

TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR DANIEL CALLUS

By A. VELLA, O.P.

THERE have been in the past great Maltese Dominicans who distinguished themselves in foreign universities, but for us the term 'Great Maltese Dominican' can only mean one, Fr. Daniel Callus, who lived among, conversed with and taught us, and whose recent death leaves us with a sense of irreparable impoverishment.

That he was an old man, 77 years old, does not make his loss any less painful, since some of his recent discoveries in mediaeval thought have not yet been published. Luckily three Oxonian scholars, B. Smalley of St. Hilda's College, R.W. Hunt of the Bodleian Library and W.A. Pantin of Oriel College, have taken responsibility for his literary works, with a view to publishing them.

Fr. Callus was born at Żebbuġ, Malta, on January 20th, 1888, second son of Paul Callus and Theodora *née* Vella. As a child he attended the Government Primary school of his native town and received his secondary education at the Junior College of the Dominican Fathers of Rabat. At the early age of 13 he began his Philosophical studies. By a special dispensation from Rome he was clothed with the Dominican habit when he was less than 15 years old, on December 25th, 1903. Upon completing the Philosophy course he was sent to Fiesole in Florence, where, while still deacon, he received the degree of Lectorate in Theology and Philosophy on July 21st, 1910. A few months later he was transferred to Rome and here was ordained priest on November 6th, 1910, by Mgr. Andrew Frewirth, O.P., Apostolic Nuncio in Bavaria and subsequently Cardinal. In Rome Fr. Daniel pursued a post-graduate course in Holy Scripture and Oriental Languages at the University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum), and on his return to Malta he began his teaching career imparting lectures on Sacred Theology, Holy Scripture and Biblical Greek at St. Thomas Aquinas College, Rabat. In 1914, on the recommendation of the Auxiliary Bishop of Malta, Mgr. Angelo Portelli, O.P., he was appointed Lecturer in Theology in the local Seminary of Mdina. On learning that the English Dominican House of Studies at Hawkesyard, in Staffordshire, needed a professor to lecture on Aquinas' *Summa contra Gentiles* and the history of Mediaeval Philosophy he volunteered for that task. In the meantime he prepared for and sat the examination *Ad Gradus*.

When Fr. Louis Theissling, Master General of the Order of Preachers, amalgamated the Philosophical *Studia* of the Italian, Sicilian and Maltese Provinces at the newly founded International College of La Quercia, Viterbo, Fr. Callus was recalled from England and appointed Prefect of Studies. Here on May 1st, 1924, the Procurator General of the Order, Fr. Filippo Caterini, bestowed on him the degree of Master of Sacred Theology.

Between the years 1924 and 1931 we find him both Regent of Studies at St. Thomas Aquinas College, Rabat, and Professor of Holy Scripture and Hebrew at the University of Malta. As Regent of Studies, he reformed the scholastic curriculum on the pattern of other *Studia* of the Order abroad, and introduced the custom of holding academic celebrations, once a year, in honour of St. Thomas Aquinas, Patron of Catholic Schools and Universities. As holder of the Chair of Holy Scripture and Hebrew, 'Professor Callus proved a very popular teacher for his clear and learned lectures during all the time he remained in the University. I myself attended the first part of his course of Hebrew, attracted by his philological disquisitions about Oriental languages in general. At all the annual examinations the students showed the great profit made under the guidance of the clever lecturer by their exhaustive answers.' These are the words of Sir Temi Zammit, then Rector of the University.

One of the greatest achievements of Fr. Callus, while teaching at the University, was the foundation of Catholic Action. We wish to stress this fact for the sake of historical truth because it seems to me that some of the present leaders of the Catholic Action Movement are not, perhaps, giving Fr. Callus his due.

Catholic Action, as defined by Pope Pius XI, saw its beginning in Malta in 1929 when Fr. Callus founded the *Lega Universitaria Cattolica Maltese*, now the University Students' Catholic Guild. Formally approved by Archbishop Mgr. Maurus Caruana, O.S.B., on February 19th, 1930, it was to serve as an inspiration and a model. The Guild was the first properly constituted branch of Catholic Action. It was acclaimed as such by Mgr. Caruana. From the Guild in the years to come, His Grace hoped, there would accrue to the life of Malta 'un'azione cristiana veramente efficace'. He trusted it would continue to grow and eventually provide the future leaders of Catholic Action.

