

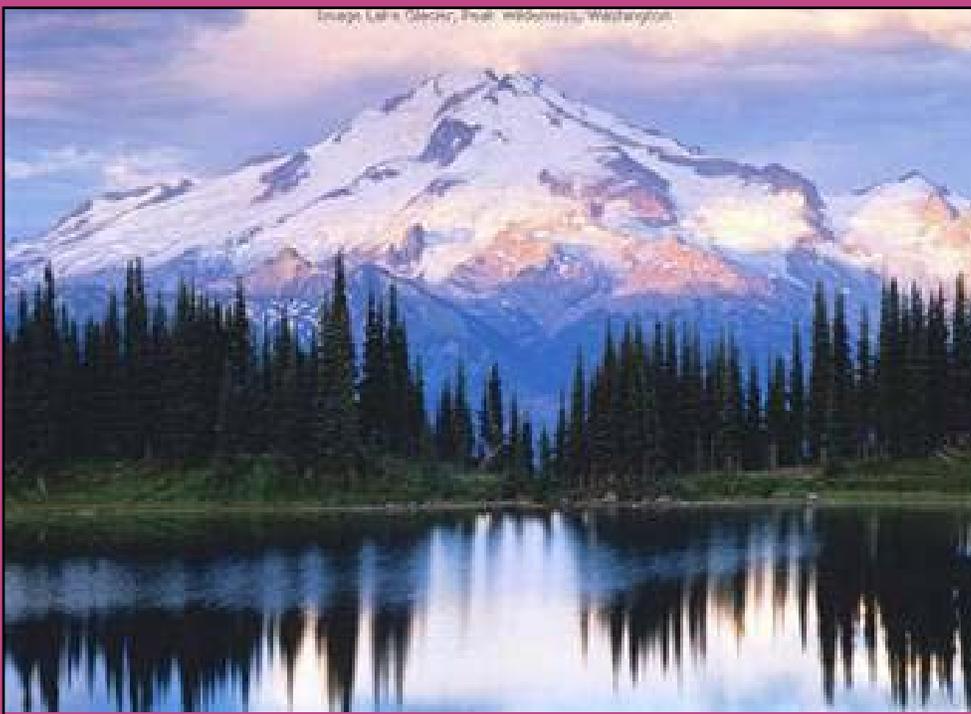


January 2012

The Christian Universalist

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Snow Capped Mountains

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." - Isaiah 52:7 NRSV

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Nearer than hands and feet

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains -
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?
Is not the Vision He? tho' He be not that which he seems?
Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?
Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb, Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him?
Dark is the world to thee: thyself art the reason why; For is He not all but that which has power to feel "I am I"?
Glory about thee, without thee; and thou fulfillst thy doom Making him broken gleams, and a stifled splendour and gloom. Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet -
Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.
God is law, say the wise; O Soul, and let us rejoice, For if he is thunder by law the thunder is yet his voice.
Flower in the crannied wall, I pluck you out of the crannies, I hold you here, root and all, in my hand, Little flower - but if I could understand What you are, root and all, and all in all, I should know what God and man is. Hallowed be thy name - Halleluia! - Infinite ideality!
Immeasurable Reality!
Infinite Personality!
Hallowed be thy name - Halleluia!
We feel we are nothing - for all is Thou and in Thee; We feel we are something - that also has come from thee; We know we are nothing - but Thou wilt help us to be. Hallowed be thy name - Halleluia!
Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

The Christian Universalist

The Christian Universalist is a digital newsletter published monthly by The Christian Universalist Association (CUA), with news, information and commentary for anyone interested in Christian Universalism. Editorial reports, letters to the editor and photos are welcome.

Deadline is the 28th of the month preceding the month of publication. Reports and photos may be emailed to the editor at patmor123@gmail.com. Please send all photos and illustrations as separate JPEGs at high resolution of at least 300 dpi.

Opinions expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of The Christian Universalist Association.

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Word of mouth

... with Pat Moauro, Editor

“Consider that Ye May be Wrong”

I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken.

- Oliver Cromwell

Consider That Ye May Be Wrong. - Cromwell's Letters and Speeches

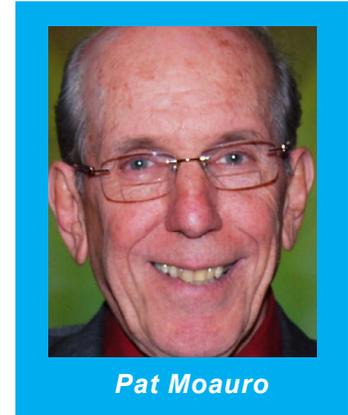
Once the mind has been stretched by a new idea, it will never again return to its original size. - Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.

These quotations remind us to exercise caution when stating our beliefs unequivocally, whether in things spiritual/religious, or in other areas of life. Far too often we may be tempted to declare that our beliefs, credos and conclusions are absolutely true and those of everyone else are only partially correct, or even absolutely false.

That is not to say that we should avoid believing sincerely and confidently proclaiming what we conceive to be true for us. I also like the quotation, “If you don’t stand for something, you will fall for anything”. Yes, believe and hold fast to your truth. However, at the same time, we need to display the kind of humility that recognizes, in comparison to the vast ocean of truth before us, we may only be able to retrieve a thimbleful of truth thus far.

The danger for us, and for those whom we believe to be wrong in their doctrines, creeds, and dogmas, is to be deluded into thinking that only our understanding, our conclusions, our beliefs, and our “truths” are absolutely correct and those of everyone else completely misguided and false.

