

Daniel Callus, a Maltese Dominican scholar at Oxford

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Abstract

The academic life of Daniel Callus, a Maltese member of the Order of Preachers, at Oxford in England, spanned over three decades. Indeed, he was the first Dominican to receive a degree from this august university since the Reformation. This research identifies the photos available at the University of Malta Heritage Archive Collection associated with the conferment of the doctorate degree on Callus by the Royal University of Malta. It also identifies his half siblings and concludes by identifying the family vault where he was buried and the vault of his stepfamily.

Father Daniel Callus has been working during the last thirty years in Oxford on the intellectual history of the medieval university. His contributions to the subject and the generous encouragement and help which he has given to all working in the field are well known.
(Oxford Historical Society, 1964)

Daniel Callus (1888–1965) was a historian and philosopher who majored in the Medieval period. He subsequently contributed to Neo-Scholastic thought in the twentieth century. His contribution to medieval history was acknowledged by Ashley.¹ He was the first member of the Order of Preachers since the Reformation to receive a degree from Oxford,² the university where he was engaged for three decades. He is included in the *Dictionary of Maltese Biographies*.³ A concise account of his life, his

¹ B.M. Ashley, *The Dominicans*, Oregon, 2009, 223.

² In England, the Order came to an abrupt end with the Dissolution of the Monasteries under King Henry VIII, the administrative and legal processes dating from 1536 to 1541. The first moves to re-establish it were in the mid nineteenth century (The Dominican Friars - England & Scotland, *History of the English Province* <https://www.english.op.org/about-us/the-english-province/history-of-the-english-province.htm>). The Order was formally reinstated at the University of Oxford when Blackfriars Priory was founded in 1921 by the Dominican Provincial and historian Bede Jarrett (1881–1934), a mentor and close friend of Callus (M.F. Montebello, *Daniel Callus - Historian & Philosopher*, Malta, 1994, 9). He had assigned Callus to stay at the Hawkesyard Priory in Staffordshire, England, in 1921. In 1932 Callus was assigned to Blackfriars, Oxford, by the Dominican Provincial Bernard Delawy (Montebello, 1994, 24), the same year Jarrett was elected Prior at Oxford.

³ M.J. Schiavone, 'Callus, Daniel Angelo', *Dictionary of Maltese Biographies*, Malta, 2009, vol. 1, 410–412. A concise curriculum of Callus is given in J. Aquilina and D.L. Farley Hills (ed.),

academic and intellectual career and a discussion on his contribution to philosophy were published by Mark Montebello.⁴ The first chapter of that publication opens with the *Mea Propria*, a typed transcription of a hand-written personal academic chronicle, including supporting documents attached with paper clips, penned by Callus himself. This document, kept at the Archives of the Cathedral Mdina (ACM) as *ACM Fr Daniel Callus OP Coll. Ms. Mea Propria*, was first published in this edited book.⁵

Mary Samut-Tagliaferro, then the Head of the University of Malta Archives and Special Collections, showed the author a number of untitled photos included in the University of Malta Heritage Archive Collection (UMHAC). The author identified Callus in the photos included in the *UMHAC Photographic Album*, herein reproduced as Figure 1. The date of 1 Oct[ober] 1965 was written at the top of the relative pages. The aim of this article is to establish the event at which the photos were taken.

Concise bio-note

Born in Zebbug, Malta, in 1880 to Paul Callus and Theodora neé Vella, Angelo joined the Order in 1903 as Fr Daniel.⁶ His academic career and research work fall into two periods: the ‘Malta Period’ (1912-1931) and the ‘Oxford Period’ (1931-1965).⁷ The number of distinguished publications issued in these periods is given in Table 1.

