

'Justification and Life for All':

**Does the passage of Romans 5:12-19 imply a doctrine
of the eventual salvation of all humankind?**

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**This Dissertation is my own work and has not been submitted
previously in support of any qualification or course.**

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Introduction and Rationale for Evaluating Universalism

The idea of ‘universalism’, or, more specifically, the belief that all humankind will eventually be saved, has been highly contentious and divisive in recent years in Evangelical circles,¹ and one only needs to point the theologian Robin Parry, author of the 2008 landmark biblical defence of universalism, *The Evangelical Universalist*, to highlight this, who felt obliged to remain pseudonymous under the name ‘Gregory MacDonald’ because of concerns for how such a heated contemporary issue would be received by the Evangelical community.² Three years later, in 2011, Robert H. Bell published *Love Wins*, which involved a challenge to historical conceptions of Christian teaching on Hell and eternal punishment; Bell, despite explicitly putting a plea in the preface for readers to see that his intention was by no means to ‘come up with a radical new teaching that’s any kind of departure from what’s been said an untold number of times’, inadvertently stirred up a metaphorical minefield of Evangelical debate on the doctrine of Hell and universalism.³ By the time just a year had passed, the Evangelical community had become decisively divided against Bell’s work, forcing him to resign from his position of pastor of Mars Hill Bible Church in Michigan, from which 3000 people had already left because of the controversy, after accusations of being a ‘heretic’ and a ‘false teacher’.⁴ This blanket repudiation is especially notable as Bell, unlike Parry, the day before publishing *Love Wins*, actually denied being a universalist, instead simply wanting to be ‘one more voice’ in the debate, highlighting just how contentious the issue is.⁵ Furthermore, largely as a result of such controversy, numerous evangelically-grounded organisations consider the repudiation of universalism a criterion of membership; an example is the Christian Apologetics Alliance, which, despite claiming to ‘not ... have positions on many of the doctrinal or theological debates that take place within the church’, explicitly singles out and states that universalism is contrary to its *Statement of Faith*, implying this doctrine is specifically and intolerably heterodox.⁶ The *Evangelical Alliance*, which considers itself the ‘largest and oldest body representing the UK’s two million evangelical Christians’, has issued its *Basis of Faith* online, which is stated to be held by ‘all members’, and likewise, is clear to contradict

¹ For the purposes of this dissertation, ‘Evangelical’ shall be capitalised as a proper noun, taken to refer to the contemporary movement within Christianity which is represented by such organisations as the *Evangelical Alliance*.

² G. MacDonald, *The Evangelical Universalist* (London: SPCK, 2008), p. i. See also Foreword.

³ R. Bell, *Love Wins* (London: Collins, 2011), pp. x-xi.

⁴ K. Weber, ‘Rob Bell Tells How “Love Wins” Led to Mars Hill Departure’, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/rob-bell-tells-how-love-wins-led-to-mars-hill-departure-85995/>, accessed 10 May 2014.

⁵ L. Kwon, ‘Rob Bell Denies Being a Universalist’, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/rob-bell-denies-being-a-universalist-49417/>, accessed 10 May 2014.

⁶ ‘Statement of Faith’, <http://www.christianapologeticsalliance.com/what-we-believe/>, accessed 10 May 2014.

universalism in its statement of the ‘eternal condemnation of the lost’.⁷ As such, that the issue of universalism is particularly divisive and antagonistic in contemporary Evangelical circles is undeniable.

However, the question remains of whether such antagonism towards the idea of universalism is actually justified; it would seem as though, in order to justify such fervent reaction to Bell and Parry, there ought to be a strong supporting argument detailing exactly why the doctrine of universalism is considered so definitely and incontrovertibly false. Given that the statement of faith of the *Evangelical Alliance*, in addition to denying universalism, emphasises the ‘divine inspiration and supreme authority’ of the Bible as ‘the written Word of God’ and ‘fully trustworthy for faith and conduct’, it seems appropriate that, in order to justify such a strong denial of universalism, a strong and utterly watertight biblical argument should be given as to why ‘eternal condemnation to the lost’ is so unquestionably true that allegiance to this belief is required as a criterion of membership.⁸ Numerous authors have sought to provide such a rationale in books and blog posts, many of whom wrote in response to Bell, including, within a year of *Love Wins* being brought out, Micheal Wittmer’s *Christ Alone*,⁹ Francis Chan’s *Erasing Hell*,¹⁰ as well as a prominent blog post arguing against universalism entitled ‘To Hell With Hell’, by Pastor Mark Driscoll, as just three examples of the numerous responses to the debate.¹¹

Aim and Thesis for the Dissertation

This work, however, seeks to question whether such a rationale for denying universalism exists as unquestionably as the Evangelical community seems to be implying, to examine whether such strength of emotive condemnation is actually biblically justified. It shall be sought, thus to engage with Evangelicalism on its own terms, by providing a wholly biblical analysis, in line with the criterion of *Sola Scriptura* (translates to, ‘Scripture only’), to examine whether a blanket denial of universalism is actually justified. The main contention of this dissertation is, therefore, that, contrary to this strong consensus that there are apparently watertight and incontrovertible biblical arguments which deny any possibility that biblical texts affirm of the idea of the eventual salvation of all, there exists a biblical theme of the ultimate universality of God’s saving work, as an expression of the victory of grace over sin, which implies that, whether before or after judgement, all humankind will eventually come into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. It shall not be argued that this universal reconciliation is definitely or incontrovertibly true, but simply that it is plausibly true, meaning one ought to be permitted hope for, or even believe in, its truth, without fear of condemnation, exclusion and ostracisation because of a

⁷ ‘Basis of Faith’, <http://www.eauk.org/connect/about-us/basis-of-faith.cfm>, accessed 10 May 2014.

