employed the expression in opposition to Apollinarianism.
24 McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit*, 136.
25 McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit*, 136.
26 Karl Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher*, trans. G. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 205.
27 Irving's Second Sermon on the Incarnation cited from Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*, 104.
28 Mary Pytches' claim that roaring like a lion signalled that the church was arising in power and majesty like the 'King of the Beasts' is an all-too-typical example.
29 G. Carlyle (ed.), *Collected Works of Edward Irving* (London: Alex Strahan, 1865), Vol. I, 529.
30 Carlyle, *Collected Works of Edward Irving*, Vol. I, 529.
31 Carlyle, *Collected Works of Edward Irving*, Vol. I, 529.
32 Edward Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed of God* (Glasgow: Collins, 1828), 246.
33 Pentecostal pioneer Donald Gee parted company with, for example, Howard Carter over what he felt was the misuse of certain gifts. See Richard Massey, *Another Springtime – a Biography of Donald Gee* (Godalming: Highland, 1992), 100ff.
34 Carlyle (ed.), *Collected Works*, Vol. I, 532.
35 Colin Gunton, 'The One, the Three and the Many', lecture delivered May 14th 1985, King's College, The Strand, London. See also his Foreword to McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit*, ix-x.
36 Mrs Margaret Thatcher made herself notorious by denying that there was any such thing as society: Interview for *Woman's Own*, 31st October 1987. Thatcherite Toryism is, in fact, an extreme form of such individualism, as Chinese Communism is of Marxist collectivism.
37 I suggested reasons for the decline of what I called 'traditional' Pentecostal eschatology in D. Allen, 'Yahweh and the Harley Davidson', paper given at the joint Elim/AOG Theological Conference, The Hayes, Swanwick, November 1995.
38 Peter Hocken, *The Strategy of the Spirit?* (Guildford: Eagle Books, 1996).
39 See the 'Ordination Charge' cited above. Irving's doctrine of the Eucharist is very much that of Calvin, i.e. that the virtues of the ascended Christ are mediated to the faithful by the agency of the Holy Spirit.

Principled Unity or Pragmatic Compromise? The Challenge of Pan-Evangelical Theology

A Lecture delivered to the annual joint conference of the faculties of All Nations Christian College, London Bible College, Spurgeon's College and Oak Hill College, held at London Bible College, 17th December 2003.[1]

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Pan-Evangelicalism: Roots and Definitions

In the course of my work as Head of Theology for the Evangelical Alliance UK, I have found the term 'pan-evangelical' widely used, but seldom defined. This may be because its meaning seems, at first glance, self-evident. Surely, one might assume, it refers to phenomena which involve Christians from a range of different evangelical traditions and convictions. And indeed, so long as we take the 'pan' in 'pan-evangelical' to denote representative diversity rather than literal comprehensiveness, this would be true. But the concept of 'pan-evangelicalism' also has a more technical provenance – one which bears significantly on the concerns we share here today, as theological educators drawn from four institutions which, to one degree or another, could likewise be called 'pan-evangelical'.

Pan-evangelicalism in this more technical sense owes its fullest definition to Roger Martin. Both in his 1974 D. Phil. thesis 'The Pan-Evangelical Impulse in Britain 1798-1830', and in his subsequent book, *Evangelicals United: Ecumenical Stirrings in Pre-Victorian Britain*,[2] Martin focuses not on any great coalescence of evangelical doctrine in the period specified, but rather, on a surge of united evangelical *action.* Specifically, he applies the adjective 'pan-evangelical' to groups like the London Missionary Society, the Religious Tract Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society and the London City Mission – groups whose formation from 1795 onwards heralded a new era of collaboration between Anglicans and Nonconformists, independents and connexionalists, Arminians and Calvinists. Like Martin, Doreen Rosman has pointed out that the rise of the great pan-evangelical mission societies and parachurch agencies through the nineteenth century 'proved to be essentially pragmatic'. As she puts it, they 'sought and acquired influential patronage, mobilized mass support by constructing a network of local auxiliaries, and co-operated with any who shared their aims *regardless of belief*'.[3] Or as Ken Hylson-Smith observes with specific reference to the British and Foreign Bible Society, it 'was viewed as an essentially Christian business venture, with a single objective [to distribute the Bible], *which did not impinge on denominational interests or autonomy*'.[4]

Now two key points arise from these observations. The first has to do with Rosman's comment about pan-evangelical pragmatism, and its expression in a concerted activism which proceeds 'regardless of belief' – that is, by sidelining serious theological reflection. The second concerns Hylson-Smith's suggestion that pan-evangelicalism is not only trans-denominational, but also self-consciously uninterested in the details of denominational polity.

These two points go to the very heart of what binds us together as evangelicals in general, and as teachers serving evangelical churches in particular. Indeed, they are points which remain as pertinent for our context here as they were for the Nineteenth Century situation which Rosman and Hylson-Smith address.

Drawbacks of Pan-Evangelicalism: Doctrinal Minimalism and Denominational Indifference

First, let us consider the implications of Rosman's comment about pan-evangelical activism, and its effect on theology.

Recently, I went on a lecture tour of seminaries and theological colleges in the USA and Canada. At the mid-point of my trip, I gave a paper on British and North American evangelicalism at the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) in Toronto. Given our subject, it is worth noting that ICS is avowedly *not* a seminary focused on preparing people for ordination within a specific denomination, and that it is pan-evangelical inasmuch as it welcomes post-graduate students from a broad range of evangelical churches. It does, however, have a very distinct ethos – an ethos based on the modern Dutch Calvinist tradition shaped by Abraham Kuyper and Herman Dooyeweerd. Whilst preparing for my paper there, I was conscious of the need to avoid conflating Canada too readily with the USA, so I consulted various sources on the history and character of Canadian evangelicalism. One of the most helpful was an essay by John Stackhouse entitled 'More than a Hyphen: Twentieth Century Canadian Evangelicalism in Anglo-American Context'.[5] In this article Stackhouse notes that as the twentieth century progressed, Canadian evangelicals were 'slow to institutionalize any substantial concern for advanced theology', founding centres like Regent College, Vancouver, Ontario Theological Seminary and the Mennonite Conrad Grebel College only as late as the 1960s. Even then, says Stackhouse, it was ICS alone which was established 'with philosophical and theological scholarship primarily in mind'.[6] Reflecting on this reluctance to embrace full-blown theological work, Stackhouse makes a telling comment – one which very much bears out Rosman's point. 'The very nature of transdenominational evangelicalism', he writes, 'militates against elaborate theological sophistication and precision, as it seeks only the minimal theological ground on which to proclaim the gospel.' Precisely because it is concerned 'only for theological essentials in its drive to evangelize the world and foster spiritual vitality', such evangelicalism is, according to Stackhouse, pervaded by 'a spirit of pragmatic compromise'.[7]

As one who works as a theological reflector within as quintessentially pan-evangelical a body as the Evangelical Alliance UK, you can imagine that statements like this, and the comment by Rosman which it echoes so closely, are the sort of remarks that keep me awake at night! Yet it is not only I who should be worried. If Stackhouse is right, his words should particularly exercise those who teach theology in pan-evangelical institutions like the ones represented at this conference. (I might add that I myself do some teaching here at the London Bible College, as an Associate Research Fellow, and have taught at Spurgeon's in the past). Now of course, I realize that Oak Hill and Spurgeon's are more denominationally-oriented than LBC or All Nations. I realize, too, that All Nations is more obviously focused on overseas mission than the rest. But these distinctions are distinctions of degree rather than kind, inasmuch as all four colleges take students from a variety of denominational backgrounds and cultures, and even Spurgeon's and Oak Hill admit different *types* of evangelical Baptist, or evangelical Anglican – Reformed, Arminian and Amyraldian, charismatic and non-charismatic, ecumenical and non-ecumenical, pro-, anti- and undecided on the ordination of women, and so on.