Fr. Callus did not stop here. After consulting Mgr. Paolo Galea, the Vicar General, he went to explain to Archbishop Caruana his project for spreading Catholic Action throughout the Island. It was his intention to invite the members of the various Circoli, Domus and M.U.S.E.U.M. existing at the time to join in a federation. His Grace welcomed Fr. Callus's

plan and requested him to write a memorandum on the matter. Fr. Callus complied to His Grace's wish. He suggested that an organizing committee be founded under the presidency of the Archbishop, with the Vicar-General, Mgr. D'Andria, Mgr. Pantalleresco and himself as members. This committee met several times to study and put into effect Fr. Callus's projected scheme.

On January 19th, 1931, an important meeting took place, with the Vicar General in the Chair, to encourage the Circoli to form a federation. Present at this meeting were the Committee, a number of parish priests, and many priest and laymen. Fr. Callus, in a long speech, which was published in three issues of *Lehen-is-Sewwa* (January 31st, February 7th and February 14th, 1931), spoke of the nature and of the need for Catholic Action and explained the articles of the Statute.

The last of Fr. Callus's enterprises in promoting Catholic Action was the convention summoned in Valletta on July 5th, 1931, under the presidency of the Vicar General. Representatives from all over the Island attended. Here a solid foundation was laid for the setting up of Catholic Action.

We must also put on record that for three years (1928-31) Fr. Callus worked hard to propagate the idea of Catholic Action in Malta. He delivered lectures in youth clubs and other places on the need for Catholic Action. He explained in articles in *Lehen-is-Sewwa* the aims and ideals of the Movement. (Later on these articles were collected and published in a booklet, entitled *X'Inbija l-Azzjoni Kattolika?* 'What is Catholic Action?') He formed groups of young men and women who were to be the first Catholic Actionists. He was as WIEHED MINNKOM said in *Lehen-is-Sewwa* of May 8th, 1962, 'the first one to organize a federation of Catholic Action clubs'.

It was indeed Fr. Callus who gave the initial impetus to the Catholic Action Movement, and his merits in this connexion cannot be passed over.

Fr. Callus left the Island in 1931 and resumed teaching at Hawkesyard. The following year he was assigned to Oxford, the renowned city of learning in which he made his home. Coming into contact with the late Regius Professor of Modern History of the University of Oxford, Sir Maurice Powicke, he plunged himself in research work, delving in Mediaeval manuscripts at the Bodleian Library, at Oxford and Cambridge Colleges, at the British Museum and in Continental libraries.

In 1938 Fr. Callus took the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. In the *Dominican Annals*, published by the English Dominican Province, for July 1938, we read: 'On June 4th, Fr. Daniel Callus, O.P., S.T.M. was admitted to the degree of Rector of Philosophy. He is the first Dominican



Very Rev. DANIEL CALLUS, O.P., M.A.(Oxon.),
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since the Reformation to take a Doctorate in the University'. Fr. Daniel was also the first Maltese to receive this degree. The University of Oxford in recognition of his scholarship, further conferred upon him the Mastership in Arts, in 1955, and Fr. Daniel became a member of the Congregation of the University.

On Fr. Callus's 75th Birthday the University of Oxford honoured him by publishing a Festschrift: Oxford Studies presented *To Daniel Callus* (Oxford Historical Society, New Series Vol. XVI) in which eminent Scholars wrote nine special studies, including a full bibliography of his published writings. In the foreword to this book Professor R.W. Southern, Chichele Professor of Modern History, wrote: 'During the thirty years he has been among us Father Daniel has exercised a mild and benevolent influence in the University, without effort, without ambition, without noise. In things of the spirit nothing succeeds like indifference to success, and some small part of devotion and loyalty which he has inspired arises from his belonging to a world quite distinct from that of the University of which he became in turn an undergraduate, a doctor, a lecturer, and a member of Congregation. He has exemplified in a striking degree for all to see those characteristics ascribed in an early biography to the founder of his Order: 'placidam interioris hominis compositionem manifesta de foris benignitate ac vultus hilaritate prodebat', and 'omnes homines largo excipiebat caritatis sinu, et cum omnes diligeret, ab omnibus amabatur'.

There is no need to alter these words, except to put them in the present tense, and this is not the place to add to them ...

