

Sight and Sound

BOOKS

Taking the Gospel Inside Islam

Inside Islam

*By Reza F. Safa, Charisma House,
201 pages, paperback, \$*

Author Reza F. Safa, raised a devout Muslim and now the leader of Harvesters World Outreach, offers a timely and blunt critique of Islam and presents strategies for sharing the love of Christ with adherents of what Safa sees as a false religion.

Author of *Inside Islam: Exposing and Reaching the World of Islam*, Safa provides a helpful understanding of Islam's foundation, explaining its history and exposing the inconsistencies of the Quran—drawing a clear line of demarcation between the Allah of the Quran and the God of the Bible.

While Christians should strive to find common ground with Muslims in order to gain the credibility for sharing the gospel, Safa—using language the wider culture likely would deem politically incorrect—reminds us that Islam “denies the deity, death and resurrection of Jesus; therefore it is an antichrist religion.” He also encourages Christians to understand that while Islam in practice varies from nation to nation, its followers are united by their belief in Allah and his prophet, Muhammad.

Safa also offers tips for witnessing to Muslims, encouraging Christians to realize that the agape love of God is more powerful than the lies that have bound countless individuals from birth. Muslims have been starved of unconditional love, he notes, and can be liberated from the fear that grips them through Christ. But rather than criticizing Islam directly, Christians should patiently share the good news with their Muslim acquaintances, Safa says.

Finally, Safa encourages the church to be more resilient and effective in reaching the world for Christ, casting out fear in favor of faith. "If the doors to the Muslim world are closed, it's simply because we the church have not knocked. We have feared Islam and its fundamentalists."

Inside Islam is a helpful handbook to keep nearby when interacting with Muslims. It is helpful for believers to have a thorough explanation of Islam at a time when plenty of presuppositions are prevailing upon the public debate.

—John M. DeMarco

Fictional Theology?

End Times Fiction

By Gary DeMar, Thomas Nelson,
252 pages, paperback, \$

In the wake of the popular *Left Behind* series' ninth release, author Gary DeMar has released a book challenging the accuracy of the pre-tribulation theology espoused by *Left Behind* co-author Tim LaHaye.

The first third of the book carries a strident tone, but when DeMar stops sniping at LaHaye, he builds a credible case for an alternate interpretation. The author points out the dangers of an excessive preoccupation with the rapture, the string of failures in predicting Christ's return in the last 2,000 years and the relative newness of the pre-trib philosophy.

However, ultimately the book is not fully convincing. One glaring omission is DeMar's failure to completely address the rapture Paul outlined in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. He also interprets the mark of the beast as symbolic language. But if a first-century emperor boiled a Christian in oil for refusing to take his mark (which happened), could history not repeat itself?

DeMar also fails to explain the beheadings of those who refuse to take the mark of the beast (see Rev. 20:4) or John's vision of New Jerusalem (see Rev. 21:2). DeMar comments that if a pre-trib rapture is true, it should be evident to even a casual Bible reader. If that is so, why are scholars still deciphering Bible prophecies thousands of years later?

A resource ideal for small groups, End Times Fiction offers a thesis worth exploring even for those who disagree with the author's conclusions. If DeMar's book persuades more Christians to search the Scriptures to know why they believe what they believe, it will serve a useful purpose.

-Ken Walker

Prayer Power

Destiny of a Nation

By C. Peter Wagner, editor, Wagner Publications,

106 pages, paperback, \$

What made the real difference in the historic 2000 presidential election? C. Peter Wagner believes it was prayer. In *Destiny of a Nation: How Prophets and Intercessors Can Mold History*, Wagner has compiled the written accounts of eight prophets or intercessors, who relay how God moved on believers to prophesy and do prophetic acts that they believe turned the tide of the election in favor of George W. Bush. Among the book's contributors are Bill Hamon, Cindy Jacobs, Chuck Pierce and Dutch Sheets.

Before these accounts, Wagner gives background information about the current prophetic movement. He is careful to state that God is not a Republican, and that Al Gore is not evil or morally weaker than Bush. He says that for some divine purpose God's desired man for the office at the beginning of this new millennium was Bush.

Though the book was written before September 11, readers may draw their own conclusions about whether or not the president's performance in the current crisis justifies that opinion. Perhaps there will be a sequel showing how prophetic intercession shaped the current conflict with the Muslim terrorists.

It is hoped that the book will not alienate those who backed Al Gore for president but will lead Christians to pray with tenacity for a positive change in both our nation and the world at large. At the end of the book is an invitation for readers to deepen their prayer lives and enter into this prophetic intercession. There also is a helpful list of 10 prayers to pray for our individual churches, cities and the nation.

–Deborah L. Delk

MUSIC

Classic Songs of The Church

Hymns

By Shirley Caesar, Word Records

If Mahalia Jackson is still considered the world's greatest gospel artist, Shirley Caesar is her heir apparent. No one else can sing gospel music with such stirring intensity as Caesar. No one.

