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# AN EVANGELICALLY FLAWED THEOLOGICAL METHOD: A RESPONSE TO ROBIN PARRY'S *THE EVANGELICAL UNIVERSALIST*

*Edward Loane*

*There have been several attempts in recent years to argue that evangelicals can legitimately believe universalism, the idea that all will eventually be saved. This article assesses one such attempt to show that it is biblically and philosophically problematic and does not warrant the label 'evangelical.'*

Robin Parry first published *The Evangelical Universalist* under the pseudonym Gregory Macdonald in 2006. Although the original publication did not necessarily have a large impact in the promotion of universal salvation among evangelicals, following the publication of Rob Bell's *Love Wins: A Book about Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived* this theology gained more prominence.<sup>1</sup> As such, a second edition of Parry's book was published in 2012, again under the pseudonym, although he fully explains his rationale for doing so in his preface. Since that time the arguments of the book have begun to permeate a wider constituency.

The central thesis of the book is that God's ultimate plan is for the redemption of all humanity and this can be justified biblically and theologically within classically evangelical parameters. The case that is presented is a stimulating exploration of an alternative eschatology to that which has been accepted across virtually all traditions throughout Christian history: only those who are reconciled to God in their earthly life will inherit eternal life. The subtle, yet vitally important point of difference between *The Evangelical Universalist* and traditional Christian doctrine hinges upon whether the opportunity to respond to the call of the gospel is limited to this life. Parry does not see any logical or biblical reason why such a limitation should be imposed, and as such, believes that ultimately all people will respond in faith and be saved.<sup>2</sup> In this article I will leave to the side the particular exegetical questions raised by Parry's book and instead address the broader issues of his philosophical

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<sup>1</sup> Rob Bell, *Love Wins: A Book about Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived* (New York: HarperOne, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Gregory MacDonal, *The Evangelical Universalist*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 6, 32.

presuppositions and theological method. Having assessed the foundations of Parry's position we will be in a position to evaluate whether it has a justifiable claim to be called "evangelical".

## Justice, Punishment and Hell

Parry begins his argument by outlining what he perceives to be philosophical problems with the traditional Christian teaching on hell. He states: "It was here that my own doubts about the tradition began, so it seems appropriate to take the reader along a route similar to my own."<sup>3</sup> The first major problem Parry observes is the justice of infinite retribution. He correctly points out that the traditional doctrine of hell is based upon the notion of retributive punishment. In other words, justice is served when people get what they deserve. He then also correctly points out that for this to be just "the punishment must fit the crime."<sup>4</sup> Parry then contends that there is no possible crime that a finite human could commit that would justly warrant everlasting, conscious torment. Indeed, he asserts in relation to this that "many find the idea absurd" and as such "the traditional doctrine seems to require a theory of punishment that ends up undermining it."<sup>5</sup>

Parry goes on to critique two approaches that account for his problem. First he looks at Anselm's argument that God's infinite greatness means that a sinful offence against him incurs infinite demerit. Anselm's argument has been criticized as being founded upon on a view of crime no longer subscribed to: that the gravity of a crime is determined both by the offence *and* the dignity of the victim. Despite this, Parry is happy to accept Crisp's case based on examples of different species, that the ontology of the offended party helps to determine the gravity of the crime.<sup>6</sup> Killing a dog is more serious than killing a mosquito and killing a human being is more serious than killing a dog. Nevertheless, Parry denies that a crime against an infinite being necessarily incurs infinite demerit. He states: "It does not necessarily follow from the claim that God has infinite honour that *any* crime against him is infinitely bad."<sup>7</sup> This conclusion directly relates to the second objection Parry perceives with Anselm's argument: that it makes all sin equally bad. Parry asserts "most people consider this

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<sup>3</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 7.

<sup>4</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 11.

<sup>5</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 11.

<sup>6</sup> Oliver Crisp, 'Divine Retribution: A Defense,' *Sophia* 42, no. 2 (2003): 36–53.

<sup>7</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 12.

counter-intuitive.<sup>8</sup> He points out that it is self-evident that some sins are more heinous than others and therefore the notion that all sinners are punished with the same eternal consequences must necessitate an injustice fundamentally inconsistent with the principle of retributive justice.

