

There are very many who though not denying the Holy Scriptures, do not believe in endless torments.

Saint Augustine, 354–430. (Chief early opponent of salvation for all.)

We assert that the Word, who is the Wisdom of God, shall bring together all intelligent creatures, and convert them into his own perfection, through the instrumentality of their free will and of their own exertions. The Word is more powerful than all the diseases of the soul, and he applies his remedies to each one according to the pleasure of God—for the name of God is to be invoked by all, so that all shall serve him with one consent.

Origen, 185–254. (Views declared heretical in 553.)

Book Review:

If Grace Is True: Why God Will Save Every Person, by Gulley and Mulholland, 2003, 224 pages.

Summary. This book presents the unorthodox idea of *universal salvation*, which follows from a view of God as infinitely loving and merciful, with unlimited grace. One cannot hold such views with a literal reading of the Bible, although the authors show there is significant biblical support. Moreover, such ideas were prominent in the early church, and have been common after the Reformation.

Contents

1. The Dilemma. *I believe God will save every person.*

- (i) “How can you contradict tradition and the testimony of the Bible?”
- (ii) “Aren’t we free to reject God’s love and ignore his grace?”
- (iii) “If everyone is going to heaven, why was Jesus necessary?”
- (iv) “What about Muslims, Buddhists, atheists?”
- (v) “You mean Adolph Hitler will be in heaven?”

2. Trusting Our Experience With God. *I believe God will save every person.*

The authors assert that belief is much more than knowing scripture, so that (for them), when God “speaks through Scripture”, it isn’t the Scripture speaking, but God. This means roughly that the Bible must be understood and interpreted, not taken literally.

3. The Character of God. I believe **God** will save every person.

The authors see God as the *Perfect Father*, as *Love*, as *Holy*, and as *Just*.

4. The Will of God. I believe God **will** save every person.
 Why would God save some and damn the rest? The authors don't like to think either that God *chooses* to do this, or that God is *unable* to do any better.

5. The Salvation of God. I believe God will **save** every person.
 This is the most problematic of the chapters for a traditional Christian. The authors do not regard Jesus as Savior, but as Lord; God is our savior. "The cross, no longer understood as a payment for human sin, illustrates human resistance to grace."
 By *salvation* they mean "much more than a ticket to heaven, much more than being cleansed of sins and rescued from hell's fire, more even than being raised from the grave and granted eternal life." Instead, they mean "being freed of every obstacle to intimacy with God. We will know as we are known and love as we are loved."

6. The Persistence of God. I believe God will save **every person**.
 The authors discuss their belief in God's infinite grace and mercy, in God's never-ending *persistence*.

Two Partial Reviews:

This book is an eloquent and persuasive argument for universalism — a theological term that simply means every soul will eventually wind up in heaven. The authors' case may prove controversial and hard to digest for many Christians, fed from birth the notion that only those who believe in Jesus Christ will be "saved." But the authors' arguments are very persuasive: To say that some will be condemned to Hell for eternity is to suggest that a person's sin or willingness to reject God will ultimately prove more powerful than God's love. If you believe that God's love is the most powerful force in the universe, the authors argue, then you must believe that God's love will ultimately triumph — for everyone. It is God's will that everyone is "saved", and to condemn a large percentage of human history to the fires of hell is to pronounce the ultimate failure of God's love — a notion that the authors cannot abide. This is an exciting, wonderful book that confirmed many of my own doubts about a "god" who would send billions of his children to hell for not believing in or following Jesus Christ. To the authors, Christ is not so much Savior, but Lord – a crucial difference.

In this wonderful book you will learn that grace and mercy are the attributes of God, and that the ultimate sacrifice on the cross was the act of a God who said "I love you and you are mine, forever!" Irresistible, infinite love is the true Good News of the gospel and it is time it is proclaimed from every church, synagogue, and temple in the world.