The Christian University: An Oxymoron or a Community of Faith and Knowledge?[1]

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"Some seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge: that is curiosity; others seek knowledge that they may themselves be known: that is vanity; but there are still others who seek knowledge in order to serve and edify others, and that is charity." – St. Bernard of Clairvaux

The paper has four sections. In 'Section I' I expose and problematize the idea of a Christian university by asking whether the term is an oxymoron and by giving a short historical perspective; in 'Section II' I approach the question from my personal Hungarian post-Communist context; in 'Section III' I discuss the role of vision in the conception of the Christian university; in 'Section IV' I conclude with the (perhaps utopian) vision of the Christian university as a vibrant, open-minded community of faith and the community of knowledge.

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1. This is a work-in-progress, reflecting mainly the personal experience of the author. Its purpose is to raise and articulate issues based on this experience. A shorter version of the paper was read at the Langham International Conference in Berekfürdő, Hungary, on 11 May 2013. Responses and critiques are most appreciated.

The Problem: Is There a 'Christian University'?

Let us start our train of thought with a reflection on the nature and mission of a Christian university.

An Oxymoron?

At first sight the idea of a 'Christian university' might strike us as an oxymoron (i.e. a contradiction in terms) – Christian faith means commitment to a closed (declarative, assertive and dogmatic) set of values while a university is committed to curiosity, openness, questioning, scepticism and academic freedom. To put it bluntly: if it is Christian, it cannot be a university, if it is a university, it cannot be Christian. Of course, I exaggerate, but I am doing this in order to clarify the identity of a Christian university.

The church and the university represent two ways of thinking and perhaps even two kinds of languages which sometimes seem to be incompatible or irreconcilable. The language of faith is declarative, assertive and revelatory and this cannot be said of the language used at the university either by the sciences or the humanities. The language of science is accurate, exact, referential, denotative; the language of the humanities, especially that of literature, is ambiguous, non-referential, metaphorical, connotative.

Neither the language of science nor that of the humanities conforms to the language of the church which is ultimately authoritative. The church from the very beginning speaks with the voice of authority invested upon her by its Founder. The university refuses to acknowledge such an *apriori* authority; however, it recognizes *aposteriori* authority, (i.e. authority in retrospect when it has proved itself and has been approved by the community of knowledge).

True, there have always been committed Christian theologians who were able to live up to the requirements of this double citizenship: they were loyal members of their churches, sometimes even of high ecclesiastical rank, and at the same time fully acknowledged members of the academic communities. They were members both of the community of faith and the community of knowledge. Nevertheless, while this double citizenship may work smoothly at the level of the individual, I doubt it can function without conflicts within the structure of church-related institutions.

In order to understand the present situation let us give a short historical perspective.

A Short Historical Perspective

In the past centuries the churches have functioned also as educators. In the Middle Ages knowledge was disseminated by the Roman Catholic Church. However, it not only disseminated but monopolized and controlled knowledge. The *universitas* was usually founded by the *ecclesia* and thus it was subordinate to it.

This relationship was radically changed in the time of the Reformation. Luther's reform meant that the *universitas* severed itself from the *ecclesia*, (i.e. Wittenberg from Rome). The Roman Church was seen as a corrupt institution whose theological and spiritual inertia could only be redeemed by the university. The university has triumphed over the church. The church's prestige has diminished while the university's prestige has spectacularly increased.[2]

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Protestant churches, especially across the Atlantic, were keen on establishing colleges and universities. However, in the United States we see examples of gradual secularization of originally 'sectarian' institutions of higher education. Princeton, Harvard, Yale and Duke Universities were originally founded by the Presbyterian or Methodist churches. In the process of secularization there has been a shift of priority from the founding vision to autonomy of the subjects taught and thus Christian faith has become marginalized. While the well-known Jonathan Edwards was one of the first presidents of the College of New Jersey (founded in 1746, now Princeton University), when the Presbyterian church leaders found that their College had come under secular influence, they founded Princeton Theological Seminary in 1812 which has flourished as one of the best theological institutions in the United States ever since. In other cases as at Yale, Harvard or Duke, the Divinity School remained a faculty of the University. Thus, the university has

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2. Cf. John Van Engen, "Christianity and the University: The Medieval and Reformation Legacies", in, Joel A. Carpenter and Kenneth W. Shipps, *Making Higher Education Christian: The History and Mission of Evangelical Colleges in America* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans and Christian University Press, Christian College, 1987). pp.19–37.

become an autonomous institution which could fulfil its mission without the church. The descendants were usually meant to 'respect' the intention of the founders but this slight gesture of verbal loyalty provided autonomy.