There are several points to be made in response to Parry's objections to Anselm but I would first like to make some preliminary observations about justice, punishment and offences. First, retributive justice does not require that exactly the same wrong as was committed is meted out in punishment. This may appear obvious, but the parking fine that I recently paid was by no means identical to the offence committed. The important aspect for retributive punishment to be served is that they are of equal weight. Indeed, this example also demonstrates that the suffering in punishment may be a quite different species from that of the offence and retributive justice is nevertheless served. Second, the extent of suffering is not necessarily uniform even for identical punishments. For example, the suffering of a parking ticket for a billionaire would be far less than it is for me. Third, the duration of the punishment does not necessarily correspond to the severity of punishment. We would consider twenty years in a minimum security prison less onerous than twenty years in maximum security, even though they are the same length. Fourth, not only should we note Crisp's point that the seriousness of an offence is related to the dignity of the offended party, we should also note that the seriousness of an offence does not necessarily correspond to the time it takes to commit. All would agree that stealing \$5 from the till every month for ten years is less serious than shooting someone in the head, which takes less than a second. These four points about the nature of justice, punishment and offence bear upon our discussion of the justice of infinite retribution.

Now, with these things in mind, we turn to Parry's case against Anselm. We see that Parry's position is weak because he has a distorted view of sin. The tendency in this section of *The Evangelical Universalist* is to present sins as breaches of the law. Some are more serious than others. Some bring more dishonour to God than others. Some deserve to be punished "longer" than others. I contend that this is a distorted and biblically deficient view of sin. The heart of sin is rebellion against the rightful lordship of God. It is enlisting in the army of those who wage war against God. In this sense, all sinners *are* in the same category as enemies of God. All humans are "by nature children of wrath" (Eph 2:3). Certainly, the sinful actions that are manifested from sinful hearts can be distinguished between the lesser and the greater, but hearts are either in

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<sup>8</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 12.

rebellion against God or they are not. So, just as an army may have generals, privates, medics, etc. each with various degrees of responsibility in the battle, they all equally stand together in their opposition to their enemy. This point is not ameliorated by Jesus's teaching that points to degrees of punishment in hell. He declares woes upon Chorazin and Bethsaida claiming it will be "more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you" (Luke 10:12–15) and he tells a parable of servants who knowingly defying their master being beaten with many blows and those who unknowingly defy their master being beaten with few blows (Luke 12:42–48). As shown above, it is entirely possible for various degrees of punishment to be endured for the same length of time. Parry is too quick to dismiss Anselm's point in his thinking about divine retribution.

The second argument that has been put forward in support of infinite retribution is that those in hell continue in their rebellion against God for eternity thus making eternal punishment just. Parry seeks to undermine this case by asking "why would God wish to create a situation in which many of his creatures rebel against him forever?"<sup>9</sup> Apart from posing this question and offering some suggestions as to how God could overcome the continual rebellion of humanity, Parry does not really deal with this objection or offer any biblical argument to justify his assertion. Moreover, he does not look at important biblical passages that indicate the continued rebellion of those in hell. Revelation 16 may indicate just this point. John pictures the eschatological punishment of God as being poured out on rebellious humanity and repeatedly states that when these reprobate are punished "they cursed the name of God" and they "refused to repent and glorify him" (16:9, 11, 21). Parry does not consider these statements either in relation to his philosophical objection to this concept or in the later chapter focused on the book of Revelation. Rather, he dismisses the possibility with the statement that "this view seems incompatible with a biblical theology according to which in the coming age God *destroys* sin from his creation".<sup>10</sup> Parry ought to have explored whether these doctrines were compatible, as most systematic theologians have found to be the case through the centuries, rather than just asserting that they are not so.

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<sup>9</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 14.

<sup>10</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 14.