⁸ ‘Basis of Faith’, <http://www.eauk.org/connect/about-us/basis-of-faith.cfm>

⁹ See M. Wittmer, *Christ Alone* (Grand Rapids, MI: Edenridge, 2011).

¹⁰ See F. Chan, *Erasing Hell* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook, 2011).

¹¹ See M. Driscoll, ‘To Hell with Hell’, <http://theresurgence.com/2011/03/14/to-hell-with-hell>, accessed 10 May 2014.

perception that it is necessarily 'false teaching', as was the case for Parry and, particularly, Bell. Thus, let statement A be the proposition that 'The eventual salvation of all is undoubtedly impossible according to biblical texts', and statement B be the proposition that 'All humankind will eventually be saved'. The former statement seems to be implicitly affirmed by contemporary Evangelicalism, while the latter is explicitly denied. The thesis of this work in challenging this, therefore, shall be that statement A is false, because statement B is at least possibly true, on the basis of biblical exegesis and a methodology outlined in chapter 1, meaning a person ought to be permitted to believe or argue for statement B without condemnation.

Chapter 1: Methodology for this Approach

Choice of Passage Rationale

Due to constraints in length, this work shall be focussed on a particularly pivotal passage, Romans 5:12-19, on which exegesis shall be performed in order to argue for the thesis, since this passage, at least *prima facie*, appears to support statement B that 'All humankind will eventually be saved', and thus implicitly contradicts statement A. This passage is not the sole passage on which an argument for universalism could be based, but has been chosen due to it having some of the apparently strongest universalistic statements in the Bible, namely verses 15, 18 and 19. These are particularly strong because they appear to contain what is referred to by Murray as a 'parallelism' between the idea of, on the one hand, 'condemnation for all' due to 'one man's trespass' (5:18a), which arguably applies to all humankind, and, on the other hand, 'justification and life for all' due to 'one man's act of righteousness' (5:18b);¹² the argument, which shall be further examined, would then state that, if the first category of 'condemnation' encompasses 'all' humankind, then, most probably, the second category of 'justification and life' also encompasses 'all' humankind. This parallelism is strengthened further as it is, according to Holleman, likewise present in another Pauline epistle, in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, particularly 15:22, which states that 'for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ', showing, once again, a direct parallelism between death to 'all' in Adam and life to 'all' in Christ.¹³ As such, the use of this Adam-Christ typology was not unique to Romans 5:12-19, instead being 'commonplace in Paul' according to Sampley, thus meaning this passage potentially represents a significant part of Pauline theology, further adding significance to it in the universalism debate.¹⁴

Furthermore, the parallelism is of particular significance because of its presence in another passage, Matthew 25:46, 'And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.' This parallelism, in contrast to Romans 5:18 and 1 Corinthians 15:22, is one of the primary arguments of the idea that, biblically, universalism is impossible, since the word 'eternal' is the Greek *aijwvniwn* in both cases, and, since *zwh;n aijwvniwn* ('eternal life') is elsewhere biblically affirmed to be everlasting in duration, the argument goes that, due to the parallelism, the *kovlasin aijwvniwn* ('eternal punishment') must also be everlasting in duration. This argument is highly significant because it is used in all three of the aforementioned responses to Bell; Wittmer considers that Matthew 25:31-46 is 'often used to

¹² J. Murray, *New International Commentary: Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans, 1959), p. 201.

¹³ J. Holleman, *Resurrection and Parousia* (Leiden: E. Brill, 1996), pp. 50-54.

¹⁴ J. Sampley, *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), p. 981.

support everlasting punishment',¹⁵ while Chan considers it 'Jesus' most suggestive statement ... about the duration of hell',¹⁶ and Driscoll mentions it as confirming that the 'suffering never ends'.¹⁷ The popularity of this argument arguably is traceable to St Augustine of Hippo's highly influential *Enchiridion*, where he argues that the *kovlasin aijwvniou* must be eternal, as otherwise it would imply that, just as there would be a *finem* ('end' from Augustine's Latin) to punishment, *isto modo* ('in this way') there would also be a *finem* ('end') to the *felicitas* ('happiness') of eternal life; in other words, if one component is translated as 'everlasting', the other logically must be also.¹⁸ This is a striking analogy, therefore, to Romans 5:18, where Augustine's argument about parallelism can also be applied the two parts of this verse, the 'condemnation' of 'all' and the 'justification and life' of 'all'; hence, if the very argument commonly used against universalism were applied to Romans 5:18, then it would ironically greatly support its case. In this way, this passage, alongside 1 Corinthians 15:22, provides a uniquely strong argument for the eventual 'justification and life for all' (5:8), hence why an exegesis of it is the ideal challenge to the commonly-held Evangelical perception that the Bible is devoid of support for universalism.

Hermeneutical Methodology

In order to make the exegetical argument sound, and in line with accepted exegetical methods from an Evangelical point of view, the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, clarified by the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics, shall be adopted and applied to Romans 5:12-19; although the authors of these statements by no means propose that such statements be 'given creedal weight', they nevertheless arguably represent Evangelical consensus on this matter, being formulated in 1978 and 1983 respectively and discussed between 'nearly 300 noted evangelical scholars', hence their significance for this work.¹⁹ Of particular interest includes Article XVIII of the statement on Inerrancy, which indicates that 'Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis' while 'taking account of its literary forms and devices', which the statement on Hermeneutics clarifies to mean 'the meaning which the writer expressed' (Article XV); Geisler expands upon this, arguing that interpretation ought to be performed by analysing 'the meaning of the text in its grammatical forms' (hence 'grammatico') as well as placing it in its 'historical, cultural context' (hence

¹⁵ Wittmer, *Christ Alone*, p. 55.

