

# *C. René Padilla and the Origins of Integral Mission in Post-War Latin America*

by DAVID C. KIRKPATRICK

University of Edinburgh

E-mail: [d.c.kirkpatrick@sms.ed.ac.uk](mailto:d.c.kirkpatrick@sms.ed.ac.uk)

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*This article discusses the origins of 'misión integral' or integral mission, a term coined by the Ecuadorian theologian C. René Padilla (b. 1932). As the first critical study of Padilla, it argues that the origins of 'misión integral' are to be found within a cluster of political and social forces that were reshaping post-war Latin America: rural-urban migration, the resulting complications of urbanisation and the rapid expansion of the universities, where Marxist ideas of revolutionary change were of growing appeal to students. This article relies on interviews with many of the leading personalities involved, together with personal papers, archival research and Latin American census data.*

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In June 1977 René Padilla, John Stott, Orlando Costas and José Míguez Bonino descended a winding road tucked into the side of Irazú, an active volcano in Cordillera Central, Costa Rica, just outside the city of Cartago. One topic dominated their conversation: the efficacy of Marxism versus capitalism, and the compatibility of each with Christianity. As they navigated the narrow road, the four theologians stopped to watch 'two teams of peasants ploughing a hillside field, and sowing it with potatoes'. John Stott recorded in his travel diary soon after

BGCA = Billy Graham Center Archives; BGEA = Billy Graham Evangelistic Association; CLADE = Congreso Latinoamericano de Evangelización; FTL = Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana; IFES = International Fellowship of Evangelical Students; IVCF = InterVarsity Christian Fellowship; IVF = Inter-Varsity Fellowship; SCM = Student Christian Movement; UCCF = Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship; UNAM = Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México; WCC = World Council of Churches; WCSF = World Christian Student Federation

All interviews cited in this article were conducted in the language of the participants and translated by the author.

that ‘Two oxen were yoked to a simple wooden plough, while barefoot men walked up the furrows rhythmically scattering fertiliser and potatoes.’<sup>1</sup> This living parable offered a vivid backdrop to discussions of the relationship between Christianity and politics, theology and economics, along with power, corruption and the future of Latin America. The conversation also provides a window into the new religious landscape of the post-war period – an increasingly diverse and increasingly global Evangelicalism, represented by a Latin American Methodist liberation theologian in Míguez Bonino, an ecumenical Evangelical in Costas, a British Evangelical Anglican clergyman in Stott, and a progressive Evangelical in Padilla.<sup>2</sup>

Three years earlier 2,473 Protestant Evangelical leaders from over 150 countries and 135 denominations had gathered in Lausanne under the leadership of the North American Southern Baptist Billy Graham (b. 1918) and the British Anglican John Stott (1921–2011) for the International Congress on World Evangelisation.<sup>3</sup> The conference was largely planned and funded by a Western leadership – particularly by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. As the conference unfolded, however, it became clear that Western-planned agenda for the entire world were no longer tenable. Indeed, the most incisive contributions at Lausanne came from leaders from the Global South, from men such as Padilla rather than Western Evangelical leaders such as Stott and Graham. Here Padilla decried the exportation of ‘American culture Christianity’ and prepackaged theological methodologies exported from the west to the Majority World. The influence of René Padilla on the radical reshaping of global Evangelical Protestant mission remains an untold story. From where, therefore, did Padilla’s prescient intellectual contribution come? If his influence has been largely obscured, how might uncovering the origins of his intellectual contribution shed light on global shifts within the social and political activism of post-war Protestant Evangelicalism?

<sup>1</sup> ‘Stott 6/1/15 travel diaries, 1977’, John R. W. Stott papers, Lambeth Palace Library, London.

<sup>2</sup> While the Spanish ‘evangélico’ differs from the English ‘Evangelical,’ these theologians identified themselves as both, so that the English term may be used here. The best definition of Protestant Evangelicalism remains David Bebbington’s quadrilateral: *Evangelicalism in modern Britain: a history from the 1730s to the 1980s*, London 1993, 2–3. The definitive scholarly biography of Stott is Alister Chapman, *Godly ambition: John Stott and the Evangelical movement*, Oxford 2012. For Míguez Bonino see Paul Davies, *Faith seeking effectiveness: the missionary theology of José Míguez Bonino*, Zoetermeer 2006.

<sup>3</sup> BGCA, Wheaton, Illinois, SC 46, box 30, folder 18. See Brian Stanley, ‘“Lausanne 1974”: the challenge from the majority world to northern-hemisphere Evangelicalism’, this JOURNAL lxiv (2013), 540, and *The global diffusion of Evangelicalism*, Nottingham–Downers Grove, IL 2013, and T. E. Yates, *Christian mission in the twentieth century*, Cambridge 1994.

Three possible conclusions may be suggested: that René Padilla played a central role in the rise of both Majority World leadership and holistic themes in World Christianity in the second half of the twentieth century; that in order to do justice to this reality, teachers of late modern Christianity should use the language of integral mission; and that integral mission arose from within the revolutionary Latin American university environment. Thus, while Protestant Evangelical and liberation theologians exchanged significant intellectual resources, the origins of integral mission are to be found within shared political and social stimuli, rather than in a wholesale borrowing from liberation theology.

René Padilla became a travelling secretary with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in the late 1950s, a role that required constant contact with universities throughout Latin America. During this time he, along with other Latin American thinkers, began to develop what would later be termed *misión integral*, or integral mission: Padilla is indeed widely considered to be its ‘father’.<sup>4</sup> David Bebbington has clearly demonstrated that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Evangelical social action was largely justified theologically as the removal of ‘obstacles to the progress of the gospel’ or as the elimination of social sins that contravened divine commands.<sup>5</sup> In terms of theological methodology, this fitted squarely within what David Bosch called a ‘two mandate approach’, which predominated in Evangelical theological language prior to the 1970s.<sup>6</sup> This method divided Christian mission into a primary, spiritual mandate and a subordinate (often muted) social mandate. By contrast, integral mission is an understanding that posits that social action and evangelism are both essential and indivisible components of Christian mission – indeed both are central aspects within the Christian Gospel (the Spanish *integral* is used to describe wholemeal bread or wholeness).

While the emerging historiography has begun to recognise Padilla’s contribution in 1974, Lausanne was not the first time that Padilla had clashed with Western leadership, or even a Billy Graham-led conference.<sup>7</sup> Five years earlier Padilla had spoken out against the Evangelical barrier

<sup>4</sup> This English translation has been adopted by René Padilla himself and so will be used in this article.

<sup>5</sup> David Bebbington, ‘Evangelicals and reform: an analysis of social and political action’, *Third Way* (1983), 10–13, and *The nonconformist conscience: chapel and politics, 1870–1914*, London–Boston 1982, 37–60.

