WORLDLINESS AND CHURCH GROWTH

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This is an old quote from Rene Padilla, but it still resonates:

> *Over a quarter of a century ago, at the Lausanne Congress. I qualified as worldliness the attempt to win converts by reducing the demands of the gospel so as Â·to produce the greatest number of Christians at the least possible cost in the least possible time' (1975 p. 126). The same message continues to be urgently needed today. At the risk of sounding too critical, it must be said that the post-modern church has found the formula to obtain phenomenal growth, but at the very high cost of replacing historical Christianity with a cheap version of the gospel.*
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> *A serious misunderstanding of both the mission and the message of the church lies at the root of the problem present in the type of church growth that, by virtue of the globalisation of the Neo-liberal economic system as well as of post-modern culture. has become fashion-able in Latin America and other parts of the world in the last few decades. When numerical growth is given prominence in the strategy for the church's mission, the door is opened for all kinds of distortions not only in the mission but also in the very life and in the message of the church. As Christian A. Schwarz (1996) has argued. There are things that we can do and things that we cannot do with regard to church growth. and focusing simply on numerical church growth is precisely what we cannot do. Consequently, he adds. 'our work should concentrate on organizing the institutional pole of the church in a way which is consistent with divine principles. so that the organic pole can grow in the healthiest possible way and without unnecessary hindrances' (p. 99. my translation).*

You can find the link to the full paper here. It comes from the amazing archive at the Biblical Studies website.