As universalists, particularly Christian Universalists, we especially need to exercise caution and avoid becoming overly fixated on our core beliefs, thinking that only we have the



Pat Moauro

inside track on Divine or ultimate truth. Personally, I have had to change my views many times during my years of spiritual exploration. I have had to give up cherished beliefs and views, or at least to amend them and view them from another or wider perspective.

For several decades I have rejected the dogma of the Trinity; I still don’t believe in a literal three-Gods-in-one teaching, as I once understood this dogma. Instead, some Trinitarians explain that they don’t believe in three separate Gods in the one Godhead, but that there are three qualities or aspects of God, reflected by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It’s still all “a mystery”, even to many Trinitarians.

Likewise, for the same length of time, I have never believed in a literal, fiery hell where “bad” people are consigned to be tortured for eternity by a so-called loving God.

However, many conservative Christians, primarily evangelical, fundamentalist believers, and even some non-Christians, still hold fast to this dogma.

Personally, I can’t imagine anyone still believing that this is Divine truth from a loving, all-knowing God, Divine Mind or Ultimate Source of All Good.

Continued on page 11

Ken Vincent's book on Universal Salvation gets rave review

Ken R. Vincent has received a rave review on www. Amazon.com for his 121-page book *The Golden Thread: God's Promise of Universal Salvation*. The review, reprinted from www.Amazon.com, reads:

"5.0 out of 5 stars Excellent little book!, December 23, 2011

By DeDona

Amazon Verified Purchase

This review is from: *The Golden Thread: God's Promise of Universal Salvation* (Paperback)

In agreement with the previous review here that this book could have been longer. The author makes a compelling case for universalism with not only scripture but mystical and near death experiences. Fundamentalists will assign near death and mystical experiences to satan but Ken shows that they have been part of the Christian faith since the time of the apostle Paul. Ken has painstakingly organized scripture into what theory of salvation they support. Salvation by works is supported by 551 verses (389 by Jesus alone),

231 verses supporting Universal salvation + 31 stating that hell is not permanent, 139 verses supporting Jesus saves theology, and 77 supporting calvinism. The Old Testament has 110 verses supporting universalism. Being a former fundamentalist for nearly 9 years I can see that this would not agree with mainstream christianity, but there are nuggets here for the openminded or even partially openminded christian to consider.

"The God of the near death experience is not concerned with theological hairsplitting but is more concerned with how we treated others and if we loved others. That is pretty consistent with Jesus' message. Remove the preconceived theological idealism and give this book a try.

"Visit Ken at: <http://www.universalist-herald.net/Mystical.html>"

Ken R. Vincent is also webmaster for *The Universalist Herald* magazine, "The oldest continuously published liberal religious magazine in North America".

God is the one who saves us!

God is light.

God is light and in him there is no darkness at all (1John 1:5). Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights (James 1:17)...he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light ...

(1Timothy 6:15-16). *God is our salvation.*

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation (Isaiah 12:2).

God is in all.

For "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). For from him and through him and to him are all things (Rom 11:36). One God and Father of all, who is above

all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:6).

God is love.

Beloved, let us love one another, because loves is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love (1John 4:7-8).

(Excerpted from *The Golden Thread: God's Promise of Universal Salvation*, page 76).

Doug Torkelson resigns from CUA Board



Doug Torkelson

Doug Torkelson announced last month that he was resigning from the **CUA** Board of Directors and any associated duties.

He said he decided to tender his resignation "after careful consideration the past few months ... Over the latter part of (2011) my heart began to move in a different direction and I believe this is the right thing for me to do. It has been a pleasure serving with you wonderful people ..."

He added: "To each of you individually, and to the organization as a whole, I see the blessings of God within and among you. Carry the torch. Stay the course. Be gentle as doves yet firm like granite. Bend often, but do not break. Hold the lamp of Light up high, for many a sad and weary soul is longing for its warmth.

In due time, when each is ready, just as they are and in their own way, they will come".

Doug also gave "a special and heartfelt note of thanks" to Board Chairman **Kalen Fristad** for his help and support.

Doug Torkelson is a graduate of *Rhema Bible Training Center*. Trained as a software engineer, he owns a software development company in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

He has shared his journey from nondenominational, charismatic fundamentalism to universalism. He is also a student of A Course in Miracles.

From the Coordinator

... with Rich Koster, Coordinator

Memo to athlete Tim Tebow: just let your life do the talking

Tim Tebow is the **Eric Liddell** of our times, and perhaps it would be well for Tim to study the life and witness of Liddell as he himself tries “to do the right thing” as a disciple of Christ.

Eric Liddell, like Tebow, was born to missionaries in a far-away land. James Dunlop Liddell was a Scottish missionary with the London Missionary Society serving a rural outpost in North China. When he was six years old, Eric was sent to England to enroll in a boarding school for missionary children.

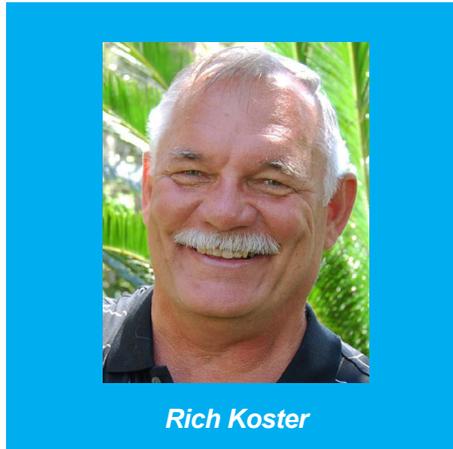
Like **Tim Tebow**, **Eric Liddell** started showing his athletic promise in high school (Eltham College), and he later became known as the “fastest runner” in Scotland while at the University of Edinburgh.

