

## Queen Adelaide and the Extension of Anglicanism in Malta

Nicholas Dixon

Close to the centre of the Maltese capital of Valletta there stands an imposing neoclassical church with an Ionic portico of six columns and a 210-foot tower crowned with a spire. Presenting a striking contrast with the large dome of the neighbouring Carmelite Church (completed in 1981), this tower occupies a prominent position on the city's skyline. Above the portico of the church is written in Latin, 'Queen Adelaide with a grateful heart dedicated this Collegiate Church to Almighty God 1844'.<sup>1</sup> Consecrated to St Paul, this Anglican pro-cathedral has been more commonly known as 'Queen Adelaide's Church', after its royal benefactress. Why did King William IV's widow make such a bold statement of Anglicanism in an overwhelmingly Roman Catholic colony? The question has never been adequately answered. The standard explanation, expressed at length by Arthur Bonnici and Alan Keighley, is that Adelaide was simply providing for the needs of the English Protestant population of the island.<sup>2</sup> Yet contemporary observers saw the building of the church in more complex terms. As Robin Gill has noted in passing, there existed a definite perception that St Paul's was not simply an expatriate church, but also a means of propagating Protestantism.<sup>3</sup>

This perception was shared by two religious groups with widely divergent perspectives: Evangelicals and Roman Catholics. The Evangelical *Malta Times* stated after the consecration of St Paul's: 'it may be said that the public worship of the Church of England was never, with any good effects, celebrated in Malta until the 1st of November, 1844, from which day we hope we may date the rapid progress of the true faith in that island.'<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Alan Keighley, *Queen Adelaide's Church* (Trowbridge, 2000), 172; National Inventory of the Cultural Property of the Maltese Islands, entries no. 552 and 556 (accessed online at <http://www.culturalheritage.gov.mt>).

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Bonnici, 'Thirty Years to Build a Protestant Church', *Melita Historica*, 6 (1973), 183-91; Keighley, *Queen Adelaide's Church*, 1-44.

<sup>3</sup> Robin Gill, *Changing Worlds: Can the Church Respond?* (Edinburgh, 2002), 109.

<sup>4</sup> *The Malta Times*, 31 December 1844, quoted in Gill, *Changing Worlds*, 109.

Meanwhile, the Catholic periodical *The Tablet* complained that the Anglican Bishop of Gibraltar had offended the Maltese by giving St Paul's the same dedication as the principal Catholic church in Valletta and that 'the observant Maltese remark that his lordship ... devotes his thoughts and time very particularly to laying schemes for proselytising themselves.'<sup>5</sup>

To what extent were such perceptions grounded in fact? This question relates to the wider historical debate about the extent to which Anglicans in general had a proselytising mission in the period of the British Empire's expansion. It affords important insights into the rationale, means and consequences of Anglican extension in an era of governmental ambivalence concerning support for religious exertion in the colonies. Furthermore, the building project's largely High Church origin draws attention to the ways in which Anglican extension had alternative modes to the Evangelical archetypes typified by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Bible Society. These societies have generally been the focus of previous assessments of missionary activity in Malta. In *Imperial Meridian*, Christopher Bayly related Anglican missionary efforts to 'a growth of evangelical ideas within the established churches', writing that a 'secondary aim' of Evangelical missions was the conversion of Catholic and Orthodox Christians to Protestantism, with 'particular attention ... paid to Malta and the eastern Mediterranean'.<sup>6</sup>

More recent studies have broadened our understanding of Anglicans' imperial exploits. According to Rowan Strong, there was a consistent desire on the part of Anglicans, both Evangelical and non-Evangelical, to proselytise in the colonies, exemplified by the activities of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and the creation of the

---

<sup>5</sup> *The Tablet*, 24 February 1844, 115.

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London, 1989), 136-7, 141-2. See also Frans Ciappara, *M.A. Vassalli: An Enlightened Maltese Reformer* (Malta, 2014), 115-38; Gareth Atkins, 'William Jowett's *Christian Researches*: British Protestants and Religious Plurality in the Mediterranean, Syria and the Holy Land, 1815-30', *SCH*, 51 (2015), 216-31.

