

Sight and Sound

BOOKS

Jesus in Beijing

By David Aikman,

Regnery Publishing,

Hardcover, 344 pages, \$.

If your spirit needs a boost, read this masterful account of Christianity's advance in China. Former Beijing bureau chief for Time magazine and Charisma columnist David Aikman predicts this phenomenon could transform the world by 2030.

Full of anecdotes brimming with signs and wonders, the book's strength comes from its focus on God. It reminds readers that only one Being could have masterminded the events that brought China to this remarkable position.

Though it includes historical perspectives and a chapter on the Catholic Church, much of Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power examines the burgeoning house-church movement. The most captivating chapters review patriarchs and leaders of both genders who withstood torture, persecution and imprisonment to proclaim the gospel.

Pentecostals and charismatics will appreciate the tracing of American pastor Dennis Balcombe's influence. According to Aikman, as an outgrowth of the Californian's preaching and teaching there, more than half China's house-church believers belong to the Spirit-filled fold.

Ken Walker

Seven Things That Steal Your Joy

By Joyce Meyer, Warner Faith,
Hardcover, 230 pages, \$.

Anointed evangelist Joyce Meyer brings together a number of teachings in her new release, *Seven Things That Steal Your Joy: Overcoming the Obstacles to Your Happiness*. Meyer's followers will hear echoes from previous teachings as they learn how to break free from the strongholds that steal their joy.

A list of Meyer's joy-stealers points to the themes always present in her evangelism: works of the flesh, religious legalism, complicating simple events, excessive reasoning, ungodly anger, jealousy and envy, and habitual discontent. She follows each joy-stealer with a joy-keeper to reinforce her message of trusting God in faith in order to be at rest.

As much as Meyer protests the overuse of secular counseling, this book is vintage Meyer in providing accessible counseling based on God's Word. It is a complement to the volumes she has already provided in her Christian-counseling outreach. Most important, Meyer ministers powerfully to the real emotional need of contemporary Christians—an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

Pamela Robinson

Twentysomething

By Margaret Feinberg,
W Publishing Group,
Softcover, 192 pages, \$.

The transition from full-time college student to independent adult involves extensive decision-making. For those in the quarter-life stage, Margaret Feinberg offers a guide to “surviving and thriving in the real world” in *Twentysomething*.

Using relevant lingo and drawing from interviews with 20-somethings, Feinberg, also in her 20s, discusses topics such as landing a job, managing finances and facing disappointments. The book is sprinkled with supportive Scriptures and “Fast Facts,” including the current number of 25-year-olds buying first homes. The book concludes with six “Freebies,” such as tips for “Moving Back in With the Fam.”

Some of the humor early in the book is youthful sarcasm. The content grows in maturity as the book progresses, focusing more on the spiritual aspects of becoming a well-adjusted adult.

The book’s specific audience is 20-something college grads, particularly those whose college expenses were covered by their parents. The hip, candid writing style of *Twentysomething* will connect with and encourage its intended readers.

Leslie Santamaria

MUSIC

Faithful

By Hillsong, Integrity Music.

Hillsong is the praise and worship team led by Darlene Zschech, and Faithful presents a series of songs that express

appreciation for God's steadfastness. The reverent "Mercy Endures" paraphrases various psalms to highlight God's eternal grace, whereas the hushed "Faithful to the End" features a male and a female lead vocalist as it meditates upon God's sure covenant with the body of Christ.

The general sound of this release is adult pop, although "Wonder" leans just a little toward the dancey side, and this release's remix of "Magnificent" rides atop a wave of strings and features a delightful flugelhorn solo. By delegating some of the singing duties to her fellow group members, Zschech has given this release much vocal variety. For instance, "Chosen As Mine" particularly stands out for its R&B/soul-inspired male vocal.

Although it's far from what you might call unplugged, this CD is nevertheless a quiet, meditative collection of songs. Hillsong's Faithful faithfully follows a smooth music worship path.

Dan MacIntosh

More Than Life

By United, Integrity Music.

