

# Discernment

So that you may be able to discern what is best. Phil. 1:10

## Christianity and Controversy

■ My birth on August 1, 1961, two months before the due date, did not go well. My umbilical cord was compressed, cutting off my oxygen supply for a time. Only three pounds and 11 ounces, I beat the odds and survived. But the part of my brain that controls walking and other movements was permanently injured, limiting my mobility. While my parents always did their best to emphasize all the things I could do, it was hard not to feel cheated and resentful.

I remember looking up one night at the countless stars splashed across the silent, black sky. In the darkness, my mom, who was with me, said it was hard to believe that all this could have just happened. I wanted to believe in God, but my experience led me to suspect that the universe was cold, indifferent, and meaningless. In my high school years, I thought more than once of suicide. My situation was hopeless.

I'm here today because my parents sacrificed their time and energy to raise me, because they showed me encouragement day after day, year after year. Thanks to their love, I found Christ, or, rather, He found me. I've even been blessed with a beautiful wife and two kids, a job that allows me to write about Christ's kingdom, and a nice place to live. Yet I wonder how many of today's unborn children with similar problems are being snuffed out because their lives are supposedly not worth living.

The abortion issue, then, is a very personal one for me. More than 30 million unborn

children have been killed since Roe vs. Wade legalized abortion on demand in 1973—currently about 1.3 million every year. They have no less a right to live, and no less potential, than I have.

Frustrated, we who oppose abortion have sometimes equated the actions of abortion rights supporters with murder or Nazi atrocities against the Jews. Unfortunately, some on the extreme fringes of the pro-life movement have taken this equation to heart. They reason, with chillingly simple logic, that if abortion is murder, then all means, legal and illegal, may be taken to stop it—including shooting abortion doctors and torching clinics. Thus, it is time to tone down the inflammatory discourse and disavow violence, working within the system not just to change laws, but hearts and

minds as well.

Of course, abortion is far from the only controversial issue Christians must wisely address in the public square. This issue of *Discernment* profiles two other key ones—the right to evangelize other groups in a pluralistic, politically sensitized society, and the responsibility to speak out against injustice. May it help us as we seek to be salt and light in our complex, violence-prone world.

Stan Guthrie, editor of *Discernment*

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# Awaiting an Answer

Last fall the Southern Baptist Convention announced plans to bring thousands of missionaries to Chicago this summer. The outreach prompted an outcry among some leaders of other religious communities. The article by Rabbi Ira Youdovin below, originally presented at a CACE forum on the Wheaton College campus, characterizes this response to the ministry. It is followed by responses from two members of the Wheaton College community.—Editor

By Ira Youdovin

■ On September 16, a lone gunman opened fire on a youth rally at the Wedgewood Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. When he was done, seven people lay dead, including three seminary students.



Photos by Dave Wittig

*Ira Youdovin says that “hate crimes are most often committed against people thought to be defective, aberrant, illegitimate as participants in society.”*

In light of this tragedy, it's perfectly understandable that Southern Baptists would take umbrage at any linkage between hate crime and their planned missionizing campaign in Chicago this coming summer. Nobody likes to be linked to hate crime, even in the very conditional parlance of our Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago's letter to Dr. Paige Patterson, president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Council's letter says, in words that are both measured and carefully chosen, that “while we are confident your volunteers would come with entirely peaceful intentions, a campaign of the nature and scope you envision could contribute to a climate conducive to hate crimes. This would assuredly not be your intent, but it could be a disastrous consequence.”

My friends, we don't know what compels a Benjamin Smith to load two weapons into a beat-up Ford Taurus and celebrate the Independence Day weekend by gunning down Jews, African-Americans, and Asian-Americans. Nor do we know why Larry Gene Ashbrook carried a loaded pistol into the Wedgewood Baptist Church.

## A Spark

What we do know is that while hate killers tend to act alone, or in pairs, their madness arises from a culture in which violence is everywhere, and guns are easy to obtain, so that a spark, even an innocent one, can turn a walking powder keg into a lethal killing machine. That was certainly the case with Benjamin

Smith, an adherent of the woefully misnamed “Church of the Creator,” which wages a “racial holy war” on the Web . . . and there are lots of Church of the Creator clones out there, preaching that minority groups have no rightful place in these United States of America, and urging that they be removed.

