

Mission Distinctives of CLADE V

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Introduction

According to the plan established by the Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana (FTL; in English, Latin American Theological Fellowship), the Fifth Latin American Congress on Evangelization (CLADE V) took place in San José, Costa Rica, July 9–13, 2012, with the participation of 570 delegates from across Latin America, as well as observers and guests from other countries. Here I will present a theological history of the congress that will help deepen our understanding of it, some of the subjects discussed, and the perspective of its missionary theology. Finally, I will offer some challenges relating to the different expositions during the congress. CLADE V was important for how it expressed the distinctives of

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contextual missionary theology, a characteristic of the theological reflection of the FTL. My contribution to CLADE V was *in absentia*, having followed the process live on the Internet, a new way to be “*quasi present*.”¹

Historical Context of CLADE and the FTL

The CLADE congresses began in Latin America within the context of the great social, political, and religious changes in the 1960s. Some of these changes included the Cuban Revolution (1959), the rise of nonconformity as expressed by the music of the Beatles, the United States’ presence in Latin America with the “Alliance for Progress,” the Second Vatican Council in 1962–1965, and the second Latin American Episcopal Conference in Medellín in 1968, which opted for liberation theology and a pastoral mission,² and the guerilla movements influenced by the Argentine medical doctor “Che” Guevara.

Kenneth Strachan, whose father, Harry Strachan, founded the Latin American Mission, embodied the changes among evangelicals. This organization began “Evangelism in Depth,” a movement that mobilized Latin American churches to evangelize, using the strategies of personal evangelism, group prayer, and massive campaigns.³ Likewise, the World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin took place October 26–November 4, 1966, with the slogan, “One Race, One Gospel, One Task” and included 1,200 delegates of

1 The majority of the CLADE V plenary sessions are available for viewing online at <http://www.livestream.com/cladev>.

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

3 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).