

WHY DOES SLOVAKIA NEED A CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY?

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The first Slovak Catholic University was launched in the academic year 2000/2001. In contrast to the foregoing attempts to establish a state Catholic University, the founder of the Ružomberok Catholic University is a non-state body – the Bishops' Conference of Slovakia.

This act brought a deep and long-lasting dispute about the right to establish a Catholic university to an end. The public felt that it was the issue of prestige that played a decisive role in this political strife, namely who (which political grouping) will have the honour of “doing” a favour to the Catholic Church and binding it to a “constructive collaboration”. Much less was spoken about the factual side of the issue – about the tasks and objectives of Catholic universities (CU), what should be the unique and unrepeatable role of the Slovak CU. Only the answer to the question of the specific objectives of the CU can justify the efforts and expenses associated with the establishment and activities of the new university.

The essence and the tasks of the Catholic university are not known enough in our cultural post-communist area that a citizen – both believer and unbeliever – would be able to form an objective opinion on the issue. This study offers help in search of a qualified answer and basic information on Catholic universities and aspects of their formation and activities. The study has four parts.

The first part is about the teaching mission of the Catholic Church based on the Church's view on faith and rational knowledge as the two forms of knowledge. Although the methods of these two forms of knowledge are different, they pursue the same aim – objective truth. The thirst for knowledge led to the establishment of the university with its initial goal to shape a comprehensive outlook on man and his be-

¹ The author of the article was the statutory representative and the first rector of the Trnava Constantine and Methodius University in 1997–98, which should have originally been transformed into a Catholic University. After the failure of this plan, he resigned and returned to his former post at the Academy of Music and Dance in Bratislava, where he lectures on musical theory, the theory of the media, and cultural management.

ing. The shaping of the personality of the future scientist was subjected to it as well. The development of natural science changed substantially the approach: particular views and ambitions came to the fore and man and the whole of his being disappeared from the field of vision. Theology and philosophy were shifted to the margin of university activities and scientific life. This necessitated the establishment of a new CU which returned to the coexistence of theology, philosophy and other natural and social sciences under the common shelter of academic efforts to answer the basic human-related questions – the question of the sense of being in particular.

In the second part we present dilemmas a modern Catholic university has to cope with. These dilemmas follow from the return to the earlier objectives of the university – to perceive humans and life as a dialectical unity. The goals of the modern university face, however, numerous changes in both social and cultural settings including secularization of society and changes in the lifestyle and the style of production brought about by the scientific and technological progress. The activities of the Catholic university are also significantly influenced by “old” universities as well by service to the needs of the Church, etc.

In the third part we present the formal conditions of the establishment of the Catholic University which are largely interconnected with the mission of the CU in modern society.

In the last part we shall try to answer the basic question whether Slovakia and its society need a Catholic university and why the existing structure of the institutions of higher education is not sufficient any more.

1. Faith and intellect

1.1. The Catholic Church and rational knowledge

Studying the role of the CU in modern society, we have to go back to the roots of the relations between the Christian religion and intellectual activities.

The Catholic Church struggled to take an active part in the intellectual life of society from its very beginning. This attitude followed from the opinion that reason and faith are two different paths towards knowing truth. The truth about nature and human being is also evidence of the divine origin of the world and its development.

Throughout its development, the Catholic Church ascribed equal importance to rational knowledge and to knowledge through faith. These products of the cognitive process are ultimately identical or at least comparable.

The comparison of the products of reason and faith is another, very important tool of knowledge. It verifies the validity of rational knowledge by faith and the validity of the postulates of faith by the vehicles of rational knowledge.

The early period of Christianity was already characterized by the great intellectual efforts of the Church Fathers. The written records from the age of early Christianity, such as St Matthew's Gospel or the letters of St Paul, focused on justifying Christianity within the Jewish intellectual tradition. Other authors, such as Justinus

Martyr concentrated on placing Christianity into connection with the great philosophical systems of their times, particularly with the teaching of Plato. This trust in human rational knowledge confirms St Augustine's opinion: "Truth is yours, oh Lord, wherever we find it."

In the history of the Catholic Church we find a number of distinguished personalities who were engaged in the issues of teaching, like Alcuin of York, Albert the Great, Saint Thomas Aquinas, M. Copernicus, etc. Spiritual and instructive congregations also belong here, namely: Basilians in the East, Benedictines, Piarists, Franciscans, Jesuits, Ursulines, Brothers of the Christian Schools, Holy Cross Fathers, Salesians, and many other orders, which were also joined by lay persons – all those fulfilled the teaching mission of the Church.

Naturally, the intellectual activity of the Christians had at first been bound to the existing forms of education and educational institutions. The Church used the existing forms of education and created new where necessary. The importance of the church educational institutions, such as monasteries and cathedral schools, had increased so much that they finally became decisive for the intellectual progress and development of the whole of Western European civilization.

1.2. The foundation of a medieval university

The interests of society called for education available not only to the clergy but also to the laity. Moreover, the burgeoning level of knowledge required a form of schooling that would shelter all branches of knowledge under one umbrella. In the eleventh-twelfth centuries this led to the establishment of universities that satisfied all such demands. This development was marked by such milestones as Bologna, Paris, Oxford, Cambridge, Padua, and many others. The University of Bologna was an example of students' community, the Paris University being a model, where teachers had a decisive role.

The first universities were founded by bishops from large dioceses. The authority of the university to operate as an educational institution, was approved by the Popes in their bulls and decrees granting privileges. By 1500, there were 75 universities in Europe and the majority of them was founded by the Church. The University is the only type of medieval institution which has survived until today.

Medieval university brought all products of knowledge and all processes of knowledge together. The efforts of the Church and its universities to know the context, connections were reflected in paying great attention to the study of Antiquity, but also to Islamic and Jewish thinkers. Christian scientists believed that God is truth, and therefore they were not afraid of raising any question and of seeking a reply with people of different religions. Thanks to this, the Christian thought was able to integrate the wealth of ideas born in other religions, other philosophical systems and other cultural patterns of being.

The medieval university was the place of fertile dispute about theology and philosophy. Medieval theology and philosophy faced the Christian heritage of the pe-

riod of the fathers (St Augustine), the philosophy of Aristotle, Arabic and Jewish philosophy and Neoplatonism. Medieval university realized a grandiose synthesis of faith and knowledge. It was the basis of the well-organized system and summa literature full of dialectics which are still among the most significant spiritual products of Western European culture (e.g. Summa Theologica by St Thomas Aquinas). These works provided humankind with the basic opinion that humans are created for truth.

The internal desire for self-knowledge and self-perfection led to the Church's acceptance of the university as a place for the dialogue between theology and the church hierarchy from the very beginning. The Church hierarchy has not only tolerated, but also welcomed creative tension between the highest representatives of the Church and the scientific explorations of theologians from the times of the first universities until today. The dialogue of Church dignitaries – the Pope, his court, the College of cardinals and other high Church dignitaries with theologians – often passes through risky phases growing in some periods into dramatic clashes. However, later development showed that such clashes had always been necessary if the point at issue was new knowledge which significantly influenced the theological thought of the Catholic Church.

One of the positive features of the dialogue was the variety of topics, opinions, and schools. Variety was and still is one of the main positive features of Catholic thought. The dialogue on the principal questions of knowledge and faith has never taken place on backstage but always under the control of the public which participates in the cognitive process.

1.3. University of modern age

With the advent of the Renaissance, the participation of secular rulers and civic authorities in the development was increasing. But the interest of the Church in the development of universities did not decrease. In 1588 the Pope Sixtus V founded the congregation for higher education – “Congregation pro universitate studia romani”, which can be regarded as the first ministry of higher education. In 1400-1799, the Church set up 17 Catholic universities which fulfil their academic mission till today.

