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STRENGTHENING CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION IN AN ERA OF GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION

CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA: CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES¹

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In this paper we focus on the theme of Christian Higher Education (CHE) which, from the specific Christian perspective, must assume all disciplines, or knowledge as a whole. We are especially interested in thinking about the challenges presented to CHE in our own particular historical context, in this first part of this century. We consider the generalized process of economic, political and cultural globalization that characterizes this era where knowledge explosion appears as the prime mover; but which also brings with it negative aspects for society and the environment.

The paper begins with an overview of the educational issues as reviewed in relevant international documents, and continues with a characterization of the present time, strongly influenced by the globalization process and its aftermath. Then, facing the *ethos* of the time, it focuses on the urgent adjustment needed in the life and mission of the university, in its experience and educational process. In the final part, the paper reflects on the specific challenges posed to Christian Higher Education in Latin America, especially in the Protestant sector, taking

Latina, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Libros Desafío, 2014

1

¹ The first part of this paper draws from work presented at the III Latin American Conference of IAPCHE under the overall theme "The Challenges of Knowledge to Christian Education in a Globalized World", held in Barranquilla, Colombia, July 2002. The annals of the conference were Published (ed. Carlos Mondragon), Buenos Aires: Kairos, 2004, and also in H. F. Bullon, *Misión, Educación y Desarrollo. Reflexiones desde América*

into account its organic relationship with the mission of the church, at this particular juncture in history.

I. General perspectives on the educational challenges of the 21st century

1.1 The global discussion

It is an appropriate place in these matters to begin by referring to two classic studies on the panorama of education worldwide, both promoted by UNESCO and produced in the late twentieth century, with a specific focus on the transition to this new century. These are, *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow*, which is the report of the commission chaired by Edgar Faure², and the report of the committee chaired by Jacques Delors³, entitled *The Treasure Within*. The latter assumes the main thesis of the first as one of its key strategic lines.

Both reports question the total process of education and its link with the fundamental problems of development in our time, from basic levels up to higher education, and even touching lifelong continuing education taking into account the different circumstances of formal and non-formal socialization processes. The Delors Report is aware that education is not the formula or miracle cure to solve all the problems of development or achieve all of the ideals of a new society. However, education itself is one of the main means to promote a more rational and harmonious human society, which could bring about a reduction, in poverty, exclusion, inequality, unemployment, environmental damage, oppression, the lack of mutual understanding and war. These situations are the major challenges facing education needed to set policy action to help create a better world.

In issuing its report, the Delors Commission was aware they were up against "a future dominated by globalization and its aftermath", resulting in an endeavor to provide guidance that could be applied globally and in national contexts. They recognize the tensions inherent in the balance between affirmation and respect for the human person and the plurality of cultures, and take into account perspectives of both ethical and spiritual natures: the tension between what is individual and local *versus* the universal and comprehensive; the tension between tradition and modernity, between competitiveness and equal opportunities for all; between the extraordinary expansion of knowledge and human capacity to assimilate it; and between short-term considerations and long-term processes that requires human transformation.

² Originally published as *Learning to be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow*, UNESCO, Paris, 1972

³ Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, UNESCO, París, 1996.

The report recognizes that education plays a decisive role in the process of economic and social development, addressing situations of poverty, unemployment, incongruities between vocational training and the labor market requirements in a changing society. As a result, it affirms the need for formation characterized by a quest for knowledge which is being permanently updated. More "curricular diversity" and an education that includes "constant updating" in a process of "continuing education" and "lifelong learning" become imperative in a "learning society," given the rapid development of knowledge and its various applications.

"Learning to learn" appears as a perspective that allows the individual to continue to be updated throughout life on a well-established training basis. However, it is equally important to "learn to do" because it is essential that knowledge is applied to the specific and productive skills and the needs of economic, social and cultural development of the changing environment in which we live. We must recognize the distinctiveness of this period in human history, in terms of the explosion of knowledge and its applications, which are accelerated by the sophistication and implementation of the so-called "communication and information technologies" in the development process⁴. In this context, "learning to learn" and "learning to do" are mediated by the management and understanding of such technologies as the basic level of training, and every effort should be made in this case to avoid increasing the current gap between the rich and poor countries.

More specifically, the First and Second World Conferences on Higher Education sponsored by UNESCO⁵, alluded to the great social responsibility that university education has on its shoulders. Thus, given the complexity of the world's present and future challenges, the conference identified some priorities: to advance the understanding of fundamental and multifaceted problems with social, economic, scientific and cultural dimensions, as well as the ability to cope with them. In carrying out its primary functions (teaching, research and social projection), institutions of higher education should focus even more on interdisciplinary approaches and promote critical thinking and active citizenship, taking social leadership in the creation of knowledge to address global challenges, including: the elimination of poverty, food security and public health; water management, renewable energy, climate change and sustainable

⁴ This trend reaches now a special point of maturity as it is announced the "Fourth Industrial Revolution" with the merging of artificial intelligence, internet of things (IoT), robotics and nanotechnology. See Klaus Schwab, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*, Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2016,

⁵ This event took place in Paris, 5-9, October, 1998 and 5-8 July, 2009.

development; and intercultural dialogue, the realization of human rights, and building a culture of peace and well-being.

The recent Declaration of Ministers of Education form Latin America and the Caribbean⁶, decided to make a direct commitment to establish mechanisms for the implementation of goals related to the *Agenda 2030 or Sustainable Development Goals* agreed in the framework of the Organization of United Nations (ONU). Especially with Goal 4, which aims "to ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education as well as promote sustainability in education systems and learning opportunities throughout life for everyone... and thus eradicate poverty and inequality".

There is thus a global framework and consensus of shared values and perceived responsibilities arising from a broad level of discussion, to be considered as a minimum basis on which to locate discussions of more particular educational sectors of society and their challenges, such as may be the case of Christian Higher Education. The origin of these guidelines, by international organizations, tacitly implies the assumption of lay or non-religious positions; but by their implicit ecumenical and universal nature, far from generating *a priori* discrepancies, they seek to generate perspectives of an inclusive and consensual order.

1.2 The current world context: negative consequences of the globalization phenomenon

Lately, much has been written about the phenomenon of *globalization* and from different fields, but predominantly they have been focused on the political, economic and social spheres⁷. A common aspect of all these is that *globalization* is understood as a new world order, in which both technology and market liberalization are the driving forces for change. But differences and discussions have emerged with regard to what the process entails; about distribution and equity issues as well as to what point its current configuration strengthens or harms global stability. Precisely, and therefore, thinking about globalization, should warn us that the emergence of a "single integrated world" should be considered as the great educational opportunity to explore a

⁶ Held in San Jose, Costa Rica, on April 21, 2016. Its resolutions are issued taking into account the conclusions derived from various educational conclaves, including those of the Regional Conference on Education for All held in Lima, Peru, 2014 and the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development, held in Nagoya, Japan, in 2014; all these events promoted by United Nations agencies, including UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, UN Women, and UNHCR.

⁷ See, for example, Koffman, E. and G.Youngs, *Globalization: Theory and Practice*, London: Pinter, 1996; Guehenno, J.M., *The End of the Nation-State*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995; Hirst, P. and G.Thompson, *Globalization in Question: The International Economy and the Possibilities of Governance*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996.

different humanity, as long as "the interdependence actually be transformed into a desired solidarity" and that the existing initial globalization does not work just for the benefit of the few. It is argued that perhaps the most urgent task in the educational field consists in activating a new awareness and new social actors to channel the sense of belonging for the proper development of human ties in the new scenario of globalization.⁸

In fact, when referring to *globalization* in general terms, we need to recognize the concept as having double valence, since in the process of civilization everything mankind does has positive or negative possibilities. Here, we analyze the dehumanizing features of the global expansion of the neoliberal economic system and its effect on the quality of human life and the environment.

