

COLOMBIA

WE HAVE NOT TAKEN Prophetic Responsibility

Henry Góngora directs CLARA in Bogotá, Colombia. In the following interview, Góngora challenges writers, editors, and publishers to proclaim God's peace.



"Abandon indifference to the culture where you minister," says Góngora.

At times, Colombia has not been a country that welcomed evangelicals. Have you witnessed persecution?

Yes. One afternoon in May 1952, a group of "chulavitas" (citizens who served as a police force for the state and the official church) interrupted a young pastor who was conducting a worship service at home. The 20 persons present were forced out and taken to a river that surrounded their small town. Their sentence had already been decided. They would be killed for political and religious rebellion. When they stood on the bridge where they were going to be executed, the pastor, *my father*, began to sing the hymn, "How Great Thou Art," with all his might. The congregation held hands and followed suit in one voice. By the time they finished the hymn the captors had fled. Victory is with those who dare to place their faith in God.

How is the situation today?

Violence against evangelicals has declined, yet

many still suffer as a consequence of their faith or simply by virtue of living in a continual state of war. The political and social situation in the country prevents the end of armed warfare. I could mention many acts of violence and human rights violations by guerrillas, paramilitary groups, drug traffickers, delinquents, and government forces. We have become used to living in a war zone. We are now violent and indifferent. But as Christians, we should not forget all this is a product of sin.

How do Christian publishers function in this environment?

I am not sure that we have taken the prophetic responsibility of the gospel of Jesus by denouncing the social injustice that prevails in our society. We are not offering good answers. Most of the time, Christian publishers are busy searching for the most recent foreign title on prosperity, spiritual warfare, the New Age or the occult, because these titles sell well. As a result, we have become dependent

on foreign, decontextualized and distant thinkers. We need to encourage good thinkers and writers in Latin America. We need to recognize that we have a great prophetic responsibility as Christian publishers in our context.

What should Christian publishers do?

We must abandon the indifference we inherited from our evangelical culture. The fundamentalist movements associated with evangelicalism have created a disinterest in the social problems—the "wordly" problems—that affect the audiences that Latin American publishing houses want to reach. As Latin American editors and publishers, we must examine our political context and develop a prophetic ministry.

Violence has marked Colombia and threatens us daily, so our titles must have a pastoral focus to encourage the growth of disciples in this violent context and a prophetic message against those who continue to perpetrate the violence.

What kind of titles do you want published?

Books that proclaim the gospel as the best way to make peace with God, humans and the environment. We need books that show that reconciliation begins with the most intimate of relationships. Our books must teach that Christians establish their ministry of peace by being reconciled with God, receiving his peace, and extending it within their own family relationships, before they can extend that peace to society. We must emphasize violence is not an option for believers. Rather, love, returning good for evil, and forgiveness should be the hallmark of social relationships. We must commission, look for, and publish books to help people see they are light and salt in the world. ❖