

New Directions for Evangelical Theology in Latin America: A Literature Review¹

Samuel Escobar

In my book *En busca de Cristo en América Latina* I offer a summary of developments in Christology during the twentieth century in Latin America. It may be said that there was a rediscovery of Jesus in Latin America which began with the arrival and the presence of evangelical² Protestantism in the latter half of the nineteenth century, especially through the distribution of Scripture, particu-

1 This article was originally published in Spanish as the final chapter of Samuel Escobar's *En busca de Cristo en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Kairós, 2012). Original Spanish text copyright Ediciones Kairós. Translated, adapted, and printed here with permission of both the author and Ediciones Kairós.

2 Translator's note: The Spanish word "evangélico," as used in the original Spanish-language version of this article, presents a difficulty for translation into English. It generally refers to all Protestants in the Spanish-speaking world. Translating it as either "Protestant" or "Evangelical" in English does not usually capture the nuances of the concept.

Peruvian pastor, theologian, and missiologist, Samuel Escobar is president emeritus of the FTL. He currently resides and works in Spain with his wife Lilly.



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larly the Gospels. This in turn brought renewal to the heart of Latin American Catholicism. It also led to theological flourishing among both Catholics and Protestants beginning in the 1960s. Since then its impact on the doing of theology throughout the entire continent has been permanent. However, as Argentine theologian José Míguez Bonino has pointed out, the Christological emphasis of evangelical theology in Latin America may have had reductionist consequences, and the time has come for a rediscovery of the trinitarian core of the Christian faith. This is the challenging agenda for the future, and I think we have started to move in the right direction.

In this article I will primarily analyze theological developments within Latin American Protestantism, and, more specifically, what is being done within the *Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana* (FTL, Latin American Theological Fellowship), which has now entered into its fifth decade of life and theological reflection.

The Trinity as a Hermeneutical Criterion

Due to their continuity with previous decades, I would first like to mention four theologians whose work has extended into the present: José Míguez Bonino, Justo L. González, René Padilla, and Juan Stam. They have contributed to Latin American theological reflection with writings of long-lasting value. In his book *Faces of Latin American Protestantism*, Míguez Bonino first offers an excellent proposal of interpretation and then presents us with a theological proposal. For Míguez Bonino, “the theological weakness of Latin American Protestantism is not so much the absence of theology, nor its deviations—which, as we have seen, exist—but rather its ‘reductionism’.” According to his analysis, that reductionism is largely due to its heritage of Anglo-American “religious awakenings whose fervor and impact,” Míguez Bonino affirms,