Effects of neoliberal globalization: generalized poverty, inequality and social insecurity

According to most studies, including those of official international bodies⁹, *globalization* has failed to achieve the convergence benefits many promoters of economic liberalization were expecting in the early nineties. In fact, most countries in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and Eastern and Central Europe have reaped very little out of *globalization*. On the contrary, there has been an increase in poverty, massive unemployment, inequality, social fragmentation and political instability. The exclusion of a large portion of world population of the benefits of *globalization* has been recognized as one of the biggest challenges of the new century. The General Secretary of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, in his report to the Millennium Assembly, said: "The central challenge we face is to ensure that *globalization* becomes a positive force for all of the world's population, instead of leaving behind a billion, in indigence". However, the failure to establish a more equitable distribution of the benefits of *globalization* has led to serious consequences against the stability of the world order.

More than eighty countries have per capita incomes lower than what they had a decade earlier. The income gap between the fifth of the world population living in the richest countries and the fifth of the poorest countries was 30 to 1 in 1960, 60 to 1 in 1990, and from 74 to 1 in

⁸ Joaquín García Roca, *La educación en el cambio del milenio. Retos oportunidades desde la tradición cristiana,* Sal Terrae, Santander, 1998

⁹ See UNCTAD. The Least Developed Countries 2000 Report: OverView by the General Secretáry of UNCTAD. Geneva: UNCTAD, 2000; UNDP, Human Development Report 1999: Globalisation with a Human Face, New York: UNDP, 1999.

¹⁰ Annan, K., We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century, Millenium Report of the Secretary General, New York: United Nations, 2000

1997. In subsequent reports during the first decade of the new century, the situation has not changed substantially; rather it shows tendencies of intensifying.¹¹ In recent research the British development agency Oxfam warns that the combined wealth of the richest one percent outstrips the other 99 percent of people in the current year 2016. The magnitude of global inequality is simply amazing and, despite efforts to promote the global development agenda, the gap between the richest and the rest is expanding rapidly.¹²

Also, in a recent work, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (2014) ¹³, the French economist Thomas Piketti, from a historical and statistical approach provides information dating back to 250 previous years, showing that there has been a constant concentration of wealth that has increased economic inequality worldwide; this includes European countries as well as North America. ¹⁴ The latest news about the notorious *Panama Papers*, make us think about the corrupt economic system and gives one of the clearest explanations of how the concentration of wealth has been taking place "legally". To Piketti, this outrage can only be confronted with tax measures on such patrimonial capital in order to redistribute wealth worldwide, with specific considerations for each region.

Definitely, poverty and inequality are morally unacceptable and should such situations persist, they will be a source of continued instability, and become a serious threat to the possibilities of future global development.

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¹¹ UNDP, *Human Development Report 1999: Globalization with a Human Face*. New York, 1999; UNICEF, *Designaldad Global: La Distribución del Ingreso en 141 Países*. Documento de Trabajo Política Económica y Social (elaborado por Isabel Ortiz y Matthew Cummins).Nueva York, Agosto 2012

¹² Winnie Byanyima Executive Director, Oxfam International, "Richest 1% will own more than all the rest by 2016", 19 January 2015, in https://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/2015-01-19/richest-1-will-own-more-all-rest-2016

¹³ Original french version, *Le Capital au XXI* Siecle (2013); English version, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century.* Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press/ Harvard University Press

¹⁴ Joseph Stiglitz, in his most recent work, *Rewriting the Rules of the American Economy: An Agenda for Growth and Shared Prosperity*, more specifically describes the current US situation as "raw image of a world that has become bad." He notes that 91% of all income growth between 2009 and 2012 was enjoyed by the richest 1% of Americans. Thus, in the first half of the book, Stiglitz focuses on practices and policies that have put the country in this situation, and how the US economy does business. Within this, the practice of increasing wealth by taking it from others instead of generating real economic activity, such as speculative activity in the stock market, and the practice of lobbying; the latter allows large companies spending money to influence laws and regulations in their favor; but in itself it is not useful for the economy, apart from the creation of a small number of jobs in Washington DC that do not produce anything other than give support to a group that is already wealthy and influential and seek to further enhance their wealth and influence.

Neoliberal globalization and the ecological dimension

In his recent encyclical, *Laudato Si*, Pope Francisco places the ecological theme at the center of the global debate on development, integrating environmental issues with other variables of a social and economic-political character. He stresses the need to address comprehensively the ecological problems establishing a connection between environmental pollution and climate change, loss of biodiversity and the voracity of transnational corporations in the use of natural resources, and subjection of political solutions to technology and finance. He criticizes modern civilizations dependent on an economic model that is based on the premise of continuous and inexhaustible growth, noting that environmental degradation is coupled with the social crisis. ¹⁵ The consumer society has promoted such excessive and unconscious use of natural resources, which has caused significant losses, in some cases irreparable. If mankind continues to drive development at the expense of destruction of nature, it will be promoting its own self-destruction. Forecasts for the rest of this century do not foresee a promising future, but on the contrary, a fateful one.

Special discussion warrants the issue of the effects of climate change as it represents one of the most widespread, destructive and complicated challenges that mankind is facing so far. Millions already suffer from extreme weather conditions, intense heat waves, reduced crop production, rise of sea levels, and prolonged droughts and increased flooding. While everyone is affected in some way through this, the people living in poverty tend to be those most affected. However, as can be seen, the global agreements on climate change have been a little hard to get. In this regard, recent commitments of COP21 in Paris last December 2015, represent an important step forward.

In general, without swift and decisive global action, environmental problems will worsen. It is imperative that appropriate measures be taken immediately, to lead us to a sustainable economy that includes as determinative, the essential ecological variable. The solution is not only monodisciplinary (the biological level) or single-sector (agriculture as a priority sector responsible for environmental policies). There are also implications of a political, legal, economic, educational, social, cultural, and even ethical character.¹⁶

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¹⁵ The Holy Father Francisco's Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si* on Care of the Common House in June 2015.

¹⁶ I refer to the works published by H. Fernando Bullón, Juliana Sergio Morillo and Membreño in *Sociedad de Consumo y Mayordomía de la Creación* (trad. Consumer Society and Creation Stewardship) (Ediciones Kairos,

II. Rethinking the nature and mission of the university: Latin American voices¹⁷

Mejia-Ricart said in his study of the university in world history, referring specifically to our region:

The Latin American University, autonomous, democratic, critical and committed to social and cultural change, is only understandable within the socio-economic and political framework prevailing in our region. That is, that our university is a product of the characteristics of Latin American contradictions and is a logical reaction to the situation of underdevelopment, dependence and permanent crisis in this part of the world...The Latin American university, as we know it, has emerged from the very bottom of a society in permanent crisis, in which dependence on foreign influences make its ruling classes weak and incapable of generating autonomous development and the lower classes are limited by ignorance and chronic unemployment that produce their own underdevelopment.¹⁸

That is, the understanding of its actuality and possibilities can only be comprehended in the context of the continental historical process, and demographic, socio-cultural and economic conditions of each country in the region. The university does not exist independently of society, so its mission has to be related to the very idea of society and its current state.

Mejia-Ricart adds,

...The case is that this Latin American university is maintained to some extent in the service of the status quo, through the training of technicians and professionals that this system requires...It is sustained thanks to a fragile balance between the progressive influence it holds over the community and service to the established order...So we can say...that the Latin American University is a controllable factor in contradiction with the current regime and that virtue is largely due to its persistence within the established system of things.¹⁹

Buenos Aires, 2002). In this work, originally presented at a panel on the subject at CLADE IV, theological and theoretical and practical aspects are discussed, from economics and environmental sciences, in relation to the Latin American context.

17 On this matter we have been reflecting at various times in the IAPCHE Latin American Conferences (1999, 2002, 2004, and 2014). The Catholic sector, better established, has had an earlier reflection coming from their own hierarchical bodies, for example see *Iglesia y Universidad en América Latina*. Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM, Bogotá, Colombia, 1970), and then a regulation issued by Pope John Paul II on *Catholic Universities* (USCC, Bogota, Colombia, 1998). In general, the reflection in the Latin American context on the matter has been extensive, especially for reasons of transition of centuries. Among others, just limiting ourselves to the Central American region, see: R. Cañas López, comp. *La Universidad hacia el Siglo XXI.* San Salvador, ES: Editorial Universitaria, Univ. de El Salvador, 1995; A. Jofré, *La Universidad en América Latina. Desafíos y estrategias para las próximas décadas.* Cartago, CR: Editorial Tecnológica de Costa Rica, 1994/1998; Jorge Mora Alfaro, *Universidad y Sociedad en el Siglo XXI*, Heredia, CR: Editorial Universidad Nacional; C. Tünnermann Bernheim, *Universidad y Sociedad. Balance histórico y perspectivas desade América Latina.* Managua: Hispamer, 2001

 ¹⁸ Tirso Mejía-Ricart G. – *La Universidad en la Historia Universal*. Sto. Domingo, RD: Editorial Universitaria, UASD, 1999 (Cap. XX – La Universidad Latinoamericana, p. 489-490).
 ¹⁹ Ibid, p. 491

With feet on the ground, based on a thorough understanding of its situation, it is up to the university to understand the world around it, its challenges, and imagine its future, outdoing itself and seeking to transform its society.

