# The Union of Catholic Students

(Student Division of the University Catholic Federation)

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## 1. THE GROWTH OF THE CATHOLIC STUDENT MOVEMENT

In an early issue of the Inter-University Magazine Father Martindale wrote: 'Towards the end of the Great War I perceived that the Universities would soon be flooded out . . . I thought therefore with sorrow of Catholic Societies which had been killed, or had languished to inanition point. I thought too of those smaller Universities where Catholics would wander, vague as sheep that had no shepherd. I desired therefore to see a society of Catholic students within each University. Hardly had I thought of this when I perceived how weak they would be if isolated . . . hence the idea of a "link"—a "Federation"—formed in my head before even the war was over.'

And so the Federation, when it was founded in 1920, had the initial aim of founding and fostering student societies at the Universities. In this it was successful, and indeed in those years the success was necessary. Before 1914 only five societies were in existence: by the end of 1922 there were twenty, and by 1940 they existed in all the Universities and nearly all the University Colleges. Throughout this time the Federation acted as a clearing house for information and a storehouse for experience, especially valuable to the smaller societies. And the Federation also had in mind the advantages of having a resident Chaplain at each University, and has encouraged its members to work for this object. At the moment there are six resident chaplaincies, at Oxford, Cambridge, Glasgow, London, Edinburgh, and Liverpool.

## 2. THE FOUNDATION OF THE UNION OF CATHOLIC STUDENTS

In its early days the Federation consisted largely of student members; but as time went on the graduate membership grew, and it became necessary to provide for the correspondingly greater diversity of interests and activities within the one body, without destroying its essential unity. The constitutional changes were gradual, and finally accomplished at the Annual General Meeting in April 1942 when the students and graduate divisions within the Federation were formed. Thus the Union of Catholic Students came into being, as an autonomous student body able to concentrate on the task of providing a medium for the stimulus and mutual help of its affiliated societies. The growth of student activities generally, and on a national scale, had already provided one reason for this step. It is time Catholic students were also active and alive to their responsibilities.

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Membership of the Union of Catholic Students is open to students at the Universities and University Colleges through the affiliation of their local society. Catholic students at other Colleges, and in particular Training Colleges, are invited to join as Associate Members; it is hoped that they will do so, for all can contribute experience of value, and benefit in like manner.

A practical effort of the Federation to help students has been the establishment of an Assistance Fund to make loans to students. Little money is at present available in the Fund, but it is hoped to enlarge it after the war. Also, students in their final year doing Education courses should get in touch with the secretary of the scholastic appointments bureau, who will assist them in finding a suitable teaching post.

## 3. THE NEWMAN ASSOCIATION

The Graduate Division of the Federation is the Newman Association, and the links between it and the Student Division are, and must be, of the closest. On the one hand the U.C.S. looks to the Newman Association for help and continuity, while the local student societies can avail themselves of the knowledge and experience of the graduates as occasion arises. On the other hand the Newman Association looks to the students for future members, fitted in their Catholic life and in their professional capacities to assume the responsibilities which attend the privileges of a University education. This aspect of the Federation's work among students is most important, and is one reason why there should be close co-operation between students and graduates through Regional and society meetings, and through the work of the professional sections (see below). Apart from the good that can be done by students as Catholics in their University days, it should be a preparation for future activities in the same way as ordinary secular studies.

## 4. AIMS AND OBJECTS

The objects of the Union of Catholic Students, as stated in the constitution, are:

(a) To link together the Catholic student societies at the British Universities for their mutual support.

(b) to promote intellectual and social intercourse among members,

(c) to place before members the ideals of the apostolate of the laity, representing the Catholic student body so that it may participate in other student or youth movements, and may co-operate with student movements abroad, especially by membership of Pax Romana.

## 5. THE WORK IN THE UNIVERSITIES

The linking up of the student societies in the Universities and Colleges of the country, which is the initial aim of the U.C.S., can be carried out in many ways: at joint meetings of neighbouring societies, through the members of the Council, through the medium of the student page in *Unitas* (the Federation Bulletin), and best of all through the General Meetings of the Federation.

It is the policy of the Federation to hold Regional Meetings during the year at various places, so that all members should be able to get to at least one such meeting each year. The main theme for the Conference is chosen to stimulate thought with regard to the problems of the future—near or distant—and experts are asked to come. But the object of such meetings is to provoke discussion among members, so that they may arrive at positive and constructive ideas as a basis for future action.

The work of the professional sections of the Federation should be of great interest to students. Their aim is to integrate Catholicism and professional life—a problem confronting the student all the time, and sometimes shelved for lack of assistance in solving it. The following sections are in existence: Social Science, Education, Medical, Science, and International. The work of running these sections is one of the main activities of the Newman Association, and by working in them students will get a broader view of the Federation's activities, and equip themselves for present and future work.

