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4-1-1974

Recommended Reading: The Nag Hammadi Gnostic Texts and the Bible

Walter F. Specht
Andrews University

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Recommended Citation

Specht, Walter F., "Recommended Reading: The Nag Hammadi Gnostic Texts and the Bible" (1974).
Faculty Publications. 4138.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs/4138>

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recommended reading

Rock and the Church, Bob Larson, Creation House, 1971, 88 pages, \$1.95.

"In *Rock and the Church*, Bob Larson pulls no punches when he says there is no place for 'Gospel Rock' nor for clever entertainers to 'sneak Jesus in.' The book in its exposé of Christian rock will jolt a lot of people off their church pews." (From the Foreword by Jack Wrytzen.)

The author, once a part of the rock scene, spares no words in denouncing rock music as an instrument of the devil for promoting immorality, drugs, and even demon worship.

His greatest concern is for the compromising spirit with which many Christians view rock music and the inroads it is making into the church as a result.

"Let us not give them what they want but rather what they need in church music. . . . In our desperate plight to reach young people, let us not emulate the mistake of Christian rock by catering to the whims of youth."—Page 74.

"The gospel is not intended to please men but to warn them. . . . When we lock horns in competition with Hollywood and Las Vegas we are only going to make a mockery of the Gospel's true ability to redeem the soul."—Page 43.

Finally, Mr. Larson suggests that probably part of the church's problem is its overemphasis on the role of the music in presenting the gospel, rather than the straight preaching of the Word.

Every worker who deals with youth or has had to deal with the music problem should have this book at his finger tips.

Rosalie Hafner Lee

Television and the Public, Robert T. Bower, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., New York, N.Y., 1973.

This book is the latest complete study of the TV viewing habits of America. The author of the book based his study on interviews that were made with 2,700 men and women in the nation by the Roper Organization. The selection of respondents was done by probability sampling. The study is closely patterned after the study conducted by Dr. Gary Steiner in 1960, that appeared under the title *The People Look at Television*. It would be interesting to see the results of a similar study conducted among Seventh-day Adventists to determine our viewing habits.

Perhaps the most important fact

emerging from this study concerns the viewing habits of educated people. "There is some evidence," the author points out, "that the educated viewers are not at the moment finding in television the content they think should be provided for the public." But this does not mean that the educated viewer watches less television. On the contrary, on evenings and weekends he watches just as much TV as others. And what is still more surprising, the study says that when an educated viewer has a clear choice between an information program and the standard TV entertainment program, "he was just as apt as others to choose the latter."

The study also deals with the interesting question as to who in a family turns on the TV. Fathers usually make the decision, the author points out. When children are with their mother, the choice is naturally determined by the mother. Still, some 33 per cent of the time children make the decision by themselves. The study says that most parents show greater approval of TV for their children, particularly because there are special TV programs being produced for children that can teach them to read. Here again it is the better-educated parent who endorses it the most. The major concern of parents, however, is the violence that their children see on TV. Parents also feel that children should not watch the adult programs.

In short, people are watching quite a bit of TV these days. There has been some decline in appreciation of TV by the American public when compared to the findings of 1960 ("from *summa* to *magna cum laude*," is how the author puts it). But the public is not as yet turned off by TV. "People are watching more television than ever in 1970. Not only that, they seemed to be enjoying more of what they saw," the study reports.

Reginald N. Shires

Revival Praying, Leonard Ravenhill, Bethany Fellowship, Inc., Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1962, 176 pages, \$2.50.

As Laodiceans we desperately need a revival, but it cannot be one that is programmed or administered into our church life. It will come in answer to prayer—"ministers weeping between the porch and the altar." Mr. Ravenhill is such a minister. A few of the quotes from the book are: "The world has lost its power to blush over its vice; the church has lost her power to weep over it." "To most of us fasting is out, tears are frowned upon, and mourning is associated with melancholia. How wise

we are! But you will notice (and with pain) we have no revival. We are wondering why God does not move; He is wondering why we do not break!" In reading this book I was driven to my knees.

Clarence Kohler

The Nag Hammadi Gnostic Texts and the Bible, Andrew K. Helmbold, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1967, 106 pages, \$1.50.

One of the most important archeological finds of this century was the discovery, in about 1945, of a Gnostic library 60 miles north of Luxor in Egypt. Just beyond a great bend in the Nile near Chenoboskion, peasants found a large jar containing 13 leather-bound codices written in Coptic, and containing 48 Gnostic treatises consisting of nearly 1,000 pages. The study of these documents has given modern scholars a firsthand knowledge of the beliefs of the Gnostics, and has revealed why Gnosticism was such a severe threat to early Christianity. Previous to this discovery our knowledge of Gnosticism came largely from early Christian writers, such as Irenaeus, who opposed this supposed knowledge.

In this recent paperback, the author, who is a Coptic scholar in his own right, has given us a well-written introduction to this Gnostic library. After telling the story of the discovery of these documents, and describing their general characteristics, Helmbold gives a catalogue of the contents of the 13 codices. He then briefly recounts the history of their study and publication, and gives a sketch of their significance. This is followed by a brief discussion of what Gnosticism is, an outline of its central teachings, and a view of the various sects in it.

Then in successive chapters the author analyzes the various treatises contained in the most important codices found in Egypt. The closing chapter is an attempt to evaluate the impact of these documents on Biblical and theological study today. They have a bearing on the study of New Testament canon, textual and source criticism, and Biblical interpretation. Finally, this book endeavors to show that some of the themes of some modern theologians are not new but are found in these Gnostic texts.

Although some of Helmbold's conclusions may be debatable, he has given a fine introduction to this important area of modern discovery. The selected bibliographies included at the close of the various chapters furnish a guide for more extensive study of Gnosticism and its impact on Christianity. The work is a welcome addition to the *Baker Studies in Biblical Archaeology*.

Walter F. Specht