The process of secularization has been long seen as a necessary process, and a fruitful one, in the United States. The sciences and the humanities could develop without the ideological control of the church. The community of knowledge has triumphed over the community of faith.

Recently, however, there has emerged a voice that speaks of the negative effects of the marginalization or the loss of religion. First it was the American historian of religion, George M. Marsden, who alerted the public concerning the negative effects of secularization of originally church-founded institutions of higher education in his book *The Soul of American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief.*[3] In reviewing the book the Jesuit J. A. Appleyard begins his reflections saying that,

> . . . most of the colleges and universities founded in the U.S. before the 20th century had a strongly religious, usually Protestant Christian, character and that virtually all of these institutions have no significant religious identity today. The best known example is Harvard, founded 'for the provision of learned ministry', whose motto for three centuries was 'Christo et Ecclesiae', but scores of other institutions – including Yale, Princeton, Chicago, Stanford, Duke, Boston University, and even the publicly founded state universities such as Michigan and California – had a pronounced Christian character in the early years of their existence and abandoned it in the 20th century.[4]

Marsden notes that within this process of secularization theology became more liberal and religious sentiment was translated into commitment

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3. George M. Marsden, *The Soul of American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

4. http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/offices/mission/pdf1/ra2.pdf. Last visited on 1 May 2013.

to patriotism and democracy; the concept of academic freedom was felt incompatible with dogmatic belief and by establishing 'departments of religion', religion itself became merely an object of scientific study, religious tests for faculty hiring were abandoned and the principle norm became exclusively academic excellence. Moreover, some major foundations, for example the Carnegie Endowment, were committed to funding only non-sectarian institutions. Appleyard expressed his hope that Catholic colleges can perhaps avoid the trap of this secularization-process.

Another robust critique of this secularizing process is James Tunsead Burtchaell's *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches.*[5] Acknowledging the insights of Marsden and Burtchaell, Robert Benne in his book *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith in Their Religious Traditions* was able to uphold the examples of Calvin College (Christian Reformed Church), Wheaton College (Evangelical Tradition), Baylor University (Southern Baptist Convention), The University of Notre Dame (Roman Catholic Church), St Olaf College (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and Valparaiso University (The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod).[6] Benne thoroughly studied the original mission statements (vision) and the present practice (ethos) of these colleges and universities which, while preserving academic excellence by successfully integrating faith and learning, were able to resist the pressure of culture to give up their Christian identity.

Ten years after the publication of Marsden's book, C. John Sommerville published his *The Decline of the Secular University* (Oxford University Press, 2006) in which he argued that though secularization had promised to be a liberating force for church-founded universities, it failed its mission because the trivialization of religion resulted in the loss of values, the sense of history, the idea of defining the human and so on. In his review of the book George Marsden explains why he recommends it as the best

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5. James Tunstead Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

6. Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith in Their Religious Traditions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

case he has seen "for why the dogged secularism of many universities is undermining the announced purposes of higher education".[7]

Of course, secularists in the United States did not share the views of Marsden, Burtchaell, Benne and Sommerville, nevertheless these books alerted the public opinion to the negative effects of trivialization of religion in the secularization of church-related universities.

However, the development in Eastern Europe, especially in Hungary, seems to be different, if not the reverse, mainly because of forty years of Communism.[8] Now I am going to contextualize the issue by sharing my own personal experience in Hungary.

Experience – From a Personal Perspective

A Personal Journey into Christian Higher Education

I was brought up the son of a Lutheran pastor (later a professor of Church History) in Communist Hungary. The Communists nationalized all church-related secondary schools of the Lutheran Church by the early 1950s so both my primary and secondary education took place in state-schools dominated by Marxist-atheist ideology. Being a 'pastor's kid' I was seen usually as a kind of curiosity in my classrooms; however, the negative discrimination of the early 1960s gradually and unnoticeably shifted into an attitude of 'respected alterity' by the mid 1970s.