Then, we must ask, university for what society? What then would the desirable transformed society be like? This is the fundamental question that Miguel Ángel Escotet formulated in his book *Tendencias*, *misiones y políticas de la universidad: Mirando hacia el future*, ²⁰ in the context of the broad discussion that has been going about the university for the twenty-first century at both global and regional levels. The question is permanent every time one has to carry out continued assessment of the mission, objectives, and goals and strategies of higher education. And it brings us finally to the field of social and political philosophy, and an educational philosophy that defines the profile of society to which it aspires.

For Escotet, the search for this social silhouette should pay attention to widespread social and ethical values, such as: a society based on freedom and the dignity of the people and their development; a society that promotes brotherhood and human rights, affirming social and cultural pluralism, and allows for active participation of citizens in all spheres; a society that practices tolerance and dialogue, and promotes human and sustainable development and equitable income distribution, where everyone can get the knowledge that will empower their capacities; and a society which is oriented to lifelong learning of its members, and is able to think globally and act locally.

On the other hand, the other big variable that feeds the definition of the educational profile is the concrete situation of today's society and its characteristics. To Escotet, the conditions of modern society and the demands of accelerated development in all domains of knowledge require a change in the university, so that it can reach the current pace of events. Society is advancing at a much higher pace than the university structures, which seem to react behind the events. Therefore it is necessary to reform universities in their missions and practices, i.e., in their being and doing. In other words, the traditional functions of the university as teaching, research and social projection must be viewed in a new light, typical of the changing

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²⁰ Miguel Ángel Escotet, *Tendencias, misiones y políticas de launiversidad: Mirando hacia el futuro, (trad.* Trends, mission and university policies: looking forward to the future. Editorial UCA, Universidad Centroamericana, Managua, 1993. This work was prepared at the request of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century, UNESCO, based in Paris, France, and published with permission its author and the institution.

dynamics of the time. Escotet raises three axes of change, each with defined lines of action to respond to these demands:

- 1. *University for reflection in action*. This emphasizes the principle of training and research in an environment constantly changing, where to learn, create and perform are parallel stages in an educational process "within active life". There are three key axes to affirm in this emphasis:
 - a. "Learning to care"; in other words, to preserve the cultural heritage, the inheritance encompassing nature and cultural products, which are the guarantees of the affirmation of the identity and quality of life for future generations.
 - b. "Learning to start up"; which implies that in a context of constant change, social and economic uncertainty, what is required is risk capacity and anticipation, initiative and proactive management, to build a better future, without denying the cultural heritage.
 - c. "Keep on learning"; in other words, permanent education, of constant improvement and actualization, in a world characterized by change, scientific and technological innovation and disruption, and new contexts and situations that require renewed approaches.
- 2. University for diversification. Creativity is necessarily related to diversity, which is an essential part of all education and the essential condition for the development of various spheres of knowledge. Therefore, as part of this diverse reality, and as an inspiration for learning and creativity, the university must give way to various sorts of diversification such as: different types of apprenticeships, areas and disciplines, teacher-learning processes, institutions, accreditations, diplomas and degrees, and formations.
- 3. A flexible University for consistent change. The rigidity of thought and structures clashes with the principles of the search for truth and the inexhaustible breadth of knowledge. Dogmatism and rigidity become sources of intolerance, authoritarianism and conflict which are contrary to the university spirit. On the other hand, we understand flexibility not as a synonym of weakness but as a symbol of strength of spirit, which recognizes the rectification of mistakes and rejects intellectual vanity discovering ignorance. For the flourishing of dialogue, tolerance, innovation, justice and freedom, a dimension of flexibility is required. The university should be the leading actor of flexibility in the following processes: curriculum structures, accreditation systems and

knowledge transfer, legislative and administrative decisions, forms of funding and in the mechanisms of reform and change.

Meanwhile, in his work, *El siglo XXI y el papel de la universidad*, Ángel Ruiz mentions that globalization, the development of knowledge and multiple relationships with the social environment, underpin changes in the mission of higher education. The characteristics he considers fundamental in this redefinition are: a more intense and reciprocal relationship between higher education and the social context, the strengthening of the paradigm of permanent education, interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspective in academia, the systematic use of technology, and preparation of students and institutions for uncertainty and change in social life. The central feature of the era of cognitive influence on the economy, institutions and all social life poses a growing demand for increased educational level of workers and the population and the formation of contextually appropriate professional or technical staff. The dynamism of knowledge, the flow of information and the changing demands of professionals, researchers and academics, require gestating different curricular principles, which include *individualization, flexibility* and *diversification* of options.²¹

Furthermore, globalization poses a particular internationalization of higher education and affects many aspects of it. Indeed, increasingly international perspective and global integration are a starting point. This implies exchange, interaction and intercommunication of students, teachers, programs, projects, concerns, aspirations and evaluation mechanisms and coordination. For example, it is clear that the development of the "virtual university" becomes an instrument used to give body to the internationalization and networking, and to develop international cooperation. Carlos Tünnermann affirms this powerful idea mentioning that the education systems of the 21st century must contribute to:-

...the formation of citizens or internationally competitive personalities while continuing to be aware of the planetary dimension of the problems that affect humanity. That planetary dimension, in turn, translates into multiple networks of educational, cultural and scientific and technological character...As knowledge plays a central role in the productive paradigm of society of the third millennium, education, therefore, will play a key role in promoting innovation, creativity and solidarity.²²

²¹ Ángel Ruiz, *El siglo XXI* y *el papel de la universidad,* (trad. The role of the university in the XXIst century), Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, San José, 2001.

²² Carlos Tünnermann, "La educación superior de cara al Siglo XXI", in *La universidad hacia el siglo XXI*, Universidad de El Salvador, San Salvador, 1995, p. 51.

Undoubtedly, all of the above is indicative of a significant change in the existing structures - in the relations between civil society, governments and in higher education - and involves the establishment of national and international agreements that build the higher education system that the new century requires. In Latin America, the university has had a tradition of struggle for reform and constant renewal. The movement culminated in the Reform of Córdoba (1918, Argentina) that was made at that time against excessive professionalism and colonial remnants entrenched in the universities. Tünnermann mentions that this reform, which both helped define the profile of the Latin American university, was the first serious challenge to a university committed to remain cloistered in anachronism and traditionalism that wanted to turn its back on the responsibility for social change of the epoch. Córdoba also represented an aspiration of originality and search for our own solutions to our problems. Quoting Darcy Ribeiro, a scholar of Latin American universities, Tünnermann argues that, since 1918, the Reform of Córdoba became the main renewing power of our universities and the presentation letter of Latin America to make its decorous entry into the 20th century.²³ Now it is up to the Latin American university to take on the challenges of change at the beginning of this 21st century, in this tradition and heritage of struggle and reform.

III. The Church and the Christian University in and from Latin America

The history of the university as an institution in the West is linked with the church as her midwife, although at present it is understood to be an institution of a largely secular character. ²⁴ Now, as to Christian Higher Education, we cannot consider it apart from its organic relationship with the church. Those of us who are part of the church and at the same time of the University (Christian and secular), understand not only the challenge of being church in the university environment, and from there to the rest of society but also that there is the challenge to contribute with the spirit and nature of being university for the renewal and development of the church, given the dynamic relationship that should exist between the world of knowledge and culture, and the religious sphere.

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²³ Carlos Tünnermann, *Historia de la universidad en América Latina*, EDUCA, San José, 1991, pp. 11-12.