## Restorative Justice and Hell

Parry has elsewhere argued that, in Scripture, God's punishment is *both* retributive *and* corrective/restorative. As such, he maintains that "any view of hell as *purely* retributive punishment brings God's justice and wrath into serious conflict with God's love and is in danger of dividing the divine nature."<sup>11</sup> He goes on to argue that a danger of "traditional evangelical theology is that sometimes it can divide the divine nature in such a way that some of God's acts are understood as acts of love (e.g., saving undeserved sinners) while others are understood as acts of divine justice, holiness and wrath (e.g., punishing sinners in hell)".<sup>12</sup> We will discuss the nature of divine love and its relevance to Parry's case later. Right now I would like to explore how the emphasis on restorative punishment has grown influential in western society over the last century and suggest that it is this cultural milieu that has shaped Parry's presuppositions about hell. Specifically, I shall look at the moral justifications offered for the practice of incarceration as a punishment.

Imprisonment has been practised for millennia, but it has only been the principal sanction in the criminal justice system for less than two hundred years.<sup>13</sup> Prior to this, prisons were generally used to hold offenders prior to trial and sentencing.<sup>14</sup> In England, the social changes of the seventeenth century led to an exponential increase in the number of crimes incurring capital punishment. The number increased to over two hundred by the mid-eighteenth century, mostly property crimes. Capital punishment was applied to offences as minor as writing an anonymous letter of a threatening nature.<sup>15</sup> Christian outrage at this brutality and injustice led to the implementation of incarceration as an alternate punishment.<sup>16</sup> The options open to judges at that time were capital punishment,

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<sup>11</sup> Robin Parry, "Evangelical Universalism: Oxymoron?", *EvQ* 84, no. 1 (2012): 3–18, 9. Emphasis his.

<sup>12</sup> Parry, "Oxymoron", 9.

<sup>13</sup> For more detail on the history of incarceration prior to its role as a means of punishment see D. W. Van Ness, *Crime and Its Victims: What We Can Do* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986).

<sup>14</sup> D. W. Van Ness, "Punishment," in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, ed. D. J. Atkinson and D. H. Field (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 710–712.

<sup>15</sup> Adrian Speller, *Breaking Out: A Christian Critique of Criminal Justice* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1986), 57.

<sup>16</sup> For details of influential Christians in this process see J. A. Hoyles, *Punishment in the Bible* (London: Epworth, 1986), 120.

transportation or incarceration. By the middle of the nineteenth century the first two of these options had become severely limited and as such imprisonment, somewhat by default, became the punishment of choice.

At first, incarceration was justified as a retributive punishment. In fact, according to Michel Foucault, the great criticism of imprisonment in the early nineteenth century was that it was insufficient as a punishment.<sup>17</sup> The retributive rationale was superseded towards the end of the nineteenth century by a justification of deterrence. Potential criminals would be deterred from their crime by seeing the punishment associated with it. Following this principle, incarceration was justified as a punishment on the basis that it would prevent future crime. A good example of this change is seen when in 1908 the English government passed the Prevention of Crime Act. This Act provided that habitual criminals could receive a double sentence to run consecutively: the first sentence for the offence committed and the second for the protection of society.<sup>18</sup> As the twentieth century progressed, however, optimism about the human condition led to the rationale of prevention being superseded by rehabilitation as the chief motivation for incarcerating offenders. This ideological shift has often come to be institutionalised in the name of the state's punishment arm as a department of corrective services. It also led to the indeterminate sentence, which consists of a minimum and maximum length. The goal of this sentencing was to offer an incentive for rehabilitation.<sup>19</sup> Not only has this rationale for punishment become dominant within society, the nature of punishment has been removed from the public domain. Foucault demonstrated that incarceration replaced the public nature of punishment with a system that took the criminal completely out of the picture. Now punishment is the "most hidden [part] of the penal process."<sup>20</sup> The shift in society from public retributive punishment to private restorative punishment has had profound effects on cultural attitudes towards the role and goal of punishment. In light of this shift, it is not surprising that God's purpose in judgment and punishment should be rethought as Parry has done. The argument that God's punishment of people in hell is both retributive *and* restorative/corrective directly corresponds to

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<sup>17</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 16.

<sup>18</sup> Speller, *Breaking Out*, 65–6.

