

THE UNIVERSITY OF S. MARIA PORTUS SALUTIS

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A STUDY of an old and little known *Studium Generale* existing in Malta more than two centuries ago would be a further contribution to my previous publications on the history of education in our Island.¹

Luckily, in the Archives of the Dominican Priory of Valletta, we have still extant the Registers of the *Matricula Studiorum*,² the deliberations taken by the Regent of Studies and his Council, the various petitions and dispensations of the Sacred Congregation of Studies, Diplomas of Sacred Theology Degrees and invitation cards to attend at public disputations.

Since this *Studium Generale* under consideration is a Dominican Institution, a short discussion on the role of the Order's *Studia* in the development of universities in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is essential.

When the two archetypal universities of Paris and Bologna were in their years of formation, the Order of Friars Preachers had just been founded by St. Dominic. St. Dominic, who was a pupil of the Cathedral school of Palencia, Spain, adapted the whole scholastic structure of his Order on an intellectual basis and designed to make every Priory a citadel of the Faith and every Friar a crusader for Truth.³ He designed his Order in this fashion in an hour of peril to safeguard the intellectual tradition of the Church. Already, in the Third Lateran Council (1179), Pope Alexander III had enacted that chairs of theology beneficed and to be held for a certain number of years, were to be established for the clergy. Again in the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), Pope Innocent III decreed that in each Archiepiscopal school a theologian had to be provided for and in each episcopal school at least a Master of Grammar. However, in 1219 Honorius III complained bitterly that very few of these provisions had been put into practice.⁴ So, when he wrote to St. Dominic that his

¹ See A. Vella, 'The Origins of the University of Malta' in *Malta Year Book*, 1956 pp. 233-9; 'Le Origini della Università di Malta', in *Osservatore Romano*, 3 Settembre, 1960; 'The Role of Private Schools in Maltese education', *Malta Year Book*, 1961, pp. 139-144; 'Prize Day Giving Speeches' in *Polymath*, St. Albert's College Magazine, 1956-58, pp. 11-15, 1958-60, pp. 5-10.

² References are given in the *Matricula Studiorum* 1673-1750, (fol. 9v) to a previous register which is now lost.

³ B. Jarrett, O.P., 'The Dominicans and their University Education' in *Miscellanea Dominicana*, Rome, 1923, p. 170.

⁴ See M.H. Laurent, 'Historia Diplomatica S. Dominici' in *Monumenta Historica S.P.N. Dominici*, Vol. I, pp. 72-3; Marshall W. Baldwin, 'The Popes and Learning

sons should be 'the invincible athletes of Christ' in order to preach and to be real apostles – an *Ordo Praedicatorum* – the Pope himself defined the *raison d'être* of the new Order, and in it he hoped to find a solution to the problem of education. St. Dominic answered the call and he ordered that no Dominican House could be established without a Prior and a Doctor of Theology.⁵ *Conventus... absque priore et doctore non mittatur*. All the Friars of the House had to attend lectures – opened also to laymen – unless excused for some urgent reason.⁶ In view of this educational formation, 'by a kind of intuitive instinct, the Friars', wrote Rashdall,⁷ 'from the first perceived the importance of establishing a hold upon the Universities. In Italy, the Dominicans had their headquarters at Bologna, in France at Paris, and in England at Oxford'.

The Friars were welcomed by the Universities and the Chancellors collaborated with them to develop their studies by granting them what they had granted to other guilds of students. Indeed, the central houses of the Dominicans, continued Rashdall, from the first assumed that form of Colleges. Thus in 1220 Honorius III speaks of *dilectos filios fratres Ordinis Praedicatorum, in Sacra pagina studentes apud Parisios*. The Universities, indeed, were also quite happy to have them in order to make use of their priories. In the XIII century, classes were held in Bologna and elsewhere in priories, churches or chapels. The University of Paris in 1221 transferred its site over the Place St. Jacques to the Dominicans to build up on it their new Priory on condition that the Friars should celebrate a certain number of masses and recite 'whole psalters', and to bury the deceased theologians in the Chapter-house; and the other members of the Faculty in the cloister.⁸ The Jurists of Bologna had their headquarters in St. Dominic's Priory, in the sacristy of which were kept the common chest and seal of the University.⁹ And again at Bologna a Dominican Friar always acted as a returning officer in the election of the Rector.¹⁰ In Italy, and Southern Europe generally, the Friars monopolised theological education: the Italian Universities remained without Theological

in the high Middle Ages', in *Manuscripta*, Vol. I, (1957), pp. 153-4.

⁵ See R. Galbraith, *The Constitutions of the Dominican Order, 1216-1360*, Manchester, (1925), p. 225.

⁶ See A.G. Little, 'Educational Organization of the Mendicant Orders in England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, new series, VIII (1894) pp. 49-60.

⁷ H. Rashdall, 'The Friars Preachers V. the University' in *Collectanea*, Second series, Oxford Historical Society, (1890) XVI, p. 196.

⁸ See E. Bernard, *Les dominicains dans l'université de Paris ou le grand couvent des Jacobins de la rue Saint-Jacques*, Paris, 1883; H. Vicaire, *Storia di San Domenico*, ediz. italiana, p. 383.

⁹ Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, Vol. I, p. 219.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

Faculties till the XIV century, and even then the Friars supplied them with teachers.

Fully aware of the Friars' contributions Pope Alexander IV in his Bull *Quasi lignum vitae*¹¹ empowered the Chancellor of the University of Paris to confer the magisterial licence upon as many Friars as he thought fit after examination by himself alone, without consulting (as in ordinary cases) the rest of the Theological Faculty.

Later Pope Callixtus III on March 23, 1457, in his Bull *Inter cetera*, made Dominican Universities autonomous by giving them the right to confer degrees.¹²

But were the Dominican *Studia Generalia* really Universities?