<sup>6</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming mission: paradigm shifts in theology of mission*, Maryknoll, NY 1991, 403.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Stanley, “‘Lausanne 1974’”, and *Global diffusion*, and Chapman, *Godly ambition*.

between social action and evangelism in the aftermath of the First Latin American Congress for Evangelisation (Congreso Latinoamericano de Evangelización or CLADE I) of 21–30 November 1969, which had been planned by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.<sup>8</sup> Targetting this methodological barrier, Padilla remarked that ‘This would be equivalent to asking about the relative importance of the right wing and the left wing of a plane.’<sup>9</sup> Padilla’s words, including his metaphor of the ‘two wings’, were repeated throughout the 1970s and 1980s, most clearly in the documents (edited by Stott) of the International Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility, held at Grand Rapids, Michigan, on 19–25 June 1982.<sup>10</sup> Stott has been widely credited with Padilla’s phrase.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, one eulogy stated that ‘[Stott] is famous for saying that evangelism and social responsibility are like ... two wings of a dove’.<sup>12</sup>

Six months prior to the 1974 Lausanne Congress, Stott and Padilla travelled throughout Latin America, preaching and lecturing together under the auspices of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. Their tour included a visit to ‘hardline communist’ political prisoners in southern Chile, who had been ‘interrogated under torture’ by the military regime.<sup>13</sup> It is not surprising that Samuel Escobar, plenary speaker and member of the planning committee at Lausanne 1974, credited Stott and Padilla’s friendship – a friendship that sprang out of the fertile Latin American revolutionary context – for the inclusion of social elements in the Lausanne Covenant.<sup>14</sup> The global Evangelical student movement provided avenues for intellectual exchange that crossed the wide boundaries of ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal’, and ‘West’ *versus* ‘Majority World’. While Stott’s influence has been widely noted, Padilla’s contribution has been widely overlooked.

<sup>8</sup> CLADE, *Acción en Cristo para un continente en crisis*, San José, Costa Rica 1970; C. René Padilla, ‘CLADE III: un <<hito>> en la historia de la Iglesia’, in *Discipulado y misión: compromiso con el reino de Dios*, Buenos Aires 1997, 118. Personal correspondence, planning and general papers from CLADE I can be found in BGCA, collection 324.

<sup>9</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Teología Latinoamericana: ¿Izquierdista o evangélica?*, Miami 1969.

<sup>10</sup> John R. W. Stott, *Making Christ known: historic mission documents from the Lausanne movement, 1974–1989*, Exeter 1996, 182.

<sup>11</sup> Chris Wright is one of many who have used the phrase: *The mission of God: unlocking the Bible’s grand narrative*, Downers Grove, IL 2006, 316.

<sup>12</sup> Roy McCloughry, ‘John Stott, 1921–2011’, *Third Way* (Sept. 2011), <http://www.thirdwaymagazine.co.uk/editions/sept-2011/features/john-stott-1921-2011.aspx>.

<sup>13</sup> Southern Chile, 24–31 Jan. 1974, John Stott papers.

<sup>14</sup> David C. Kirkpatrick interview with Samuel Escobar, Valencia, Spain, 21 Oct. 2013.

*The historiographical landscape*

Historiography on late modern Christianity continues stubbornly to ignore developments from the Global South – a surprising omission given that the vast majority of Christians today live in the Global South, and exert increasing influence on Western Christianity. Literature that has begun to address this gap include David Stoll's 1990 work *Is Latin America turning Protestant?*, which began the narrative in the 1970s, defining integral mission with reference to liberation theology.<sup>15</sup> Other titles have followed suit.<sup>16</sup> The most recent historiography on the influence of Latin American Evangelical Protestants has been surprisingly silent on its origins.<sup>17</sup> For example, Daniel Salinas, in his important *Latin American Evangelical theology in the 1970s*, followed Stoll by excluding the 1950s and 1960s, instead focusing narrowly on the 1970s.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, in his 2012 *Moral minority*, David Swartz highlighted the influence of Escobar and Padilla on the rise of progressive Evangelical politics in the United States.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, helpful studies from Brian Stanley have contributed to a growing consensus regarding the importance of Evangelical Protestant voices from the Global South.<sup>20</sup> These works contribute to understanding the eventual influence of the ideas of Latin American Evangelical Protestants. Yet, in order to grasp and communicate trends that shaped late modern World Christianity, further study is needed. The origins of integral mission and the importance of social location in the rise of Latin American Protestant Evangelical social theology in the 1950s and 1960s has been overlooked or understated.<sup>21</sup> By uncovering the origins and development of integral mission, this study will provide a missing historiographical link to

<sup>15</sup> David Stoll, *Is Latin America turning Protestant? The politics of Evangelical growth*, Berkeley 1990, 131–2.

<sup>16</sup> One recent title suggests that Evangelical Protestant social theology provided a perspective on preexistent liberation categories: Sharon E. Heaney, *Contextual theology for Latin America: liberation themes in Evangelical perspective*, Milton Keynes 2008. None the less it is a valuable attempt at a systematisation of Latin American Protestant Evangelical theology.

<sup>17</sup> Heaney, *Contextual theology*; Daniel Salinas, *Latin American Evangelical theology in the 1970s: the golden decade*, Leiden–Boston 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Largely due to his methodology Salinas follows the recollection of the protagonists: *Latin American Evangelical theology*, 25.

<sup>19</sup> David R. Swartz, *Moral minority: the Evangelical left in an age of conservatism*, Philadelphia 2012, 113.

<sup>20</sup> Stanley, *Global diffusion*, and “‘Lausanne 1974’”.

<sup>21</sup> The best historical survey of the origins of liberation theology remains Christian Smith, *The emergence of liberation theology: radical religion and social movement theory*, Chicago 1991. See also David Tombs, *Latin American liberation theology*, Leiden–Boston 2002.

intellectual ideas that reshaped the Protestant Evangelical world – in politics, mission and ecclesiology.

*The rise of the Latin American university*

Careful scrutiny of Latin American census data reveals two preliminary conclusions regarding the vast post-war matriculation boom at Latin American universities. The first appears to be a stark, interwar increase in rural-urban migration. The second is a great surge in student enrolment within the universities themselves. According to the 1930 Mexican census, Mexico City, had nearly 961,000 inhabitants.<sup>22</sup> By time of the next census, a decade later, the city's population had grown to almost 1.5 million.<sup>23</sup> Peru recorded similar urban growth during this period. The population of Lima stood at nearly 300,000, according to the November 1931 government census.<sup>24</sup> Less than a decade later it had nearly doubled, with over 500,000 inhabitants in 1940.<sup>25</sup> This trend continued: Lima's population reached over 800,000 in 1950.<sup>26</sup> These countries were by no means unique within Latin America. Indeed, the political scientist George Blanksten wrote in 1960 that 'There is no Latin American country in which there has been a trend away from urbanisation; everywhere the impressive fact has been the movement toward the city, the swelling of urban populations.'<sup>27</sup> The interwar and post-war era in Latin America witnessed an explosion of urban migration, with a rise in economic ambitions as its corollary.