<sup>19</sup> R. J. Toyn, "Sentencing, Prison," in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, ed. D. J. Atkinson and D. H. Field (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 776.

<sup>20</sup> Foucault, *Discipline*, 9.

our contemporary culture's philosophy of punishing criminals. We ought to be wary, however, when cultural changes are given precedence in establishing theology.

## Theological Problems with Restorative Punishment for Sin

One of the repeated claims Parry makes in *The Evangelical Universalist* is that this is a minor doctrinal adjustment that does not undermine any of the major evangelical theological beliefs. In *All Shall Be Well* he argues that universalism is *theologoumena* and is neither required nor forbidden in Christian doctrine.<sup>21</sup> In arguing that this position is a bona fide evangelical position he claims that universalism "violates no non-negotiable evangelical beliefs or practices and, what is more, it is actually motivated by theological reflection on central evangelical commitments."<sup>22</sup> I believe that the claim that this is a minor doctrinal adjustment is a counter intuitive claim given the coherence of Christian doctrine and its anchor: the person and purpose of God. To demonstrate this point I will argue that Parry's understanding of punishment and justice actually profoundly undermines one of the most central evangelical positions: penal substitution.

Using the definition given in a recent monograph on the subject, penal substitution holds that "God gave himself in the person of his Son to suffer instead of us the death, punishment and curse due to fallen humanity as the penalty for sin."<sup>23</sup> My intention here is not to argue for this position, but rather to demonstrate that Parry's universalism undermines it. I believe this happens in three significant ways.

First, if Jesus really did, to borrow Calvin's expression "pay the penalty that we had deserved" in what respect might we say that the punishment borne by him was restorative?<sup>24</sup> Did Jesus need correction when he suffered the penal consequences of sin? Did he improve himself through punishment? The divinity of the Christ who bore sin implies that the penalty he was subjected to was retributive only. This indicates that

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<sup>21</sup> Gregory MacDonald, "Introduction: Between Heresy and Dogma", in *All Shall Be Well: Explorations in Universalism and Christian Theology, from Origen to Moltmann*, ed. G. MacDonald (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 11.

<sup>22</sup> Parry, "Oxymoron", 17.

<sup>23</sup> Steve Jeffery, Mike Ovey and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Nottingham: IVP, 2007), 21.

<sup>24</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.12.3.



the punishment God justly metes out for sin is also retributive rather than restorative/corrective.

Secondly, Parry's argument about redemption from hell having served a just punishment, or indeed any punishment, diminishes the cross of its power. Evangelical theology of the cross is that Christ bore *all* the punishment, guilt and shame for those who belong to him. If a sinner "serves his time" in hell, the penal substitution of the cross is superfluous. Justice has been served. Even if not all the punishment a sinner deserves has been exhausted when they are redeemed from hell, the efficacy of the cross is undermined. Someone for whom Christ bore punishment also, to some extent, bore that punishment. As such, universalism necessarily leads to a "double payment." This diminishes the glorious all sufficient work of Christ on the cross.

Third, Parry claims that "it is patently the case" that not only those outside, but also those inside the church can experience divine wrath and judgment and as such "the cross is no guarantee that in the short and medium term eschatological punishment (now and not yet) will be our lot."<sup>25</sup> Yet, the passages that speak of Christ's penal substitution make the opposite point. "There is now *no* condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." His "one act of righteousness was *justification* that brings life." He was "made to be sin, so that in him we might become the *righteousness* of God." "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us." Suggesting that those in the church face punishment in the same sense as those outside is quite perverse. We do find passages that speak of discipline and correction for believers (e.g. Heb 12:4–11) but this is a different species of punishment to that which has been atoned for in Christ's death. Parry's conflation of these ideas is unbiblical and problematic in its implications for the heart of evangelical faith, the atoning death of Christ.

The implications of universalism for penal substitutionary atonement are significant. Parry closes his argument in *The Evangelical Universalist* by positing that if he is wrong he, "will not have done any serious damage" because he has "not sidestepped the centrality of God's work in Christ."<sup>26</sup> Yet, as we have seen, his arguments relating to the nature of punishment, justice and offence are seriously detrimental to Christ's penal substitution and, as such, "empty the cross of its power."

