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Missionary Theology in Context: Marks of Mission from CLADE V

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I Introduction

In accordance with the aims of the Latin American Theological Fraternity (Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana, or FTL), the Latin American Congress on Evangelism (Congreso Latinoamericano de Evangelización, or CLADE V) was held in San Jose, Costa Rica, 9 – 13 July, 2012. In attendance were 570 delegates from across Latin America, as well as observers and guests from other countries.

Recognizing that the importance of CLADE V lies in the fact that it expresses the marks of the contextual missionary theology which characterizes the theological reflection of FTL, my intention here is essentially to situate the event historically and theologically with the aim of gaining a deeper appreciation for the Congress, some

of the issues it has raised, and for its contribution to missionary theology. By way of conclusion I will consider some of the challenges raised by the various presentations made during the Congress.

II Historical Context of CLADE and FTL

The CLADE congresses began in Latin America in the context of the major social, political and religious changes of the 1960s. Among these were the Cuban Revolution (1959), the restlessness associated with the music of the Beatles, U.S. presence in Latin America through the 'Alliance for Progress', the Second Vatican Council (1962), the second Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM), held in 1968 in Medellín, which opted for liberation theology and a missionary pastoral care,¹ and guerrilla movements influ-

¹ Enrique Dussel, *A History of the Church in Latin America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 113, 142, 143, 147.

enced by the Argentine physician 'Che' Guevara. Changes among evangelicals were noted in the presence of Kenneth Strachan, son of Harry Strachan and founder of the Latin America Mission (LAM), who initiated the program 'Evangelism in Depth', a movement which aimed at mobilizing churches in Latin America in the task of evangelization and whose strategy was to promote personal evangelism, prayer groups and mass campaigns.²

At the same time, the World Congress on Evangelism,³ held 26 October to 4 November, 1966, in Berlin, carried the theme, 'One People, one Gospel, one Task', and brought together 1200 delegates from 100 different nations; with few exceptions, participants came from the conservative evangelical wing of Protestantism. Organized by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and the magazine *Christianity Today* (as it celebrated ten years since its founding), the conference considered it necessary to make an urgent appeal to the world church to return to the commitment to world evangelization which characterized Edinburgh 1910.⁴

A major event of the 1960s, Berlin 1966 helped to give rise to the first CLADE, which was a regional continuation meeting following on from Berlin. Shaping FTL as well as CLADE were the great tensions of the Cold War, the

presence of communism in Latin America, the ecumenical movement, 'Church and Society in Latin America' (ISAL), which was guided by Marxist analysis and interpretation and was promoted by the World Council of Churches from 1957 onwards, and fundamentalist evangelicalism, promoted mostly by independent missions and characterized by premillennial dispensationalism. As Samuel Escobar explains in his essay on the founding of FTL, it is clear that the sixties were theologically polarized.⁵

III The 'Old Lions', CLADE and FTL

The quality of FTL's roots was evident at CLADE V by the presence of the 'old lions',⁶ by which I mean the most influential figures of FTL's older generation, including Samuel Escobar, Pedro Arana and René Padilla. Also present were Juan Stam and Sidney Rooy. The inaugural panel was enriching because these men helped to recall the movement's past as they were primary sources of its history.

Right from the start, it was the intention of CLADE V to trace its history within FTL. This legacy ought to be

² See further Paul E. Pretiz and W. Dayton Roberts, *"Like a Mighty Army" R. Kenneth Strachan and the Global March of Evangelism-in-Depth* (Miami, Latin America Mission, 1998).

³ Carl F. H. Henry and W. Stanley Mooneyham, *One Race, One Gospel, One Task: World Congress on Evangelism* (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1967) Volume I, 3, 5-6.

⁴ Henry and Mooneyham, 12, 13, 22.

⁵ Samuel Escobar, 'La fundación de la Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana: Breve ensayo histórico', *Boletín Teológico FTL*, 59/60, (1995): 7-25.

⁶ The term 'old lion' was used among university Bible groups (GBU) to refer to the pioneers of student work in Peru in the 60s and 70s. Rene Castro, former Secretary General of the Association of University of Peru evangelical groups (AGEUP), wrote his novel, *The Old Lions* (1969), which recounts the missionary experience of the 'old lions', including Samuel Escobar and Pedro Arana.

recorded firmly not only in terms of important dates, but also with respect to the creative tension experienced by the founders as they sought to work out a dynamic process of reflection in the critical times of that day. In this way, future generations might learn that the task of contextual theology in Latin America is not as simple as it seems.

From one angle, it required people of deep conviction in order to promote the changes that the church and society needed. From another angle, it required people with a deep passion to see God do something new both in the church and society. This is what the 'old lions' accomplished in their more than four decades of hard work in the struggle to promote and develop fraternal dialogues which would result in a Latin American contextualized biblical theology. Committed to the *missio Dei*, these men have sought to put it into practice in the Latin American context. Herein lies the strength of FTL's missionary theology.