These patterns converged in the Latin American university. For example, the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) had in 1928 an enrolment of 7,527 students, which by 1950 had ballooned to nearly 25,000. By 1960 the student population in that year had surpassed the aggregate for the whole of the 1940s. Indeed, the total number of graduates between 1940 and 1950 numbered only 62,584, while in the year 1960 alone, the university had over 70,000 students. Today UNAM has nearly 325,000 students, over 36,000 academic staff and an endowment of over 2.5 billion US dollars – a vast increase on its 7,000 students of nearly a century ago.<sup>28</sup> Mexican universities certainly

<sup>22</sup> M. Epstein (ed.), *Statesman's yearbook, 1935*, London 1935, 1117.

<sup>23</sup> Idem, *Statesman's yearbook, 1945*, London 1945, 1087.

<sup>24</sup> Idem, *Statesman's yearbook, 1933*, London 1933, 1193.

<sup>25</sup> Idem, *Statesman's yearbook, 1945*, 1176.

<sup>26</sup> S. H. Steinberg (ed.), *Statesman's yearbook, 1955*, London 1955, 1302.

<sup>27</sup> Gabriel A. Coleman and James Smoot Almond, *The politics of the developing areas*, Princeton, NJ 1960, cited in Josué De Castro, Irving Louis Horowitz and John Gerassi (eds), *Latin American radicalism: a documentary report on left and nationalist movements*, London 1968.

<sup>28</sup> 'La UNAM en números', 30 Sept. 2013, [http://www.estadistica.unam.mx/numer-  
alia/](http://www.estadistica.unam.mx/numer-<br/>alia/).

were not alone in witnessing this phenomenon – indeed it was universal in Latin America.<sup>29</sup> The most prominent university in Peru, for example, the Universidad de San Marcos, had 1,849 students in 1928, nearly 9,000 by 1955 and 14,000 by 1962.<sup>30</sup>

Burgeoning populations and expanding universities ultimately overwhelmed the urban infrastructure. Certainly large-scale industrialisation followed upon widespread urbanisation. However, while countries such as Colombia saw a level of industrial growth in the 1930s similar to that of Great Britain in the nineteenth century, growth tapered off after 1945.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, industrialisation and economic growth were unable to keep pace with the demand for work. This story of rural-urban migration, the accompanying influx of university students, and declining economic opportunity set the stage for revolutionary action in cities around Latin America.

René Padilla observed this in the mid-1960s and wrote a series of articles about it.<sup>32</sup> In ‘La universidad: lo social, lo spiritual’ (‘The university: the social, the spiritual’) Padilla diagnosed a ‘social bottle neck’: an abundant desire for upward mobility but a dearth of opportunity to achieve it.<sup>33</sup> Padilla wrote that ‘The university has become the sore spot where the sickness of the whole organism is made evident.’<sup>34</sup> Enrolment at a university was far from a guarantee of socioeconomic improvement: according to Padilla, only about a quarter of those who enrolled eventually graduated, and those who did graduate faced meagre job prospects.<sup>35</sup> Most Latin American cities also lacked the structural framework to integrate so increased a population. The rate of urbanisation was far higher than the rate of industrialisation, in some cases as much as double the rate.<sup>36</sup> To put it another way, ‘The urban process raised levels of social aspiration

<sup>29</sup> See C. René Padilla, ‘Student witness in Latin America today’, *IFES Journal* xix/2 (1966), 13.

<sup>30</sup> M. Epstein (ed.), *Statesman’s yearbook*, 1930, London 1930, 1195; S. H. Steinberg (ed.), *Statesman’s yearbook*, 1950, London 1950, 1303, 1322.

<sup>31</sup> David Bushnell, *The making of modern Colombia: a nation in spite of itself*, Berkeley, CA 1993, 186.

<sup>32</sup> Padilla, ‘Student witness’; ‘El testimonio cristiano en la universidad Latinoamericana’, *Pensamiento Cristiano* xiv/55 (1967), 176–83; and ‘La universidad: lo social, lo spiritual’, *Certeza* viii/31 (1968), 205–7. The latter article can also be found in the C. René Padilla papers, Kairos Center, Buenos Aires, Argentina, uncatalogued.

<sup>33</sup> Padilla, ‘La universidad’, 205.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Idem*, ‘Student witness’, 12–13. These figures appear to be inflated and are difficult to verify.

<sup>36</sup> Irving Louis Horowitz, ‘The socioeconomic pivot’, in De Castro, Horowitz, and Gerassi, *Latin American radicalism*, 148.

without relieving economic pressures.<sup>37</sup> This led to widespread disillusion, particularly among young people.<sup>38</sup> The importance of political action among university students is better understood when seen in this light. According to Padilla

The student strikes (which at times lead to the closing of the university for weeks and even months) ... are mere manifestations of the problems that afflict the whole society ... From this perspective it is possible to explain the importance that politics is given among the students ... the professional agitator seeks to channel the bitterness of the oppressed into the narrow passages of a violent revolution.<sup>39</sup>

Latin American history demonstrates a long tradition of government toleration of student radicalism.<sup>40</sup> But much had changed in the preceding decade: the Cuban revolution, a rapid spread of repressive military regimes, and mass rural-urban migration. All these factors converged in the Latin American university context.<sup>41</sup> Social unrest in Latin America mirrored broader global student uprisings, such as the Paris student riots of 1968, the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia, the Vietnam War protests including the Kent State shooting of 1970, events surrounding the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, and widespread student protests in Britain in 1968 and the years that followed.<sup>42</sup> While protests raged around the world, those in Latin America were particularly violent and widespread.

In this environment, Latin American social theologies that challenged the Western theological *status quo* were often viewed with suspicion and fear; trends in migration and urbanisation had set the stage for the rise of Protestantism, bringing new ideas and practices that challenged traditional Latin American religion.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 145.

<sup>38</sup> Padilla, 'La universidad', 206; 'Student witness', 13; and 'El testimonio cristiano', 178.

<sup>39</sup> Idem, 'Student witness', 12.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, David Espinosa, 'Student politics, national politics: Mexico's national student union, 1926-1943', *The Americas* lxii/4 (2006), 533-62; cf. Risto Lehtonen, *Story of a storm: the ecumenical student movement in the turmoil of revolution, 1968 to 1973*, Grand Rapids 1998, 42.

<sup>41</sup> Tombs, *Latin American liberation theology*, 68.

<sup>42</sup> For more on global student protests see Lehtonen, *Story of a storm*, 43-4. See also E. R. Norman, *Christianity and the world order*, Oxford 1979, 52. For more on the rise of third world theologies, and their impact on the missionary movement see Stanley, *Global diffusion*, 25.

<sup>43</sup> Todd Hartch, *The rebirth of Latin American Christianity*, Oxford 2014, 12.



