

## Universalism Against Itself—Wilford

The system of belief denominated Universalism, which teaches that all men will be saved irrespective of moral character, is as old as sin itself; and grows as necessarily out of the depravity of the heart, as rank weeds are produced by a luxuriant and uncultivated soil.

Perhaps no form of error has ever been devised so perfectly adapted to deceive the lovers of sin, as the one under consideration. It at once addresses itself to the depraved appetites and passions of men; and is so admirably adjusted to this end, that it inspires a fallacious hope, in which there is no reason, and for the support of which there is no evidence.

Whenever the heart pleads the cause, the understanding is a very lenient and partial judge. That which men wish to be true, they require but little evidence to convince them of its truth; and, on the other hand, what they do not wish to be true, scarcely any amount of evidence is sufficient to convince them of its falsehood. \* (From the introduction by W. P. Strickland, D. D.)

*“Hereby know we the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error.” —1 John 4:6*

1. Bible: “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be . . .” (John 12:26)  
Universalism: Where Christ is there shall also the servant of the devil be as well.
2. Bible: “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out . . .” (Acts 3:19)  
Universalism: Your sins shall be blotted out whether you repent and be converted or not.
3. Bible: “Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the saying of the prophecy of this book.” (Revelation 22:7)  
Universalism: The man who disobeys every word in this book is just as certain of being blessed as the most obedient man on earth.
4. Bible: “. . . If any man serve me, him will my Father honor.” (John 12:26)  
Universalism: If any man serve the devil all his life him will the Father honor with a seat at his own right hand, for all shall be made holy and happy.
5. Bible: “And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” (1 John 2:17)  
Universalism: There is no difference in the outcome between them who do the will of God, and those who do the will of the devil.
6. Bible: “Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:” (2 Thessalonians 1:5)  
Universalism: All shall be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, whether they suffer for it or not.

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## What Really Matters—Galen Gregg

And so, the man said to me, “Preachers can be so petty.” Hmmmm. He was saying that we can sometimes get stuck on little things that have no bearing on salvation, nor will they matter in a few days, but we get offended or feel like we have to comment or retaliate. We somehow think we have to “fire our salvo.” This caused me to think. Brethren, we must not spend our energy on that which does not matter. Just let it go.

When Jesus related the parable of the unmerciful servant, He said the second servant owed the first. The second servant did not owe the master. The point is that He was not talking about the second servant having committed sin, rather he committed a slight against the first servant. If we get stuck on high center over some wrong, either real or imagined, that has been committed against us, then God will get “stuck” in regard to His blessings to us.

God has a tremendous aversion and hatred of sin. I believe that we sometimes do not understand

the strength of God’s “recoil” from sin. Sin is a wrong against God. Because we are made in the image of God, when we are done wrong, we want to recompense a wrongdoer. This is misdirected nature. God put those tendencies in us, but when they manifest themselves as vengeance and anger and hatred (or pettiness), they are wrong.

Paul told us that the Law was given to give us an understanding of sin. But that same Law says, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I [am] the LORD” (Leviticus 19:17-18).

The rabbis taught that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah not only because of their sin, but also because of their lack of mercy and consideration (see Ezekiel 16:49).

Mercy and consideration of others are not normal human characteristics. Our own unwillingness to have mercy and consideration of others within our minds and hearts will lead to bitterness and hatred.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**What Really Matters** **1**

**The Thonrakians** **3**

**Leaders, Don’t Distance Yourself** **4**

**The Monarchian Prologues** **6**

**Dispelling Myths . . .** **7**

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**Dispelling Myths . . . —D.S. Garza**

If ever there had been a clash of views, those between the Pharisees and Jesus Christ, ranked among the highest. Some of His sternest warnings and censures were directed at them. It seems that at every turn, and at every opportunity, these quenchers of the Spirit\* challenged the work of the Lord.

For example, in John chapter nine, a man is healed of his blindness. The man was born blind, but soon received his sight when the Lord spat on the ground and applied clay to his eyes and had him wash in the pool of Siloam. It was a great miracle. But according to the religious leaders of that day, the Lord made a big mistake because He healed this man on the Sabbath. Their set-in-concrete religious views made no allowance for this to happen, let alone rejoice over it. It was a belief that could not be moved, and there’s no telling when this assumption took root.