The one event that memorialized Liddell was at the Paris Olympics in 1924, when he withdrew from competing in the 100-yard dash, his best distance, because his heat was scheduled on a Sunday.

Knowing that he was Scotland’s best hope for multiple golds, he felt the pressure to compromise his convictions and run the heat. But he did not, and that in itself is the one act of “doing the right thing” that so distinguished Liddell that he has become an icon and was voted Scotland’s most popular athlete of all time.

The lives and witness of Liddell and **Harold Abrahams** were featured in the film, *Chariots of Fire*. The movie garnered seven Oscars, including Best Picture.

Tim Tebow would not be here except for a similar act of conviction by his parents, Robert and Pamela, who were Baptist missionaries in the Philippines. When Pam came down with a life-threatening illness



Rich Koster

during the pregnancy her doctors wanted to abort the birth but she and Robert insisted on going full-term.

It seems everyone knows about Tebow’s superb performance for the Florida Gators, but maybe not his excellence in high school where he displayed tremendous talent and perseverance, once playing the whole second half of a football game with a broken fibula.

What can Tim learn from Eric?

So here we have two young men, in different times and somewhat different social settings, but with similar family backgrounds and career tracks, and both with fervent religious zeal and convictions. So what might **Tim Tebow** learn from the example of **Eric Liddell**? What is he doing now that might undo any possibility of a movie about his life?

Eric Liddell lived his convictions but did not wear them on his sleeve, so to speak. Given an opportunity, he was always ready to speak at churches and in church school and there he gave his testimony freely and eagerly. But otherwise, he did not display his faith with public prayer and gestures of piety but with quiet obedience to

God and service to others.

Liddell’s most sublime act of Christian witness came during World War 2. He had sent his wife and children to England but he stayed behind to help his sick brother in a medical clinic, and then the Japanese arrived and put everyone in a sort of prison camp. Some time later **Winston Churchill** had arranged for a prisoner swap that would bring Liddell back home.

But **Eric Liddell** did not go home. Instead, he gave the freedom voucher to a pregnant woman. Not long afterwards, Liddell himself became seriously ill and died there in the camp.

Tim Tebow seems to be a remarkable young man with grit and determination, and he is well-liked by his Denver Bronco teammates. In a recent national survey, he was named the celebrity most desired as a neighbor.

These are personal accolades which speak well of Tim Tebow. But we may wonder, does he believe that many of the people who want him to be their neighbor are going to be sent to eternal torment after they die? He should say so if that is what he believes.

Beyond that, he needs to be encouraged to stop kneeling in prayer when things go well on the football field; it would be better for him to do that after fumbling the ball or throwing an interception. Better yet, he could take **Eric Liddell** as an example and just let his life do the talking.

Rich Koster, a minister and Coordinator of The Christian Universalist Association, can be reached at richkoster.cua@gmail.com

'Give Thanks (Karis) for the Gift (Karisma) of Grace (Karin)'

By David C. Huber

Grace as God's Gift in the LORD Jesus Christ by the Power of the Holy Spirit is *why* one can be both a Christian and also a Universalist.

As many Reformers and others have discovered (really *rediscovered*), the Bible clearly states that "For the **wages** of sin *is* **death**; but the **gift (karisma)** of God *is* **eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Please notice that there is a clear distinction here. All Christian teaching has it right in the sense that *death* is what comes as what is earned by sin. No one can say that eternal life is earned. LORD willing, I hope to start a series in 2012 on why the afterlife includes "age abiding" *discipline* but not "eternal" *damnation*, which is death. By God's **Gift** we are saved from death and have eternal life.

Our Precious Savior, the LORD Jesus Christ, took the death. I believe with all of my heart that the Father was satisfied with this Death (Christ took this damnation - He not only suffered but also *died* in our place!). Following His death, on the Third Day the LORD Jesus Christ Is Risen from the dead. As many Bible passages teach, this is covering the wage we should have paid. Sin should have killed us. Sin is what is NOT life giving.

As Christian Universalists we affirm what Jesus said in John 14:6 that "I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me". As Christian Universalists, we also believe that our Heavenly Father requires *no more death at all*, because eventually all will receive this **Gift (Karisma)**.

Please see also Revelation chapters 21 and 22 (especially Revelation 21:4). John 6:37 states that "**ALL** that the Father **giveth (didon)** in Greek) Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in



David C. Huber

no wise cast out". **Ekballow** is the Greek word here, meaning to "throw out". The Father can NOT throw out His adopted children but He sure can *discipline* us as His disciples (Hebrews 12:1-11 especially, more on this in a later article).

It is practically and *Biblically* a matter of God's **KARIS (Gift, Grace)** that we are all *disciplined* but NOT *damned* and that we are *corrected* and *chastened* but NOT *condemned!*

Now back to the foundation of **Karis**, which not only means **Grace** in the Greek but also means **Gift**. Ephesians 2:8-10 states that "For by **Grace (Karithi)** are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the **Gift (doron)** of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them". Please note carefully that at least the root word **KARISMA** for "**GIFT**" in Romans 6:23 and the root word **KARITI** for "**GRACE**" in Ephesians 2:8 are very similar.