*Migration and social theology: the Padilla family*

René Padilla's own family was part of the story of migration in Colombia in the 1930s. They moved to Colombia from Ecuador in 1934 when he was two-and-a-half years old, as his father Carlos sought a better market for his tailoring business.<sup>44</sup> The country was experiencing unprecedented economic growth, especially in the textile industry.<sup>45</sup> Like that of other Latin American cities, the population of Bogotá had exploded.<sup>46</sup> While initially sustained by massive industrial growth, Colombia's infrastructure was unable to support it.<sup>47</sup>

Carlos Padilla was, as Padilla put it, a tailor by necessity, and an Evangelical church planter by choice.<sup>48</sup> Both Padilla's parents became Evangelical Christians before he was born, through the influence of Padilla's uncle, Eddie Vuerto, who, according to Padilla, was one of the first Evangelical pastors in Ecuador.<sup>49</sup> While economics was the impetus for crossing borders, evangelism meant that the Padillas were often on the move within Bogotá.<sup>50</sup> The family's Evangelical activism did not go unnoticed by local Roman Catholics. Multiple arson attempts were made on the Padilla household, while numerous Evangelical church buildings were burned down around them. Padilla was unable to attend first grade because the local school excluded Protestant children – a female church member taught him at home, instead.<sup>51</sup> When he was eventually able to attend school, the challenges only increased. To this day he bears scars from stones thrown at him as he walked down the streets of Bogotá, when he was only seven years old. Both Padilla and his older brother Washington were later expelled from school – Padilla for not attending a Roman Catholic procession in honour of the cardinal, and Washington for arguing with a teacher from the Bible. Twice people came to their house to burn it down, but were stopped by police.<sup>52</sup> By the time that

<sup>44</sup> C. René Padilla, 'My theological pilgrimage', *Journal of Latin American Theology* iv/2 (2009), 91–111. This article also appears in Darren C. Marks (ed.), *Shaping a global theological mind*, Burlington, VT, 2008, 127–37; cf. Paul Ericksen interview with René Padilla, 12 Mar. 1987, BGCA, collection 361, T1.

<sup>45</sup> Bushnell, *Modern Colombia*, 186.

<sup>46</sup> Epstein, *Statesman's yearbook*, 1945; Bushnell, *Modern Colombia*, 186.

<sup>47</sup> Bushnell, *Modern Colombia*, 186.

<sup>48</sup> Ericksen-Padilla interview. See also C. René Padilla, 'Siervo de la palabra,' in C. René Padilla (ed.), *Hacia una teología evangélica latinoamericana*, San José 1984, 113–20.

<sup>49</sup> Padilla, 'Siervo de la palabra'.

<sup>50</sup> Idem, 'Pilgrimage', 127.

<sup>51</sup> David C. Kirkpatrick interview with René Padilla, Buenos Aires, 13 Sept. 2013.

<sup>52</sup> 'Stott 6/1/15 travel diaries 1977', Stott papers; cf. Padilla, 'Pilgrimage,' 128.

Padilla was eighteen years old, multiple attempts had been made on his life – including an assassination attempt while he was preaching outside his father’s new church.<sup>53</sup> Padilla has described the ‘persecution’ as ‘part and parcel of life for non-Roman Catholic Christians and others in pre-2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council Days’.<sup>54</sup> Looking back, he simply notes that this was part of being a faithful Evangelical Christian: ‘In Colombia you had to identify yourself as an Evangelical Christian, and if you did, you had to take the consequences.’<sup>55</sup>

As an economic migrant and a member of a religious minority, Padilla came of age within a context of violence, oppression and exclusion. The relationship between suffering and theology was an organic one for Padilla – although he lacked knowledge of the theological social categories at the time. He later recalled ‘longing to understand the meaning of the Christian faith in relation to issues of justice and peace in a society deeply marked by oppression, exploitation, and abuse of power’.<sup>56</sup> For Padilla, however, his ‘inherited’ Protestant Evangelical Gospel provided few answers to the questions that came out of a Latin American context. It spoke strongly of an individual, vertical salvation while remaining mute on the capacity of the ‘social dimensions in the gospel’ to address horizontal issues.<sup>57</sup> The question, for Padilla, was not whether the Gospel could engage with a revolutionary Latin American context, but how.

### *René Padilla at Wheaton College*

With the help of American missionaries in Ecuador, in August 1953 René Padilla enrolled at Wheaton College, Illinois, an Evangelical Christian institution with a considerable academic reputation.<sup>58</sup> Padilla attended Wheaton from 1953 to 1959, completing his Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Master of Arts in Theology. During his time away from Latin America, Padilla developed some aspects of his theological thinking at the expense of others. Social questions were in abeyance, as he focused on the conservative Evangelical emphases of the time, such as the ‘historical-grammatical approach to hermeneutics’, which he learned from Professor A. Berkeley Mickelsen.<sup>59</sup> Padilla would later describe this

<sup>53</sup> Kirkpatrick-Padilla interview, 13 Sept. 2013.

<sup>54</sup> Padilla, ‘Pilgrimage’, 128.

<sup>55</sup> Ericksen-Padilla interview. For the socio-political tumult in Colombia after 1930 see Herbert Braun, *The assassination of Gaitán: public life and urban violence in Colombia*, Madison, WI 2003.

<sup>56</sup> Padilla, ‘Pilgrimage’, 94.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 94–5.

<sup>58</sup> Ericksen-Padilla interview.

<sup>59</sup> Padilla, ‘Pilgrimage’, 97–8.

approach as ‘a good and necessary step, but ... not enough’.<sup>60</sup> At Wheaton, Padilla discovered the centrality of Christology, the importance of eschatology and the ‘tools of exegesis’ such as Koine Greek and biblical Hebrew.<sup>61</sup> Questions of social theology, however, were less pressing in the comfortable North American suburban context.

Padilla returned to Latin America in 1959 after being appointed an IFES travelling secretary for Latin America, specifically for Venezuela, Colombia, Peru and Ecuador. Padilla was often away from his family for weeks at a time, immersed as he was in student work on Latin American university campuses.<sup>62</sup> This widespread contact with universities and students around Latin America gave him a unique perspective on the socio-political situation. The stark contrast with Wheaton and the shock of returning to Latin America threw into question his theological categories, particularly those that he had formulated at Wheaton. The effects of the Cuban Revolution of 1953–9 reverberated throughout Latin America, and university students pressed Christian student workers for a response to the pull of revolution.<sup>63</sup> Padilla immediately perceived the inadequacy of Western Protestant Evangelical theology in this context: ‘In this [university] context I found myself lacking a social ethic. My years of studies in the United States had not prepared me for the sort of theological reflection that was urgently needed in a revolutionary situation!’<sup>64</sup> Padilla’s own dissatisfaction with existing approaches to ministry, combined with student demand for social engagement, resulted in a unique social theology.<sup>65</sup> The Latin American university campus became a laboratory for new theologies, particularly within the IFES.