To answer this question again a few points on what is a University and what are the requirements for the foundation of a University are necessary.

A *studium generale* according to Medieval Jurists implied three characteristics:

- (i) that the school attracted, or at least invited, students from abroad not merely those of a particular country;
- (ii) that it was a place of higher education, that is to say, that at least one of the higher faculties – theology, law, medicine – was taught there;
- (iii) that such subjects were taught by a considerable number – at least by a plurality – of masters.

By the middle of the XII century the idea had already grown that the erection of new *studia generalia* was one of the papal and imperial prerogatives. In St. Thomas's words the *Collegium scholasticum* was a *collegium ecclesiasticum*. But this is to be interpreted in the light of the mediaeval conception that the Christian *ecclesia* was synonymous with Christian society. While the *Studium* belonged to the *Sacerdotium* rather than to the *Imperium*, it was, like both, a part of the Christian society, which acquired a dignity of its own and deserved the support of *Sacerdotium* and *Imperium* alike. Thus, kings founded universities in co-operation with, and generally after gaining the approval of, the Popes.¹³ Thus in 1224 Emperor Frederick II founded a *studium generale* at Naples. In 1229 Gregory IX did the same at Toulouse. In 1244/1245 Innocent IV estab-

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 184. When the Brescian College was dissolved most of its revenues were directed to assist the school of the Dominicans at Bologna. (*Ibid.* footnote, p. 198).

¹² See Denifle, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, I, no. 247. Pope Eugenius IV confirmed this practice in 1442 (*Chartularium*, IV, no. 2562). See also *An Apology for the Religious Orders* by St. Thomas Aquinas, edited with introduction by J. Procter, London, 1902.

¹³ Cf. *Bullarium Ordinis Praedicatorum*, III, pp. 362-5.

lished a *studium generale* in the Pontifical Court itself.

In the light of these preliminaries we may now tackle the juristic status of the Dominican *Studia*.

In various Dominican Provinces certain priories were set apart as houses of study. The Dominican system of education comprised the provincial schools and the schools of the whole Order. The Provinces maintained schools for the study of the arts, philosophy and theology, *studium artium, studium naturalium, studium theologiae*. Those promising students who had performed their curriculum of philosophical and theological studies in the provincial schools to the entire satisfaction of their professors were sent to one of the general houses of study for the Lectorate. These schools were at the apex of the Order's educational organization, and every year the provinces were permitted to send one to three students to each of them.

In the *Constitutiones Fratrum Praedicatorum*, edited by order of the Master General J.M. Larroca, p. 561, n. 1083, we read:

Studia Generalia seu etiam Universitates aut Collegia vocantur, quaedam studia principalia, auctoritate Capituli Generalis vel Magistri Ordinis instituta. General Studies, Universities, Colleges are called those principal centres of studies, which have been instituted either by the General Chapter or the Master General.

It is to be understood that both the General Chapter and the Master General had obtained the Faculty of erecting the *studia generalia* of the Order from the Pope himself. The right to appoint professors in the *Studia Generalia* was reserved to the General Chapter and the Master General.¹⁴

In the beginning of the Order there was only one *Studium Generale* at Paris, to which three students could be sent from each Province. In 1248 four other *Studia Generalia* were added: (i) Bologna (ii) Oxford (iii) Cologne (iv) Montpellier; in 1285 two others: Spain and Rome; in 1304 one: Toulouse; and in 1541, in the General Chapter held at Salamanca, twenty-five Provincial Studies were erected in Universities.¹⁵

In 1569 in the General Chapter held at Rome, the *Studia Generalia* are simply called 'Universities': *Primo declaramus quod in omnibus universitatibus nostri Ordinis...* etc (*Constitutiones*, Larroca, p. 566)

The *studia* of the Order were either incorporated into the University as at Paris, or simply adjacent to them as in Bologna, before the erection of the faculty of theology. When Diniz, King of Portugal, gave the *Magna*

¹⁴ Rashdall, *Ibid.*, p. 23-4.

¹⁵ See *Constitutiones, Declarationes et Ordinationes Cap. Gen. S.O.P.*, edited by Master General V. Fontana, revised and reedited by Jandel, Rome, 1857, p. 463.

Charta to the University of Coimbra on February 15, 1309, he ordered that the lectures in theology would be given in the Priories of the Friars Preachers.¹⁶ The *studia* of the Preachers were regarded, if not as altogether equivalent to the Faculty of theology, at least as adequate to that function. The curricula of the Dominican schools were similar to those of the universities and the qualification of the professors equal to those required by the universities. And at Universities without a Faculty of theology, the theological schools of the Preachers fulfilled this function. This occurred at Orleans, Padua, Montpellier and elsewhere.¹⁷

The Dominican *Studia Generalia* had also the privilege of absence from benefices for those secular priests studying in them. Thus, Pope Innocent IV made a grant in favour of clerics in the Province of Lyons: 'Whoever pursues theological studies in the schools of Friars Preachers in the Diocese of Lyons shall receive integrally the same income from the benefices as if they had carried on the same work at Paris'.¹⁸ That the Dominican Professors had the privilege of the *Jus ubique docendi* is evident from their wandering from one university to another. We have, for instance, Roland of Cremona who was a master of Arts at the University of Bologna, teaching at Paris (1229-30), at Toulouse (1230-33), and again at Bologna (1233-58); John of St. Giles who as Medical Doctor taught at Paris and Montpellier, and after joining the Dominicans taught at Paris (1230-33) and Toulouse (1233-5); Albert the Great who taught at Cologne (1228), Paris (1240-42) back at Cologne (1248 and 1257-60), resigned his bishopric and began again to teach at Strasburg (1268-69) and Cologne (1269-74); and Thomas Aquinas who taught at Paris (1256-59), Anagni (1259-61), Orvieto (1261-65), Rome (1265-67), Viterbo (1267-8) back at Paris (1269-72) and Naples (1272-73).¹⁹

After having shown that the Order of Preachers was 'a university distributed in the convents and in the Provincial and General Studia', we come now to show evidence 'how the Maltese Dominican Province reflected, and participated in, the intellectual attitudes and educational practices of the Order as a whole'.