The *Charismatic* tradition comes from the idea of focusing upon using spiritual *gifts*. It is wonderful to know that the same Greek root **KARI** or **KARIS** tie together both **GIFT** and **GRACE** in the Bible!

But dear friends, it is NOT enough just to know and receive this Truth! In 2 Corinthians 9:15 we read, "Now

THANKS (KARIS) be unto God for His Unspeakable (Indescribable) **FREE GIFT (DOREA)**". 2 Corinthians chapter 9 gives a lot of teaching of **GIVING THANKS** for **GOD'S GIFT**.

Consider the **KARIS** root word in 2 Corinthians verse 8, which reads "And God is able to make all **GRACE (KARIN)** abound toward you". Growing up, my family taught me how to "Say *Grace*" before the meal. It states "Bless us, O LORD, for these thy Gifts, which we are about to receive, for thy bounty through Christ our LORD. Amen!". In other words, we are to *Give Thanks!*

We think of that wonderful song "Give Thanks" by **Henry Smith**, which starts out by saying "*Give thanks* with a grateful heart; *Give thanks* to the Holy One; *Give Thanks* because He's Given Jesus Christ, His Son". 2 Corinthians 9:11 speaks about "being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us **THANKSGIVING (EUKARISTIAN) TO GOD**".

In this verse, and also verse 12 in the plural **EUKARISTION**, we learn of the word *Eucharist*, which is often referred to one of many ways to call the LORD's Supper or Table - the communion service of taking the bread and wine to remember and even thankfully receive God's **Grace (Karis)** in Christ, who is **God's Gift**. But let's rejoice in What and (more importantly *Whom*) we are learning today. **KARIS** is **GOD'S FREE GIFT**. **KARIS** is **GOD'S FREE GRACE** in **CHRIST**. **EUKARIST** is to **GIVE THANKS TO GOD IN CHRIST**.

None will be left out hungry or in eternal cold in our LORD and Savior's Great, Loving **GIFT of GRACE** for ALL people, so that God will receive ALL of the Glory - therefore let us in one accord **GIVE THANKS!**

David C. Huber of East Northport, N.Y., has been a **CUA** member since August 2010. He can be reached at dch51703@yahoo.com

Conflict in coffee shop meeting results in blessings

Lance Haverkamp is new to the **CUA**. He lives in Colorado Springs and recently completed a Doctorate in Practical Ministry. His studies have led him to a full preterist and ultimate reconciliationist doctrine. Having no Church home, he does some pulpit supply, and teaches whenever he gets the chance. He has freely available studies on both *Ultimate Reconciliation* and *Preterism*. His dissertation is being reworked into a book on *Spiritual Gifts*. You can reach him at Lance@TheHaverkamps.net



Lance W. Haverkamp

Lance W. Haverkamp

We learn from the book of Acts that the earliest congregations met in private homes. Since those early days the popularity of house churches has risen and fallen with the ebb and flow of history.

A few years back several local “Jesus freaks” of the 1960s who had worshiped in house churches for decades, found a website of mine, where I promoted a coordination of house churches in the area (Colorado Springs). After a few years we’ve developed a local email discussion list of about 150 families who are either interested-in or currently involved with a local house church.

Recently I posted, to that group, a summary of the theology presented by the recent flurry of Universalist/Reconciliationist books. Many people might not read a 300-page book on the topic, but might be interested in reading a synopsis of the beliefs contained in these newly best-selling books against Hell.

“Enraged electronic replies”

A blast of enraged electronic replies came back to me over the email list completely oblivious to the first paragraph that said I was summarizing recent books. I was chastised for even mentioning such

heretical beliefs—even if I (presumably) disagreed with them.

After a day or two of rampant complaining, someone suggested a meeting to discuss the matter civilly. Several days later four of us got together at a nearby Panera Bread restaurant. Two voiced their dissatisfaction over there being conflict at all, and how everyone else behaved, then returned home. The most vocal in opposition to my posting stayed a while longer, and a genuine dialogue developed after he had a chance to vent.

We were there just a while longer, not more than 15 minutes, when the man at the next table asked if we were talking about the posting on the House Church discussion list! Much to our surprise it turned out to be someone neither of us knew and who is also on our email list. He added another great dimension to our discussion. Only minutes later a younger man said “This sounds like an interesting discussion—mind if I sit-in?”

“A God thing!”

You couldn’t have planned this if you wanted to - clearly this was a God thing!

The younger man turned out to be a Roman Catholic on-track to enter seminary. He, too, had great

insights from a yet another perspective! After hours of deep theological discussion, laughs, and challenging opposing viewpoints (plus a little extra coffee); we swapped email address, shared Bible verses, and went our separate ways.

With all our varied backgrounds and theological differences, the evening became a study we hadn’t planned on. The topic we danced around all night, without ever saying so, was:

How do we avoid “fellowshipping with unbelievers”, while staying in genuine dialogue with those with a different Christian belief and practice?

2 Corinthians 6:14 tells us: Do not be bound together with unbelievers, and, Hebrews 10:24-25 tells us not to forsake fellowship with other believers.

How to deal with an “Heretic”

Wait just a second ... what if I don’t consider him to be a real believer? Let’s say I decide someone deserves the label of “Heretic” (I realize we don’t burn them at the stake any more):

Should I discontinue all dealings with them?

Should I warn others to stay away?

Should I stay and fight for truth (as I see it)?

Should I ignore our differences, and just “get-along?”

Should I remain in friendly disagreement?

Is there a line? If so, where do I draw it?

What an incredible night’s discussion. And what a great and wise God ... bringing this array of believers together to learn from, and be challenged by, each other!

