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A table of contents for *Theological Students Fellowship (TSF) Bulletin (US)* can be found here:

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Introducing This Issue <i>Vernon Grounds</i>	3
Singing With The Fundamentalists <i>Annie Dillard</i>	4
American Evangelicalism: Quo Vadis? <i>Vernon Grounds</i>	7
From Truth to Authority to Responsibility: The Shifting Focus of Evangelical Hermeneutics, 1915-1986 (Part II) <i>Douglas Jacobsen</i>	10
The Theology of Acts <i>F.F. Bruce</i>	15
Bibliography on Aging for Pastors and Other Church Leaders <i>David O. Moberg</i>	17
Leadership '88 Conference	20
REVIEW ESSAYS:	
The Chronology of the Apostle Paul <i>James D.G. Dunn</i>	21
Reading the New Testament as a Canonical Text <i>Scot McKnight</i>	22
Childs Responds to McKnight	24
Taking Mennonite History Seriously <i>Dennis D. Martin</i>	25
Early Christians in the Roman Empire <i>Christopher Haas</i>	27
Book Reviews and Comments	29
Vol. 10 Index	46

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before his courts with praise. He is the king of kings.
Thou art the lord.

All around me, eyes are closed and hands are raised. There is no social pressure to do this, or anything else. I've never known any group to be less cohesive, imposing fewer controls. Since no one looks at anyone, and since passersby no longer look, everyone out here is inconspicuous and free. Perhaps the palm-raising has begun because the kids realize by now that they are not on display; they're praying in their closets, right out here on the Square. Over the course of the next weeks, I will learn the the palm-raising is here to stay.

The sun is rising higher. We are singing our last song. We are praying. We are alone together.

He is my peace Who has broken down every wall . . .

When the song is over, the hands go down. The heads lower, the eyes open and blink. We stay still a second before we break up. We have been standing in a broad current; now we have stepped aside. We have dismantled the radar cups; we have closed the telescope's vault. Students gather their book bags and go. The two leaders step down from the fountain's rim and pack away their guitars. Everyone scatters. I am in no hurry, so I stay after everyone is gone. It is after nine o'clock, and the Square is deserted. The fountain is playing to an empty house. In the pool the cheerful hands are waving over the water, bobbing under the fountain's veil and out again in the current, *hola*.

American Evangelicalism: *Quo Vadis?*

by Vernon Grounds

I

Long months ago I received a rather flattering invitation. Would I participate in a conference of older evangelical leaders? Older? Yes, indeed, since I was born in 1914. As for being a leader, well, if in the judgment of the conference sponsors I could still so qualify, I as a semi-retiree would be happy to accept the invitation. So I found myself sometime later sharing in the discussions and deliberations of a group which included many individuals who are well-known in Christian circles. Looking back on our experiences, we pondered the probable needs and possible problems of younger Christians who will be leading the Church in the third millennium. It was an interesting experience. Though not endowed with prophetic foresight, we were in effect functioning as spiritual futurologists. A hazardous undertaking! Since God alone knows what will be happening in the years ahead, any attempt at prognosticating the shape of the events after A.D. 2000 runs the risk of presuming to possess a scintilla of omniscience.

I recalled that conference as I was interacting with James Davison Hunter's *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation* (The University of Chicago Press, 1987). It is one of those books every self-respecting evangelical must read, as well as anyone concerned about religion *per se*. A sociologist who in 1983 published *American Evangelicalism: Contemporary Religion and the Quandary of Modernism*, Hunter is a probing analyst of Protestant orthodoxy, that species of the genus Christianity to which I personally adhere. So does Inter-Varsity as an organization. Hunter gives a report and an interpretation of the data he accumulated from surveys of students in representative evangelical colleges and seminaries. The statistical findings of his research are set forth in charts that even I with my anti-statistical bias could understand (p. 9ff; pp. 240-248). Included too are *verbatim* comments made by interviewees, candid responses to specific inquiries about beliefs and attitudes. All of this, I am sure, Hunter's fellow sociologists will certify as warranting his guarded forecasts regarding the future of evangelicalism.