### *Theology meets revolution: student work at the Latin American university*

The IFES was founded in August 1947 at Phillips Brooks’s house at Harvard.<sup>66</sup> It is the worldwide representative body that arose out of Inter-

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 98. See also Kirkpatrick-Padilla interview, 13 Sept. 2013.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Samuel Escobar, *La chispa y la llama: breve historia de la Comunidad Internacional de Estudiantes Evangélicos en América Latina*, Buenos Aires 1978, 70.

<sup>63</sup> Padilla, ‘Pilgrimage,’ 97.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> See Samuel Escobar, ‘Doing theology on Christ’s Road’, in Jeffrey P. Greenman and Gene L. Green (eds), *Global theology in Evangelical perspective: exploring the contextual nature of theology and mission*, Downers Grove, IL 2012, 67.

<sup>66</sup> Pete Lowman, *The day of his power: a history of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students*, Downers Grove, IL 1988, 79; A. Donald MacLeod, *C. Stacey Woods and the Evangelical rediscovery of the university*, Downers Grove, IL 2007, 251. For the founding of IFES see C. Stacey Woods, *The growth of a work of God: the story of the early days of the*

Varsity Fellowship (IVF), later known in Britain as the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship (UCCF), and the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship-USA (IVCF), its US counterpart. Its Latin American work began in 1945 with mostly North American missionaries working in Mexico, Peru and Central America.<sup>67</sup> That Latin America was in ferment was one of the first observations made by Western student mission leaders as the IFES began to expand its ministry southward in the 1940s. Antipathy toward Protestant Evangelicals, who were seen as foreign or ‘gringos’, only increased as revolutionary movements multiplied.<sup>68</sup> Protestants were often seen as sympathetic to military regimes domestically, or to the interests of the American government or the CIA internationally. Indeed, Ed Pentecost, the first IFES student worker in Latin America wrote in 1948 that ‘Probably not six months have gone by in the last fifteen years when some have not been killed for being Protestants and many more burnt out of their homes.’<sup>69</sup> The IFES was certainly not alone in its proximity to political ferment: reports from ecumenical SCM staff workers are strikingly similar to those of IFES staff.<sup>70</sup>

In the political realm, university students in Latin America grappled with the attraction of revolutionary action – whether protest, violence or even guerrilla warfare – as a response to socio-political unrest.<sup>71</sup> In Latin America, students had political clout, due both to their numbers and to the fact that they were educated: in Colombia, for example, 60 per cent of the population was illiterate in the late 1960s.<sup>72</sup> University students were therefore one of the few groups that was able to engage with the political and particularly the Marxist literature of the day.<sup>73</sup> Escobar and Padilla were immersed in the same milieu as liberation theologians – engaging with the issues raised by university students.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, when the Peruvian Evangelical Pedro Arana (Padilla’s successor as IFES general secretary for Latin America) was a student leader with IFES, he enrolled in ‘various summer courses’ with his fellow-Peruvian, Gustavo

*Inter-varsity Christian Fellowship of the United States of America as told by its first General Secretary*, Downers Grove, IL 1978, 137–41.

<sup>67</sup> For the founding of IFES in Latin America see Escobar, *La chispa y la llama*; Woods, *The growth of a work of God*, 32–4; and Lowman, *The day of his power*, 189–201.

<sup>68</sup> Kirkpatrick-Padilla interview, 10 Sept. 2013.

<sup>69</sup> *His* (June–Sept. 1948), 47, cited in Escobar, *La chispa y la llama*, 51.

<sup>70</sup> See, for example, WCSF papers, Yale Divinity School Archives, collection 46, box 284, folder 2500.

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, Camilo Torres Restrepo, ‘Message to students’, in De Castro, Horowitz and Gerassi, *Latin American radicalism*, 497–8.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* 496.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* This article originally appeared in *La Gaceta* (Bogata) xiii (Mar–Apr. 1965) (trans. Morton Marks).

<sup>74</sup> Escobar, *La chispa y la llama*, 86.

Gutiérrez, such as lectures in July 1968 in Chimbote, Peru.<sup>75</sup> These lectures later became Gutiérrez's masterwork, *A theology of liberation*.<sup>76</sup> Escobar recalled Arana visiting his home afterwards and discussing the lectures.<sup>77</sup>

IFES in Latin America operated with a constant eye toward the changing political situation. Samuel Escobar, in particular, noted the intimate connection between revolution and theology in 1966, the year of the death of the Catholic guerrilla priest, Camilo Torres Restrepo.<sup>78</sup> The previous year Torres had made a direct appeal to university students in Colombia, in the newspaper *La Gaceta*, to join the Marxist revolution.<sup>79</sup> Escobar described the revolutionary situation that greeted IFES staff workers at Latin American universities in the 1960s and 1970s:

Around 1966 the challenge of Marxism and of leftist nationalists in general had stopped being only ideological and political ... Guerrilla warfare as a way of attaining power and transforming the world had quickly become an extremely attractive doctrine and practice, *especially in the universities*. Every question regarding violence and subversion touched, in one way or another, the field of theology and the teaching of the Bible.<sup>80</sup>

Protestant Evangelicals such as Padilla and Escobar were not immune to the attraction of revolution. The questions posed by Marxism challenged the core of their theology. Samuel Escobar recalled being 'tempted' as a young man by the Marxist social analysis of class and power; it spoke to the yawning gap between rich and poor in Peru and the obvious hegemony of the ruling class.<sup>81</sup> René Padilla credited Ecuadorian 'Marxist and atheist' high school teachers with having 'implant[ed]' questions of social justice and peace into his mind at a young age. Padilla himself did not see Marxism as inherently incompatible with Christianity, but cautioned against using social-scientific analysis as an 'ideological straight-jacket' for the Bible: an accusation that he levelled at some liberation theologians, such as Juan Luis Segundo.<sup>82</sup> Padilla turned to the writings of a Scotsman, the Princeton theologian and writer on Latin American Christianity John A. Mackay, along with those of Mexican writers such as Gonzalo Báez-Camargo, and Alberto Rembao. Yet, rather than

<sup>75</sup> David C. Kirkpatrick (Skype) interview with Pedro Arana, 11 Mar. 2014; cf. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A theology of liberation: history, politics, and salvation*, Maryknoll, NY 1973, p. xi.

<sup>76</sup> Kirkpatrick-Arana interview.

<sup>77</sup> Kirkpatrick-Escobar interview, 22 Oct. 2013.

<sup>78</sup> Escobar, *La chispa y la llama*, 86.

<sup>79</sup> Restrepo, 'Message to students', 497–8.

<sup>80</sup> Escobar, *La chispa y la llama*, 86 (italics mine).

<sup>81</sup> Kirkpatrick-Escobar interview, 22 Oct. 2013.