Myths, fables, half-truths, etc., are difficult to penetrate. For example, the Lord dealt with one particular false notion at the beginning of the chapter when the disciples asked whether the man was born blind because his parents had sinned, or because the blind man had sinned—Jesus said neither was true. Obviously, their pre-understanding on this topic was firmly held with no exceptions to the rule. It seems like a challenge just to get people to change their opinions. Sometimes it takes something cataclysmic or something profoundly powerful to destroy an errant belief or a fallacy, whereas a delusion (a fixed, false belief) is firmly held in spite of contrary evidence.

For example, the Japanese were led to believe that their island could not come under Allied attack. But some became convinced otherwise when in early April of 1942, Jimmie Doolittle’s raid comprised of sixteen B-25’s, dropped their bombs.\*\* After this “shocking awareness” took place, one resident later said: “We finally began to realize that all we were told was not true—that the Government had lied when it said we were invulnerable. We then started to doubt that we were also invincible.”\*\*\* In another example, this one dealing with early American history, Tecumseh’s brother, who was the tribe’s medicine man, led his people to believe that they would not be hit by any enemy bullets. Many didn’t live long enough to let him know that he was wrong.\*\*\*\*

John 9:16 says, “Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.” These are two different lines of thinking. One group had discernment or the understanding and the flexibility to allow themselves to judge the results, and the other didn’t. And unfortunately, the ones that don’t, are usually in control. Jesus said, “Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” (Matthew 7:16).

They could have looked at the life of Christ. His character was impeccable, His life pure—that would have given them the answer. But their school or line of thinking didn’t allow for this type of test to penetrate their worldview.\* Their traditions were more important to them, and it cost them dearly. They said to the blind man, “We know that God spake unto Moses: *as for* this fellow, we know not from whence he is.”

But the blind man had an epiphany. He had had something powerful happen to him. He said, “Why herein is a marvelous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and *yet* he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing” (John 9:30-33). And presupposition and prejudice responded and said, “Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.”

Pharisees of today are the same as those of yesteryear. They are intolerant, inflexible, and defenders of their own interpretations. They are also totally incapable of critically analyzing the origin of their beliefs (interpretations), and predicting their unforeseen and unwelcomed outcomes. There are too many theological points of view that have their origination in Romanism and/or in Protestantism to rely on commentaries, word of mouth, etc. For instance, Calvin’s false predestinational fallacies have had many unintended consequences. Simply put, false doctrine produces more false doctrines. And false doctrines also produce a bad spirit.

I wonder if a lack of evangelism, and outreach, and concern for the lost, is not an indirect result of Calvinism, since according to their way of thinking, God predetermines one way or the other if someone is going to be saved or lost. They completely disregard the passage that states . . . “whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). We need to be able to judge the results or fruit of our belief system. It’s not only vital to assess that what we believe is scripturally right, but it’s also equally important to assess that what it is producing is good and right.\* Not just for the present, but for the future as well. For instance, the decision to preach against TV and Hollywood has been a good one. It’s good for today; it’s good for our tomorrows.

We don’t ever want to be guilty of Pharisaism. The price is too high. We need to dispel myths and the such like whenever possible. The blind man was not only healed of his blindness, but he went on to see greater things. There is also a stark contrast between his spirit and attitude and those of the Pharisees. A willingness to learn and be taught is a beautiful gift of God. John 9:34-39 says, “Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshiped him. And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.”

The following verses say it all. “And *some* of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth” (John 9:40-41).

\* William DeArteaga—Quenching the Spirit.    \*\* George Sullivan—The Day Pearl Harbor Was Bombed.    \*\*\* C.L. Sulzberger—World War II.    \*\*\*\* Allan Eckhart—The Frontiersmen.



## Leaders, Don't Distance Yourself—Jerry Trevino

In an attempt to analyze the diversity of cultures, Dutch psychologist Geert Hofstede amassed a huge database of interesting facts and insights which came to be known as the “Hofstede Dimensions.” Amongst these Dimensions is a captivating observation called the “Power Distance Index” (PDI). Power Distance entails how cultures view hierarchy and how they defer to and revere authority. Those in authority would be its older people, employers, managers, office holders, etc. How a culture responds to these individuals determines their PDI. Those cultures who find it difficult to refute authority or directly disagree with it, have a high PDI. Those who are more comfortable in discussing differing views or show outright disrespect have a low PDI.