Continued on page 7

Former Roman Catholic seminarian discovers Christian Universalism

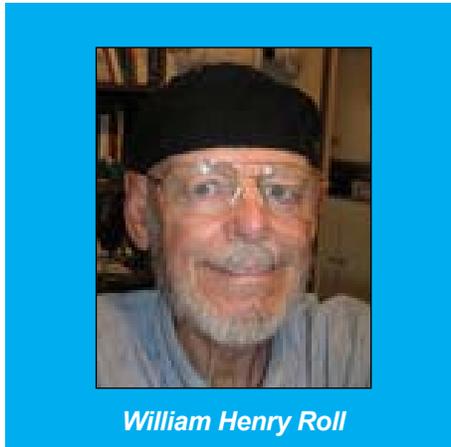
William Henry Roll of Blyth, California, a sustaining member of the Christian Universalist Association, describes himself as an "Independent Religious Institutions Professional". Early last year he created an online wiki about Christian Universalism, using the same software as Wikipedia. His Wiki is at AgapeWiki - agapewiki.org. He can be reached at: whroll@alumni.sandiego.edu; whroll@gmail.com; his Blog: [Maranatha - maranatha.us/](http://Maranatha-maranatha.us/); and Facebook: [facebook.com/whroll/](https://www.facebook.com/whroll/); phone (760) 278-4121.

By William Henry Roll

If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?

- **Rabbi Hillel**, one of the most influential scholars in Jewish history)

This is the story of my spiritual journey and how I did not answer the call to Christian ministry for most of my life. I feel I am being called now to bring the Good News of Universal Salvation through Jesus Christ to people who are looking for their good news in all the wrong places. I have



William Henry Roll

always been a very religious person. Exactly one month after my birth in 1942, I was baptized a Roman Catholic.

My spiritual journey began in my early youth. My mother, **Mary Catherine Lennon**, was a devout Roman Catholic and my father, **David Hedges Roll**, was brought up as a Presbyterian. My mother taught her children the importance of keeping the Lord's Day, and following the teachings of the Catholic Church. My father did not attend church. My mother insisted on giving her children an education in Roman Catholic schools. I attended Catholic schools from the very first

day in 1947 to my being certified as a teacher by the State of California in 1969. That is, except for one year at public school in the ninth grade.

The superior education I received from many nuns and priests equipped me with the knowledge and skills I needed to lead a purposeful life. Spiritual formation was a major part of that experience. From the seventh grade, I attended church services every day of the week. I became an altar boy in 1956, and began to learn to perform, recite and sing the Latin liturgy of the church.

In 1956 I had a vision while praying in church. It consisted of a bright light. I did not hear a voice, but a powerful thought came to me that I was to become a priest. I was both attracted and repelled by the idea. The priesthood required tremendous sacrifice.

I was quietly muttering with my head down, "No. No." when a nun touched me on the shoulder and asked if I was well. From that point I was committed to becoming a priest. After high school in 1961 I entered the minor seminary to study for the priesthood.

Continued on page 8

Conflict in coffee shop meeting results in blessings ... continued from page 6

The best way to present potentially unpopular doctrinal positions seems to be:

1. Gather a long list of Bible references that explain your position. This prevents them from claiming your views aren't scriptural.

Make several copies and stash them everywhere; Bible, car, book-bag, purse, etc., so you'll always have a copy handy.

Never argue. Pull out your list and ask them how they explain all these verses. Be willing to go through the verses one by one.

When they inevitably try to ex-

plain it away, saying something like "all doesn't mean all" or "soon doesn't mean soon," don't argue, instead ask them more questions to help them realize that they're really disagreeing with the Bible, like; "Do you really believe scripture is wrong about that issue?" or, "That's in red ... Jesus said that. Do you think He was wrong?"

The person you're speaking with won't have an epiphany—they probably won't suddenly "get it", but hopefully they will be "jarred" enough to go home and study. That's all you can really expect. The Holy Spirit must convict them

of the truth.

In retrospect, the lesson from this evening's adventure was that you don't need to plan a big event to have a big impact on people's lives. Two men in a noisy coffee shop sitting near the door was all it took to attract others into the discussion.

Yes, you run the risk of offending someone with an interpretation they might consider to be heretical; but you also run the risk of introducing someone to the true Gospel, the really Good News, that Christ will reconcile all people to God.

Former Roman Catholic seminarian discovers Christian Universalism ... from page 7

Soon I was prepared as one of three candidates to study theology at the American College in Rome.

Lumen Gentium, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on November 21, 1964. I saw this as the Church breaking itself off from the tradition of the past to begin anew in another direction. I saw this as heresy.

I refused the first step in Holy Orders and left the seminary in 1965. It was not the program I had signed up for! I still wanted to be a priest, but not in that church. In 1969, the traditional Roman Catholic Mass was forbidden and it was replaced by a service based on the liturgies of the Protestant Reformation.

This was the greatest spiritual confusion I had ever experienced in my life. The life of the Roman Church was centered around the Roman Rite Mass. I left the Church, or rather the Church left me. I still considered myself a Roman Catholic, but I could not find the Roman Catholic Church. I was never able to find it again... it was gone!

I was a Sedevacantist Roman Catholic. Sedevacantism is the belief that there has been no pope since the death of Pope Pius XII in 1948. And, so, there was no visible church. The clergy and hierarchy had all apostatized. I kept trying to discover what had happened to the church.