<sup>82</sup> C. René Padilla, 'Liberation theology: an appraisal,' in Daniel S. Schipani (ed.), *Freedom and discipleship*, Maryknoll, NY 1989, 47, and 'La teología de la liberación: una evaluación crítica', *Misión* i/2 (1982), 20.

‘vaccinating’ him against Marxism, as was Escobar’s experience with Mackay, this literature stimulated Padilla’s search for an Evangelical Latin American social theology.<sup>83</sup> Padilla reflected that ‘My reading of these authors affirmed in me the conviction that my total inability to articulate a Christian answer to the questions my teachers posed was due to the lack of a social dimension of the gospel I had received at home: a gospel for *individual* salvation by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, and little more than that.’<sup>84</sup> These theological questions would resurface years later, after ‘hibernating’ during his studies in North America.<sup>85</sup> Upon returning to Latin America, Padilla began to explore social theology through his service among the poor.

*Emerging social theology and new theological avenues: Lima, 1966*

In January 1966 Samuel Escobar and René Padilla developed and presented, in Lima, the first Latin American-led training course for IFES university students. This course was immensely important for the development of socio-contextual theological ideas. Each afternoon, after ‘discipleship’ and evangelism training, the students were sent into poor neighbourhoods to work with local churches in service projects. C. Stacey Woods, the IFES general secretary, had initially been sceptical,<sup>86</sup> but he increasingly deferred to his Latin American staff, allowing them to set the direction and content of student work and thus providing an intellectual freedom that was unconventional within contemporary Protestant Evangelical student ministries. The curriculum of the Lima course in 1966 had evolved from eight years of experience in the Latin American university context and mirrored broader trends in Latin American Christianity, such as the Roman Catholic Church’s shift toward the poor in the mid-1960s.<sup>87</sup>

Unfortunately, historiography has credited Western leaders with the curriculum, in particular in interpreting it as based upon a training course led by Hans Bürki in 1965 at Casa Moscia, Switzerland, which Padilla and Escobar attended. Pete Lowman, for example, mistranslated and misquoted Escobar as saying that the 1966 Lima course was ‘something which gave form to all that *we had learnt*’ from Bürki and his course. Other historians have followed Lowman’s lead, as described in his *The day of his power*, which relied heavily on Samuel Escobar’s *La chispa y la*

<sup>83</sup> Kirkpatrick-Escobar interview, 22 Oct. 2013; Samuel Escobar, ‘My pilgrimage in mission’, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* xxxvi/4 (2012), 206.

<sup>84</sup> Padilla, ‘Pilgrimage’, 94–5.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* 96.

<sup>86</sup> Kirkpatrick-Padilla interview, 10 Sept. 2013.

<sup>87</sup> Escobar, *La chispa y la llama*, 81. On the Roman Catholic Church see especially Tombs, *Latin American liberation theology*, 85–6, 96–7.

*llama*.<sup>88</sup> Escobar himself wrote of the 1966 Lima course that ‘We had begun to articulate something that was very Evangelical but also very much our own: something which brought together *our own experience* (*propia vivencia*), inside the tradition of the Fellowship.’<sup>89</sup> That unique element was social theology, manifested in concrete social action among the poor.<sup>90</sup>

Careful attention to archival documents and unpublished papers also clarifies and corrects the oral history concerning this course. The 1966 Lima course was the first initiative taken by Padilla after his return from Manchester, where he had completed his PhD under F. F. Bruce (1910–90). At the time, Bruce was ‘the most prominent conservative Evangelical biblical scholar of the post-war era’.<sup>91</sup> Padilla had been appointed the first General Secretary of IFES for Latin America after finishing in October of 1965 and graduating *in absentia* in June of 1966. Padilla later recalled the Lima course as ‘a way of promoting not only evangelisation as oral proclamation of the Gospel, but of promoting integral discipleship, including the social dimension of the Gospel’.<sup>92</sup> Yet, this rounded understanding of integral mission is probably being applied retroactively here. The first time that Padilla used the phrase ‘social dimensions of the Gospel’ in writing was in 1973, in an article for *Certeza* (the IFES magazine for Latin America).<sup>93</sup> A year earlier, he had used the phrase ‘dimensions of the gospel’.<sup>94</sup> Yet, in January 1966, Padilla still had his PhD thesis fresh in his mind. There his language reflected the prevalent Protestant Evangelical understanding of social theology: social action was a necessary implication of the Gospel message, rather than a component of it. Padilla certainly emphasised social action in his thesis when he said that ‘It cannot be overemphasized that the Gospel has social implications’, yet he lambasted the attempt to read social transformation into the Bible:<sup>95</sup>

To the embarrassment of the modern social reformer, in none of the Pauline epistles is there the slightest suggestion that the Church will eventually mould the social structures or that it is incumbent upon her to do so. To hold that ... is an arbitrary modernisation of his teaching. *The idea that the Church is an agency of*

<sup>88</sup> Escobar, *La chispa y la llama*, 80. See also Lowman, *The day of his power*, 201–2 n. 1, and Stanley, *Global diffusion*, 158–9.

<sup>89</sup> Escobar, *La chispa y la llama*, 81.

<sup>90</sup> Kirkpatrick-Escobar interview, 21 Oct. 2013; Padilla to Kirkpatrick, 8 Oct. 2013 (e-mail).

<sup>91</sup> Stanley, *Global diffusion*, 54. Padilla to Kirkpatrick, 8 Oct. 2013 (e-mail).

<sup>92</sup> Padilla to Kirkpatrick, 8 Oct. 2013 (e-mail).

<sup>93</sup> C. René Padilla, ‘Evangelio y responsabilidad social’, *Certeza* vii/52 (1973), 108–13.

<sup>94</sup> Idem, ‘La teología en Latinoamérica’, *Boletín Teológico* ii (1972), 7.

<sup>95</sup> Idem, ‘Church and world: a study of the relation between the Church and the world in the teaching of the Apostle Paul’, unpubl. PhD diss. Manchester 1965, 245.