²⁴ P.L Glanzer, explains extensively this process in his paper "Will the parent abandon the child? The birth, secularization, and survival of Christian Higher Education in Western Europe", in J. Carpenter, P.L. Glanzer, N.S. Lantinga, *Christian Higher Education: A Global Reconnaisance*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdemans, 2014 (pp. 134-162)

3.1 The global context of the discussion within the Protestant sector

(1) Christian University, human development and ecumenical culture

There is a natural bridge between the nature and mission of the church and the nature and mission of the Christian university, understood as a special projection of the church. To think about the diaconal nature of the church on the basis of its charismatic structure as the *laos* of God - its holistic mission, its educational essence, its responsibility for the whole *oikoumene*, both as humanity and creation - leads us to make this natural link between the church and the task proper to mankind related to knowledge and its applications, developed primarily at the university level. As Dr. Van der Stelt, former President of IAPCHE has affirmed correctly:

To proclaim and announce the new life in Christ without applying its mandates to society and culture, fosters a culturally irrelevant Christianity historically like an artifact in a museum...To proclaim and implement principles of the Kingdom without relating them to the higher education institutions is an inevitable spiritualist overestimation of what Christians can perform as individuals and in an underestimation of what they face in the modern world...²⁵

An evangelical perspective of holistic mission and development will necessarily have to worry about promoting a more equitable society for the greater good, a culture of peace, and an incarnation of the gospel in the realities of life. A highly differentiated society with increasingly complex problems and growing challenges necessarily demands an interdisciplinary work. In this case, the proclamation of the principles of the Kingdom by the churches requires the support of Christian higher education institutions, which can contribute to the articulation of the principles that need to be implemented in society and culture.

From this perspective, the current "seminary model" as the main training institution of church leadership, appears to be offbeat. It is equally offbeat that, in the event that such seminaries are justified, they are being kept isolated from contact with other higher educational settings. And even worse when we find that there are still circles that think that establishing centers with an interdisciplinary training approach is a departure from the mission of the church.

13

²⁵ John Van der Stelt, "Breve historia y visión de AIPESC", in *Educando como cristianos en el siglo XXI*, Memoria del Primer Encuentro Latinoamericano de la Asociación Internacional para la Promoción de la Educación Superior Cristiana, AIPESC, San José, 1999, p. 183.

By contrast, leadership training should be diversified and interdisciplinary to achieve effective transcendence in society.²⁶

To promote a culture of peace in a global dimension we must take into account the considerations of the Delors Report as mentioned above, about how to respond to an increasingly widespread pluralism and even confrontation between cultural or civilizational blocs. How should we evangelize? How should we do holistic mission? And how should we do Christian education in this new global context that requires respectful dialogue? Undoubtedly, an effective action of the church in society implies a new type of approach and a cooperative effort between several large churches and groups to face common problems, whatever their religious vision. However, this cannot happen without a clear perspective of ecumenicity. As David Bosch has said clearly, the new era demands from the church a new paradigm of mission, an *ecumenical paradigm* that knows how to assume creatively the various forces in tension - unity *versus* diversity, divergence *versus* integration, and pluralism *versus* holism - and knows how to do mission-with-others, truly a task of inculturation of the Christian faith.²⁷ Considering the integrity of life and mankind, this line of thought also agrees very well with the expression of Johannes Verkuyl about the implications of a *missio politika ekoumenica* developed from a proper Christian perspective.²⁸

(2) The issue of safeguarding the identity

The recent study by Glanzer, Carpenter and Lantinga²⁹ concludes that amid the massification, privatization and globalization and the effects of secularization and risks of instrumentalization of education, the issue is how to protect the identity, the unique mission that corresponds to the Christian university as part of the Church. How should we cope with the ongoing threats, which, in many cases, according to historical experience, have blurred and virtually swallowed it up? The challenge is to embody the Christian singularity with regard to the main functions of the university, such as teaching, setting appropriate curricula and research. We need to ask how we should use the community of Christian universities best at both regional and

14

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 $^{^{26}}$ Clearly this theme of the "seminary" model cannot be kept apart from the problem of clericalism of the church, as opposed to the conception of the church as *laos* of God or "priesthood of all believers" and the various vocations in the world.

²⁷ David J. Bosch, *Misión en transformación. Cambios de paradigma en la teología de misión,* Libros Desafío, Grand Rapids, 2000, pp. 451-619.

²⁸ J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 1987, pp. 373-404.

²⁹ J. Carpenter, P.L. Glanzer, N.S. Lantinga, op.cit. 2014

global levels, with the aim that, in the midst of this protective affirmation of identity, its fundamental transformational and redemptive mission is not set aside, but affirmed.

3.2 Some main facts about Latin American Protestant universities³⁰

It is noteworthy that in Latin America the expressions better achieved regarding Christian universities belong to the Catholic sector. In fact, this sector has been able to build stronger universities on the continent; they are recognized for the quality of their teaching and for their contribution to research and development.³¹ Regarding the Protestant sector, there are around 50 universities from which 30 are located in Brasil. If we include the Adventist Church, the number rises to 75. From the 50 related to evangelical churches, two thirds have been established in the last 25 years.³² Joel Carpenter mentions that quite a few evangelical universities in Latin America and the Caribbean have been started recently, which corresponds to an expansive movement similar in other continents (Africa and Asia). The size, age, diversification programs, research development, and insertion and reputation they have, vary by country and from case to case.³³

Compared with the Catholic sector and secular universities, the universities of the Protestant sector with very few exceptions, still need to be established with solidity and to contribute to academic work and research excellence, signifying a real contribution to the solution of national and continental problems. In fact, despite the "reconnaissance" of their presence, and some particular developments, in general, their best contribution as a group has still

30

³⁰ Here we take as a basis the data already provided in the work of Carpenter, Glanzer, Lantinga, op. cit. (2014), to which we add perceptions from our own experience working with IAPCHE in recent years.

³¹ This could be verified reviewing the national, regional and global *rankings* on comparative positioning of universities; many outweigh the more established national universities; however, virtually no Protestant universities are included. And, in spite of its opening to multidisciplinary schemes according to the demands of the changing times, they have not left aside its identity as Catholic universities; this, in largely Protestant contexts like USA, as in Latin America itself. See for example G. Marsden, "What Catholic Universities Can Learn from Examples Protestant?", published in *The Challenge and Promise of a Catholic University*, ed. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C. (Notre Dame & London: University of Notre Dame Press) 1994.; and F. Fernandez Font, SJ et al, *Universidades Jesuitas para el Mundo: Las universidades Jesuitas de México frente a los desafíos del cambio de época.* México, DF: Sistema Universitario Jesuita, 2010.

³² The Appendix presents a list of Protestant universities in the region, indicating their year of establishment. There are no current data about the quantity of students as a whole, within these universities. However, Carpenter and Glanzer try to calculate globally the percentage of students in Christian universities, including catholics, and this is small, apart from Nicaragua. The data they give for Chile, Colombia and Dominican Republic might coincide with students in Catholic universities, as in Chile there in no protestant evangelical university, and in Colombia a Dominican Republic, its presence is very small.(See Carpenter, Glanzer and Lantinga, op. cit, 2014, pp. 286-291)

³³ See Joel Carpenter, *New Euangelical Universities: Cogs in a World System, or Players in a New Game?* Dort College, Sioux Center, Iowa, IAPCHE, 2001. This study was expanded in the more recent work of Carpenter, Glanzer, Lantinga, op.cit. 2014.

to be seen. This includes providing professionals who are working constructively to the development of their nations and are recognized for it. In some countries Protestant universities are so small (sometimes they are merely faculties and do not deserve the name of universities), which makes it imperative to convince them to join forces in order to serve the community better and increase their possibilities of contribution.

Alcantara, about the Mexican experience, and Fonseca & Santos in relation to Brazil, two countries representative of the region, describe some of the limitations of a good number of the new Protestant universities, who appear to have more denominational interests rather than being fully aware of the role that corresponds to them in the service of their countries. Where they assume a more multidisciplinary program, there is a tendency to be absorbed by the common market logic as is the case of many other secular private universities.³⁴ Still, Glanzer and Carpenter, mention signs that they are operating like any other secular university, pointing to the patent case of the oldest and largest Protestant university in the continent (Mc Kenzie, Brazil).³⁵

The Adventist sector constitutes a separate case as it has established a very good network of universities worldwide. In Latin America one or more Adventist universities exist in most countries. However, we must mention that given the significant population density of their churches, universities are mostly oriented to serve the denomination, thus maintaining a limited scheme of faculties in support of their churches, schools, clinics and social service agencies (Theology, Education, Administration, and in some cases Nursing and Nutrition).