¹⁶ Chan, *Erasing Hell*, p. 82.

¹⁷ Driscoll, 'To Hell with Hell', <http://theresurgence.com/2011/03/14/to-hell-with-hell>.

¹⁸ Latin version of Augustine's *Enchiridion*:

A. Augustine, 'Enchiridion', <http://www.augustinus.it/latino/enchiridion/index.htm>, accessed 5 May 2014

See also English translation by A. Outler:

A. Augustine, 'Enchiridion', http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/augustine_enchiridion_02_trans.htm, accessed 10 May 2014.

¹⁹ 'Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy', <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html>, accessed 12 May 2014, see also 'Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics', <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago2.html>, accessed 12 May 2014.

'historical').²⁰ In addition, Article XIV and Article XVII of the statements respectively affirm the 'unity, harmony and consistency of Scripture', meaning that it is affirmed to never contradict itself, as well as considering it 'its own best interpreter'; this shows the importance of, as well as giving historical and cultural context, giving biblical context to the passage in order to allow, as Geisler argues, 'one passage [to shed] light on another'.²¹ The verses with particular significance with the parallelism and strong apparent universalist implications, Romans 5:18-19, shall therefore be placed in the larger context of 5:12-19, which, although Schreiner divides up into the two smaller sections 5:12-14 and 5:15-19, shall be kept as a unity for ease of ensuring correct understanding of context throughout the passage.²² Furthermore, this work shall discuss cultural and historical context of the passage in chapter 2, prior to a systematic grammatical analysis of the passage in chapter 3, in order to remain faithful to the grammatico-historical method, and the conclusions drawn from the apparent originally intended meaning of the passage.

²⁰ <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html>, accessed 12 May 2014, see also <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago2.html>, accessed 12 May 2014.

²¹ <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html>, accessed 12 May 2014, see also <http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago2.html>, accessed 12 May 2014.

²² T. Schreiner, *Baker Exegetical Commentary: Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), p. 267.

Chapter 2: Observations on the Passage as a Whole

Cultural and Historical Background of the Passage

Authorship, Unity and Date

Romans is one of the biblical works which is most confidently considered Pauline; as Schreiner argues, despite a few fringe 19th-century theories suggesting otherwise, which are said by Cranfield to be 'among the curiosities of NT scholarship',²³ authorship by Paul is an example of one of the 'assured results of NT scholarship' and not contemporarily doubted by any 'serious scholar'.²⁴ Dodd considers the matter 'a closed question'.²⁵ In addition, the Epistle is widely believed to be a unified work, which is helpful for providing direct context, and the controversial claims of some, such as Kinoshita and Schmithals, that Romans represents a redaction from multiple Pauline works, are said by Schreiner likewise to be 'quite arbitrary and have persuaded scarcely anyone'.²⁶

In relation to the date of the Epistle, this too is not a matter of great contention, being fairly straightforward to calculate based on statements in chapter 15 which allude to events in Acts; Paul's mission to the east '... from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum ...' (15:9) has been completed and an intention expressed to travel to Jerusalem (15:24-32), which thus, according to Schreiner, gives a date of around AD 55-58.²⁷ Dodd gives support to this general approximate date range, tending on a slightly later date of AD 59 but also arguing that 'a year or two earlier is possible', based on the limits set by Acts.²⁸ This dating is, again, significant exegetically as it (especially Dodd's tendency to date it slightly later), places the Epistle subsequent to a significantly volatile situation for the Jews inhabiting Rome; the date range of AD 55-58 is comfortably subsequent to the expulsion of Jews from Rome in AD 49 by Claudius, which would have made the previously mixed-background church predominantly Gentile in demographic. This situation changed again after this, with Claudius' AD 54 death giving Jews greater freedom to enter Rome once again, meaning that Jewish Christians returned to the (at this point) mainly Gentile church, which created cultural and religious tensions that Paul, notably, seeks to address in this Epistle.²⁹

²³ C. Cranfield, *International Critical Commentary: Romans IX-XVI* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), p. 2.

²⁴ Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 2.

²⁵ C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1954), p. xiii.

²⁶ Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 5.

²⁷ Schreiner, *Romans*, pp. 3-4.

²⁸ Dodd, *Romans*, p. xxvi.

²⁹ Schreiner, *Romans*, pp. 12-13.

Audience and Purpose

Therefore, due to this political situation bringing about a church composed of two radically different demographics, a major purpose of Romans is to promote unity and harmony in the congregation by attempting to rectify differences in theology and practice.³⁰ However, due to the majority Gentile composition of the church, arguably they are the main audience of the Epistle, as can be seen when Paul states his mission to 'all the Gentiles' (1:5), since the Roman church is given as part of this, which would have been highly counterproductive if the intended audience were primarily Jewish, especially given the tension which already existed.³¹ A tendency amongst exegetes, such as Nygren, has been to consider the purpose of Romans to be an 'exposition and summary of Paul's theology' in general; however, it is unclear why Paul would make such an all-inclusive attempt at systematic theology in a work with an Epistolical genre, and Schreiner argues that many major Pauline emphases are absent, such as his thorough discussions on the nature of Christ (e.g. Colossians 1:15-23), the Church (e.g. 1 Corinthians 12:12-31) and the Eucharist (e.g. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34). This makes it, in his view, more probable that Paul, rather than arbitrarily writing a general systematic theology, uses Romans as an apologetic for those specific theological issues which were controversial at the time in the Roman church. This background of cultural tension and intention to promote unity therefore also sets the scene of the passage in question, Romans 5:12-19, where the discussions on the universality of sin and power of grace over sin were, most probably, written with the intention of settling and pacifying a controversial situation; given the intention of this work is also to address a highly controversial issue, universalism, the fact this passage has this intention further justifies its centrality in the discussion.