Southern Baptists don't say that. But what does come out through statements by your leaders “could provoke hate crimes by fomenting faith based prejudice.”

## Targeting

The issue here is targeting, which is the practice Billy Graham cited in opposing the Chicago campaign. We're told that targeting will not be implemented here in Chicago. But with all due deference, I must ask that you read your own Web site—[www.sbc.net](http://www.sbc.net)—where you will find the following:

- The Jews, we are told, are God's “lost sheep.” That God doesn't hear the prayers of Jews. And that the Convention, two years ago, voted to expand and intensify its efforts to convert Jews, a goal pursued with vigor and a great deal of money, this past September during the Jewish high holy days, when tens of thousands of booklets were distributed in Southern Baptist churches urging the faithful to pray that Jews will see the light.

- Hindus were subjected to similar treatment during their Festival of Light, called Divali. The booklet published by the International Mission Board describes them as being “more than 900 million people lost in the hopeless darkness of Hinduism . . . that no lamp can dispel.”

- As regards Muslims, the site has a posting in which Phil Roberts, who heads the strategic cities initiative, warns 200 Southern Baptist seminarians and college students that the growth of Islam in America presents a challenge to Christianity. This,

by the way, expresses the kind of nativism rampant among groups like Matt Hale's Church of the Creator. Hate crimes are most often committed against people thought to be defective, aberrant, illegitimate as participants in society.

To the devout and dedicated Southern Baptist missionary, these represent a call to bear witness. To others, they could become a call to arms. And it happens that here in Chicago both Jews and Muslims have been victimized by hate crimes.

### Seeking a Response

All the Council's letter asks is that the SBC's national leadership consider these facts and enter into dialogue with local faith communities. Thus far, the response has been negative.

I close by sharing a letter I wrote to Dr. Al Meredith, pastor of Wedgewood Baptist Church in Fort Worth, which I sent immediately after faxing every rabbi in the Chicago area urging them to include prayers for the dead.

*Dear Pastor Meredith:*

*Together with our president, Rabbi Michael Siegel, I write on behalf of the Chicago Board of Rabbis, comprising the spiritual leadership of Greater Chicago's Jewish community of a quar-*

*ter million, to express our condolences and outrage over the tragedy inflicted upon you and your people. We grieve for your dead as if they were ours, for indeed they are; and share the pain borne by their families and friends. We stand with you as an extended family, mourning the loss of God's innocent children.*

*When I think of your dead, I think also of six Chicago Jews who were gunned down while walking home from Sabbath services in their synagogues this past July, and three more shot in a Jewish Community Center in Los Angeles several weeks later. God spared all of them. But the perpetrators of these atrocities killed others: an African-American out jogging with his son, a Korean-American leaving his church on Sunday morning, and a Filipino-American postal worker. Faith-based and ethnic-based hate crimes know no denominational boundaries.*

"While we are confident your volunteers would come with entirely peaceful intentions, a campaign of the nature and scope you envision could contribute to a climate conducive to hate crimes."

*Victims die because they accept Jesus as their Savior. Other victims die because they do not.*

*This is not a time to raise the issue of the Southern Baptist Convention's campaign to proselytize Jews. However, the moment's exigencies compel me to ask whether our two faith groups do not have a higher agenda to pursue in firm partnership, together with all people of good will. There are powerful forces in our country who are determined to extinguish the flame of goodness and decency that has illumined our path as a nation from its inception. We, along with other faith communities, are their primary targets. As such, we need to join hands in a*

*phalanx of decency to stop this evil in its tracks. Our nation and the God of all of us demand no less.*

*My prayer is that this tragedy, coming toward the close of a bloody summer, will move Southern Baptists to meet with Jews as equal partners, respecting one another's differences, to pool our considerable human resources in this sacred effort.*

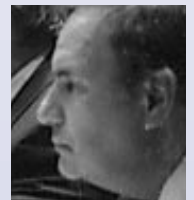
*Indeed, Chicago is a particularly good place for launching this partnership. Rev. Jim Queen, director of the Chicago Metropolitan Baptist Association, has said that the 100,000 volunteers the Southern Baptist Convention plans to send here during the year 2000 will be dedicated to doing service projects, such as food delivery to the homeless, and building*

*or rehabilitating affordable housing projects. If that is their purpose, they will be honored guests in our city. The Chicago Jewish community stands ready to work with them, as do other faith communities, and will be pleased to assist your planners in identifying potential projects.*

*The Chicago Board of Rabbis has asked its members to make reference to your tragedy during Sabbath services tomorrow night and Saturday, and during services for Yom Kippur, our annual Day of Atonement, on Sunday night and Monday.*

*I close by reiterating my condolences, and those of my colleagues.*

This letter, too, has not been answered. Nor have the copies I sent to Dr. Paige Patterson and Rev. Jim Queen. I believe God, Himself, awaits an answer.



