***Ecumenicism, Apostasy, Death, and Universalism  
  
RV26-02***

Please open your Bible to Revelation 2:18-19. We're on the segment of this chapter which has to do with the letter to Thyatira. We have seen that the Bible portrays unfaithfulness to God and to His doctrines on the part of his children as spiritual adultery. Spiritual adultery creates a condition which in time is conducive to physical immorality. Some of the members in the local church in the city of Thyatira in Asia Minor were guilty of both kinds of adultery – spiritual, and physical. Both were being participated in as an expression of worship of God.

**Ecumenicism**

The leading personality in this corruption of Christianity in the Thyatira church was a woman who was reminiscent of the Old Testament Jezebel who corrupted the people of Israel with her ecumenicism of Roman society. The word "ecumenical" means "unifying." It means "cooperation." It means "a base of compatibility with other groups."

The pagan beliefs and practices were viewed simply as alternate religious expressions by people who were seeking the same supreme being. Human viewpoint actually sees these alternate religions as equally acceptable to God as Christianity. That is a problem that we face today. In the spirit of ecumenicism, the doctrines and the practices are paganism in the Roman Empire were given Christian significance. So the spirit of ecumenicism which was promoted by the Thyatira Jezebel was not something acceptable to God. In time, it resulted in a mixture of paganism and Christianity historically, during the Middle Ages. This developed into the Roman Catholic Church.

For a spirit of ecumenicism to prevail, it is necessary to abandon the concept of the Bible as being an inerrant source of religious beliefs. You cannot take the attitude that the Bible is a book produced by God by supernatural means, and it has no error to it, and yet come together with everybody else's religious viewpoints when those religious viewpoints contradict each other. You can't all get together under the same umbrella with contradictory viewpoints unless you say that the Bible is not the final, determining authority as what God thinks, but that man's reasons can be brought in to judge these matters. Consequently, that's exactly what the ecumenical movement from the time of this Thyatira Jezebel to our own day has done.

It has taken the Bible and said, "The Bible is not a supernatural book which God produced without error. The Bible is simply a book that is the product of the writings of men who were trying to record what they felt about God; what their experiences had been with God; what they have found out from God; and, what the meditating around the campfires and on the mountain tops in nature had taught them about God, and they wrote it down. Some of it was right and good, but some of it was wrong. It was just human misconception. We, in an advanced, sophisticated society know better. Consequently, the Bible is not a book that has to be obeyed. It is a book, rather, of religious experiences which people have to analyze according to the enlightenment of our age."

Of course, the Bible is no such thing. The Bible everywhere claims for itself to be the voice of God. It is, "Thus saith the Lord," and it claims everywhere to have been the product of a God who has the omnipotence to be able to produce a record of information that we need – a record without error.

Those practicing the spiritual adultery of the ecumenical movement (we were told in this letter) are going to find that their adulterous bed of pleasure is going to be transformed into a bed of affliction in the tribulation. This ecumenical church is not going to be destroyed. It's going to prosper; it's going to grow; it's going to develop, just like it is today; and it's going to go right out into the tribulation period. It is increasingly going to be cemented together by the charismatic movement which centers on an emotional experience rather than the content of Scripture.

Today, the ecumenical movement is still with us – the same concept of the Thyatira Jezebel. It's represented by two basic organizations: the National Council of Churches; and, the World Council of Churches. These organizations seek organizational unity of all religious expressions. We do know from the Bible that such a unity will exist in the tribulation under Satan's control. Pope John the 23rd popularized the ecumenical concepts among Catholics and Protestants alike when he called Vatican 2 (the Vatican Church Council), and the theme of that council was the scriptural quotation, "They shall be one." The idea became very popular, and it caught the imagination of religious people everywhere – the idea of all religious groups getting together, and John the 23rd gave that a great boost.

**The Ecumenical Movement Today**

But what men describe as dialog with Roman Catholicism and with liberal Protestantism, God calls spiritual adultery. The ecumenical movement today, then, is the modern expression of the viewpoint which was being championed by this Jezebel-like woman in the city of Thyatira. In order for you to understand the ecumenical movement today, you need to remember three basic facts about it. These will help you not to get caught up and to be intimidated by folks who say, "Let's be cooperative; let's be sympathetic; let's have a dialog with these groups; and, let's at least talk with them as if there was some virtue in them.

