

Together with the ongoing publication of the Nag Hammadi texts and translations, and the 1980-81 publication of the Proceedings of the 1978 International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale (Bentley Layton, ed., *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, 2 vols. [Leiden, 1980-81]), the papers of the Springfield Seminar are to be greeted as a major event in the study of gnosticism. They define the state of scholarship in the areas they cover and testify to the vitality of such studies in America.

Andrews University

ABRAHAM TERIAN

Hunter, James Davison. *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987. xi + 302 pp. \$19.95.

With the appearance of *Evangelicalism*, Hunter has established himself as a major interpreter of contemporary evangelicalism whose work must be taken with absolute seriousness. This is his second book on evangelicalism, and it continues his exploration of the dialectical tension between conservative religion and modernity that formed the core of his earlier study. As the subtitle indicates, it concentrates upon young evangelical elites, who in all probability will be the bearers and shapers of the evangelical tradition in the years to come. The empirical base of the study is a cohort of college and seminary students in the years 1982/83 in nine of the leading evangelical colleges in the Christian College Consortium and in seven major evangelical theological seminaries. It is broader than his earlier study in that it locates American evangelicalism within the context of the global evangelical phenomenon and takes a comprehensive view of evangelicalism as a cultural system with an interlocking network of beliefs, values, ideals, and practices. The depth of Hunter's quest for understanding the meaning of modernity and the fate of conservative religion in the contemporary world is never far below the surface in this study.

Hunter's basic conclusion is that the symbolic boundaries which maintain the inner cohesion of the evangelical subculture are being blurred. More specifically, he argues that this is taking place in the very institutions—colleges and seminaries—which have been established to transmit and maintain the traditions. Boundaries are being redefined and eroded as these academic communities are confronted by the push and pull of modernity. This takes place just as much in the redefinition and simplification of boundaries in efforts by the right to defend the tradition against modernity as it does under the impulse to accommodate modernity by reconstruction of the traditions. He studies trends in four general dimensions of the evangelical cultural system: its theology; its understanding of work, of morality, and of the self; its concepts of the ideal family; and its attitudes toward involvement in politics. He does so by analyzing the attitudes of

his sample cohort of students in comparison with definitions of an earlier quintessential evangelical orthodoxy. To provide perspective, the attitudes of his cohort were compared with those of a group of students in the Religious Studies Department of the University of California at Santa Barbara, which he admits may not be a strictly representative sample.

The difficulties one has with this study are typically those inherent in this kind of research. For instance, one wonders whether Hunter's population of students, who attend prestigious evangelical institutions, is generally representative of all evangelical students. And there are difficulties with the questions asked, particularly with those which force difficult answers. For instance, respondents were requested to decide which of the following statements best reflected their views: "1. The Bible is the inspired Word of God, not mistaken in its statements and teachings, and is to be taken literally, word for word" or "2. The Bible is the inspired Word of God, not mistaken in its teachings, but is not always to be taken literally in its statements concerning matters of science, historical reporting, etc." (p. 24). The key word in both is "literally," but there is no definition of what the word is intended to mean. Does it mean there is no room for any kind of symbolism? And if a student reads "literally" in an absolutist sense and feels that he/she could not respond positively to Question 1, would this really indicate a betrayal of orthodoxy?

Further, the questions on theology seem to give undue weight to notoriously difficult problems regarding biblical inerrancy and salvation for those who do not know Jesus Christ. No questions are asked regarding other concerns which are central to the gospel, viz., the virgin birth or the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

A larger problem, as this reviewer sees it, is Hunter's definition of evangelicalism as an orthodoxy. What is distinctive about an orthodoxy on this view is that it represents a "consensus through time" that is "based upon the ancient rules and precepts derived from divine revelation" (p. 181). The truth of orthodoxy "does not unfold but has already been revealed" (p. 158). Can the orthodoxy of evangelicalism at the four loci tested be adequately defined in such static terms? Has the evangelical experience not been characterized more by process than by absolute stability of this order? The ideals he upholds at each of the four major loci studied would seem to exist more firmly in myth than they have ever existed in reality. The understanding of evangelicalism as an orthodoxy sets the stage for, and casts its shadow upon, the whole study.

Hunter takes seriously the empirical data he has collected; but, as noted above, he locates these in a matrix derived more from ideal constructs than from the evangelical reality. In addition, his arguments proceed beyond the analyses of the data to theoretical interaction with the ideals previously projected. As a result, the reader feels constrained to wonder whether Hunter gives so much weight to high-level theoretical analysis

that his empirical analysis hardly has a chance to stand on its own feet and tell its own story. One result of this is his overly pessimistic prognosis of the future of conservative religion in its confrontation with modernity.

Hunter disavows any intention to predict the future of evangelicalism, but his data lead him to conclude that the traditions are being eroded under pressures from both the left and the right and that the boundaries of orthodoxy are being blurred in the process of transmission. Evangelicals, and others who are concerned regarding the future of a society that has lost its basic consensus regarding values, find this study deeply disturbing. In fact, it simply cannot be ignored by any who are involved in the transmission of Christian belief and values to succeeding generations.

Andrews University

RUSSELL L. STAPLES

Michaels, J. Ramsey. *1 Peter*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 49. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988. lxxv + 337 pp. \$24.95.

J. Ramsey Michaels has produced a significant commentary that will likely become the standard text on 1 Peter. The readers of *AUSS* are already familiar with other fine contributions in the Word Biblical Commentary series, so nothing needs to be said regarding format and arrangement.

Michaels, in taking a conservative, though cautious, approach with regard to authorship, considers that there are no solid grounds for setting aside the traditional view of Petrine authorship. He identifies 1 Peter as an "apocalyptic diaspora letter" and its recipients as Gentile Christians. His discussion of sources is standard, not really breaking any new ground. The discussion of the book's theology, though brief, is helpful, particularly in pointing out the similarity and distinctiveness of 1 Peter in relation to the rest of the NT.

Michaels breaks from current scholarly trends in his discussion of date and authorship. It is generally held that if a late date can be established, then Peter cannot be the author, since tradition holds that he was crucified under Nero. Michaels, however, points out that there is also a strong line of tradition which indicates that Peter lived much longer in Rome. He thus holds to the compatibility of a later date with Petrine authorship. While this position is not new (it dates back to William Ramsay), it provides an important contribution to the current discussion.

Michaels' presentation of the letter's structure is helpful for understanding its purpose and the development of the argument. The discussion, however, could have been improved by taking note of Peter's pattern of following paraenetic material with a theological motivation, usually centered around a Scripture quotation, though at times apparently based on a hymnic or liturgical fragment. Such arrangement can be detected in 1:15