Let me mention that, in seeking to ascertain the beliefs and attitudes of today's younger evangelicals, Hunter investigates their thinking regarding theology, work, morality, selfhood,

family, and politics. Taking for granted the correctness of his statistics and the validity of his extrapolations, we are shut up to his tentative prediction: "The world of the coming generation of Evangelicals may bear little resemblance to the Evangelical world of many previous generations" (p. 15). It *may*. Hunter eschews the role of a dogmatic futurologist, heavily qualifying all his projections from the known of today to the unknown of tomorrow. Thus at the outset of his study, he admits that, "One may well wonder whether an attempt is going to be made to predict the future of Evangelicalism." And he informs us that "The answer is a qualified no." While insisting that prediction is "not the central concern here," he nevertheless acknowledges that "there is, then, a qualified sense in which we can speak of predicting the future of American evangelicalism" (p. 14).

And what does Hunter foresee? "American evangelicalism seems to face an uncertain future, a future as ambivalent as its own present nature" (p. 208). Assuredly—I am assuming that Hunter is sure of this—it will not disappear, but it *may* differ significantly from traditional evangelicalism and suffer a decline numerically. Though consistently refusing to dogmatize, Hunter at any rate ventures to assert that "the prospects are not at all bright" (*ibid*). Indeed, he even goes so far as to say that there are "reasonable grounds for pessimism" (p. 203). He holds, essentially, that, as an orthodoxy struggling to maintain continuity with its past and fidelity to its heritage, evangelicalism is inescapably subject to the modifying pressures of its social context. Modernity is bearing down inexorably on this paradigmatic form of orthodoxy as it is on all orthodoxies whether Roman Catholic, Jewish, Islamic, or Buddhist (pp. 214-236). The acids of modernity, as Walter Lippman termed them, include "philosophical (or scientific) and functional 'rationality,' intensive sociocultural pluralism, the bureaucratization of public life, the subjectivization of private life" (p. 182) and other corrosive elements summed up under the comprehensive rubric of secularization. Hence evangelicalism is not only "broadening" (p. 163); it is likewise "weakening" (p. 172) and losing its power of "binding address." In other words, it is less and less able "to communicate its ideals . . . in ways that are inwardly motivating or emotionally compelling" (p. 210). Pervaded by "movement and fluctuation, restlessness, fluster, and even turbulence" (p. 157), it is "a theological tradition in disarray" (p. 32). There are, conse-

Vernon Grounds is Editor of *TSF Bulletin* and president emeritus of Denver Seminary.

quently, "reasonable grounds for pessimism" regarding the future of evangelicalism.

At the same time, referring to the somewhat wistful speculations of "prominent experts in social science and social criticism" like Daniel Bell, Peter Berger, Robert Nisbet, and Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, who wonder about a religious renewal of culture, Hunter discusses such a possibility. He concedes that it is a possibility. Certainly! "Anything is possible," especially if one is willing to hypothesize "that extra-empirical dynamics could be at play." But it is at best a low-order possibility. Reluctantly, therefore, Hunter registers his agnostic opinion: "the likelihood that contemporary Protestantism will be a prominent and autonomous source of cultural renewal and contemporary society is not very high" (pp. 198-292).

II

At the same time that I was interacting with Hunter's analysis I was reading Mark Noll's *Between Faith and Criticism* (Harper and Row, 1986). Since he has already established himself as a sort of shining luminary in the American theological sky, Noll cannot accurately be called a rising star; and this new work, which is simply superb, will greatly enhance his reputation as a creative and critical historian. At my age, I only occasionally encounter a solid, substantial, scholarly book of an evangelical *genre* to which I react with unconditional enthusiasm. This is one of those mind-stretching rarities. Anyone, especially a student, who wants to understand American evangelicalism can do no better than invest as long as it may take to give *Between Faith and Criticism* a careful perusal. It deserves that by all means, not a casual retinizing.

