CHAPTER FOUR

THE FRATERNIDAD TEOLOGICA LATINOAMERICANA—FTL

A year after CLADE I, another meeting took place, this time in Carachipampa, a rural community outside of Cochabamba, in the arable middle valleys of Bolivia. This meeting had wider repercussions and influence for the theological production in Latin America than the Congress on Evangelism in Bogota. This chapter presents the accounts of the founding of the Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana (FTL). Using the methodology of Rezeptionsgeschichte this chapter discusses the reception history of this group together with its importance in the process of maturation and definition of a Latin American evangelical theology.

Introduction

CLADE I stirred the theological ferment that was brewing in Latin America. Quite unintentionally, C. Peter Wagner’s book on Latin American theology, distributed at no cost to all the delegates in Bogota, stoked the agitation. Wagner described three distinct groups of Christians in Latin America: “the conservative evangelical Protestants, the conservative Catholics of the Establishment, and the radical left-wing group made of both Protestants and Catholics.” The main argument of the book was that the last group, characterized by “secular theology and revolutionary politics,” was outnumbering the evangelicals in theological production and scholarship. Wagner included brief presentations of several Latin American writers from what he called the “radical left.” However, when the time came to introduce the evangelical position, Wagner did not find “an evangelical leader who has entered into the

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2 Wagner, Latin American Theology, 9.
3 Ibid.
dialogue of the day and said something significant about the relationship of the church to the contemporary world.” Consequently his presentation of the evangelical voice was short and sketchy. Wagner presented an apology for “Church Growth” as the solution for Latin America.

The source of information for Wagner was John H. Sinclair’s bibliographical guide to Latin America. Since Sinclair did not include any theoretical work written by a Latin American evangelical, Wagner concluded that those writings “are virtually nonexistent.” Wagner should have done his homework more thoroughly. What he did was to multiply Sinclair’s mistake. Sinclair’s criteria in selecting the works he listed were “too Anglo-Saxon.” On his list only four out of twenty collaborators were Latin American, and it had important lacunae like the omission of one of the biggest groups in Argentina, the Plymouth Brethren, and of important journals like Certeza. It was fair to say that there were few published theological books, but there were innumerable journal and magazine articles Wagner could have used. Those articles constituted the platform from which Latin Americans presented their ideas to the public. To attribute lack of theology to the scarcity of books revealed a mediocre knowledge of Latin America.

Several reactions greeted Wagner’s book. “While some people were exultant about the book and gathered around Wagner, others were uneasy and convinced that a response had to be given.”

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4 Ibid., 83.
6 Sinclair, Protestantism in Latin America.
7 Wagner, Latin American Theology, 83.
9 Ibid., 314.
10 Widely known journals would have given Wagner a more comprehensive idea of what evangelicals had written: Cuadernos Teológicos, founded in 1950; Pensamiento Cristiano, 1953; and Certeza, 1959, among others. John Howard Orme also includes sermons as sources: Orme, “The Doctrine of Social Concern,” 2.