The hard question raised by Stackhouse is whether this pan-evangelical dimension of our work *necessarily* diminishes our intellectual rigour; whether, to repeat his words, it militates, against 'elaborate theological sophistication and precision'; whether it defaults inevitably to doctrinal minimalism – to a 'bare bones' theology which has in turn contributed to the still relatively modest status of evangelical thought on the world intellectual stage.[8]

As I was pondering all this shortly after my return from North America, news came through from the annual conference of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) in Atlanta, Georgia – news which underscored the second point I have raised in respect of pan-evangelicalism – namely, whether there is something about its *trans-denominational* character which intrinsically blunts its edge; which prevents it from 'following through' on its logic; which reduces its capacity to act on its convictions and maintain its parameters. In short: whether it is inherently less capable of exercising the sort of doctrinal discipline which has historically been associated with particular denominations, church councils and local congregations.

A Case Study: The Evangelical Theological Society and Open Theism

As you are probably aware, ETS is the largest network of evangelical scholars in North America, and for the past few years it has been agonizing over the vexed question of Open Theism. There is not space here to review the finer details of this issue, but to recap briefly: Open Theism is a doctrine of God which has been promoted since the mid-Nineties by a group of professing North American evangelical theologians which includes Clark Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker, David Basinger and Gregory Boyd. It challenges the traditional theistic understanding that since God knows 'the end from the beginning' (Isa. 46:10), he must be 'omniscient', and must therefore perceive everything which will happen. Open Theists continue to use the term 'omniscience', but deny that it need imply such exhaustive divine foreknowledge. Indeed, they suggest that God deliberately eschews such knowledge because it would jeopardize the creative, reciprocal nature of his relationship with us. This

relationship, they suggest, is one of dynamic mutual understanding and dialogue.[9] And 'What kind of dialogue is it', asks Pinnock rhetorically, 'where one party already knows what the other will say and do?'[10]

Now as self-proclaimed evangelicals, Open Theists are keen to defend their position from Scripture. While acknowledging that God keeps the 'big picture' of redemption in view, they maintain that he often regards the future conditionally rather than deterministically. He instructs Jeremiah to preach to the Israelites so that they *may* listen, and suggests that if they do, he *may* 'change' his 'mind' about the disaster he has 'intended to bring' (Jer. 26:2-3). Likewise, he 'relents' from his plan to destroy Nineveh (Jonah 3:10). He tests men and women, apparently to discover how they will react (Gen. 22:12; Deut. 8:2; 2 Chron. 32:31). Even Jesus, who foretells his own death early on in his public ministry, still seems to recognize the possibility of escaping it in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:39).[11] Bearing such texts in mind, Open Theists add that their theology makes more sense of prayer. If God has fixed everything in advance, they claim, why is he so often swayed by the intercessions of his followers (e.g. Exod. 32:14; Num. 11:1-2; Deut. 9:13-14; 1 Chron. 21:15)?[12]

Traditionalists have retorted that the God of the Bible knows specific details of the future rather than merely broad themes. He enumerates the years of Israel's exiles (Gen. 15:13-14; Jer. 29:10-11). He names individuals before they are born, discloses biographies before they unfold, and schedules the fate of specific kingdoms (1 Kings 13:2-3; Isa. 44:28; 45:1-6; Dan. 2:31; Ezek. 26:7-21). In scores of prophecies, he describes the coming Messiah in startling detail. As that Messiah, his Son Jesus foretells Peter's denial, Judas' betrayal and the events of the last days (Matt 26:34; John 6:64-71; Matt. 24-25). Only a God who knows this fully how things will turn out, say classical theists, can guarantee to accomplish his will (Job 42:2; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1). Only this kind of God can be called 'sovereign', or be trusted in times of suffering (Exod. 4:11; Heb. 12:3-13). The God described by the Open Theists is, they conclude, far removed from this God. Open Theists are thus promoting 'another gospel', and ought not to be recognized as authentic evangelicals.[13]

At the 2003 meeting of ETS, debate on Open Theism came to a head, with a vote on a motion to expel both Pinnock and Sanders from membership. As it turned out, however, each was retained – Pinnock by a straight majority, and Sanders on just less than the two-thirds of votes needed for expulsion.[14] Leaving aside the minutiae of the case against them, what is telling from the perspective of Stackhouse's hypothesis is that they were not 'tried' – if that is the right word – according to some specific confessional statement on the providence and foreknowledge of God within the constitution of ETS. Indeed, there is no such statement. There are, in fact, only two clauses in the doctrinal basis of ETS, and they are both very short:

> The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs.
>
> God is a Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each an uncreated person, one in essence, equal in power and glory.[15]

As it was, Pinnock and Sanders were challenged on the grounds of denying inerrancy – a charge they robustly resisted. Even if we leave aside their open theism, anyone who has read Pinnock's more recent work on the authority and inspiration of Scripture, or who has considered the hermeneutical position implicit in Sanders' writings, will realize that what they understand by 'inerrancy' is very different from the way in which, say, Harold Lindsell, Norman Geisler or Jim Packer would construe the word.[16] This in turn raises the question whether in the context of so brief a statement of faith, and for so large and diverse a group as ETS, 'inerrancy' still has any clear semantic content, or whether its contingent *function* as a cipher of evangelical unity has become more significant than what it is supposed to denote in referential terms. However one views the outcome of ETS's verdict in this case, Peter J. Leithart is surely justified in highlighting the problems which the whole episode has exposed for the regulation of doctrine in pan-evangelical, para-church contexts. Suggesting that 'inerrancy' here operated as a 'shibboleth' which, once mouthed convincingly by the accused, had spared everyone a more exacting scrutiny of their wider theological commitments, Leithart nonetheless concedes that 'Given the structure of ETS – the minimalism of its doctrinal statement and the fact that it is not a church with disciplinary powers – there was little that the Executive Committee could do.' He adds:

> I say this not to defend the final decision but merely to acknowledge. . .the fragility of the Society's theological consensus. . .What will ETS do if faced with "biblical" docetists, who mouth the word "inerrancy" but argue that the Son only *seemed* to take on human flesh in the incarnation? What will ETS do with "inerrantist" defenses of sodomy? What about "biblical" denials that the Bible actually teaches a bodily resurrection?[17]

Then again, one might well respond to this analysis by asking just how much a society of scholars, supposedly committed to research and debate, should concern itself with discipline as compared with, say, a local church or a national denomination. To put it another way: what weight do concepts of 'academic freedom' carry in such a context, as compared with concepts of 'orthodoxy' and 'church order'? Furthermore, Leithart's reflections prompt the question of where an Evangelical Alliance, or a pan-evangelical college, might stand on such doctrinal dispute – where the limits of intellectual speculation and exploration should be fixed in such organizations, and more particularly, how those limits should be enforced.

Darrell Bock and 'Purpose-Directed Theology'

I mention the ETS crisis not only because it is recent, and paradigmatic of the issues I want to address here, but also because it has spawned a helpful book which seeks frankly to tackle the questions I have raised. The book is called *Purpose-Directed Theology: Getting Our Priorities Right in Evangelical Controversies*. Its author is Darrell L. Bock, Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary.[18] What is especially significant is that Bock was until recently President of ETS, and wrote the text as an expansion of the Presidential Address he gave to the Society in November 2001, when the Open Theism debate was in full

flow. Bock presents an instructive meditation on the theological problems of pan-evangelicalism – and while we shall see that he is finally stronger on diagnosis than treatment, his proposals are at least stimulating, and conducive to the sort of serious discussion which is now so urgently needed among evangelicals, on the relation of visible unity to doctrinal conformity.

