

**Haugen, Gary, *JUST COURAGE: God's Great Expedition for the Restless Christian***

2008, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

Review by The Honourable Dallas K. Miller, Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta, Lethbridge, Alberta.

Edward John Carnell, the great twentieth century apologist who taught at Fuller Theological Seminary in its early years, stated that there are as many defenses for the faith as there are facts in the world. Though not intended as a book on apologetics, *Just Courage* falls into the broad category of defending the faith as defined by Carnell.

Gary Haugen was the director of the United Nations genocide investigation in Rwanda in the early 1990's and is the founder and president of International Justice Mission (IJM), a human rights organization based in Washington, D.C. He has written previously on justice and human rights issues in *The Good News About Injustice* (1999, InterVarsity) and *Terrify No More* (2005, Thomas Nelson). IJM rescues victims of slavery, sex trafficking, sexual exploitation, and other forms of violent oppression. By way of personal disclosure, the reviewer is chairman of the board of directors for IJM-Canada.

While the book is intended to be an encouragement to Christian believers to confront the evils of slavery and sex trafficking, its unintended apologetic value and consequences are significant. In this short and easy-to-read treatise, Haugen does three things that are of value in defending the Christian faith. He accepts the Bible as divine revelation, he assumes Jesus' deity, and he adopts an eternal approach to the injustices of this world.

The Old Testament is not discounted as simply describing a God of wrath but rather Haugen portrays a God of justice who in both the major and minor prophets was concerned with "his" people communicating and acting out justice, an essential and core attribute of God. The book of Psalms is treated as literature of rescue and redemption with a goal of glorifying the Creator God, just as the Jews and Christ read it. Haugen's handling of the Old Testament results in a conclusion that any good apologist would want to reach - that is, an act of worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Likewise, his treatment of the New Testament and Jesus has

apologetic implications. The hope that is portrayed in Christ's resurrection as the answer to man's sinful, fallen nature points to why followers of Christ should fight injustice and protect human rights. The positive message that Jesus has conquered sin, evil, and death through his sacrifice, gives hope and encouragement to tackle human rights abuses. Few books in this area have the Gospel as the core message to motivate people to fight the evil of human rights abuses.

Structural and personal abuses of human rights are viewed as evil, not from a morally relative perspective but rather with moral clarity found only in God's word. To call slavery evil, to denounce sex trafficking in underage girls as sin, and to say it is unjust to dispossess widows of their land is uncommon in today's human rights discourse. Haugen does so and can do so because he speaks from *and* with a scriptural perspective.

Haugen's book and indeed the work of IJM is an example of *moral apologetics*. So often the unbeliever asks, "How can God be good and the Gospel true if Christians are neither?" Down through the ages we have seen examples of Christians using moral apologetics to help clear away the obstacles to faith. Tertullian in his third century *Apology* argued, "It is our care of the helpless, our practice of loving kindness that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents. "Only look", they say, "look how they love one another."" Similarly, Blaise Pascal in the seventeenth century put forward a moral apologetic when he stated, "Men despise religion. They hate it and are afraid it may be true. The cure for this is just to show that religion is not contrary to reason, but worthy of reverence and respect. Next make it attractive, make good men wish it were true, and then show them that it is." By writing this book Haugen has done exactly what Tertullian and Pascal prescribed.

This book will provide motivation and encouragement for Christians to become involved in the great human rights struggles of our day. It is a correction for those on the right side of the spectrum who have neglected these issues for far too long. It is a rebuff to the theological left who tend to discount Scripture as the motivation and foundation for moral absolutes that must undergird the human rights movement. Much that is published in Christian circles is either too emotional or lacks the theological foundation found in the historic creeds. As a result, we are reluctant to put those works in the hands of unbelievers as a witness. Haugen succeeds in giving Christians a dose of motivation, as well as writing something they can pass on to unbelieving friends in the human rights field. Stylistically similar to C.S. Lewis, Haugen clearly lays out the need for involvement in the great moral struggles of our day, but at the same time sets forth "the

reason for the hope that you have" (I Peter 3:16b).

The confluence of apologetics and human rights is not new. The great moral reformer of the eighteenth century, William Wilberforce, fought to abolish the international slave trade, and did so out of Christian conviction. However, when first elected as a member of Parliament he was not a believer and moral reform was far from his agenda. It was the apologetic challenge of his evangelical friend, Isaac Milner, which caused him to look to Christianity anew. Following his conversion, Wilberforce was mentored and disciplined by John Newton, the author of *Amazing Grace*. Today, Wilberforce is looked upon as a human rights pioneer. Had it not been for an apologetic challenge, history may have continued unaffected by this statesman's convictions. The writings of Haugen and the work of International Justice Mission may have a similar influence in the twenty-first century. Christians would do well to read this book and take up its many challenges.