The development of higher education in Slovakia fully mirrored the then tendencies in shaping the universities. The oldest university was Academia Istropolitana in Bratislava, founded in 1465 by the Archbishop John Vitéz of Esztergom. Unfortunately, problems between the archbishop and the ruler soon led to the closure of the university.²

Trnava University was founded in 1635 by Archbishop Peter Pázmány of Esztergom. The University had philosophical and theological faculties. The Faculty

² The exact year of the closure of the university is not known, but the university did not operate more than 10 years.

of Law was founded by Archbishop John George Szelepcsényi-Pohronec of Esztergom in 1665 and the Faculty of Medicine in 1770. It was the Jesuit university. After the abolition of the Jesuit order in 1773, the university was nationalized and in 1777 it was moved to Buda, where, in terms of the Emperor's education decree 'Ratio educationis', it became a royal academy.

The third university which is an evidence of the high share of the Catholic Church in the development of education in the historic Kingdom of Hungary, was Košice University founded in 1657 by the Bishop B. Kisdi of Eger. The university also had Jesuits at its head. In 1773 the university was taken by the State and in 1777 it was changed into a royal academy, which belonged to Buda University. During the Bach era, the university became a Law Academy. After the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic (ČSR) the academy was abolished in 1921.

Looking back at the development of the higher education system in Slovakia, we see that administrative interventions against Catholic universities taking place because the state represented by the monarch wanted to take control over education, finally damaged the education system and the development of education in the country. It took a long time to fill the gap caused by the closure of the universities and academies.³

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed basic changes in higher education. Natural and technical sciences came to the fore. Social sciences survived in universities as a sort of pious respect for Antiquity and its message rather than because of pressing tasks of theory and practice. The outlook on the problem of the education of future scientists also changed. The medieval university regarded shaping of the personality as a special and specially followed task (embodied in a tutor at Oxford University responsible for the successful personal and professional growth of students throughout their studies), but the nineteenth-century university concentrated exclusively on conveying the scientific knowledge and/or the common scientific research conducted by professor and his students.

These changes in the process of education and the profiling of the modern university were also due to the founder of Berlin (today Humboldt) University Wilhelm Humboldt (1767-1835). Humboldt's opinion was that scientific issues were not only a challenge for cognitive processes, but also an instrument for spiritual and moral shaping. If a student intensively studies scientific problems together with his professor, exploration and knowledge help him find a correct worldview and moral platform.

Thanks to remarkable scientific results obtained by its professors, the Berlin university soon became an example followed by all European universities. One of the consequences of its influence was also the fact that the question of the shaping of the personality of future graduates was left and still is beyond the field of view of teaching.

³ Both Trnava and Košice universities had greater impact on the level of education of the youth than contemporary universities thanks to the gymnasias (or secondary schools) and printing houses established and affiliated to these universities.

Religious indifferentism or liberalism was characteristic of the nineteenth-century university. It means that every denomination was good; if somebody professed something it was all right. If s/he professed nothing, it was still better. Such an approach to students' and professors' religious belief became increasingly convincing and attractive.

Under these conditions no worldview could be the basis of university activities. Cognition lacked a unifying effect of essential moral values. University activities were controlled by the only quality, namely a view that humans are predetermined for freedom to follow the route they have chosen.

This opinion was very tolerant to faith if we compare it with the teaching of the founder of positivism Auguste Comte (1758-1857). According to Comte, after three stages of social development, science can only build on the ruins of faith and metaphysics. In other words, the scientific progress is conditioned by reprobating the confession of faith.

This new "freedom" of science was characterized by the fact that it got rid of any bedrock and prerequisites which might influence the impartiality and objectiveness of exploration. Humans are obliged to seek truth without knowing whether any truth exists...

The development of natural science and technology extended the interests of university by disciplines which shifted them further from the earlier focus on philosophical and theological issues.

This had the result that the stormy growth of natural science took place outside the Church or, more precisely, without its participation. This led to a large contradiction between natural science and the Church. A Christian living in the nineteenth century could not avoid coming into conflict with his own conscience when trying to launch into the research in natural science.

Natural science, as a decisive discipline of the modern age, alienated at first from the Church as a result of the separation from religion and the Church and took a hostile attitude to the Church, followed by an increasing distance from God through the generations. According to Cardinal König "both sides lived in separate spiritual provinces, speaking different language, not knowing or respecting one another. Faith was passing by science and the world which was controlled by science. The contradiction between faith and science becomes tragic. It is a contradiction which causes great losses on both sides."⁴

The tragedy of the conflict deepened through further misunderstandings. Theology as well as profane sciences went beyond their competencies by some statements. A spiritual abyss spread between the old and the new age, which appears to be a denial of the own past, because it is a chasm between the whole and the partial vision of man and his being.

⁴ F. Cardinal KÖNIG: *Wesen und Aufgabe einer katholischen Universität heute*. In: F. Cardinal KÖNIG [Ed.]: *Wesen und Aufgabe einer katholischen Universität*. Düsseldorf, Patmos Verlag, 1985, 2nd edition, p. 137.

The ancient and medieval thought grew from admiration of and respect for man and his being. On the other hand, the thought of modern man is drowning in doubts and scepticism, in uncertainty and distrust. A logical consequence of that change was the change of the attitude towards theology: the university of the modern age had no place for theological faculties and the creators of the nineteenth-century university felt theology as a "foreign body" in a clear-sighted eye of positivist science.

1.4. The founding of Catholic universities

The Catholic Church was driven into a corner. It suddenly lost contact with the education necessary for it to fulfil its teaching mission and as a source of new knowledge. The only way out was to conduct its autonomous education and teaching activities. The Church began building independent schools, faculties, theological colleges, and universities.

The ever greater concentration of universities on natural science, and their gradual subjection to secular rulers and/or to nation-states, led to theology being driven to the margin of higher education, and finally being placed in seminaries. If we realize the natural need of theology to be in constant contact with the humanities and natural science, this isolation can be denoted as a ghetto.

The Church, constantly aware that it fulfils a teaching mission, could not reconcile itself to the situation. The development of natural and technical sciences brought new philosophical and ethical problems. The task of theology is to recognize them in time and to help to solve them together with philosophy and ethics. The continuous contact with other scientific branches and problems associated with their development is one of the basic preconditions of the updating of the theological thought in concrete historical and social conditions.

The signal for the revival of the Catholic university had come from Belgian Leuven, where, in 1835, the activities of one of the oldest European universities were restored (the activities of the university founded by the Pope Martin V in 1425 were interrupted by the French occupation in 1797). After Leuven, there were established additional 17 Catholic universities.

John Henry Newman significantly contributed to the remarkable development of modern Catholic university.⁵ He was asked in 1852 by Irish bishops to set up a national Catholic university. On that occasion he delivered several lectures on the

⁵ NEWMAN, John Henry (1801-1890) was probably the most influential theologian of Victorian England. He studied and lectured at Oxford University, was ordained a priest of the Church of England, became vicar of St Mary's Church in Oxford in 1828, and in 1831-1832 he served as university priest. In 1833 he participated in the so-called Oxford Movement against the repeated intervention of British government in the internal matters of the Church of England. Under the pressure of criticism, the founders of the movement converted to the Catholic faith. Newman was baptized in 1845, and a year later he was ordained a priest in Rome. In 1854-58, he was the founding rector of the Catholic University in Dublin. He was nominated Cardinal by the Pope Leo XIII in 1879. He was an excellent essayist, wrote a masterful autobiography, a series of historical philosophical studies, two novels, and several highly valued poems.

topic of "The idea of university", which had a decisive influence on the programme of studies at the Catholic universities of the modern age. His ideas are topical even today and they are observed by all founding fathers and leading representatives of contemporary Catholic universities.

Cardinal Newman, who can be designated as the last universalist of the modern age, returned to the original idea of university. He underlined that the point at issue is man and not a "book". The most important component of the university work was for him the spiritual exchange between teachers and students. Thirst for knowledge and moral attractiveness of the particular teacher were decisive.