Sales sheets for the band United say the group is the top-selling modern-worship act in Australia. It originated from the "United" youth ministry at the 15,000-member Hillsong Church in Sydney.

Like other Hillsong projects, More Than Life shows why this church has inspired a modern-worship movement, with 10 new songs and five favorites that will bring down the house. Recorded live, United opens with the enthusiastic "One Way"

and proceeds to use a mix of guitars, bass and drums to deliver the message that God is on His throne and His Son, Jesus, reigns forever.

One reason this album stands out is the unabashed disregard for the radio-friendly three-minute “packaged” song. Free-form worship here runs from three to more than seven minutes, with highlights including “Sing (Your Love)” and “Where the Love Lasts Forever.”

United will sound very familiar to fans of Hillsong, Vineyard and other live, loose modern-worship projects. One of the biggest advantages is that these songs are catchy without being the same worship songs that have been recorded again and again. More Than Life offers a fresh alternative.

Natalie Nichols Gillespie

Hands Lifted High

By Dennis Jernigan, Doxology Records.

On Hands Lifted High, worship leader Dennis Jernigan demonstrates once again the versatility of his talent for praise and worship that edifies the modern church. By blending the styles and voices of top artists in duets and a trio, Jernigan creates an uplifting and inspiring version of greatest hits, with standout performances by special guests, including Natalie Grant, Jeff Deyo, Ron Kenoly and Rebecca St. James.

The opener with Grant, “You Are My All in All,” sets the tone for the avid Jernigan fan to prepare for something different. The instrumental intro is a refreshing variation from the usual and anticipated piano-backed offerings. The bonus track,

“Let Freedom Ring,” is the patriotic theme song for the National Day of Prayer 2004 and is an inspiration.

Hands Lifted High is a passionate expression of worship to the Lord which typically characterizes Jernigan’s music, but with added musical diversity and refreshing twists. Listeners who have cherished this worship leader and prolific songwriter’s music will find this album a pleasing addition to their collections.

Elizabeth Witherell

Born Again

By Greg Long, Christian Records.

With song titles such as “Born Again;” “Sing About Jesus;” “The Cross, the Blood, the Love;” and “Savior of the World,” Greg Long makes no bones about what he believes on his new solo project, Born Again. Long stays firmly rooted in adult contemporary and inspirational territory with light pop creations and ballads that accent his beautiful tenor vocals.

The most powerful track is the story song “Fifteen,” a reminder that we are to plant seeds of the gospel continually. The song states: “If it takes fifteen times / To hear about Jesus / For someone to believe / Wherever I stand in line / I’ve got to make a difference / In case it comes down to me ... What if I’m fifteen?”

Title track “Born Again” captures the infectious enthusiasm of new conversion and baptism, while “Once Upon a Time” is a quiet gem that retells the story of Christ’s birth, life and saving grace. The R&B-flavored “The Cross, the Blood, the Love” is a winner, and Long waxes pleasantly nostalgic on his

rendition of Dallas Holm's 1970s classic "Rise Again."

The only missteps may be "Sing About Jesus" and "Savior of the World," which have great lyrics but a dated sound. Overall, Long's new solo album deserves to be heard.

Natalie Nichols Gillespie

NEWS

Books Help Kids Experience God

Opening a life-changing moment in children's lives" is the ambition of CharismaKids and CasaKids books, which launched their premiere titles last month.

"We see children as Spirit-empowered believers," explains editor Pat Matuszak. "Our message to kids is not about being good Christians; it's about experiencing God."

The first six books—four of which are being released simultaneously in Spanish—take advantage of popular Strang Communications authors Dr. Don Colbert and Juanita Bynum, along with Casa Creación publisher Tessie DeVore.

The Toxic Detective by Colbert is an interactive adventure story. Parents and children will learn biblical principles about healthy living.

Bynum boiled down her message from Matters of the Heart for A Heart for Jesus, using a narrative of a girl who sees how God changes her mother from the inside out. Matuszak said she

asked women who've been changed by Bynum's message how they would relate that same message to their children.