When Bock talks of evangelical theology being 'purpose-directed', he is not, as far as I know, pitching for a job as theological adviser to Rick Warren – he of the *highly* pragmatic 'purpose-driven' church! Rather, Bock is pleading for theological endeavour in general, and theological debate in particular, to be attuned to its context, and directed towards ends which are appropriate to that context. As Bock himself puts it, 'not all evangelical institutions are created for equal ends. Knowing what type of organization you belong to and in which you are operating is essential.'[19] Specifically, he proposes that there are two main contexts in which theology is done, and that these suggest two significantly different models of doctrinal authorization.

Taking his cue from Michael Horton, Lewis Smedes and Shane Rosenthal,[20] Bock argues that there are some evangelical bodies whose ethos is explicitly 'bounded', 'confessional' and 'tradition-specific', and others which have a necessarily looser, more discursive character – somewhat akin to a village green or a public square. Crucially in relation to what I have been saying, Bock argues that for evangelicalism to thrive, it needs *both* paradigms to function well. Moreover, it needs to understand which should apply where, and to establish how they should interact. In particular, he avers that local churches and denominations will function more properly in accordance with the 'bounded-confessional' model, whereas pan-evangelical scholarly associations like ETS ought to be conceived much more in terms of the 'public square'.

Unlike Horton, who declares boldly that there can be no 'power of excommunication' in this public square, Bock contends that it shares with the 'bounded-confessional' set the need for a 'prioritized core', or 'centre', which may from time to time need to be reasserted against those who wilfully seek to move the focus elsewhere. For the public squares of pan-Evangelical theology, Bock identifies this 'prioritized core' as the supremacy and perspicuity of Scripture – although it may be telling in the light of his ETS experience that he seems less keen to press 'inerrancy' as such into this position. Still, however, he emphasizes that the overriding responsibility for discipline and censure will lie with the church and its councils, which from Bock's point of view are much better placed to draw 'circles' around the core, and to define what lies within and outside them:

> We. . .need to appreciate that most denominations are confessional and thus need to be able to draw boundaries. Provided they also have a historical sense of where the core of the faith lies (i.e., Scripture), evangelicals should welcome these denominations. . .[But we also] need a place like ETS and other selected evangelical institutions, such as publishing houses and educational institutions, where we can have such discussions with an openness to explore how Scripture could and should be read.[21]

Bock's reference to 'educational institutions' here will, of course, claim our attention. But in truth, through the book as a whole there is some ambiguity in his attitude to theological colleges and seminaries. Later on, in fact, he submits that 'seminaries as self-defining entities can end up in either slot, depending on the doctrinal base they affirm.'[22] This is not only somewhat obvious; it is virtually tautologous! I suspect, however, that it comes closer to what most of us have actually experienced. A denominationally 'non-aligned' college like LBC has its own quite extensive statement of faith and code of conduct, but it still trains many students on behalf of specific church and denominational sponsoring bodies, and the students in question will be responsible to those bodies for their life and doctrine, as well as to the college. The same is true of All Nations. Somewhat by contrast, Oak Hill has defined a set of 'Commitments' which are clearly evangelical in tone, but its official doctrinal standards – at least for the ordinands under its care – are the same as those which define the Church of England to which it belongs: the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Book of Common Prayer, the Ordinal and the Homilies. Here, certainly, the intermediate status of the educational institution in Bock's two-fold schema becomes clear: the assessment of a student's orthodoxy or otherwise will be at one and the same time a collegiate, a congregational and a denominational concern, just as was their original candidature. No doubt there are considerable tensions inherent in this interaction, just as there are presumably tensions between Oak Hill's own pan-evangelical identity and its more generically 'Anglican' nature – not least in the current climate of conflict over human sexuality, ministry and the structure of the Anglican Communion.

As for Spurgeon's College, while it is a member of the Baptist Union and subject as such to the BU's doctrinal standards, in a formal sense those standards are famously light – both in quantity and imposition. Yet on its website and elsewhere, Spurgeon's proudly proclaims itself to be a member of the Evangelical Alliance, whose own Basis of Faith, unlike that of ETS, is rather more precise than the formularies of the BU.[23] Here, it seems, we have something of an inversion of Bock's model. The trans-denominational, pan-evangelical, parachurch Alliance, which might appear at first glance to be more like a public square than a 'circled set', is significantly defining the 'confessional boundaries' of a denominational institution! Clearly, the situation is rather more complex than Bock suggests, and we need, perhaps, to supplement his model with something more nuanced.

This brings me to the Alliance itself, and to the ways in which the concerns expressed by Bock have been reflected in my work there as Head of Theology, and more particularly, as Director of its theological advisory body ACUTE – the Alliance Commission for Unity and Truth among Evangelicals. In what follows, I shall reflect first on the more general challenges faced by this pan-evangelical theological group. Then I shall show how these challenges emerged quite specifically with respect to ACUTE's work in 1999-2000 on its special report, *The Nature of Hell*. Arising from each of these analyses, I shall explore various ways forward for the conduct of pan-evangelical theology, suggesting an enrichment of Bock's analysis from some profound thinking done on this topic by the American evangelical theologian Kevin Vanhoozer.

The Evangelical Alliance and the Origins of ACUTE

In late 1992, the then General Director of the Evangelical Alliance UK, Clive Calver, paid a visit to Jerusalem. Under Calver's leadership, the Alliance had grown phenomenally in the previous decade, from a little-known association of a few thousand members, to a mass movement which could plausibly claim to represent a million Christians in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Alliance had co-sponsored what was now the largest Christian festival in Europe, Spring Harvest; its media profile had risen year on year; it had successfully brokered Billy Graham's Mission England campaign, and had earned a serious hearing from politicians of all parties. [24] From looking admiringly across the Atlantic at the social impact made by evangelicals in the United States, the Alliance now found itself increasingly lauded as an exemplar of unity, balance and effectiveness by North American evangelicals who recognized that despite their own numerical strength, they could not match the dynamic cohesion which had now been achieved by their British counterparts.[25]

Despite such success, while in Jerusalem Calver realized that something was missing. Moreover, he was sufficiently well versed in the formation of the Evangelical worldview to appreciate that this deficit was not new. On arriving back in Britain, he wrote:

> The last decade has witnessed transformation and growth within the Alliance. [But my] emphasis [here] is on a strategic area of weakness, *viz.*, EA's lack of proper theological undergirding of what it is attempting to do. In 1846, our forefathers began by establishing a clear theological foundation. They then proceeded to establish a vehicle for evangelical unity and inquired as to what its prime functions and practical outworkings should be. The great Scottish secessionist Thomas Chalmers raised the objection that the Alliance could become a "do nothing" society. He would not retain that fear today. However, the opposite objection is sometimes raised – "EA does a great deal, but what is its undergirding raison d'être? Has it thought through the correct theological basis for its attitudes and activities?"