Callus undertook his undergraduate studies in theology, philosophy, pelegraphy, history of art and Semitic languages at the University of Florence and at the Angelicum, known as the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas in Rome. In 1914, soon after his return from Rome, he was appointed Professor of Dogmatic Theology at the Archiepiscopal Seminary, a post he held until 1921 when he left the island to spend two years at Hawkesyard Priory in Staffordshire, England, where he served as lector actu legens.⁸ In 1924 he obtained a Master of Theology degree from the Angelicum⁹ and was appointed Professor of Holy Scripture and Hebrew at the University of Malta.¹⁰ In 1931,

‘Curriculum Vitae: the very Rev. Daniel A. Callus, O.P.’, *Journal of the Faculty of Arts*, 1964, 2(3), 261-264.

⁴ Montebello, 1994.

⁵ This reference, although cited, is not stated in Montebello, 1994, 1-20. Montebello (1994) also includes an essay to introduce Callus’ life, his intellectual contributions and his place in the history of philosophy. It also includes reprints of two of his papers, namely ‘Introduction of Aristotelian learning at Oxford’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1943, 19, 229-281 and *The Condemnation of St Thomas at Oxford*, 1946, 5, pp. 38 (republished in 1955). For Callus’ contribution to the history of philosophy in Malta, which was essentially limited to the Aristotelico-Thomistic tradition, see M.F. Montebello, *Il-Ktieb tal-Filosofija f’Malta*, Malta, 2001, vol. 1, 64.

⁶ *ACM Fr Daniel Callus OP Coll. Ms. Mea Propria f.1*. On 22 January 1888 he was christened Angelus, Philip, Julius, Paul. The underlining is in the original manuscript.

⁷ Montebello, 1994, 35-40.

⁸ *ACM Fr Daniel Callus OPColl. Ms. Mea Propria f.2*.

⁹ The degree was conferred in 1925.

¹⁰ *The Malta Government Gazette*, No. 6713, 10 October 1924, 925; *The Malta Government Gazette*, No. 6812, 24 September 1925, 719; attached to *ACM Fr Daniel Callus OP Coll. Ms. Mea Propria f.2*; also reproduced in Montebello, 1994, 16-17.

Callus left Malta and settled in Oxford from 1932 until 1965, the year of his death. This period at Oxford was academically and intellectually stimulating, as evidenced by forty significant scientific publications relating mainly to the Medieval period (Table 1). A bibliography of his publications is included in Aquilina and Farley Hills, and in Montebello.¹¹

Table 1: The number of distinguished publications by period and theme¹²

| | <i>Malta Period</i> | <i>Oxford Period</i> |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Varia (Popolaria) | 8 | 1 |
| Historica | 14 | |
| Varia (Academica) | 10 | 3 |
| Sacra Scriptura | 2 | 3 |
| Mediaevalia (In Genere) | | 19 |
| Mediaevalia (Oxoniensia) | | 9 |
| Mediaevalia (Unitatis Formae) | | 5 |
| <i>Total</i> | 34 | 40 |

Academic career during the ‘Oxford Period’

Callus’ stay at Oxford was essentially dedicated to academic research in Medieval theology and philosophy.¹³ He graduated with a D.Phil. in 1938,¹⁴ and from 1940 to 1952 he was Regent of Studies at Blackfriars.

In 1942, Callus was appointed Emeritus Professor at the University of Malta¹⁵ and Lecturer of Medieval Thought at the University of Oxford.¹⁶ He was elected a Member of the Medieval Academy of America (1943),¹⁷ a Member of the Committee of the Medieval Latin Dictionary of the British Academy (1946),¹⁸ a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society (1947),¹⁹ and a Member of the Congregation and Member of the Faculty of Modern History, University of Oxford.²⁰ He was conferred with the degree

¹¹ Aquilina and Farley Hills, 262-264; Montebello, 1994, 117-137.

¹² Based on Montebello, 1994, 141.

¹³ For the circumstances in which Callus left Malta, see Montebello, 1994, 24.

¹⁴ On the same occasion, Hannibal Publius Scicluna was conferred a Master of Arts degree (Honoris Causa) by the University of Oxford (see attachment to *ACM Fr Daniel Callus OP Coll. Ms. Mea Propria f.4*; also reproduced in Montebello, 1994, 19).