Interactivity comes into play through a finger puppet in *Hover Gets His Wings* by Chris Blake, which is about finding courage through the Holy Spirit. Blake also wrote *I'm Just the Right Size*, the tale of a crab who thinks he's too small to be noticed. By story's end, the crab and his fish friends have learned about the self-esteem, patience, power and courage that come from God.

Praying With the Presidents, written by multiple Gold Medallion Award-winning artist Ron DiCianni, helps children get involved with this country's national leaders through prayer. Study questions and suggested prayers are included.

Happy Birthday to Me! by husband-and-wife writing team David and Tessie DeVore features a child whose parents are Anglo and Hispanic. This story of a boy who celebrates his birthday with multicultural customs incorporates Spanish words into the text in a natural flow.

Releasing this fall are Jack Hayford's *ACTS! Bible Story Book* with Carol Wedeven and *Big Bad Bible Bullies* by Scott Hagan. Hagan uses Bible heroes to teach children how to deal with bullies.

Under the CasaKids imprint in Spanish are *¡Feliz cumpleaños a mí!* (*Happy Birthday to Me!*), *Cometín recibe sus alas* (*Hover Gets His Wings*), *Un corazón para Jesús* (*A Heart for Jesus*) and *¡Soy del tamaño correcto!* (*I'm Just the Right Size*). Out this month is *Una parábola sobre el Rey*, the Spanish version of *A Parable of the King* by Beth Moore.

Matuszak explains: "This is a different take on children's books because we're dealing with the Holy Spirit in children's lives. The use of story opens that window in a child to see how the Holy Spirit relates to his or her life."

She adds that these products see children as participants with the Holy Spirit no matter what their individual ages, rather than teaching them that the concept applies only when they grow up.

"Our books emphasize the power of prayer and a personal relationship with God," Matuszak says. "They answer three questions for kids: How can I experience God's presence, find His purpose for my life and receive His power to fulfill it?"

Elizabeth Witherell

MUSIC SPOTLIGHT

Voice of the Celts

As the "first lady" of Celtic music, Moya Brennan was the ideal choice to lead the St. Patrick's Day celebrations at Capitol Hill in March. The singer is known not only for creating a new genre with Irish band Clannad but also for sharing her Christian faith.

President Bush, Sen. Ted Kennedy, Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern and political leaders from Northern Ireland were among those who gave Brennan "a fantastic reception." Her short set included "Theme From Harry's Game," a major hit for Clannad in 1982.

Back then, the group's haunting vocals set a fresh tone and Brennan became known as "the voice of Clannad." Since then, she has released a series of solo albums that speak openly about her faith. Brought up in a Catholic home, Brennan now attends St. Mark's, a charismatic church in the heart of Ireland's capital, Dublin.

However, her latest release, *Two Horizons*, is not overtly Christian; it's a concept album about a harp. New Age listeners will love it. Brennan knows that when such fans hear her mainstream material, they investigate her Christian recordings—sometimes with life-changing results.

"Quite a number" have traveled that journey, she says. "I always include the Lord in all my work."

It fits the evangelistic model pioneered by St. Patrick and others. The Celtic saints were known for weaving timeless truths into the art and culture of their day.

Clive Price

CHARISMATIC TOP SELLERS

1. Total Forgiveness

R.T. Kendall (Charisma House)

2. Matters of the Heart

Juanita Bynum (Charisma House)

3. The Three Battlegrounds

Francis Frangipane (Arrow Publications)

4. Pigs in the Parlor

Frank and Ida Mae Hammond

(Impact Christian Books)

5. The Torch and The Sword

Rick Joyner (Destiny Image)

6. A Divine Revelation of Hell

Mary K. Baxter (Whitaker House)

7. Prison to Praise

Merlin R. Carothers (Merlin R. Carothers)

8. The Tongue

Charles Capps (Harrison House)

9. The Final Quest

Rick Joyner (Whitaker House)

10. Within the Gates

Rebecca R. Springer (Christ for the Nations)