Although the Friars Preachers were canonically established in Malta in 1461, our forefathers had been acquainted with the Order a long

¹⁶ B.M. Reichart, *Monumenta Historica S.P.N. Dominici*, Vol. VIII, p. 324.

¹⁷ See P. Mandonnet, O.P., *Saint Dominique, L'idée, l'homme et l'oeuvre* (Perspectives) p. 97.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, footnote.

¹⁹ For the activities of the Dominican Masters one may consult the list of seventy one Friars Preachers who taught at Paris: P. Glorieux, *Répertoire de Maîtres en Théologie de Paris au XIIIe Siècle*, Paris 1933; and on English Dominican scholars: Little-Pelster, *Oxford Theology and Theologians*, O.H.S., 1934.

time before.

Between 1259 and 1459 we find four Diocesan Dominican Bishops: James de Mileto, Andrew Bancherini, Hilary Conradus and Andrew Vaccarini.²⁰

Besides the four bishops we come across Dominican regional Inquisitors, such as Fra Matteo *Maltese e Domenicano*, Saviour Cassetta, who later was appointed Master of the Sacred Apostolic Palace and then was elected Master General of the Order; the famous Philip de Barberiis, John Reda and Dominic Bartolo.²¹

Before the coming of the Order of St. John to Malta, only the Dominicans of all the Religious Orders had two Priories, one at Notabile and another at Borgo (Vittoriosa); shortly after the Great Siege of 1565 a third house was erected at Valletta.

Since we have the record of a lector in the three Houses it appears that the constitutional requirement of a school in each priory had been observed by the Maltese Dominicans.²² Fr. Peter Zurki is mentioned as Lector at Notabile, Fr. Paschal Barletta as Lector at Vittoriosa, and Fr. Damian Taliana as Lector at Valletta.

But the existence of a formal house of studies in Valletta for the training of Dominican and secular priests cannot date before the end of the XVI century or the beginning of the XVII century when Valletta was erected Priory.²³ It was then under Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt, when Malta was enjoying a long period of peace and the Island was becoming an international centre, that made the Dominicans invite friars from abroad

²⁰ See C. Eubel, *Hierarchia Catholica Medii Aevii* (ab anno 1198 usque ad 1431), Monacho, 1931, p. 340; A. Grech, *De Confirmatione Ord. F.F. Praedicatorum*, Malta, 1915, pp. 89-93.

²¹ See A. Mifsud, 'Appunto sugli archivii di Malta' in *Archiv. Melit.*, Vol. II, 1912 pp. 60-1.

²² In 1511 the Master General of the Order, Thomas de Vio Gaetano, threatened all the superiors of the Sicilian Province, including Malta, of removing them from their ranks if they failed to establish in each house teachers of Grammar 'ut in conventibus singulis habeantur lectores grammaticae'. *Registrum Thomae Cajetani*, IV, 18, fol. 86.

²³ On the legal conditions required for the erection of a Dominican Priory, see G.R. Galbraith, *The Constitutions of the Dominican Order*, Manchester (1925) pp. 47-53. Master General, Roccaberti, on October 8, 1672, confirmed the statute granted by his predecessor, De Marinis, that the students who pursued their Theological course at Valletta, could be examined for the degree of Lectorate in Sacred Theology at the *Studium Generale* of Messina or at the College of Noto. *Eadem die* (8 Octobris 1672) *fuit confirmatum statutum factum a Revmo Generali de Marinis, fel. mem., quod studentes qui per triennium student in conventu Portus Salutis de Melita, expleto triennio, possint examinari in lectores in studio generali Messanae vel in collegio de Noto, ut apparet in Reg. Epistolarum fol. 7.* Archivum Generale O.P., IV, 142, fol. 209vv; *Matricula Studiorum, Vallettae*, Vol. I, fol. 6v.

to lecture on Philosophy and Theology in their *studium*. Between 1613 and 1618 two French Dominican lectors are mentioned who had taught at Valletta, namely Le Febre and James Postmogner.²⁴ Since at that time the Maltese Dominican Congregation formed part of the Sicilian Province various Sicilian friars resided and taught at Valletta.

But all these foreign friars were by far surpassed by a Maltese Dominican, the famous Fr. Mathew Rispoli, known at the University of Paris as *Le Maltais*, where he crossed swords in the controversy *De Auxiliis* with Molina. At St. Dominic's Priory, Rabat, there are still extant various works of this great scholar as reported and copied by a secular priest, Don Gio Maria Camilleri, who was one of his students at Valletta. At the beginning or at the end of these treatises we read: *Lecti et explicati sunt bi Philosophiae Tractatus in Conventu S. Mariae Portus Salutis ab Adm. R. Patre Fratere Matheo de Rispolo, S.Th. Magistro, Anno 1617 et 1618* – Again, *Atque haec sint satis dicta de fato et de secundo libro Physicorum brevissime doctissimeque explicata nobisque tradita a R.P. Fr. Jo. Matheo Rispolo, S.Th. Magistro in Conventu S. Mariae Portus Salutis, in Vallettae Civitate, die 9 aprilis anno Domini 1618.*²⁵ Fr. Rispoli was twice Regent of Studies at the Studium Generale of Palermo and in 1624 became Regent of Studies of St. Sixtus College in Rome.

In 1688 a contention arose between the three priories because of the expenses incurred by friars teaching and residing at Valletta, but belonging or, more precisely, affiliated to the two other priories as it was then the custom. On January 10, 1688, the Master General, Antonius Cloche, sent a letter to the fathers of Valletta instructing them to provide books, clothes, etc. to all the lectors teaching and residing at their Priory, abolishing any existing custom to the contrary.