Returning to the evangelical universities sector, its heterogeneity is linked to several factors. The best established ones were opened in an opportune time when the private sector began to dabble in higher education, gaining spaces in the demand for services and thus being able to guarantee their full finances in time. In some cases, it is feasible that there was clarity about the mission itself of higher education, and they went beyond what the specific denomination initially required of them. In other cases, although in the beginning they may have had followed denominational guidelines, they eventually managed more autonomy, and, having become established in an opportune time their management and financing were guaranteed by

16

³⁴ J. Alcántara, *Christian Higher Education in Mexico*; A.B. Fonseca & C.C. Santos, *Chritian Higher Education in Brasil amd its Challenges*, en Carpenter, Glanzer & Lantinga, op. cit., 2014. These authors provide an overview of the historical development process of Christian education in their countries, both Catholic and Protestant, common to the whole of Latin America, which is not considered here; in the Catholic case, from the colonial times; for Protestantism, since the nineteenth century.

³⁵ op.cit, 2014, p. 282

having sufficient demand (for instance McKenzie in Brazil, Madero in Mexico, Mariano Galvez in Guatemala, UPOLI in Nicaragua, and UEB in Bolivia). While in other cases, a late onset coupled with the atomization and incoordination of small efforts determined a minimalist, monodisciplinary, or quasi-denominational or sectarian scope of services (for instance UNELA, UBL, and UNIMET in Costa Rica). There are also cases where the government has had to suspend the operating license, probably due to low standards of service, (for instance Latin American Christian University UCL, of Ecuador). Like this case, some are fighting for their existence or they may be on the verge of disappearance or non-relevance at all.

It is interesting to note the importance of the names given to Protestant universities, depending on the indication or not of their confessional identity. These names have been chosen to appeal to the demand of educational services, an issue that does not affect Catholic universities as the majority of the population in the region is "officially" Catholic. As Protestantism has a subaltern and minority status and is given an almost "sectarian" identity, the type of name chosen implies a strategy of integration in Latin American society that can influence the amount of demand. For instance, in Guatemala, Mexico and Nicaragua, the names of the universities do not refer to being "evangelical" or "confessional" and they all have large student bodies; while in other cases, as in Costa Rica, they all do, with small confessional student bodies. Only in particular contexts and given the special opportunity when their services were started some universities have been able to maintain an evangelical identity in their names; such are the cases of McKenzie Presbyterian University in Brazil, the Evangelical University of El Salvador (UEES), the Methodist University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, or the Bolivian Evangelical University (BSU).

As shown in Appendix at the end of this document, there are currently Protestant universities in almost all Latin American countries (albeit tiny ones), with the exception of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Venezuela and Panama. Even in these countries, there are Protestant teachers in Catholic and secular universities, as is the case in all of the rest of Latin America.

3.3 Challenges and possibilities

(1) Relations between Christian formation and society: Possibilities of a singular impact of Protestantism in Latin America?

To be able to make a correct diagnosis of the actual situation and make a rational plan of action, the historical perspective is important as an analysis of evolving past developments shows how the present circumstances have been generated, its problems as well as its potentialities. In this regard, and taking into account the religious factor, important studies by Latinamericanists such as Leopoldo Zea³⁶ and José Carlos Mariategui³⁷ as well as Antonio Gramsci³⁸ for the European context, need to be taken into account. They analyze processes in which differentiated effects are seen in the development of culture and society as a result of different religious visions and practices. Zea compares the democratic, modern and developed North America, influenced by the Protestant version of Christianity versus the conservative, anti-modernist South America, influenced by the Catholic version of Christianity. In these results the effects of their own education systems, including the higher level would be involved. Then, one could reach the conjecture that the largely Protestant educational system would have been more efficacious than the largely Catholic one, in terms of overall development of their societies.³⁹ This leads us to the ecclesiological point of view that mission coming from Protestant churches has had different ethical consequences in terms of economic and longstanding social issues, as seen in studies such as Antonio Gramsci's comparative studies of the impact of the Reformation in northern Europe versus the Southern part to which he belonged.

The Protestant churches presumed that Latin America was a mission field, despite the long establishment of the Catholic Church on the continent, as an official religious tradition.⁴⁰ They held the firm conviction that authentic Christianity, in this case in its Protestant version,

³⁶ Leopoldo Zea, *América en la Historia*. Madrid: Edit. Revista de Occidente, 1970

³⁷ José C. Mariátegui, *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana.* La Habana: Casa de las Américas, 1963

³⁸ G.F.Piñón, "Antonio Gramsci y el análisis del fenómeno religioso", in *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, Vol. XXV, No. 91: pp.63-79; also R. Díaz-Salazar, *Gramsci y la construcción del socilaismo*. San Salvador: UCA Editores., 1993

³⁹ Here we could include reflections Carpenter makes about what might have been the contribution of the Protestant universities in the nineteenth century with projections to the early twentieth century in USA itself, as a product of the "awakenings" (See Carpenter, Glanzer, Lantinga.,Op.cit. 2014, pp. 18,19)

 $^{^{40}}$ Data are known about the decisions of several Protestant missions, after the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 that did not give priority to Latin America, when meeting in Panama (1916), to consider the evangelization of this region.

might have different consequences in personal and community life. The result has been the establishment of Protestant churches and educational institutions since they began to appear in the nineteenth century. According to historical data, despite the tiny proportion of the Protestant population until almost mid-twentieth century, the contribution of these educational centers has been recognized, perhaps the most notably in relation to social projection. Moreover, the Protestant presence in some economic or development projects, or political functions was assessed positively.⁴¹

However, it is from the middle of last century, with the coincidence of the explosion or growth of Protestantism, mostly by Pentecostal churches, that inconsistencies in these projections are beginning to be appreciated: such as an atomization of the Protestant sector, millenarianisms detached from the social realities and contradictory appearances in the public arena. Overall, there has been a massive move away from social issues by Protestant congregations, and a reversal of what should be the effect of the Protestant Reformation or the great revivals which generated changes in terms of new ethical and social densities in their respective countries and times. It is in this context that many new Protestant universities begin to appear. So, we must ask, what role could they play firstly within the Church of which they are part, to promote the effects which should be manifested as the ethical and social product of the Protestant tradition; in other words, the differentiation in development mentioned by Gramsci, Zea and Mariategui.

In fact, there does seem to be a serious formative problem in evangelical congregations, including among their own professionals. The bulk of evangelicals in Latin America do not seem to be oriented missionally for social transcendence because they have not understood the dimensions involved in the exercise of the various vocations and the application of its related disciplines, in connection with the values of the Kingdom, for the improvement and transformation of society; values such as, justice, integrity, solidarity, excellence in service, articulated via the daily work in the social body. Despite the numerical growth of evangelicals, the data we have about the lack of transcendence of their contribution in confronting or solving a variety of social problems is largely due to misunderstanding these issues.

Therefore, it is essential that the church leadership at different levels has a more interdisciplinary formation, so as to induce a more holistic missional approach into their congregations. The church leaders must discover and learn to work with the multidisciplinary

⁴¹ J.P. Bastian, Historia del Protestantismo en América Latina, México: CUPSA, 1990

potential represented in their congregation which needs to be transformed into a missional force dispersed within the social conglomerate. The university setting is the best environment to form the leadership of the people of God. There is a need to de-clericalize the present trends (typical of the seminaries) and turn the learning space into something more comprehensive, which corresponds to the reality of the world and the development of a vision for society and culture that the Creator has given us from the beginning. Also, an ecumenical educational environment would be best to prepare the leadership for dialogue and constructive action in a plural and globalized world like ours today.