The system silently tolerated that some teachers were discretely churchgoing people while, of course, not allowing them to articulate their faith before their pupils. I also had the good fortune of having been surrounded by some teachers of good will who gently tried to detain me from applying to study at a Faculty of Humanities. They said it was not really a good choice for a 'p-kid' to study at the Faculty of Humanities, since the humanities were ideologically loaded disciplines and therefore

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7. http://www.oup.com/us/catalog/general/subject/ReligionTheology/American/?view=us a&ci=9780195306958. Last visited on 1 May 2013.

8. Cf. Perry L. Glanzer, "The Death and Resurrection of Protestant Higher Education in Europe: A Case Study" in *The International Handbook of Protestant Education* (pp. 195–224), eds. William Jeynes and David Robinson (New York: Springer Press, 2012).

it was especially difficult for ideologically non-friendly applicants like me to get in. They wanted to be sure that somebody with an ecclesiastical pedigree would not undermine or infect the solid atheistic educational system of the regime.

Nevertheless I applied to study my favourite subject, English. Because I chose Library Science as a second subject I was probably seen more as a future researcher than a teacher. I was accepted to study at the Faculty of Humanities in 1973. To many people this seemed to be almost a miracle in Communist Hungary. And an even greater surprise was when seven years later, after my graduation in 1980, I was invited to be an assistant Lecturer of English Literature at the Faculty of Humanities at József Attila University of Szeged. It was still Communist but the climate was already different: the anti-establishment, critical intellectual elite of the Faculty of Szeged University began to look favourably at dissident thinkers and they sought and found support in me in defying the dull ideological clichés of the, by then, more and more irrelevant and impotent Marxism.

And indeed: teaching Shakespeare in the 1980s offered a unique opportunity for me to silently challenge and subvert totalitarian ideology. Shakespeare's plays (*Hamlet, Richard III, As You Like It, Macbeth* or *The Tempest*) were about 'time out of joint' and in most of them Machiavellian usurpers usually dismissed the lawful rulers and this created a world upside down, the beginning of tragedy. In these worlds the legitimate ones were banished or marginalized and the illegitimate ones were wicked and perverted usurpers. Was it not the case after 1956 in János Kádár's corrupt and unlawful regime? Within the rubrics of academic freedom I taught Shakespeare but the students' minds were opened to recognize and see parallels between the issue of the plays and the contemporary political situation.

Moreover, I could witness to my Christian faith indirectly, by teaching English literature (medieval moralities as *Everyman*, poetry of Donne, Milton, Eliot, the novels of Bunyan, etc.), works that were permeated by Christianity, which I selected for classroom discussions. And three years before the fall of the iron curtain I even developed a course on the English Bible as part of the "Intellectual Background of English Literature".

Having taught for more than a decade at the University of Szeged I was invited to serve as a scholar-in-residence at Roanoke College, Virginia. It was a Liberal Arts College founded by the Lutheran Church in the mid-nineteenth century.[9] It was my first experience to teach at a church-related college. I saw that a minority of the faculty wanted to be faithful to the College's Lutheran heritage while a majority tried to sever that link as much as possible following the example of the secularization of the great American universities mentioned earlier.

I came to see that for committed Christians this double loyalty (loyalty to the church and loyalty to the academy) was indeed a heavy burden. I remember at Roanoke an eye-opening lecture of my colleague Dr Ned Wisnefsky on the ethos of the Lutheran College which is both a community of faith and a community of knowledge[10] to which I shall return in Section 3. Let it suffice here to say that the faith-community is smaller but it articulates and defends the institution's original religious vision. The academic community is larger and several of their members are ideology-free, (i.e. not Christian and especially not Lutheran) but they necessarily make compromises for a *modus vivendi*.

The semester I spent at Roanoke College turned out to be an excellent experiment for me to investigate the relationship between church and academia. This prepared me for my return to Hungary (1993) when I was invited to organize and chair the English Department at the newly established Pázmány Péter Catholic University. At the same time, I became the director of the Centre for Hermeneutical Research, an ecumenical foundation hosted by Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary.

The problems I had to face were familiar from my Roanoke College experience. Double loyalty: to the church and Christian values on the one hand and to neutral, purely academic values on the other hand. (Here

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9. See Robert Benne, "A College Recovers its Christian Identity" http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2095. Originally published in *The Christian Century*, 18–25 April, 2001, pp. 12–15.

