

implications of a theocentric adjustment to Christianity are in need of urgent exploration and implementation. *No Other Name?* provides a very useful basis for such work.

--PAUL R. STROM  
Ph. D. Candidate  
The Iliff School of Theology  
and the University of Denver

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, *The Hispanic Presence: Challenge and Commitment/La Presencia Hispana: Esperanza y Compromiso*. Publication #891. Washington D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1984. 73pp.

In November, 1982, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops authorized the "preparation of a pastoral letter on the Hispanic ministry." At their meeting in November of the following year, they approved the final draft of the letter. It was published a few months later as *The Hispanic Presence: Challenge and Commitment/La Presencia Hispana: Esperanza y Compromiso*. In it we have a succinct summary of the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Hispanic-American people of the United States today.

The work is divided into four main "chapters" and a brief conclusion. The first chapter is entitled "A Call to Hispanic Ministry." It mentions some of the values held by Hispanic Catholics and then begins to describe some of the problems and needs within the context of this country. It includes sections on "Hispanic Reality" and "Socioeconomic Conditions," each of which gives important statistical and demographic data. The second chapter is entitled "Achievements in Hispanic Ministry in the United States." It is two pages long.

The third chapter deals with "Urgent Pastoral Implications." It covers a great number and variety of what the authors call "creative opportunities." These include: Liturgy, Catholic Education, Migrant Farm Workers, Prejudice and Racism, and even *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* (Base Ecclesial Communities). Unfortunately, each is only a few paragraphs long. The fourth chapter, entitled "Statement of Commitment," describes what the Bishops plan to do about the situations they have just outlined. They end with a call for the 3er *Encuentro Nacional Hispano de Pastoral* (which took place in August of 1985), which is to serve as "a basis for drafting a National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry." The conclusion of the work offers a positive and hopeful outlook for the future.

The pastoral letter has some positive points. First, the text of the letter is actually published in both the English and Spanish languages together. This makes it a very practical and helpful document. Clearly, it is being read. First printed in early 1984, it went into its second printing three weeks later and into its third printing a few months after that! Second, it is brief. This facilitates its use as a study guide for a one-day workshop, a weekend retreat, or even a series of church school lessons. Third, it attempts to cover quite a variety of issues. Last, it includes a list of abbreviations, useful for those not entirely familiar with the jargon.

The pastoral letter also, however, has some negative points. It may be too brief, and it does not include an index (probably because of the brevity). More important, however, is the possibility that the pastoral letter may be somewhat disingenuous when referring to the Catholic Church's past in this type of ministry. I would encourage readers to evaluate critically the following two selections from different parts of the same pastoral letter:

"As far back as the 1940's, the bishops showed genuine concern for Hispanic Catholics by establishing...a committee for the Spanish-speaking to work with Hispanics of the Southwest. In 1912 Philadelphia began its Spanish apostolate. New York and Boston established diocesan offices for the Spanish speaking in the 1950's." (p. 10)

"No other European culture has been in this country longer than the Hispanic. Spaniards and their descendants were already in the Southeast and Southwest by the late sixteenth century." (p. 6)

Genuine concern?! "Effort in 1912 and after" does not seem all that long when one considers that Hispanic Catholics have been in this country for well over 400 years.

Another note of interest: there is a very subtle difference in the sub-titles. In Spanish, the first word in the sub-title is "Esperanza" which means "hope," and in English, this word is translated "Challenge." Readers should interpret the significance of this shift for themselves.

In conclusion, this pastoral letter does provide us with some insights into how the Roman Catholic Church views Hispanics, their problems, and its own ministry. It presents the reader with the official Church position and commitment. Its intent is not to limit but rather "to encourage further reflection, dialogue, and action..." Let us hope that we can indeed respond by reflecting, dialoguing and acting!

NELSON, WILTON M., *El Protestantismo en Centro America*. San Jose, Costa Rica: Editorial Caribe, 1982. 102pp. / *Protestantism in Central America*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984. 90pp.

The church in Central America has become a topic of interest to many persons. To understand the problems of today, many study the history of yesterday. An important part of this history is Protestantism in Central America. Dr. Wilton M. Nelson, Professor and Rector for many years of the Seminario Biblico Latinoamericano (Latinamerican Biblical Seminary) in San Jose, Costa Rica, offers a good introduction to the topic in the present work.

The book was written originally as a part of a larger ecumenical project sponsored by the "Comision de Estudios de la Historia de la Iglesia Latinoamericana" (CEHILA-Commission for the Studies of the History of the Church in Latin America). Having lived and worked in Costa Rica for forty-four years, Dr. Nelson was eminently qualified to write on the topic; and, as such, he was selected as the Protestant representative for Central America. He finished his assignment before the rest of the project was completed and was able to publish it as a book in Spanish in 1982. He later translated it into English and published in that language in 1984.

In general terms, the book can be divided into two main parts. The first part (chapters one and two) offers mostly historical information on the topic. The first chapter deals with "Protestantism during the Colonial Era" while the second one focuses on "Protestantism during the Nineteenth Century." The author provides a base and context that can help readers to understand the events of later years. The second part (chapters three to six) offers mostly interpretive information on the topic. The third chapter deals with the "Beginnings of National Protestantism." Here he writes about the "pioneers," the biblical societies and the missionary boards which were the first organizations that tried to bring the "message to the Latin Americans themselves in Central America." Next the author deals with "advance in the midst of opposition." Nelson presents some of the abundant and complicated problems which the missionaries and the denominations faced as they took that message to the people. Then Nelson interprets the "Characteristics of Early Evangelicals." He contends that these people were generally from the poorer classes, of polemical spirit, and full of evangelistic zeal, among other things. The sixth chapter of the book relates the "Growth and Development in the Modern Period." Nelson offers reasons for the growth, describes the phenomenon of simultaneous "division and ecumenism," outlines the "ecclesiastical, institutional, and social progress" of the last forty years, and presents "some present problems." Finally, in the English version, he adds a seventh chapter in which he deals with "Protestantism in Central America since 1975."

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