¹⁵ *ACM Fr Daniel Callus OP Coll. Ms. Mea Propria f.4*.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ *ACM Fr Daniel Callus OP Coll. Ms. Mea Propria f.5*.

¹⁹ *ACM Fr Daniel Callus OP Coll. Ms. Mea Propria f.6*.

²⁰ *ACM Fr Daniel Callus OP Coll. Ms. Mea Propria f.8*. Extract from the University of Oxford, *Gazette* (12 March 1953), attached to the *Mea Propria*, is reproduced in Montebello, 1994, 20.

of Master of Arts by the University of Oxford (1953)²¹ and Doctor of Literature ‘Honoris Causa’ by the Royal University of Malta (1963).²²

During this period Callus travelled widely to lecture and deliver papers at conferences and symposia. The many learned institutions wherein he lectured include the Department of Palaeography and Diplomatic Studies, Durham (1953, 1955),²³ Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, Louvain (1955),²⁴ University of Cologne (1963),²⁵ and the Warburg Institute, University of London (1963).²⁶ He was appointed visiting professor by a number of institutions including the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, Madrid (1947);²⁷ the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto (1949, 1956);^{28,29} and the Pontifical Lateran University, Rome (1961).³⁰

The photos of Daniel Callus at the *UMHAC Photographic Album*

The event which the photos record was a ceremony, held at the Jesuits’ Church in Valletta, to mark the foundation day of the Royal University of Malta (Figure 2). This event was not held on 1 October 1965 but on 12 November 1963.³¹ The ceremony was presided over by H.E. Sir Anthony Mamo, Deputy Governor of Malta and Pro-Chancellor of the University, and the Rector, Professor Joseph Anthony Manché. During the ceremony Daniel Callus was conferred with the degree D.Litt. (Honoris Causa). This event is recorded in the *Mea Propria* (Figure 3).³² This degree was

²¹ *ACM Fr Daniel Callus OP Coll. Ms. Mea Propria f.8*. Extract from the University of Oxford, *Gazette* (23 February 1953), attached to the *Mea Propria*, is reproduced in Montebello, 1994, 19-20.

²² *ACM Fr Daniel Callus OP Coll. Ms. Mea Propria f.71*. Between 1937 until Malta became a Republic in 1974, the University of Malta was known as the Royal University of Malta (L-Università ta’ Malta, *History*, <https://www.um.edu.mt/about/history>). On 7 November 1963, the Council of the Royal University of Malta resolved with acclamation to endorse the unanimous recommendation of the Senate to confer the degree of D.Litt. (Honoris Causa) to Callus (Aquilina and Farley Hills, 261). Callus was proposed to the Senate of the University by Professor Andrew Vella O.P.. The proposal was seconded by Professor Joseph Aquilina, and supported by Professor Carmelo Coleiro and Professor George Xuereb [A. Vella, ‘Tribute to Professor Daniel Callus’, *Journal of the Faculty of Arts*, 1965, 3(1), 66-72].

²³ *ACM Fr Daniel Callus OP Coll. Ms. Mea Propria f.8*.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *ACM Fr Daniel Callus OP Coll. Ms. Mea Propria f.71*.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *ACM Fr Daniel Callus OP Coll. Ms. Mea Propria f.6*.

²⁸ *ACM Fr Daniel Callus OP Coll. Ms. Mea Propria f.7*.

²⁹ *ACM Fr Daniel Callus OP Coll. Ms. Mea Propria f.65*.

³⁰ *ACM Fr Daniel Callus OP Coll. Ms. Mea Propria f.69*.

³¹ Aquilina and Farley Hills, 261.