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<sup>25</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 139.

<sup>26</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 176.

## Overcoming the Problem of the Joy of the Redeemed

The second philosophical objection that led Parry to doubt the traditional Christian doctrine of hell was the question whether people in heaven could be truly joyful if some of their loved ones were in hell. In his description of this situation Parry uses evocative language when he hypothesises that God “could make my heart callous.” He argues that God loves those who are in hell and so will the redeemed in heaven. And despite the lack of any biblical warrant, he goes on to assert that this love of those in hell will undermine redeemed people’s heavenly bliss.

Even if we permit Parry’s objection at this point, the solution of *The Evangelical Universalist* actually does nothing to overcome it, at least until all people are redeemed from hell. In other words, there will be an extended period when the citizens of heaven cannot be maximally happy because those they love will be suffering in hell. So even if we conceded this objection to the traditional doctrine, (which I do not), Parry’s solution is unsatisfying.

One of the underlying errors that surfaces throughout Parry’s arguments is his simplistic understanding of God’s love. He maintains that “it would not be an exaggeration to say that it is a strong belief in God’s love that often drives people towards universalism.”<sup>27</sup> He believes that if God were to limit the opportunity to respond to him only to this life “God would not be behaving in a loving way.”<sup>28</sup> Apart from the offensive inference that other Christians have a weaker understanding of God’s love, his argument fails to appreciate the possibility that God may love people *differently*.<sup>29</sup> He is right to suggest that, “For God to be love, it would seem to be the case that he has to love all his creatures.”<sup>30</sup> But Parry goes further than this when he states; “any theology of hell that is not compatible with divine redemptive love reflects an inadequate doctrine of God.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, the fact that God is love means God must love all his creatures with the same divine redemptive love. On the contrary, the biblical portrayal of God’s love, while certainly demonstrating God’s love for all people, does not imply *redemptive love* for all people. In the

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<sup>27</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 100.

<sup>28</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 104.

<sup>29</sup> Parry is particularly crass in his assessment of Calvinists who in his opinion believe God “does not love all people and want to save them.” MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 19.

<sup>30</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 22.

<sup>31</sup> Parry, “Oxymoron”, 9.

Bible, God's covenant love is always discriminating. He loves those who put their faith in him in a different way to those who do not. Moreover, there is no biblical reason to think that God would love people in *exactly the same* way. Even within Parry's system there must be some distinction in God's love because not all are brought to a saving relationship before death—surely if God loved all people the same way no one would ever go to hell.

The philosophical notion that people's loved ones suffering in hell will undermine their heavenly bliss is not only asserted without any biblical warrant, it is also based on a monolithic notion of love. People will love as God loves and the biblical portrayal demonstrates differing types of divine love. Indeed, it is appropriate to say that God will continue to love people in hell, for this is his character, but there are no grounds to say that such love is redemptive love. Despite this, Parry's system does not overcome his own objection because he argues for a period of suffering in hell and if the presence of loved ones in hell compromises heavenly bliss then it will be compromised in Parry's proposed eschatology also, at least for a time.

### How “Evangelical” is *The Evangelical Universalist's* Approach to Theology?

We have spent some time looking at the philosophical problems that motivated Parry to adopt universalism. I have maintained that the issues that Parry identifies can be accounted for within the traditional understanding of hell and, furthermore, that his system does not satisfactorily overcome his problems. To close, it is worth considering how “evangelical” *The Evangelical Universalist's* approach to theology actually is. The author of the book goes to some effort to justify his position within the evangelical fold. Indeed, “Evangelical Universalist: Oxymoron?” is an article that was specifically written, not to argue for universalism, but to argue that such a position can be considered authentically evangelical.<sup>32</sup> Certainly, the central section of *The Evangelical Universalist* is given over to studying biblical passages—a very evangelical practice indeed. The point of departure, however, from evangelicalism, is not the conclusion Parry reaches *per se*, but the method he uses to get there.

Parry prefaces his argument with some statements about Christian theology being guided by Scripture, tradition, reason and experience.