Having mentioned the contrast between Catholics and Protestants in their historical perspectives and possibilities (according to Zea, Mariátegui and Gramsci), however, as history is dynamic and changing, we must be concerned about current trends. Already, we have mentioned the difference in the quality of Catholic universities, notable for their strengths in the humanities and social sciences *versus* the lower quality of the Protestant ones. There are differences between the liberal contribution when it came against the absolutist, hierarchical, anti-democratic vision of the XVIII and XIX centuries, and the current liberalism whose worn-out prospects against the democratic advances and the emergence of the socialist currents, appear as limited in view of better confrontation of the great social problems of today.

At present, the countries of great Protestant presence are those that constitute the hegemonic axis of the neoliberal economic system about which we have expressed the corresponding criticisms, such as the concentration of wealth and massification of poverty and consumerist and excessive growth dynamics with serious consequences on the environment. In this scenario, to some extent part of supra-national and supra-regional structures and networks are the Protestant churches and the Protestant universities

So it is good to carefully analyze the dynamics regarding to how to assert appropriately the Protestant Christian identity in relation to the redemptive mission with consequences in the social, economic, political and cultural development. If the Protestant church is to be consequent, it must carry out transformative systemic tasks both in countries in the North as well as the South, and in the mutual relationships that have been established; the Protestant universities should lead this endeavor.

Thus, the question arises whether the current Protestant universities are able to help create a change in the sector of Protestant Churches, and through them to carry out social, economic and

cultural changes that Latin American nations require. In fact, thinking about their potential, it is quite possible that as a constituent part of the Church, they also express the limitations and contradictions of the ecclesiastical sector to which they belong. Indeed, we cannot consider the Christian University apart from its organic relationship with the church and the society to which they are a part. Among some or the limitations we could find: 1) the fact that Protestantism is a subordinate minority in almost all the countries, determines that the proportion of Protestant universities is also small, in some cases, tiny and without any influence, and their level of recognition does not have the appropriate relevance; 2) their atomization determines a dispersion of resources making the implementation of joint projects for the necessary larger social transcendence impossible; 3) an ambivalent management as a result of the contradictions that are generated when belonging to denominations whose headquarters are outside the country, and; 4) reductionist views regarding the scope of the mission of the church.

Nevertheless, the challenge of the Protestant university to overcome their own situation is making use of the best of their heritage; we must believe in their possibilities. It seems that as the universities are detached from the interference from their ecclesiastical hierarchies, they may be able to lead the educational enterprise more autonomously, overcoming some of the above mentioned contradictions, connecting with consistent aims of the academic *ethos*, and impulsing relevant social transformation of their countries. But then, concerns arise which will be discussed next.

(2) The question of identity

In light of the Western experience, Carpenter asks whether evangelical universities that are being established, can maintain their identity as they develop. For this, the author sees as imperative the necessary integration of theological reflection with the various disciplines; as well as maintaining a critical percentage of leaders and academics with clear evangelical convictions who can give direction to the institutions. ⁴² In recent years, laudable efforts of organizations like IAPCHE are seeking to raise awareness about the possibilities and responsibilities of evangelical higher education institutions in the Latin America region. In previous consultation held by IAPCHE in the context of the IV Latin American Congress on Evangelism (CLADE IV, in

⁴² Joel Carpenter, op. cit, 2001, pp. 16-17.

September 2000, in Quito), a final document outlining the pressing challenges and suggesting several strategies for action, was produced.⁴³

It should be noted, that by emphasizing the issue of identity, there must be a concern that the core of the Kingdom values (truth, justice, integrity, charity and others) are reflected in the projections of university life, rather than doctrinal formulations or religious proselytism saturating university activity. Especially, it is up to the Christian universities to devote themselves unreservedly to the cause of truth. This is their way to serve both the cause of human dignity in general as well as the causes of the church. Christian universities must have an "intimate conviction that truth is its real ally...and that knowledge and reason are faithful servants of the Christian faith...The University should be distinguished by its free search for the whole truth about the nature of man and God."⁴⁴

Thus, what has been discussed in previous sections regarding the requirements of the renewal of education in general and higher education in particular, must also apply to Christian higher education. The philosophical, scientific and technical contributions described become an ethical imperative, if the interest is to pursue wisdom in order to serve our neighbor better. As mentioned in the first part of this paper, and as a result of consensus at the global level, a minimum commitment of the network of Protestant universities should be to support the *Development Agenda post 2015* (with horizon to 2030), made explicit in the Sustainable Development Goals which invite multidisciplinary, multicultural and ecumenical actions. The focus of this agenda is the eradication of poverty and inequity, and the confrontation of the ecological and climate problematique. Moreover, a clear ethical judgment of the current economic system is at the heart of all of this, seeking to contribute both at a theoretical and practical level, with systemic alternatives that are based on Kingdom values.

I would like at this point to clarify the concept of the "Christian University" and its projections, proposing that those Christians who practice in secular university centers be included. As we often say "the church is present where the Christians are" as full witnesses, even in the midst of the most secular situations. The same can also be said about the Christian University: The Christian *universitas*, as part of the church, is where there are Christians who

⁴³ See Sidney Rooy (comp.), *Presencia Cristiana en el Mundo Académico.* Buenos Aires: Ed. Kairos, 2001,pp. 289-299.

⁴⁴ Juan Pablo II, *Las universidades católicas*, Ediciones Paulinas, Bogotá, 1998, pp. 5-6.

practice in the world of higher education however secularized the setting might be. A Christian conception of existence — in connection with the multiplicity of disciplines that are given — may have a more organic expression in an expressly Christian higher institution. However, the practice of a discipline from a Christian who practices in a secularized environment should also bear the marks of a Christian vision and mediation, which is a common demand to every member of the church regardless of the place where he or she serves.

In that sense, and remembering that Christian identity is fundamentally discovered in a life which embodies true values, we need to research the production of intellectuals of Protestant backgrounds who are working in non-Protestant Universities (secular, religious, public or private), and who are being recognized for their contribution to development and cultural acquis of their countries. In Latin America we have some salient cases: Orlando Fals Borda de Colombia (sociologist), Rubem Alves of Brazil (educator), Carlos Monsivais of Mexico (urban literature), all deceased, but widely recognized at the continental level for their outstanding contributions to their disciplines and to Latin American culture and development. Another case in question is of those who are not even Protestants but have passed through one of our universities, and are doing a connoted service to their country; they might have received some influence from our centers.⁴⁵

(3) Matters of teaching, curriculum, administration, social outreach and research

It is the particular duty of each institution to improve and refine their own performance at every level taking into account the urgent challenges that have been mentioned; this implies transversal actions related to teaching, curriculum, administration, research and social projection. Obviously, every country and institution has its own contextual challenges, but there are those that can be taken jointly at both national and regional levels. The following are some reflections in this respect:

In the area of **teaching** *or professional formation* as one of the great university functions, Christian universities should aim to educate students so that they become people recognized both for their character as well as for their knowledge and practical skills; people trained to perform

23

⁴⁵ As in the case of Idalberto Chiavenato, Brazil, in the field of administration, who did one of his degrees at the McKenzie University, although most of his degrees elsewhere. http://www.chiavenato.com/espanol/institucional/quien-es-idalberto-chiavenato.html

functions of responsibility in society, with defined ethical qualities, as a form of witness of their faith before the world. They need to endeavor continuous and widespread achievements, which results in promoting the improvement and development of the Latin American society.

The challenge is therefore to improve the formative experience, contributing to a type of high-quality professionals in their performance; above all, the "Christian plus" must be shown in the human quality of their professionals and their commitment to Kingdom values. In a global context dominated by the neoliberal logic and competitiveness marked by the status symbols of this world, sacrificial service and surrender must be the hallmark as well as a qualitative contribution that will be seen to leave a footprint on our countries. As someone has expressed well, in this world there is plenty of knowledge and skill to meet the great needs and problems. However, in the midst of the abundance and production of knowledge and professionals, the social problems persist and instead of being solved only seem to be getting worse. Indeed, it seems that knowledge is used for evil, or is under the control of anti-Kingdom schemes. So, what are lacking are compassion and a radical commitment to the real needs. This can be seen in: the doctor who opts to serve in remote communities within our countries versus those medics who are seeking to be placed in clinics that serve the urban rich; the economist who is committed to promoting the development of the poor versus that who is flitting around financial stock exchanges, to quickly becoming rich and raising his social status; or the lawyer who chooses instead of a buffet in favor of transnational companies, to defend the peasants' human rights.