Direct context of the passage in the Epistle

This passage comes fairly early in the Epistle, subsequent to both an emphasis in 1:18-3:20 on the desperate situation of humankind, and an expression of the hope in spite of this in the redemption of Christ in 3:21-4:25, called by Edwards 'faith that defies defeat', two radically polarised different emphases.³² These radically opposing themes are alluded to in the contrast between 'trespass' resulting in 'death' and 'righteous act' resulting in 'life', where the former 'death' refers back to 1:18-3:20 and the latter 'life' refers to 3:21-4:25; as such, it is critical that the general message of these earlier passages is understood. Two major points, in fact, appear to be emphasised in these two previous passages which are relevant for the interpretation of 5:12-19; first of all, the universality of sin and the need for

³⁰ Schreiner, *Romans*, pp. 15-23.

³¹ Schreiner, *Romans*, pp. 13-14.

³² J. Edwards, *New International Biblical Commentary: Romans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), p. 120.

redemption and salvation is clear from 1:18-3:20, being particularly poignantly portrayed in 3:9-20, which is an idea that, as Morris argues, ‘begins and ends’ this latter section, highlighting the centrality of this theme.³³ From this, it is apparent that in the phrase in 5:18, ‘condemnation for all’, *pavntaV* means literally ‘all’ and similarly, the ‘many’ (*polloiv*) in ‘the many were made sinners’ (5:19) is universal in scope, with *polloiv* simply being used as a synonym for *pavntaV*. Secondly, despite this universally desperate situation, the hope presented in 3:21-4:25 is even greater, in that God’s redemption is portrayed as being greater than the failure of sin, to the extent that, by grace, all humankind is able to be ‘justified freely’.³⁴ This means that, when sin and justification are placed alongside each other, although sin is universal, justification should be conceived as being greater, a theme present in 5:15 for example, which ought to be taken into account for accurate exegesis.

Parallels of Romans 5:18 with Romans 11:32

A last point of context before beginning the systematic exegesis is to point out the presence of another potentially universalistic passage in the same Epistle, which is Romans 11:25-32, which ends with another strong use of parallelism, similar to 5:18, in 11:32, of ‘For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all’, where the ‘has imprisoned all’ seems to directly parallel ‘condemnation for all’ (5:18a) while ‘he may be merciful to all’ seems to directly parallel ‘justification and life for all’ (5:18b). The result of this is that the two passages can inform one another and clarify any ambiguous phrases, and MacGregor, significantly, argues that, if one were to isolate Romans 11, it would appear to point to a Pauline ‘unqualified universalism’.³⁵

This is because the *pavntaV* (‘all’, the same word as in Romans 5:18), seems to refer to genuinely ‘all’ people without qualification, rather than simply ‘all’ as in ‘all groups of people’, from the fact that 11:32 is followed by 11:36, which triumphantly declares that ‘from him and through him and to him are all things’, where it can hardly be conceived that this *pavnta* (‘all [things]’) has a different reference frame to the *pavntaV* of 11:32, since this would both be anticlimactic and an unexpected, unprepared and confusing paradigm shift. Neither can it be asserted that ‘all things’ in this sense excludes some, since Paul’s assertion here is, as Schreiner argues, that God is the ‘source of all things’, ‘the means by which all things are accomplished’ and the goal of all things’ (in parallel to Colossians 1:16-17), in order to demonstrate the worthiness of God in worship (11:36b) in that no individual could ever be God’s ‘counselor’.³⁶ If ‘all things’ in 11:36 does not genuinely mean ‘all’, it would reduce the strength of Paul’s argument for the worthiness of God, which is Paul’s emphasis in 11:36, as it would nullify Paul’s

³³ L. Morris, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans, 1988), p. 166.

³⁴ Edwards, *Romans*, p. 103.

³⁵ G. Buttrick (ed.), *The Interpreter's Bible: Volume IX* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press), pp. 576-577.

³⁶ Schreiner, *Romans*, pp. 637-638.

argument that no-one could be God's 'counselor' because God is the 'source of all things', since there would be exceptions to this rule.³⁷ In summary, therefore, the reference of 11:32 seems to be 'all without exception', which therefore increases of the plausibility of Romans 5:18 also referring to 'all without exception'; the reason for this being so important to stress is that the potentially universalist interpretation of the passage hinges on whether genuinely 'all' are included in 'justification and life for all' (5:18b). To further examine this, therefore, an exegesis of the passage shall now be performed systematically portion-by-portion in fulfilment of the grammatico-historical methodology.

³⁷ Schreiner, *Romans*, pp. 637-638.

Chapter 3: Systematic Exegesis of Romans 5:12-19

Verse 12

This verse, which focusses on the origin and scope of sin, is argued by Murray to have a 'close logical connection' with the previous few verses due to the presence of 'therefore' (Dia; tou:to), and, although he does not specify the nature of the connection, Murray considers this observation not of great significance.³⁸ However, this seems to overlook the fact that the context of the former part of Paul's argument could be invaluable in accurate exegesis, as both Dunn and Cranfield demonstrate as they make significant points based on this link in argumentation.³⁹ Dunn, firstly, argues that Dia; tou:to refers back to the whole argument of the Epistle so far, 1:18-5:11, where 5:12 and the its 'sweeping indictment of Adamic humanity' refers back to the section beginning at 1:19, as well as 3:23, to overall emphasise beyond a doubt how 'all have sinned' and no person is worthy of salvation on their own.⁴⁰ Cranfield, however, considers the Dia; tou:to to have a narrower frame of reference, to 5:1-11, arguing that the reality of reconciliation for an individual, as expounded in 5:1-2, is being expanded upon here for its universal implications; a movement is made from referring to just the Church and believers to the universe as a whole, arguing that what was accomplished by Christ (5:9) is 'as universal in its effectiveness as was the sin of the first man'.⁴¹ However, it is a false dichotomy to suggest one must choose between these two perspectives, and, as such, although Cranfield's view seems to make more sense of the stark move from the first person plural in 5:1-11 to the third person plural in 5:12-19, which appears to indicate a deliberate change in reference, the Dia; tou:to could also refer both back to a conclusion from the whole of the Epistle so far. As such, by referring back to 1:18-5:11, this verse accentuates the sheer universality of the scope of sin, while by referring back to 5:1-11, Paul indicates that the discussion on the redemption of Christ in 5:1-11 is expanded to indicate its similarly universal applicability.