I gave up hope in 1982; I had to have a church to attend. I joined the Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus, a Hispanic, non-trinitarian, Pentecostal church where my brother-in-law was a minister. I was baptized again in Jesus' name by total submersion. I loved that church, which in many ways was more Catholic than the new Roman Catholic Church.

I was expected to speak in tongues. I could not do that on demand, although I was able to speak in tongues

“I did not answer the call to Christian ministry for most of my life; however, now I want to answer that call to bring the Good News of Universal Salvation through Jesus Christ to people who are looking for their good news in all the wrong places”.

privately. That church overemphasized tongue speaking, which, after all, is a minor gift of the Spirit. I left that church in less than a year and returned to the Sedevacantist Roman Catholic schismatics.

In 1988, I saw a television program showing **Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre** in Ecône, Switzerland, consecrating four bishops according to the traditional Latin Roman Rite, and against the orders of the **Pope John Paul II**. I became aware of a Roman Catholic Church that did not follow the modernist heretics. The only connection I had with other Sedevacantists was viewing daily live streaming video of the Mass (communion service) over the internet from Cincinnati, Ohio. I kept trying to find the Roman Catholic Church.

In 2010, I realized that the Roman Catholic Church had never been the one, true infallible church it had always claimed to be. It was not a total fraud. They actually believed they were correct. I now realized that, “The church is not an institution that has sacraments. The church is a sacrament that has institutions.” (**Alexander Schmemmann**, a well-known Orthodox priest)

I experienced significant growth in my spiritual life. Previously my spirituality was limited to reading and formal prayer: the Divine Office in particular. I discovered deep spirituality in other Christian denominations and

non-Christian traditions, especially the Quaker and Orthodox faiths and Buddhism and Sufism. I discovered theosis, or divinization, as a means of cultivating awareness of the Divine Presence in my study of Eastern Orthodox practices. The Orthodox prayer rope and the Jesus prayer led me to Christian meditation as taught by **John Main OSB**, **Laurence Freeman OSB**. Soon I was prepared as one of three candidates to study theology at the American College in Rome.

I joined the United Methodist Church because its liturgy looked Catholic. In less than a year I discovered that I was considered a heretic there. My beliefs in universal salvation, Christian meditation and the gift of tongues were suspect in the local church. I left the Methodists. I don't think any of the Christian denominations are an option for me.

There never has been a day since 1965 that I did not want to be a Christian minister. But confusion over issues of validity of ordination by various groups prevented my taking that step.

Most of my religious beliefs changed over the years. At some point I became a Christian Universalist. I believe that God is Love. God would never create someone knowing full well the person would be tortured in hell forever. I believe that eventually all people will go the heaven.

I found that this belief had a history, a growing body of believers, and an organization - the *Christian Universalist Association*. I joined the Association and applied for ordination to the ministry. I now don't think hell is a place for punishment, rather it is an intensive self re-education program.

I don't believe I need the papers called ministerial credentials in order to perform my ministry, since we are all priests already. **Kalen Fristad**,

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(CUA Chairman) in his book *Destined for Salvation*, on pages 109-110, says:

“Another example of the exclusive conduit for salvation doctrine espoused by churches in general is that the Church often gives clergy at the time of their ordination exclusive authority to baptize and serve Holy Communion. I have always personally felt uncomfortable with that concept, as if through my having been ordained I had been given some kind of magical and exclusive power”.

But people expect a person who claims to be a minister of the Christian church to have credentials from a respected organization. The state gov-

ernment requires the same credentials for certification to perform marriages. I already have cheap credentials for that purpose, but I want valuable credentials that have actually been earned from a respected institution.

I don't fit any of the Christian denominations. I want to be a non-denominational Christian minister. I don't want to impose my beliefs on others. I want to teach them how much God really loves them. I want to minister the way that Jesus did: out on the road, propelled along by my own feet. I want to minister mostly to the kinds of people Jesus did: the sinners, the poor, the street people, the outcasts. I want to minister without

a budget, without a building, and without big shots.

I want to preach to established people, asking the question, “How can I worship a homeless Man on Sunday and ignore a homeless person on Monday?” God has never abandoned me, and I want to tell others about how God never abandons them.

I did not answer the call to Christian ministry for most of my life; however, now I want to answer that call to bring the Good News of Universal Salvation through Jesus Christ to people who are looking for their good news in all the wrong places.

Awareness leading us to the “Oneness Society”

By Doug Torkelson

Just as we have evolved from an Agrarian society, to an Industrial society and are now in the early stages of the Information society, so too have all aspects of our lives been maturing and developing.

I believe this is equally and especially true of the spiritual-psychological realm, which will culminate into a heightened awareness of Who we are, why we are here, where we came from, and where we are going after we slip out of these bodies.

All religions and belief systems, rules and regulations, in one way or another are attempts to take these questions and build a framework of understanding to guide, control and comfort us along the way (or scare the hell out of and into us as has often been the mechanism of “control” the past several centuries).

In all cases, they eventually hold us back as we begin to realize “there is something more to it than this”. Ultimate Truth never changes, but we seem to be living in a state of fluctuating growth as we continue to search



Doug Torkelson

for “All-That-Is” and “The Answers”.

Look at every field of science, and we see that this is the case. There have always been cells, photons, quarks, dark matter and black holes, but only when we were both capable and ready to discover them, has our “understanding of the truth” grown to the next level of understanding.

I believe that the areas of science, religion and the metaphysical are beginning to expand to the point of merging around the edges, and will one day be understood almost as a unified theory, or “knowing”.

