter for which God should be praised. Compare also the Old Testament where 'saints' or 'the Psalmist' rejoice at the righteous judgment of God. The thing that seems to be uppermost in their mind is the knowledge that God is vindicated, and his righteousness has triumphed at last. If we find it hard to attain to that, we must ask ourselves why and where the difficulty comes. Certainly this is the Bible view.

2. The universalist response

Now what does the universalist say in the face of all this? There were some in the last century who based their universalist belief on a flat denial – a flat wiping out of their Bibles – and all this teaching as some sort of mistake and the substituting in its place the belief that all men would be restored to fellowship with God immediately upon death. But that is not the way in which universalists, I think, put it; not one, from Origen on, has ever put it this way. The way they have put it, rather, is in the form of a speculation about what happens after death. They say that for all those who die out of Christ, there is a second chance. Universalism is one of the many types of 'second chance' speculation. And, say the universalists, hereby setting themselves apart from other exponents of the 'second chance' idea, our conviction is that the second chance is going to be accepted in every single case; that God's confrontation of the impenitent after death with the issues of the gospel, which either they did not hear or rejected in this life, is going to be successful: there is going to be a positive response.

Hell, say the universalists, is real, but they say it is temporary. It is not the ultimate state for anyone, it is only the penultimate state. E. Brunner, expounding this doctrine (he never finally committed himself to it), speaks of hell as a pedagogic cleansing process. Hell on this view is a means of grace: it is a rough place, a place of correction, a place where people come to their senses. It is a kind of purgatory for those whom the church of Rome would not allow into purgatory. This doctrine is a doctrine of salvation through, and out of, the state which the New Testament refers to in one place as 'perdition', in another place as 'eternal destruction', and in another 'eternal punishment'. It is an unqualified and unlimited optimism of grace. Sin is a reality, hell is a reality: but God's grace is going to triumph in the end!

3. Arguments justifying this thesis

The positive arguments put forward fall into two classes: first, exegetical; secondly, theological. Taking the exegetical argument first, there are, universalists say, three classes of text in the New Testament which point this way. (1) Those which predict the actual salvation of all men: John 12:32; Acts 3:21; Ephesians 1:10; Romans 5:18; Philippians 2:9-11; 1 Corinthians 15:22-28, 'God shall be all things in all.' (2) Those texts announcing God's will to save all men: 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4. (3) Those that assert that God stands here and now in such a relation to men that salvation must come to them eventually: 2 Corinthians 5:19; 1 John 2:2; Hebrews 2:9; Titus 2:11; Colossians 1:20, 'God reconciled all things to himself through the cross of Christ.'

Are these texts conclusive as props of the position they are produced to prove? One cannot say so for the following three reasons.

(1) Do these texts admit of another explanation more germane to the context? (2) All these texts are juxtaposed with texts in the documents from which they are drawn which refer specifically to the prospect of some perishing through unbelief. And unless we assume that the writers did not know their own minds, we have to conclude that they cannot, in the texts quoted, really have meant to confirm universal final salvation. (3) Let us note the fact that there is no scripture for the form of the second probation theory. You certainly cannot argue it from that mysterious text 1 Peter 3:19, telling us how, quickened in the spirit, Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison 'who were disobedient in the days of Noah'. Whatever that means, it is a reference to a message taken to a particular limited group of spirits in prison. And the fact that the group is so limited is a strong argument against there being any suggestion of a universal publishing of the gospel to people beyond the grave in Peter's mind.

The attempt to establish the doctrine of universalism by exegetical means must be held to have failed, and as long ago as 1908, Robert McIntosh, whose position might be regarded as wishful universalism, wrote, 'The question is generally argued as one of New Testament interpretation, but the present writer does not think that hopeful. He sees no ground for challenging the old doctrine on exegetical lines.' And most of the modern universalists would agree with that. Therefore they base their universalist speculation on a different foundation. They seek to present it as an irresistible theological inference from certain things in the New Testament; an inference so irresistible and certain as to warrant our discounting certain other things in the New Testament. It is, in other words, a hermeneutical speculation, bound up with the belief that you are allowed to handle the Bible like this. Let us see how they argue this line of thinking in theological terms.