Traditional evangelicals, though by no means in jot-and-tittle agreement on many subsidiary issues, have defended the Bible's supernatural origin and total trustworthiness while endeavoring to function at the same time as responsible and competent scholars. Noll suggests that their defensive scholarship has passed through four stages. First, they were full partners in the critical enterprise from 1880 to 1900. During this period, as Charles Briggs contended, "The great majority of professional Biblical scholars in the various universities and Theological Halls of the world" were demanding "a revision of traditional theories from the Bible on account of the large induction of new facts from the Bible and history" (p. 17). But the evangelicals, particularly members of the faculty at Princeton Theological Seminary, A. A. Hodge, Charles Hodge, Francis Paton, William Henry Green, and Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, felt no compulsion to abandon the traditional theories. Instead, with commanding scholarship they effectively contended for the validity of those theories in the academic arena. Through their efforts and those of other able evangelicals, the major Protestant denominations refused to countenance the new views. Even a moderate advocate of Biblical criticism like Briggs was officially suspended from the ministry and forced out of the Presbyterian communion.

In the second period, however, from 1900 to 1935, as Noll rehearses the story, there was a sad decline in evangelical learning. Radical change occurred in Protestant beliefs about Scripture. The professionalization of Biblical scholarship put into key faculty positions more and more critics who modified or abandoned traditional theories. Liberalism was now in the ascendancy. Evangelical scholars, increasingly estranged from *academia*, turned to a popular audience. *Pari passu*, *academia* paid less and less attention to their work if it was of high quality as in many cases it indisputably was. To be sure, some evangelical scholars continued to command the attention of their liberal counterparts. Princeton Seminary particularly was a stronghold of traditionalism which not even radical critics

could dismiss as obscurant. Yet, Noll points out, "Princeton scholars were becoming increasingly isolated. Because their work was so forthrightly conservative, it no longer had much of a place in the academic world" (p. 47). One exception was J. Gresham Machen whose two major works, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* and *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, did elicit appreciative responses from liberal quarters. But, according to Noll's account, at this point in time Protestant Biblical scholarship had reached its nadir. It had acquired "a reputation for atavism, anti-institutionalism, and even anti-intellectualism" (p. 57).

Noll pauses in rehearsing the development of Biblical criticism among American evangelicals to pay high and deserved tribute to the British scholars who between 1860 and 1937 developed a believing criticism which effectively held its own against the onslaughts of a more radical criticism. He applauds the outstanding labors of the great Cambridge trio, Fenton A. J. Hort, B. F. Westcott and J. B. Lightfoot, who demonstrated that the most objective and meticulous scholarship could be employed in the cause of traditionalism. They "provided the most powerful model for critical study of the Bible by evangelicals" (p. 72). Later, through the strategy deliberately adopted by far-sighted leaders of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, evangelicals pursued graduate study at the university level and eventually gained significant academic appointments. All of this, when British theological publications were re-issued in the U.S.A., helped tremendously in the revitalization of American evangelical scholarship.

That revitalization, beginning in the mid-1930s, pushed beyond fundamentalism into a new evangelicalism, a term minted by Harold John Ockenga. Fresh and vigorous voices began to argue the case for Christian orthodoxy. Evangelicals—*neo* if one chooses to so designate them—like Carl Henry, Edward J. Carnell, and Bernard Ramm (these are only three of many more who might be mentioned), once more made Biblical Christianity a live-option academically. Roger Shinn could lampoon "the new generation of brainy fundamentalists who have studied at Harvard in order to learn the arguments they will spend the rest of their lives attacking," but evangelicals who had earned their doctorates at Harvard and other citadels of critical erudition could not be brushed aside with a humorous quip. They were prepared to engage non-evangelicals on their own ground with indisputable expertise. As George Ladd, one of the "Harvard fundamentalists" wrote in 1967, these are scholars "whose theological heritage is the older fundamentalism, who are convinced of the truthfulness of the fundamentals of the Christian faith but who do not reflect the basic defensive, apologetic stance of fundamentalism. They acknowledge their indebtedness to critical scholarship. They believe that if the traditional orthodox interpretation of the Gospel is true, it should be capable of defense, not by the negative technique of attacking other positions, but by expounding its own view in critical but creative interaction with other theologies. These modern successors of fundamentalism, for whom we prefer the term evangelicals, wish, in brief, to take their stand within the contemporary stream of philosophical, theological, and critical thought" (p. 121).