Besides Philosophy, Theology and Canon Law, Oriental Languages were taught at the *Studium* of Valletta. Because of the intercourse with Moors and Jews, and for the pursuit of Biblical studies, the Order had been led to establish these Schools from the end of the XIII century.²⁶

²⁴ F.M. Azzopardo, *Descrittione delli tre conventi che l'Ordine dei Predicatori tiene nell'isola di Malta*, Archivum Rabat, I, p. 196, n. 264; *Notizie Storiche*, Valletta, Vol. I, p. 84.

²⁵ See D. Callus, 'Un illustre Sengleano del Seicento, P. Gio Matteo Rispolis O.P.', in *Archivum Melitense*, Vol. VIII, 1929, pp. 7-34.

²⁶ The Church impressed by the influence of these schools in the Council of Vienne in 1311 had decreed the establishment of Chairs of Oriental Languages in university centres. See R. Weiss 'England and the Decree of the Council of Vienne on the teaching of Greek, Arabic, Hebrew and Syriac' *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et de Renaissance*, 14 (1952) pp. 1-9; A. Barthier, 'Les écoles de langue orientale fondée au XIIIe siècle par le Dominicains en Espagne et en Afrique', *Rev. Africaine*, Vol. LXXIII (1932), pp. 84-103. For a most detailed study on the teaching

Malta produced excellent Orientalists. Fr. Andrew Gatt Inguanes was appointed Bishop of Cefalù by Pope Sixtus IV in 1478 precisely because of his knowledge of Hebrew, Greek and Latin²⁷ and shortly afterwards Bernardino da Malta was appointed Apostolic Prefect in Armenia.²⁸ Two other Maltese Dominican bishops, Ambrose Buttigieg and Anthony Zahra, were sent by Pope Julius III to Mesopotamia together with the Patriarch of Chaldea, Rabban Suleka, to work for the union of the Catholic and the Greek Orthodox Church. We may presume that these two bishops because of their delicate apostolic mission knew also the language of the place.²⁹

The first friar mentioned in the *Notizie Storiche del Convento di S. Maria Portus Salutis*, (Vol. I, p. 229), Valletta, who taught Hebrew and Arabic in the Valletta studium, is Fr. Paul Muscat who died in 1726.³⁰

In spite of these intellectual activities and the learned friars the *Studium* of Valletta up to 1729 was still considered as a *Studium Particulare*. As such the College had no real power to confer academical degrees. However, by special dispensation granted *toties quoties*, the degree of Lectorate in Sacred Theology was conferred on Dominican students who pursued the curriculum of studies in the College.³¹

We have seen that Pope Callixtus III in 1457 gave the Friars the right to confer degrees on their own members. On May 26, 1727, Pope Benedict XIII in his Constitution *In Conspectu Domini* in order to promote the study of St. Thomas's teaching extended this privilege by granting to the Order of Friars Preachers the power of conferring academical degrees on those students who did not belong to the Order *alumni externis*, but followed the Philosophical and Theological courses in the *Studia* of the Order after of Arabic in Malta at the University and Lyceum, see A. Cremona, *L'Antica Fondazione della Scuola di Lingua Araba in Malta*, in *Melita Historica*, 1950, pp. 20-36. In this study, however, Cremona makes no mention of studies of the Dominican Colleges.

²⁷ Caruana-Dingli *Galleria Maltese*, n. 86; A. Mizzi, *L'Apostolato Maltese*, Vol. I, p. 70.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, n. 674; *Ibid.* p. 73.

²⁹ See R. Vostè, *Analecchia Ordinis Praedicatorum*, Vol. IV (1925) pp. 261-78; D. Callus, *Memorie Domenicane*, Vol. V. (1926) pp. 368-408.

³⁰ The Master General, J.T. de Boxadors, in 1759, sent a *Memorandum* to the Provincial of Sicily urging him not to admit candidates to the study of Philosophy without the knowledge of Hebrew and Greek. *Matricula Studiorum*, Vol. I, Appendix, n. 1.

³¹ See *Matricula Studiorum*, Vol. I, ff. 42^v, 47^v, 49^v, 51^r. This is confirmed by the petition submitted by Fr. Henry Ercole to the Holy Father on February 13, 1719, who *inter alia* wrote: ... 'umilment supplica vostra Beatitudine voglia ordinare, che la lettura d'anni quattro di Teologia che farà nel suddetto Convento (della Valletta di Porto Salvo) essendo lo studio inquanto agli esercizi lo stesso che gli Studi Generali di Provincia mentre quegli Studenti godono tutto quello che si gode dagli studenti negli Studi Generali sino a passarli Lettori, si voglia pro forma, et gradu Magisterii, etc.), (*Ibid.*, fol. 534^v)

the method of St. Thomas Aquinas. *Ne adolescentes saeculares a prae-laudenta Divini Doctoris (S. Thomae Aquinatis) scholam deterreri contingat. ex quo nullum in ea praemium, nulla expedita via pateat ipsis per theologicas disciplinas ac dignitates illas, quae solis Lauream Licentiam, vel Gradum in Theologia consequitis conferri debent ac possunt, motu, scientia ac potestatis plenitudine, ad universa insignora Studia Generalia, Collegia, Studia, ut dicunt Formalia... privilegia omnia et singula apostolica... concedimus.* And concludes: *Laurea doctoralis, sive Magistralis, Praesentatura, ac Licentia sive gradus Baccalaureatus, as alii consueti in S. Theologia... libere ac licite conferri valeant scholaribus saecularibus studentibus in insignibus civitatibus aut locis, in quibus ad eorum scholas iuvenes saeculares accedere permittuntur, idque tametsi alias publica pateat Universitas...*³²