³² At the same ceremony, a D.Litt. (Honoris Causa) was conferred in absentia on Professor Arthur J. Arberry (1905-1969), a British scholar versed in Oriental Studies. An article published in the *Times of Malta* (13 November 1963) on the event marking the foundation of the university listed the graduates (*Times of Malta*, 3), a list which is also available at the University of Malta. From this list one can identify the graduates in the photos.

conferred when Callus was 75 years of age.³³ Thus, the dating of the photographs in the *UMHAC Photographic Album*³⁴ to October 1965 is erroneous. Two further pieces of evidence that this date is not correct are provided by the timing of Callus's demise and the appointment of the new Rector of the Royal University. After travelling to Malta in the first months of 1965, Callus passed away in May.³⁵ Professor's Manché term in office came to end by the academic year 1963/1964. With effect from 1 October 1964, the Rector was Professor Edwin Borg Costanzi.³⁶

Other considerations

Montebello reproduced a photo of Callus receiving the D.Litt. (Honoris Causa) from the Rector of the Royal University of Malta.³⁷ Other images reproduced by Montebello included those of Callus's father Paul, his younger brother Rev. Loreto, and of Daniel with his elder brother Hugo, also a Dominican. They had joined the Order together. Citing the Dominican Archives Birgu (DAB),

*[Daniel) Callus had a brother, Rev. Fr. Loreto, and a sister, a Franciscan Nun, Luigia. He had also a stepbrother (from his father's side), Rev. Fr. Hugo, a Dominican.*³⁸

Daniel's father was married twice and his second wife was Giovanna neé Bonnici, seven years older than Daniel. Giovanna's parents were Giovanni and Theodora neé Vella³⁹ and she was related to Daniel's mother.⁴⁰ Paul and Giovanna had four children (Figure 4).⁴¹ Suor Luigia was Daniel's youngest half-sister from his father's side. Rev. Hugo and Rev. Loreto were his elder and younger brothers from Paul's first marriage. The photographic image of Callus' father reproduced by Montebello, also available at the DAB, is identical to the one reproduced in Figure 4 and was the image reproduced

³³ On Callus' 75th birthday, the University of Oxford honoured him by publishing a Festschrift entitled *Oxford Studies presented to Daniel Callus*, Oxford Historical Society, New Series Vol. XVI. It was reviewed by K. Edwards, *The English Historical Review*, 81 (319), April 1966, 442-443.

³⁴ *UMHAC Photographic Album Vol. 2, 12* and *UMHAC Photographic Album Vol. 2, 14*.

³⁵ Callus died at the Dominican Hospital of St Catherine's of Sienna, Attard (Malta) on 26 May 1965, two months after celebrating his diamond jubilee as a member of the Order. On 20 May 1965 he dictated the final instructions regarding the disposal of his papers at Oxford to Professor Andrew Vella O.P. (Montebello, 1994, 15, fn 8). Vella read history at the University of Oxford [M.J. Schiavone, 'Vella, Andrew, P.', *Dictionary of Maltese Biographies* (Malta, 2009), vol. 2, 1585-1586]. A copy of the said typed statement, which was unsigned, is reproduced in Montebello (1994, 34). The Oxonian scholars B. Smalley of St Hilda's College, R.W. Hunt of the Bodleian Library and W.A. Pantin of Oriel College took Callus' literary works with a view to publishing them (Vella, 1965).

³⁶ Angela M. Xuereb, email to Lino Bianco (3 June 2020). Xuereb obtained this detail from Angela Tabone, Rector's Delegate, University of Malta.

³⁷ Montebello, 1994, 16.

³⁸ *DAB, IX, 4*; cited in Montebello, 1994, 1, fn. 2. The author could not consult the DAB as it was not accessible due to COVID-19.

³⁹ John Bianco, *The genealogy of the Bonnici family* (unpublished).

⁴⁰ Helen Borg Bonnici, personal communication.

⁴¹ The children born in the marriage between Paul and Giovanna Callus were Theodore (?-1966), Guilio (1903-1985), Maria Giuseppina (1905-1984) and Suor Luigia, christened Rosa (1907-1997).

on the obituary card (Figure 5, left).⁴² The obituary card of Daniel's stepmother is also hereby reproduced (Figure 5, right).