10. Ned Wisnefske, "The Lutheran College: A Community of Learning, a Community of Faith." in *Papers and Proceedings of the 79th Annual Meeting, Lutheran Educational Conference of North America*, 7–10 February 1993, pp. 6–13.

my case was even more complicated as I was a Lutheran among Roman Catholics.) As the Head of Department I was faced with the dilemma whether to hire committed Christians with perhaps lower academic credentials or academically excellent ones with no, or hardly any, Christian commitment. Of course, one always wants to find the proper balance, but my priorities were in academic excellence.

After a decade or so I was invited to be in charge of the English Department at the Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary. Now, as a Lutheran I am at least among Protestants but still not a member of the church that runs this institution. And I have been faced with the same dilemma again. Several non-Christian faculty are associated with these new church-related institutions on the basis of a mutual practical compromise: they simply need jobs and the church-related university needs professional expertise.

Issues and Dilemmas in the Experience of Christian Higher Education

My dilemma is: what should be the expectations of these institutions towards these colleagues with regards to Christian values? How to avoid the danger of ideological sycophancy, or, on the other hand, the hidden agenda of subverting Christian values? Are these the only dangers lurking in our midst?

As for the present, I perceive three possible dangers in the existence and structure of our Christian universities: a) ideological sycophancy; b) the hidden agenda of intellectual subversion of Christian values; and c) the conversion of religious sentiments, or the lack of them, into political ones.

Ideological Sycophancy

By ideological sycophancy I mean the detestable attitude of some colleagues who, for promoting themselves and securing their own position within an ecclesiastical institution, pretend to be Christian or at least conform to the values of a Christian or Protestant university without being able to show some evidence or sign of their commitment. Some of them had usually good positions in Communist institutions and learned there how to be time-servers and now, as the political climate changed, they turn their coats

and instead of the language of Communist ideology they choose to flatter their superiors in Christian phraseology in their newly adopted loyalty. Sycophancy is detestable, and hypocrisy, in my view, is the greatest enemy of Christian faith.

Intellectual Subversion

On the other hand, a danger of a different kind is also lurking around the fragile foundations of a Christian university. I vividly remember those years when I could silently challenge Communist ideology with the teaching of Shakespeare. What if some of my colleagues, like me thirty years ago, have also a hidden agenda, and, in the rubrics of academic freedom, use their professional expertise to undermine classical Christian values? Should, for example, gay and lesbian literature and criticism be taught at a Christian university? Should I respect the academic freedom of colleagues wishing to teach subjects like this, or, should I occasionally emerge in the unpopular dress of a dogmatic watchdog? No, being a dogmatic watchdog is definitely not the way one should act in civilized circumstances but what if one perceives that God's Kingdom is regressing rather than progressing in our classrooms?

Politicizing of Religious Sentiments

In Hungary after the political changes of 1990 not only were two religiously affiliated universities founded but hundreds of primary and secondary schools were re-affiliated with the mainline churches. The churches frequently loudly claimed that the state should give back their schools and institutions that they had nationalized between 1948 and 1952. This seems to be a fair argument on the surface but in reality it fails to notice that in the 1990s the churches were not what they were forty years before. It fails to notice that not only were the state institutes corrupted and ruined with Communist ideology, but with the help of secret agents within the churches (frequently bishops or professors), the churches as moral bodies were even more wounded.[11] Church leaders in the early 1990s were haunted by their

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11. One should, of course, differentiate between agents who nominally accepted this task perhaps naively hoping that by this they could somehow serve the interest of their churches, and the ones who cynically betrayed their fellow Christians. (See my essay "The

own dark past and the process of purification has not been accomplished even until now.

Society has been naive and manipulated when they expected a moral breakthrough from the religious institutions. It happened quite frequently that the leadership of the schools was not changed when the churches took over these institutions. Old leaders, once loyal to the Communist party, frequently even party members, now suddenly turned around and adopted a rhetoric of loyalty to their church leaders. Faith, unlike political sentiments, does not inflame the younger generation. My thesis is that religiously affiliated schools, because of the lack of authentic faith and the institutional communication of it, easily could become prey of radical, in most cases right wing, political sentiments.

It is no wonder that students coming to a Christian university from such schools brought along these political sentiments with them. For a certain period they even enjoyed the support of the highly talented and charismatic Bishop, the founder of Károli Gáspár University who, for all his good will, associated himself with the ideology of a nationalistic, right-wing party. When the Bishop died in February 2013 it was announced on his mourning card that he was the 'Bishop of the Hungarians' and not just the Bishop of the Reformed Church in Hungary. If such neo-pagan heresy haunts the church, it is natural that the vacuum of Christian faith can easily be filled by radical, right-wing political sentiments.