Rabbi Ira S. Youdovin presented these remarks at a CACE forum at Wheaton College on January 13, 2000. Youdovin is executive vice president of the Chicago Board of Rabbis.

# I Prefer Pluralism to “Tolerance”

By Lon Allison



Lon Allison is director of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College. He is an evangelist.

■ Rabbi Ira Youdovin’s condolences to the people of Wedgewood Baptist Church, Fort Worth, come with sincerity and the promise of prayer. The empathy of those who have suffered similar sorrows means the most in grief. Wedgewood Baptist was the scene of seven tragic murders of Christian students and seminarians on September 16, 1999. The rabbi writes as a representative of a people who have suffered similar atrocities for centuries. His compassion carries “weight,” and, I am sure, was much appreciated.

## Evangelism and Hate

But the rabbi and others on the Chicago Religious Council question Christians—namely, Southern Baptists and others—hoping to share Christ in Chicago this summer. They are concerned that such activity may “contribute to a climate conducive to hate crimes.”

I fail to comprehend how the Christian summer 2000 mission to love Chicago with the words and deeds of the Gospel contribute to a climate conducive to hate crimes. Love and hate do not mix well. The Chicago mission combines verbal witness with acts of love and kindness. The message of Jesus is one of love and forgiveness of sins. There is nothing to inspire hate there. Acts of kindness like feeding the hungry and building homes for the poor usually result in gratitude more than enmity, don’t they?

## The Right to Witness

A key issue simmering beneath the “hate crime” argument is whether Christians have the right to witness to people of other faith systems and heritages. The rabbi, upon studying the Southern Baptist Web site, found that Christians believe they have a responsibility to bring Christ’s Gospel to Jews, Muslims, and Hindus. This is not only the belief of Southern Baptists, but all Bible-believing

Christians. Because we Christians take this responsibility so seriously, we are willing to suffer for it in places such as India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka.

The rabbi wants Christians to quit targeting groups of people as if they are “lost sheep” and “lost in total darkness” spiritually. I do apologize for any Christian using words like “target.” To “target” someone means to do them harm. It is a word linked with weaponry, and weaponry destroys rather than saves. (The message of Christ saves.) Rabbi Youdovin

is right in stating that Mr. Graham spoke against the notion of targeting any one group. But what Mr. Graham also said is that he has never targeted any one group because he wants all persons of every group to find Christ.

Then the rabbi’s argument takes an unwarranted leap in logic. He infers that because Christians view others as lost sheep or in spiritual darkness, we therefore consider others to be “defective, aberrant, illegitimate as participants in society.” Quite the opposite is true. It is because we so value all people that we long for them to know Christ.

God loves the whole world, and, at our best, we do too. Christ died for all people. We are all defective and aberrant and desperately in need of a Savior.

## Tolerance

Tolerance seems to be the highest value of our society, and it lurks within the rabbi’s criticism. But the kind of tolerance that lets people freely believe (without challenge) notions that may in the end harm them is not tolerance. It is indifference. Give me good old fashioned pluralism any day over lifeless and passionless tolerance. I want a society where people believe things so strongly that they must try and convince others of them. I know the rabbi and others are upset because we try to convert them to Christ. I’m upset that they don’t try to convert me.

“I know the rabbi and others are upset because we try to convert them to Christ. I’m upset that they don’t try to convert me.”

# Ashamed of the Gospel?

By Edwin A. Hollatz

■ In the midst of a culture infected by politically correct discourse, there are times when true Christians need to stand up and be counted. I trust that my comments will not only encourage further discussion, but motivate us to take a stand that is in conformity with Scripture.