1. **Theologically Liberal**

First of all, please remember that no matter how much dialog you carry on, and how compatible you seek to become, these groups are now, and always will be, theologically liberal. The ecumenical movement is theologically liberal. That means that it rejects the inerrancy of the Bible so that the Scriptures are not a binding authority in spiritual matter. Fallen human reason is placed above the statements of Scripture. So the theological concept is that at the heart of the ecumenical movement, if you find something in the Bible that doesn't seem reasonable to you, you don't have to believe it. You can adjust it and you can adapt it to our so-called modern times.

For this reason, the ecumenical movement and the leaders of the ecumenical movement today ridicule and despise the fundamental doctrines of the Bible as being outmoded delusions of simple and unsophisticated minds. So the ecumenical movement basically is anti-biblical. Don't kid yourself about that. In spite of any praise that they may have for the Bible, or any kind words they may have for the Bible, the only reason the liberals deal with the Bible is because they have some basis of authority.

**Liberalism**

There is an old liberalism and a new liberalism. The old liberalism of the 1920s came to a complete devastation. The reason for that was that they had so destroyed the Bible that finally preachers were getting up and talking, and they had put themselves in a position where everybody was saying, "How do I know what you're saying is right? On what basis should I listen to you?" So suddenly the preachers in the liberal pulpits had no authority at all. They destroyed all ground for people paying any attention to them at all, and that's exactly what happened. So people said, "I don't want to go there. Since there's an authority, I don't even have to go to church to listen to the guy." The result was the exodus out of liberal churches.

So along came a fellow named Karl Barth with a new kind of liberalism called neo-orthodoxy. He said, "Hey, we've got to come back and have some kind of a basis of authority." So he said, "The Bible is the authority. We have to talk from the Bible." There were enough ignorant evangelicals who said, "Wonderful! Hooray! The millennium has come. The liberals are turning back to the Word of God." However, the liberals have not changed their opinion about the Bible being a record of what men think about scriptural and religious matters. They didn't come back and say, "The Bible is the authoritative Word of God." They were just standing there and telling you that, "I'm talking from the Bible, and I'm going to give you what our modern understanding and reasons indicate to us that this means." Well, they talked from the Bible, but they were still telling you their human viewpoint.

So the ecumenical movement is theologically liberal no matter what these men say in a laudatory way concerning the Scriptures.

1. **Economically Socialistic**

Then there's another thing you should remember about the ecumenical movement, and that is that it is economically socialistic. When you listen to the religious leaders in the ecumenical movement, you will very quickly realize that they are strongly anti-capitalistic, and they are strongly anti-American. These are two factors that come through as you listen to the leaders of the ecumenical movement. They are in favor of programs which confiscate wealth from those who have it, as a result of the fact that they produced it, and which redistribute that wealth to those who don't have it because they have not been producers. That is at the heart of the ecumenical movement. It is not just a religious movement. It is an economic movement as well. That economic movement is to take away from producers, and share it with non-producers. So when you talk about the ecumenical movement, you must remember that it is a socialistic oriented concept. It portrays socialism as being compassionate, and it rejects the biblical principle of private property as being greed and exploitation.

So here you have people, again, who are supposedly championing the Bible, and they are championing an economic system that the Bible condemns. The Bible very strongly condemns anything except a private property base of relationship between human beings and their governments.

1. **Politically Collectivist**

There's a third thing to remember about the ecumenical movement, and that is its political viewpoints. It is politically collectivist. That means that it favors international controls over national sovereignty. What the ecumenical movement is after is a world welfare state. It wants to create a millennium without Jesus Christ. The ecumenical movement is in favor of every kind of one-world movement. It is politically collectivist, and that is why it comes as a shock to people to realize that groups like the World Council of Churches finance terrorist groups to the extent of millions of dollars. This is money that people come to church with and that they put in the offering plate. These are Protestant groups that are part of the World Council of Churches. This money that comes from church members (supposedly Christians) is then taken and given to terrorist groups who are using it to maim, and to kill, and to destroy life and private property in order to bring about a unified one-world political situation. They seek to impose a communist system in contrast to free societies.