There is an undeniable benefit when a society respects authority. It is very evident that a lack of respect by the younger generation for the older, engenders social breakdown. When youth no longer hear the voices of those who have traveled the road of life before them, they lose core values and insights. This leaves them wanting in the most important of life's issues. There can however, be a social chasm created by a culture from having too high a PDI. When a younger person is anxious about questioning an elder as to the “why” of certain practices, it can leave the younger generation without the impetus to continue in a pre-described course. Most cultural practices are evolved from experiences. Trial and error over time defines the best way to accomplish things. Without this knowledge, mores are easily abandoned.

In the culture of the church, we have set up a government that is biblically based. A pastor is the shepherd and the leader of his flock and naturally there is a very high PDI. However, in too many cases the ministry has become the “Unapproachables.” At times our edicts and mandates are given with no room for question or request for explanation. In some cases, those saints who do have questions are relegated to the rebellious goat category.

We have seen some set themselves far away from ANY counsel concerning the decisions they make as a pastor. We have seen boards of elders established for the safety of the congregation, but some are set up in such a manner that they are only put into motion in the most dire of circumstances. In these cases, most of the counsel that a pastor receives is on a request-only basis. Thus, we see the PDI is not only between the saints and the pastor, but also between the pastor, his elders, and his peers. The latter of these is the most dangerous.

It is evident that a man of God must act at times on a word from God or inclination he feels in prayer; there must be a work of the Spirit. There are times when a pastor must say, “I just feel that way in the Spirit.” A spiritual and honest man can be trusted with this kind of leadership; a megalomaniac cannot, and will wreak certain havoc with this kind of authority.

Though we walk in the Spirit, there are a myriad of decisions that we must make without a word from the Lord. God has given us a stewardship in which we must make decisions using wisdom mingled with pure motives. It is often in these decisions that we have no other judge than our own conscience, and it is here where too many men get into trouble.

It is distressing to see ministers creating a Power Distance that isolates them from everyone around them, including their wives and closest of friends. We grow accustomed to unaccountable leadership. It is when we set ourselves on this precipitous perch that others are afraid to approach us for fear of sending a relationship down into the surrounding crevasse that independent leadership has created. For this we ought to allow ourselves to be approachable. We should surround ourselves with those for whom we have respect, and those whose counsel we can honor.

There are many men who could have benefited immensely from a gentle nudge by a close friend. How many pastors have we seen leading their children down a destructive path? How many have put precious energies into the wrong battles? Who could have used a little counsel concerning his attitudes? Some were never approached because we all knew there was too great a Power Distance. In other cases some braved the chasm and were rebuffed for it. The wonderful book of Proverbs gives us great insight concerning this matter.

Proverbs 9:7-8, “He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. (8) Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.” A man who cannot be approached is deficient in character. Leaders don't distance yourselves!

The touchy subject of how a pastor ought to distance himself from the saints can be a tight rope walk indeed. A revered elder amongst us beautifully put this into simple perspective for me one day. He said, “You know, the saints aren't dumb, and they aren't always wrong.” Intriguing words indeed.

Yes, we must be firm and sure of our decisions and leadership, but we also must be humble enough to allow the gentle approach of a friend or follower.

There certainly is another side of the coin that deals with busybodies and rebellion; however, we won't attempt to deal with those issues. The response to those issues is generally self-evident. It is reducing the Power Distance Index that most leaders need to consider.

In his book, Outliers, Malcolm Gladwell capably reveals the danger of too high a PDI in certain occupations. The most interesting example of PDI he tells of is that of airline pilots. Before 1999, Korean Airlines, with pilots from a culture with a high PDI was having an alarming amount of crashes and mishaps. To make a long story short, it was because the first officers and flight engineers were afraid to tell the pilot—their superior—he was doing the wrong thing. It resulted in many people dying. The Power Distance was so great that even in the face of death, subordinates were afraid to cross the barrier, so planes flew into mountains.

Your course may not cause physical deaths, but it may cause your children to be lost; it may thwart revival; it may ruin your marriage. Do you have an assistant that has the benefit of approaching you? Can your wife offer her point of view without fear of stepping on your ego? Do your friends feel free to disagree with you? Have you told elders and a few trusted peers that you are open to instruction? If not, then it is very likely you are employing a very imbalanced paradigm of leadership.

Flying a commercial aircraft is a feat that requires teamwork; there are just too many things for one man to keep track of in the cockpit. This becomes especially true when flights enter bad weather and/or the flight has been long and the pilot weary. At that time, he needs others to help him more than ever.

Brethren, we need each other! Leading a church is a huge undertaking; being a minister is multifaceted. Be sure you have someone who may see something you don't, be allowed to say, “Hey, your going to crash if you don't change course.”