Furthermore, as well as addressing scope, this passage summarily accounts for the origin of sin, and on this basis the doctrine of 'Original Sin' was formulated; understanding this point is essential for elucidating the relationship between sin coming into the world 'through one man' and the fact it 'spread to all', a matter which has promoted vast amounts of discussion on this topic. To understand this

³⁸ Murray, *Romans*, p. 180.

³⁹ Dunn, *Word*, p. 247; Cranfield, *Romans*, p. 271.

⁴⁰ Dunn, *Word*, p. 243.

⁴¹ Cranfield, *Romans*, p. 271.

relationship is highly significant, because to consider how ‘one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all’ shall later aid with the interpretation of the mechanism of how Christ, by analogy, is said to bring ‘justification and life for all’. The phrase on which such discussion hinges is εἰς ἅπαντας ἡμάρτων (‘because all have sinned’), which is an explanatory phrase of the mechanism of how the sin and consequent death in 12a ‘spread to all’. Dunn argues that the debate has now ‘more or less been settled’, with the controversy over the meaning of εἰς ἅπαντας having been settled on the translation of ‘for this reason, that, because’, meaning that the reason why ‘death spread to all’ is because (εἰς ἅπαντας) of the fact that ‘all sinned’.⁴²

Dunn then argues that, although the result of this is that the origin of sin and death is somehow Adamic, ‘the link between the “one” [Adam] and the “all” [humankind] is not explained’.⁴³ However, he does argue that a classic Augustinian conception of all humankind being in some sense ‘present’ in Adam and thus sinning through his sin is contrary to Paul’s line of thought here, where a very clear distinction between ‘one’ and ‘all’ is deliberately present, to the extent that the ‘all’ are ‘not simply subsumed’ within the ‘one’.⁴⁴ This seems justifiable since the alternative falls to a *reductio ad absurdum* argument,⁴⁵ because, to suggest that all were subsumed in Adam in a way that gives all people genuine responsibility for his sin would firstly completely negate free will; it would also imply that there would be a situation where, as a parallel, Christians would have to be subsumed in Christ’s act of self-sacrifice and compassion on the cross as though they themselves performed this and had responsibility for this. This is doubtless something which Paul’s strong conception of sin in 3:23 and the sole worthiness of Christ in 11:36 would contradict. Hence, as Dunn argues, a balance ought to be maintained between the assertion that humankind has genuine responsibility for its sin, and the idea that this was somehow Adamic in origin in the sense of sin being a ‘compelling power’ which contributes towards the act.⁴⁶

A final note on this verse is the presence of a ὡςπερ (‘as’, or ‘just as’, NRSV), which creates a protasis without the presence of an apodosis, which, Cranfield argues, shows that Paul considers it essential, before completing the comparison between Adam and Christ, to emphasise how ‘utterly dissimilar’ they are ‘except in respect of the actual points of comparison’, so that the analogy is not misunderstood.⁴⁷ As such, it is paramount to not stretch the comparison between the two figures beyond the soteriological point Paul is making.

⁴² Dunn, *Word*, p. 273.

⁴³ Dunn, *Word*, p. 273.

⁴⁴ Dunn, *Word*, p. 273.

⁴⁵ This reasoning method shows the lack of soundness of a line of argument by showing it has absurd (hence *ad absurdum*) consequences if one accepts it.

⁴⁶ Dunn, *Word*, pp. 272-273.

⁴⁷ Cranfield, *Romans*, p. 273.

Verses 13-14

Here, Paul simply and briefly clarifies the relationship, chronological and judicial, between 'sin' and the law (argued by Hodge to be 'clearly the law of Moses'),⁴⁸ which is explained by, as Schreiner argues, distinguishing between 'sin' as a general power and influence and an actual 'transgression', which requires a moral standard and law against which an act is evaluated.⁴⁹ This actually clarifies firstly how 'sin' can exist before the Mosaic Law, which is in that it takes the form of a negative influence, but one which is not *ejllogei:tai* ('not taken into account', i.e. in Hodge's words, 'not laid to one's account and punished') because it does not explicitly break a commandment.⁵⁰

Secondly, it shows just how universal the scope of sin is, in that it does not even require knowledge of law to be prevalent; by extension, this sets the scene for demonstrating just how powerful God's grace is in comparison.⁵¹ This is emphasised by the verb, in the imperfect past tense, *ejbasivleusen* ('[it] reigned', rendered 'exercised dominion' in the NRSV); Moo applies this to 'death' to emphasise how sin and its effects are 'both universal and inescapable' that this strong 'image', even for those who did not transgress based on a specific command.⁵²

Subsequent to this, Paul returns to the topic of Adam and Christ, beginning to formulate the apodosis to the protasis in 5:14, and Adam, as the origin of the sin emphasised earlier in the verse, is called a 'type' of the 'one to come'.⁵³ Moo, influenced by Davidson, clarifies such a 'typology' as a concept with the 'divinely intended function' of 'prefiguring the eschatological age', making the emphasis of this verse immediately more eschatological and implying that the 'one to come' shall have a universal and far-reaching effect, just as Adam did on reality.⁵⁴ This 'one to come' seems most likely to be a contemporary Messianic term, applied to Jesus.⁵⁵ Significantly, in support of the universalist case, the eschatological focus and future tense (although Moo argues this is possibly simply there because Christ is future to Adam) indicate a potential for the 'justification and life' in 5:18 to be applied to eschatological

⁴⁸ C. Hodge, *Romans: The Crossway Classic Commentaries* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), p. 151.