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<sup>32</sup> Parry, “Oxymoron”, 17.

He then rightly asserts that Scripture is “the most authoritative.”<sup>33</sup> Parry proceeds from here to suggest that when Scripture seems to conflict with other sources of authority we consider whether Scripture has been misunderstood.<sup>34</sup> It is from this point that he outlines the philosophical problems regarding the traditional doctrine of hell that we have discussed above. What I want to suggest undermines Parry’s claim to be producing “evangelical” theology is his next move: armed with his philosophical presuppositions, he seeks to reinterpret Scripture in such a way as to justify his *a priori* exegetical conclusions. The thrust of Parry’s book is his attempt to show how he can make the Bible say what he wants it to say. In his interpretation of Revelation he admits that a number of texts are very problematic for the universalist but he argues that they can be made to fit a universalistic reinterpretation.<sup>35</sup> When dealing with Jesus’s teaching about hell he offers an *argumentum e silentio* in that “Jesus never explicitly endorsed the claim made by some Jews that the wicked would be tormented *forever* nor the claim of others that they would be *annihilated*.”<sup>36</sup> Jesus, in fact, spoke more about hell than he did about heaven.<sup>37</sup> For Parry, however, he withheld from his listeners the truth that all would ultimately be saved because this would have undermined his message that hell was to be avoided at all costs.<sup>38</sup> He even makes the remarkable claim for any evangelical about his position: “clearly my interpretation is undetermined by the texts!”<sup>39</sup> Parry’s prior philosophical convictions definitively shape his understanding of the Bible. For example, his conviction about corrective punishment leads him to say, “Any interpretation of Gehenna as a punishment must be compatible with the claim that divine punishment is more than retributive but has a corrective intention as well.”<sup>40</sup> This approach to Scripture and theology cannot claim to be evangelical.

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<sup>33</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 9.

<sup>34</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 9.

<sup>35</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 131–32.

<sup>36</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 140.

<sup>37</sup> Leon Morris, “The Dreadful Harvest”, *Christianity Today*, 35, no. 6 (1991): 29–39.

<sup>38</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 149. It is not quite clear how Parry thinks it was appropriate for Jesus to withhold this “truth” because it would undermine his message, but Parry’s universalist proclamation would not undermine the seriousness of hell.

<sup>39</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 140.

<sup>40</sup> MacDonald, *Evangelical Universalist*, 148.

Parry is right in his assessment that there has been a near-unanimous evangelical opposition to universalism.<sup>41</sup> Although some notable Evangelical leaders towards the end of the twentieth century questioned the traditional position, they did not seriously countenance universalism as an evangelical option but tentatively suggested annihilationism as an alternative.<sup>42</sup> The Evangelical Alliance in 2000 produced a report entitled *The Nature of Hell* in which they affirmed that the Universalist view was inconsistent with evangelical faith.<sup>43</sup> Undoubtedly, the debate over the defining characteristics of evangelicals will rage on. But there is certainly no merit in taking the Humpty Dumpty approach: “When I use a word, ‘evangelical’ I mean just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less”. At the very least, evangelicalism entails biblically derived theology. As such, the philosophical motivation and framework that is applied to biblical texts in *The Evangelical Universalist* means the book’s title is a misnomer. Moreover, I have argued that the grounds for such conclusions are weak and, rather than being a small addendum to traditional Christian theology, these conclusions undermine the work of Christ and the eschatological hope.

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<sup>41</sup> Parry, “Oxymoron”, 4.

<sup>42</sup> For Example John Wenham and John Stott. C.f. Wenham, *The Goodness of God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1974); *Facing Hell: An Autobiography*, (London: Paternoster, 1998), 238; David Edwards and John R. W. Stott, *Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 318.

<sup>43</sup> “In particular, we can find no convincing warrant in Scripture for ‘post-mortem’ or ‘second chance’ repentance. We also reject the teaching of universalism, which holds that all will be saved regardless of their commitment to Christ.” David Hilborn, ed., *The Nature of Hell. A Report by the Evangelical Alliance Commission on Unity and Truth among Evangelicals* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), 131.