*'social redemption' to be brought about through the permeation of society by Christian principles is a modern invention; the attempt to justify it by an appeal to Paul or any other Biblical writer is doomed to failure.*<sup>96</sup>

It is clear, then, that in the mid-1960s René Padilla's understanding of social ethics reflected mainstream Protestant Evangelical theology. Archival documents also confirm that his doctoral thesis was still very close to him – indeed, it formed the basis of his plenary talk at Lima in 1966 entitled 'The Church and the world'. One participant wrote that 'In René Padilla's lectures the conclusion of more liberal theological approaches was rejected, i.e. that God's purpose is to change the structures of society ... the only Biblical approach that of [*sic*] winning the individual in bringing him deliverance from the Kingdom of Darkness to the Kingdom of Light.'<sup>97</sup>

In his thesis, Padilla discovered the raw material that would later inform his understanding of integral mission – mainly the inseparability of word and action, the kingdom of God as the basis for social ethics, and eschatology as its framework.<sup>98</sup> Careful attention to chronology here also reveals that Padilla discovered and began to use kingdom of God language prior to the rise of liberation theology.<sup>99</sup> (Here, Padilla appropriated the use made by the North American Baptist George Eldon Ladd [1911–82] of the phrase 'already and not yet' to represent the present and future characteristics of the Kingdom of God.)<sup>100</sup> The effect of returning to Latin America threw into question Padilla's understanding of social theology, and demanded, in Padilla's words, 'a new way of doing theology' – a phrase that finds critical continuity with Gutiérrez.<sup>101</sup> Padilla lacked the theological categories of integral mission but not the space to experiment with praxis-oriented ministry. Padilla and his wife Catharine Feser Padilla carried out significant ministries among the poor, widowed and addicts both in their home and in the Evangelical Baptist Church of La Lucila in Buenos Aires.<sup>102</sup> Padilla later, in 1976, became a pastor of that church.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 252 (italics mine). See also p. 258.

<sup>97</sup> J. W. Voelkel to Ruben Lores, 19 Mar. 1966, BGCA, Latin America Mission papers, CN 236, box 11, folder 8.

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, Padilla, 'Church and world', 245 and at pp. 187–8, 212–13, 254, for kingdom of God language.

<sup>99</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *Jesus and the kingdom: the eschatology of Biblical realism*, New York 1964, p. xiv. For Ladd see further John A. D'Elia, *A place at the table: George Eldon Ladd and the rehabilitation of Evangelical scholarship in America*, Oxford–New York 2008.

<sup>100</sup> See David C. Kirkpatrick, 'C. René Padilla: integral mission and the reshaping of global Evangelicalism', unpubl. PhD diss. Edinburgh 2015.

<sup>101</sup> Padilla, 'Pilgrimage', 101; Gutiérrez, *A theology of liberation*, 15.

<sup>102</sup> Much more could be said on the important work and influence of Feser Padilla. See Kirkpatrick, 'C. René Padilla', 123–41.



*From implication to content: René Padilla and the social dimensions of the Gospel*

By 1970 René Padilla had moved from speaking of the social implications of the Gospel to its inescapably social content. He was driven by discontent with the inadequacy both of mainstream Protestant Evangelical theology and also of the gospel of Marxism, which he viewed as ‘devoid of spiritual content’. Similarly, the socio-political context of Argentina, where he had lived since 1967, remained at the forefront of his mind. After Juan Perón’s return from exile in June 1973, and death the following year, Argentina was plunged into chaos. Two years later a *coup d’état* brought back military rule to Argentina, along with the infamous Dirty War, in which between 15,000 and 30,000 alleged leftist sympathisers and civilians were murdered or disappeared.<sup>103</sup> In this context, Padilla continued to search for and to develop a Protestant Evangelical social theology.

In the late 1960s Latin America had become a battleground for the soul of Christian mission. Historic denominations, especially those associated with the WCC, increasingly moved away from the traditional emphases of Protestant mission. For example, in 1968, the WCC gathering in Uppsala radically redefined the purpose of mission as ‘humanisation’ rather than conversion.<sup>104</sup> Many of these global shifts were the result of pressure from the South – including the WCC-sponsored discussion forum ‘Church and Society in Latin America’ or ISAL.<sup>105</sup> In response to socio-political unrest and missiological shifts, the BGEA planned the boldly titled First Latin American Congress for Evangelization (CLADE I).<sup>106</sup> A total of 920 delegates met in Bogotá on 21–30 November 1969.

The explicit goal of CLADE I was the evangelisation of the whole of Latin America.<sup>107</sup> Yet, according to Padilla, the conference was ‘made in the USA’

<sup>103</sup> For more on the Dirty War in Argentina see Marguerite Feitlowitz, *A lexicon of terror: Argentina and the legacies of torture*, Oxford–New York 1998, and Paul H. Lewis, *Guerrillas and generals: the ‘Dirty War’ in Argentina*, Westport, CT 2011.

<sup>104</sup> WCC, *The Church for others, and the Church for the world*, Geneva 1967. For discussion of *The Church for others* see Mark T. B. Laing, *From crisis to creation: Lesslie Newbigin and the reinvention of Christian mission*, Eugene, OR 2012, 208–9. These trends were already taking shape in the 1950s as well. See ‘Report on leadership training course’, Cochabamba, Bolivia, 31 Dec. 1955–15 Jan. 1956, WSCF papers, collection 46, box 284, folder 2693.

<sup>105</sup> Smith, *Liberation theology*, 116; Alan P. Neely, ‘Protestant antecedents of the Latin American theology of liberation’, unpubl. PhD diss. American University, Washington, DC 1977, 189, and also his ‘Liberation theology in Latin America: antecedents and autochthony’, *Missiology: An International Review* vi (1978), 363.

<sup>106</sup> CLADE, *Acción en Cristo*. Personal correspondence, planning and general papers from CLADE I can be found at BGCA, special collection 324.

<sup>107</sup> CLADE, *Acción en Cristo*.

with scant contribution from Latin Americans themselves.<sup>108</sup> Each delegate also received a copy of the American missionary Peter Wagner's *Latin American theology*.<sup>109</sup> Wagner categorised Latin American Christians according to a North American liberal-conservative spectrum.<sup>110</sup> He also posited a contextual Latin American understanding of mission, in which he rejected social action in favour of 'saving souls'. In response, Padilla wrote a scathing article outlining his most explicit case to date for integral mission.<sup>111</sup>

Here, Padilla first addressed what he called 'the customary divorce' between evangelism and social action:<sup>112</sup>

The proclamation of the gospel (*kerygma*) and the demonstration of the gospel that gives itself in service (*diakonia*) form an indivisible (*indisoluble*) whole. One without the other is an incomplete, mutilated (*mutilado*) gospel and, consequently, contrary to the will of God. From this perspective, it is foolish to ask about the relative importance of evangelism and social responsibility. This would be equivalent to asking about the relative importance of the right wing and the left wing of a plane.<sup>113</sup>

Padilla posited an understanding of Christian mission that dissolved the barrier between social action and evangelism. In doing so, he connected mission to the content of the Gospel message. His article was prescient in the context of wider Protestant Evangelical dialogue on social ethics and theology.<sup>114</sup>

At CLADE, Padilla, Escobar, Costas, the Peruvian-born British missionary Peter Savage and others discussed the persistent paternalism of the missionary leadership and the scarcity of contextual Protestant Evangelical theology in Latin America. This group met again in the December of the following year in Bolivia, in the bucolic town of Carachipampa, just outside Cochabamba (although in later press releases, Cochabamba was cited for clarity).<sup>115</sup> There, they founded the *Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana* (the Latin American Theological Fraternity), which became the most influential Latin American Evangelical Protestant theological think-tank.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Padilla, 'CLADE III: un <<hito>> en la historia de la Iglesia', 118.