Calver went on to suggest reasons why such issues were arising, and his assessment very much bore out that made by John Stackhouse in the quotation I cited above:

> Much of the ground for this concern emanates from the fact that the majority of EA's present leadership are activists at heart. Their desire is to build on the basis of evangelical unity those achievements which can be viewed as measurable gains. This pragmatic approach has much to commend it. It can be argued that the current membership growth indicates popular estimation of the value of what is being achieved by EA's coalitions, staff and specific initiatives. It is readily recognised that the Alliance has not deserted its theological roots. However, it is also observable that little emphasis is placed on relating these doctrinal perspectives to our current cultural and theological situation.[26]

To mitigate these concerns, ACUTE was formed as a 20-strong group of academic theologians, church leaders and lay representatives. With Paternoster Press, we have since produced scholarly reports on homosexuality, the Toronto Blessing, Eastern Orthodoxy, the prosperity gospel, generation-based mission, and social transformation, as well as an authorized history of the Alliance and numerous shorter briefing papers on a range of issues.[27]

Both at its inception and in its subsequent development, ACUTE has been exercised by the question of how that unity-in-diversity which it was formed to promote might affect its mandate to articulate *truth*. Through the course of ACUTE's life, familiar observations have been made that Evangelicalism is a multifarious movement embodying different dogmatic systems, polities and sub-cultures, so that its unity could never be mere uniformity, and must therefore entail a degree of diversity. Yet as a Commission also formed to define sound doctrine, debate has arisen on whether this diversity might have any significant implications for the operative epistemology of ACUTE – that is, whether the plurality manifest in the group is an impediment to be overcome in the quest for the unitary truth of the One True God, or whether it instead reflects something intrinsic to *the nature of divine truth as such.* In other words, is our *de facto* theological plurality a purely *provisional* and *pragmatic* plurality, or could it in some way be a *principled* plurality? Consideration of this issue is ongoing within ACUTE, but helpful light is shed on it, and on other challenges facing us, in Kevin Vanhoozer's article 'The Voice and the Actor: A Dramatic Proposal about the Ministry and Minstrelsy of Theology'.[28]

Kevin Vanhoozer: Pan-Evangelical Theology as 'Ministry' and 'Minstrelsy'

Pertinently, Vanhoozer's paper appears in a volume called *Evangelical Futures*, edited by John Stackhouse – the very same Stackhouse who wrote so pessimistically about the problems of pan-evangelical theologizing in 1993. Hopefully, given that this volume was published seven years later, in 2000, Vanhoozer's contribution persuaded Stackhouse to be more optimistic. He has certainly helped me understand better what ACUTE and the Alliance are meant to be doing.

Vanhoozer begins by noting that in reaction to liberal movements which denied the verbal nature of divine revelation, many evangelical theologians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries developed models of doctrinal truth which identified God's Word closely with the unitary propositions of Scripture. While clearly capturing an important facet of God's self-disclosure, Vanhoozer comments that this approach has tended to present the task of theology as 'the systematization of the information conveyed through biblical [statements]'. By contrast, he suggests that developments in contemporary linguistic philosophy have helped theologians to appreciate that the range of communication in Scripture in fact extends much wider. Vanhoozer is here bearing out what may be described as a more general turn in contemporary evangelical theology – the turn to *discourse.*[29] In the first place, discourses are linguistic phenomena, representing 'continuous stretches of language longer than a sentence' – stretches in which one phrase or

utterance 'contextualises' the phrases or utterances which follow it.[30] More generally, however, discourse is configured as a *human activity* – an interrelational enterprise in which meaning is seen to emerge from what Gillian Brown and Gordon Yule call 'a dynamic process in which language is used as an instrument of communication in a context by a speaker/writer to express . . . and achieve intentions.'[31]

While not neglecting the propositional model, Vanhoozer advances this discoursal paradigm as one which more fully describes the evangelical theological task. In this paradigm, not only is the God Who Speaks also in discourse with *us*, through prophecy, Scripture and the living Word Jesus Christ; He is additionally in discourse with *himself*, through the mutual interaction of the three persons of the Trinity – a mutual interaction which is reflected in the ongoing 'conversation' of the various traditions of the church. Hence, Vanhoozer infers a positive theological plurality which, far from being inimical to God's purpose, is woven into his cosmic plan: 'A certain plurality', he writes, 'would seem to be biblical. At the very least, there is a recognizable plurality in the communicative acts of Scripture.' He goes on:

> While it is true "that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19), we may need more than one interpretative framework to articulate fully its meaning and significance, just as it took four Gospels to articulate the truth of Jesus Christ. There may therefore be several normative points of view in the Bible that are all authoritative because they disclose *aspects of the truth.* It is therefore possible simultaneously to admit a multiplicity of perspectives and to maintain "aspectival" realism.[32]

As for the Bible, so also for interpretative traditions, Vanhoozer advocates a constructive 'catholicity' which appreciates what different strands within the church might each contribute to the task of evangelical theologizing. Drawing on the work of the Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin, he proposes a positive 'plural unity' which recognizes that no single human voice – no one perspective – is able to exhaust the truth of a text. Hence, as Vanhoozer puts it, 'The dialogue's the thing' – dialogue being a cardinal manifestation of discourse. Thus, 'One of the defining characteristics of dialogue is its "unfinalizability". The moral for Christian theology is clear: "Final" or absolute biblical interpretations are properly eschatological. For the moment, we must cast our doctrines not in the language of heaven but in the time-bound, culture-bound languages of earth, governed, of course, by the dialogue we find in Scripture itself.'[33]

Whilst there is little doubt that ACUTE does in fact proceed along such dialogical lines, it is important to emphasize here what Vanhoozer says about finality and authority in respect of the truth which is dialogically explored. He is well aware that there are plenty of non-evangelical traditions which have become content to conceive the dialogical model as either infinitely 'open' or infinitely self-reflexive. On the radical side, following Roland Barthes, the view that language is an endless chain of signification in which 'meaning ceaselessly posits meaning ceaselessly to evaporate it', and in which God, reason, science and law are eternally 'deferred', becomes a keynote of poststructuralist and deconstructionist theology.[34] More moderately, the Postliberalism of George Lindbeck, Hans Frei and others maintains a place for authority, but typically locates it with the 'cultural-linguistic system' developed by the interpreting community, rather than within the revealed Word of God itself.[35]

By contrast, for Vanhoozer there is no question of abandoning Scripture as the locus of theological authority. Rather, it is the *manner in which biblical authority is understood* which, he suggests, merits reassessment by evangelicals. Rather than presenting theology purely in terms of a unitary Word, Vanhoozer advises that we promulgate our vocation as theologians more clearly in relation to the *canonicity* of Scripture. The term 'canonicity' is carefully chosen here, because it is seen to capture both the fixed and formal status of the biblical text, while at the same time conveying its transparent multiplicity – of books, authors, codes, languages, styles, settings and, perhaps, of theologies.[36]

Developing a fertile analogy with dramatic performance, Vanhoozer underlines the importance for evangelical theology of respecting the author's intent, and of adhering to the given 'script'. Yet he adds that different 'stagings' of the play might actually complement, rather than subtract from, our appreciation of it as a whole artwork, or 'canon'.[37] Vanhoozer is emphatically not suggesting here that all interpretations are equally valid. The testing of an interpretation through time, and through dialogue with other well-honed interpretations, will do much to establish its value – the extent to which it 'funds' the canon of pan-evangelical theological understanding. Indeed, Vanhoozer particularly appreciates the contribution which can be made by an experienced and time-honoured 'cast' of denominational traditions in the hermeneutical process:

> I for one would be sorry if everyone thought just like me. I would deeply regret it if there were no Mennonite, or Lutheran, or Greek Orthodox voices in the world. Why? Because I think that truth would be better served by their continuing presence. To some, this may be a shocking way of thinking about truth. Is not truth one? Must not our confessions of faith contain not only affirmations but also denials? Yes! But my question concerns whether a systematics that employs only a single conceptual system can fully articulate the truth.[38]

Of course, mere durability is, in and of itself, no guarantee of orthodoxy, and it is not hard to cite instances in which a long-standing, consensual evangelical reading of Scripture has fallen to superior exegesis (e.g. slavery). Indeed, as Vanhoozer concedes, 'to locate authority in the community itself is to forgo the possibility of prophetic critique'.[39] And yet his view of a collaborative alliance of theologians from diverse traditions seeking communally to express a truth which they take to be objective, if not immediately exhaustible, and which they acknowledge to be supremely mediated for today through the canonical Scriptures, comes close to what many of us in ACUTE have actually experienced as we have done theology together on behalf of the Evangelical Alliance and the wider pan-evangelical community.