Colonial Bishops Fund.<sup>7</sup> Hilary Carey has argued that churches were involved in all stages of colonisation, and that the Church of England's 'orthodox mainstream' took a renewed interest in colonial endeavours from the 1830s.<sup>8</sup> Joseph Hardwick has shown how the Colonial Bishops Fund was 'overwhelmingly associated with high churchmen and high church ecclesiology'.<sup>9</sup> Yet Malta, where debates concerning Anglican missionary activity and episcopacy were strikingly evident, has not yet been the object of any sustained enquiry. Historians have displayed a tendency to focus on settler colonies, while discussions of the place of Roman Catholicism in the British Empire have mostly revolved around Ireland and its diaspora.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the role of royal patronage in promoting Anglicanism abroad has received little attention.<sup>11</sup> This article aims to address these lacunae, and draws upon a wide range of neglected sources in London, Cambridge and Malta.

British sovereignty over Malta had been confirmed by the Treaty of Paris of 1814, since which time there had been a strong understanding that the British Government would leave the rights and privileges of the Roman Catholic Church in Malta undisturbed. The support of the Maltese Catholic clergy had been of vital assistance in Britain's capture of the island from Napoleonic France in 1800 and in sustaining the subsequent occupation. Hence there was a firm desire on the part of the colonial authorities to avoid antagonising the local clergy and the religious sensibilities of the Maltese.<sup>12</sup> Catholic bishops were accorded military honours

---

<sup>7</sup> Rowan Strong, *Anglicanism and the British Empire, c. 1700-1850* (Oxford, 2007). See especially *ibid.*, 10-40, 198-221.

<sup>8</sup> Hilary Carey, *God's Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British Empire, c. 1801-1908* (Cambridge, 2011), 17, 65.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Hardwick, *An Anglican British World: The Church of England and the Expansion of the Settler Empire, c. 1790-1860* (Manchester, 2014), 125.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Colin Barr and Hilary Carey, eds., *Religion and Greater Ireland: Christianity and Irish Global Networks* (Montreal, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Missionary enterprises are largely absent from the most comprehensive study of modern royal charitable activity: Frank Prochaska, *Royal Bounty: The Making of a Welfare Monarchy* (New Haven, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> Relations between the British Government and the Roman Catholic Church in Malta during this period are described in Harrison Smith, *Britain in Malta*, 2 vols (Malta, 1953), 1: 73-100;

by the British soldiers stationed in Malta, who also fired salutes and furnished guards of honour for Catholic feast days.<sup>13</sup> This attracted considerable Protestant censure, but an even greater focus of complaint was the lack of a proper Anglican place of worship. Church of England services were held in a dingy vault, formerly a kitchen, in the Governor's Palace, which could barely accommodate colonial functionaries, let alone the wider English community.<sup>14</sup>

From the mid-1820s, a steady stream of complaints regarding this situation was articulated. In January 1826, John Cleugh, the Government Chaplain in Malta, wrote to Sir Frederick Bouverie, Chief Secretary to the Government, that 'the respectability of our character as a nation, (to say nothing of the interest of our religion) is materially injured by the inadequacy & meanness of the present chamber; in a country where so much consequence is attached to externals'. Cleugh went on to state that Protestants desired 'an edifice that shall correspond with their important rank in the Island'.<sup>15</sup> The following month, Lord Hastings, the Governor of Malta, wrote in a letter to the Bishop of London, William Howley, of 'how desirable it would be to exhibit to the Maltese a more dignified stile of attention to the Duties of our Communion'.<sup>16</sup> However, the position had not changed by 1829, when John Le

---

Adrianus Koster, *Prelates and Politicians in Malta: Changing Power-balances between Church and State in a Mediterranean Island Fortress (1800-1976)* (Assen, 1984), 35-51; Joseph Bezzina, 'Church and State in an Island Colony' in Victor Mallia-Milanes, ed., *The British Colonial Experience, 1800-1964: The Impact on Maltese Society* (Msida, 1988), 47-78.

<sup>13</sup> See Thomas Atchison, *Some Particulars relative to the Co-operation required of the British Troops in Malta, in the Superstitious Ceremonies of the Romish Church* (London, 1826); *idem.*, *The Idolatrous Ceremonies of the Roman Catholic and Greek Churches at Malta, Corfu, and Zante, in which the Officers, Civil and Military, and Troops of the British Army are Commanded to Join* (London, 1830); LPL, FP Blomfield 65, fols 182<sup>r</sup>-183<sup>r</sup>, John Le Mesurier to Charles Blomfield, 27 August 1829.

<sup>14</sup> LPL, FP Blomfield 65, f. 178<sup>r</sup>, John Le Mesurier to George Tomlinson, 24 June 1828. John Henry Newman lamented this state of affairs on a visit to Malta in 1833: Anne Mozley, ed., *Letters and Correspondence of John Henry Newman*, 2 vols (London, 1891), 1: 31.

