

# A FAITH IN THE MAKING

ROYAL CLOYD

A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR "THE FAITH OF A  
UNIVERSALIST" BY ROBERT L'H. MILLER

council of liberal churches  
universalist-unitarian, inc.

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Guide



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## Preface

### CREATIVE DISCUSSIONS FOR A CREATIVE RELIGION



his guide and Robert Miller's The Faith of a Universalist is intended to help you to develop and create new understandings of yourself. It is not to limit the horizon but rather it is intended that you learn greater confidence in developing your own religious philosophy. While true it is that there is "nothing so terrifying as ignorance in action," it is still more pathetic to see a man, product of millions of years of evolution, weakly following and professing beliefs of others. Here is an opportunity to ask yourself what you believe about the most important questions of humanity. Robert Miller classifies himself as a "Natural Theist." He presents his ideas with interest and force. While he is more qualified than most men by training to treat such material in such a fashion, neither he, nor the author of this guide, feel qualified to determine another man's beliefs, another man's knowledge. As Louis Kronenberger writes, do not "live.... off someone else's answers...in the spirit of living off someone else's alms." Let your work with this guide affirm Universalist belief in the "priesthood of believers" as well as an intelligent respect for learning.

The guide presents significant questions related to each chapter, giving illustration of diverse positions taken by sincere members of the Universalist Church. This is followed by a statement of common beliefs held by many Universalists on these important issues. We attempt to consider the views of Christian, Theist, and Humanist wherever they are held by Liberal religious men and women. If, in using this material, you become more confident and well-informed about your own philosophy of religion, the goal intended will be reached.



Gift Religion

## CHAPTER I

What is Universalism? Dr. Miller states that Universalists believe:

- a. The aim of religion is the good life.
  - b. The source of religion is the natural.
  - c. The method of religious discovery is intellectual understanding.
  - d. The atmosphere of religion is freedom.
1. Does this include all of the beliefs you hold?
  2. Where do Jesus and the Bible fit into these beliefs?
  3. How do these beliefs differ from those held by members of other great religions of the world?
  4. Are these beliefs to change with the passage of time?



## DIVERSITY

The aim of Universalists  
is the worship of God  
who offers universal  
salvation.

Universalists seek  
knowledge of the Good  
Life through greater  
understanding of Jesus  
and other great rel-  
igious leaders.

Universalism is a  
philosophy concerning  
man, his life on earth,  
and his relationship to  
an impartial universe.

## UNITY

Universalists believe that the heart and the  
brain are both necessary for mature religious  
conviction. We believe that life can be good and  
that a considerable degree of freedom in inter-  
pretation should be accorded to believers. The  
great majority of Universalists find no conflict  
between science and religion but view truth as  
revealed by science as sacred knowledge.

## CHAPTER II

### We Purpose Together

1. The author suggests that our bond is not a belief but a common purpose: the search for the good life. Can we say that this purpose is not based upon belief?
2. Dr. Miller characterizes this purpose as one of searching, mutual concern, and worship, bearing witness that life is supreme, providing a laboratory for life, and providing a structure for organization. Are there purposes in your church that are not included here?
3. Do you feel that the church should serve some purpose other than those it presently meets? How can such a transition to new purposes be effected in the parish? How much?
4. What kinds of cooperation can be expected or desired in such a church?



## DIVERSITY

The church should discover and maintain the traditional views of the divinity of Christ and supremacy of his teaching.

The church should refine and add to Christian belief in establishing a liberal Christian point of view that is clear.

The church should impose no dogma. Its virtue is in searching for the truth among all religions and science. It will never have the truth but will find its meaning in the broadest kind of searching.

## UNITY

Most Universalists believe that the teachings of Jesus and the lessons of the Bible represent great truths. Few Universalists feel that all truth has been revealed or that the Christian Bible represents the final word.

## CHAPTER III

### A Fellowship of the Free

1. What is the significance of the "Liberty Clause?" Is liberal religion possible without it?
2. What kinds of discipline does such freedom require of adherents?
3. What are the assumptions which give merit to the inclusion of such freedom?
  - a. Each man counts as one.
  - b. Each man is expected to contribute.
  - c. Differences among men are expected and appreciated.





## DIVERSITY

Freedom should be  
accorded to each member  
but within the framework  
of Christianity.

Freedom should be  
accorded to each member  
with broad limits set  
for a liberal orthodoxy.