Together with his siblings, nephews and nieces, Daniel is buried in the family vault at Sacred Heart of Jesus Cemetery, Zebbug, Malta.⁴³ The grave is number 6 in the compartment on the right upon entering through the main entrance of the cemetery. The Callus family tombstone (Figure 6, left) is a few meters away from the vault of the family of his stepmother, located at number 12 (Figure 6, right).

Final Comments

Callus was a respected academic both in Malta and overseas. This article:

1. proves that the photos of Daniel Callus included in Figure 1 available at the *UMHAC Photographic Album* were taken during the ceremony when a D.Litt. (Honoris Causa) degree was conferred on him on 12 November 1963, the day marking the foundation of the Royal University of Malta;
2. edits and includes biographical information on Callus' family which is not in the literature; and
3. identifies the exact location of the family vault where he was buried and the vault of his stepfamily, namely at number 6 and number 12 respectively.

Daniel Callus was one of Malta's leading scholars, having made his career overseas. At Oxford he was intellectually engaged with scholars such as Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) and Étienne Henri Gilson (1884-1978).⁴⁴ One of his many acquaintances was Peter Serracino Inglott, the former Head of the Department of Philosophy and later Rector of the University of Malta, when Serracino Inglott was a Rhodes Scholar at Champion Hall, Oxford.⁴⁵ Another Dominican friar who excelled in scholarship abroad, but is hardly known in Malta, was Paul Natal Zammit (1904-1995).⁴⁶ One of Zammit's students at the Angelicum was Karol Józef Wojtyła, later

⁴² This obituary card makes reference to "tliet saċerdoti, soru Franċiskana u tfal oħra tajba", freely translated by the author as "three priests, a Franciscan nun and other respectable children".

⁴³ E. Bonnici, 'Fr Daniel Callus', *Find a Grave* (15 December 2011). Retrieved from <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/81988392/daniel-callus>
On 17 June 1965, three weeks after his burial, a Mass was held at Blackfriars, Oxford. The sermon delivered at the Requiem was reproduced in D. Knowles, 'Father Daniel Callus, 1888-1965', *New Blackfriars*, 1965, 46 (542), 609-612.

⁴⁴ These authorities, notably Maritain, respected the Romanian Greek Catholic Neo-Thomist priest-philosopher Ioan Miclea (1902-1982). Callus' parents were of Greek ancestry (Knowles, 609); certainly the family of his stepmother had strong links with the Ukrainian port of Odessa until the Russian Revolution.

⁴⁵ Peter Serracino Inglott (1936-2012), personal communication.

⁴⁶ Two concise biographical entries on Paul Natal Zammit are Schiavone (vol. 2, 1680) and Montebello (vol. 2, 275-276). Zammit had studied:

1. philosophy and theology at the Angelicum, where he obtained his doctorate in theology and a separate doctorate in philosophy (1932);
2. law at the Catholic University in Lille, France, where he graduated with a B.A. (1931) and obtained his doctorate (1950); and
3. economics at the University of London where he graduated with a Ph.D. (London).

elected Pope and subsequently canonised as Saint John Paul II.⁴⁷ Encouraging research on such personalities goes beyond documenting Maltese migrants in order to become acquainted with their work. Their academic and intellectual achievements are transnational and form an intangible part of the heritage of Maltese scholars.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the following members of staff of the University of Malta Library: Kevin Ellul (Administrative Director), Matthew Cuschieri, Joseph B. Borg and Beverly Agius. He would like to express his gratitude to the University of Malta Library for granting him permission to reproduce Figure 1 and Figure 2; the Archives of the Cathedral Mdina to reproduce Figure 3; Helen Borg Bonnici and Josephine Borg for Figure 4; and Pia Camilla and Alessandra Bianco for Figure 5 and Figure 6 respectively.

