

Sight & Sound

BOOKS

A Tour Guide for Christian Travelers

The Christian Traveler's Guide series

By Irving Hexham, general editor,

Zondervan, 224-256 pages, paper, \$.

If you think it would be great to tour Europe with exuberant professors for less than \$20 a country, then you can with The Christian Travelers Guide series. Whether you're taking an armchair trip or actually packing your bags to visit France, Germany, Great Britain or Italy, each guidebook is a fascinating read.

You'll find uplifting stories of heroes of the Christian faith as well as non-Christians who have had a startling impact on our beliefs. In France there are the creators of such masterpieces as Chartes Cathedral and Notre Dame. In Germany, visit Beethoven's birthplace or experience the church's struggle against Nazi paganism.

You become a pilgrim along with John Bunyan in Great Britain and see where John Wesley preached against slavery and converted thousands. In Italy you can see Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper, one of the many stupendous examples of religious art in Italy and once considered to be the "Bible of the illiterate."

Each book offers an overview of the country's history, literature, music, art, and architectural styles, as well as the 10 top Christian sites, and lists must-see places—the detailed descriptions spiked with helpful traveler's tips. There also is a Web site at that lists additional hotel and travel information.

Written by educators of history, language, religion and art, these travel books guide you not only through the past, but also into a greater perspective of our Christian heritage.

Series editor Irving Hexham, a religion professor at the University of Calgary in Alberta, says: "Today, Christians are quickly forgetting their rich spiritual heritage as Christian biographies are replaced in popular culture by secular gossip. Popular magazines, radio and television are full of 'lives.'

"But they are the lives of pop singers, film stars, television personalities and secular politicians. Instead of teaching spiritual lessons, they repeat trivia and revel in scandal. Something has been lost. And it is this something that can be recaptured by Christians who begin to search for their spiritual roots."

—Marsha Gallardo

Answering Critics

The Revival Answer Book

*By Michael L. Brown, Renew Books,
344 pages, paperback, \$.*

Michael L. Brown's newest book is actually a refurbished release of *Let No One Deceive You*. In addition to a fresh

title, the new version contains an introductory chapter providing a historical reflection on revival discernment. An appendix titled “Counterfeit Criticism: A Review of Hank Hanegraaff’s Counterfeit Revival” has been removed, and the tone of the book has been altered. Instead of confronting critics of the revival, Brown—head of Fellowship International Revival and Evangelism (FIRE) School of Ministry in Pensacola, Fla.—walks readers through relevant issues related to revival.

Unfortunately, defensiveness still laces Brown’s writing. In several chapters, the author is so committed to proving a point that he argues it into the ground. While some critics and readers will need to grapple with all the various angles addressed, a vast majority will find themselves wandering through rabbit trails they had never considered and will possibly get bogged down.

The greatest weakness of the book is also its greatest strength, as the title defends modern and historical revivals and reveals the foolish conclusions of critics. This is a great gift book for those who have made criticizing moves of God a hobby.

—Margaret Feinberg

Listening to God

How to Hear the Voice of God in a Noisy World

*By Teresa Seputis, Charisma House,
216 pages, paperback, \$.*

Would you like to hear the voice of God clearly, directly and accurately? Teresa Seputis, author of *How to Hear the Voice of*

God in a Noisy World, believes all Christians can hear the voice of God, are expected to hear His voice (see John 10:27) and are required to listen to Him—no exceptions.

An ordained minister and founder of GodSpeak International, Seputis contends that God is a communicating God. (“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” John 1:1.) Therefore it is His nature and desire to talk with His children. She adds that God has created us with an innate ability to hear Him and that most believers fail to hear from God because they don’t recognize His voice.

Seputis clarifies that hearing God’s voice is not based on one’s personal holiness, nor the caliber of one’s personal relationship with God. Rather, it is God Himself who initiates and cultivates a relationship with intimate communication. He longs to meet believers in their everyday lives to speak with them about the big things and the little things.