Newman defined university as a place for universal knowledge instruction. University cannot convey universal knowledge as a fundamental mission without the help of the Church, which, as the only one, is acquainted with the revelation of the divine. This close relation is useful both for university and for the Church; the university can reliably orientate in teaching the truth and the Church is strengthened by the dissemination of truth which is its basis.

Importantly, in order to satisfy these aims, the university teaching should really be universal. It is necessary to teach "all sciences" or branches of knowledge and not to forget or prefer any. The studies of each discipline must have an adequate framework. The essence of the university is a systematic survey of all knowledge. The knowledge pursued at the university has to be pursued for the knowledge itself and not for a partial profit since the cultivation of the intellect per se is useful for the practical and spiritual life of man.

Theology is the queen of science, which penetrates into all other sciences. It is therefore particularly urgent not to neglect the teaching of theology at the university. "Religious truth is not only part of the universal knowledge but it is its basic precondition," Newman writes.⁶ The activities of the Church in university education are evaluated by many as unwanted intervention. However, the Church in fact helps society not only to channel education but it also provides a counterbalance to the rational truth, by which we can weigh the value of various partial theories.

Newman saw the objectives of all schooling in education towards a spiritual attitude. He understood it as the education of the spirit towards correct thinking about all matters, towards the thirst for truth and understanding of truth.

This attitude has to overarch all sciences, it has to become determining for philosophy and theology, it has to be common to them. This joint component is the conscience of unconditional commitment to truth.⁷

Spiritual horizons, as drafted by Newman, are justified in relation to every university, but they are particularly valid for the CU.

⁶ NEWMAN, J.H.: *Zum Wesen der Universität*. Mainz, 1960.

⁷ NEWMAN, J.H.: *The Aim of a Catholic University*. http://www.libertynet.org/tunewman/Prose/catholic_u.html NEWMAN, J.H.: *What is Meant by Liberal Knowledge*. <http://www.libertynet.org/tunewman/Prose/knowledge.html>

We can learn a lot about the structure of science and education at a CU from the examples of some existing universities. For instance, the CU of France was founded in 1875. The first lectures began in the same year, the subjects like law, spiritual sciences, and natural science. The new university struggled for humanitarian, Christian-oriented education. In 1878, bishops established their own theological faculty, which consummated the Catholic character of the school.

Catholic institutes (in France, only state universities can be called universities since 1880) exist today in Angers, Lille, Lyon, Paris, and Toulouse. The largest of them is Institut Catholique de Paris established in 1935 as a papal university.⁸

The largest European Catholic university is the CU in Leuven, Belgium.⁹ Towards the end of the twentieth century there were 43 Catholic universities in Europe. There are only four CU in Central and Eastern Europe (three in Poland – Lublin, Warsaw, and Cracow and one in Hungary, in Budapest).

The growth of Catholic universities was not restricted only to Europe. The first Catholic university in the USA was founded in Georgetown in 1789. This year is identical with the year of the foundation of the American Union. The university was granted the right to award academic degrees in 1815. In 1844 it obtained the statute of a federal university.

Other universities were established later. At present there are 38 Catholic universities in North America. If we add so-called colleges that offer university education towards the bachelor's degrees, the number of the Catholic institutions of higher education is almost three thousand in the USA.

The greatest number of Catholic universities is in Asia (57) and in Latin America (45), the smallest in Africa (6) and Australia (2).

At the end of the twentieth century there were 191 Catholic universities in the world.¹⁰

2. Dilemmas of the modern university

2.1. *Universitas humana (human universe)*

The focus of university science on the exploration and knowing of the facts leads to the increasingly greater differentiation of particular disciplines. The overall

⁸ The cultural-social and international significance of this university can also be illustrated by the data about students: in the school year 1999-2000 there studied 18,000 students at the six faculties of the Institut Catholique de Paris, 25-30% were from 120 foreign countries, mainly from Africa and Latin America.

⁹ In the school year 1999-2000 almost 27,000 students studied at the university, 9% of them foreigners. The university has 3,573 professors and researchers, 2,118 administrative and technical workers. There are 7,000 doctors and medical workers at university clinics. There are 6 academic programmes, 4 of them being completely taught in English (philosophy, theology, religious studies, Canon Law). There are 102 postgraduate courses. The University library has 4 million books and buys 15,000 journals!

¹⁰ The data are of September 1999, provided by the Secretariat of the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU) in Paris.

vision of the university is complicated by the ongoing compartmentalization of scientific branches into smaller, narrower specialized subjects.

If science is draining away in specialized tasks, it is exposed to danger to lose the existential whole of human being from its field of vision. Incapability to describe and express the integrity of being evoke scepticism and the feeling of powerlessness in man.

The disciplines are so distant from one another that the renewal of the original 'universitas', that is an association of teachers and students in a community is practically impossible.

The earlier complex efforts to take a comprehensive view disturbs, in addition to scientific specialization, also the professional preparation programme for students. The student's primary goal is the preparation for work, for a future career; the student is not interested in anything else, or it appears to him as luxury, which he cannot afford.

This personality development, the turning away from basic questions is also a consequence of underestimating the importance of basic philosophical questions which were posed at the beginning of scientific knowledge and have been their determining element since then. The University loses interest in the overall picture because students are not interested in it either.

The University finds itself in a boundary situation. The orientation of the university is not only a question of individual interest but it is also the product of some market mechanisms. If an institution is to be regarded as university, it has to try to depict 'universitas humana' – to shape human universe with man in a dominant position.

That does not mean that a university should ignore partial problems. Knowledge cannot dispense with analysis. Scientific analysis is the vehicle of the explanation of human activities and thought in the world that has the character of multifarious and internally diverse entity. Its identification as a dialectic whole is the university's assignment.

Hegel said "truth is the whole" ("Das Wahre ist das Ganze."). The religious question about human fate also belongs to this whole. "Even the most diverse science alone... is not enough for humankind," Cardinal J. C. Korec said in reply to the question what a man freed from God is able to do. "No knowledge of biology, psychology, or sociology will provide us with a complete and exhaustive image of man and it will not tell us what a man should be, where s/he should go and how will s/he achieve it."¹¹

This is precisely the space where the special role of the Catholic university is defined. Religion cannot be only restricted to the belief in Revelation and to free individual decision. Historically and ontologically, faith is inseparable from human existence. Man as a mortal being asks what will be the life "after", seeks reply to the question of infinite time, the question of eternity.

¹¹ J. C. Cardinal KOREC: *Spomínam, premýšľam, vyznávam. Rozhovory s kardinálom.* Bratislava, Lúč 1999, p. 197.

It is a basic question. It cannot be answered only by theology. A number of scientific disciplines have to examine it from many angles within a vast research area. "In a secularized society, where political aims diverge from moral values, it is very important, even absolutely necessary, to raise repeatedly the question about the whole, to deal with man as a whole."¹² We have to learn to perceive man as a whole not only in space but also in time. The essence of human existence cannot be explained merely in the worldly space-time, but human existence in eternity has to be included in our contemplations as well.

The study of humans is the mission of the modern university. The other material world, nature, the universe are interesting merely as the setting for human existence. Its importance and value is only gained in relation to man and life. Any other approach shifts science to the margin, whose pragmatic approach disqualifies it in human efforts to approach the absolute truth.

2.2. Faith – a private matter?

In the last decades, faith has increasingly been considered to be a private matter of every man. The influence of faith is only limited to the level of an individual. The consequence is a serious misunderstanding that religion is not a cultural phenomenon. By contrast, culture is often reduced to a purely social phenomenon.

Thus a great danger arises that religion will be removed as the bearer of the basic question and that man will end in the custody of the infinite. This would eliminate the open character of his/her fate and the continuity of life after earthly death.

It is a process that strongly endangers man. If man is regarded as a social and political being only, then s/he will be exclusively a product of the superior whole represented by the state. The state is a time- and space-limited and closed aggregate. Such an understanding of man, such a subordination of his/her being to the will of the state would necessarily lead to spiritual and political totalitarianism.