<sup>15</sup> Rabat, National Archives of Malta, CSG03/1048, John Cleugh to Frederick Bouverie, 9 January 1826.

<sup>16</sup> LPL, FP Howley 4, p. 522, Lord Hastings to William Howley, 13 February 1826.

Mesurier, Chaplain to the Forces in Malta, wrote to the new Bishop of London, Charles Blomfield, expressing the hope that the established church in Malta would be placed on ‘that respectable & efficient footing which even in a political view our national character demands.’ He further remarked:

[I]t is the astonishment of every new comer not to find an English Church, & it is the lament of every right thinking person. Your Lordship must be well aware of the effect which externals have on the minds of the illiterate, & that in respect to the Soldier & the lower orders, inducements should be held out, & difficulties removed that they may be brought to perceive & feel the superiority of our National faith.

Referring to Anglican difficulties in other parts of the Mediterranean, Le Mesurier suggested the remedy of ‘an Ecclesiastical head of talent & rank appointed to superintend & on the spot the concerns of our Mediterranean Church.’<sup>17</sup> Thus, by 1830, a strong argument for extending Anglicanism in Malta had taken shape and been brought to the attention of those in influential quarters. Its main premises were the importance of established religion to the national character, the necessity of an architectural manifestation of this and the potential for Malta to become an active focal point for an enlarged sphere of Anglican activity in the Mediterranean. Such a line of thought was made possible by Britain’s naval dominance of the region and rule of the Ionian Islands, which placed Malta at the centre of an emergent British Mediterranean empire stretching from Gibraltar to Kythira.<sup>18</sup>

The case was reiterated in an extended fashion by the High Church Winchester

---

<sup>17</sup> LPL, FP Blomfield 65, f. 180, Le Mesurier to Blomfield, 12 March 1829.

<sup>18</sup> On this Mediterranean empire, see Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 102-4, 196-202; Robert Holland, *Blue-Water Empire: The British in the Mediterranean since 1800* (London, 2012).

prebendary George Nott in a pamphlet of around 1835.<sup>19</sup> Nott was frequently resident in Italy, and his account of the state of Anglicanism in Malta suggests a detailed knowledge of local conditions as well as an acquaintance with the views of Cleugh and Le Mesurier. He argued that the Maltese would not ‘take umbrage at the English Government should they build a Church ... for the sake of placing religious service among the English at Malta, on a footing of respectability similar to that on which their own is placed.’<sup>20</sup> On the contrary, the Maltese would see Anglicanism in a more favourable light if its worship were conducted in consecrated buildings.<sup>21</sup> The British Government’s obligation to maintain Roman Catholicism among the Maltese did not require it to allow Anglicanism ‘to remain in a state that tends to make it contemptible in their sight.’<sup>22</sup> If Malta were better provided with Anglican ministry, ‘numerous would be the advantages we should gain, in a civil and political, as well as in a religious point of view.’<sup>23</sup> The Anglican clergy would inculcate spiritual and political orthodoxy, while a new church ‘would facilitate the attendance not of the British only, but of various believers, of the Greek and other Christian communions, of whom there are a large number at Malta’.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, a ‘superintending Minister’ could be

---

<sup>19</sup> On Nott, see Stefano Villani, *George Frederick Nott (1768-1841): un ecclesiastico Anglicano, tra teologica, letteratura, arte, archeologica, bibliofilia e collezionismo* (Rome, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> [George Frederick Nott], *General Statement of the Facility of Building a Church for the English at Malta* (Winchester, n.d.), 7. This pamphlet was printed with another entitled *General Statement of the Quantity of Ecclesiastical Duty to be Performed by the Two Chaplains at Malta* (Winchester, n.d.). On the rationale for dating these pamphlets to around 1835 and attributing them to Nott, see Villani, *George Frederick Nott*, 869.