On the fortieth anniversary of FTL's founding, celebrated in Chile on December 17, 2010, the Chilean Oscar Pereira (one of the founders of FTL) offered the following historical overview of the organization.⁷ From 12–18 December 1970, 25 leaders (5 of them missionaries) from a variety of denominations gathered in Carachipampa,

Cochabamba, Bolivia, at the Jorge Alan Seminary, and founded the Latin American Theological Fraternity. Principal leaders were Samuel Escobar from Peru, René Padilla from Ecuador, and Peter Savage, an Anglo-Peruvian. The movement had begun as a means of theological reflection in the first Latin American Congress on Evangelism (CLADE I) held in Bogota, Colombia in 1969.

At first the organization was called the Fraternity of Latin American Theologians, but the name was soon changed because its membership included theologians, missionaries and non-theologian professionals.⁸ Escobar explains that the former name was felt to be pretentious, as the members saw themselves primarily as students of theology and not theologians as such.⁹ FTL's first document was the Cochabamba Declaration, which expressed the missionary, pastoral and contextual concern which characterized FTL's deliberations. Escobar describes that Declaration as

A reflection that takes into account its ecclesial context and which is critical of that reality while remaining within it. A reflection with a dynamic sense of missionary obligation. A reflection that seeks to contextualize obedience to the Lord of the Church. Of course the work of contextualizing has to distinguish between the message's core and

⁷ Oscar Pereira, 'Comunidad de Reflexión y Espiritualidad Ecueménica', 'Fratela, 40 años', Part 1, 17 December 2010, <http://comunidadereflexionyespiritualidaddeva.blogspot.co.uk/2011/01/fraternidad-teologica-latinoamericana.html> (Accessed online 12 July 2012, 7.10). See also Samuel Escobar, *Evangelio y realidad social* (Lima: Ediciones Presencia, 1985), 43.

⁸ Pereira, 'Comunidad de Reflexión y Espiritualidad Ecueménica', Part 1. See also Sharon E. Heaney, *Contextual Theology for Latin America* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 60.

⁹ Samuel Escobar, Personal Communication with Author from Valencia (13 August 2012).

shell, or content and clothing. This requires mature and realistic self-criticism.¹⁰

Carlos Mondragón¹¹ indicates that it was by way of response to ultra-conservative groups within CLADE I which were trying to impose their own views on the mission of the church that one year later a group of young dissidents decided to found FTL. Escobar explains that the straw that broke the camel's back at CLADE I was the distribution of a book written by the American missionary to Bolivia, Peter Wagner, *Latin American Theology: Radical or Evangelical?*, which was regarded as simplistic and anti-theological. There was also a desire to impose the Frankfurt Declaration's insistence on the inerrancy of Scripture on the CLADE conference.

Padilla responded to these moves during FTL's formation, stating that it was sufficient to affirm the full authority of the Bible without the use of the term 'inerrancy', not only because it was a concept created outside the Latin American theological context, but also because inerrancy was not an issue among Latin American evangelicals.¹² Padilla went on to state that Wagner was eager to see that Fuller

Seminary's (in Pasadena, California) Church Growth strategy was accepted, although it was inappropriate for the context.¹³ As a result, Wagner returned to the U.S. and maintained a hostile attitude towards FTL.¹⁴

In its infancy, FTL's missionary theology reflected a contextual emphasis focused on Latin American reality. This can be seen clearly in the papers presented at the Consultation in Cochabamba, which Samuel Escobar summarizes in his work, 'The Founding of the Latin American Theological Fraternity', on the occasion of the celebration of 25 years of FTL.¹⁵

Pedro Arana dealt with 'God's Revelation and Theology in Latin America', Ismael E. Amaya with the 'Inspiration of the Bible in Latin American Theology', and Rene Padilla with 'The Authority of the Bible in Latin American Theology', while Andrew Kirk took up the subject of 'The Bible and Hermeneutics in Relation to Protestant Theology in Latin America'. The program also included lesser presentations aimed at contextual application, such as 'Church Growth in Latin America' by Peter Wagner, 'The Bible and Social Revolution in Latin America', by Samuel Escobar, 'The New Catholicism and the Bible' by Emilio A. Nunez, and

¹⁰ Escobar, 'La fundación de la Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana', 22-25.

¹¹ Carlos Mondragón, 'CLADE V con más de 800 participantes y una historia que se remonta a 1969', <http://www.clade5.org/index.php/es/congresos/108-articulo1> (Accessed online 31 July 2012, 13.21).

¹² Escobar, 'La fundación de la Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana', 20-23. See also Daniel Salinas, 'The Beginning of the Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana', *Journal of Latin American Theology* Vol. 2, N. 1, (2007):58-60.

¹³ Rene Padilla, electronic communication to the author, from Buenos Aires (13 Aug 2012).