So when you talk about the ecumenical movement today, do not be deceived. A lot of Christians are because there are some people who have fellowship with the World Council of Churches and the National Council Churches – people like Billy Graham that everybody knows is a Bible believer; who everyone knows understands the doctrine of salvation; and, who everyone knows has spoken the doctrine of salvation, and many people have been saved. But they find that they are confused when they see him speaking before conferences of the World Council of Churches and their conventions, and the National Council of Churches, and saying very laudatory things about them, and saying that he has found many wonderful people who love the Lord in these groups.

Don't ever forget these three points, no matter what Mr. Graham or others of influence have to say about the ecumenical movement. It is a theologically liberal movement. It is anti-Scripture. It is an economically socialistic movement. It is anti-free enterprise. It is politically collectivist. It is internationalist in its goal. It is exactly the program of the antichrist. Therefore, it is exactly the program of his majesty the devil. This is exactly what the devil is seeking to establish in human society. That is what the ecumenical movement is all about.

**Apostasy**

The ecumenical movement, therefore, is a great evil which is promoted by Satan; it is rejected by God; and, it is traced all the way back here to Revelation 2 and this Jezebel woman described here in the letter to Thyatira. The Bible makes it very clear that the organized church on earth, that Jesus Christ founded, is going to become apostate. We won't go into these Scriptures now, but there are many Scriptures that clearly indicate that the church is going to become apostate: 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:1; 2 Peter 2:1-2; and, Revelation 2:20-23.

This apostasy historically has been based, first of all, on the denial of the premillennial return of Jesus Christ to this earth to set up a millennial kingdom. If you do not believe that Jesus Christ is going to return to this earth and set up a kingdom and be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords over all organized governments and society, then you are in the tradition of this apostasy represented by this Jezebel-like woman. Apostasy begins with denying the return of Jesus Christ to take over this world.

Apostasy is based also on the denial of salvation by grace apart from all human doing. Those are two things that have always been involved in historical apostasy: first, Christ is not coming back to set up His kingdom and rule on this earth; and, secondly, salvation is not apart from human effort – it involves human effort; that is, salvation is not by grace alone.

When the true and genuine church is taken out of this world at the rapture, the ecumenical church is going to be left behind. This church is described in Revelation 17:5. This church believes these three things and promotes these three concepts that we've been listing. Revelation 17:5 is described in these words: "And upon her forehead was a name written, 'Mystery Babylon the Great, The Mother of Harlots, and Abomination of the Earth.'" This church is described as a harlot. She's a prostitute. And she's connected with Mystery Babylon; that is, with the mystery religions of ancient Babylon, which have been mixed with Christianity, and which in our day is epitomized by the Roman Catholic Church.

The ecumenical church of the tribulation period (this harlot church) is going to persecute with a vengeance all genuine biblical believers. So, Revelation 17:6 says, "And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered with great wonder." It was an amazement to John that he, who lived in the first century and knew the church in its pristine beauty, was going to become, in God's eyes, nothing but a harlot.

The ecumenical church of the Tribulation period is going to dominate the political ruler of the Western world until the political ruler of the Western world becomes the ruler of the whole world. Once he becomes the ruler of the whole world, he doesn't need this harlot church anymore, which has been assisting him in his domination. Then he will destroy her. Revelation 17:16-17 describe the end of the ecumenical movement: "And the ten horns, which you saw upon the beast (ten nations in a confederacy under the Western ruler), these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God will put it in their hearts (the political rulers) to fulfill His will and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast until the words of God shall be fulfilled." So this church is going to be destroyed – the church that was begun by the concepts of this woman in Thyatira.