<sup>21</sup> Nott, *General Statement*, 8-11.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-15. A secondary concern of Nott’s was to prevent a growth in dissent: *ibid.*, 14. A Methodist chapel was built in Valletta in around 1824 but closed in 1843, its premises being taken over by the nascent Free Church of Scotland: G. A. Sim, ‘Religious Liberty in Malta’ in *Maintaining the Unity: Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference and Diamond Jubilee Celebration of the Evangelical Alliance held in London, July 1907* (London, 1907), 205-16, at 208-9.

appointed to oversee all Mediterranean Anglican congregations.<sup>25</sup> ‘If a free and brotherly intercommunion between all these congregations were effected’, Nott asked, ‘what means could be devised better adapted for the diffusion of Christian Knowledge, and the free circulation of the Scriptures, along the shores of the Mediterranean?’ Accordingly, ‘a more regular direction might be given to the exertions of the properly appointed Church Missionaries sent from England.’<sup>26</sup> Malta, in Nott’s scheme, would be an important base for Anglican missionary activity.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, he believed that Anglican extension was emphatically justified by Malta’s status as ‘an integral part of the British empire, and one which an approaching crisis may prove to be ... indispensable towards the maintenance of our national greatness, and independence.’<sup>28</sup>

It seems that, indirectly, Nott’s pamphlet finally accomplished the building of an Anglican church in Malta. A copy of it was transmitted to the Foreign Translation Committee of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), for whom Nott had worked on an Italian translation of the *Book of Common Prayer*.<sup>29</sup> More importantly, it appears to have found its way into the hands of Queen Adelaide, whose support for a variety of Anglican causes was generous and constant.<sup>30</sup> In widowhood, Adelaide closely aligned herself with the High Church party within the Church of England, which increasingly dominated the SPCK and had a powerful advocate in William Howley, now Archbishop of Canterbury and the

---

<sup>25</sup> Nott, *General Statement*, 15-16.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>27</sup> Villani, *George Frederick Nott*, 870-1.

<sup>28</sup> Nott, *General Statement*, 19-20.

<sup>29</sup> CUL, SPCK.MS A16/1, p. 68, SPCK Foreign Translation Committee minutes, 11 July 1836. SPCK material is cited by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

<sup>30</sup> Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*, 55-60; Marilyn Thomas, ‘Royal Charity and Queen Adelaide in Early Nineteenth Century Britain’ in Marilyn Button and Jessica Sheetz-Nguyen, eds., *Victorians and the Case for Charity: Essays on Responses to English Poverty by the State, the Church and the Literati* (Jefferson, NC, 2014), 42-57.

society's President.<sup>31</sup> During a stay in Madeira in 1848, Adelaide was to take up the cause of the British chaplain there, Richard Lowe, who was threatened with dismissal by Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston after accusations of ritualism.<sup>32</sup> Robert Gray, Bishop of Cape Town, observed after meeting Adelaide in Madeira that she was 'a capital Churchwoman ... and has told the Consul here that if the Chaplain is turned out and another thrust in without the Bishop's license, she will be very sorry, as it will prevent her attending church.'<sup>33</sup>

The Queen Dowager's commitment to High Church activism had been equally evident a decade earlier. On a visit to Malta for health reasons in the winter of 1838, Adelaide had expressed severe dissatisfaction with the lack of an Anglican church in a fruitless appeal to Queen Victoria, before determining to erect one at her own expense.<sup>34</sup> The project moved apace: a site was granted by the Government and the foundation stone of St Paul's was laid by Adelaide in March 1839.<sup>35</sup> Her rationale for this enterprise was expressed in a letter to Archbishop Howley of November 1840:

I have received the most satisfactory report of the progress of the building of the Church which I have been enabled to erect at Malta and am naturally very anxious

---

<sup>31</sup> James Pereiro, *'Ethos' and the Oxford Movement: At the Heart of Tractarianism* (Oxford, 2007), 17-25; Hardwick, *Anglican British World*, 110-4. 'High Church' in this context does not generally denote Tractarianism, but rather an older High Churchmanship of the kind described in Peter Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship, 1760-1857* (Cambridge, 1994).

<sup>32</sup> W. M. Jacob, *The Making of the Anglican Church Worldwide* (London, 1997), 118. I am grateful to Dr Bill Jacob for drawing this episode to my attention.

<sup>33</sup> Charles N. Gray, ed., *Life of Robert Gray, Bishop of Cape Town and Metropolitan of Africa* (London, 1883), 49. Adelaide also donated High Church furnishings to St Michael's Church, Lewes: Jeremy Goring, *Burn Holy Fire: Religion in Lewes since the Reformation* (Cambridge, 2003), 124.

<sup>34</sup> Arthur Benson and Reginald Brett (Viscount Esher), eds., *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1861*, 3 vols (London, 1908), 1: 138, Queen Adelaide to Queen Victoria, 13 December 1839. Adelaide expended around £20,000 on the church: Keighley, *Queen Adelaide's Church*, 25.