¹⁴ For an extensive analysis of the formation of FTL, see Daniel Salinas, *Latin American Evangelical Theology in the 1970s: The Golden Decade* (Brill Academic Publishers, 2009), a published version of his doctoral thesis, 'Hispanic Evangelical Theological Production in Latin America Between 1969 and 1979'.

¹⁵ Escobar, 'La fundación de la Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana', 7-25.

'The Bible and its Proclamation' by Paul Pérez.¹⁶

In his historical essay, Escobar concluded that the emergence of FTL represented part of the search for an evangelical theology which was at one and the same time biblical and contextual. This theological position is evident in the main papers presented at the first consultation in Cochabamba, while all relate to the Latin American context.

The 25 individuals who signed the Declaration of Cochabamba were the founders of FTL.¹⁷ The founder and first president of FTL from 1970 until 1984 was the Peruvian, Samuel Escobar, who currently serves as Honorary Chairman. Other well known founding members are Peter Savage, Pedro Arana, Andrew Kirk, Emilio Antonio Núñez and Robinson Cavalcanti (d. February 2012). More members were added over time, including Orlando Costas, Jose Miguez Bonino, Tito Paredes, Valdir Steuernagel, Arthur Stone, Victor King, Humberto Lagos, Humberto Bullón, and many others who have had links with FTL throughout its more than 40 years of existence.

Faced with new changes in 1960, evangelical theologians and pastors set out to develop a contextual missionary theology formulated in the Latin American context and which was faithful to the gospel. In his book *From Mission to Theology*, Escobar defines the benchmark for the new theology and missionary of FTL as follows:

Neither Geneva-style ecumenical dialogue nor liberation theologies born in Roman Catholic lands could provide appropriate responses. The ecumenical theology coming from Geneva reflected the doubts and fatigue of a declining European Protestantism. Catholic liberation theologies depended largely on the assumption that America was a 'Christian continent'.¹⁸

In the process of Latin American theological reflection, Rene Padilla and Samuel Escobar were invited at the Lausanne Congress in 1974 to present papers on social justice and the need for a holistic mission that included social responsibility and not only the salvation of souls. Since 'Lausanne 1974', FTL's stress on a comprehensive missionary theology has been felt globally among evangelicals.

FTL then made the wise decision to extend the boundaries of its reflective work through regular publications. So the first *Boletín Teológico* ('Theological Bulletin') appeared in May 1972, then in 1982 *Misión* magazine, founded by René Padilla, featured many FTL associates. The first book was *El Debate Contemporáneo sobre la Biblia* ('The Contemporary Debate about the Bible'), edited by Peter Savage in 1972, followed by *Fe Cristiana y Latinoamérica hoy* ('Christian Faith and Latin America Today', Certeza, 1974), *El Reino de Dios y América Latina* ('The Kingdom of God and Latin America', *El Paso, Casa Bautista de Publicaciones*, 1975),¹⁹ and in 1984 *Hacia una teología*

16 Pedro Savage, *El Debate Contemporáneo Sobre la Biblia* (Barcelona: Ediciones Evangélicas Europeas, 1972).

17 Savage, 'Declaración Evangélica de Cochabamba', *El Debate contemporáneo*, 225-228.

18 Escobar, *De la Misión a la Teología* (Buenos Aires, Kairos: 1998), 8-9.

19 Escobar, electronic information to the au-

Evangélica Latinoamericana ('Toward an Evangelical Latin American Theology', edited by Rene Padilla, San Jose, Caribe, 113-120).

IV Five CLADE Congresses

Thus far, five CLADE congresses have been held, and can be described as follows:

CLADE I

CLADE I was held in Bogotá, Colombia, 21-30 November 1969, and brought together 830 delegates. The key theme of the congress was 'Action in Christ for a Continent in Crisis'.²⁰ The era was typified by the 'cold war' between the world's superpowers, military coups in several Latin American countries, and a growing number of foreign missionaries from North America. Since FTL had not yet come into existence, this was the only CLADE that was not organized by FTL.

Sponsored by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, CLADE I was the result of a series of meetings that began with the Congress of Berlin in 1966 and culminated with the famous 1974 Lausanne Congress. The report found in the archives of the Billy Graham Centre states that it was in response to the request of Latin American delegates at the Berlin Congress of 1966 that Graham called on the assis-

tance of American Clyde Willis Taylor, then Executive Secretary of The Evangelical Foreign Mission Association (EFMA), and the Puerto Rican Efrain Santiago, evangelist and coordinator of the Latin American Division of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, to organize CLADE.²¹

As it happened, the theological agenda was set by the theological views of the organizers of that time. Escobar presented his paper on the 'Social Responsibility of the Church', a key issue in the formation of an integral missionary theology based in Latin America. This paper had a surprisingly good reception which showed that it was a burning issue for Evangelical churches in Latin America.