⁴⁹ Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 279.

⁵⁰ Hodge, *Romans*, p. 151.

⁵¹ Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 279.

⁵² Moo, *Romans*, p. 333.

⁵³ Moo, *Romans*, p. 333.

⁵⁴ Moo, *Romans*, p. 334.

⁵⁵ Moo, *Romans*, p. 334.

judgement; it indicates a potential for future redemption later than is commonly perceived, potentially even after judgement.⁵⁶

Verses 15-16

However, the apodosis statement does not yet continue beyond this; instead, Paul continues emphasising 'to drive home the vast dissimilarity', according to Cranfield, between the 'free gift' and the 'trespass', focussing on the effects of the two acts.⁵⁷ Both have an effect on 'the many' (oiJ polloiv), which is translated in the NRSV with a definite article in the slightly awkward phrase 'the many' in order to distinguish it from the English sense of just 'many', which would imply a contrast with 'all'; Sanday and Headlam argue from the parallelism present (which has been previously discussed) that the effects of the 'trespass' and the 'free gift' both 'extend not only to "many" but to "all"', implying genuinely that this statement refers to all without exception both suffering death, and being in a situation when the free gift 'abounded' (past imperfect tense, ejperivsseusen) to them.⁵⁸ This latter phrase about the free gift which 'abounded' is not completely clear *prima facie*, although Cranfield emphasises that, as Paul intends to point out the dissimilarity between the 'transgression' and the 'free gift', this phrase seeks to highlight the 'infinitely superior effectiveness' of the 'free gift'.⁵⁹

In this way, this verse becomes the first statement of the passage which becomes particularly explicit in asserting apparent universalism; the first group, oiJ polloiv ('the many') encompasses all, since Paul in 1:18-3:20, as well as 5:12 (as has been argued) very clearly considers all people without exception to have fallen into sin, and the power of sin to therefore be very significant. As such, the latter group, also indicated by oiJ polloiv, as Sanday and Headlam argued, evidently has the same reference (which is 'all' people), and, especially with Cranfield's emphasis that grace is greater than the power of sin and the aforementioned argument based on Augustine's parallelism in chapter 1, it cannot logically be maintained that the second group is more limited than the first; if anything, the radical dissimilarity tends towards the idea that the second group ought to be wider in scope than the first.⁶⁰ As such, this verse seems to clearly assert that the 'free gift' of God has 'abounded' (ejperivsseusen) to all people, arguably without exception. Therefore, the only apparent means to avoid what seems to be a powerful universally salvific conclusion would be to assert that the idea of a 'free gift' and it 'abounding does not

⁵⁶ Moo, *Romans*, p. 334.

⁵⁷ Cranfield, *Romans*, p. 284.

⁵⁸ W. Sanday & A. Headlam, *International Critical Commentary: Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1900), p. 140.

⁵⁹ Cranfield, *Romans*, p. 284.

⁶⁰ Sanday & Headlam, *Romans*, p. 140; Cranfield, *Romans*, p. 284.

imply salvation. However, Murray argues, contrary to this potential objection, that the 'free gift' refers to the 'righteousness of God', as alluded to in 1:17; 3:21, 22; 10:3, which is given freely in order to bring about justification, meaning that the idea of such a gift 'abounding' to all people at least seems *prima facie* to strongly imply universal salvation by bestowal of the righteousness of God upon all.⁶¹ Before concluding this however, the subsequent similar verses ought to be examined.

Verse 16, very similar in focus, makes this link more specific by stating that the 'free gift' of God is stronger to the extent that it can follow 'many trespasses' and still be effectual, and that this effect is indeed actual 'justification' leading to salvation. Thus, the equal reference frame of oiJ polloiv is strongly apparent from the text, and 5:16 simply re-asserts this for emphasis, including expressing the dissimilarity between the 'free gift' and 'the effect of the one man's sin', where the latter is greater and thus, arguably, at very least of same scope (and plausibly greater) in effect than the former.⁶²

Verse 17

Similar to 15:15-16, verse 17 contains a parallel of universal death and the provision of life, except it is particularly profitable for exegesis due to Paul's explanatory comments in addition to the reiteration of the typology. Cranfield argues that this contains once again a deliberate contrast between the power of death through Adam and the provision of life in Christ, which adds support to 5:16a again, as well as favouring the idea that the scope of 'the many' in the case of Christ is just as universal (in fact more powerful and significant) that the sin which originated from Adam.⁶³

One particular description is of note, which is an apparent qualification of the latter category (those receiving the 'free gift') to 'those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness'; at first glance, this seems like a limitation of the scope of Christ's redemption to simply those who receive Him, which apparently seems to be the view of Morris,⁶⁴ as well as Hodge, who states that 'this phrase evidently implies the voluntary reception of the offered boon'.⁶⁵ However, Cranfield argues otherwise, asserting that this verse, rather than implying the need for voluntary acceptance (although this could be implicit), seeks to portray the 'unspeakable generosity' of 'the abundance of grace'; this is done by creating a parallel between the 'dominion' of death due to 'one man's trespass' and the 'dominion' of a believer, in that the grace is powerful enough not only to rectify the sin, but to mean that people become 'kings themselves', part of what Cranfield calls 'the inexpressible glory of

⁶¹ Murray, *Romans*, p. 198.