<sup>109</sup> Wagner was an associate general director of the Bolivian Indian Mission. He later became a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary.

<sup>110</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Latin American theology: radical or Evangelical? The struggle for the faith in a young Church*, Grand Rapids 1970, 9.

<sup>111</sup> C. René Padilla, 'Teología Latinoamericana: ¿Izquierdista o Evangélica?', *Pensamiento Cristiano* xvii/ 66 (1970), 133–40.

<sup>112</sup> This gloss reflects Padilla's English word choice.

<sup>113</sup> Padilla, 'Teología Latinoamericana', 139.

<sup>114</sup> Douglas A. Sweeney, *The American Evangelical story: a history of the movement*, Grand Rapids 2005, 155–80.

<sup>115</sup> 'FTL Consulta 1', undated, Padilla papers; Padilla, 'Pilgrimage', 133.

<sup>116</sup> It was later renamed 'Latin American Theological Fellowship' in order to reflect the gender-neutrality of the Spanish word *fraternidad*.

Throughout the next four decades, FTL consultations and members became key interlocutors for the development of themes of integral mission. Notable conferences included the ‘The Kingdom of God and Latin America’ on 11–18 December at the Seminario Bíblico in Lima, Peru.<sup>117</sup> Padilla’s theological maturation continued to bear fruit. Regarding this conference, Escobar recalled that ‘René had convinced us of the importance of eschatology and of the Kingdom of God for understanding the message of Jesus.’<sup>118</sup> In their papers for the conference Padilla and Míguez Bonino provided their first public explanation of their theologies of the Kingdom – which would become central themes for both liberation theology and integral mission. Padilla continued to publish in Spanish too, increasingly interrogating the ‘dimensions of the gospel’.<sup>119</sup>

Three years later, in 1973, Padilla first asked the question ‘What is the Gospel?’ of the English-speaking world in a book review for *Christianity Today*.<sup>120</sup> That same year he answered the question in Spanish in a monumental article for *Certeza* entitled ‘Evangelio y responsabilidad social’ (Gospel and social responsibility):

Although the Gospel has to do with the personal relation of man with God, it is not simply a formula of individual salvation, but also a proclamation that ... God acted in Jesus Christ to create a new humanity. It is the good news ... of the Kingdom of God in the person of Jesus Christ. And in *this event*, the most important of all time, Christian ethics (as well as theology) encounters its beginning and its end.<sup>121</sup>

Here, Padilla expanded for the first time on his understanding of the ‘social dimension of the Gospel’.<sup>122</sup> For Padilla, the Gospel was more than just a guide to personal salvation – it was the announcement of the coming of the kingdom of God. Later in the same article Padilla collapsed ethics, eschatology and the Gospel together, saying that ‘The Christian ethic is the Gospel clothed until its ultimate consequences.’<sup>123</sup> The following year he used the phrase ‘misión integral’ for the first time in his plenary speech at the Lausanne Congress of 1974, though the English gloss ‘comprehensive mission’ was provided for English speakers.

Later in the same decade, Padilla continued this conversation in English. The IFES general committee met in 1975 at Schloss Mittersill, the IFES

<sup>117</sup> C. René Padilla (ed.), *El reino de Dios y América Latina*, El Paso 1975, 7.

<sup>118</sup> Samuel Escobar to David C. Kirkpatrick, 20 Dec. 2013 (e-mail).

<sup>119</sup> Padilla, ‘La teología en Latinoamérica’, 7.

<sup>120</sup> Idem, ‘What is the Gospel?’, *Christianity Today* xvii/21 (1973), 34–5.

<sup>121</sup> Idem, ‘Evangelio y responsabilidad social’, 109.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

headquarters in Austria, with the theme ‘The Gospel Today’.<sup>124</sup> Padilla’s paper for that meeting was later published in Spanish in *El Evangelio Hoy*, and included in his most famous work, *Misión integral*, and the English version, *Mission between the times*. He wrote that

The most important questions that should be asked with regard to the life and mission of the Church today are not related to the *relevance* but to the *content* of the gospel. To be sure, there is a place for the consideration of ways in which the gospel meets man’s needs in the modern world. Far more basic however is the consideration of the nature of the gospel that could meet man’s needs. The what of the gospel determines the how of its effects in practical life.<sup>125</sup>

From 1975 onward, Padilla would explore the content of the Gospel, work which eventually led to the formulation of a fully worked-out understanding of integral mission. Within the socio-political tumult of post-war Latin America, the Latin American university campus and the local church continued to be a laboratory for theological and social experimentation.

By paying careful attention to neglected archival documents, early publications in Spanish, census reports and extensive interviews, the influence of René Padilla on the rise of social theology within global Evangelical Protestantism in the second half of the twentieth century emerges as both clear and complex. Padilla’s proximity to the revolutionary Latin American university scene, in particular, gave rise to both unique theological questions and discontent with pre-packaged answers, making the university a metaphorical classroom within which contextual responses were formed. Padilla and Escobar were developing integral mission *en embryo* contiguously with liberation theology and broad reforms within the Roman Catholic Church.

The global student movement, and in particular the organisational structure of IFES under the leadership of the Australian C. Stacey Woods, was far-sighted in developing both national leadership and providing the freedom to explore contextual theological methodology. This global organisational structure and leadership environment was unique – even idiosyncratic for its time. The raw ingredients of integral mission sprang from the expanding post-war Latin American universities, in which Marxist ideas of revolutionary change presented a growing appeal to students. The surge in student enrolment was preceded by waves of rural-urban migration, leaving in its wake urban poverty and creating a context which was ripe for radical student idealism. The origins of integral mission, then, are found within a revolutionary university context, grounded in the global

<sup>124</sup> ‘Anonymous, handwritten notes from the presentation’, IFES papers, Blue Boar Street, Oxford, box labelled ‘International student movements: the Americas, 1960–1983’, folder ‘South America’.

<sup>125</sup> BGCA Archives, SC 046, box 12, folder 1.

Evangelical student movement, and developed by Latin American thinkers themselves – principally the Ecuadorian theologian C. René Padilla. From these Latin American origins, Padilla's influence spread around the world – in Christian political activism, mission and relief organisations, in congress declarations and global ecclesiastical movements.<sup>126</sup> Integral mission themes arose not as a response to developments within the Roman Catholic Church, but as a response to the same political and social stimuli that gave rise to liberation theology. Historians and teachers of late modern Christianity should use the language of integral mission to underscore both Padilla's influence and the unique developments that took place in post-war Latin American Protestant Evangelicalism.

<sup>126</sup> The extent of Padilla's global influence is beyond the scope of this paper. One example, however, is the Micah Network, which comprises more than five hundred Christian mission and relief organisations from over eighty countries, and claims integral mission as its goal: <http://www.micahnetwork.org/>.