In a chapter which calls to mind Hunter's research, Noll documents statistically "The Recent Achievement" of resurgent evangelicalism, an achievement which even liberals have been constrained to acknowledge and applaud, with reservations of course. Noll affirms that "The emergence of an evangelical believing criticism is certainly one of the most significant developments of the recent history of American Biblical scholarship, quite apart from its importance for the internal history of evangelicalism" (p. 163). But Noll devotes

a long section of that same chapter to warning his fellow-evangelicals about the "perils" which they face: (1) the inescapable tendency, given the nature of their ecclesiastical communities, for academic arguments to become matters of public debate; (2) the "immense diversity, both theologically and academically among evangelicals"; and (3) the danger of reducing believing criticism to "a piously veneered replica of naturalistic scholarship" (pp. 166-173).

Noll also points out that evangelicals by and large lack a theology adequate and comprehensive enough to serve as a solid foundation for their Biblical convictions. They likewise lack a sufficiently sophisticated understanding of hermeneutics. Above all, they lack, in the words of David Wright, "a satisfactory doctrine of Scripture for an era of Biblical criticism." We must, Wright urges his co-believers, "work out what it means to be faithful *at one and the same time both* to a doctrinal approach to Scripture as the Word of God *and* to the historical treatment of Scripture as the words of men" (p. 178).

What, then, returning now to Hunter's concern in *The Coming Generation*, may we speculate regarding the future of American evangelicalism? Unlike Hunter, Noll focuses on a single issue, that of Biblical scholarship. Evangelical scholars must "(1) speak out against the irresponsible Biblical interpretations to which the evangelical tradition is heir; (2) resist the distinctively American pressure to equate a Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of all believers with democratic individualism; (3) go beyond strife over Biblical inerrancy to create synthetic theology based on the best Biblical resources available; and (4) prosecute scholarship in the wider world without falling prey to the secularism which is so much a part of that world today" (pp. 193-194).

Noll ends his rich, challenging study on an almost Kierkegaardian note. Evangelical scholars need to "move beyond the external examination of Scripture to an integral appropriation of its message" (p. 197).

III

Well, what about the future of American evangelicalism? Having listened to these two perceptive diagnosticians, what can I add? Nothing really, except my own hunches which lack any statistical support. I recall that even Amos explained, "I was neither a prophet or a prophet's son," disclaiming any insight based on foresight and insisting that his predictive ministry was carried on by God's appointment and enablement. Lacking divine calling and endowment as a foreteller of the future, I can do little but evaluate the statistically-supported prognostications of scholars far more insightful than myself and, in addition, make some hesitant guesses. Sadly devoid of prescience, I am utterly devoid of omniscience. Yet that in no way embarrasses me as a finite creature. It reminds me, rather, of that text in the Letter of James, "Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow." In the realm of history which is the realm of human responsibility, unpredictability must characterize the outworking of events and invincible ignorance must characterize my prevision of the days and years still to dawn.