CLADE II

CLADE II was called together by FTL to reflect on the theme: 'That Latin America May Hear God's Voice'. 266 delegates were present when the Congress was held in Huampaní, Lima, Peru, 31 October to 8 November, 1979. At least two major events were influential to CLADE II in its agenda: the Lausanne Congress (1974) and the 'Gospel and Culture' consultation at Willowbank (1978). CLADE II took place in the context of tensions between conservative evangelicals, who were concerned with evangelistic strategies, and those who favoured an integral mission on the part of the church, motivated by an understanding of social responsibility.

Theological papers presented at

thor, from Valencia (13 Aug 2012).

²⁰ 'Records of the Primer Congreso Latinoamericano de Evangelización (CLADE)', Billy Graham Center, Collection 324, <http://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/GUIDES/324.htm> (Accessed online 1 August 2012, 9.02).

²¹ 'Records of the Primer Congreso Latinoamericano de Evangelización (CLADE)', Collection 324.

CLADE II aimed at contextualizing basic themes of the gospel message. Samuel Escobar explains that each issue was addressed by two authors who represented different traditions and generations in the work of the Fraternity: 'Spirit and Word in the Task of Evangelization', 'Christ and Antichrist in Proclamation', 'Sin and Salvation in Latin America', and, finally, 'Hope and Despair amidst the Continental Crisis'. These made up roughly one third of the topics addressed at CLADE II, while the rest of the time was devoted to models of evangelization, specific needs, and strategies for the future.²²

Some important post-CLADE II consultations within the global evangelical world were 'An Evangelical Commitment to a Simple Lifestyle' in High Lee, United Kingdom, 1980; the 'Consultation on World Evangelization' held in Pattaya, Thailand, 1980; the Consultation on Evangelism and Social Responsibility in Grand Rapids, U.S.A., 1982, and the consultation on 'Theology and the Bible in Context', in Seoul, 1982.²³

CLADE III

This Congress was preceded by the Lausanne Congress II, held in Manila

in 1989, which produced the 'Manila Manifesto'. The year 1992 was also significant as it marked 500 years since the so-called discovery of America, which was, more than anything else, a form of oppressive colonization using religion as a source of oppression. It was in this context that CLADE III was held from 24 August to 4 September, 1992, in the Anderson School of Quito, Ecuador. There were 1080 men and women from 25 countries focused on the theme, 'The Whole Gospel to all Peoples of Latin America', during plenary sessions and workshops devoted to theological, missiological, historical, social and economic concerns. In his book, *Time for Mission*, Samuel Escobar maintains that CLADE III was the realization of a Latin American self-awareness not merely as a mission field, but as a base for sending missionaries to other parts of the world, and of a search for new mission models through biblical and theological reflection.

As the most representative gathering of Latin American Protestantism of the 20th Century, CLADE III involved the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) as well as the conservative Evangelical Latin American Evangelical Fellowship (CONELA). One of the conclusions of CLADE III established the need for self-criticism that leads us once again to the example of Jesus and to pedagogical, prophetic and evangelical forms of mission rather than to those 'Christendom' forms—whether Catholic or Protestant—which are based on military, economic and technological power.

CLADE IV

CLADE IV was organized once again

22 Samuel Escobar, 'Los CLADES y la Misión de la Iglesia', *Kairos*, http://www.kairos.org.ar/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=840&catid=90%3Aarticulos-de-la-revista-iglesia-y-mision&Itemid=156 (Accessed online, 17 July 2012, 16.07).

23 'Declaración de Seúl: Hacia una Teología Evangélica para el Tercer Mundo', http://www.kairos.org.ar/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1435, *Iglesia y Misión*, no.4, (1982); note 10, printed edition: vol.2; no.1.

in Quito, 2-9 September, 2000, under the banner of 'Evangelical Witness for the Third Millennium: Word, Spirit and Mission'. Attended by over 1200 delegates from Latin America, as well as observers from other continents, the Congress was held in the newly inaugurated SEMISUD campus of the Church of God Seminary in Ecuador.

As a participant observer, I noted that at least three marks of mission were encouraged: an openness to dialogue with a view to deepening and projecting the church's mission with the Word of God and with the guidance of the Spirit in the new millennium; a strengthening of the link between the theory and the practice of integral mission through a strategy that includes social responsibility in the life of the church in Latin America, and furthering the presence of the Kingdom of God through the kind of comprehensive mission which directs a message to the whole person and is aimed at the transformation of all aspects of life.

These three marks developed at CLADE IV were to turn up at CLADE V with the latter's call for a multi-faceted effort in favour of models of service to others through NGOs and community projects for the needy.