With the guidance of hired experts, Korean Airlines was able to change the cockpit of its planes into a tiny temporary world that left common culture at the hangar. First officers and flight engineers were empowered and encouraged to help the man in charge. For the first time, the cockpit crew became the team it was intended to be. Today Korean Airlines has a sterling record of safety and has won an award for its diligence and improvements.

It is always beneficial to bring out stories and studies that reveal how certain principles work in the world around us. However, we need only look to God's Holy Word to find these wonderful truths that God set in motion before we came into being— . . . the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

*Proverbs 15:22—Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.*  
*Proverbs 9:9—Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.*  
*Proverbs 1:5—A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.*  
*Proverbs 12:1—Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish.*

## The Monarchian Prologues to the Gospels—Thomas Weisser

The Monarchian Prologues to the Gospels are introductions to the Gospels found in many old Latin manuscripts of the Bible. The author of these prologues was unknown until the early twentieth century. It was then that John Chapman (1865-1933), English Benedictine historian, convinced the learned world that these prologues were the work of Priscillian, a fourth century Oneness martyr. The amazing thing for us to consider is that these writings identify Christ with the Father and promote a Oneness theology.

The perplexing problem Chapman ran into was, "that from the fifth century till the nineteenth the Prologues have been looked upon as positively orthodox" (p. 223). Knowing they contain views of God in opposition to Trinitarianism, he is dumbfounded at their acceptance. It is my contention that Oneness theology was more widely embraced than most historians would even dare to imagine. The acceptance of these Bibles incorporating the Prologues reinforces this view.

The most fascinating of the four, in my opinion, is the prologue to Matthew. The author sees in the genealogy of chapter one, three sections of fourteen generations. The first, beginning with Abraham represents faith. The second, beginning with David representing election. And the third, the transmigration to Babylon ending in Christ, to conversion. These lists of genealogies represent Matthew's faith, calling, and transmigration from tax collector to Christ. These steps are not only applicable to Matthew, but can be applied to every believer. We begin with faith (Heb. 11:6) and follow into election, which is available to anyone (2 Pet. 3:9); then we proceed into conversion (Acts 2:38).

The actual listing of the generations of Jesus Christ starts with Abraham as Father and ends with Christ as Son. After Abraham the sequence follows a son-father pattern ending with the Son, Jesus. The natural order would move Jesus from Son to Father. Not a human father, but spiritual and everlasting. The terminology is used to indicate that after Christ's resurrection, He would, "restore the name of Father in the fathers to the Son, and the name of Son to the Father in the sons" (p. 226). Even though the genealogy starts with Abraham, God was, of course, before Abraham. Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am."

Here is part of the prologue to Matthew translated by Chapman.

*Now the God Christ is (and it is necessary to faith to hold this) the time, the order, the number, the arrangement, and the reason of all things. He who was made of a woman, made under the law, born of a virgin, who suffered in the flesh, nailed all things to His cross, triumphing over them in Himself, rising again in the body, in order that He might restore the name of Father in the fathers to the Son, and the name of Son to the Father in the sons, He who is without beginning, without end, showing Himself to be of one Nature with the Father since He is one Person with Him. (p. 226)*

The prologue to John is very plain in identifying Christ with God.

The first part of the prologue to Luke says this.

*Luke, a Syrian of Antioch by nation, by profession a physician, a disciple of the apostles, later followed Paul until his confession, serving God without blame. For he never had wife or children, and died at the age of seventy-four in Bithynia, full of the Holy Ghost. When Gospels had been written, by Matthew in Judaea and by Mark in Italy, at the instigation of the Holy Spirit he wrote this Gospel in the parts of Achaia, and he also signified in the commencement that others had previously been written. Apart from the demand made by the order of the disposition of the Gospels [which made his Gospel necessary] the principal object of his toil was that he should labor that the Greek faithful might, by the manifestation of all the perfection of God coming in the flesh, be prevented from giving themselves to the study of Jewish fables, and from being held by the desire of the law only, and that they might not be seduced by heretical fables and foolish questions, and so depart from the truth. (pp. 231, 232)*

The prologue to Mark identifies him as the son of Peter by baptism (see 1 Pet. 5:13) and the bishop of Alexandria in Egypt. It also asserts that the Gospel was written in Italy (pp. 235, 236).