'Since 1932 Father Daniel has been at Oxford. His loyalty and energies have naturally been claimed in the first place by the house of Blackfriars, where for twelve years from 1942 to 1954 he was Regent of Studies. But he has also found time to lecture and to supervise research in the University and to deliver lectures in many places in this country and abroad. And all this has been accompanied by a steady stream of discoveries in the field of scholastic thought. These activities fall into place in the great task of elucidating the development of Christian thought in fidelity to that precept in the Constitutions of the Order of Preachers which declares the *studium sacrae veritatis* to be the necessary means to the special end for which the Order was instituted. The University of Oxford is older than the Order of Preachers by a generation or so, but it and the Orders of Friars grew up together, and through the centuries their purposes have never utterly diverged. If they have become closer during the last thirty years, this is owing not only to the renewal of the constitutional links between the University and the House of Blackfriars, but still more to the unassuming and fruitful labours of a few men, and not least the

doctor of the University to whom these essays are a tribute of affection and gratitude'.

The Royal University of Malta did not lag behind the University of Oxford in honouring her Emeritus Professor.

I had myself the privilege of proposing Fr. Callus's name to the Senate of the University for the conferring of the Degree of *D. Litt. Honoris Causa*. My proposal was seconded by Prof. Joseph Aquilina, and supported by Professor Carmelo Coleiro and Professor George Xuereb.

The Senate decided by acclamation that such degree be conferred on him at the Foundation Day Ceremony on November 12th, 1963. The University Council unanimously approved this resolution and decided that for a week he would be the guest of the Royal University. On this occasion Mgr. E. Coleiro, Professor of Latin, finished his splendid oration in Latin by saying: 'Professor Callus is the scholar whose life-long work has been not only a source of solace and satisfaction to himself but also of great help to other scholars. Let others be ashamed if, while devoting themselves to their studies, they have not found it possible to publish the fruits of their labours. In him we have a man of true learning, one indeed who is known to all those who have even a little knowledge of Mediaeval Studies. All his life he has devoted himself to his work. Indeed, even that amount of time which others are wont to bestow on well-earned recreation, he has spent on his research and on his publications.

'In the words of Horace, he has built a monument more durable than bronze to his own accomplishment, to the honour of his Dominican Province and to the glory of his fellow countrymen and of this University, once his Alma Mater. This address of mine, whatever its worth, I have delivered as a token of our admiration and, as it has been a real pleasure to compose, so will it also be, I hope, acceptable to him whom we are honouring and will echo the approval of all of you who are present at this assembly'.

Fr. Callus's works (a list of which has already been published in this *Journal*, Vol. II, No. 3 [1964], pp. 262-264) may be grouped under three categories: Dominican, Biblical and Mediaeval.

On the history of the Dominican Order and in particular on the history of the Maltese Province, his main works are:

- 1917 - 'Tradizionale Ospitalità Dominicana al Novello Vescovo di Malta', *Archivum Melitense*, 3 (1917), 3-11.
- 1918 - *Il P. Domenico Ottomano (Fu vero Principe?)*, Saggio storico-critico, Rome, 1918, pp. xxii-187.
- Giaino Vescovo di Malta (1447), *Archivum Melitense*, 3(1918), 104-7.

- 1921 - 'I Domenicani in Malta. Cenni Storici', Malta, 1921, pp. 31.
- 1926 - 'Due Missionari Domenicani Maltesi in Oriente nel Cinquecento', *Memorie Domenicane*, 43(1936), 386-408.
- 1929 - 'Un illustre Sengleano del Seicento, P. Giovanni Matteo Rispolis, O.P.', *Archivum Melitense*, 8(1929), 1-34.
- 1941 - 'The Apostolate of the Press in the Dominican Order', *Blackfriars*, 22, 162-71.

On Biblical Studies he wrote:

- 1925 - 'A propos des "Conversations de Malines"', *Revue Thomiste* (1925), 55-73.
La Bibbia alla luce delle recenti scoperte archeologiche. Prolosure al Corso di S. Scrittura e di Lingua Ebraica, Malta.
- 1941 - 'The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages', Review in *Blackfriars*, Vol. 22, 664-74.
- 1961 - 'The Biblical and Patristic Background of the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas (abstract)', *Abstracts of Proceedings of the Oxford Society of Historical Theology* for the academic year 1960-1961, pp. 23-25.

