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Mestizo Christianity: Theology from the Latino Perspective

Arturo J. Bañuelas ed.

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Mestizo Christianity: Theology from the Latino Perspective. Arturo J. Bañuelas, ed. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995. Bibliography, index. 278 pages.

Mestizaje, understood as both a heritage and a dynamic reality yet in the process of becoming, is the paradigm for the U.S. Hispanic experience and therefore the theology which arises from within that context. In this volume Arturo J. Bañuelas, a Roman Catholic pastor and the founder of the Tepeyac Institute in the Diocese of El Paso, has pulled together what he appropriately calls a "core canon" of U.S. Latino theology: significant contributions of the first generation of Latino theologians, most of which have been previously published. The first eight chapters are organized to establish the cultural and theological identity of U.S. Hispanics somewhat systematically and to examine the interplay of these sources and loci in exploration of a theological methodology.

Virgil P. Elizondo is considered a founding father of this theology for his articulation of *mestizaje*, the mixture of human cultures not easily defined and doubly margined, as the identifying context for U.S. Hispanic theology. To the phenomenon of *mestizaje* is added the historical experience of "otherness," which characterizes the U.S. Hispanic experience of being a minority culture and helps distinguish the U.S. Latino from other Latin American theologies. The methodological discussion also emphasizes that this theology is mission-oriented and by its use of the rich term *pastoral de conjunto* demonstrates that the methodology is not distinct from its goals. *Pastoral de conjunto* is rooted in the historical encounter of two worlds, incorporates the experiences of the participants and reflections upon these experiences in the light of faith and the task of evangelization. Ana María Pineda notes the inadequacy of the English rendering of *pastoral de conjunto* as "organized pastoral effort"; what she describes is far more dynamic and participa-

tory, emphasizing the inclusion of participants who often reflect on their experience from the perspective of societal exclusion.

The relationship between U.S. Hispanic theology and Latin American liberation theology is a recurring theme in the volume. In his own contribution to the collection, Bañuelas argues that this theology is not a mere translation of liberation theology, although in conversation with both Latin American and black liberation theologies Latino theology forms part of the new theological landscape. The place of liberating praxis, a common feature of these theologies, is examined historically and philosophically by Roberto S. Goizueta, who finally asks, "Is liberation a concomitant or a goal of praxis?" (90) and calls for a more systematic treatment of both these dimensions of praxis. Goizueta suggests the centrality of popular religiosity in U.S. Hispanic praxis as a significant difference from its Latin American counterpart. Orlando O. Espín argues in traditional theological terminology that this popular religiosity is an authentic bearer of the *sensus fidelium* in the Hispanic community, and Allan Figueroa Deck addresses it in terms of an inculturated spirituality.

In a less systematic way, the remaining articles demonstrate the *pastoral de conjunto* method by including the voices and experiences of Latinas as they have shared in the formulation of this theology, as well as the Protestant and Evangelical perspectives. Social ethics and spirituality are creatively brought together from an evangelical perspective by Edwin Villafañe. A noteworthy feature of the book, again demonstrative of the commitment to a *pastoral de conjunto* and the dialogue this requires, is the inclusion of brief biographical sketches of the theologians as well as their addresses and telephone numbers.

Bañuelas has very effectively brought together the authoritative voices of a new movement in theology, charting its short history and establishing its place on the theological horizon. The variety of voices and experiences, male and female, Protestant and Catholic, as well as their connection through the experiences of *mestizaje* and marginalization, powerfully articulate the process of a unique faith experience seeking understanding and transforming society.

John Stowe