The same privilege was confirmed by Pope Clement XII in his Constitution *Verbo Dei Scripto* on August 28, 1733, wherein it is stated: *ut pro exterius quibuscumque saecularibus, in Gymnasiis Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Theologicae facultate toto triennio operam dantibus... Laurea Doctoralis, seu Magistralis Praesentatura, Licentia, Baccalaureatus atque alii gradus in S. Theologia libere ac licite conferuntur.*³³

The degrees in theology conferred by the *Studia* of the Dominican College in Malta corresponded to the same rights, prerogatives, preeminences, privileges and honours accorded to the *Academia Romanae Sapientiae*, Salamanca, Paris or any other University created by Papal authority.³⁴

Undoubtedly the desire of the Popes to associate the *Studia* of the Order with the three mentioned renowned universities shows their wish to encourage students to attend the schools of the Friars Preachers even in Places where there existed other State or Church universities.³⁵ Hence after the promulgation of the Constitution of Pope Benedict XIII, the *Lector Primarius*, Fr. Rosarius Agius and the council of the Studium of S. Maria Portus Salutis sent a petition to the Master General, Thomas Ripoll, praying that the Dominican college of Valletta be elevated from *studium particulare* to *studium generale* or university on the grounds that (i) this *studium* has existed for well over one hundred years, (ii) that this was

³² *Bullarium Ord. Praed.*, VI, p. 615.

³³ Cf. Fontana, *Constitutiones, declarationes et ordinationes Cap. Gen. S.O.P.*, p. 206.

³⁴ See Statutes and copy of Diploma issued by the Dominican University: G. Grech Ellul, *Discorso recitato agli studenti del Collegio di S. Tommaso D'Aquino*, Malta (1904), pp. 25-33.

³⁵ The Master General, Louis Theissling implored Pope Pius XI to extend to the *General Studia* of the Order the power to confer also D.Phil. After consulting the Congregation of Studies on March 17, 1923, the Pope granted this petition. (Cf. *Analecta Fratrum Praedicatorum*, Vol. XVI, p. 161).

always opened for the training of both secular and regular clerics, (iii) that it was situated in the principality of Malta, and (iv) that the studium of Valletta supplied teachers to other *Studia* especially in Sicily.

After mature consideration, the Master General eventually acceded to the petition. In the first folio of the *Matricula Studiorum Clericorum Saecularium*, Vol. II, we read: 'To the Glory of Almighty God, our most Holy Virgin Mary under the auspices of our Angelic Doctor St. Thomas Aquinas, in the year of our Redemption 1729, was inaugurated the *Studium* in this Venerable Priory of S. Maria Portus Salutis in the city of Valletta in the Island of Malta according to the privilege granted to our Order by Pope Benedict XIII in his Constitution *Pretiosus*, and the faculty granted by the Master General of the Order Fr. Thomas Ripoll, in virtue of which our *Studium* is instituted in the form of a University, with power to confer the degree of Doctorate in Theology to all secular students, who for some years have attended lectures in the same *Studium* given by our Lectors'.

The first Regent Master of the University was the Very Rev. Rosarius Agius, who taught Dogmatic Theology. The Lectors were: Fr. Bemardinus Castelli, Fr. Hyacinth M. Frasch, and Fr. Saviour M. Cauchi.^{35a}

Secular students were: John Baptist Scicluna, Michael Angelus Gatt, Paul Spiteri, Henry Guicciardi, Emmanuel Gaspar Carabott and Lawrence Mangion.

The first candidate who supplicated for the degree of Doctorate in Theology was the subdeacon, John Baptist Scicluna of Senglea. He was examined by five moderators for two whole hours on topics taken from the *Summa Theologica* of Aquinas, namely from the I Part *De Trinitate et de Angelis*; from II-II *De Fide*; from III Part *De Incarnatione*. The first Moderator was the Very Rev. Fr. Prior Louis Lumia, Master in Sacred Theology, who examined him on the topic: *Si Spiritus Sanctus non procederet a Filio, realiter ab illo non distingueretur*. The second Moderator, Fr. Henry Ercole, Master in S. Theology, examined him on the question: *Angeli per Dei potentiam absolutam possunt numerice multiplicari*. The third Moderator Fr. Rosary Agius, Regent of Studies; *Sacra Scriptura est certa ac infallibilis regula Fidei, Verbum Dei scriptum*. The fourth Moderator Fr.

^{35a} The Provincial of Sicily, Fr. Peter Anthony Moiorana, in selecting those Professors for the newly constituted University wrote: *Cum conventus noster ac Universitas Sanctae Mariae Portus Salutis Melitensis tantum ceteris Provinciae nostrae studiis excellat, quantum laus ac gloria doctoralis laurea saecularibus candidatis conferendae...* (Nos) *omni contentione, diligentia, cura solliciti sumus eos perquirere religiosos viros, qui zelo fervidi, morum integritate conspicui, sapientia praeclari, virtute secundi pristinum Angelicae Doctrinae splendorem novis incrementis adaugeant, ac vigilantiae incitamentis ad eam amplectendam adolescentes scholares provocent inflammentque*. *Matricula Studiorum*, Vol. I, fol. 64r.

Bernardinus Castelli, Lector in S. Theology: *Si Adam non peccasset Deus incarnatus non fuisset*. The fifth Moderator, Fr. Hyacinth Frasch, Lector of Philosophy: *Potest homo viribus naturae seclusa gratia supernaturali facere aliquod opus bonum ordinis naturalis*.³⁶

As in mediaeval universities on the day of graduation the candidate was to give an exhibition of his professional capacity by delivering an inaugural disputation.