The Vision – A Community of Faith and a Community of Knowledge

According Bob Benne there are three components of the Christian tradition that are publicly relevant for Christian colleges and universities: its vision, its ethos (practice) and the people who "understand and articulate the Christian vision and embody the ethos of that particular tradition".[12] I

Drama of Reconciliation in the Post-Communist Hungarian Church" in, Robert Schreiter and Knud Jørgensen, eds., *Mission As Ministry of Reconciliation* (Oxford Centre of Mission Studies, 2013), pp. 231–238).

12. Benne, *Quality*, p. 8.

shall deal with the first aspect at more length and briefly summarize the other two by applying them to the personal context I have been discussing so far.

Vision

A Christian university is born out of a theological vision. Though at the end of my paper I shall argue for the relevance of a Christian rather than of a denominational identity, it must be acknowledged that a theological vision is usually the result of a particular theological interpretation. I would like to offer three such theological interpretations: the Roman Catholic, the Reformed and the Lutheran. It seems useful to relate these interpretations to three of the five models offered by the H. R. Niebuhr's now classic *Christ and Culture* (Harper Torchbooks, 1951).[13]

The Roman Catholic vision, characterized by unity and integrity, corresponds to the model of 'Christ above culture'. According to this vision Christ appears "as a supernatural fulfilment of the aspirations of culture, in the same way that grace is seen as perfecting nature and theology as perfecting philosophy . . . All learning pointed, with the assistance of revelation and grace, toward the supernatural source of the world and reason and toward the supernatural end of humanity, which is the contemplation of God."[14]

A Christian university, as John Paul II declared in his Apostolic Constitution on Catholic universities, is born out of the 'heart of the church' – '*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*' (1990). It explicitly said that,

> A Catholic University's privileged task is to unite existentially
> by intellectual effort two orders of reality that too frequently
> tend to be placed in opposition as though they were

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13. Here I shall rely on the analysis of an excellent article by Mark U. Edwards, Jr. "Christian Colleges: A Dying Light or a New Refraction?", in, *Christian Century*, 21–28 April 1999, pp. 459–463. Available also on the internet: http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=547. I am quoting the internet source.

14. Edwards, "Christian Colleges".

antithetical: the search for truth, and the certainty of already knowing the fount of truth.[15]

This sentence hits the nail on the head as it recognizes that both the community of faith and the community of knowledge are concerned with the question of truth. The former is committed to the search for truth and the latter is committed to the "certainty of the fount of truth". Accordingly, the vision of a Christian (or Catholic) university is to 'unite' these two orders of reality. So the tension I was speaking of in Section I is not to be removed but it has to be made effective and creative.

The Reformed theological vision corresponds to the model of "Christ the Transformer of Culture". According to this vision, everything on earth and in human existence belongs to, and is therefore ruled by, Christ. A leading figure of the Reformed vision of education was the Dutch Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), a theologian, university founder and politician. Kuyperian Calvinists lay the emphasis on the integration of faith (revelation) and learning (culture). Followers of Christ are, therefore, invited to transform this world. Christian philosophers, politicians, and artists, it is believed, can make this world better. No wonder therefore, that it has been a frequent practice, both globally and also in Hungary, that Reformed clergy who began their careers as congregational pastors eventually turned politicians in their (originally theological) hope that once they were in the arena of the public square, they would make it better. The Kuyperian theology has been embraced by, for example, Calvin College, Michigan, and this vision is ultimately the basis of George Marsden's already quoted magisterial book *The Soul of the University* in which he regrets the loss of Christian values of the once church-related colleges and universities and the marginalization of 'Christian scholarship'.[16]

The Lutheran Vision, argues the Reformation historian and the Lutheran St Olaf's College ex-President Mark U. Edwards, is characterized by the Niebuhrian – ultimately Lutheran – model of "Christ and Culture

15. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_15081990_ex-corde-ecclesiae_en.html last visited on 1 May 2013.