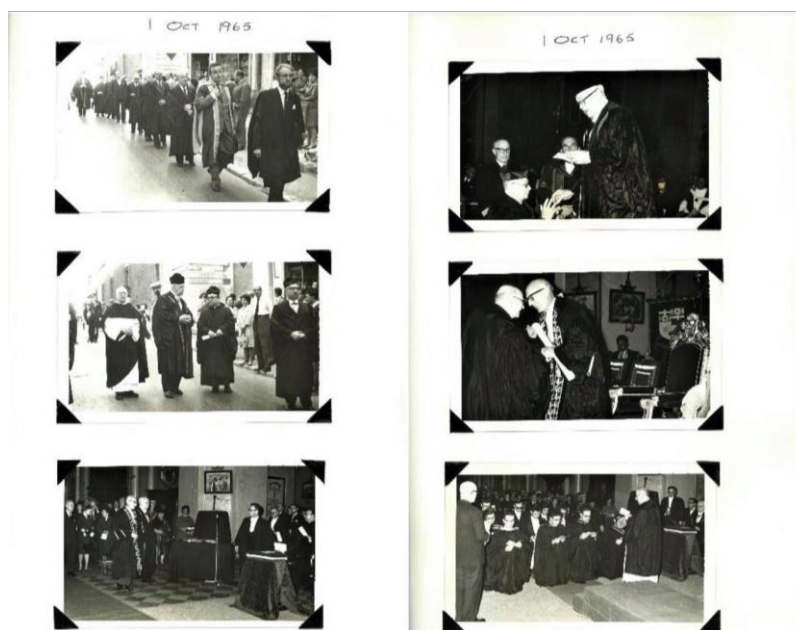


Figure 1: Image of *UMHAC Photographic Album Vol. 2, page 12* (left), and *UMHAC Photographic Album Vol. 2, page 14* (right) (Source: University of Malta Library).

Zammit was appointed professor of ethics at the Angelicum in 1931 and taught ethics and economics at this university from 1936 to 1940. He was appointed Professor of Philosophy and Social Science at St Edmund's College, Ware, Hertfordshire (1940-1946). Back in Rome, he taught at the Angelicum and was professor of philosophy of law at the Università Internazionale Pro Deo (1946-1950). Zammit taught philosophy at St Albert's College, Oakland, California (1955-1957) and the Dominican College of San Rafael (the Catholic University of America), and taught theology and Holy Scripture at Notre Dame College, Belmont. He had founded and directed various study groups and authored several scientific publications (Schiavone, vol. 2, 1680). He was also involved in drafting the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* and other documents issued by leading international organisations (Professor Antony Zammit (1950-2017), personal communication).

⁴⁷ Montebello, 2001, vol. 2, 276. Two of Miclea's colleagues at the high school, the future Bishops Tit Liviu Chinezul and Ioan Suciu, graduated with a Doctorate in Sacred Theology from the Angelicum in 1930 and 1931 respectively. These Bishops were beatified with five others by Pope Francis on 2 June 2019 as martyrs under the Communist regime in Romania.