The projected Southern Baptist campaign has reportedly provoked Billy Graham to say: "I normally defend my denomination. I'm loyal to it. But I have never targeted Muslims. I have never targeted Jews." Graham says that he does not target any particular group in his crusades, but invites all to come and respond to the message of salvation. However, Graham's statement has been interpreted by the media to mean that he is against the Southern Baptist witness. If that is the case, then Graham would be against the many long-established organizations in the United States today committed to the evangelization of Jews, including the well-known Jews for Jesus. Moody Bible Institute offers a major in Jewish studies in its Department of World Missions and Evangelism. The Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College has an Institute for Muslim Studies as a part of its world evangelistic outreach.

In this age, to assert that there is only one way to God, and by implication to say that all other attempts are in error, is seen as discriminatory, if not racist, whether one is talking about Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Confucianists, or any of the many animist religions. Saying that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only true hope for the redemption of humanity is seen as intolerance. Implying that there is no salvation in other religions is called bigotry.

## Biblical Examples

The apostles long ago encountered criticism and persecution for asserting that Jesus Christ is the only way to God. As we know, they were merely repeating in different words what Jesus Himself had said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one

comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). John and Peter got into considerable difficulty with the religious establishment by affirming, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

As Peter targeted Jews in the proclamation of the Gospel, so Paul at various times targeted the Jews. For a full account of the difficulties and persecution he encountered, read Acts 21-26. The hostility of the Jewish authorities is similar to that encountered by Jesus in the last year of His earthly ministry.

Note how specific Paul is regarding the very exclusive nature of salvation, only through Jesus the Messiah. For further development of the unequivocal elements of the Gospel, see Paul's statements in Romans 10:9-13 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-12.

Paul also declares that the exclusive nature of the gospel is a "stumbling block to the Jews and is folly to the Gentiles" (1 Cor. 1:23). Be that as it may, this is what we are commanded to preach, regardless of the consequences. Knowing that the gospel may be offensive to some, Paul states in no uncertain words: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who has faith, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

What about us? Perhaps we in the United States will suffer persecution for making the unvarnished claim that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah promised by God more than 2,000 years ago, and salvation is found only in Him.

I have heard of Christian professors at a few colleges and universities being denied tenure, largely because of their Christian commitment and alleged politically incorrect statements. We need to read afresh the Apostle Peter's First Epistle and be prepared for whatever suffering may come as we proceed through the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

"Implying that there is no salvation in other religions is called bigotry."



Edwin A. Hollatz is a professor of communications at Wheaton College.

# Violence in Colombia: A Christian Response

Lilia Solano Góngora, who is a Colombian professor at the Universidad Javeriana, speaks from the midst of the chaos of Colombia. In her original January CACE lecture, of which this is only a portion, she blamed a number of factors for the country's continuing violence. In her opinion, they are (1) The Struggle for Land; (2) Unemployment; (3) The Aberrant Distribution of Wealth and Income; (4) The Non-Existence of Justice; and (5) The Intervention of the United States (including drug consumption and military support of the government). Below she presents what Colombian Christians are doing to be a force for peace. Gene Green of Wheaton College's Bible/Theology Department responded directly to her, and his remarks are included nearby.—Editor

By Lilia Solano Góngora

■ There is a consensus within Colombian society on the importance of creating a space for peace negotiations to resolve the armed conflict. We have the National Peace Council (Consejo Nacional de Paz) and the Permanent Assembly of the Civil Society for Peace (Asamblea Permanente de la Sociedad Civil por la Paz). We must persevere. A strategy for a negotiated peace is fundamental. I believe the church has a role to play in supporting this process of negotiations. This is the most sensible solution for Colombia, but it is very difficult. At times the negotiations go well; at times they do not.

We maintain a clear, firm position. Behind this dialogue is a power struggle between the government and the leaders of the society, on the one hand, and the insurgent organizations that do not recognize their validity, on the other. Therefore, the political negotiation must treat the factors of violence. The dialogue must find solutions to the structural causes associated with the armed conflict. The guerrillas propose that any peace plan must include deep political, social, economic, and military reforms and must include significant immediate measures, and not just hopes for the future.