16. George Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship.* (Oxford University Press, 1997).

in Paradox". Luther made a distinction between the two kingdoms: the sacred and the secular; the world of Christ and the world of culture. Though both realms are ruled and governed by God, it is done in different ways. Luther said that it is the art of making distinctions that defines a theologian. He recognized the tension and the paradox between the worlds and deliberately avoided creating any 'synthesis' between them. Education definitely belongs to the secular realm and, therefore, suggests Edwards, we should not lament the disappearance of 'Christian scholarship'. For Edwards, both the Catholic and the Reformed visions or models opine for an ideal, normative view of what Christian education 'should be' and they see every deviation from this ideal regrettable. Unlike them, the Lutheran Edwards sees the present situation not necessarily as the time of the 'dying light' but, rather of a 'new refraction'. His conclusion is worth quoting:

> We need to remember that the faithfulness of the church and of the church's institutions, including colleges, depends ultimately not on what we do for ourselves but what the Holy Spirit does for us. God has shown throughout the centuries, in the Bible stories and in church history, that God can accomplish God's purposes despite all the human weaknesses and foolishness that stand in the way. A sense of humility and, yes, an accompanying sense of humour are not out of place. We need to be able to laugh at our pretensions and shortcomings. And God can be trusted to preserve the colleges of the church in the form and way that God wills.[17]

In fact, a very similar conclusion was drawn by a Valparasio Lutheran theologian Mark R. Schwen. Though at first, evoking the ideas of the nineteenth century Catholic Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801–1890) and his classic *The Idea of the University* (1854), Schwen eloquently argued for the principles of 'unity', 'universality' and 'integrity' (loosely coinciding with the Trinitarian framework of creation, redemption and sanctification). However, towards the end of his essay, he came to argue that the "Christian

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17. Edwards, "Christian Colleges".

university is the one that is most at odds with Newman".[18] With the philosopher Charles Taylor, Schwen believed that "modern culture, in breaking with the structures and beliefs of Christendom, also carried certain facets of Christian life further than they ever were taken, or could have been taken, within Christendom."[19] Similarly to Mark U. Edwards Jr, Schwen also proposed "to be more sanguine about the present state of Christianity and higher education". This Lutheran *hilaritas* is the underlying tone of the representative views of the third model.

> The Christian university can truly be itself only in a context of institutional pluralism, as one of several models, perhaps even a model on the margins, of university education. Christianity functions most truly and most effectively when it is disenthralled. And in this regard the life of the ideal Christian university is like unto the life of the individual Christian. Insofar as Christians relax their grip upon the reins of earthly dominion and contract the scope of their temporal ambitions, they so far increase the range of their spiritual influence and so the more steadily secure their hold upon eternity. This too should be a teaching of a Christian university.[20]

Therefore, the three versions of a Christian vision of university can be summarized by the following three statements: the Catholic vision encourages an overarching conversation between a secular and a robust theological perspective; the Calvinist vision seeks to transform secular culture completely; the Lutheran vision is happy to accept a more modest role for the Christian voice in the cacophony of the pluralistic community of a university. Though I recognize the feasibility of all the three visions, my conclusion in this paper is closest to the Lutheran one.

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18. Mark R. Schwen, "A Christian University: Defining the Difference", in, *First Things* 93, May 1999, pp. 25–31. Also available on the internet: http://www.firstthings. com/article/2007/01/a-christian-universitydefining-the-difference-17. I quote the internet version.
19. Schwen, "A Christian University: Defining the Difference".
20. Ibid.

Ethos

Ethos is concerned with what is being done to achieve the identity of a Christian university. What are the characteristic contents of Christian higher education? Schwein in the above mentioned article said that in a Christian institute of higher education there should be a department of theology, an active chapel ministry, a faculty "that carry in and among themselves the DNA of the school",[21] and a curriculum including courses that articulate the vision.

People: A Community of Faith and a Community of Knowledge

Among Schwein's criteria the third one is indeed problematic – that faculty should "carry in and among themselves the DNA of the school". At some American colleges (e.g. at Calvin College) where faculty are hired only if they are members of the sponsoring church and sign a statement that they would be committed to integrate faith and learning in their teaching, the Schwein-criterion of the 'DNA' might work.

However, for several church-related Christian schools (including the 20-year-old Hungarian Pázmány Péter Catholic and Károli Gáspár Reformed Universities) this model would not work, partly because these institutions are also sponsored by the state, and because there are only a few faculty that come from the universities' respective church traditions. As suggested earlier, the situation is based on a compromise: the church-related universities need enough expertise (most professors have to be hired outside of their respective religious traditions) and professional experts with their PhDs are happy to be offered a job that they are qualified for. Thus within a Christian university it is usually a minority that belongs to the faith-community, the majority is only a member of the community of learning. A Christian university is, using the term of St Augustine, is a *corpux mixtum* at vengeance!

