

# MELITA THEOLOGICA

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## EDITORIAL

### OUR ASSOCIATION

ON the 29th December, 1946, our Association, the Royal University Students' Theological Association, was officially recognized as a University Students' Body, and its rules were duly approved by the General Council of our Alma Mater.

This was a historic event both for our Faculty and for the University. As far as we know no Association of a kindred nature has ever existed within the walls of our venerable Institution.

What prompted us to create this Association was, obviously, a keen desire to carry higher and higher the name of our Faculty. In order to attain this end, we necessarily intended to create new interest in the study of our particular science: Theology.

There is no need to emphasise here the importance of the study of Theology. It suffices to state that it is the noblest, the surest and most profitable of all sciences, since its formal object is God Himself, the Truth *par excellence*. For the priest, Theology is not only the science *sine qua non* for a successful career, as, e.g. is the study of law for the lawyer. Theology for the priest is something more: it is the science from which he derives immense profit to his spiritual life. Through the long hours spent on the books of Theology, he attains an intimate knowledge of his Master and Lord; and, consequently, he understands more accurately the purpose of his existence and the mysteries of life beyond the grave.

The particular aims of our Association can be best seen in the rules which we have formulated and which we are publishing in another section of this issue. We wish to encourage research work based on scientific lines; to create a strong bond of union among all students of Theology and to promote healthy contacts with institutions similar to our own spread all over the Catholic world.

A remote aim of our initiative is to see established in Malta a Theological Association embodying both the regular and secu-

lar clergy. This rosy hope should be realised as soon as circumstances permit. There is hardly a country, even with a Catholic minority, that boasts not of such institution; while in the more progressive countries there are bodies which specialise in a particular branch of the vast science of Theology. This fact should give fresh impulse to our determination to remedy this disgraceful omission in our Catholic life.

Before ending this note, we wish to appeal both to the students of Theology and to the clergy in general to cooperate with us in our difficult work, especially by participating in all our activities. We wish, moreover, to extend our warmest thanks to His Grace the Archbishop, Mgr. Sir Michael Gonzi for his paternal interest in our Association and to the Honourable the Rector of our Royal University for the help he has given us so far.

### **MELITA THEOLOGICA**

We have stated that one of our aims is to promote research work based on scientific lines. To realise this aim it appeared necessary to us to publish a scientific review. We have christened it *Melita Theologica*, a significant name which embodies our ideals.

This review will be mainly at the disposal of students to help them to publish the results of the research work required by the Constitution "*Deus Scientiarum Dominus*". It often happens that in the course of such work, a student may discover points of Theological interest which may not necessarily be incorporated in the thesis required in terms of Art. 31 of the Regulations of the Royal University. Well, in this case, his exertions will not be spent uselessly, for he may publish the result of his studies in our review too.

We intend to publish *Melita Theologica* twice during each scholastic year in the same form as the present one; and we hope that our next issue will be conspicuous for contributions by students, which, for obvious reasons, are lacking in this first issue of our journal.

### **UNIVERSITY LIFE**

A University is an important institution. Its influence for good or bad is great and perhaps disproportionate to the small number of men and women sheltered within its walls. Higher education is essential for the cultural, social, political and econo-

mic. progress of a country; but this education must be sound and wholly directed to the formation of right thinking minds and men of principles rather than to the mass production of specialists. Specialization in these days of the division of labour is necessary, and inevitable, yet we must guard against its dangerous effects, lest the mind of the student be narrowed down to his own restricted field of studies and to the interests of his own profession. Such perversion of mind making one to consider one's own class as the pivot of the globe, is the murder of the innocents in disguise and perhaps one of the chief causes of the present babel of thinking.

Newman found the solution for this problem in University life, that is, not so much in academic work as in the social side of that life, which affords the student an opportunity to forget for a moment his own preoccupations and restricted ideas to interest himself in the work of others, to enter their minds, to think with them and to sympathise with their feelings. Through such contact, his mind is broadened and his interests which are bound to be restricted through his professional studies, are widened. In other words a truly constituted University is a place for liberal education, which cannot be measured with the yardstick or reduced to hard cash.

These are fine ideas in theory. Are we having them realised in practice? A negative answer would not represent the reality; yet we must admit that in our University there is much to be done, unless we want it to be ranked as a school of higher studies. Something is being done in this direction by the students themselves who are setting up various societies for themselves and feverishly organizing all sorts of meetings and social activities; they are checking thereby the undesirable consequences of the watertight compartment organization of our courses. This is only a beginning, we hope that in future steps will be taken so that every student will find the opportunity to know every other student in the University.

### **OUR FACULTY :**

In his "Idea of a University", Newman insisted on the importance of having the faculty of Theology in a University; indeed, he stated, a University without Theology is no University at all, since the knowledge of God is an essential branch of that

universal knowledge which a University professes to impart. Fortunately the Faculty of Theology has always existed in our Alma Mater, from the very first day of its foundation. This branch of learning has enjoyed its due honour and has always merited its good influence on university life in general.

Within these last seventeen years our Faculty was radically reorganized and based on a new foundation laid by the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries in 1931. It was changed from a school of higher Theological studies into an Academy of Research; such is the aim, at least, of the new constitution *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*. No more do our degrees depend on a three-hours questions-and-answers examinations, but on theses based on research work during the last three years of a five-years academical course. Our Faculty, therefore, was one of the first in our University, to reorganise itself and had set an example to the others. Unfortunately, however, the students of the course of Theology are yet unable to reap the full fruits of such an excellent organization.

Since 1937, no one succeeded to gain the D.D., and a good number not even the Lic.D. The reasons for this unpalatable state of affairs are many, the war included. We cannot blame the students themselves, who, whenever they were given the chance and the means, always succeeded. It is true that many of them lacked the necessary spirit of initiative and felt a strong inferiority complex to carry on; spirit of initiative, courage and self-confidence, however, are not plum-puddings; most often they are the result of incentive from others or the effect of environment. This defeatism is further enhanced by the lack of material means: our libraries are poor. No one can expect the students themselves to buy the books required; it is unthinkable and ridiculous.

This lack of books and up-to-date reviews is the cause for a more dangerous narrowing of mind: it seems indeed that at times we are unable to conceive any subject to write upon because of our lack of acquaintance with contemporary thought. We are fully aware that steps are being taken to remedy all this by way of the purchase of essential reference works. We want more than this; we want recent works, contemporary reviews that we may keep abreast of modern research. Only thus can we have an 'academic atmosphere' in our University, powerful enough

to transform professors and students alike into passionate researchers of truth and knowledge.

**HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN MALTA:**

An ample field for research is surely the history of the Church in Malta; work in this branch of study is practically nil. What a chance is there for our students to train themselves in original research and scientific writing in terms of article 31e (c) of our Regulations! These studies should be the prerogative, not to say the monopoly of ecclesiastics; but our Church documents are often being perused and published by laymen and at times foreigners. We hope that the Professor of Church History will do his best to interest the rising generation of priests in this subject. We congratulate him for having introduced it in his lectures; we want more. We will continue to harp on this point until we see our hopes realised.

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