For its part, the establishment does not accept this goal. At best, it is looking for a disappearance of the guerrilla groups and their reinsertion into

society as in previous agreements. Problematically, it proposes a structure of shared power with new political and social players. Reforms that substantially modify the programs of development, the distribution of income, the structure of political power are even less likely.

This summarizes the great distance between the groups and the inherent difficulties and obstacles impeding a quick solution. Let us look at the \$64,000 question. What is the role of Christians? We have many more questions than answers, but asking the appropriate questions is a necessary step before we begin looking for answers.

## Crucial Questions

The Colombian conflict has at its roots injustice, associated with the abuse of power; poverty; and marginalization. This pushes us to ask questions like the following. What God do we believe in? Is He only concerned about saving individuals or does He have a social conscience? Why do we hear so few sermons about justice? Why do we feel indignation about certain sins, but we remain silent regarding injustice?

What kind of creature do we believe the human being to be? Do we believe in human dignity and in the value of all human beings? Did Jesus feel compassion for the victims of violence? What was His attitude and commitment to the poor? How did Jesus respond to the powerful when they used their power to oppress?

"The Colombian conflict has as its roots injustice, associated with the abuse of power; poverty; and marginalization."



Photos by Dave Wittig

Lilia Solano Góngora says that Christians must ask questions about injustice in society.

What kind of community should the church be? Is the church so accommodating to the culture that we are indifferent when we face so many injustices?

To begin to respond to some of these questions, we need to reread the Gospel. Throughout history we have distorted the Gospel by turning it upside down, by falsifying it, and by interpreting it according to our whims. We take passages out of context to use in situations that are totally foreign to their original meaning.

### Some Texts

We have read and distorted the texts to defend ourselves from their truths. But these are sacred texts, and it is impossible to distort them all. Let us keep in mind the violence in Colombia as we reread the sacred texts:

• *When you spread out your hands in prayers, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. (Isa. 1:15-17)*

• *Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. (Isa. 59:15-16)*

• *There is a conspiracy of her princes within her like a roaring lion tearing its prey; they devour people, take treasures and precious things and make many widows within her... Her officials within her are like wolves tearing their prey; they shed blood and kill people to make unjust gain. (Ezek. 22:25, 27)*

• *He lies in wait near the villages; from ambush he murders the innocent, watching in secret for his victims. He lies in wait like a lion in cover; he lies in wait to catch the helpless and drags them off in his net. His victims are crushed, they collapse; they fall under his strength. He says to himself, "God has forgotten; He covers His face and never sees." Arise, Lord! Lift up your hand, O God. Do not forget the helpless. Why does the wicked man revile God? Why does he say to himself, "God won't call me to*

*account"? But you, O God, do see trouble and grief; you consider it to take it in hand. The victim commits himself to you; you are the helper of the fatherless. Break the arm of the wicked and evil man; call him to account for his wickedness that would not be found out. (Psa. 10:8-15)*

We repeatedly see Jesus expressing His solidarity with humanity through concrete actions of liberation and justice. For example, His healings were visible signs of the presence of God. Every healing was a concrete liberation of an oppressed and marginalized person. In their original context, we can see that these healings did not just have

value for the individual. They were social, economic, theological, cultural, and religious events. These events reestablish health, human dignity, access to God (according to the background of the age), make possible the exercise of a profession, and guarantee sufficient income to make a living. These healings also destroy the ideology of the privileges of those who are already well. In Jesus they are God's condemnation of situations of injustice and exclusion.

In all of these passages, the pursuit of justice is a straightforward command of God for His people. I am sure of this (Matt. 5:10).

It is a wonderful miracle that God has called us to participate in what He is doing in human history. He invites us to pursue first within human history God's kingdom and justice (Matt. 6:33).<sup>1</sup>

“What kind of community should the church be? Is the church so accommodating to the culture that we are indifferent when we face so many injustices?”



Lilia Solano Góngora is national coordinator of the Latin American Theological Fraternity. She gave these remarks at a January 27 CACE lecture. Dr. Lindy Scott, Department of Foreign Languages at Wheaton, assisted her in the translation of this lecture.

### Concrete Examples

Here are some concrete examples of what the church in Colombia is doing to express God's love.

1. We evangelicals wrote a letter to all of the armed groups to establish a genuine dialogue in pursuit of peace. We wrote this out of concern for our churches in the areas of armed conflict, but also out of our concern for our country.