⁶² Cranfield, *Romans*, p. 284.

⁶³ Cranfield, *Romans*, p. 287.

⁶⁴ Morris, *Romans*, p. 237.

⁶⁵ Hodge, *Romans*, p. 163.

God's plan for man'.⁶⁶ As such, the apparent qualification in 17b seems more plausibly simply a description of the potential of an individual who has received God's grace, rather than an attempt at a limitation. Moreover, to have the offer of grace without the actualisation would make the 'justification and life' (5:18) in Christ to be lesser than that of Adam, through whom actual, universal and effective condemnation for all was brought about. In this way, once again the scope of this verse still seems most probably unqualified universal.

Verses 18-19

This parallelism is made especially clear at the point of 5:18-19, the climax of the passage in question and finally the apodosis from the unresolved protasis in verse 12,⁶⁷ are present, and potentially contain the clearest possibly universalistic statement in the whole passage in question. As such, it is essential that it in particular is analysed to examine whether universalism is plausible given a high view of biblical authority, based on findings from previous verses which, arguably so far, have seemed very sympathetic to the universalist position. These verses are grouped together because the analogy they draw is almost identical apart from minor literary changes, creating mutual support for one another; for instance, 5:18 argues that, as 'one man's trespass' leads to 'condemnation for all', 'one man's act of righteousness' leads to 'justification and life for all', and, in 5:19, this is closely paralleled by 'one man's disobedience' causing 'the many' to be 'made sinners' and 'one man's obedience' resulting in the situation that 'the many will be made righteous'. Both contain such parallelism, therefore, with the explicit usage of *pavntaV* ('all') in this construction which, Schreiner argues, further confirms the universally inclusive nature of *oiJ polloi*.⁶⁸

This is contrary to Origen's assertion, that, despite probably being a universalist himself,⁶⁹ 'the many' in 5:15-19 is not inclusive of all without exception; he argues this on the basis of a distinction he draws between the categories of 'person who has sinned' and a 'sinner', hence drawing the conclusion that the 'many' who are made sinners refers to only a certain portion of humankind and thus escaping universalist conclusions.⁷⁰ However, this contradicts a vast plethora of factors, many of which have already been discussed, including a distinction between 'sin' and 'sinner' which is nowhere present in Pauline literature, a denial of Paul's strong statements regarding sin being universal, such as the argument that there is 'no one who is righteous, not even one' (3:10), and the relation of *oiJ polloi*

⁶⁶ Cranfield, *Romans*, p. 288.

⁶⁷ Cranfield, *Romans*, p. 273.

⁶⁸ Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 291.

⁶⁹ 'Universalism', <http://www.theopedia.com/Universalism>, accessed 15 May 2014.

⁷⁰ Origen of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Washington, WA: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), p. 342.

(‘the many’) to pavntaV (‘all’) in 5:18 which confirms them to be synonymous in this passage. As such, especially when backed up with the earlier argument from Augustine’s discussions on parallelism, it seems virtually without doubt that the two groups Paul refers to in this passage have the same point of reference, which is ‘all people’.

In relation to 5:18 in particular, it may also be questioned as to whether Paul refers to active salvation as the product of Christ’s ‘act of righteousness’ (implying universalism), or rather simply the offer of grace (simply asserting Arminian unlimited atonement); the NRSV translates the result, dikaiwvsin zwh:V, as ‘justification and life’, implying the former, an active, actualised reality rather than simply potential reality, which implies universal salvation. Turner considers zwh:V appositional and thus simply synonymous to dikaiwvsin (‘justification’),⁷¹ but, Schreiner argues, this fails to take into account the eschatological reference of zwh:V to zwh; aijwvwnion (‘life pertaining to the age to come’ or ‘eternal, eschatological life’) and renders the genitive plural form more superfluous.⁷² Schreiner considers a more precise, literal translation to be ‘justification of life’ due to zwh:V being in the genitive, and, given its eschatological reference, considers this ‘life’ to be in some sense a ‘consequence of justification’, which is also supported by Cranfield,⁷³ Murray,⁷⁴ Zeisler,⁷⁵ and Byrne.⁷⁶ This thereby effectively confirms that the redemption that results from Christ’s ‘act of righteousness’ is not merely potential or partial in extent, but actively and specifically imparting eternal life itself, and thus supporting the universalist case.

Moo argues that, fundamentally, 5:19 asserts the same point as 5:18, meaning ‘all’ (pavntaV) and ‘the many’ (oiJ polloi) are confirmed once again to refer to the same group, but with elaboration as well; an emphasis is placed, for example, on Christ’s act of obedience, arguably His death on the cross, and on Adam’s disobedience as the source of the ‘life’ and ‘condemnation’ respectively, emphasising the central role of Jesus’ crucifixion in the impartation of life.⁷⁷ More significantly, Paul moves away from the ‘states’ or ‘destinies’ that he had been referring to as results of Adam’s sin and Jesus’ righteousness, which were ‘condemnation’ and ‘justification’ in 5:16 and ‘condemnation’ and ‘justification of life’ in 5:18, and he instead takes the issue more on a personal, individual level.⁷⁸ He argues that, just as ‘many were made sinners’, so in a parallel way ‘many will be made righteous’; once again, this supports the

⁷¹ N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1963), p. 214.

⁷² Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 287.

⁷³ Cranfield, *Romans*, p. 289.

⁷⁴ Murray, *Romans*, p. 202.

⁷⁵ J. Zeisler, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia PA: Trinity Press, 1989), p. 151.

⁷⁶ B. Byrne, *Romans* (Collegeville: MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), p. 185.

⁷⁷ Moo, *Romans*, p. 345.