CLADE V

CLADE V was held in San Jose, Costa Rica, on the premises of the New Life Pentecostal Church 9-13 July, 2012, and was attended by 570 participants. The president of FTL was Jorge Enrique Barro, while Ruth Padilla served as Secretary General. The theme set for the Congress by FTL board was, 'Let us Follow Jesus in his Kingdom of Life. Guide us, Holy Spirit!' CLADE V

invited a process of theological reflection, communion, confession and celebration of God's mission in the Latin American context.²⁴

Of special note was the fact that CLADE V was broadcast live for the first time through the internet. As an on-line participant observer I was able to take part in the discussions as well as the vibrant liturgy during each worship occasion. I was moved by the presence of the 'old lions', who, despite their age and physical limitations, reflected the same spirit that moved them to promote a Latin American missionary contextual theology—that is, a living, incarnational theology which is relevant to each context. In this regard Samuel Escobar observes:

Theology is a living thing if it does not limit itself to the servile repetition of forms developed in London, Geneva, Tübingen or Nashville. It may have been nurtured by these forms, but it does not remain there, but moves on. It is a form of reflection which takes the experiences of service of today, of the here and now, and reflects on them in the light of God's Word. In this way, it becomes a form of thought and proclamation that has relevance for human beings today.²⁵

²⁴ Ruth Padilla, 'Congreso Latinoamericano de Evangelización', <http://www.clade5.org/index.php/es/congresos/71-clades> (Accessed online 10 July 2012).

²⁵ Samuel Escobar, 'Nuevos Libros: Lideres siervos que hacen teología' <http://www.protestantedigital.com/ES/Blogs/articulo/3522/Nuevos-libros-lideres-siervos-ue-hacen-teologia>, *Protestante Digital*, Wednesday, 1 Aug. 2012.

V Understanding the Missionary Theology of CLADE V

For reasons of space I will offer here briefly just some aspects of the missionary theology of CLADE V. As an agent of God's Kingdom and righteousness, FTL celebrates different theological perspectives while laying stress on integral mission, that is, on God's mission understood as proclamation and social responsibility; the two going hand in hand. As such, CLADE V has described the history of its founding as a theological movement for integral mission. The five regions of FTL that exist today share the following three unifying marks for mission in common:²⁶

- Fraternal theological reflection which is not merely academic, but which seeks missiological engagement and a committed ethic.
- Theological reflection that is centred on a common passion to look for evidence of the Kingdom of God and his righteousness in the present time.
- Theological reflection that is articulated in the midst of the dynamic relationships between Word, people and context.

In relation to these three unifying marks, it seems to me that CLADE V harmonised with the call which FTL is-

sues every decade by promoting God's Kingdom and by its emphasis on reflection on Scripture in the context of integral mission. With this in mind, we can say that every CLADE held three theological considerations to be necessary: We are all disciples; we are all agents of the Kingdom of God, and we are all dependent on the Holy Spirit. For CLADE V, all the topics were, first and foremost, pastoral proposals for observing reality, making judgments about it, and acting; that is, proposals for reflection and action for an incarnational gospel which include the theology of worship and arts as a form of mission.²⁷

I understand that one of the marks of CLADE V has been to remember, and to put into practice, a historical theology of more than 40 years of pilgrimage in mission. The dialogue addressed the opportunity of re-articulating the theological vision of following in the footsteps of Jesus as a mature movement. This historical theology was driven by some of FTL's founding members which was a helpful development in passing on the baton to the new generation of FTL leadership.

In relation to the local congregations, FTL agrees with Miguez Bonino that our faithfulness to Jesus Christ begins with our faithfulness to our local congregation. Regarding a Trinitarian theology, it is stressed that for FTL and CLADE congresses every work of God involves the three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This historical theology explains that FTL is not a static movement, but a story in

²⁶ Ruth Padilla, 'Day One CLADE V', San José, Costa Rica, Monday 9 July 2012, http://www.livestream.com/cladev/video?clipId=pla_8793e6a9-89a6-41a1-a2e0-6ecb0347ee73&utm_source=lslibrary&utm_medium=ui-thumb (Accessed online, 11 July 2012, 10.40).

²⁷ Jorge Barro, 'Congreso inaugural CLADE V' (9 July 2012, San José, Costa Rica).

the making, and, as Pedro Arana suggests, at CLADE V FTL was finding its prophetic voice in the midst of history.

In relation to the mark of discipleship, the Methodist Mexican Alejandra Ortiz explored in her paper, 'Doubt and Mystery', a theology of reconciliation by raising the question of reconciliation with God in the midst of doubt which sometimes arises in the context of Christian discipleship. Hence, we need the constant presence of the Holy Spirit in order to overcome all obstacles. FTL's pastoral theology seems to identify with the doubts of Thomas, the 'unbelieving' disciple; this gives us an idea of the anthropological emphasis of CLADE V, expressed in the need for the transformation of the whole person in recognition of human weaknesses. We might say that the basic proposal here is that God reconciles the weak to make them strong.

Why did CLADE V invite critical voices outside FTL? The Colombian Harold Segura explains that FTL organizers agreed not to fill the time with papers delivered by renowned individuals, as has been the traditional approach.²⁸ Rather, they opted for generational and cultural diversity mixed with the experience of the 'old lions'. They also sought out critical voices outside FTL in the hope of forging a valid way ahead for the coming decades in FTL. For this reason they enlisted the participation of a prominent theologian outside FTL, by inviting the Catholic liberation theologian Juan José Tamayo, and also Erika Izquierdo

as a representative of a new generation of FTL.