2. We have joined with thousands of Colombians in marches in which we ask for peaceful, political solutions.

3. We have provided seminars for pastors to study the topic of war, its complexities, its evolution, and its consequences. We have tried to offer some helpful suggestions and solutions.

4. We have joined with the Catholic Church in denouncing human rights violations. We are also working with other groups in a civil network to express a Christian voice.

5. We have prayed for peace and have called upon the church to clamor for justice.

6. Some Christians in North America are trying to persuade the United States Congress to decrease military "aid" to Colombia. They are urging shifts in funding toward agricultural alternatives to drugs and support of human rights and justice structures in Colombia.

7. We have projects to help the 2 million Colombians displaced by the armed conflict, but we need help and solidarity from Christians in other countries to bring these projects into reality.

We have to work hard as Christians in the active pursuit of solutions to our large national problems. We have a mandate from our Creator to seek His Kingdom and His justice.

<sup>1</sup>Translation note: The Spanish word *justicia* consistently translates the New Testament Greek word *dikaosune* here in Matthew 6:33 and in other passages. English translations, perhaps reflecting an excessive individualism or a Protestant rereading of justification by faith back into the text, frequently utilize the word "righteousness," and less commonly "justice."

## Quotes

"Too much time has been wasted—and too much blood shed—in a world where others have been defined by their differences rather than loved as neighbours. Christians, again, have a unique—and terrifying—calling, to be in, but not of, this world. Particularly in places where pluralism amounts to a denial of distinctives, in law, education, or sexuality, for instance, the calling is critically hard to maintain. But bluff can always be called. Christians would do well in many situations to be for, not against pluralism. A true and full-bodied pluralism, that respects and protects difference, is surely worth seeking."

■ *David Lyon, in Grace and Truth in the Secular Age (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).*

"A peculiarly ugly mood seems to have settled over the one arena where freedom of inquiry and expression should be most unconstrained and civility most respected—our colleges and universities. It is no fun running a university these days."

■ *Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Disuniting of America (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992).*

"The fundamental problem in the evangelical world today is not inadequate technique, insufficient organization, or antiquated music, and those who want to squander the church's resources bandaging these scratches will do nothing to stanch the flow of blood that is spilling from its true wounds. The fundamental problem in the evangelical world today is that God rests too inconsequentially upon the church. His truth is too distant, his grace is too ordinary, his judgment is too benign, his gospel is too easy, and his Christ is too common."

■ *David F. Wells, God in the Wasteland (Grand Rapids and Leicester: Eerdmans and Inter-Varsity, 1994).*

"Without entrusting oneself to the God who judges justly, it will hardly be possible to follow the crucified Messiah and refuse to retaliate when abused. The certainty of God's just judgement at the end of history is the presupposition for the renunciation of violence in the middle of it. The divine system of judgment is not the flip side of the human reign of terror, but a necessary correlate of human nonviolence".

■ *Miroslav Volf, Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996).*



# A New Paradigm

By Gene Green

■ Lilia Solano Góngora is a marvelous example of the type of involvement the Lord calls us all to. As I read her paper, I felt a deep sense of shame, on two counts.

1. We in the U.S. are a very bellicose people, a people who have sometimes confused might with right. We remember fondly War World II as a time when our nation rose up to stop injustice. That has become a national paradigm for us. Unfortunately, we have confused the doing of right with the insertion of might, and we have not always been wise.

2. As you have noted, our country's consumption of illegal drugs has contributed to the destruction in your country. I remember the accusations that would come from North America against deforestation in Costa Rica, where I lived for many years, as the beautiful rainforests were turned into arid land. The United States would wag its finger at Costa Rica for cutting down the forests, forgetting all the time that we had decimated our forests here as well, and that the United States was one of the countries that buy the rainforest lumber. We are responsible, too. We have a part in this consumption.

I want to mail your remarks to one of my relatives, who does cocaine. Her participation in drugs not only is destructive to her and her family, it is destructive to you and your family. We have to, one way or another, do what we can as a church to help our nation cut consumption. If we aren't consuming, the *narcotraffickers* won't be producing. That is where it has to begin.

## Citizenship

But apart from the shame, I also have a bit of concern, because you hint at a liberationist model, which is often called the paradigm of the Exodus. I would like to suggest a different approach—the paradigm of citizenship.