I do not by any means disparage, however, attempts to lift the veil on the future. A book like Howard Snyder and Daniel Runyon's *Foresight* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986) makes us aware of ten trends which will possibly affect the destiny of evangelicalism. It certainly has value for educators and administrators. David McKenna's *Megatruth* (San Bernardino, California: Here's Life Publishers, 1987) likewise has value in showing how the Church can respond with spiritual effectiveness to John Naisbitt's *Megatrends*. But, appre-

ciative as I am of these concerned attempts as well as those of Hunter and Noll, I gratefully take the GOK position. GOK? Ah, to unfold the significance of those three mysterious letters, I relate again that hackneyed anecdote concerning a world-famous diagnostician. One morning in a teaching hospital leading a group of interns on Grand Rounds, he stopped at a bedside, scrutinized the patient, examined him carefully, stepped back and solemnly said, "Gentlemen, I'm afraid it's a case of GOK." The interns were puzzled. "GOK? GOK?" Probably some rare disease. Noticing their puzzlement, the diagnostician with a slight smile explained, "GOK means God only knows."

And only God knows the future of American evangelicalism, whether it will continue to flourish or whether it will decline. Like all space-time phenomena, its as-yet-unwritten history is humanly unpredictable. It may suffer the fate of once dynamic Christian movements and organizations. Donald MacKay, noted British physicist and neuroscientist, in an address to fellow-believers, warned against an evangelical triumphalism by citing some instances of spiritual declension in modern Christianity. "Consider then the Free Kirk of Scotland in 1842, resounding with the passionate evangelical orthodoxy of Chalmers. Who would have predicted that by 1893 the same Kirk would be riddled with German liberalism? Look at the Evangelical Student Volunteer Movement of last century. Could its founders have foreseen how it would be gradually transformed into the Student Christian Movement (SCM) that extruded Inter Varsity Fellowship (IVF) into independent existence, and how it would latterly repudiate the very concept of Christian mission that gave rise to it? Or ask Dutch evangelicals what has happened to the Gereformeerde Kerk of the stalwart Abraham Kuyper."¹ The same kind of change for the worse may occur in American evangelicalism. GOK.

On the other hand, American evangelicalism, to use a phrase from the King James Version, may "go from strength to strength." GOK. Unpredictably, responding to the Spirit of God, evangelicals may make Biblical Christianity more spiritually and culturally relevant and powerful than it has ever been. GOK. Think of the astonishing renaissance of Christianity in the Soviet Union, a miracle of not just survival but resurgence which has elicited this comment from Malcolm Muggeridge:

A wonderful sign has been vouchsafed us, one of the great miracles of the story of Christendom. This sign is the amazing renewal of the Christian faith in its purest possible form in, of all places, the countries that have been drastically subjected to the oppression and brainwashing and general influence of the first overtly atheistic and materialistic regime to exist on earth. This is a fact. I should say myself that it is the most extraordinary single fact of the twentieth century. . . . If when I was a young correspondent in Moscow in the early thirties you had said to me that it would be possible for the Soviet regime to continue for sixty years with its policy of doing everything possible to extirpate the Christian faith, to discredit its record and its originator, and that after this there would emerge figures like Solzhenitsyn speaking the authentic language of the Christian, grasping such great Christian truths as the cross, in a way that few people do in our time, I would have said, 'No, it's impossible, it can't be.' But I would have been wrong . . . Recently, we were making a television programme about the anti-God movement in the communist countries and were filming a selection of propaganda posters. The early ones all showed old peasants, old has-been people, but the latest posters showed young people as the ones being

foolishly deluded by religion. So contrary to what might be expected, this fantastic steamroller trying to destroy every trace of Christian faith has failed. All the efforts of the most powerful government that's ever existed in the world, in the sense of taking to itself the most power over the citizenry, has been unable to shape these people into the sort of citizens it wants them to be. Of all the signs of our times, this is the one that should rejoice the heart of any Christian most, and for that matter of anyone who loves the creativity of our mortal existence.²

God, I am constrained to think, delights in surprises, forcing finite foretellers—except when He grants them as He did with the Biblical prophets a God's-eye perspective on history—to admit that the future is unpredictable.