In such a model, truth need by no means be 'compromised' by dialogue, collegiality and consensus. On the contrary, it may be revealed at a *more* godly pitch, since it is through the church, rather than through isolated individual theologians,

that God has promised to bring his glory definitively to bear (Eph. 3:21). Whereas a great deal of today's 'western' theology, whether practised in the West itself or exported to the two-thirds world, is atomized, individually-focused and effectively divorced from the life of the church,[40] ACUTE in a modest way reflects something of the ethos of the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), and the earliest ecumenical councils of the post-apostolic period. It attempts to do theology *ecclesially* – that is, in a manner that is consciously of, with and for the church, as well as for wider society. As the record shows, the discussions which took place in these early councils were hardly superficial or uniform; indeed, they were often highly charged. Yet by God's grace positions were defined, and texts produced, which could realistically claim to articulate the mind of the church. Granted, they might have looked like 'compromise' to some, and granted, in the case of councils like Chalcedon, they often marked out boundaries rather than presenting exact definitions on every point. Yet it is doubtful whether anything better, or more representative, could have been produced at the time. While it claims to act for only one stream of the wider church, and while it clearly does not carry the authority of such ancient councils, ACUTE does seek to operate on the same basic, ecclesial model.

Now if we accept Vanhoozer's canonical analogy as linking Bock's 'bounded confessional set' to his 'public square' – that is, as an analogy of both diversity and restraint, freedom and order, grace and law – we must immediately face the question of how much variety can be allowed, of how pluralistic we can become before we threaten the definitive, irreducible norms of evangelical belief. This in turn echoes Bock's concern for 'prioritized cores', and for a pan-evangelical 'village green' which stays in touch with more bounded denominational sets. While this concern is ever-present in the work of ACUTE, it came most starkly to the fore as we developed our report, *The Nature of Hell.*[41]

Pan-Evangelical Theology and *The Nature of Hell*

For the last 15 years or so, there has been an escalation of evangelical debate and tension on the subject of hell, and in particular, on issues related to its duration, finality, quality and purpose. While the majority of evangelicals continue to hold that hell entails conscious everlasting punishment for the unredeemed, a growing number of evangelical theologians, pastors and lay people are embracing the doctrine of conditional immortality. This teaches that although they will face final judgment and some degree of divine punishment after that, the unredeemed will eventually be destroyed, or annihilated (hence the term 'annihilationism', which technically refers to the outcome of this view rather than its whole theology, but which in practice functions as a synonym for it).[42] Both sides of this debate have their signature texts: Mark 9:48, Matthew 25:46, Revelation 14:9-11 and 20:10 are most often adduced by traditionalists; Matthew 10:28, John 3:16, Romans 6:23 and 2 Peter 3:7 are frequently claimed for the conditionalist cause. Other verses – not least 2 Thessalonians 1:9 – appear equally amenable to both sides, containing as they do images of both punishment *and* destruction.[43]

Now we were aware when we began work on this issue that the conditionalist view had to some extent already been assimilated within the evangelical constituency. Derek Tidball's influential book *Who Are the Evangelicals?* had in fact already defined this debate on hell as a distinctively evangelical one, which many in the wider church and world would regard as an intramural, 'family' dispute.[44] Likewise, Rob Warner and Clive Calver's 1996 account of evangelical unity and doctrine, *Together We Stand,* had portrayed conditionalists as an established 'evangelical party'.[45]

On the other hand, we were also aware that concern had been expressed in some quarters that conditionalists might be transgressing the boundaries of Vanhoozer's evangelical 'canon'. Thus both Anthony Hoekema and John Gerstner had provocatively cast the growth of evangelical conditionalism as a 'revolt', with Gerstner calling its proponents to repent as a matter of urgency.[46] Then again, it became clear quite early on in our investigations that evangelical conditionalists were now emerging as equally passionate advocates of their own position. Indeed, Clark Pinnock, Robert Brow and John Wenham had presented themselves as nothing less than 'proselytizers' for the conditionalist cause, seeking to 'convert' evangelicalism from what they now saw as a grossly mistaken doctrine of eternal conscious punishment, to one which would, in their view, reflect the true message of the gospel.[47]

Bearing such tensions in mind, ACUTE was forced in a very stark way to determine issues of truth and falsity in respect of hell. More subtly, and perhaps more complexly, however, it was also compelled to consider those aspects of the doctrine of hell which evangelicals should regard as primary and non-negotiable, as against those which might be deemed *adiaphora* – that is, secondary concerns over which it would be possible to differ with integrity. In doing so, it was prompted more generally to reflect on the methods by which theologians in a pan-evangelical setting might distinguish canonicity from non-canonicity, primacy from secondariness, essential from inessential dogma.

As it was, we concluded the report by recognizing conditional immortality as a 'significant minority evangelical position' – one which stands on the margins of evangelical belief, but which falls within, rather than beyond, its parameters. By contrast, we defined both universalism and 'second chance' or 'post-mortem' salvation as lying beyond the bounds of legitimacy.[48]

What emerges particularly from our reflection on the essential-inessential tension is that the distinction of primary from secondary issues depends to a large degree on how one chooses to define evangelicalism. At present, there is an abundance of studies addressing this matter.[49] All agree that evangelicals are those who, like the adherents of ETS, believe in a triune God. They also agree that evangelicals share a common faith in the incarnation, the sacrificial atonement of Christ, his bodily resurrection and second coming, justification by faith, the supreme authority of the Bible and the missionary imperative. Yet it is clear that differences arise when evangelical authenticity is assessed in relation to other issues. Most starkly in relation to ETS this would apply to inerrancy. While Clark Pinnock and John Sanders just about still manage to reconcile it with their view of Scripture, other evangelicals – not least in the UK – see no need

to do so. Likewise, baptismal practice, the ecumenical movement, the ordination of women, the origins of the earth, spiritual gifts, the millennium and, for that matter, the nature of hell all regularly divide evangelicals. Some writers see one or more of these issues as 'primary' rather than 'secondary', with lines between essentials and non-essentials being drawn in different places. For others, none of them would warrant separation or breach of fellowship.

Beyond all this, the actual criteria by which it is determined whether something is primary or secondary struck us as being far from straightforward. It might be reassuring to think that these criteria were purely biblical and theological. But in practice, they also include considerations of history, culture, politics and relationships.

Truth, Pan-Evangelicalism and Scripture

Virtually all evangelicals would agree that the first criterion by which we must establish whether something is orthodox or heterodox, or primary or secondary, is the criterion of Scripture. The Evangelical Alliance Basis of Faith typifies this priority when it takes its definitive guide in such matters to be 'the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments', and affirms them to be 'entirely trustworthy' and 'supremely authoritative in all matters of faith and conduct'. Given evangelical agreement on the Bible's witness to the existence of hell *per se*, the question facing ACUTE was whether Scripture depicts this hell so unambiguously as a place of eternal torment that no alternative view could legitimately be deemed 'evangelical.'