The Catholic University has to face this danger. It has to prevent religion and faith from being pushed into the private sphere. The CU has to understand the articulation of culture and religion in their dialectic connection as its exceptional task. The interconnection of culture and religion enables a uniform understanding of man as a created unity which is a system open in time and space.

The separation of culture and religion threatens not only culture but also faith itself. If religion is torn out of its struggles for the cultural profile of humankind, it is exposed to danger that it will develop into sectarianism and its activities will be one-sided.

But even when the share of the Church in university activities diminishes, the Church still looks at the university as an important region of its pastoral efforts.

¹² LEDURE, Yves: Institut Catholique de Paris. In: F. Cardinal KÖNIG [Ed.]: *Wesen und Aufgabe einer katholischen Universität*. Düsseldorf, Patmos Verlag, 1985, 2nd edition, p. 80.

University should not be merely a place for meeting scientific knowledge but also an opportunity to encounter Christ and Revelation. The University is also the vehicle of interconnection and intertwining of faith and culture. Pope John Paul II defined it well in his letter written on the occasion of the establishment of the Papal Council for culture in 1982, where he said that "the synthesis of culture and faith is not only a demand of culture but also of faith... Faith which is not culture, is never fully accepted, fully thought over, and really lived faith."

The religious answer does not solve all human issues. Both the answer and the question are inseparable parts of a controversial being of man.

2.3. Human dimension of scientific and technological progress

The freedom of scientific knowledge does not mean a loss of any attitude. The other way round. A scientist who freely struggles for the freedom of cognition must not forget the basic values and the freedom of personality as points of orientation of all scientific work. 'Universitas literarum' is one of the elementary components of the university idea. It is an idea of summing up everything that might be a subject of scientific knowledge.

This idea is jeopardized by the continuing differentiation and separation of partial disciplines. This threat can be avoided by dialogues, by opening to the questions which are associated, inter alia, with the shaping of the student's personality. The scientific profile of the university depends on the one hand on scientific research and, on the other hand, on the teaching of various disciplines; this diversification has to become a basic forum for the spiritual controversies of the time, for the discussion of basic questions as posed by the development again and again in different connections and in different forms.

A type of abstract ideology of scientific knowledge stripped of the value dimension has been spread in university science. The value of scientific knowledge is determined exclusively by its practical use. Nobody cares today about social, moral, spiritual, psychological aspects of the application of the particular knowledge. The university's task has to be examination of the effect of particular sciences and their methods on human existence and social links.

The University has to raise the question whether progress really serves man again and again. The development of the knowledge about human behaviour in society and the development of behaviour of the society leads to the fact that social sciences face the danger of becoming an instrument for the manipulation of man and that they will be abused for installing the economic and political rule. As John Paul II said in his address to scientists and students in 1980 in Cologne Cathedral, "human dignity is the institution from the point of view of which one has to judge the cultural use of technological and scientific knowledge".¹³

¹³ KEWENIG, W.A.: Ort und Stellenwert einer katholischen Universität in der bildungspolitischen Landschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. In: F. Cardinal KÖNIG [Ed.]: Wesen und Aufgabe einer katholischen Universität. Düsseldorf, Patmos Verlag, 1985, 2nd edition, p. 94.

Christian exploration of science – if it avoids dogmatic replies – enhances our ability to reflect science and contributes to the development of scientific ethics. Some theologians, for example, Ludger Honnefelder of Berlin Free University, think that the question about the sense is simultaneously a question for studying the future.¹⁴ The raising of questions about the sense of the scientific progress is then the manifestation of the responsibility for the future, for science and consequences of scientific achievements. It is the manifestation of the consciousness of historical responsibility.

The questions that verify the sense and the truth of all disciplines that do not keep to the borders of these disciplines and which examine whether the aims of partial disciplines correspond to human dignity – all this represents a decisive contribution of the CU to the re-establishment of *universitas literarum*.

2.4. The reform of the modern university – renewal of the image of man

The greatest problem of the modern university is the fact that, struggling to achieve scientific knowledge “without prejudices” – which actually means scientific cognition, renounces the value dimension – the university is not able to raise any ethical question.

The contemporary university follows the view that ethical meaning is of no importance in studying and stating certain facts. It is thus exposed to the danger that decisive human issues will disappear from the field of vision. The universities of the Third Reich and those controlled by Marxist state ideology can serve as the best illustration of the possible ends of such an attitude.

The basic idea of education has undergone a significant change since World War II. The university, aware of the consequences of the catastrophe of war and the rule of totalitarian regimes took on the task of regenerating humanistic values and thus helping to renew the democratic foundations of society.

The necessity to reform the university was characterized by K. Jaspers in his speech about university reform delivered in 1946. According to Jaspers, “the Third Reich destroyed the image of man. This image cannot be re-created without including God. It is therefore necessary to re-establish theological faculties which must be given the leading task.” By this Jaspers indicated the essence of the gradual transformation of the spiritual field: science and religion, faith and knowledge are not incompatible contradictions but dialogue has to be carefully searched for.¹⁵

In spite of the fact that modern universities in Europe and in Slovakia primarily concentrate on the education of students, it is appropriate to raise again the question about the educational mission of the particular university and how it should be formulated. In Western countries, this renaissance was forced through the so-called *studium generale*.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ JASPERS, K.: Vom lebendigen Geist der Universität. Heidelberg, 1946.

Also universities in the post-communist age saw their recourse in *studium generale*. Marxist-Leninist philosophy was replaced by the courses devoted to the surveys of the history of philosophy, contemporary philosophical streams, Christian philosophy, extended studies of languages, etc.

But, surprisingly, students reject *studium generale* because they want to focus exclusively on the preparation for work and job performance. Young people's ideal is the image of the skilled expert, the professional. The earlier ideal was a culturally mature knowledgeable man, a scholar of considerable knowledge but also of personal culture and taste.

There are not many people in our country who realize that at the time of revolutionary demolition of the rulers' thrones in Europe, England concentrated on the cultivation of taste, which became the basic quality and criterion of social life. European nations struggled through revolutions towards democracy but the deficit in the development of social tact and taste survived.

Few recognized the consequences of the long-lasting influence of Marxist-Leninist ideology on man. It was an ideology which devastated the value system of man: instead of belief in God and love of neighbour it programmed humans for permanent struggle against the class enemy, instead of social solidarity of all people it instilled the principle of revolutionary unity and solidarity of the working class in their struggle against exploiters into generations. The thinking of the man who builds his value analyses on interpersonal Christian love is incompatible with the thought of the man who values the world according to the patterns of hatred and envy, according to the patterns of individual egoism and social Darwinism.

University is an institution that represents humanism and therefore it has to serve humanism. If it intends to fulfil this mission, it has to centre primarily on the shaping of the student's personality.

However, here it runs into another obstacle: the personality of a student and its development has been understood as a personal matter for decades!

The image of a university graduate and a scholar is an important component of social culture and professional ethos applied in the performance of academic occupations. The concept of an academically educated person has always been associated with the human dimension, with the concept of the integral man and the integral and indivisible truth. The development reached however the stage, in which the type of the Catholic scholar was replaced by the intellectual – a person who knows a lot and feels rather “economically”.

Some people perceive it as a definite victory of the scientific and technological revolution. But in fact, the scientific and technological culture faces an increasingly greater crisis. It has formulated a world of things, which, as if intended to become independent so that it could immediately turn against people. Postmodernism, alienation, the end of history, do not represent a new beginning, but rather an end without continuation.

To get the European continent and Western European civilization out of the crisis, the re-entry of Catholic academics is necessary: they think through and enforce the new relation of modern scholars to social reality and the new understanding of their role in the state, the Church and society.