I would call this coming and possi-

bly final age of time the “Oneness society”, in which the law of love is eventually shed abroad and understood in the hearts and minds of all, winning over the lives of men, women, cities, states and nations, until there is no need to say, “Know the Lord”, for the love of God will be found and lived in all.

At last, we all will be doing the simple thing Jesus and many others spoke of, which is loving our neighbors as ourselves, for we will know that we all are really are One in Christ (the perfect reflection of the Creator, created in His Image and Likeness). This is the Second Coming of Christ. The lesson will have been learned, and time and matter will be no more.

There's an old saying, “When the student is ready, the Teacher will appear”. - perhaps we are sitting in our chairs, a little restless still, but looking up excitedly at the clock that is ticking ... maybe the new year is once again about to begin.

Doug Torkelson of Tulsa, Oklahoma, is a former member of the Board of the Christian Universalist Association. He can be reached by email at: doug@torqueware.com

Religious experience research reveals Universalist principles

By Ken R. Vincent

What is a religious experience? What can we learn from “mystical” experiences, and how do “spiritual” experiences affect our lives? You may be unaware that social and biomedical scientists have been exploring these questions aggressively for the past 100 years.

My own research into religious experience began over 20 years ago, and during that time, I began to recognize a recurring pattern of Universalist principles among the conclusions of my fellow researchers.

Granted, many of them may be unaware of the term “Universalist” and the vital role of Universalist thought in early Christianity and world religion; however, their findings sound like classic Universalism: 1) God loves ALL and will save ALL, 2) Hell is for rehabilitation (not torture) and is not eternal. In addition, people who know that God loves us ALL show greater respect and kindness toward others in this earthly life.

Research into religious experiences can be and is conducted using the same criteria that is used to investigate any other psychological phenomena.

These include: 1) case studies of transpersonal experience; 2) sociological surveys that tell who and what percentage of the population have religious experiences; 3) psychological tests that measure not only the mental health of the individual but also evaluate the depth of mystical experiences; 4) biomedical and neuroscience testing, including, in some cases, the EEG, PET-scan, and MRI to document genuine altered states of consciousness and demonstrate that mystical experiences are not just wishful thinking; EEGs and EKGs that allow us to document death in Near-Death Experiences (NDEs) that occur in hospitals; 5) sociological and psychological investigations that assess the after-effects these experiences



Ken Vincent

have on people; and 6) controlled experimental research (such as **Panke's** experiment testing psychedelics).

Religious or spiritual experiences relate to the direct experience of the Holy Spirit of God (or if you prefer, Ultimate Reality). According to **David Hay**, former head of the Religious Experience Research Centre, both terms describe the same phenomena, but “religious” experience is preferred by people who attend church and “spiritual” experience is favored by people who don't.

I also include those religious experiences that point to life after death - namely near-death experiences, death-bed visions, and after-death communications.

The following is a sampling of 20 religious experience researchers whose conclusions can reinforce our confidence in the validity and truth of our Universalist message. God Loves ALL and Will Save ALL.

Bill and Judy Guggenheim research after-death communications. These usually occur when a loved-one comes back to tell you they are all right, but it also includes experiences with religious figures such as Jesus appearing to Paul (1 Cor. 15) and modern people. In their book, *Hello From Heaven*, they unequivocally state, “no one regardless of cruelty of malicious crimes he or she may have committed on earth is ever forgotten or forsaken.”

They go on to state that the criterion for healing seems to be admission of responsibility for the hurt, pain, and suffering they have caused others.

One of the most thoughtful and prolific near-death researchers is social psychologist **Ken Ring**. In his most recent book with **Evelyn Valarino** *Lessons from the Light*, he reiterates his absolute certainty that everyone will come to the light. He tells the story of a person sexually abused by her father who, when asked if **Adolf Hitler** would eventually come into the light, and she said, “Yes.” Later she said, “Even my father will see the light.”

In an earlier book, *Heading Toward Omega*, **Prof. Ring** states, “Indeed, the strongest evidence of the NDEs' universalistically spiritual orientation and in many ways the culmination of the qualities already discussed is their belief in the underlying unity of all religions and their desire for a universal religious faith that will transcend the historical divisiveness of the world's great religions.”

Richard Bucke, a Canadian neuropsychiatrist and comparative religion scholar, saw a unity of all religions and people. His Universalist perspectives came to him in a powerful mystical experience and led him to research and write the book, *Cosmic Consciousness*.

The philosopher **Mark Webb** notes in his article, “*Religious Experience as Doubt Resolution*,” that “nearly all religious experiences result in the belief that the universe is an essentially friendly place; that is, that we shouldn't worry about the future. People who have had experiences of this sort tend to live more calmly than others, having acquired a strong feeling that the world is essentially just and that they particularly are cared for.”

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"This is true," Webb writes, "seven of those experiences include a conviction that the world is fallen and sinful, because they also include a conviction that God is sovereign and loves his creatures. The second area of agreement is that all humans are closely interrelated in some way... the pragmatic value of these two results is clear: people who believe these propositions will tend to be happier and more concerned about each other."

The Presbyterian minister and theologian **J. Harold Ellens** writes in his book *Understanding Religious Experience* that he personally has had at least a dozen such religious experiences.

He states that, "God has declared God's covenant of unconditional and universal grace to all people, guaranteeing that we are all God's people and God is our God, no matter what."

Ellens is a committed Universalist who was once accused of heresy by an elder for preaching Universalism and subsequently brought before trial by the Presbyterian hierarchy where the charges were eventually dismissed.