Violence was part and parcel of Jesus' day. Oppression by a foreign power produced no end of bloodshed. If you read Josephus' *Jewish Wars*, you find that the days of our Lord in Palestine were filled with thousands upon thousands of deaths. And yet Jesus comes along, and though they hail Him as the king, the one who would liberate them from that

political oppression and violence, He doesn't do it. Instead, He was nailed to the cross. We have this great enigma of our faith: Our Savior, our King, was crucified.

How does the paradigm of the cross fit in here? As I read on in the New Testament, I catch people like Paul and Peter talking about partici-

pating in the society, not withdrawing, not going back into a ghetto, but participating in "doing good." This was a common term in Greco-Roman ethics for participating as a benefactor and as a help, being involved for the welfare of the city. Doing good, a concept that seems so simple and ineffective to us, in the first century was extremely powerful. One way we can understand doing good is in terms of citizenship.

I think of Colombian Christians who become involved in constitutional reform and the political process. I have talked to Christians in Latin America and elsewhere who feel that evangelicals cannot be involved in the politics. Sometimes that message has come down from the missionaries. I think it is time for a change in the paradigm. We Christians need to be involved in the process, with voices, in marches, but also with votes and people who are in there willing to bring justice to those internal structures.

"Doing good, a concept that seems so simple and ineffective to us, in the first century was extremely powerful."



Photo by Dore Wittig

Gene Green is a professor in the Bible/Theology Department at Wheaton College.

# Good News and Bad News

By Norman J. Ewert

■ A review of *Good News About Injustice: A Witness of Courage in a Hurting World*. By Gary Haugen (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999). See Haugen's article, "Christians, Violence, and Injustice," in the Winter 2000 issue of *Discernment*.

Christians have long been involved in evangelism, sharing the Good News. In recent years, we have also become more open in our concern about abortion and the persecution of Christians around the world. Christian higher education has emphasized the integration of faith and learning. But have we been as concerned with justice issues, including ethnic cleansing, the exploitation of child labor, and many other equally violent forms of injustice? Is our faith holistic? Are we faithful in living our faith?

These are the questions Gary Haugen in *Good News About Injustice* challenges readers to consider. As a human rights lawyer, Haugen worked in the civil rights division of the U.S. Department of Justice.

In 1994, he was the director of the United Nations genocide investigation in Rwanda. From these and other human rights experiences, he takes the reader through gripping accounts of global injustices, abuses of power, assaults on human dignity. Haugen describes his efforts to bring perpetrators of ethnic conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi to justice. He also shares brief accounts from the 15 million children sold into bonded labor in India, those forced into prostitution in the Philippines, and people forced off their land by structural injustices in Latin America. He says that "injustice is the plague of our earth" and that in the political, economic, or social worlds, injustices are inflicted every day.

## Living Faith

The book is essentially a challenge to integrate our faith with our living, to respond to whatever injustices we are in a position to address. John Stott, in the foreword, states that it is a "powerful combination of narrative and Scripture, of dramatic story-

telling and biblical reflection, of human injustice and the justice of God."

Haugen begins by describing his normal bus ride to work in Washington, D.C., immediately after returning from Rwanda. With the harsh reality of the slaughter in Rwanda still haunting him, he wanted to get up and say, "Excuse me, friends, but did you know that less than 48 hours ago I was standing in the middle of several thousand corpses in a muddy mass grave in a tiny African country called Rwanda?" How should the fact that about a half million people were savagely murdered by their fellow countrymen in Rwanda affect his life in Washington? During April, 1994, when these atrocities occurred, he was still in D.C., assembling cribs for his new twin girls, carrying on with his professional life, and heavily involved with his church. Now he was back again, but a different person.

Haunting him was the last mass grave he visited in Kibuye as the U.N. investigator of the genocide, gathering preliminary evidence to bring the perpetrators to justice. In previous conflicts, people generally had found refuge in the churches.

Kibuye was different. Here, hundreds of defenseless people had crowded into the church, thinking they would find refuge. However, on orders from the provincial governor, they were slaughtered by a mob of extremist Hutus and the military. The killing lasted two days, most victims killed by massive machete blows to the head.