Although we know the diagnosis, the Catholic university cannot be presented with ready solutions. The CU has to work through towards them itself. But from the very beginning of the efforts to establish and develop a CU, one has to realize that it will not be enough to convey professional competence to students: it will also have to have shape the student's personality and strive for the process and the state expressed by the untranslatable German word 'Bildung', which means not only education, but also shaping, building of a man who has his culturally shaped identity, that means also the identity shaped by faith.

We again have to warn against a one-sided understanding of this task as a targeted impact on the student's personality within extra-scientific, cultural, and social activities. CU has to "hit" the student's personality mainly by specific understanding of science, and, finally, by one's ability and skills to relate faith to the sense of science and define its significance for worldly and eternal existence of humans.

Successful solution to this problem is not only a question of the correct profiling of the CU; if it is able to solve the problem successfully, it would also be an important stimulus for the development of the profile of other Slovak higher education institutions.

The efficiency of a university depends on how convincing are its results. A CU can win its authority not only by posing spiritual questions which often lead to wrong speculation but mainly by its scientific authority. That means that all questions about the sense of life, science, and educational efforts must be based on serious knowledge foundations.

Such efforts run into many obstacles inside and outside of the educational system. The deteriorating financial situation of Slovak universities requires formulation and enforcement of rather pragmatic strategies for their existence. There is usually not enough time and strength to seek the higher sense, to formulate high aims and to explore suitable methods to reach them. But even the failure in the efforts to influence the shaping of students cannot eliminate this task from the catalogue of the aims of higher education. Therefore, if taking a resolute step is unsuccessful, each (not only Catholic) university has to try to take at least small steps to prevent the task from falling into oblivion, which would mean that the university would give up its aspirations.

2.5. At the service of the Church

The preparation of lay persons for service in the Church is an important task of the CU. The Church cannot only rely on Church university graduates; it also needs the intellectual potential of Catholic universities. The Catholic Church needs people working in the places where the world is constantly changing, where there

are germs and branches of human culture and where new ideas and knowledge are shaped.

A CU is an excellent and privileged place for the dialogue between the Church and the world. The Church is confronted with the world permanently changing. The Church also has to acquaint itself with the latest achievements and identify new values. A CU should work out a system of faith and science, which could serve as a support for new thought and action. A CU is often understood as a permanent consciousness of the development of society. It is a guarantee of the encounter of the continuously developing world and the Church and its mission. Faith has to "listen" to the world.

The transformation of the society can only be done if the scientific, economic, political, and cultural achievements reflect the point of view of the gospel. The university is the setting for interdisciplinary meeting and thought confrontation, which can help to find a Christian answer.

Revelation is not only an intellectual load of abstract truths. It is not a sort of a catalogue of timeless dogmas. Revelation is God's action in history. It represents a connection between God and man. This secret found its perfect expression in Christ. If we take into account the variable words of the constantly changing world, Revelation can never receive its final expression. Every generation has to develop the wealth of this secret that consists in shaping its own history anew.

Social life includes cultivation of tradition and opposition to it. "Society discharging its energy in protecting and taking care of its own tradition is condemned to stagnation; society which sees the only solution in the continuous revolt against tradition is condemned to destruction," Leszek Kolakowski said.¹⁶ The balance between respect for tradition and its critical re-appraisal is one of the inconspicuous but important tasks of the modern university, which wants to adequately moderate the conditions of the development of society.

2.6. The structure of university must not be ossified

Higher education institutions must be open systems. They have to react flexibly to the development of science and the social order. They have to be prepared to terminate the activities of some old disciplines without delay and to launch the new ones. Moreover, structural conditions must be created for the formation of interdisciplinary educational scientific or research programmes. And, finally, they have to fight tenaciously against the loss of scientific research, new knowledge, formulation of new questions and the search for new answers from their activities.

The position of university research is an object of unending striving. In the developed European countries, the labour division in scientific research has been

¹⁶ Cited according to BONÉ, E.: Akademische Freiheit und katholische Universität: In: F. Cardinal KÖNIG [Ed.]: *Wesen und Aufgabe einer katholischen Universität*. Düsseldorf, Patmos Verlag, 1985, 2nd edition, p. 132.

settled so that different specialized institutes and institutions are engaged in applied research and basic research is carried out at the institutions of higher education.

Such a solution is very disadvantageous to higher education institutions. It is unlikely that a university or a college would obtain an external order to solve an issue of basic research. One cannot reckon with any extra incomes for scientific projects ordered by sponsors and external contractors to finance science at these schools. If the budget forces universities into looking for external orders, they will stop pursuing their task in the field of basic research and the task will not be taken over or fulfilled by anybody else.

Any founder of higher education schools, including a CU, has to be aware of these circumstances. Seemingly, it complicates the conditions at first sight. In fact, it is an investment with multiple profit, which, however, does not go back to school, but to the whole society. It should therefore be the state's ambitions to found Catholic universities.

2.7. The influence of "old" universities

One of the hindrances which have to be overcome by every newly-established university is the "temptation" to adapt its structure to the existing model. This "temptation" is stronger because it is institution-based. Older or old universities are automatically regarded in public and in professional circles as almost an embodiment of what is correct, good and modern in university activities.

What has been said, sounds very Slovak, but "predominance" of old models is not exclusively our problem. A number of universities were established in the Federal Republic of Germany in the eighties; Thomas Finkenstaed wrote in his study on the history of German universities¹⁷ that the objectives and tasks of the founders of universities are soon forgotten; hardly any are interested in achieving their "own" profile; ambitions to have all the classical faculties prevail with some small specializations, which would serve as a signboard...

The negative attitude of the universities to the territorial areas is not changing either; each of them wants to be in the central part of the country and as soon as it grows there, it wants to occupy a "central" position. Many probably confuse the adjective "regional" with the adjective "provincial". Regional development is one of the important aspects of the EU and the regional university should not be therefore a "threat" to, but rather a goal of the establishing efforts.

The inclination of universities to the old and verified is particularly evident during crisis. This was proved in the campaign launched by the "old" Slovak universities against the three new universities. The regional aspect of their activities was not taken into account and everybody thought, even maintained, that it was the establishment of new universities that led to a crisis in the financing of the Slovak

¹⁷ FINKENSTAED, Th.: Humboldts Erben? Zur Geschichte und Struktur der deutschen Universität. In: F. Cardinal KÖNIG [Ed.]: *Wesen und Aufgabe einer katholischen Universität*. Düsseldorf, Patmos Verlag, 1985, 2nd edition, p. 13.

universities. This uproar should have hidden the crisis in the structure of the particular courses of study.

If a newly-founded university gives up the paved ways, omitting less topical or vanishing branches, there is no threat of any structural crisis for another, at least ten years, which is difficult to solve at the "old" universities.

2.8. *An attempt at the recapitulation of the tasks of the CU*

There are several inseparable views characteristic of the specific mission of the CU.

From the apostolic constitution *Ex corde ecclesiae* it follows that the institutional identity of a Catholic university is given by being both a university and Catholic. This identity will be fully applied only when:

1. it becomes a member of the international community of sciences from which it will borrow the standards of the professional and educational work and with which it will cooperate in solving global questions with all solemnity and full commitment of the expertise,

2. it will develop its Catholic identity in union with the Church at local and universal levels and the identity will determine the life, performances, services, and programmes of the university community.

Its objectives to secure the presence of Christianity in the university world institutionally can only be fulfilled by fusing these two basic criteria.

Its close connection with the Catholic Church has to be justified by the CU by fulfilling a certain mission in the field of education and the task of a beacon light. The CU has to remind the Church of the relations between contemporary science and culture and the questions following from these relations.¹⁸ The university is then actually a sort of "laboratory of the Church"¹⁹ which, through its expertise and results, constantly contributes to the strengthening of the identity of the Catholic Church.

"Face to face with crucial responsibility and in the situation which can be very unpleasant, Catholic universities have to be very careful by solving tensions and conflicts which might accompany their service of the truth... It is not enough to ask for and win academic freedom and institutional autonomy; they also have to be able to cope with and control it by suitable structures and policy which will take account of the general well-being. This self-regulation is a necessary opponent of great privileges."²⁰

¹⁸ One example for all will do: the cultural consequences of the development of the electronic media.