Caesar shouts out biblically based lyrics with such fervency and vigor, it's hard to imagine where the 60-something gets the energy. Her latest album, *Hymns*, is a striking culmination of years of experience ministering through song. Caesar's voice never sounded better.

Pastor of Mount Calvary Word of Faith Church in Raleigh, N.C., Caesar is known to sermonize throughout her songs. Though *Hymns* doesn't find Caesar speaking directly to the audience, it does contain passionate singing over brassy, shoulder-swaying beats in a traditional gospel style. *Hymns* brings together classics such as the old spiritual "Steal Away to Jesus," featuring Michelle Williams of the popular R&B group Destiny's Child, plus songs Caesar penned herself, such as "One More Battle to Fight."

"There Is Power in the Blood," "Amazing Grace" and "Blessed Assurance" are just a few of the other popular classics Caesar

belts out on Hymns. Get this disc and you'll find yourself wanting to sing along. Shirley Caesar is a legend for a reason. Hymns represents, perhaps, the pinnacle of her long and relevant recording career.

—Mark Weber

Praise That Rocks

Revival

By Petra, Inpop Records

For many Christians, the music of Petra is synonymous with their walk. From their early albums such as *Washes Whiter Than* to the groundbreaking *Beat the System*, Petra has been at the heart of where Christians are. Lead singer John Schlitt describes the group as “a survivor,” but many would probably describe them as old friends. *Revival*, Petra’s 20th album in 27 years, builds on their heritage of breaking new ground.

Revival is a praise and worship album, but unlike the Petra Praise projects, it relies solely on modern scores rather than mixing in older classics. Dwayne Larring and Jason Halbert of SonicFlood shared production responsibilities. Once again Petra manages to take advantage of this fresh insurgence of creativity to make music that is alive and new. Matt Redman’s “Better Is One Day” opens *Revival* and sets the pace for the rest of the project.

Teetering between the elements that many fans are familiar with and more modern persuasions, *Revival* is good music and will offer many new surprises. Schlitt’s vocals are one of the many subtly pleasant changes that add to the disc. Newfound depth compliments songs such as “Oasis” and “Meet With Me.”

Petra founder and guitarist Bob Hartman's sounds are hard to hide, and Revival has many of the familiar riffs that have long marked the group. In the end, the sounds of Revival will end up in numerous worship settings, and many will welcome an old friend into their CD players again.

—Doug Joseph

SOFTWARE

Resource Explains All About Islam

The World of Islam

Global Mapping International,
\$, , (719) 531-3599

Beginners and experts alike will find this CD-ROM a valuable resource for information on Islam and how Christians can witness to Muslims. In fact,

The World of Islam: Resources for Understanding is probably the most complete one-stop-shop of educational resources available today.

The CD-ROM is published as a partnership of four ministries: the Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity, Fuller Seminary School of World Mission, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and Global Mapping International. It draws on the vast resources of all of them, as well as numerous Muslim sources.

The software contains the full text of 45 books and articles on Islam, seven academic courses on Islam, 10 maps of the Muslim world, annotated bibliography on Islam, a list of links to related Web sites (both Christian and Muslim), color

photographs of Muslims and the Arab world, and the complete text of the Quran with Muslim commentaries.

The resource carefully treads the fine line between respecting Muslims as people without condoning their spiritual beliefs. The tone is respectful of Muslims (for example: “Muslim scholarship is a rich source. Learning has been revered and the spoken and written word carefully preserved and transmitted”).

Beginners and experts will find the software easy to navigate. (Don’t skip the User’s Guide, however, or you could get lost in all the information.) The software runs on MS Windows 3.1 and later, and requires a 486-66 processor and 16 megabytes of RAM.

-Elisabeth Farrell

AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT

Packing Power in Four Syllables

After a person says yes to God, surrendering to His will and His way of living, there’s one more word they need to know, according to author Mark Rutland: nevertheless. “When Satan [attacks] you with everything to destroy your faith, God has given you an answer: Nevertheless,” Rutland says.

President of Southeastern College in Lakeland, Florida, and founder of Global Servants missions ministry, Rutland hopes his book by the same name will bring hope to a nation searching for answers. “[I hope the book] will implant this word in people’s functional vocabulary at such a level that no matter what happens, they can say, ‘Nevertheless, I know my

Redeemer lives.'”

At 85 pages, Nevertheless includes 11 short chapters that discuss such issues as the “nevertheless” of difficult circumstances and obedience. “The nevertheless of naked obedience unlocks more miracles than we can imagine,” he writes. “The bridge between our discouragement and God’s will is nevertheless, and on the other side are the bulging nets of His bounty.”

Discovering the power of “nevertheless” is like a child who finally finds an answer for the bullies, Rutland says. “He feels more confident because now he’s got an answer.” A former pastor, Rutland has preached this sermon frequently and is often told that the message is life-changing. He hopes Christians worldwide will allow these four syllables to change their lives too.

–Adrienne S. Gaines