The book provides practical steps to learn how to recognize God’s voice, as well as valuable information explaining how God’s voice does and does not sound. Seputis also instructs readers about what to do when they mishear God. How to Hear the Voice of God is insightful and intelligent, teaching readers as Eli taught Samuel to respond to God and position themselves to hear His voice.

—Donna Sullivan

MUSIC

A Reflective Storyteller

Conversations

By Sara Groves, INOTOF Music.

For those who enjoy music and lyrics over complexity, Sara Groves' *Conversations* may be just what the doctor has ordered. *Conversations* is a 13-track offering that will comfort and encourage its listeners.

Borrowing from the age-old and proven paradigm of singer/songwriters such as Joni Mitchell and Carol King, Groves becomes a reflective storyteller: observing the beauty of life and standing wide-eyed before a world that was fearfully and wonderfully made. There are some strong stylistic similarities to Ginny Owens, Lisa Loeb and Carolyn Arends. This is both a virtue and a vice. The tracks are familiar and welcoming, but they do little to etch out a recognizable niche for Groves.

Sara Groves establishes no new ground with *Conversations*, but this shouldn't deter anyone from giving this disc a spin. Each song is lovingly and thoughtfully crafted: mixing elements of sentiment with God's mercy, grace and compassion.

Conversations is a complete album with solid lyrics, great production, warm, compelling vocals and strong musical accompaniment. Groves is wonderful and perhaps will be able to establish herself as a new and talented artist.

–Doug Joseph

Latin Rhythm

Dance el Ritmo

By Freddie Colloca, One Voice Records.

There are few musical genres that carry more compelling energy than Latin music. Freddie Colloca comes by this sound honestly. A pastor's son residing in Miami, Colloca was born in Argentina and clearly draws on his rich Spanish heritage in his musical delivery. Dance el Ritmo (translated "Dance the Rhythm") is an English version of the Dove-nominated album Más que un Sentimento and was released by the Christian Latin label One Voice Records. Yet the great music coupled with the joy and happy expressions on this disc don't mask the message clear throughout Dance el Ritmo.

Colloca's heart is clearly in drawing a new segment of listeners to hear the gospel. The combination of songs such as "In Your Eyes," and Caribbean-flavored "At the Cross," mixed with "fun" cuts such as "Live It to the Limit" or "For Granted" make for an album that will appeal to a larger cross-section of believers. But in the end, the album includes more ballads and worshipful music than pop/dance cuts.

A Christian alternative to the exuberant, Spanish sounds of Marc Anthony and Ricky Martin, Dance el Ritmo delivers a well-produced, heartfelt project that would be a welcome addition to anyone's pop/dance collection. Unlike these other artists, though, Dance el Ritmo is a complete album without the usual gaps in quality found in many other offerings. This quality results in a disc that has longevity beyond the pop tunes that will undoubtedly get radio airplay.

-Doug Joseph

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

Tennessee pastor Michael W. Smith took a break from his usual musical fare to record a live worship album at Carpenter's Home Church in Lakeland, Fla., June 1. Smith said this album, along with his recent instrumental release, are recordings he has wanted to do his entire career.

"I've done it all—career, lots of records sold. But it doesn't bring peace. I wish it hadn't taken me so long to 's all about You. It's not about me," Smith says.

Joining Smith for the recording, slated to release in September, were several "friends" who asked to participate in the project. Dressed in black and serving as a choir of sorts were Geron and Becky Davis; Darwin Hobbs; Cindy Morgan; Out of Eden; Phillips, Craig & Dean; Chris Rice; Jason Perry and Nathan Walter from Plus One; Mark Schultz; Amy Grant, and several others.

Opening with cuts from the Exodus project, Smith's only previous foray into praise and worship, the set included praise and worship standards—songs Smith says he likes to sing in the car when he hopes no one is watching. Standouts include "Breathe," "Heart of Worship" and "You're All I Want," with a stirring rendition of "Awesome God" at the close.

Wearing jeans and a simple blue shirt, Smith told the crowd he has seen an unprecedented passion for God within this generation. He encouraged them to participate in worship and not be spectators, adding that he believed some people would be healed or would come to know God through the service.

—Adrienne S. Gaines