¹⁹ MICHAUD, Lucien: *Knowledge and Faith. A historical essay on the International Federation of Catholic Universities 1924-1994*. Paris, IFCU Centre for Coordination of Research, 1996.

²⁰ FALISE, M.: *Seminarium*, 1990, No. 4, p. 675.

A CU has to study important problems of our time and to work out proposals for solutions based on ethical and religious values, corresponding to the Christian opinion on man. It is particularly valid in relation to scientific and technological progress, where, along with the research and experimental work, the CU focuses on the verification of scientific results from the perspective of Christian ethics.

Catholic means universal. A Catholic university has to be universal in two views: firstly, philosophy and theology in particular, has to be to the fore. Theology should not, however, be used as an "exhibition piece" for filling the gaps of knowledge fabricated by contemporary universities. Theology should be part of the intellectual exploration at the highest level to find itself in the live dialogue with all the other university disciplines.

The second dimension results from the philosophical and theological orientation. There is a danger that without focusing on philosophy and theology, the intellectual and moral aspects of human knowledge will remain separated. Philosophy and theology force every scientist into looking beyond the borders of what he sees immediately, namely into looking at "the whole country of God and man and the universe". It is only a university that is able to join the two demanding tasks – to teach people and to integrate science into the right humane aspects of culture.²¹

The CU has to involve itself in the dialogue between faith and culture and to foster the development of culture, which is anchored in faith. A CU can only fulfil its assignment when all those participating are aware of its specific mission and if it becomes an efficient vehicle for fulfilling its evangelizing task.

The most significant periods in the history of universities were those during which the communities of scientists and students had opportunities to meet the emerging cultures. The Alexandrian University achieved the first integration of science of the then known ancient cultures. Medieval universities were able to bridge Christianity and Hellenism with the aid of Arabian culture. The developed universities of the Western world succeeded in equal splitting of and interconnecting their interest in two remote epochs – Renaissance and Modernism. Many universities of the third world were successful in organizing the meeting of the traditional culture and Western civilization.

We should emphasize here the role of the management of the Catholic university to be able to balance the relation between the whole university and cultural aspirations. The university management has to try hard to understand these aspirations, it has to be able to value them from the point of view of human experience and to introduce their universal value into the educational programme. The satisfaction of this basic condition can decide the survival of the universal institution and the final fulfilment of its mission.²²

²¹ HESBURGH, Th. M.: *The Vision of a Great Catholic University*. 1967. Cited according MICHAUD, L., op. cit., chap. 2.

²² CARRIER, H.: *Higher Education Facing New Cultures*. 1982. Cited according MICHAUD, L., op. cit., chap. 2.

The CU has both a spiritual and cultural mission, which it professes and cares for.²³ The idea of CU was born in a sort of defensive effort by the Church. There were many attempts to hinder the Church's active share in the development of knowledge. But this defensive effort is not enough. The Church has to replace it with offensive efforts to implement purposeful development of knowledge to be reflected in all areas of the intellectual activities of man. The CU has to clarify faith in the truth of revelation and to enrich the account of revelation with the products of rational knowledge.

The Second Vatican Council declared that the earthly reality has its autonomy. The created things and communities also have their autonomous value and definition, man has to get to know them, to use and shape them step-by-step. It is then fully justified if this autonomy of the earthly world and its values are supported because they mirror the will of the creator. The Council also alerted to the regrettable mistakes of the Christians resulting the lack of understanding of the autonomy of science. Conflicts resulting from such an attitude evoked in many people a conviction that there is a contradiction between faith and science.²⁴

All these aspects – spiritual, educational, and cultural join up into one essential function, which was for the first time emphasized by Pope Paul VI: "The University feels or should feel its responsibility for knowledge as an excellent instrument for fulfilling its social commitment to the world which seeks better evaluation of the role of man in our age." Among the tasks of the CU he also mentioned "the training of leaders whose ambitions are to lead the people towards the more just development where all can enjoy the gift of God's creation (...) The University is able to provide a special way of factual analysis, scientific and technological knowledge and a special philosophical and theological channel that requires an enhancement of the value of human being."²⁵

If there were an absolutely valid model of the CU, it would not be necessary to discuss it so widely. The preparation of the formal programme of studies and the spirit of the university is not "a short-distance race" but rather a task for several generations. Each of them will only look for a section of spiritual reality, considered to be the most important for the cultural and spiritual profile of the particular society which will be the focus of the university's attention.

The search for one's own pathway does not eliminate, however, the orientation according to the opinions of those who studied CU in their cultural and social milieu.

Vienna Cardinal Emeritus Franz König is a frequently cited authority who has been committed to discussions about establishing a CU in the German cultural set-

²³ Pope PAUL VI: Letter addressed to the General Assembly of IFCU in Tokyo, 1965. Cited according MICHAUD, L., op. cit., encl. 7.

²⁴ See pastoral constitution on the Church today, *Gaudium et spes*, p. 36.

²⁵ Pope PAUL VI: Letter addressed to the General Assembly of IFCU in Tokyo, 1965. Cited according MICHAUD, L., op. cit., encl. 7.

ting for many years.²⁶ Cardinal König characterized the specific points of the CU's activities as follows:

1. The will for truth must be manifested as a self-critical openness to everything unknown. It has to be attached to the awareness that the knowledge always works its way through only to part of the whole.
2. Tolerance has to be a product of fear. The more we recognize the limits of our own cognitive ability, the more important it is to acquire the sense of real tolerance.
3. We have to acquire patient "endurance" of the plurality and patient coping with the inability to work our way through to the synthesis soon. The route to the comprehensiveness of cognition is always complicated by new horizons, which emerge in the progress forward. Impatient and premature synthesis is denoted by Cardinal König as a form of ideological violence.
4. We have to be able to admit the powerlessness of science. In spite of all cognition, science has not yet been able to identify the sense of our being, which means that it has failed to deal with the most important question of man.
5. Nobody can deprive science of its representatives of responsibility for the fate and being of man. Science in its present status of development, is able to cause the extinction of humankind. The decision on whether science will be used for the destruction of humankind does not depend on science itself, but on the moral quality of man. In other words, the use of science in favour of man and in order to prevent any damage to man is exclusively a function of will and not of intellect.
6. The truth can only be recognized in freedom in free conditions. John says in his Gospel [8,32]: "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." A necessary prerequisite of such an outcome is dialogue. To be prepared for dialogue is a social virtue.

The Church also supports the method of dialogue, and the university presents itself as one of its important forms.²⁷

Patient coping with plurality is also a pledge of the tradition of Christian thought. The tradition has never been monolithic – even in the period of early Christianity. The Gospel itself is evidence of a variety of ideas, which were born in

²⁶ The demand to establish a German CU was submitted for the first time by the participants of the General Assembly of Catholic Unions at Aix-la-Chapelle in 1862. After 118 years, in 1980 the German CU was set up in Eichstätt. The Austrian Catholics' call for a CU was stronger. The result was, however, only the "International Research Institute for Science Foundations" founded in 1964 at the state Salzburg University. For details, see DICKENDORF, H.: Die Idee einer "freien" katholischen Universität in Deutschland des 19. Jahrhunderts. In: F. Cardinal KÖNIG [Ed.]: *Wesen und Aufgabe einer katholischen Universität*. Düsseldorf, Patmos Verlag, 1985, 2nd edition, pp. 30-31.

²⁷ F. Cardinal KÖNIG: *Wesen und Aufgabe einer katholischen Universität heute*. In: F. Cardinal KÖNIG [Ed.]: *Wesen und Aufgabe einer katholischen Universität*. Düsseldorf, Patmos Verlag, 1985, 2nd edition, pp. 140-142.

various communities. The intellectual variety and diversity is one of the characteristic features of the Roman Catholic thought. The development of this thought is therefore not possible without dialogue, without creative dispute or intellectual polemic. Such variety was the basis of the dynamism of Christianity, which is able to face any problem.