In addressing this key question, the report notes that the main evangelical proponents of conditionalism demonstrate a high regard for the authority of Scripture, and seek to make their case by thorough exegesis of the relevant texts. From this perspective at least, we suggest that they operate as evangelicals. Furthermore, we go so far as to say that their work highlights verses and images which some traditionalists might previously have ignored, or even misconstrued. No one, we suggest, who has studied the work of Edward Fudge or David Powys could seriously read the many biblical references to God's 'destruction' of the impenitent without considering whether they might, in fact, denote a final cessation of existence, rather than endless conscious torment.[50]

Having made this point, however, the report goes on to concede that a properly evangelical *intention* to uphold the primacy of Scripture does not necessarily lead to good evangelical theology. Evangelicals, we observe, characteristically seek to make doctrine clear and consistent, since they are those who maintain the core Reformation principle of biblical 'perspicuity'. On the face of it, we suggest, this would militate against a conciliatory, 'both/and' approach to the hell debate. After all, it seems illogical to propose that people could be both annihilated *and* tormented forever. In the end, surely either traditionalists must be right and conditionalists wrong, or vice versa. To conclude otherwise would, surely, be un-evangelical?[51]

On one level, it might have been adequate to deal with this point by invoking Vanhoozer's 'eschatological' view of evangelical truth. We might simply have agreed that eternal conscious punishment and annihilation cannot logically be reconciled, but have then suggested that since there appear to be images of both in Scripture, it might be necessary to suspend judgment on how they relate to one another until this interrelation becomes clear at the parousia. But as it is, we do *not* leave the explanation there. Rather, we consider another possibility – a 'third way' – driven not by insipid compromise, but by astrophysics. We emphasize that both conditionalism and traditionalism rely to some extent on words and images from our present space-time world to portray a destiny which lies beyond that world. For the present, however, we underline that space and time are known to be relative, that time is experienced differently at different velocities, and that visibility is affected by gravity. Against this background, we cite an article by Douglas Spanner to suggest that one recently discovered feature of the universe might help to resolve the traditionalist-conditionalist dichotomy. A spaceship travelling into a black hole would be sucked in and annihilated. Yet an observer would continue to see this ship appear to hover above the horizon of visibility, gradually fading but without definite end. Similarly, we propose, hell might be *experienced* as annihilation but *observed* as continuing punishment, with those condemned gradually fading from view.[52] From the ACUTE perspective, this is a useful example of the way in which fresh evangelical thinking, which is prepared to look beyond entrenched dogmatic convictions, might contribute to the cause of evangelical unity.

Truth, Pan-Evangelicalism and Tradition

For all our commitment to the primacy of Scripture, it would be hard to deny the role of historical considerations in seeking to distinguish essentials from non-essentials in the pursuit of evangelical unity. This process typically entails looking back to those periods of the church's life when God has invigorated his people through reformation, awakening and renewal. The birth of Protestantism in the early 1500s, the Puritan era and the Evangelical Revival are obvious reference-points for us here.[53] Indeed, these eras tend to supply the key traditions in Vanhoozer's canon of pan-evangelical interpretation.

Now in *The Nature of Hell*, we recognize that where eschatology is concerned, this historical criterion of unity is comparatively unfavourable for conditionalism. After all, we say, evangelicals did not seriously entertain the eventual extinction of the unsaved until the late nineteenth century, and then did so only in relatively small numbers.[54] Besides, it had been consistently anathematized by the church in the preceding thirteen centuries. At the same time, however, we point out that evangelicals are typically cautious about tradition as compared to Scripture, and are especially wary of appeals to ecclesiastical precedent. At this point we invoke the aforementioned example of the way evangelicals modified their thinking on slavery in the early 1800s. Here, we suggest, was a 'doctrine' and practice that many evangelicals had advocated, and justified from Scripture, but which came to be seen as misguided, and which we would now would reject out of hand.[55]

As I have reported, some evangelical conditionalists contend that eternal conscious punishment is at least as

deserving of theological revision as was slavery. What is clear, however, is that for evangelicals worthy of the name, revision on this or any other historic article of faith must proceed on the basis of biblical interpretation rather than simply by emotion, or even, by moral indignation alone. Here the report argues that history can help, since the interpretative tradition on a biblical text or doctrine can indicate how heavily the burden of proof lies on those who wish to change things. In the case of conditionalists this burden of proof is considerable, since the traditional view has prevailed for by far the greater part of the church's history. It is consequently incumbent upon them to make their case with humility and respect among traditionalists, whose convictions in this case reflect the legacy of Augustine, Calvin, Luther, Wesley, Jonathan Edwards and others who helped most significantly to shape the evangelical movement.

Truth, Pan-Evangelicalism, Attitudes and Behaviour

If the definition of evangelical unity is at least partly historical as well as biblical, then we ought to acknowledge that it must also to some extent be *attitudinal* and *behavioural.* In *The Nature of Hell,* we suggest that doctrine plays a part in such definitions, but add that it is not identical with them. Probably the best known attitudinal/behavioural definition of evangelicalism is that offered by David Bebbington. Bebbington identifies four key characteristics of an evangelical – conversionism (a call to people to be converted), activism (an active faith affecting all of life), biblicism (a commitment to the authority and inspiration of the Bible), and crucicentrism (holding the cross at the centre of all life and theology).[56]

In *The Nature of Hell* we observe that according to these and most similar taxonomies, those who hold a conditionalist position would remain within the parameters of authentic evangelicalism. Certainly, the conditionalists whose work we scrutinize in the report are shown as unequivocally committed to conversion and mission, to activism in the world, to the Bible as their ultimate authority, and to the centrality of the cross. By this set of criteria, at least, we conclude that those specific details of hell's duration, quality, finality and purpose which are at issue in the current evangelical debate are comparatively less essential.[57]

Truth, Pan-Evangelicalism and Relationships

As a final factor in determining the parameters of evangelical unity, the ACUTE working group on hell comments that evangelicals often identify one another not because of any clear outward 'badge', but because of what might be called a 'family resemblance'. In practical terms, we function within relational networks and, although we may differ from one another in many other ways, we generally recognize and accommodate the differences. Whether we talk of there being various tribes of evangelicals,[58] branches of the same tree,[59] colours of the rainbow, or facets of a Rubik's cube,[60] in time we become adept at recognizing 'family' when we see them. And the report concludes that when it comes to those who have moved from traditionalism towards conditionalism, the familial ties remain strong. Such people may have shifted to the margins on the matter of hell, yet it is clear that virtually all of those who have defended conditionalism in print have done so as self-professed and well-established members of the evangelical household. Some, indeed, have made enormous contributions to it (e.g. John Stott, John Wenham, Michael Green and Philip Hughes).[61]

These images of 'family' and 'tribe' are, of course, more than simply pragmatic. They are significant scriptural motifs. The people of God, though diverse through time and space, together form part of the same extended community. On this analogy, those who have embraced conditionalism, while disagreeing with the majority, could be said to have done so overwhelmingly from *within* the community, and on *behalf of* the community. Furthermore, despite the protestations of Gerstner, Hoekema et al., it seems likely that they will remain within the community as a whole, even if it finally rejects their convictions on this specific point of doctrine.

Now of course, as Theological Adviser to the major pan-evangelical body in the UK, and as editor of *The Nature of Hell,* I am aware that these observations on the future of conditionalism and conditionalists might well look like self-fulfilling prophecies. After all, by publishing a report which deems conditionalism to be legitimate, ACUTE has probably gone a long way to making it so – at least for evangelicalism in Britain, and at least this side of Judgement Day! This observation in turn raises a final, major question for our examination of how evangelical theological method is affected by the 'commission' approach.