How can, or should, a Christian university which is both a community of faith and a community of knowledge, reconcile its inherent tension?

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21. Ibid.

How far do these two communities overlap with each other? Or are they the only communities at Christian universities?

My focus is now on the University of the Reformed Church in Hungary. We have had leaders -- some of them better than others -- new ideas and new structures have been introduced, some other structures have suddenly disappeared. We have wonderful colleagues and wonderful students. Most of us are happy within our walls, but unfortunately rarely, or hardly ever, do we stop to reflect on the mission (vision, ethos, people) of our church-affiliated university. A good innovation was the introduction of the so-called biannual 'training weeks' (short-term mandatory classes of great variety for students and leadership development workshops with entertaining programmes for faculty) at Károli University, but there has not been enough reflection on their effects.

How far can the community of faith define the profile of a Christian institution of higher education? Can the community of faith affect the community of knowledge? Ned Wisnefsky in his above-mentioned article offered an answer to this question:

> There are three principal ways in which a community of faith can affect a community of learning within Lutheran Colleges: by establishing a religious context within which learning takes place; by helping set the goal of learning; by influencing the content of what is learned.[22]

It is significant that Wisnefsky's focus is not only on the structure of such an institution or on the faculty, but on the students for whom he insists on defining the context, the goal and the content of learning.

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22. Wisnefsky, "The Lutheran College", p. 6.

Conclusion: A (Perhaps Utopian?) Vision of a Vibrant, Open-minded, Faith-oriented Community

In conclusion, I am suggesting the university should really be concerned with defining its Reformed/Protestant/Christian identity. How far should this identity be manifested in the personal commitment of faculty and the formation of the curriculum?

At the Catholic University, the requirement was that at least 50 per cent of the faculty should be Roman Catholic and the rest could be anything. Frankly, I felt somewhat uncomfortable that as a Lutheran Christian, I found myself in the group of atheists, agnostics, (i.e. 'the anything').

In my view the community of faith, especially in the age of ecumenism, should have more of a Christian rather than a rigid denominational identity however different theological interpretations (models) determined the visions of the founding fathers. Ultimately, a Christian vision, including the input of Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Evangelical believers should be able to contribute to the making of the identity of a Christian university, whether Roman Catholic or Reformed.

The larger community of knowledge should respect the identity-forming efforts of the community of faith while the community of faith should respect academic excellence.

The third and so far undiscussed community is that of the administration. They interfere with both the community of faith and the community of knowledge. The professional aspect should be emphasized here too – you do not have to necessarily be a committed Christian to be a good manager. However, it is good to know that there are some excellent Christian managers too!

By making these borders visible, non-believing faculty members could honestly pursue their professional and educational efforts without being forced to hypocrisy or sycophancy. Such openness would be mutually productive. A vivid and honest discussion of faith-issues would make a Christian university distinct from any other secular universities where faith-issues are either taboo or non-existent. Yes, we can rejoice when some of our faculty, though coming from an atheistic or agnostic background, are open to, sometimes even keen on, accepting the values of the community

of faith. I have first-hand personal experience of colleagues who, during their tenure, were baptized and became very active members of their local churches. True, at a Christian university, the direction of this process might also work the other way. In a secularized world, whether we like it or not, faith can also diminish and formerly committed Christians might start talking about their newly adopted 'post-Christian' views.

Whatever the situation is, an open-minded church-related university should promote vibrant and honest discussion of faith-issues. How fruitful it would be to initiate 'faith and learning' discussions for both faculty and students or to organize 'questions of faith' series for members of both communities of learning and communities of faith!

This also means that the Christian university should not close its door to evangelization either of the students or of the faculty. The Christian faith, after all, is a missionary faith. However, the freedom of conscience, again an old Protestant value, of every individual within our walls should be highly respected. The missionary faith of a Christian university, though a university cannot and should not take over the task of the church, could also be articulated, avoiding, of course, aggressive proselytization. Ultimately, a Christian university, with the help of its church, could always express a readiness in offering, if there is willingness to take it, the treasure of its founding parent, the *thesaurus ecclesiae*, the gospel.

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