

## **The Reformed Universalist Catechism**

by Byron Arnold

### **Definitions**

Q. What is Reformed Universalism?

A. Reformed Universalism is a form of Christian Universalism that is based upon Reformed Theology.

Q. What is Christian Universalism?

A. Christian Universalism is a form of Christianity that teaches that eventually all men will be saved?

Q. What is Reformed Theology?

A. Reformed Theology, also known as Calvinism, is a form of Christianity that stresses man's inability to turn to God and God's sovereignty in electing some to salvation.

### **Basic Doctrines of Christianity**

Q. What is the nature of God?

A. God is a triune being, consisting eternally of three persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Q. What is sin?

A. Sin refers to an action which separates us from God. It can also refer to the condition of being enslaved to our sinful inclinations.

Q. How did sin enter into the world?

A. God created the world, and the first people, perfect and free from sin. It was His desire to have everlasting fellowship with them. The first humans, however, chose to disobey God, and were thus corrupted by sin. The condition of being enslaved to sinful desires is hereditary, and is passed upon every human being born.

Q. Why does sin separate us from God?

A. God is perfect and just. By His nature, He cannot stand sin.

Q. How did God solve this problem for us?

A. While we were yet sinners, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world so that he may live a perfect and righteous life, and then bore our punishments for failing to do so. Because He took our punishment for us, his righteousness can be imputed upon us so that we don't have to be separated from God. This is known as salvation, and what is meant by being saved.

### **Christian Universalism**

Q. Where do Christian Universalists get the idea that all will be saved?

A. From many different places in the Bible. Many of the biblical authors say things that at least imply that all will be saved.

Q. Did Jesus ever teach universalism?

A. Jesus seems to teach universalism in a few places, one of the clearest examples being in John 12:32 where Jesus says: “I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” (World English Bible)

Q. Did Paul teach universalism?

A. Yes, in many places! One of my favorite Bible verse is Romans 5:18, in which Paul says, “So then as through one trespass, all men were condemned; even so through one act of righteousness, **all men were justified to life.**” (emphasis mine) I encourage you to read the entire chapter, because it provides a very strong case for Christian Universalism when read in context of this verse.

Q. Where else did Paul teach Christian Universalism?

A. In Colossians 1:19 & 20, Paul says, “For all the fullness was pleased to dwell in him; 20 and through him **to reconcile all things to himself**, by him, whether things on the earth, or things in the heavens, having made peace through the blood of his cross.” In Romans 11:32, Paul says, “For God has shut up all to disobedience, that **he might have mercy on all.**” In 1 Corinthians 4:10, he says, “For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we have set our trust in the living God, **who is the Savior of all men**, especially of those who believe.”

Q. Do any other writers of the New Testament teach universalism?

A. John says, in 1 John 4:14, that “We have seen and testify that the Father **has sent the Son as the Savior of the world.**”

Q. Does this mean that all roads lead to God?

A. No, there is only one way to get to the Father, and that is through the Son (John 14:6). We are also told that no one can come to the Son unless the Father draws him.

## Reformed Theology

Q. How does Reformed Theology differ from other branches of Christianity?

A. The differences between Reformed Theology and other forms of Christianity are best summarized by the acrostic TULIP, and are based upon God's sovereignty rather than man's free will.

Q. What does TULIP stand for?

A. TULIP stands for the doctrines of **T**otal Inability, **U**nconditional Election, **L**imited Atonement, **I**rresistible Grace, and **P**erseverance of the Saints.

Q. What does Total Inability mean?

A. When our first ancestors sinned, they corrupted the image of God they were gifted with. This corruption is passed onto every single human ever born. We are totally unable to turn to God or to respond to him in any way except disobedience, or even desire to do so.

Q. What does Unconditional Election mean?

- A. Seeing that none would accept Christ's sacrificial death on their own, God decided before the Earth was even created to transform some to allow them to believe. This process is known as Regeneration, and those regenerated are known as God's Elect. These are the people God chose from the beginning of the world.
- Q. What will happen to the non-Elect?
- A. In Reformed Theology, those who are not of the Elect are known as the reprobate. They are sentenced to eternity in hell, according to Reformed Theology. In Reformed Universalist theology, however, hell is only temporary and remedial. It is not only just punishment, but also rehabilitative to the sinner.
- Q. What does Limited Atonement mean?
- A. Limited Atonement is the most controversial doctrine of Reformed Theology. It refers to God's desire to only save the Elect. In Reformed Theology, the theologian reasons that since God accomplishes whatever He desires, and not everyone is saved, then God must not desire the salvation of the whole world. Reformed Universalism agrees with this only as it applies to this lifetime. In the afterlife, all will be reconciled to God eventually.
- Q. What does Irresistible Grace mean?
- A. When God regenerates a sinner, he transforms their will, desires, and nature to such a degree that the Elect will desire salvation and will be unable to turn away from God.
- Q. What is Perseverance of the Saints?
- A. Once regenerated, a person will have no desire to turn away from God, and will in fact be unable to. Though they may backslide, God will use divine discipline to bring them back to Himself. The Bible tells us, "... he who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1:6)
- Q. What is meant by God's sovereignty?
- A. God's sovereignty refers to the will of God in the world. It encompasses all things, from the selection to the Elect, to the course of history. God has a plan for everyone, and He will bring it about. He does not force us to do His will against our own, but rather he creates us and our environment in such a way that we desire to do what is His will on our own.
- Q. What does predestination mean?
- A. Predestination refers to the selection of God's Elect from before the creation of the world, and His desire for individuals, groups of people, and the world. Providence, which is God's often times undiscernible hand guiding history, brings about the fulfillment of all that God predestines to happen.
- Q. Does God desire all to be saved?
- A. Some Bible passages imply that he does. Other's seem to imply Limited Atonement. The solution to this seeming contradiction is to understand God's ultimate plan. He has selected only His Elect to be saved within this lifetime. That is His desire, according to His own sovereignty. But he desires that the rest of humanity be saved in the next lifetime, being delivered from hell as He sees fit.