These public disputations used to be held either in the Church or in the Oratory of the Blessed Sacrament, *magno populi concursu*, as it is said of the graduation of Scicluna, and were presided over either by the bishop as in the case of the secular priest Francis Xuereb in 1732 (by Mgr. Paul Alpheran de Boussan) and F. Buhagiar (by Mgr. Bartholomew Rull)³⁷, or by the Grandmaster as in the graduation of John Mary Pisano, O.P., held on July 4, 1756, by Emmanuel Pinto.³⁸ It is worth noting here that the first work to be printed by the first Printing Press introduced in Malta by the Order of St. John, was a commission of 100 invitation cards to attend the public disputation by Fr. John Pisano in the Dominican Church of Valletta. Grand Master Pinto ordered that these cards should be printed free of charge.³⁹

After the solemn profession of Faith and the oath to observe the statutes and the Papal Constitutions and to follow the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, the new graduate had a ring placed on his ring-finger and the *birettum doctorale* upon his head. It would seem that the old decree of the Third Lateran Council (1179) forbidding any fee or reward being taken for granting of degrees continued to be observed in the Order since there is nothing registered either in the University or Priory account books.

The Dominican University of Valletta attracted scholars from all parts of the Island and from Sicily.

In the list of the *Matricula Studiorum*, we find the names of secular priests who graduated in theology such as Francis Xavier Vassallo, Parish Priest of Axiaq, John Baptist Zammit, Parish Priest of Gudia, Francis Caruana, Parish Priest of Balzan, Canon Lawrence Zammit, the Theologian of the Collegiate Church of St. Lawrence, Vittoriosa, Wenceslaus Debono, the Master of Ceremonies of the Cathedral and Mgr. Saviour

³⁶ *Matricula Studiorum Clericorum Saecularium* Vol. II, (1729-1863) fol. 2^r; A. Ferris, erroneously, gives as the first priest who became Doctor at the Dominican Study of Valletta, John Gatt, parish priest of Sannat, Gozo, 1759-99. (*Descrizione storica delle Chiese di Malta e Gozo*, p. 588-9).

³⁷ *Matricula Studiorum Clericorum Saecularium* Vol. II, f. 7^v, 9^v.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, fol. 11. Sometimes disputations were held in the Regent of Studies' room or in the Aula Conversationis (Recreation Room) *Ibid.*, ff. 36^v, 38^v, 78^f.

³⁹ See C. Gatt 'L-Istampa f'Malta' (L-ewwel xoghol li hareg mill-istamperija ta' l'Ordini), *Il Malti*, 1950, p. 10.

Bondi of the Cathedral Church of Gozo. Among the Sicilian secular priests who either graduated or studied at Valletta we have Peter Giudice from Agrigento, Francis Omodei from Augusta, Joseph Cannata from Noto. The number of Dominican Sicilian students is far greater. We may mention Anthony Cimbalo from Augusta, Raymond Scribani from Catania, Vincent Thomas Arena from Noto, Vincent Balthassar from Monteserra, Antoninus Lacco from Palermo, Vincent Bellassai and Joseph Mobilia from Taormina.

In view of the fact that of the three Dominican Maltese Pories only Valletta became a University, the *Studia Particularia* of Notabile and Vittoriosa sent their promising students to read for the lectorate in Valletta.

An idea of the high standard of the Dominican University may be formed from the published Doctoral theses as given by Anthony Schembri in his SELVA DI AUTORI E TRADUTTORI MALTESI, (Malta 1855): *Sacrosanctae Orthodoxae Fidei Dogmatico-Scholasticae Theologiae veritates, Duce atque Auspice, Divi Thomae Aquinate Angelico Ecclesiae Doctore, Haeresum omnium Praedebellatore Philosophum ac Theologum facile Principe. In humillum ejusdem Sacrosanctae fidei obsequium propagandae. Quas Clericus Dominus Foelix Borg Melitensis universitatis Sacri Ord. Praed. alumnus ad Lauream Doctoratus Proponit, Exhibet, offert. Cataniae 1743; Propositiones Theologico-Dogmatico-Historico-Scholasticae ex tractatibus De Incarnatione, et Locis Theologicis e Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, Ecclesiae Doctoris, Theologica Summa depromptae. In humillum Sanctissimi Virginis Deiparae Mariae Reginae S. S. Rosarii, Thesauris Sapientiae, et Scientiae Dei, Virtutibus, Privilegiis, et gratiis, super Angelos et homines quam maxime refertae, obsequium propugnandae. Quas Cajetanus Bubagiar Melitensis Universitatis Sacri Ordinis Praedicatorum Alumnus ad Lauream Doctoratus, Melitae, in Palatio 1757. Philosophiae conclusiones ad mentem nostri angelici praeceptoris Divi Thomae Aquinatis, quas Illustrissimo Domino, fratri Don Emanuelli Pereyra etc., Benedictus Falzon in hac Alma Melitensi Universitate conventus ordinis veridici, atque regalis Sancti Dominici S. Mariae Portus Salutis Civitatis Vallettae liberalium artium auditor, dedicat. Melitae in Palatio 1767; Vera Naturalis Entis cognitio Selecta Conclusionum ex universa Aristotelico-Thomistica Philosophia, quae Praeclarissimo Domino Don Frater Joseph Telles Sacri Militaris Ordinis Hierosolimitani etc. in humillimum sui animi pignus Clericus Don Joseph Fenech, Melivetanea Universitatis Sacri Ordinis Praedicatorum Alumnus consecrat, exhibet, offert. Cataniae 1751.*

One must note here that some of the candidates who graduated at Valletta did not pursue all their theological course of study in this *Studium*. These candidates had to apply for a special dispensation from the Master

General of the Order, subject to the consent of the Holy Father or the Sacred Congregation of Studies. For instance the secular priest Charles Falzon pursued his Philosophical and Theological Studies at the Public University of Malta and graduated in the Dominican University in 1835. Again the secular priest Aloysius Callus studied philosophy and theology in the college of the Discalced Carmelites at Cospicua. And Aloysius Marmarà studied in the College of the Dominican Fathers of Vittoriosa.