In spite of the universality of the Christian scientific view and method there are several special areas in the intellectual life of the Church:

- the studies of Hebrew and Christian spiritual books that should serve the correct and updated interpretation of the Scriptures;
- understanding, examination, and development of the philosophical thought aimed at recognizing major truths and facts about human existence;
- acquisition and use of the verified philosophical methods, for example the elements of classical Greek thought or Cartesian and enlightened canons;
- return to the primary sources of the history of Catholic thought, permanent exploration of the classical texts;
- dichotomy between facts and values and between reality and moral life is surmountable because there are logical links between the theory of knowledge and ethics;
- expression by symbols and mysticism are subjects of serious studies since non-verbal images provide an alternative mode of expression and knowing and mysticism teaches us that reality cannot be encompassed by “ordinary” consciousness;
- faith and culture are inseparable and require a dialogue between faith and human experience; they call for taking care of the poor and suffering;
- literature and the arts comprise different fruits of spirituality, human experience, and imagination, which are the sources for knowing humans and life;
- a deep sense of history is of primary importance because Christianity, like Judaism, is a historical religion based on the conviction that God entered history;
- languages deserve high esteem and special attention because evangelization of nations requires the preacher to speak the language of the people;
- human culture has to be investigated not only from the point of view of particular cultural nations but also from the global view, so that we can identify what unites all humankind. This leads to tolerance and positive commitment;
- value-oriented education is a manifestation of the respect for the human being. It focuses on cultivating personal responsibility, on the sensitivity to individual differences, and on the development of the belief that diversity of views enriches the community.

This catalogue of ambitions and views can be extended by the other ones that will mirror a specific situation of the particular national community. In post-communist countries, there will certainly be a polemic with Marxism-Leninism, with the pseudo-argumentation and pseudoproducts of the so-called atheism and with all branches of totalitarian thought, which were infiltrated in the thinking of fathers as well as sons

entering higher education institutions even ten years after the break-up of the totalitarian system. The ideology of class struggle has to be confronted with the ideology of love of neighbour and the social teaching of the Church. This teaching reflects the charitable tradition of the Church and its evaluation of the social question through the eyes of human dignity which is given by the very act of the Creation of man.

A task of equal importance is the preparation for dialogue with other religions of the world. Departments (institutes, seminars) of Judaism, theology, and other Christian denominations, Islamic studies and eastern religions with distinguished personalities should be the basis for extensive interdisciplinary activity whose topicality is dramatically amplified by the announced "clash of cultures". Is such a clash necessary? Are the values created by world religions incompatible or can their potential be connected to cope with the problems to be solved by humankind?

The emphasis on the human dimension of science and faith as well as efforts to complete the whole vision of man as a being that seeks the way to eternity provide the CU with immense possibilities for unique and unrepeatable profiling. The time is definitely coming when universities of this type will be equally attractive as universities with narrow specializations. It is pointless to describe here the advantages of such solutions. But any rational observer will easily recognize that the vanishing ethical dimension of life and the actions of both individuals and groups, often also of the whole society does not condemn trust in good or morals to destruction, but the other way round: it will activate hunger and thirst for theological-philosophical knowledge and for people who observe the knowledge that is difficult to satisfy.

3. The statutes of a Catholic university

3.1. Legal norms binding on a Catholic university

A CU is established in accordance with the state's legal norms determining the legal framework of higher education (in Slovakia it is the Higher Education Act no. 172 in innovated wording) and the norms of the Catholic Church containing the view of the Church on higher education and determining the internal rules of this institution.

Such a dual obedience to civil law and to Canon Law is important also from the viewpoint of the objectives of the CU, namely to educate graduates whose diploma will correspond to the general criteria for university graduation and degree awards and whose specialization and profile will correspond to the needs of the Catholic Church and its ideas of the correct orientation of a Catholic scholar.

The Canon Law anchored in the *Codex Ius Canonici* (CIC) recognizes two types of Catholic universities: first, the Catholic universities and other institutes of higher education for lay persons, whose mission has been described in previous chapters. Second, Church universities and faculties, where students are prepared for clerical professions as well as the education of scientists who deal with "sacred disciplines" (theological disciplines) and scientific preparation in these disciplines. The Church faculty graduates who have completed their studies successfully, are given the so-called canonic mission, which justifies them to perform their clerical profession.

Both types of universities – Catholic and Church – differ not only in their programme but also in their founders. The Catholic university can be established by both secular and Church authorities, but also by an individual, Church universities (faculties) can only be established by the Church authorities. The canon that is important for the CU is the canon no. 808 CIC, according to which “no university, though really Catholic, should have the name of Catholic university unless approved by the competent ecclesiastical authority”. A university becomes Catholic only when its content and aims are approved by the particular ecclesiastical authority. It is particularly valid when the university is established by a secular legal person or a natural person.

A CU can also be founded by the Holy See. In that case it is a papal university or papal academy. In Central and Eastern Europe there were two papal academies in Poland – Warsaw and Cracow. The Warsaw academy was transformed into the Catholic University of Cardinal Wyszyński in 1998, the Cracow academy's transformation is being prepared.

CIC defines the professional and moral principles for teachers in special provisions. It is imposed on the ecclesiastical authority to set up the theological faculty, an institute or at least a department to provide theological studies for lay persons. Teachers lecturing theological disciplines must have a mandate from the particular ecclesiastical authority (usually the diocesan bishop). It is also entrusted with delivering lectures of a theological character at all faculties. The lectures should focus on the theological issues associated with the disciplines studied at these faculties.

The last task imposed upon the ecclesiastical authority by CIC is the pastoral care of CU undergraduates. The share of the Church in the activities of CU is defined in eight canons of CIC.

The organism of the university is too complicated to be able to solve all questions associated with the objectives of the university in several provisions of the legal code. Individual Popes addressed a series of special letters to CU, where they formulated their expectations from and ideas about the CU activities. Pope John Paul II has been one of the most “generous” Popes. During the first twelve years of his pontificate, he addressed more than 50 documents to CU. The most important is the Apostolic constitution *Ex corde ecclesiae* of 15 August 1990. The constitution contains the fundamental attitude of the Church to the formal and content issues of the CU.

3.2. *Apostolic constitution Ex corde ecclesiae (ECE)*²⁸

In the introduction to the document, Pope John Paul II characterizes the university as “a centre of the creativity and dissemination of knowledge for the good of humanity”,²⁹ as a community of teachers and students. Typically, the second sentence speaks about “free associating in a common love of knowledge”. Freedom of

²⁸ *Ex corde ecclesiae* (ECE). In the following text we refer to the unofficial translation of the Constitution prepared for the Government of the Slovak Republic.

²⁹ ECE, 1.

exploration and knowledge is a decisive point of Pope's contemplations on the scientific work of teachers and students at a CU.

Another aspect emphasized in the document is culture. At the same time, it defines the part of culture which is the centre of attention of CU. "There is only one culture – that of man, by man and for man." This understanding of culture makes the Church an "expert in humanity" as Pope Paul VI expressed it.³⁰

It is "the honour and responsibility" of a CU to consecrate itself to the matter of truth. The point is the free search for the whole truth about the world, man, and God. To discover truth is not enough. The CU has to reveal the meaning of truth, to study "all aspects of truth in their essential connection with the supreme truth – God".³¹

Pope John Paul II sees the mission of the CU in discovering "the content of its humanity",³² which is the essence of a fertile dialogue with people of every culture³³ which leads to the search for the meaning of progress, verified by moral, spiritual and religious perspectives. All this presupposes an impartial search for truth.³⁴

The academic community can fulfil these tasks only if it has institutional autonomy and "secures for its members academic freedom preserving human rights in the interest of truth and the general welfare". The guarantee of institutional autonomy is a prerequisite of an independent free choice of research topics and methods, which correspond to the particular disciplines and chosen topics. Academic freedom justifies the members of the academic community to seek and reveal truth.³⁵ "If necessary, the Catholic university must have courage to also tell unpleasant truths, which might not be liked by the public, but which are necessary for the protection of public welfare."³⁶

We have underlined only the part concerning the institutional and academic freedom. The academic community of the CU is free as any university community; its members are, however, to respect the mission and the teaching body of the Church.