Truth, Pan-Evangelicalism, Expediency – and Hope

Given all that I have said about the interaction of exegesis, doctrine, tradition, culture, worldview and community, and bearing in mind how this interaction is exemplified by *The Nature of Hell,* one is led to ask just how far it is really possible in a body like ACUTE to operate free from contingent political, relational and institutional imperatives. To put it more concretely: if *The Nature of Hell* had declared unequivocally against conditionalism, and, more to the point, if we had deemed it to be incompatible with the UK Alliance's Basis of Faith, then we would logically have had to expel one of our most respected Vice Presidents, the Rev Dr John Stott – for it was Stott who, in 1988, did so much to open up this debate by preferring annihilationism to the traditional view.[62] We would also almost certainly have lost other esteemed British evangelical leaders who happened to be conditionalists – not to mention an unpredictable number of rank and file members. Of course, having decided to accept conditionalism rather than reject it, we faced the opposite prospect of traditionalists resigning because of a perceived downgrade in this area.

It would be disingenuous to pretend that ACUTE functions quite apart from such strategic concerns. We are, after all, the theological commission of the Evangelical Alliance, rather than an independent, autonomous think tank. We are funded by the Alliance, to serve the Alliance, and it is therefore not surprising that, to a large extent, we reflect in our

composition, research and reports the *existing* theological profile of our membership. Moreover, we do not merely guess at or assume this profile; we know it, because from time to time we poll our members on key theological questions. For example, prior to embarking on *The Nature of Hell*, a recent survey had informed us that 79.6% of our affiliated churches affirmed belief in hell as eternal conscious punishment, while 14.2% favoured the doctrine of annihilation.[63]

Plainly, one must beware of being 'led' by such figures. It would be easy to run ACUTE in such a way that it merely reflected back to the Alliance what the Alliance already was, and what it already believed – with footnotes added for a sheen of academic respectability. Our brief may be advisory rather than prescriptive, but we must surely be more than simply *de*scriptive. ETS is much less of an 'advisory' body, yet I could not resist a wry smile when I came across Darrell Bock's recollection that when it undertook to add a Trinitarian statement to its inerrancy clause some years after its foundation, it did so only on the basis that more than 80% of its membership voted for it!

There are many books in print which address evangelical theological divisions by essentially *explaining* those divisions without comment, or by presenting a debate between representatives of the various key positions. Both approaches have their merits, and two or three of our ACUTE publications have followed this format. Yet there is much to be said for undertaking the harder work of producing genuinely conciliar, 'through-composed' texts like *The Nature of Hell.* The writing, editing and peer review process can be painstaking and deeply frustrating, but at its best, it can operate as an exemplar of what pan-evangelical theology must be – that is, theology in the service of the church.

Similarly, since the UK Alliance is a broad-based body which takes in cessationists and charismatics, five-point Calvinists and radical Anabaptists, Anglican bishops and Brethren elders, there is a serious danger of generating little more than what might cynically be termed 'theological diplomacy' – that is, a bland discourse of generalities and platitudes designed, however elegantly, to do little more than 'keep the peace'. This, of course, is exactly the sort of insipid minimalism depicted by Stackhouse. The linguists Geoffrey Leech and Jenny Thomas have coined the term 'pragmatic ambivalence' to describe the use of language in such a way as to keep two apparently contradictory assertions in play for some wider practical purpose.[64] The eucharistic vocabulary of the Book of Common Prayer is, perhaps, a more constructive example of this phenomenon; the recent attempts of mixed denominations like the United Reformed and Methodist churches in the UK, and the Presbyterian Church (USA), to define their position on homosexuality, have been somewhat less lucid or edifying.[65] While there may be an inevitable dimension of 'pragmatic ambivalence' in pan-evangelical theology, it demands continual scrutiny and restraint, lest it become either so vapid as to be pointless or so diffuse as to be senseless.

There are, then, genuine pitfalls associated with the enterprise in which the EA and other pan-evangelical bodies like the theological colleges represented here are engaged – genuine dangers that we might fail, out of timidity, fear, financial concern or academic self-preservation – to let our Yes be our Yes and our No, No. Yet, as I have suggested in relation to hell, the discourse of pan-evangelical theology does not have to reduce to such expedient minimalism. Conversely, in fact, the experience of working together may by God's grace reveal insights which could be lost in a more atomistic scholarly process, even while it risks intensifying division and disagreement, as has occurred in ETS. To take a near 'ideal' example, the language of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed may have been pragmatically ambivalent; it may have been highly politicized and historically marked; yet it also happens to be sublime and, most important of all, faithful to Scripture. Granted, we may not aspire to such heights, and certainly none of us in our respective institutions has a comparable ecclesial authority! Even so, my hope is that in our different but kindred pan-evangelical contexts, we will represent that 'evangelical reality' which, in Vanhoozer's words, 'is disclosed to us in the plural form of the biblical witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ'. With Vanhoozer also, I trust that by God's grace, our mission of theology will thus be related to the mission of the church – 'creatively and faithfully – dramatically! – to interpret and perform the way, the truth, and the life'.[66]

Notes

1 Soon after this lecture was delivered, London Bible College was renamed London School of Theology.

2 Roger H. Martin, 'The pan-evangelical impulse in Britain, 1798-1830; with special reference to four London societies', D Phil, University of Oxford, 1974; *Evangelicals United: Ecumenical Stirrings in Pre-Victorian Britain 1795-1830* (Metuchen, NJ & London: Scarecrow Press, 1983).

3 Doreen Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 23. My emphasis.

4 Ken Hylson-Smith, 'Roots of Pan-Evangelicalism: 1735-1835', in Steve Brady & Harold Rowdon (eds.), *For Such a Time as This: Perspectives on Evangelicalism, Past, Present and Future* (Milton Keynes: Scripture Union / London: Evangelical Alliance, 1996), 144. My emphasis.

5 John G. Stackhouse, 'More than a Hyphen: Twentieth Century Canadian Evangelicalism in Anglo-American Context', in George Rawlyk and Mark Noll (eds.), *Amazing Grace: Evangelicalism in Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 375-400.

6 Stackhouse, 'More than a Hyphen', 394.

7 Stackhouse, 'More than a Hyphen', 394.

8 For a searing account of this lowly status, see Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids/Leicester: Eerdmans/IVP, 1994).

9 Clark Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker & David Basinger, *The Openness of God*, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1994); Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids/Carlisle: Baker/Paternoster Press, 2001); Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 'The Open Theism View', in James K. Beilby & Paul R. Eddy (eds.), *Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 2001), 13-64; Gregory A. Boyd & Paul R. Eddy, *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 43-49, 95, 171-75; John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1998).