But at least three plus consequences flow from our ignorance. First, that ignorance induces a spirit of humility and moderates any claim to predictive pretensions—or ought to do so. Second, our ignorance is actually an antidote against unwarranted gloom and despair. Thus Martin Marty quotes an affirmation which he heard at a conference, "We don't know enough about the future to be absolutely pessimistic." And since we don't, a relative optimism is in order rather than an absolute pessimism. Third, our ignorance inspires us to take seriously our responsibility for cooperating with God in bringing about a future much more substantially fulfills the petition, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Writing on "Future Directions for American Evangelicals," theologian John Jefferson Davis of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary gives us some guidelines regarding the shape and thrust of our lives and activities as we move towards and

into the third millennium if as a Christian entity we are to make an increasing impact. "As American evangelicals we must re-affirm our commitment to the complete truthfulness and authority of Scripture, but with a focus not on the agenda set by the historical-critical method but rather on the coming contest with our world religions—with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam; that to our knowledge of the Holy Spirit as Illuminator, Regenerator and Sanctifier we have the knowledge of the Spirit as Healer and Liberator and Spirit of praise; and that our missionary agenda be re-oriented toward the needs of the hidden peoples, and especially toward the megacities of the third world." Then with the optimism of a postmillenarian which is his eschatological stance, Davis concludes: "This is indeed an exciting time in which to be a Christian. It is an exciting time to be serving Christ in the ministry. I believe that the time of the greatest expansion of the Christian Church in all of human history is just ahead of us. May God help us, individually and collectively, to be on the cutting edge of Christ's Kingdom as we approach the twenty-first century."³ Perhaps not too many of us are that optimistic, but why not say with Robert Browning, "The best is yet to be"? Or to resurrect a watchword of an older evangelicalism, "The future is as bright as the promises of God."

Quo vadis, American evangelicalism? GOK.

1. Donald M. Mackay, "The Health of the Evangelical Body," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, Volume 38, Number 4, December 1986, p. 259.
2. Malcolm Muggeridge, *The End of Christendom* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1980), pp. 38–39, 41–42.
3. John Jefferson Davis, "Future Directions For American Evangelicals," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 29/4, December 1986, p. 467.

From Truth to Authority to Responsibility: The Shifting Focus of Evangelical Hermeneutics, 1915-1986 (Part II)

by Douglas Jacobsen

The Post-Classic Evangelical Generation: The Hermeneutics of Responsibility

The third generation of Evangelical hermeneutics I would like to discuss is the Post-Classical generation. The central metaphor of hermeneutics for this generation seems to be the concept of responsibility. Let me emphasize the words "seem to be" in the preceding sentence, and let me do that for three reasons. First, this new generation of Evangelicals is still in the process of congealing and it is hard to photograph this moving target. Second, Post-Classic Evangelicalism, as it is emerging into the form of a community of biblical interpreters, has taken on a multifaceted and pluralistic form; thus, it is more difficult to isolate a center of hermeneutical concern in this generation than it was for earlier more uniform Evangelical movements. And third, Post-Classic Evangelicalism was brought to birth in a different manner than the two other generations already examined. Post-Classical Evangelicalism was pushed into existence as much as it developed as a pos-

itive reaction to changes taking place in American society. The rise of Post-Classic Evangelicalism, needs, then to be understood in the context of this dialectical process. Let me begin by discussing the positive roots of the movement—its reaction to the historical experience in the years immediately prior to 1975.

Post-Classic Evangelicalism's hermeneutic of responsibility arose partially as a reaction to the preceding fifteen years of American history. That period had seen the demise of America's authoritative status of "policeman of the world." Overseas America was being defeated by (in typical rhetoric of the period) a "third rate nation" (i.e., Vietnam), and at home the country was divided over issues of war, race, and age. The expansive if troubled optimism of the fifties and early sixties was shattered. Americans were asking what had gone wrong. The world which had once seemed so agreeable to American interests and values now seemed inexplicably truculent. Rather than merely pronouncing answers, many Americans were asking questions—profound questions.

The changes that confronted Evangelicals in the mid-seventies were not limited to the political-cultural realm. Amer-

Douglas Jacobsen is Professor of Theology at Messiah College, Grantham, PA.