It is obvious that the prologues promote a concept of Christ that identifies Him with the Father. That this was considered heresy by the predominant group from the fourth century on, is obvious. Chapman makes the following observation, "Why documents so heretical and so obscure should have been so frequently copied is the really insoluble problem which they present to the modern critic" (p. 253). It is my hypothesis that Oneness adherents were much more numerous than assumed for hundreds of years after the fourth century. The Bible that Patrick took to Ireland contained them. Chapman surmises that the prologues originated with Priscillian's personal Bible. Copies were made from this source in scriptoriums in Europe (p. 285).

*Quotes cited from: Chapman, John; Notes on the Early History of the Vulgate Gospels; Clarendon Press; Oxford; 1908.*

## Were the Thonrakians of the 18th and 19th Centuries Oneness Believers?—William Chalfant

The Thonrakians are first identified in the seventh century among some Christian groups being driven from Albania and Armenia into the Lake Van area (modern Turkey). John of Otzun (eighth century), a Greek Orthodox Catholic bishop called them “the dregs of Messalianism.” Messalianism is seen in the fourth century as probable dynamic monarchians, a type of Oneness people.

The Armenian Catholic Gregory Magister (c. AD 1050) calls the Thonrakians “Paulicians, who have been poisoned by Paul of Samosata.” Paul of Samosata was, of course, a dynamic monarchian of the third century. He believed in the Oneness of God and Christ, baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, but had some different ideas on the moment of the incarnation.

The historian Steven Runciman asserts the independence of the Thonrakians from the “mainstream” of the Paulicians, and states that unlike the Paulicians, they were not “dualists” (like Manichaeans, who believed that there were two equal and opposite powers rather than an omnipotent God). The Thonrakians did not worship Mary, and they had no reverence for the Catholic sacraments or for the succession of the Catholic priesthood.

They had some “rite” of spiritual baptism. A document, *The Key of Truth*, revered by them for centuries was discovered in the nineteenth century by the historian F.C. Conybeare, and translated into English. It identifies the Thonrakians as Monarchians, or a type of Oneness believers. They continued to exist in the areas of Armenia and Turkey up through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In the late 1700’s an Orthodox Catholic abbot named Hovhannes was converted to the Thronrakian faith, and became one of their bishops, ordaining ministers and causing an uproar in the neighborhood of Karin in Armenia. When the Catholic Orthodox Church persecuted Hovhannes, he fled to Manazkert, and continued preaching. Later, in Constantinople, he spread his teaching from 1714-1781. The Armenian Patriarch Zachariah threw him into prison for preaching the monarchian doctrine. He escaped eight months later and spread his teaching in the villages in the area of Khanus. He spent some time in Venice, Italy, and later returned to Armenia. Hovhannes made the last extant copy of *The Key of Truth* in 1782, which was the same copy F.C. Conybeare copied 109 years later.

Another Thonrakian contemporary, John Shoushdak-Vartabedian, was converted at Moush about AD 1775. He fled to Constantinople, and from there fled to fellow Armenians in Mekuifarist in Venice. Forced to return to Constantinople, Shoushdak-Vartabedian fled to the Turkish Kadi of Khanus. He was accused of faking a conversion to Islam to save his life. With the help of the Turkish Kadi he returned to Armenia, where he was ordained possibly by Hovhannes in Manazkert, and continued to spread the Thonrakian teaching throughout the area. In 1837 the Catholic Synod of Etschmiadzin noted that Shoushdak-Vartabedian’s followers were still to be found in the village of Arkhveli (Russian Armenia). The same year, the Thonrakian “heresy” was noted to exist in Alexandropol (Gumri), where followers claimed they had their teaching from George Sarqisian and Souvar Hohannesian of Arkhveli. An American traveler noted about sixty Thonrakians at Khanus in 1852. Historian Leon Arpee noted that George Sarqisian possessed a copy of *The Key of Truth*, which Catholic authorities confiscated in 1872 and placed in the Holy Synod library at Etschmiadzin (which Conybeare later had copied).

Arpee notes that the “theology” of *The Key of Truth* is “unitarian of the monarchian type.” Arpee agrees that this theology harkens back to Paul of Samosata, the third century dynamic monarchian leader of Antioch. These Christians, who continued to exist down through the centuries in eastern Europe, baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and believed in the Oneness of God, although they had a different view of the *moment* of the incarnation. Acts 2:38 was the plan of salvation. They probably existed in Armenia up through the beginning of the twentieth century, when God opened up a revival of Oneness believers in America. The Acts 2:38 gospel cannot be stamped out.