In Tamayo's view the most important elements of FTL are the sense of community and its practice of sharing, which was evident in the sharing of life together, mealtimes, relationships and solidarity. He also pointed out that it is a festive fraternity (noting that a fraternity without celebration is in danger of extinction), and that its future lies in the contextualization of its theological concerns.

Accordingly, contextualization requires a great deal of care, since one cannot (for example) sing the popular worship song, 'I bow to you' to the rhythm of Salsa! Contextualization can be interpreted as a creative clash between the word and the context, so we must remember that the purpose of theology is to fulfil the *missio Dei* and not to entertain people.

Padilla stresses that in Latin America there is now a better connection between the preaching of the message and its application to the context. He says:²⁹

The FTL includes professionals who have not studied theology academically, but who are striving to communicate the message contextually. This is due to the interdisciplinary nature of theological reflection. The theology of questioning helps us to discover new contextual references that can be applied to reality. We need to take into account the questions that reality presents us with in order to go to the text, and in that way to find appropriate responses

²⁸ CLADE V, 'Foro Teológico Jueves', Thursday, 12 July 2012, <http://www.clade5.org/index.php/es/clade/103-transmisionenespanol> (Accessed online 12 July 2012, 20.15).

²⁹ Rene Padilla, at CLADE V (Day three, 11th July 2012).

for society. For this we have to distinguish between theology and ideology, as in the case of the so-called 'prosperity theology', which in itself contains more ideology than theology. It is Scripture that should help us to understand the answers society requires, not the other way around.

What are the identifying marks of FTL? For Tamayo there are ten marks of mission that FTL has developed. To be sure, Tamayo's stress on liberation from oppressive systems is a sign of his liberation theology, which must be examined with wisdom and without absorbing all its theological content. One needs to distinguish between theology, ideology and methodology whenever one enters into dialogue with other theologies. Here I offer a summary of what I call the theological marks of FTL as perceived by Tamayo:³⁰

- The mark of mission. It is the fundamental charge of Jesus to believers. As the Kingdom of God and his righteousness is emphasized, faith in action has priority over organizational structures.
- The mark of commitment. This refers to praxis, or to what FTL refers to as evidences of the kingdom, such as verification of kingdom mission; without commitment, mission becomes empty.
- The mark of reflection. This refers to a reasoned as well as lived faith, as faith must be

thought out. At the same time, however, intellectualism should be avoided, as well as activism (which does not give one time to think) and irrationalism (since belief is not absurd).

- The mark of a basis for dialogue. Religious wars have steadily given way to encounters, to pluralism in dialogue. Differences can never be points of contention, but rather occasions for dialogue which involve listening and argumentation, not conversion, as the time is not right for conversions but rather for dialogue.
- The mark of contextual biblical interpretation. The word of God illuminates the context for liberation.
- The mark of inheritance. In view here is not the dividing up of family assets, in which the best of the past is recovered. 'What is called for is an inheritance that is inherited correctly', not in anger but with balance, seeking to look towards the future, the time of the Kingdom of God.
- The mark of a hopeful vision for the future. This is the kind of hope that is an active virtue aimed at building the Kingdom of God. The evangelical vision is an active hope, not a passive one which expects God to do everything.
- The mark of the church's integral mission. Mission has to do with being sent, in which the initiative belongs to God. So there is no place for conceit. What is integral gathers together the whole message of God, which leads to integrity of life and harmonizes

30 CLADE V, 'Foro Teológico Jueves', Thursday, 12 Jul 2012, <http://www.clade5.org/index.php/es/clade/103-transmisionenespanol> (Accessed online 12 July 2012, 20.15).

theory with practice. It is a mission through integral discipleship, which for Tamayo is a discipleship of equals.

- The mark of the Spirit. The Spirit has been neglected for a long time in the life of the church.
- The mark of contextualization. Without a context the universality of Christianity becomes a disembodied gospel.

Finally, Tamayo's consideration of FTL's work presents the following challenges for the church, which Luis Andavert defines as 'macro challenges':³¹

- Poverty and the response which it requires.
- An inclusive form of globalization, as opposed to exclusive.
- Patriarchy and feminism (the control of power by men).
- The destruction of the environment and ecological awareness.
- Neo-colonialism and the 'decolonization' of churches.

Another aspect that CLADE V sought to promote was a relational missionary theology. In this sense, another theologian invited to evaluate the meeting, Dana Roberts,³² professor of

World Christianity and History of Mission at Boston University, asserted that a theology of relationships needs to be connected with global realities, and emphasised that the strength of FTL is its fraternal nature. Further, the selection of John's Gospel for daily topics clearly reflected the desire to promote a missionary theology of relationships.