Complete freedom should  
be accorded to the most  
unconventional of be-  
lievers and worshippers.

## UNITY

Freedom is a cherished aspect of religious belief  
to all Universalists. Its limits are defined dif-  
ferently but there is a very real expectation and  
acceptance of considerable deviation on important  
issues.

## CHAPTER IV

### God: Unconquerable Love

1. What are Universalist definitions of "divine revelations?"
2. How does one "build a faith on reason and daily experience?"
3. Dr. Miller says: "We live in a universe that is motivated and directed toward good ends, for we live in a universe guided and directed by a life source." Do you agree with such a statement? Would this statement be accepted by an orthodox theist? Would it be acceptable to the humanist?



## DIVERSITY

There is a personal  
God which can best be  
characterized as a  
loving father.

God is a force and ten-  
dency toward good in the  
universe.

The universe may or  
may not be orderly.  
The universe is neither  
benevolent or hostile.

## UNITY

Most Universalists have no faith in a punitive father figure who keeps a book of good and bad earthly acts. Universalists feel that the fruits of earth and life can be good and that man can influence these without fear of arbitrary punishment from a hostile heavenly father. Most feel, whether there is a personal God or not, man is capable of finding and doing good in a world of opportunity without a stigma of "original sin." He need not fear his nature or the nature of the universe.

## CHAPTER V

### Jesus: Our Spiritual Leader

1. Does Universalist belief depend on whether Jesus, as an individual actually lived as described in the Gospels?
2. Some Universalist leaders stress that we are concerned with the teachings of, not the teachings about Jesus. Is this a defensible position?
3. What is the meaning of Jesus' life to Universalists? How is this different to us than the significance of Buddha?
4. Will the spiritual leadership of Jesus ever be superseded by another?



## DIVERSITY

Jesus was the son of God in a way that other men are not. He reflected divine wisdom which will stand for all time.

Jesus was a man but he is the greatest spiritual leader of man. His teachings are noble and everlasting.

Jesus was a great teacher. His teachings along side the other great men of the world are important but not exclusive or all unique. We will evolve beyond his teachings.

## UNITY

Most Universalists feel that Jesus and his teachings offer a great example to western man. His teachings are of great importance as standards and goals. Questions of his divinity or relative greatness are less significant than the guidance his image has afforded.

## CHAPTER VI

### Truth: Basic Authority

A discussion of this section might begin or include a discussion of just what the word truth means to each member of the group.

1. How does the Universalist definition of truth compare with the definition of that used by orthodox Protestant groups? Scientists? Compare it with the belief behind the doctrine of papal infallibility.
2. Can we demonstrate from our knowledge of life a basis in truth for the things Universalists believe?
3. Most other religions suggest that authority and truth lie within the institution or a particular set of readings. To what extent do Universalists accept this idea? How do we explain our departure from these sources of authority?



## DIVERSITY

The Bible is the most important source of religious truth but other materials are appropriate for our central worship.

We accept the concept of truth, known or to be known. Most religious truths, however, are revealed by Jesus and biblical scholars.

The Bible has great significance for western man but it is no more true than many other books and writings.

## UNITY

The Bible is a great testament of the history, hopes, and plans of western man. There are lessons and examples of value for all men. Just as the Bible reveals truth, knowledge may be found and observed in the research, writing, and lives of other great men and women. Truth is one and will not be ultimately contradicted.

## CHAPTER VII

### Man: His Supreme Worth

1. Consider the statement that "We avow our faith in the supreme worth of every human personality." What does this mean for the congenitally insane or moronic? What does this mean when we consider psychopathic dictators?
2. In what light do we view ideas of "original sin?"
3. How does Universalist faith ask: How are you facing up to your own potential and worth and dignity?
4. Dr. Miller says, "The better day will come through human effort, through more knowledge and by the assumption, by man, of his responsibilities." Do you feel this day will surely come? How is such an opinion affected by the fact that our sun is slowly dying?





## DIVERSITY

Man stands supreme in his world. Growth and his understanding will prevail with the help of an interested God.

Man is not central in his importance in the universe but he can construct societies and ideas of central importance.

Man is of no more value in the course of the history of the universe than other forms of life. The universe is one and he probably has no special place in it.

## UNITY

Most Universalists feel that, regardless of whether man has a special place in the universe, he has significance. To enhance and maintain meaning in his existence he should have profound respect and reverence for all forms of life including that of his fellow human beings.

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