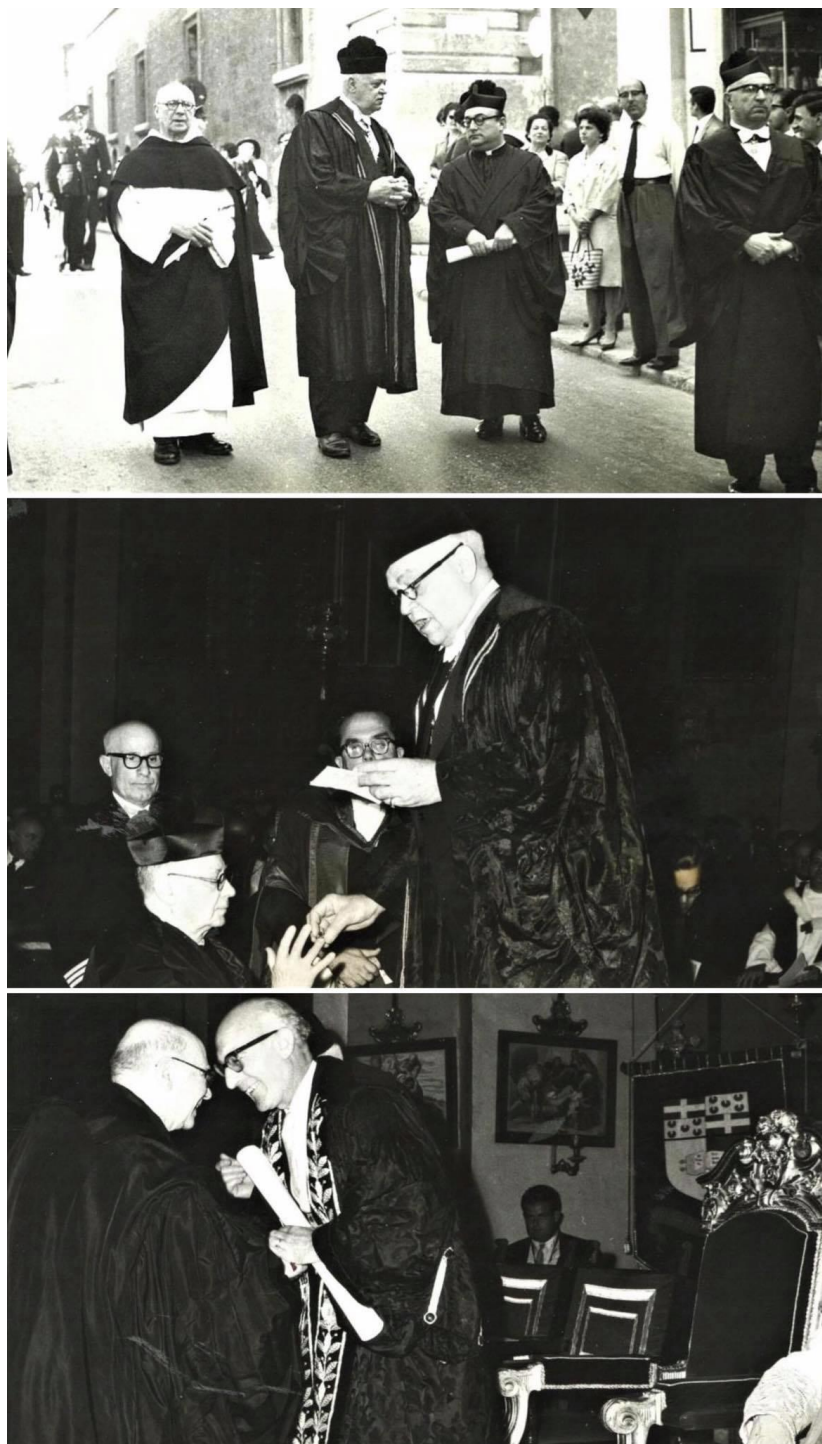


Figure 2: Ceremony held on 12 November 1963 (Source: University of Malta Library) – Top: procession of the academic body to the Jesuit Church with Rector Manché on the right of Callus (in Dominican robes);⁴⁸ middle: the Rector placing the university ring on Callus hand;⁴⁹ bottom: H.E. Sir Antony Mamo hands over the degree certificate.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *UMHAC, Photographic Album Vol. 2, page 12, photo 2.*

⁴⁹ *UMHAC, Photographic Album Vol. 2, page 14, photo 1.*

⁵⁰ *UMHAC, Photographic Album Vol. 2, page 14, photo 2.*

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February 7. Luncheon at St. Edmund Hall in celebration of my 75th birthday offered by Dr. A. B. Under and the collaborators to Oxford Studies presented to D.A.C. - W. A. Portin, R. W. Southam, L. Doyle, R. W. Hunt, C. Martin, B. Smalley & two Thomas, Vic of Blackfriars.