What this tells us is that the leaders of the ecumenical movement today are just as evil as Jezebel, and they're promoting the same kind of spiritual adultery. They may be very cultured men (and they are), and may be very educated men (and they are). They may even look religious. A lot of them wear their shirts backwards with their collars on backwards in order for you to identify them very clearly as being men of God. None of that makes any difference. Some of them even wear crosses that they dangle around their necks to show that they are devoted to Jesus Christ. Do not be taken in by that. If they are for the ecumenical movement, they are for these concepts that we have outlined. The final effect of the movement is going to be to worship the antichrist as God.

So, turning now to Revelation 2:23, we have a sentence of death pronounced upon this ecumenical church and this woman in Thyatira and that ecumenical product that she has been promoting. Verse 23 says, "And I will kill her children with death." The word "and" is the Greek word "kai." It's a conjunction which indicates an addition to the fact that you will be cast into tribulation. Verse 22 says that this woman and those who cooperate in her adultery are going to be thrown into great tribulation. Historically, that will be fulfilled after the rapture of the church. But it also historically (probably) had some fulfillment back in the New Testament church when this church actually existed. God brought great tribulation and trial upon those who were participating in this evil.

He says that what He's going to do is, "He's going to kill." The word "kill" is the Greek word "apokteino." "Apokteino" means "to take away life:" here as a divine judgment. This is in the future tense which means that sometime in the future God is going to do this to this woman and her children. It is active. It is Jesus Christ who is going to do this destroying. It is indicative. It is a statement of fact. This, of course, again reflects the historical situation of the Jezebel of the Old Testament. In 2 Kings 10:7, you have recorded how all of her children were destroyed. So here the analogy is being carried over, and the Lord Jesus Christ is telling this church that, "I'm going to separate from life all those of you who are participants with this woman."

The word "her," of course, refers to this Jezebel woman: "I will kill her children." The word "children" is the Greek word "teknon." What this means literally is "born one:" "I will kill her born ones." They are her born ones. These are the ones that she has spiritually given birth to. You know what happens to a child that you give birth to. He looks like you... Worse than that, he acts like you. Sometimes you can spot a child. You don't know who he is, but he has a cast of his eyes; he has a way that he jerks his head; or, he has a little way that he tosses a word around (an expression), and in your mind you connect that with some adult. Sure enough, many times I've discovered that's that person's child. He is not just somebody who is cooperating with his parent. He's a product. He's an image. He's a reflection. He's a direct production. That is a much closer tie. That's the difference here.

The Lord Jesus is dealing in verse 23 with these people who were born ones. They're "teknons." They are begotten of this woman. They are her spiritual offspring. They are the direct reflection of her religious perversion. Furthermore, they are unrelentingly loyal. They are like a child who is the complete product and reflection of his parents, and is completely loyal to them because he is reflecting the fact that he's the product of that parent. That is what he is expressing. He is a born one. These people in Thyatira, as children of this woman, bore her perverted ways. They were like the parent, and they had no qualms of conscience about their attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ. These born ones, historically, of course, are the products of the Roman Catholic Church, and those whom God will destroy in the tribulation. This includes the Protestant groups that have come out of the Catholic Church that are reflecting the basic concepts of the ecumenical movement.

**Spiritual Heritage**

It is very hard to reject your own spiritual heritage, even though the heritage that you were reared with was corrupted by Satan. Over the years, you have seen as I have seen, people who have come in and out of our ministry. They came in from a corrupted spiritual heritage. They were members of some big denomination, or they were members of some liberal organization. It wasn't very long before they got the signal that what they were part of was under the condemnation and the wrath of God. It's very hard to recognize that you are the child of a perverted product, and to withdraw yourself from it. Your first inclination is to defend it; to stand up for it; to excuse it; to try to hang onto it; and, to justify it. But I'll tell you that that is a dangerous thing. It will result in maximum divine punishment. It will result in personal losses to you on an eternal basis.

So what this first phrase of verse 23 is talking about is people who are the direct products, in terms of being children of this woman, who the Lord is now warning that they better change their way, even though it means what people have often had to do: to point to their parents and say, "My mother was wrong. My father was completely wrong in what he thinks spiritually? I realize now, as I look upon myself, that my parents raised me without a spiritual orientation." You'll have to say that, and that's hard to say: "What my parents taught me was completely contrary to the Word of God. My parents taught me (worse than that) something that was almost right, but just wrong enough to rob me of a spiritual heritage." It is very hard for a young person to look at his parents and say, "My parents were mistaken in what they taught me about God." Yet, if you do not do that, the consequences are eternal.