Classes were usually held in the two Oratories situated inside the Priory, namely that of the Blessed Sacrament for Theology and that of the Rosary for Philosophy. Two other rooms near the main entrance of the Priory served as classes for Grammar and General Science.

When Grand Master Perellos was elected Honorary Rector of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, he wrote a letter to the Master General begging him not to allow the Friars to hold classes in their Oratory. The Master General immediately ordered the Friars to remove their classes to a more suitable place. The members of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament built three rooms for this purpose. As after a short time also the members of the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary objected to holding classes in their Oratory, the Friars removed their class of Philosophy to another room.

The University suspended its studies twice: the first time during the French occupation of Malta (1798-1800) when all the Dominican Community of Valletta was imprisoned at Fort St. Elmo, and a Brother Cooperator, Fra Domenico Falzon⁴⁰ was shot at the Palace Square with Dun Mikiel Xerri, because the French accused the Dominicans of having taken part in the Peasant Revolt; the second time during the plague of 1813. The Secretary of the University left this note: *Die 7 Maji 1813: Cessavit penitus studium propter flagellum pestilentiae quod miserrime hanc Insulam devastavit; propter quod clausae fuerunt Ecclesiae, Officia publica, et nihil aliud attentum erat, nisi ad faciendas orationes et petitiones ad Deum ut liberare dignaretur hanc eandem Insulam et ad administranda Sacramenta infirmis morbo pestilentiae correptis, et corpora ipsorum (iam mortuis) sepellienda in Campo Santo.*

*Die... Januarii 1814, cessato morbo pestilentiae aperta fuerunt Ecclesiae et officia publica et denno incepit studium.*⁴¹

In 1825 the Dominican University instituted a chair of English literature and Fr. Patric Butler, an Irish Dominican, was appointed its first

⁴⁰ *Matricula Studiorum*, Vol. II, ff. 58^r, 66^r, 80^v. Cf. *Notizie storiche del Convento di Porto Salvo di Valletta*, Vol. II, pp. 62-3, and Felice Cutajar, *L'Occupazione Francese di Malta nel 1798*, (published by G. Curmi, Malta, 1933), p. 49, p. 51.

⁴¹ Cf. *Matricula Studiorum*, Vol. III, ff. 68^v, 69^r.

Professor.⁴² Also a circulating British Catholic library was set up at the Valletta Priory for the British Catholic congregation of this Diocese. In 1852 the Most Rev. Fr. Austin White, Assistant Master General, after the Canonical Visitation ordered the Provincial, Fr. Francis Tonna, S.Th.M., to transfer the Dominican students to Rome to continue their academic studies at S. Sabina, on the grounds that at the Valletta Priory there was no perfect common religious life as required by the Dominican Constitutions in a House of Studies. The Dominican University, however, was not closed. The secular priests continued to attend regularly the classes of Philosophy and Theology. The last student was the secular priest, John Ebejer, who graduated on July 20, 1865.⁴³

The following year, on February 3, 1866, the Friars of the Dominican Province summoned for the 11th Provincial Chapter, by permission of the Master General, Vincent Jandel, elevated the old *studium particulare* of Vittoriosa to *Studium Generale*, thus transferring the University from Valletta to Vittoriosa.⁴⁴ Here the Studium Generale did not last very long. On February 13, 1880, the Master General Joseph M. Larroca transferred it to Notabile.⁴⁵

Since the curriculum of studies pursued in the Dominican University of Malta is similar to that of the other *Studia Generalia* of the whole Order, it is unnecessary to speak on this matter. Many eminent historians such as C. Douais, *Essai sur l'organisation des études dans l'Ordre des Frères Prêcheurs au XIII et XVI siècle* (Paris, 1884) and Sir Francis Powicke in Rashdall's *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, (Vol. I, p. 370 sqq.) have dealt with it exhaustively.

Having considered the origin and development of the University of S.M. Portus Salutis, we pass to a consideration of the relations between the Dominican University of Valletta and the University of Malta. I can state straight away even at this stage that both universities worked hand in hand and helped each other. It should be borne in mind from the very outset that they were both Church Universities, the former under the guidance of the Order of Preachers, the latter originally under the Society of Jesus.

⁴² *Notizie storiche... Valletta*, Vol. III, p. 248. In the *Letter Book 1826-36* of the Royal University of Malta (p. 29, 31) we came across a Rev. Thomas Patric Butler who in 1826 was recommended by the Council of the University for the Chair of English, but his nomination was not approved by the Lieutenant Governor. It seems that the nomination refers to the Dominican father, whose name appears simply as Rev. Patrik Butler (See *Government letters, 1823-1832, University*, Vol. I, p. 30) together with the nomination of Dr. Fortunato Panzavecchia for the Chair of Philosophy, whose recommendation was also rejected.

⁴³ *Matricula Studiorum*, Vol. II, f. 83^r.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Acta Decimi Capituli Provincialis Prov. Melitensis, O.P.*, 1864, p. 5.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Acta Decimi Quarti Capituli Provinciali Prov. Melitensis, O.P.*, 1880, p. 7.