God, they say, is love. This is the real centre of the New Testament revelation, and love must have the last word, and love in the Scriptures is sovereign love, therefore the love of God must imply an effective intention in saving all the rational creatures he has made. Nels Ferré, the American, expounds this in terms of the old liberal thought of the universal fatherhood of God - 'God has no permanent problem children.' Bishop Robinson, in his pre-*Honest to God* days, argued that the only way of holding to the Bible-New Testament insistence that love is the last word to be spoken of God, is to be quite frank in seeing what the Scriptures say about his retributive justice as a function of his redeeming love. He rejects the idea that God's loving purpose could triumph if any were lost on the grounds that it 'cannot preserve the absolute identity of divine love and justice'. For Robinson, you have to assert the absolute identity of divine love and justice, so that you have to understand God's justice as a function and activity of his love preserving the purpose of love, i.e. of correction leading to the response of repentance and the final enjoyment of heaven. But, does the New Testament anywhere lead us to believe that the doctrines of justice and love are identical? I would not have thought so. But Robinson says you must say this.

The second line of theological arguing is to argue from the fact that the cross was a decisive victory. The very essence of the victory, so they say, consists in the fact that the cross effectively saved all men. And they understand faith as simply a matter of coming to acknowledge the fact that you were saved; faith is the opening of men's blind eyes so that they acknowledge what they already are - men are in a state of salvation and grace. But is this New Testament? The New Testament, to me, seems to be saying that no-one is actually saved, no-one is actually in Christ, until he has actually believed into Christ. This is the doctrine of Ephesians 2:12-13, 'Before you

came to Christ, you were without hope.' The New Testament seems to be very clear that where there is no actual belief there is no actual salvation, no state of grace in any sense at all. Compare John 3:16 and 36, which make this very explicit. Likewise, 'Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved' sounds a very different doctrine from the universalists' awakening to faith. Again compare Hebrews 10:39: 'We are not of them that draw back but have faith unto the saving of the same.'

Now there is a positive cogent and conclusive argument against universalism. I simply ask, does not the New Testament actually insist on the decisiveness of this life? What did our Lord mean when he threatened the Jews with the prospect of dying in their sins (John 8:21 and 24) as being the ultimate disaster? What did he mean in the parable of Dives and Lazarus where he included the detail about the great gulf fixed between the two men?

What did he mean when he spoke of one group going away into eternal life and the other group going away into eternal punishment, the judgment being passed in each case on the basis of what they had done in this life? What did he mean when he spoke of Judas in this way: Matthew 26:24, '... good it were for that man if he had not been born'? Universalism is a doctrine of the salvation of Judas. Could our Lord have said this if he had expected the salvation of Judas? And what does the rest of the New Testament mean when it speaks in similar terms: Galatians 6:7, Hebrews 9:27, etc? What are we going to make of these passages? And there are many more like them. Are they not pressing for the decisiveness of this life?

The conclusion of the matter must be that of James Denney writing on this subject sixty years ago: 'I dare not say to myself that if I forfeit the opportunity this life offers I shall ever have another, and therefore I dare not say so to another man.'

Preachers, can you get around that? It would simply be dishonest to encourage in others a hope I dare not rely on myself.

So I don't find myself able to be a universalist. Though it is uncomfortable, though is a doctrine that troubles and grieves the heart, I find myself obliged to stick to the old view that the choices of this life are decisive, and to evangelize and to preach the gospel in these terms and as an expression of this conviction.

This is where the argument leads me and these are my reasons for judging that universalist speculation at the present time is a very great evil, calculated to blight a man's ministry, and, as the older evangelicals used to think, 'calculated to ruin souls'.

Questions for study

1. Packer sets out four reasons why universalism has become increasingly common within modern western Protestantism. Summarize each in your own words. Which do you think is the most important?
2. Which biblical texts does Packer regard as being of especial importance in relation to this question?
3. To what extent is Packer's argument motivated by a desire to ensure a continuing passion for evangelism?