In relation to this, and thinking *pedagogically*, if one of the central purposes of Christian higher education is to promote the manifestation of the values of the Kingdom of God in the graduates and in their service, but such a behavior is not shown in a concrete form, something in our training processes have gone wrong. It is serious that discourse exceeds concrete *praxis* in life as well as in our institutions. This dissociation of behavior-thinking may have its origin in overvaluing intellectual activity with regard to exploring emotions and spirituality, creating a vacuum of affective-volitional knowledge and practice. A renewal of our educational philosophies and methodologies could lead to a formation process which could enable us to get closer and closer to doing what we say, to effectively implementing what we believe and think, and to seek to concrete the theories we formulate.

As for the *curriculum* there are challenges of various kinds as the reality of each university and levels of development of these are very varied. As for the theological

"universities", the contents of the discipline must acquire more social components, then advance to more interdisciplinary schemes, introducing careers, initially more related to theology (psychology, philosophy, education and other humanities) to finally go to the broadest spectrum of all disciplines, including the natural and social sciences, arts, humanities, technology and engineering and other applicative areas. For each discipline the undoubted challenge is to make the connection with the Christian worldview. But, as has been mentioned, these should not be merely articulated in dogmatic principles, but rather clearly connected to Kingdom values. Something very important in this line is the contribution to the development of a more interdisciplinary and ecumenical spirit in terms of mission and development work. We also need a more intercultural and interreligious character in our missional approach, in which the university should greatly contribute to its nearest ecclesiastical contexts.

In the case of universities with a clear multidisciplinary scheme, as Carpenter and Glanzer mention, when the tendency is to be absorbed by the boom of the market, it is important to consider careers, or at least concentrations of courses, in humanities and social sciences. However, theory and practice in the field of economics is a crucial study to be reviewed. There is an unfortunate "blind" acceptance of economic liberalism as if it were the "word of God" in economics programs of some Protestant universities. The core problem of inequality and concentration of wealth worldwide has been mentioned, and this is linked to the current prevailing system of neoliberal capitalism, assisted by a whole "legality" that allows it. There is currently a wealth of materials related to the generation of an alternative economy that expresses its identity with scriptural values, where the image of solidarity and interdependence applied to the church, should also apply to society, so that we do not live dichotomous and contradictory lives as Christians.

As for the *administration and leadership*, the challenge is to find ways to lighten the network of impediments that may be obstructing the development of the best multidisciplinary university projects, due to too many clericalized settings with regard to the educational project. Also, we need to progress in inter-institutional cooperative efforts that can give greater strength to the Protestant presence in a context of a nominal Christian culture (mainly Catholic), as is that of Latin America. This, with greater need in present times when the offer of educational services is so broad from both the public and private sectors, and with which it becomes difficult to compete; this does not preclude the cooperative effort, according to purposes and convenience,

that each Protestant institution may have with secular, public and private entities for reasons of teaching, research or social projection.

Indeed, we must recognize the little effort that is being done to push cooperative actions of mutual support, and to set a front line identity affirmation of the Protestant contribution to the development of the respective countries and the Continent as a whole. If at some moment there were meetings and even an effort at the grassroots level was made to build a common supranational body, these have not continued. The reason for this, as discussed above, could be the ecclesiastical contexts in which we live or the level of development of our own institutions, that suffer from resource constraints. In addition to this, the dynamics of our efforts have been often linked to certain personalities, but when the successions are rotated in institutional roles, continuity is lost and the little bit of progress made is disarticulated, contributing, within our scarcity, to decapitalization of the investment done.

As for the *social extension* it seems to me that we need to articulate a plan for the projection to society through the end result or product of our university work - the graduates. There is a vast task of *promoting social entrepreneurship* at national and continental levels so that true transformational social movements may arise. We need to encourage the organization of institutions of various kinds: schools, NGOs and development agencies, economic enterprises with a clear social responsibility (fundamentally, based on a more social economy), and political and social movements, and others. We need to create a massive entrepreneurial movement, who can articulate a major social transformation in our countries.

In general, in terms of entrepreneurship, no one disputes its importance in the context of the widespread economic crisis which is reflected in high rates of unemployment, especially in the youth, and this at the worldwide level. We need increasingly to foster an entrepreneurial culture in all fields, especially from within the educational environment responsible for training future professionals. However, the vision becomes reductionist when it focuses only on certain professions, responding to the economistic and commercial logic imposed by the neoliberal model that dominates. Privilege is given to engineering and careers in economics and business management, at the expense of social sciences, arts and humanities. Often the place and role of

26

⁴⁶ CONDUCE, a consortium which grouped together some of the evangelical universities in Latin America attempted something, although with weakness to meet its objectives, as mentioned by Carpenter (see Carpenter, op. Cit., p. 3). At present, this body is inactive.

each professional discipline is disallowed for the integral development of society, discarding something intrinsic to human nature, the vocational call and the need for the development of individuals and a total society. If entrepreneurship is needed, then this must take place within the broader vision of "social entrepreneurship" that includes all vocations. Also, that those more related specifically to the field of economics need to be located within a broader vision of human development, which implies a clear sense of social responsibility and a fight for a different economic and social system, different to the present neoliberal system that is the matrix of a permanent concentration of wealth and access to resources produced socially, only by a few.⁴⁷

In the field of *research*, undoubtedly it is imperative to maintain a clear commitment to the great needs and social problems and development of our countries. A clear aim for these investigations is to try to lead to their implementation - linked to promoting entrepreneurship as mentioned before - so that they do not remain shelved. It is important to think big in this task of research-implementation, so that gradually, the contribution to the generation of new ethical densities and economic and social situations in communities, regions and/or specific sectors of our countries will be noticeable.

It is important to make a great effort to register and classify this research at the continental level, so that this documentation of the Protestant universities' contribution in the context of all the national and continental research can be appreciated. In this compilation effort, as mentioned, we need to include the contribution of a vast number of Protestants who serve in secular, public and private universities, with their own research interests. We must consider the contributions for our countries, which have already been given, but we have not considered as part of the CHE; and yet, they are a part of us. There is thus an important work to be done in documentary logistics. By highlighting this field of research and intellectual production, we are not unaware that in teaching and administrative functions, surely there is also a plethora of scattered Protestant personnel in the secular sphere, whose work is confined to the apparently functional realm. This must not be. We need to recognize that the excellent performances in these functions are in line with the ultimate goal of our own Protestant universities: to have education centers that serve the best development and welfare of our countries and for the benefit of all spheres of human endeavor.

 $^{^{47}}$ Indeed, such were the concerns mentioned at the First International Congress on Entrepreneurship, held in the Universidad de Costa Rica, in 2015

Conclusions

As Christian universities belonging to the Protestant tradition, we need to recognize that there is a framework and global consensus of shared values and perceived responsibilities arising from a broad discussion level, to be considered as a minimum basis on which to locate discussions of educational sectors more particular in society and their corresponding challenges, such as may be the case of Christian Higher Education. The origin of these guidelines generated by international agencies tacitly imply the assumption of lay on non-religious positions, but because of the ecumenical and universal nature of these, far from generating *a priori* discrepancies, provide perspectives for inclusive and consensual order to be taken into account.

On the other hand, among the substantial problems identified in the above analysis and consensual discussions, we need to delve into them as part of understanding the world we live in and their most pressing challenges. In this regard, we wanted to emphasize the dehumanizing features of the globalization of the neoliberal economic system and its effect on society and the environment. We need to keep in mind, the global consensus on the need for a commitment to the *Post 2015 Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals*, which seeks to end poverty and inequality and promote a more humane economy and development.

In light of the above, it is fair to rethink the nature and mission of the university centers to see if they are up to the challenges of the time. This is a subject on which the Latin American region has had a rich reflection and production, especially on entering the new century, and by coincidence a new millennium, with all the changes this transition has brought. We need also to keep as a point of reference these contributions about the features that universities should have, in order to face the challenges.