The reality of injustice became very personal for Haugen. While working among the anonymous heaps of broken bodies, he reflected on the fact that each of these was a unique person, each created in the image of God, each a member of a family, each a person with hair numbered by God, each treated as rubbish. The book continues with many additional accounts of gross violations of human rights.

## Hard Question

We frequently ask, "Why doesn't God do something about these horrendous injustices?" This is the wrong question, according to Haugen. He reminds

Author Gary Haugen challenges us to integrate faith with living

us that God has done something about these injustices: He's placed millions of His followers in positions where they can address injustices when they arise, and He's given them gifts to address the injustices. As Haugen says, God could proclaim the Good News with lifeless stones or feed the world with two fish and five loaves, but He chooses us in our various vocations to be His hands, not only in spreading the Good News, but also in working for justice. The real question, then, is why haven't these followers done more to right these injustices?

G.K. Chesterton states that "the Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried" (p.119). Isaiah speaks to a lack of concern for justice (59:14-16): "So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene." There is a social ethic, according to Haugen, that demands action.

### What We Can Do

What then can we do? What do we do with these accounts of injustices, indeed, with all the injustices we witness every day? Evangelical Christians have been at the forefront of many of the great achievements in social justice. We can make a difference. The book recounts examples of three Christians who had the courage to challenge unjust structures of forced prostitution, child labor, and public lynchings.

Haugen argues Christians are to be the champions of justice for all in any context. While he couldn't bring the dead back to life in Kibuye, he could bring the perpetrators to justice. We need to become aware of injustices, understand them, and learn how to respond, how to rescue the oppressed.

### Concerns

As an investigative lawyer, Haugen, naturally, tends to focus on genocides and other human rights violations. In reading the book, however, one can't help

but think that the world is considerably more complex than Haugen depicts it. The U.S., for example, imposes sanctions of one form or another on countries containing over half the world's population, sanctions which take a dreadful toll on human life in countries like Iraq. The Third World debt crisis has already taken millions of lives in debtor countries trying to adjust to demands placed on them by creditors. Indeed, there are justice issues involved in all aspects of our lives that go well beyond overtly violent acts.

The book seems to place too much responsibility on Christian mission and development workers by arguing that they are the eyes and ears of the Christian faith community, monitoring human rights and other abuses around the globe. We are all the eyes and ears, regardless of our occupation or location. There are injustices all around us. As Haugen himself says, this is an all-hands-on-deck proposition.

The challenge for us at Wheaton is to help students to know the God of justice as well as the God of love. As evangelicals we've shared the Good News,

healed the sick, cared for the disabled. We now have an interesting journey ahead as we learn to better understand and act on Christian responsibility amidst abuses of power. Haugen is right to urge us to go beyond integrating faith with learning to integrating faith with living.

### A Call for New Zeal

The book is not intended as a theological volume, nor as a comprehensive catalog of human rights violations and abuses of power. Rather, the book is a powerful narrative of one investigator's varied experiences documenting blatant human rights violations, and his attempt to reconcile the reality of those violations with the God of justice. John Stott advises would-be readers not to read the book—"unless you are willing to be shocked, challenged, persuaded and transformed." Haugen is calling us to work for justice with the same zeal, the same courage, and the same institutional commitment as we do in spreading the Good News.

"Haugen describes his efforts to bring perpetrators of ethnic conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi to justice."



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## CACE News & Notes

### We are Grateful

■ We are grateful to the James S. Kemper Foundation and to Dr. Thomas Hellie, executive director, for their support of this volume year of *Discernment*. The Kemper commitment to ethics education has been a source of great encouragement to us over the years.

### CACE Resources

■ Many of the articles in *Discernment* have been abstracted from the public forums supported by CACE and held on Wheaton College's campus. Audiotapes of all CACE-sponsored programs are available through the CACE office at minimal cost. For a complete list of audio- and videotapes from 1987 to the present, contact us at 630.752.5886 or [cace@wheaton.edu](mailto:cace@wheaton.edu). Back issues of *Discernment* can be downloaded from our Web site at [www.wheaton.edu/cace](http://www.wheaton.edu/cace).

### Calendar

■ The CACE theme for 2000–2001 is “The Ethical Challenges of Globalization.” We are planning a series of debates and forums, so visit the Web site later this summer for details, or call our office to be placed on the mailing list.

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