⁷⁸ Moo, *Romans*, p. 345.

point argued in relation to 5:18 that the positive result of Christ's work is not merely the offer of salvation, but an active process that actually results in them being 'made righteous'.⁷⁹ This righteousness, Moo argues, in agreement with Schreiner,⁸⁰ is 'forensic' in nature; that is, it refers to being 'judged acquitted' and 'cleared of all charges', and thus genuinely referring to an act of salvation.⁸¹

Furthermore, Paul uses a future passive tense for 5:19b, which is argued by Kuss⁸² and Schlier⁸³ to refer to a 'real' future, a point when individuals shall experience being 'made righteous', which fits well with a universalistic worldview involving the possibility of posthumous redemption. On the one hand, Moo, Fitzmyer⁸⁴ and Lagrange⁸⁵ may be correct in that this future is primarily 'logical' in nature, in that 'justification' and 'life' is arguably something Paul intends people to experience in the present as well as the future, but on the other hand, this need not preclude there from being a future fulfilment of salvation in addition, the presence of which would allow universal salvation to be actualised.⁸⁶ As such, in summary, 5:18-19 seem to lend further support to the universalist case by emphasising the real nature of the redemption through Christ (rather than simply an offer of redemption) and using parallel language which confirms that 'all people' are included.

⁷⁹ Moo, *Romans*, p. 345.

⁸⁰ Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 287.

⁸¹ Moo, *Romans*, p. 345.

⁸² See, O. Kuss, *Der Römerbrief* (Regensburg: Putset, 1963).

⁸³ See, H. Schlier, *Der Römerbrief Kommentar* (Freiburg: Herder, 1977).

⁸⁴ See, J. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1993).

⁸⁵ See, M. Lagrange, *Saint Paul: Epître aux Romains* (Paris: Gabalda, 1950).

⁸⁶ Moo, *Romans*, p. 345.

Chapter 4: Concluding Remarks

In April 2014, just under three years after he was forced out of his pastoral position at *Mars Hill* church, an article was released in *Relevant Magazine* announcing that Rob Bell was beginning to run a new talk programme on the Oprah Winfrey Network, demonstrating a new approach in a different form of ministry rather than losing hope under the stress of the Evangelical pressure placed upon him due to the controversy of *Love Wins*.⁸⁷ In analogy, arguably the contemporary Evangelical movement ought to be able to, should challenges, issues or new information arise, change its focus and contextualise its message; this dissertation has sought to provide such a challenge to Evangelicalism and its specifically contentious approach to excluding and harshly reacting against any notions of eschatological universalism. It has sought to engage on their own terms, employing historico-grammatical exegesis in accordance with the Chicago Statements, on potentially one of most explicitly, plausibly universalist passages in the whole of the Old and New Testament. The aim was to, by analysing the implications of this passage, begin to come to a conclusion as to whether the eventual salvation of all humankind was in any way biblically plausible

This was hence used as a means to evaluate the work's thesis; this consisted of two statements, statement A being, 'The eventual salvation of all is undoubtedly impossible according to biblical texts', and statement B being that, 'All humankind will eventually be saved'; the thesis was that the former statement is false and the latter is plausibly (or at least possibly) true. This was adopted in defence of those such as Bell and Parry who, to different extents, believe in and argue for versions of universalism, arguing that they ought to be permitted to do so with no backlash, because the doctrine is biblically defensible. After an analysis of the passage, a few themes were particularly apparent; firstly, the strength of Romans 5:12-19 in a case for universalism was realised, based on its repeated structure of verses containing strong parallels between the universal entry of sin into the world by 'one man's trespass' and the redemption through Christ leading to 'justification and life for all', implying the result of Christ's work is just as universal as the problem of sin itself. Also, furthermore, alternative interpretations to avoid the *prima facie* universalist conclusion have been examined, but have seemed unconvincing; Christ's redemption is portrayed as not simply being sufficient to overcome the problem of sin, but as being limitlessly abundant (5:15), and it is thus portrayed as not simply giving people the offer of salvation (a counterargument to the universalist thesis), but actually having this salvation actualised (5:19). In relation to the thesis, it seems to be clear that statement A has been satisfactorily

⁸⁷ 'Rob Bell's Talk Show for the Oprah Winfrey Network Begins Taping Soon', <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/slices/rob-bell%E2%80%99s-talk-show-oprah-winfrey-network-begins-taping-soon#ycvih8Vvkj2ZyQG5.99>, accessed 13 May 2014.

falsified, since it seems at least possible that Romans 5:12-19 was intended by Paul to refer to eventual universal reconciliation (and the demonstration of possibility is all that is needed to falsify the impossibility of a doctrine). Moreover, statement B seems at least possible, even plausible, based on this passage and its strong, repeated statements on the universal scope of redemption.

In such a way, Romans 5:12-19 provides a very strong, potentially unexpectedly strong, case for universal reconciliation which is often overlooked or excluded as a possibility before being properly investigated, and, although it on its own cannot justify an entire doctrine, it can form part of a larger biblical justification for a form of universal reconciliation, or at very least a defence for the inclusion of those who do take this view. As such, a challenge is given to, while by no means having to agree to a universalist view themselves, at least agree to accept it as an acceptable option for others to believe and still have a strong biblical faith, and hence remove exclusion clauses from organisations based on this doctrine.⁸⁸ Doing this would prevent unnecessary division and allow people to have the biblically legitimate and arguably life-enhancing hope of the eventual salvation of all. The words of Barth, from *The Humanity of God*, resolve this positively: 'This much is certain, that we have no theological right to set any sort of limits to the loving-kindness of God which has appeared in Jesus Christ.'⁸⁹

⁸⁸ 'Basis of Faith', <http://www.eauk.org/connect/about-us/basis-of-faith.cfm>.

⁸⁹ See, K. Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Zurich: Zollikon, 1960).

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