This is also the criterion of the choice of teachers and students. Lay persons can also serve as teachers and academics. ECE assumes that more than a half of teachers will be of Catholic denomination. The students' religion is not decisive. But non-Catholic teachers and students or those who profess no religious belief are to respect the Catholic character of the university in their work and morals.

The Catholic teachers are to obey the Catholic teaching and to observe Catholic doctrine and morals in their teaching and research. Catholic theologians are re-

³⁰ ECE, 3.

³¹ ECE, 4.

³² ECE, 5.

³³ ECE, 6.

³⁴ ECE, 7.

³⁵ ECE, 12 and 16.

³⁶ ECE, 34.

quired "to be aware that they fulfil a mandate received from the Church" and that they are "to be faithful to the teaching mission of the Church as the authentic interpreter of the Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition".³⁷

The joint task of the management of the institution and the diocesan bishop is to promote the Catholic character of the university and to strengthen it. The ECE formally imposes on the university management the regular submission of reports on its activities to the diocesan bishop. All other matters concerning the cooperation between the university and the Church are the subject of joint agreement, which has to respect institutional autonomy of both the academic community and the authority of the Church as a framework for the preparation of the programme of the university.

4. Does Slovakia need a Catholic university?

The current state of Slovak society with its high rate of unemployment, social tension, corruption, egoism, individual and organized criminality, calls for the activation of such social and cultural activities which would improve the individual and social morals and, particularly, the social responsibility of entrepreneurs, the state administration and local government as well as of legislative and executive bodies.

Slovak society is currently in an immense internal crisis caused by the absence of Christian values in the consciousness and behaviour of the individual and the community.

The forty-years' oppression of free thought,³⁸ long-term persecution of the Church and believers is now bringing its malignant fruits, when individuals and the society have to face merciless examination in the form of the new political and social reality.

In spite of the heroic efforts of the Catholic Church to preserve its ability to pastoral work and to keep on running its basic functions, the period of democratization found the Church debilitated. The absence of the young generation of priests cannot be replaced by several "strong" years; the preparation of priests for pastoral work in this contradictory world requires much longer and more careful studies than half a

³⁷ ECE, article 4, paragraph 3.

³⁸ Cardinal Korec describes the communist oppression as follows: "The fury of persecution after 1948 went beyond all the limits known from the whole of history. On the one hand, it was threatening and on the other hand it was an unprecedented primitivism of the atheist communist power, which discredited itself in front of us, Europe, and the whole world." J. C. KOREC, *op. cit.*, p. 183. Elsewhere (p. 91), he says: "When atheist communism took power in our country, it undermined the Church from all sides, of course, from the historical side as well. For decades everything in the Church and around it was "dark" according to atheism. It was almost treacherous since there was no possibility of defence against it. Who could oppose it or argue appropriately when we had no press or printer and gradually no people or anything else?!"

century ago.³⁹ There is a lack of the “rising scientific-teaching generation” that would fill the thinning staff of university associate professors and professors.⁴⁰ There is a small number of religious Catholics in our media, which is particularly evident in public discussions about the issues of faith and the development of spiritual life.

We must not forget that “nations have become great through faith. When their faith faded away, the nations faded away, too.”⁴¹ Faith is a twin of scientific knowledge. As faith needs distinguished places for believers to meet the Creator, science needs space for cultivating its wealth, the fruits of rational knowledge.

The Church has not had the possibility as yet to build up its intellectual advisory bodies to enable systematic analysis and assessment of the social development and propose the measures in terms of its social teaching. There is also a lack of experts for building the networks of political education to secure the entry into political life of more politically educated believers who would be able to orient themselves in accordance with the principles of the social teaching of the Church.

The number of gaps in the structure of the Catholic education in Slovakia which should be filled with the outcomes of the Ružomberok Catholic university is great. A list of our insufficiencies should serve as a justification of the necessity to establish a CU but also as a basis for making decisions about the structure of the programme of studies.

This is just a fragment of the arguments speaking for the creation of the best possible conditions for the promotion of the first CU in Slovakia.

Conclusion

The Catholic Church's share in the development of learning in Slovakia up to the twentieth century is undeniable. This process began with Constantine and Methodius' mission to the realm of Prince Rastislav. Its spiritual dimension was closely connected with the cultural dimension – translation of the liturgy into the national language, developing original writing and establishing an educational centre with many features of later universities. “We could say that the Church in Slovakia had laid foundations of culture and was long a cultural agent alone, as Ján

³⁹ Cardinal Korec describes the intellectual needs of Slovak Catholicism: “It is necessary to write about our religious needs about almost everything. Almost everything was destroyed under atheism. And therefore it is necessary to start with philosophical topics, from noetics, ontology, through the works about Christ, salvation, the Church, sacraments, about morals, pastorals, up to catechetics. It is necessary to analyse social problems in the spirit of the encyclicals. The exegesis of the Sacred Scripture is also necessary. Everything has to be seen through the new eyes and for current needs of us all, both believers and non-believers.” *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁴⁰ “What is in our hands? Where are the professors, scientific cultural institutions, where are the editors, writers? We lay the foundations, but there is still rain in the building of our culture, also in the religious one... Slovakia is today a large workplace also on its spiritual side, and is looking for the workers of the spirit.” *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

Chryzostom Cardinal Korec said. Culture spread by the Church was not, however, an appendage but a direct product in fulfilling its mission – annunciation of the salvation in Christ.⁴² That product has been growing throughout history. Once it had the form of monastery schools, then of Jesuit universities, or gymnasias (secondary schools), etc. Even at the time when the presence of the Catholic Church in schools was reduced to the minimum, its teaching mission continued, concentrating either on the spiritual word or on secret activities and, thanks to them, church fathers were able to bring up erudite and qualified young priests.

The Church proved its devotion to its teaching activities in Slovakia and today it needs a vehicle for concentrated scientific and personality education of Catholic scholars in the new conditions of free life. It is the only way to provide society with the cultural dimension which was degraded to a level threatening the spiritual survival of Slovak society.

Slovakia is now on the threshold of the history of its statehood, at the dawn of the new millennium. It became independent at the time of ongoing integration into a sort of global village. While the other countries and nations enter this global whole as real identities, Slovakia is only in the stage of shaping its identity. It needs its identity to avoid getting lost in the maze of values, to avoid betraying the values which determined its pathway through history. In solving this difficult task, we should reach for all means of spiritual and social growth verified in the past.

Let us use an account of this situation described by Cardinal Korec: "As human-kind, we create unity. We grow out of the past and we are preparing the future. He, who thinks that the past can be ignored and that the future can only be built from the present, is wrong. It is nonsense to contrast the past with the future. The future gives nothing and brings nothing. We have to give it all, we are creating it. If we are empty, we shall create an empty future. But we grow into fullness from the spiritual wealth of the past. This requires the width of our spirit. The human spirit can advance very far but on one condition: that the current thought of the individual and of the society will join the thought of generations patiently and quietly. Therefore we learn and get absorbed in the history of thought, arts, the history of literature and science, and the history of culture..."⁴³

Slovakia needs an institution and intellectual processes which will, together with the deepening of faith, bring as great a number of scholars as possible to the ability "to live their lives with the divine depth, which is offered in Christ, and accept consciously and positively the mission to re-create and consecrate the world".⁴⁴

Let us believe that the newly established Catholic university will be an institution whose identity will be shaped at the intersection of the binding Christian past and the dramatically provoking present.

⁴² Ibid., p. 93.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 339.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 343.