10 Clark H. Pinnock, 'Systematic Theology', in Clark Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker & David Basinger, *The Openness of God* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1994), 122.
11 Richard Rice, 'Biblical Support for a New Perspective', in Pinnock et al, *The Openness of God*, 11-58; Gregory A. Boyd & Paul R. Eddy, *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 43-49.
12 David Basinger, 'Practical Implications', in Pinnock et al, *The Openness of God*, 156-62; Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 95. Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids/Carlisle: Baker/Paternoster Press, 2001), 171-75.
13 Gerald Bray, *The Personal God: Is the Classical Understanding of God Tenable?* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998); John Piper, Justin Taylor & Paul Kjoss Helseth (eds.), *Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2003); Gregory A. Boyd & Paul R. Eddy, *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 37-43.
14 For voting figures and other details see www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0403/opinion/leithart.html (accessed for this paper, December 2003).
15 For this and other material relating to the ETS, see its website at www.etsjets.org (accessed for this paper, December 2003).
16 Clark H. Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle: A Systematic Defense of the Full Authority of the Bible* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985); more particularly, see his comments on the authority and interpretation of Scripture in *Most Moved Mover*, 25-64; John Sanders, 'Historical Considerations', in Pinnock et al, *The Openness of God*, 59-100; *The God Who Risks*, 137. Compare Harold Lindsell, *Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976); Norman Geisler, various articles on the Bible in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 74-102; J.I. Packer, *God Has Spoken* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1979). At the 2003 ETS meeting, Pinnock did concede that some statements in *The Scripture Principle* could be 'improved on' and others 'removed or modified', but it is very unlikely that such revisions would bring his overall interpretation of inerrancy into alignment with that exhibited by the more conservative scholars mentioned.
17 Peter J. Leithart, *First Things* 141 (March, 2004), 11.
18 Darrell L. Bock, *Purpose-Directed Theology*.
19 Bock, *Purpose-Directed Theology*, 54.
20 'Evangelicalism: Who Owns It?' *Modern Reformation*, 10, no. 2 (March-April 2001).
21 Bock, *Purpose-Directed Theology*, 32.
22 Bock, *Purpose-Directed Theology*, 57.
23 Baptist World Alliance, *We Baptists* (Franklin, Tenn.: Providence House, 1999). Baptist Union of Great Britain - website at http://www.baptist.org.uk/. Accessed for this article, December 2003.
24 For an account of this period in the life of the Alliance, see Peter Lewis, 'Renewal, Recovery and Growth: 1966 Onwards', in Brady & Rowdon (eds.), *For Such a Time as This*, 178-91.
25 See, for example, Tom Sine, *Cease Fire: Searching for Sanity in America's Culture War* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).
26 Clive Calver, 'The Jerusalem Paper', Evangelical Alliance archive, London, dated 28.11.92, 1-2.
27 ACUTE, *Faith, Hope and Homosexuality* (Carlisle: Acute/Paternoster Press, 1998); *Evangelicalism and the Orthodox Church* (Carlisle: Acute/Paternoster Press, 2001); David Hilborn (ed.), *'Toronto' in Perspective* (Carlisle: Acute/Paternoster Press, 2001); Ian Randall & David Hilborn, *One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance* (Carlisle: Evangelical Alliance/Paternoster Press, 2001); Andrew Perriman (ed.), *Faith, Health and Prosperity: A Report on 'Word of Faith' and 'Positive Confession' Theologies* (Carlisle: Acute/Paternoster Press, 2003); David Hilborn (ed.) *Movement for Change: Evangelical Perspectives on Social Transformation* (Carlisle: Acute/Paternoster Press, 2004).
28 Kevin J Vanhoozer, 'The Voice and the Actor: A Dramatic Proposal about the Ministry and Minstrelsy of Theology', in John G. Stackhouse Jr (ed.), *Evangelical Futures* (Leicester: Apollos, 2000), 61-106.
29 Vanhoozer, 'The Voice and the Actor', 80-81.
30 David Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (3rd edn) (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 106; Peter Auer, 'Introduction: John Gumperz' Approach to Contextualization', in P. Auer & A. di Luzo (eds.), *The Contextualization of Language* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1992), 1-37.
31 Gillian Brown, & George Yule, *Discourse Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 26.
32 Vanhoozer, 'The Voice and the Actor', 78-9.
33 Vanhoozer, 'The Voice and the Actor', 80.
34 Barthes, Roland, *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana, 1977), 149. For Vanhoozer's fuller consideration of this model, see his more detailed study *Is There A Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).
35 Vanhoozer, 'The Voice and the Actor', 77.
36 Vanhoozer, 'The Voice and the Actor', 81-4.
37 Vanhoozer, 'The Voice and the Actor', 83-4.
38 Vanhoozer, 'The Voice and the Actor', 80.
39 Vanhoozer, 'The Voice and the Actor', 80.
40 For corroboration of this point see George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Leicester: IVP, 1994).
41 ACUTE, *The Nature of Hell* (Carlisle: ACUTE/Paternoster Press, 2000).
42 This background is explained more fully in ACUTE, *The Nature of Hell*, 1-8.
43 For a detailed discussion of the relevant biblical material see ACUTE, *The Nature of Hell*, 36-52.
44 Derek J. Tidball, *Who Are the Evangelicals?* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1994), 152-5.
45 Clive Calver & Rob Warner, *Together We Stand: Evangelical Convictions, Unity and Vision* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996), 87.
46 Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1979), 265; John Gerstner, *Repent or Perish* (Ligonier, PA.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1990).
47 John Wenham, 'The Case for Conditional Immortality' in Nigel M. de S Cameron (ed.), *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1992), 190-1; Clark Pinnock & Robert C. Brow, *Unbounded Love: A Good News Theology for the 21st Century* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994), 88, 94.
48 ACUTE, *The Nature of Hell*, 131-134.
49 Tidball, *Who are the Evangelicals?*; Alister McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (London: Hodder &

Stoughton, 1993) and *A Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism* (Leicester: Apollos, 1996); Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*; David F.Wells, *No Place for Truth, or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Leicester: IVP, 1993); Mark Thompson, *Saving the Heart: What is an Evangelical?* (London: St Matthias Press, 1995).

50 ACUTE, *The Nature of Hell*, 124-6. Cf. Edward William Fudge, *The Fire that Consumes: The Biblical Case for Conditional Immortality* (Revised edn.) (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994 [1982]); David Powys, *'Hell': A Hard Look at a Hard Question* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997).

51 ACUTE, *The Nature of Hell*, 125.

52 Douglas Spanner, 'Is Hell Forever?' *Churchman* 110/2, 1996, 107-120; ACUTE, *The Nature of Hell*, p.125.

53 Alister McGrath makes illuminating use of the Reformers, for example, as one inspiration for evangelicalism today: *Roots that Refresh: A Celebration of Reformation Spirituality* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992).

54 ACUTE, *The Nature of Hell*, pp.126-7.

55 ACUTE, *The Nature of Hell*, pp.126-7.

56 David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 10-12.

57 ACUTE, *The Nature of Hell*, pp.127-8.

58 As in Calver & Warner, *Together We Stand*, 128-30.

59 As in Martyn Percy, *Words, Wonders and Power: Understanding Contemporary Christian Fundamentalism and Revivalism* (London: SPCK, 1996).

60 As in Tidball, *Who are the Evangelicals?* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1994).

61 ACUTE, *The Nature of Hell*, 128-9.

62 John Stott & David L. Edwards, *Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988), 287-304; 312-329. For an account of the disagreements among evangelicals arising from Stott's work, see Tony Gray, 'Destroyed for Ever: An Examination of the Debates Concerning Annihilationism and Conditional Immortality', *Themelios* 21:2 (January 1996), 14-18.

63 ACUTE, *The Nature of Hell*, p.6, n.13.

64 Geoffrey N. Leech, & Jenny Thomas, 'Language, Meaning and Context: Pragmatics', in N.E. Collinge, *An Encyclopedia of Language* (London: Routledge, 1990), 173-206. For a detailed discussion of this phenomenon in relation to theology, see my own unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 'The Pragmatics of Liturgical Discourse', University of Nottingham, 1994.

65 ACUTE, *Faith, Hope and Homosexuality* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 7-11.

66 Vanhoozer, 'The Voice and the Actor', 106.