**Death Means Separation**

In this case, God says that these who were born with the full characteristics of this Jezebel-like women, if they do not reject her, then, "God is going to kill them with." The word "with" is the Greek word "en." It's a preposition which means "in" or "encased." Encased in what? Encased in "thanatos" (death): "I'm going to kill them with death." That's kind of an odd sounding phrase. This is the Bible's way of making a very strong emphasis upon the fact that a separation is to take place. That's the first thing you must remember about death. If you look at death, remember to associated it with one word, and that is "separation." This separation is of several kinds:

**Physical Death**

First of all, it is a separation of the human soul and the spirit from the body. When that happens, you have physical death. That's what takes place. In Genesis 35:18-19, we have this experience described for Rachel: "And it came to pass as her soul was in departing, for she died." And there it was. Verse 19: "And Rachel died and was buried." Her soul departed from the body, and that is death. That is what physical death is all about. It is the departing of the soul from the body. And, along with that: the spirit. James 2:26 makes that clear to us. We are not just souls. We are souls and spirits. And some people have dead spirits, but nevertheless, you do have a spirit. James 2:26 says, "For as the body without the spirit is dead. So faith without works is dead." So the first thing that "thanatos," in terms of separation, describes is a condition where the human soul and the human spirit separate from the body. That results in physical death. Hebrews 9:27 tells us that all of mankind is destined for physical death. That gives people, of course, a lot of misery.

**Spiritual Death**

However, then there is a second kind of separation. When the human soul and the human spirit are separated from God while you are still physically alive, then you experience spiritual death. Number one is physical death; and, number two is spiritual death. Isaiah 59:2 tells us that evil separates us from God. Of course, that is what separates the soul and spirit from God. Matthew 27:46 describes how Jesus Christ was crying out in agony on the cross, in calling out why God the Father and God the Holy Spirit had separated from Him. Well, it was because He was under sin. It is sin that caused it, and His human spirit and soul were separated from them. He died spiritually.

Ephesians 2:1-5 tell us that, "We are born dead in trespasses and sin." What does that mean? We're born physically alive, but spiritually dead. When you're born, your human spirit is dead, and your soul is separated from God. In Ephesians 4:18, we're told that we are, "Alienated from the life of God."

**The Second Death**

Then there was a third kind of separation that you should be aware of. This separation is body, soul, and spirit – all separated from God into the lake of fire. This is called eternal death, or sometimes the second death. This is permanent separation from God in the lake of fire. Spiritual death is irrevocable. Revelation 21:8 indicates that there's no turning back. This is the place of the eternal confinement of Satan, demons, and unbelievers (Revelation 19:20, Revelation 20:10-15). The lake of fire, of course, was created for Satan and for his angels.

Here we have the Lord Jesus telling this church that the product of this woman (her children) are going to be killed with a death – a certain kind of death. Number one is physical death; number two is spiritual death; and number three is eternal death. Which one does He have in view? It seems quite obvious that the death which is referred to in verse 23 is this third one. It is the eternal death, or the second death, which is described as the lake of fire. Let's just take a look at that for a minute.

**Hell**

This is what people usually mean when they use the word hell. Revelation 20:12-15. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was opened which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the book according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades delivered up the dead that were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works, and death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

So this is the second death. Let's look back in verse 6: "Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection. On such, the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." The first resurrection includes only believers, and they are free of this second death. So what is being told us here is that this punishment that God is going to impose upon these children of the Thyatira heretics is going to be the eternal separation from God in the lake of fire.