In the light of what has been said, we have come to consider our own interest within the Protestant Christian higher education sector. It is noteworthy that there is a concern for a clear commitment to human promotion and development and an ecumenical attitude in fulfilling our functions, while at the same time, trying to protect the identity that should distinguish the Christian University. Faced with the data presented to us about the reality of Protestant universities in Latin America, which are highly heterogeneous in size, time of existence, programs that they offer, levels of recognition and other indicators, we have reflected on the most

pressing challenges they meet, their confrontation, and their possible contribution to the development of the Church and the societies to which they belong.

One aspect that needs to be weighed up is about the role that Christian universities may have regarding a revitalization of the church in its social projection by the best formation of their leadership; and through this, to launch congregations, (fundamentally made up of laypeople), in ways that help to regenerate the social fabric, this on the basis of the historical experiences of the positive impact of Protestantism in social change. This step of contributing to a better development of the church, carries, in itself, a contribution to improvements in the development of society in general.

Returning to the question of identity, we need to clarify the issue of what fundamentally needs to be taken into account - the question of embodying Kingdom values in the activity and goals of the University, more than mere doctrinal statements. Also in accordance with these values, we need to identify clear commitments-goals in order to solve pressing problems, a feature that validates and affirms identity. On the other hand, we need to include within the concept of the Christian University, all believers working in higher education even if they are located in secular institutions. This broadens the scope and projections of the binomial Church-university.

Finally, in relation to the major university functions (teaching, research and social extension) and its own administration, we suggest possibilities to help improve and refine performance at all levels and according to the urgent challenges that have been mentioned. Among the principle challenges for greater social transcendence are: pedagogical renewal for the formation of organic professionals; the commitment of curriculums and research with the critical problematiques of our time; creating a broad social entrepreneurial movement; and strengthening interinstitutional cooperation.

The possibilities of a more solid and ample development and contribution for church and society from Latin American evangelical universities are there. But they need continuous renewal so that they fulfill their vocation in a Continent that already has stepped through the doors of the 21st century, both as part of a changing society, which requires renewed approaches to eternal human problems, and as part of the church, whose nature is to be *ecclesia reformata et semper reformanda*. Such renewal requires a clear awareness that, because of its Christian nature, the evangelical university should have an attitude and more incisive capacity for

authentic search for truth. This search should not be subordinate to or conditioned by unworthy interests, but be inspired by the values of the Kingdom of God, the steadfast anchor of their identity and true vector to wellness and wholeness of human beings and all creation. On the basis of this permanent interior renovation (*universitas reformata et semper reformanda*), the Christian university will be able to be an instrument of permanent transformation of the church to which it belongs, and of the wider society toward which its fundamental and broader calling is oriented.

Appendix: Protestants Universities in Latin America

I. Evangelicals (indicating the founding date)

Mesoamerica (including Mexico and Central America) and the Hispanic Caribbean

Universidad Madero, Puebla, México (1982/1986)

Universidad Cristiana de las Américas (UCLAME), (1989) México, DF and other sites

Universidad Mariano Gálvez, Guatemala (1966)

Universidad Cristiana Evangélica "Nuevo Milenio" (UCENM), Honduras (2001)

Universidad Evangélica de El Salvador (UEES) (1981)

Universidad Luterana Salvadoreña (ULS), El Salvador (1993)

Universidad Cristiana de las Asambleas de Dios (UCAD), El Salvador (1983)

Universidad Politécnica de Nicaragua (UPOLI) (1967)

Universidad Evangélica Nicaragüense Martin Luther King Jr (1994)

Universidad Martín Lutero, Nicaragua (UML) (Asambleas de Dios) (2002)

Universidad Evangélica de las Américas (UNELA), San José, Costa Rica (1992)

Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana, San José, Costa Rica (UBILA o UBL) (1926/2000),

Universidad Cristiana del Sur, San José Costa Rica (1996)

Universidad Nacional Evangélica, República Dominicana (UNEV) (1986)

South America

Corporación Universitaria Reformada, Barranquilla, Colombia (CUR) (2002)

Universidad-Seminario Evangélico de Lima, Perú (USEL) (2015)

Universidad Cristiana de Bolivia (UCEBOL), Santa Cruz (1990)

Universidad Evangélica Boliviana (UEB), Santa Cruz (1980)

Universidad Bethesda (UNIBETH), Santa Cruz, Bolivia (2006)

Universidad Evangélica del Paraguay (UEP) (1994)

Brazil⁴⁸

Universidad Presbiteriana MacKenzie (1952)

Centro Universitario de Anápolis (1961)

Universidade Lutheran do Brasil (1964)

Facultade Moraes Júnior – Mac Kenzie Río (1965)

Universidade Metodista de Piracicaba (1966)

Faculdade Evangelica do Paraná (1969)

Centro Universitario Medotista Bennet (1971)

Universidade Metodista de Sao Paulo (1971)

Centro Universitario Metodista Idsabella Hendrix, Belo Horizonte (1972)

Centro Universitario Luterano de JI – Paraná (1989)

Faculdade Presbiteriana Gammon, Lavras (1990)

Instituto Superior e Centro Educacional Luterano, Joinville (1996)

Centro Universitario Luterano de Santarém (1996)

Centro Universitario de Manaus (1996)

Centro Universitario Luterano de Palmas (1996)

Faculdade Metodista de Santa Maria (1998)

Faculdade Metodista Granbery, Juiz de Fora (1998)

Faculdade Batista do Rio de Janeiro (1999)

Faculdade Batista Brasileira, Itaigara, Salvador - BA, (1999)

Escola Superior Batista do Amazonas (1999)

Instituto Luterano de Ensino Superior de Itumbiara (1999)

Faculdade 2 de Julho (Presbiteriana) – Salvador, BA (1999)

Faculdade Batista de Minas Gerais (2000)

Instituto Luterano Superior de Porto Velho (2001)

Facultade Teologica, Filo e Ciencias Humanas Gamaliel, Tukurui, PA (2002) (A.of.G)

Faculdade Anglicana de Erechim, RS (Anglican) (2003)

Centro Universitario Metodista, IPA, RS (2004)

Faculdade Boas Novas Ciencias Teologicas, Sociales e Biotec. (2005) (A.ofG.)

Faculdade Evangelica de Brasilia (2005)

Faculdade Evangelica Cristo Rei (Ch.of C), Jaicós, Paraiba (2006)

II. Adventist Universities⁴⁹

Mesoamerica (including Mexico and Central America) and the Hispanic Caribbean

Universidad de Montemorelos (University of Montemorelos), Nuevo León, Mexico Universidad de Navojoa (University of Navojoa), Navojoa, Sonora, Mexico Universidad Linda Vista (Linda Vista University), Pueblo Nuevo, Chiapas, Mexico Universidad Adventista de Centro America, Costa Rica

⁴⁸ List taken from Alexandre Brasil Fonseca & Cristiane Candido Santos, op.cit 218-220. Thirty evangelical universities are registered, although in several cases seems to be sites of the same institution in different parts of the country.

⁴⁹ http://todoadventista.blogspot.com/2009/06/lista-de-universidades-adventistas.htmlc

Seminario Adventista de Cuba Universidad Adventista Dominicana, Dominican Republic Universidad Adventista de las Antillas, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico Universidad Herbert Fletcher, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico

South America

Instituto Universitario Adventista de Venezuela

Universidad Adventista de Colombia (UNAC)

Instituto Tecnológico Superior Adventista del Ecuador, Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas,

Universidad Peruana Unión Campus Lima, Peru

Universidad Peruana Unión Campus Juliaca, Peru

Universidad Peruana Unión Campus Tarapoto, Peru

Universidad Adventista de Bolivia, Cochabamba,

Universidad Adventista de Chile, Chillan,

Universidad Adventista del Plata, Entre Ríos, Argentina

Misiones Adventist College, Misiones, Argentina

Centro Universitário Adventista de São Paulo Campus 1, Brazil

Centro Universitário Adventista de São Paulo Campus 2, Engenheiro Coelho, Brazil

Centro Universitário Adventista de São Paulo Campus 3, Campinas, Brazil

Faculdade Adventista da Amazonia, Brazil

Faculdade Adventista de Minas, Brazil

Faculdade Adventista do Paraná, Brazil

Faculdade Adventista da Bahia, Brazil