Evidently, the idea that evangelization comes through relationships has been understood better. Thus a theological vision of the kingdom is based on the model of Jesus and his Father. In my theological understanding, Roberts presents FTL's marks of mission in a way that differs entirely from that of Catholic observer Tamayo:

- FTL's frontier goes beyond denominational divisions.
- There is a need to build bridges between the theology of the kingdom and local congregations. What is needed is a missionary theology of relationships designed for the Latin American diaspora.
- The peace of Christ should mark the relationship between the gospel and society. There have been calls for a false peace and false theologies of domination which have sought to bring about a society of peace. Therefore, friendship must be visibly evident in mission; it is a kingdom mission based on mission practice.
- Friendship is the kingdom based on the practice of mission.
- FTL's relational mission seeks to nurture interrelational dialogue between evangelicals of different generations, being a Christian community of theological reflection which comes from particu-

³¹ Jose Luis Andavert, 'A Propósito de CLADE V (3), Propuestas para un itinerario Teológico', *Actualidad Evangélica*, 28 August 2012, http://www.actualidad-evangelica.es/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4364:a-proposito-de-clade-v-3-propuestas-para-un-itinerario-teologico&catid=47:columnas (Accessed online, 30 Aug 2012, 16:05).

³² Samuel Cueva, Following CLADE V via the internet, Day Four, 2012, <http://www.clade5.org/index.php/es/clade/103-transmisionen-espanol> (Accessed online 14 July 2012, 9.50).

lar church traditions and which points to Jesus as coming King.

- FTL promotes an extensive use of art as mission. This includes poetry, painting, drama, dance, and contextual songs with a strong emphasis on Latin American realities.

In line with Roberts' analysis within CLADE V, I suggest that FTL might articulate problems of society with one voice by building and strengthening biblical relationships. Thus strengthening, for example, the mark of prayer and the affirmation of women's role in the task of theological reflection will help to produce one voice within society.

A critical aspect of CLADE V relates to the tension between the social aspect and the evangelistic message of mission. Hence, regarding CLADE V, British theologian Andrew Kirk, one of the founders of FTL, remarks:³³

In general terms, I have the impression that by promoting a particular vision of integral mission which emphasizes social aspects (the 'good news' for those who are marginalized and oppressed politically and economically), the evangelistic message (the 'good news' for the lost) is being neglected. The pendulum is moving in the other direction. I'm not sure whether the FTL has yet done full biblical justice to the notion of God's mission as an integral whole, and not just a series of disconnected parts. Nonetheless, this is a very generalized comment

regarding a complex issue. The discussion goes on, and without a doubt there will be different voices within the FTL.

Accordingly, it seems that CLADE V could give the impression of polarizing the double mission mandate. This apparent dichotomy has to be clarified if FTL wants to avoid unnecessary conflict within the evangelical movement. Spaniard Jose L. Andavert,³⁴ points out that many papers were devoted to social injustice, marginalization, and poverty, coming across as a stale repetition of Liberation Theology, given the social changes which the gospel has brought since 1970.

The British missiologist, John Corrie, believes that the Congress was lacking in discussion, critique, analysis and debate on the topics raised, and that on occasion the papers presented very little that was challenging from a theological perspective and little by way of integral mission models which are working well in Latin America. What was positive about CLADE V, in Corrie's view, was the appearance of a new generation of young theologians with a passion for social justice and ecology.³⁵

One weakness of FTL is that because of institutional limitations, the results of theological reflection are not spread

33 Andrew Kirk, Information to the author regarding CLADE V, sent by email 3 August 2012.

34 Andavert, 'A propósito de CLADE V, Una mirada retrospectiva', *Actualidad Evangélica*, 9 August 2012, http://www.actualidadevangelica.es/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4285:a-proposito-de-clade-v-una-mirada-retrospectiva&catid=37:pensamiento (Accessed 30 Aug 2012 at 16:15).

35 John Corrie, Information sent to author (12 Sep 2012).

as quickly and as broadly as might be desired. (Sometimes this has been regarded as 'elitism', but it is more of a logistical problem).³⁶ At the same time, one of its strengths is the way a conference like this and FTL itself provide members with opportunities for mutual encouragement, theological reflection, all in the service of the church. Moreover, one of the riches of FTL has been the way it has encouraged its members to write and publish their articles and reflections in books. In the need for a systematic Christology, perhaps Escobar's recent book in Spanish *En busca de Cristo en America Latina* (*In Search of Christ in Latin America*) will help to answer the question, 'Who is Jesus for Latin America today?'³⁷

The Latin American theological constituency is called to transcend its own times and circumstances and to make use of the social sciences, theology, missiology, history and other tools to find evidence that is appropriate to the context without diluting the message of the gospel.

VI Challenges and Conclusions

1 Missionary theology

In my understanding the marks of FTL's missionary theology are as follows:

- Integral mission. There exists a

transnational community which is intertwined with the practice of integral mission, which means that the gospel includes proclamation and demonstration, which clothes integrity with the hope that Christ brings.