On Mediaeval Studies he wrote:

- 1943 - 'Introduction of Aristotelian Learning to Oxford', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 19(1943), 229-81 (a paper communicated to the Academy in November 1943).
- 1946 - *The Condemnation of St. Thomas at Oxford* (Aquinas Papers, 5), Oxford, 1946, pp. 38. (Reprinted 1955).
- 1953 - 'Robert Grosseteste's Place in the History of Philosophy', *Proceedings of the XIth International Congress of Philosophy*, Bruxelles 1953, 161-5.
- 1954 - 'The Contribution to the Study of the Fathers made by the Thirteenth Century Oxford Schools', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 5, 139-48 (a paper read at the First International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, 1951).
- 1955 - 'Robert Grosseteste as Scholar', *Robert Grosseteste Scholar and Bishop*. Essays in Commemoration of the Seventh Centenary of his Death, edited by D.A. Callus, with introduction by Sir Maurice Powicke, Oxford, 1955, pp. 1-69.
'The Treatise of John Blund on the Soul', *Autour d'Aristote. Recueil d'Etudes de Philosophie ancienne et médiévale offert à Monseigneur A. Mansion*, Louvain, 1955, pp. 471-95.
- 1959 - 'The Problem of the Unity of Form and Richard Knapwell, O.P.',

Mélanges offerts à Etienne Gilson, Paris-Toronto, 1959, pp. 123-60.

'Introduction of Arabian Philosophy to Oxford', *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, 57, 647-50 (résumé of paper read 8 Sept. 1959 at Le Premier Colloque International de la Philosophie Musulmane, Cologne).

'*Fides and Auctoritas* in the late thirteenth-century' *ibid.* 670-2 (résumé of paper read on 10th Sept. 1959 at the X Mediävistentagung, Cologne).

1960 – 'The Problem of the Plurality of Forms in the Thirteenth Century. The Thomist Innovation', *Actes du Premier Congrès International de Philosophie Médiévale*, Louvain-Bruxelles 28 août-4 septembre 1958, Louvain-Paris, 1960, pp. 577-85.

1963 – 'The Subject-Matter of Metaphysics according to some Thirteenth-Century Oxford Masters', *Die Metaphysik im Mittelalter. Ihr Ursprung und ihre Bedeutung* (Akten des II. Internationalen Kongresses für mittelalterliche Philosophie, Köln, 21. 8-6.9.1961).

These publications did not pass without recognition. Professor Callus was enrolled among other scholars and honoured with the title of Fellow of the Royal Historical Society as well as Fellow of the Mediaeval Academy of America.

Although always very busy in lecturing, supervising and doing research work he found time to act as spiritual adviser to some Religious Congregations of Nuns. Indeed his kindness and thoughtfulness for others endeared him not only to his brethren but to all who came in contact with him.

Towards the end of 1964 his health was causing much anxiety, and in March 1965 he came to Malta for a rest. On March 25th he celebrated the diamond jubilee of his profession as a Dominican at the Annunciation Church of Vittoriosa. A few days later he went to St. Catherine of Siena Hospital, Attard. Professor Craig who attended him soon diagnosed that he was suffering of a malign cancer. On May 26 he passed away, being quite conscious to the last few minutes repeating the words: 'Cum defecerit virtus mea, ne derelinquas me Domine'. 'Sancte Pater Domine, ora pro me'.

A Solemn Requiem was celebrated at St. Dominic's Parish Church, Valletta, by the Prior of Oxford, Fr. Bede Bailey, O.P., who came purposely to Malta for the occasion. He was buried on May 28th at Żebbug Cemetery, Malta.

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COMMENT

THE PUBLICATION of this review gives us great pleasure and great pain. The pleasure is our reward and the pain is our punishment – the reward is for the time we spend on its preparation which makes possible the printing of some good articles and the pain is our disappointment at its irregular appearance for which we apologise to our readers. Our hope is that one day we shall succeed in regularising our publication dates; but there are still some hurdles in the way not easy to overcome such as our many personal academic commitments and the type of time-wasting Compositomatic printing machine on which we have to rely. Even so, though we are a small University with small means, we think we are doing our best. After all, not all the Faculties of much larger universities publish their own review. We do hope that the articles in this number will please at least some of our readers. With so many books and reviews on the market intelligent busy readers short of time have to be selective. To deserve their attention, we publish articles which we consider worth reading and interesting from one angle or another. One particular angle which we think will interest non-Maltese readers is the Maltese angle. We are a small but very hardy people – people with our own history and immemorial civilization. We describe our civilization as immemorial because it begins with a very high grade civilization from the prehistoric era (the earliest Maltese built wonderful megalithic temples) continuing into contemporary times with a largely humanitarian civilization, religiously Christian and culturally Latin.

We are trying to promote the welfare of the University of Malta which is the oldest University in the British Commonwealth Overseas, but the burdens which the new times are imposing on our University are too heavy for us to carry alone unaided. Malta, which has ceased to be a British Colony but has remained within the British Commonwealth, for a long