Of course, you know that the origin of death was the Garden of Eden. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 tells us that when God made us, he made us (and He made Adam, therefore) with three distinct parts. Paul says, "And the very God of peace sanctified (or set you apart) as a person entirely. I pray God your whole spirit (human spirit), your soul (your human soul), your body (your human body) be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." There you have the three parts that constitute a human being: he is spirit; he is soul; and, he is body. And spirit comes first. Very often we speak of this for logical reasons or study reasons, and we'll say, "Body, soul, and spirit." The Bible says, "Spirit, soul, and body:" The spirit is your contact with God; the soul is your contact with other people; and, the body is your contact through your senses to the world about you.

Well, this is how Adam was created. As a human being, Adam was part of a creation which God, in Genesis 1:31, pronounced to be very good. So whatever else you may say about Adam, one thing you know about him for sure was that when God was through creating him, God looked at Adam (as well as the rest of creation) and said, "This is terrific. This is magnificent. This is number one. This is very good. I could not have done better." That's very interesting to realize that human beings are the top production of what the Almighty God could do.

However, there's one thing to remember, and that is that as Adam was created, he was neither subject to death, nor was he deathless. He was neither mortal nor immortal. He was rather a person who could not die unless he did something that would make him subject to death. But until he did something to make him subject to death, he wouldn't die. Yet he could die if he did that thing that God told him not to do. Of course, Adam's negative volition to God's commandments about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil made him mortal. Adam could have gained experience or knowledge of good and evil in two ways (as you can gain it in two ways). You can gain an experience of good and evil by pursuing the good. That's what God wanted him to do. As he pursued the good, he would understand the contrast. He would know what good is, and he would have a definite contrast of what was evil.

He went about it the other way – the way humanity does today. He said, "I'll learn the difference between good and evil by pursuing the evil. Of course, you can pursue evil, and you can become so steeped in evil that there will be no doubt in your mind as to what good is. You'll have a clear cut picture of what is good? This is what crushes people. They realize how evil they have become, and what a contrast that is to the good that they could have been, and that they wish they were.

So what Adam did has exercised negative volition toward God's commandment about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That made him mortal. Now he was subject to death. Adam chose this way to gain this experiential knowledge. Adam's rebellion against God resulted in death just as he'd been warned.

What were the consequences? Well, man became a sinner by nature, and so he died spiritually. He passed the sin nature on to his children, so they are born spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1). Man, in his progeny, then became subject to physical death, as Romans 5:12 tells us. Mankind became subject to the second death, which is the lake of fire. Death is the divine punishment for evil. Only the intervening grace of God through Jesus Christ can reverse this destiny. It's an unnatural factor. Death is not natural to us. That's one reason we're so uncomfortable with it. We were never designed to carry death. It's an element that just doesn't fit in with anything about us. That's why God has said that the last thing He's going to correct of the devastation that Satan created is to remove death from the human experience. He's going to remove it from the unbelievers as well as from the believers.

This business of death in the Bible is a very solemn theme. It deals with it for the first time in Genesis 2:16-17: "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die." And, as you know, the Hebrew there, "You shall surely die," literally says, "Dying, you shall die," because "Dying" meant that he immediately died spiritually. And as the result of that spiritual death, he said, "You shall die," and years later, he died physically as well. So, in the expression "Dying, you shall die," God indicated that both spiritual and physical death were to come upon him. It was an intensified Hebrew expression. The death was going to be an intensified kind of death. Well, that's the first warning. That's the first reference.

Then the terror of death mounts through the Scriptures. We could spend quite a time just listing all the words and expressions that refer to that experience. Finally, the Bible comes to Revelation 22:18-19, the last chapter, and it makes one more reference. Here is the end of the reign of terror: "For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away His part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." And "to take away from the tree of life" means to be confronted eternally with death – to take away the tree of life; to take away the living access to life; and, to find yourself in the condition of conscious eternal death.

*Death does not mean loss of consciousness. Death means separation.* Only the Bible can speak with authority on this subject. There's never any suggestion in the Bible that this judgment of death can be escaped. There are three views of how things are viewed with this confrontation.