The two Orders were empowered to confer degrees by the Holy See, the former by Pope Callixtus III in 1453, a privilege which was reconfirmed by Pope Benedict XIII in 1729, the latter by Pope Pius IV in 1561, reconfirmed by Pope Gregory XIII in 1578. Both universities were elevated from the rank of colleges *Studia materialia* or *particularia* to *Studia formalia* or *Generalia*, i.e. Universities, in the first half of the XVIII century when they began to confer degrees. The Dominican University in 1729, the Jesuits' University in 1727. Both Universities placed their institution under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin; the former under the title of 'Port of Salvation', the latter under the title of 'Our Lady of Sorrows'. Again both universities adopted the motto of their respective institution: the former *Veritas* which is God himself, the Eternal truth, the End of our studies; the latter *Ad majorem Dei gloriam* which is paraphrased in the present university motto *Ut fructificemus Deo* as is inscribed in the Royal University coat-of-arms.⁴⁶

When on April 23, 1768, Grand Master Pinto proscribed the Society of Jesus and confiscated their property the Dominicans of Valletta came to the rescue of their sister university.⁴⁷ Fr. Dominic Genovese, Master in Sacred Theology and ex-Rector of the Dominican University, was appointed Rector and Professor of Moral Theology while Fr. Simon Pace, Lector in Sacred Theology, was appointed Professor of Philosophy and Frs. Francis Vassallo and Joseph Levanti were appointed Professors of Oriental languages. These Dominicans together with other teachers were to administer the university until such time as G.M. Pinto provided a new group of learned and distinguished men from abroad to build up a university on the model of the old and long established Continental universities.⁴⁸

On December 14, 1770, Fr. Dominic Genovese died.⁴⁹ Six weeks later Fr. Robert Ranieri M. Costaguti of the Order of the Servites, the new Rector, together with the group of foreign professors reached Malta.⁵⁰ Among these professors we find Fr. Joseph Mongada O.P., Master in Sacred Theology, who was appointed professor of Logic, Metaphysics and Ethics.⁵¹ Another Dominican was Fr. Charles Bruno, a pupil of the Dominican Valletta University, who was appointed Prefect of Studies, Spiritual Director and Master of Religious Knowledge in the institution of education,

⁴⁶ R.M.L., 1343, f. 62^v.

⁴⁷ Cf. A. Mifsud, 'L'espulsione dei Gesuiti da Malta nel 1768 e le loro temporalità' (Appendix), *Archivium Melitense*, Vol. II, p. 156; R.M.L., A.O.M. 272, ff. 136-139.

⁴⁸ Cf. 'Costituzioni per i nuovi studi dell'Università' in R.M.L., 1343; V. Laurenza, *Il Primo Rettore e i primi Statuti dell'Università di Malta*, Govt. Printing Press, 1934, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁹ *Notizie storiche...* Valletta, Vol. I, p. 371.

⁵⁰ V. Laurenza, *Il Primo Rettore*, p. 11.

⁵¹ R.M.L., 1343, f. 3^v.

known from the time of Governor Ponsonby as the Lyceum.⁵²

The foreign professors retained their office for only a very short time. G.M. Ximenes de Texada at the end of the scholastic year 1772-73 owing to the debts incurred by the Venerable Common Treasury of the Order could not afford to pay the salaries of the university Teaching Staff. Hence with the permission of the Holy Father, he dismissed the foreign professors and replaced them by a local staff. In the beginning of the academic year 1778 the new Grand Master reconstituted the University and appointed as Rector the already mentioned Dominican Fr. Joseph Mongada.⁵³ During his rectorship the University underwent many reforms. The most important ones took place on April 22, 1779, when the University became 'autonomous, administering its own property, absolutely independent of the Common Treasure' (*Ente autonomo, amministrante i proprii fondi, in assoluta indipendenza dal Comun Tesoro*).⁵⁴

During the Napoleonic domination, the Royal University of Malta and the Dominican University shared the calamities which befell our Islands during this period. They closed their courses in 1798, to be opened again in 1800. Napoleon meant to replace the Malta University by a Central School. This order, however, remained a dead letter, while the Dominicans of Valletta as we have seen were imprisoned at Fort St. Elmo.

By this time our Islands had undergone a change of allegiance. The French were no longer the masters of Malta and Gozo. Sir Alexander Ball, the Royal Commissioner reopened the University of Malta and Canon Francesco Saverio Caruana was appointed Rector in view of the merits and the valuable services rendered by him to the Island during the Peasant Insurrection.⁵⁵ In 1822 Mgr. Caruana having been elected Archdeacon of the Cathedral, resigned the rectorship. In his stead was appointed first as acting Rector (1822-26) then as Rector (1826-34), the Dominican Jerome Inglott, who was Professor of Philosophy at the Royal University. During Inglott's tenure of office Governor Maitland on January 14, 1823, appointed a committee to carry out investigation into the system of education in the university of Literature. The result of this commission was that later on a General Council was formed with the Governor as Chancellor and Protector, and John Hookham Frere as Chairman. It was during the period of Inglott's rectorship that the study of Maltese was introduced into the

⁵² *Ibid.*, f. 80r.

⁵³ In the list of Rectors published in the *Calendars of the Royal University of Malta*, for the year 1778, P.M. D' Affitto is mentioned as Rector. D. Callus tells me that he was a Dominican. In the absence of some registers of the *Acta Academiae Melitensis*, I am unable to identify him.

⁵⁴ R.M.L., A.O.M., 273, ff. 21-22; Laurenza, *ibid.*, p. 25.

⁵⁵ Cf. *The Royal University of Malta Calendar 1959-60*, p. 8.

university with Mikiel Anton Vassalli, who had reduced the vernacular to a grammatical system, as its first teacher.⁵⁶

The Maltese Dominicans continued to supply the University of Malta and other Universities abroad, such as that of Oxford, the Angelicum, Rome, and Oakland, California, with Professors, Lecturers and Examiners. Therefore it may be said that the Maltese Dominicans form an integral part of our Alma Mater and other academic institutions with the faculty of philosophy and theology.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Cf. A. Laferla, *British Malta*, Vol. I, p. 128.

⁵⁷ *Oxford*: D. Callus, Emeritus Professor of the Royal University is at present lecturer on Medieval history at the University of Oxford, and visiting Professor at the Lateran University, Rome.

Angelicum: G. Grech is prefect of studies and Professor of Dogmatic Theology, M. Said, Professor of Canon Law and P.P. Zerafa, Professor of Scripture.

Oakland: M. Camilleri is Pro-Regent of Studies of St. Albert's College which is affiliated to the Catholic University of America.