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All these activities depend on having flourishing and well supported local societies, and it is therefore extremely important that Catholic secondary and public schools should be kept in touch with the U.C.S. and its affiliated societies. This can be done by students, or graduates, or University Chaplains, visiting schools in the Easter term to inform prospective university students about the work of the local societies and the U.C.S. Much good might also be done by contributing 'University Notes' on these lines to the school magazines.

## 6. RELATIONS WITH OTHER CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS

The Federation has always recognized the need for the various Catholic organizations to co-operate in directions of mutual interest: it is itself a co-operative movement. The activities of local societies in this field naturally vary from place to place and according to the times. In many places much has been done by members and whole societies working with the Sword of the Spirit, the Catholic Social Guild, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Ladies of Charity, the Catholic Evidence Guild, and the League of Christ the King.

With the present situation in mind it is hoped that this co-operation will be especially fruitful in the field of Catholic Youth organizations and Youth Clubs, where University students have great opportunities and corresponding responsibilities. The U.C.S. is represented on the National Catholic Youth Association, which is an organization where ideas and experience in the field of Youth work can be pooled with a view to constructive action. Youth leadership courses are envisaged,and in the meantime students are urged to take the lead in all-Catholic and other pre-service units.

## 7. RELATIONS WITH OTHER STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

The third object of the Union of Catholic Students is to place before members the ideals of the apostolate of the laity. The action flowing from these ideals is manifest in the work of the Union as a body, but to a far greater extent in the activities of affiliated societies. The U.C.S. is represented on the Co-operating Committee for England and Wales of the International Student Service. This body is mainly (but by no means exclusively) concerned with the international side of student relief, and is a 'neutral' body (politically and ideologically) with headquarters in Switzerland. There are I.S.S. committees in many University centres throughout the country on which some local societies are already represented. The work done by these committees is good, and members are urged to co-operate with them.

For some time it was the custom of the Federation to hold a general meeting during Congresses of the National Union of Students, and a special sermon was given on some topic connected with the Congress. This custom lapsed; but a number of individual societies took the initiative and sent delegates, after holding special meetings to discuss the Catholic principles involved. It would be very desirable to extend this type of activity, which could be co-ordinated through the U.C.S. In this connection it should be noted that the N.U.S. has special sections for teaching trainees and medical students on which Catholics might well be better represented.

An important consideration is the relationship of Catholic societies with other student religious societies. Never was a 'Christian Front' more necessary than to-day, and we know from the attention given to the words of the Pope and the late Cardinal Hinsley how many Christians are looking for a lead. And so it appears desirable, without compromise in matters of principle, to co-operate with other Christians where local conditions permit. Many societies have already done much in this way by holding meetings with the Student Christian Movement, and Religion and Life.

## 8. THE INTERNATIONAL FIELD

The foundation of the University Catholic Federation in 1920 was part of a general movement throughout the European countries which led naturally to the foundation of the International Secretariate of Catholic students—PAX ROMANA. Since the first Congress in Friburg in 1921 Pax Romana met annually until 1939 in one of the historic cities of Europe, and in 1939 it met for the first time in America, in Washington and New York. At each of these meetings, in fourteen different countries, the Federation has been represented by large delegations, and in 1928 it acted as host to the Congress in this country.

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The Federation has worked consistently in the field of international relations, and in these tragic times the value of that work is apparent. Pax Romana has survived, and is one of the three bodies constituting the European Student Relief Fund—the others being the International Student Service, and the World Student Christian Federation (world S.C.M.). This organization, working from Switzerland, is doing valuable relief work among students on the Continent. The continuation of the general work of Pax Romana has been ensured by the setting up of an office in Washington, made possible by our American friends of the 1939 Congress. This offers an occasion for a closer understanding between University Catholics in Great Britain and America, which should be of increasing importance in post war years. Only recently the President of Fordham College, N.Y. (Fr. Gannon S.J.) visited this country and spoke to members of the Federation on this subject. As a practical beginning he announced that a Social Science scholarship is to be instituted at Fordham for post-graduate students from this country.

Another aspect of the international work of the Federation is the contacts we now have with Catholics from Poland, the Netherlands, France, Belgium and other occupied countries. Special mention may be made of the Poles as there are many students at our Universities, in particular at Edinburgh and Liverpool. These contacts have resulted in the formation of International Committees in London (centre at Hereford House), Manchester, and Sheffield, and should be of great value in the development of the University Catholic Movement after the war.

## 9. FINANCE

The history of the Federation has shown that a student organization cannot be self supporting, and the Newman Association is therefore contributing to the U,C.S. from its own subscriptions. Part of this contribution is in the form of a subsidy to *Unitas*, and the rest is made up of 2/6 from each guinea subscription.

The subscription rate for University societies is 6d. per head per year, which should be sent to the Treasurer as early as possible in the Academic year. The rates for Associate members, and other particulars can be obtained from the Secretary.

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