**Universalism**

The first one is restorationism. Another word for that, that you might be more acquainted with, is universalism. What does that say? Well, first of all, I'm going to tell you it's never taught in the Bible. It's pure human viewpoint reasoning. It argues that all rational creatures are eventually going to be saved. Nobody goes to hell forever, including the devil and the demons. That is popular information. If there's anything the unbeliever would like to hear, it's that nobody ever goes to hell. I imagine that some of the great tyrants of history (the great evil men of all times who themselves had qualms of conscience at times because of what they were doing) would have been happy to hear that nobody goes to hell.

There are various types of this universalism viewpoint. One is that punishment for evil is here on this earth. You have all your hell here on this earth. This is a variation of the karma idea of reincarnation – that you come back in another life form, and you experience all your punishment for your sins until you've expiated all those sins, and whatever kind of person you are now, you come back in another life, and you suffer for that what you've done in a previous life, until you finally come to the point where you are fit for nirvana, or heaven.

Another variation is that the grave is the hell you experience. It is the hell of going into the grave, but once you're resurrected, everybody goes to heaven. Some people do teach that not all will be restored, but they teach that most of them will be restored. That's why the Mormon at the Mormon temple in Salt Lake City looked confused at me when I talked about hell, and that people go to it. He said, "Oh, you mean the sons of perdition?" And he said, "There'll be very few of them – very few." You really have to work hard to go to hell by the Mormon system. I mean you really have to try. If you don't try, you're going to make it into heaven. You see the subtle implications of universalism right at the heart of Mormonism. That's one of the reasons it's attractive. This is very appealing to believers who reject the biblical basis of salvation.

Why do they say this? Well, very briefly, they take passages of Scriptures which belong to believers, and they apply them to unbelievers (Psalm 103:8-18, Isaiah 57:16). These verses tell us of how God will care for His creatures. Those verses are talking about how God cares for believers, and they apply that to unbelievers. Or, they'll take texts which teach about the availability of salvation for all (John 1:29, Romans 5:19, Colossians 1:19-20, 1 Timothy 2:4-5). These are passages that say that God is not willing that any should perish. Well, that makes sense, doesn't it? Therefore, if God is not willing that they should perish, nobody is going to perish. They take these verses and they ignore the fact that the Scriptures also place positive volition responsibility upon the individual for accepting the way that God has provided to escape that doom. However, 1 Corinthians 15:22 says that all are going to be resurrected. So the universalist says, "Everybody is going to be saved." However, Jesus said that some are going to be resurrected to life, and some are going to be resurrected to eternal condemnation.

They will also take 1 John 4:8 which says that, "God is love," and this is a favorite one. They say, "I cannot imagine a God of love who would put a human being into conscious torment without end for all eternity. Of course, you know that the answer to that is that they're ignoring the fact that God's love is always controlled by His integrity. His Holiness is the central factor that controls God. God's love cannot do anything that His holiness cannot justify.

They'll take 1 Timothy 2:5-6 that say that, "Christ died for all." So that say that all are going to be saved. This ignores the fact that, while Christ did die for all, only those who accept are going to be able to profit by what He did.

They function on certain false assumptions: "God is the Father of all mankind." Have you heard about the fatherhood of God? God is only the Creator of mankind. He is not the father of all. Father is a family relationship. You have to be born into a person's family for that person to be your father. John 8:44 tells us that the father of the lost is the devil, and those who are born again into the family of God – only they have God as their father.

Another argument is that man's intuitive sense of reasoning and his feelings cannot conceive of God doing a thing like this. Proverbs 14:12 tells us that, "There is a way that seems right into a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Another argument for the restorationist (the universalist) is that punishment is reformatory in its effects. Therefore, after people have been punished so long, they will be reformed, and everybody will go to heaven. That's a variation of purgatory. Punishment is not always reformatory. That is clearly declared to be the case in Scripture (Amos 4:6-11, Revelation 9:20-21, Revelation 16:7-11-21). So here you have human reason putting together a way to escape what God has said: "I'm going to do to those of you who follow the perverted system of the Thyatira Jezebel. I'm going to kill you with the second death – with eternal separation from My presence."

One of the ways that people try to get around that is by these arguments to make it seem plausible that everybody eventually is going to make it to heaven. There are two other important ways that people face this kind of a statement. We'll look at those next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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