Journalist, near-death researcher, and former Anglican priest **Tom**

Harpur (of Toronto, Canada) is a committed Universalist. In his book *Life After Death*, he states, "If we truly believe in an all-loving gracious Source of all things, the kind of accepting presence imaged by the father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, then it seems to me to be utterly incongruous to hold that anyone will be lost. We are all God's off-spring or children as New Testament Christianity - and most other religions - makes clear ... I fail to see how heaven or eternal life would be bliss of any kind unless one were assured that all will be sharers in it. At this ultimate family occasion, there will finally be no empty chairs, no missing faces."

Religious experience researcher **Nona Coxhead** in her book, *The Relevance of Bliss* states, "for just as the sun shines on everyone without discrimination, the realization that love and light will be fully accessible to all of us following our bodily demise is a message of joy that those who have returned from 'the gates of death' bring us."

Religious experience researchers **Meg Maxwell** and **Verena Tschudin**, in their book, *Seeing the Invisible*, note, "The most strik-

ing element of the personal experiences in the collection of the *Religious Experience Research Centre* is that they are overwhelmingly positive in nature. They enhance and enrich life; they point forward; they are positive; they are benign."

The great Universalist/pluralist philosopher **John Hick** acknowledges that he has had several mystical experiences.

In his book *The Fifth Dimension*, he notes that what we know from mysticism is that, "if our big picture is basically correct, nothing good that has been created in human life will ever be lost ... this is not a faith wherein no harm can befall us in this present life, or those we love, but a faith that ultimately, in **Lady Julian's** words (**Julian of Norwich**), 'All shall be

EDITOR'S NOTE: The second and concluding part of this article will appear in the February 2012 issue of this newsletter.

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"Consider that Ye May be Wrong"

As convinced as I am about these and other truths, do I arrogantly proclaim my beliefs and utter anathemas against all those sincere fellow humans whose beliefs are diametrically opposed to mine? Do I issue fatwas and urge jihad against my religious "enemies" by strapping bombs to the bodies of gullible young believers and sending them forth to destroy the "enemy"?

If we are caught up in such belief systems that teach it is acceptable to a loving God to destroy our "enemies", then we seriously need

to reconsider our beliefs. We need to "Consider That Ye May Be Wrong", as **Oliver Cromwell** wrote.

I choose to follow the teachings of the gentle master teacher, **Jesus Christ**, to "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you". (Matt 5:44). Nowhere do I read that Jesus issued any orders to destroy his "enemies" physically or to hate anyone whose beliefs are contrary to mine. I do recall reading that when we are "slapped" on the cheek (or insulted and condemned) we are to turn the other cheek (or allow the

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other person to have the last word.)

At the same time, I need to remind myself that as strongly as I believe my truth, I must keep my mind open to new truth and new ways of seeing and understanding.

Anything else would put us in the category of narrow-mindedness and even fanaticism.

But then I could be wrong. *cu*

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Holy Humor

“One for you, one for me”

A big old pecan tree stood just inside the cemetery fence on the outskirts of a small town. One day, two boys filled up a bucketful of nuts and sat down by the tree, out of sight, and began dividing the nuts.

“One for you, one for me, one for you, one for me,” said one boy.

Several dropped and rolled down toward the fence.

Another boy came riding along the road on his bicycle. As he passed, he thought he heard voices from inside the cemetery.

He slowed down to investigate. Sure enough, he heard, “One for you, one for me, one for you, one for me . . .” He just knew what it was. He jumped back on his bike and rode off.

Just around the bend he met an old man with a cane, hobbling along. “Come here quick,” said the boy, “You won’t believe what I heard! Satan and the Lord are down at the cemetery dividing up the souls!”

The man said, “Beat it kid, can’t you see it’s hard for me to walk.” When the boy insisted, the man hobbled slowly to the cemetery. Standing by the fence they heard, “One for you, one for me. One for you, one for me.” The old man whispered, “Boy, you’ve been tellin’ me the truth. Let’s see if we can see the Lord.”

Shaking with fear, they peered through the fence, yet were still unable to see anything. The old man and the boy gripped the wrought iron bars of the fence tighter and tighter as they tried to get a glimpse of the Lord.

At last they heard, “One for you, one for me. That’s all. Now let’s go get those nuts by the fence and we’ll be done.”

They say the old man had the lead for a good half-mile before the kid on the bike passed him.



The worm turneth

A minister decided that a visual demonstration would add emphasis to his Sunday sermon.

Four worms were placed into four separate jars.

The first worm was put into a container of alcohol.

The second worm was put into a container of cigarette smoke.

The third worm was put into a container of chocolate syrup.

The fourth worm was put into a container of good, clean soil.

At the conclusion of the sermon, the minister reported the following results:

The first worm in alcohol ... Dead.

The second worm in cigarette smoke ... Dead.

The third worm in chocolate syrup ... Dead.

The fourth worm in good, clean soil ... Alive.

So the minister asked the congregation, “What did you learn from this demonstration?”

Maxine, sitting in the back, quickly raised her hand and said, “As long as you drink, smoke, and eat chocolate, you won’t have worms!”

That pretty much ended the service!

Christian one-liners

* If you can’t sleep, try counting your blessings.

* The best vitamin for a Christian is B1.

* Come in and have your faith lifted.

* Man’s way leads to a hopeless

end - God’s way leads to an endless hope.

* The person who angers you, controls you!

* Yes, God loves us all, but he favors “fruits of the spirit” over “religious nuts.”