- Incarnational theology. Theology is not abstract, but rather grows from the reality of life. Faith and theology are intimately related, as theology arises from an encounter with God.
- Corporate theology. The whole body of Christ—youth as well as adults, and women—participates in the mission of sharing the gospel.
- Hope. There is a sense of hope in every context. This is a hope which is not based on circumstances, but is rather a total commitment to a life of hope.
- Contextualization. FTL has helped us to understand that mission is cultural, which means that the gospel is translatable.
- Theology connected with the church. FTL has offered its own particular way of doing theology as it has promoted a missionary theology of reflection which helps us to understand God's mission as well as the mission of the church.
- A deep sense of celebration in following Jesus, with a commitment to the radical demands of Christ.
- Art as mission. This is the most recent mark, and will require critical reflection as it becomes implemented as an expression of missionary theology. The first consultation organized by FTL

³⁶ Humberto Bullón, Information to the author, 9 Aug 2012.

³⁷ Samuel Escobar, *En Busca de Cristo en America Latina* (Buenos Aires, Ediciones Kairos 2012).

on art, liturgy and mission took place in April, 2012.³⁸

2 Challenges

Some of the challenges for strengthening a missionary theology through the CLADE Congresses are:

- Firstly the challenge of humble dialogue. The CLADE Congresses should maintain a continuous dialogue with various other conferences or consultations in order to gain a comparative sense of topics covered from a Latin American perspective. Following the historical thread from the Edinburgh 1910 and Panama 1916 Congresses in dialogue with Lausanne I, II and III will help maintain a humble attitude such as that of the founders, who reflected deeply without falling into theological arrogance and still less into imposing their ideas dogmatically on others. They recognised the need to wait upon the *Kairos* of God in order to establish dialogue with the other theologies of their day and context. In this way, a Latin American systematic missionary theology could be forged.
- Secondly the challenge of being a Latin American movement. To remember what the CLADE Congresses represent for present and future Latin American mis-

sion. Escobar puts it this way:³⁹

The congresses represent a moment of balance and reflection, as well as awareness, which together may act as a ferment that has a quiet, long-term effect in various denominational spheres, mission agencies and local churches.

- Thirdly the challenge for future generations—to maintain the methodology used in the CLADE Congresses. Pedro Arana points out that there are several key aspects: hearing the Word of God, the content and experience of personal faith and the faith of the community; observing the historical situation; and responding with reflection and action.⁴⁰ These elements will help to strengthen a biblical evangelical identity.

In speaking of such an identity, I agree with Escobar when he insists that a recovery of our identity is essential.⁴¹

To recover our identity is first of all to look to our past and to our roots, but is also something more: to look forward with a sense of mission. It is not about looking back in order to repeat in servile or routine form the models of yesterday. At the heart of

³⁸ Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana, 'Art, Liturgy and Mission Consultation', http://www.ftl-al.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=303&Itemid=100 (Accessed online, 8 August 2012, 18.25).

³⁹ Escobar, 'Los CLADES y la Misión de la Iglesia'.

⁴⁰ Escobar, 'Los CLADES y la Misión de la Iglesia'.

⁴¹ Samuel Escobar, '¿Que significa ser evangélico hoy?', *Iglesia y Misión*, number 1, 1982, note 2, http://www.kairos.org.ar/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1363 (Accessed online 19 July 2012, 8.50).

the evangelical way there is faith in a Holy Spirit who blows, renews and creates, and in his Word which is a sure guide and anchor, but also always fertile seed which vivifies.

3 Trends

Finally, there are three trends in Latin America which will present the greatest challenge for evangelicals in the upcoming decades, and for which FTL and the CLADE Congresses to come will have to discern the corresponding contribution.

In the first place, the radicalization of evangelization which will persist in both evangelical and Catholic churches will promote an ecumenical approach to evangelism. Liberation Theology will continue to stress a concern for social justice, and FTL will point towards a hopeful evangelical vitality on a global scale as long as it stresses a theology centred on the local church, while its focus on integral mission will translate into a certain weakening of verbal proclamation.

Second, the charismatic movement will continue to experience disputes on account of its theology, but will continue to increase its social presence, as well as to provide a vital and signifi-

cant stimulus for evangelistic growth; it will require stronger support of a biblical theology as well as a deeper bond with traditional churches.

Third, the stress on integral mission on the part of the church in Latin America is bound to produce a sense of social responsibility. Mission is a constant tension between evangelism and social responsibility. Evangelistic vitality put together with commitment to social responsibility will result in an important theological synthesis for the Latin American church.

Our forecast suggests that FTL will foster a better and more fraternal dialogue within the protestant and evangelical world, as well as with other existing theological traditions, working in this way to systematize its missionary theology in dialogue with the world missionary movement.

CLADE V seems to be a crucial moment for giving credit to FTL's commitment to fostering a Latin American missionary theology, and for acknowledging the effort of the 'old lions' who have offered their lives to God's mission and have lived out and promoted a distinctive Latin American theology through both theological reflection and practice.