

5-1-1993

Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church

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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Nancy Vernon (1993) "Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church," *Consensus*: Vol. 19 : Iss. 1 , Article 19.
Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol19/iss1/19>

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Perhaps Augsburg's passion about the workings of anger and reconciliation is a bit overwhelming. But, as they say in Burma, "if a cock ruffles his feathers, it is easy to pluck him" (120).

Peter L. VanKatwyk
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Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church

Ada María Isasi-Díaz & Yolanda Tarango
Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992
123 pages

Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church (originally published in 1988 by Harper and Row) asserts that the voices of Hispanic women are "an intrinsic part of the human voice and therefore should be an intrinsic part of theology." There is no claim to objectivity in this book; rather it presents the subjective voices and words of Hispanic women commenting on their own reality in their homes, churches and communities.

The authors are two Hispanic women living in the United States. Ada María Isasi-Díaz identifies herself as a Cuban-born feminist and activist who teaches theology at Drew University. Yolanda Tarango is a Chicana activist who coordinated an American organization of Hispanic women. In this book, Isasi-Díaz and Tarango set out to work towards a Hispanic Women's Liberation Theology.

They gathered information for the book during weekend retreats with Puerto Rican, Cuban and Mexican-American women throughout the United States. The heart of the book is the women's verbatim responses to questions about their relationships with God and the church, the role of their families in religious matters, their faith and their doubt, their experiences with good and evil and their feelings about the Bible.

This book is clearly a valuable tool for anyone working with Hispanics in the Canadian church. The questions asked of Hispanic women are listed in the appendix and would be lively discussion-starters for any group of Hispanic women living in Canada.

But the book's relevance is not limited to those working in Hispanic ministry. This book is another voice to listen to in feminist theology and liberation theology, and it provides food for thought for anyone concerned about the health of the Canadian church in an increasingly pluralistic society. The insight this book gives into Hispanic women's private thoughts about their roles in home, church and community contributes to sensitivity to all women in the church, particularly those who have been marginalized for reasons of race, culture, language and class.

I was surprised that the authors did not include Central American refugee women in the interview process since women from El Salvador,

Guatemala and Nicaragua are making up an increasing number of the Hispanic population in North America. These women have arrived within the past decade, and many of them bring rich experience with the post-Vatican II church and Base Christian Communities in Latin America. I would have liked to hear their voices added to the voices of women from Puerto Rico, Cuba and Mexico.

Although I was happy to see the content summarized in Spanish at the end of each chapter, the book would be even more usable if the whole content were printed in Spanish and English. I would like to be able to place the verbatim interviews, the analysis and the authors' conclusions in the hands of Hispanic women who do not read English.

This book stands out as an attempt to approach theology from the vantage point of *Hispanic women living in North America*. Its special focus critiques "the racism/ethnic prejudice to which feminism in the United States and Latin American Liberation Theology seem to be prone." By insisting on the personal experience of Hispanic women living in North America as the starting point in the process of their own liberation, it makes a very special contribution to the field of theology. The authors and their community are practising a theology that values their own communal socio-political-economic experience as they struggle together for liberation.

Nancy Vernon Kelly
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Ending Marriage, Keeping Faith (A New Guide through the Spiritual Journey of Divorce)

J. Randall Nichols

New York: Crossroad, 1991

209 pages U.S. \$17.95 hardcover \$11.95 paper

My problem in writing this review is that it is difficult to be objective. The author writes from personal experience and I read from the same. As Nichols says, "divorced is not something you get; divorcing is something you do." As the jacket says, "Though filled with pain and confusion, divorce can be experienced as a kind of spiritual journey rather than an absolute ending. So the purpose of this book is to help others see their way more clearly through this soul searching experience."

Nichols begins by saying there are 343 books in print about divorce and wonders why he should write another one. I am glad he did. Because, as he points out, we need to deal with the "spiritual". It is interesting we begin marriage in a religious setting but end in a legal setting. In fact, if one reads only the introduction it is worth the price of the book.

His second reason for writing this book is because it is his own story and Nichols has received help from the writings of others so he now wants to