Feb. 18. Lecture at the University of Cologne on: -
"Albertus Magnus & Roger Bacon". 5 p.m.
"Apostolicism & Aristotelism". Thomas -
Institut. 8 p.m.

March 6, 9, 12, 14, 16, 20, 23, 26. A course of eight lectures on: - "De anima intellectiva secundum Magistrum Sacerdotis XIII.", at the Pontifical ~~Hebrew~~ Hebrew University of the Lateran.

.. 23, 27 "De aristotelismo S. Alberti Magni",
.. 27. "De aristotelismo S. Thomae ap." at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas.

May-June. Trinity Term. "The Writings of Aquinas".
Thursdays 11 a.m.

June 13. Lecture on "Albertus Magnus" at the Warburg Institute, University of London.

October-December. Michaelmas Term: "The Beginnings of Aristotelianism in Oxford". Thursdays 11 a.m.

November 12. Conferment of the degree of Doctor of Literature by the Royal University of Malta.

December 25. 60 years a Dominican. Deo gratias!

Figure 3: Image of ACM Fr Daniel Callus OP Coll. Ms. Mea Propria f.71 (Source: The Cathedral Archives, Mdina): The penultimate entry, dated 12 November, refers to the conferment of a Doctor of Literature degree by the Royal University of Malta.



Figure 4: Top: Paul Callus (left) and Giovanna neé Bonnici (right), Paul's second wife and stepmother of Daniel Callus; bottom (left to right) are their children, with descending age: Theodore, Guilio, Maria Giuseppina and Suor Luigia, christened Rosa (Source: Helen Borg Bonnici and Josephine Borg).

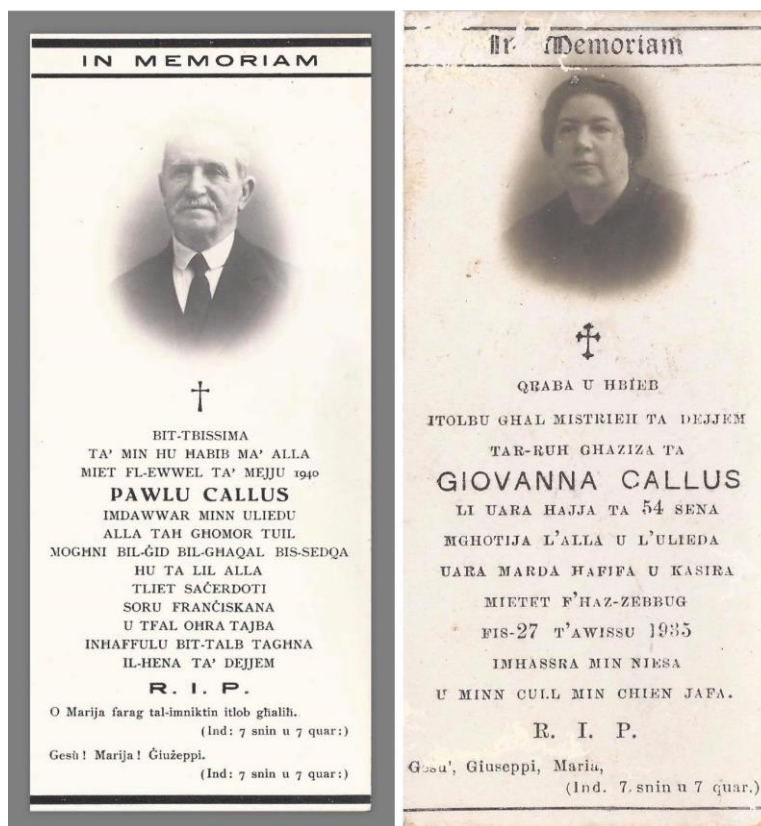


Figure 5: Obituary cards of Paul Callus (left) and his second spouse Giovanna neé Bonnici (right) (Source: Pia Camilla Bianco).



Figure 6: Vaults of Family Callus (left) and Family Bonnici (right) at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Cemetery, Zebbug, Malta (Source: Alessandra Bianco).