<sup>35</sup> TNA, CO 158/106, Bouverie to Lord Glenelg, 6 January 1839; *ibid.*, Bouverie to Glenelg, 20 March 1839. For an account of the laying of the foundation stone, see *The Morning Post*, 9 April 1839, 5.



that it should become the Cathedral of a Bishopric. [...] The peculiar position of the Island of Malta renders it adapted above all other for the Seat of a Bishopric & the spiritual Superintendence of the many Protestant Congregations scatter'd over Italy, the Levant & Gibraltar.

Adelaide proceeded to expand on her aims for this project:

...the assurance that “both in a religious & political point of view it would be greatly to be desired, that the Maltese would take no umbrage, on the contrary it would give respectability and a higher & firmer footing both in Malta & throughout the Mediterranean if we had a Protestant bishop established” has encouraged me to request you will State these my anxious wishes to L[or]d J[ohn] Russell in order that the home Gov[ernmen]t may take into favorable consideration this important subject...<sup>36</sup>

It is apparent that in the quoted section, Adelaide was directly paraphrasing Nott's opinions that the Maltese would not be offended by the building of an Anglican church, and that such a project would have numerous advantages.<sup>37</sup> That Adelaide was already thinking in these terms during her visit to Malta may be inferred from a letter of January 1839 from her chamberlain Earl Howe to Archbishop Howley, expressing the hope that the building of St Paul's would lead to 'the establishment of a Mediterranean Bishopric' which would 'give a

---

<sup>36</sup> LPL, MS 1754, fols 5<sup>r</sup>-6<sup>r</sup>, Adelaide to Howley, 1 November 1840.

<sup>37</sup> See above, **xx-xx**.

dignity to our Church in the eyes of R[oman] Catholics & prevent their constant observation that a faith in which its votaries shew so little interest cannot be a true one!’<sup>38</sup>

By endorsing Nott’s pamphlet, Queen Adelaide identified herself with the agenda of those who wished to make Malta a centre for the active extension of Anglicanism. Shortly before her visit, an attempt to build an Anglican church in Malta had been made by Christopher Schlienzy of the CMS.<sup>39</sup> This had been obstructed by the Governor, Sir Henry Bouverie, who expressed fears that ‘it would be extremely dangerous to allow of the building of a Church by the Church Missionary Society, unless ... that Church were put under the control of the Government so far as to prevent all attempts at conversion of the Maltese to the Protestant faith ... should any such attempts be made ... this Government would be plunged into endless difficulties.’<sup>40</sup> By contrast, Adelaide’s proposal was, at least ostensibly, less ecclesiologically partisan; it was also more difficult to refuse on account of her status. In November 1844 her completed church was consecrated.<sup>41</sup> Its neoclassical design was atypical for its period, and was deliberately intended to contrast with Roman Catholic places of worship.<sup>42</sup> Resisting suggestions to introduce more gilding, the architect William Scamp stated that ‘the principle by which I have been guided, both to the interior and the exterior’ was ‘*Simplicity*’.<sup>43</sup> An allegorical statue of Faith donated by Earl Howe to the church was removed to the Garrison Library on the grounds that its appearance was too Catholic.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> LPL, MS 2185, f. 145<sup>r</sup>, Earl Howe to Howley, 5 January 1839. Adelaide, in advocating a bishopric, went one stage further than Le Mesurier and Nott, who had only envisaged a ‘superintending Minister’.

<sup>39</sup> Bonnici, ‘Protestant Church’, 187.

<sup>40</sup> TNA, CO 158/95, Bouverie to Glenelg, 16 March 1837.

<sup>41</sup> *The Morning Post*, 4 December 1844, 5.

<sup>42</sup> On the church’s architecture, see Malcolm Borg, *British Colonial Architecture: Malta (1800-1900)* (Malta, 2001), 44-9.

<sup>43</sup> Rabat, Crypta Sancti Pauli Archive, MALTA SERIES I 5744, f. 27<sup>v</sup>, ‘Plans and Sketches of the New Church at Malta’.

<sup>44</sup> *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, December 1844, 632.

The building of ‘Queen Adelaide’s Church’ coincided with the establishment of a Mediterranean bishopric of the kind which Adelaide had called for, with the support of the newly-established Colonial Bishops Fund. In 1841, Archbishop Howley had stated in a public meeting in aid of this fund that ‘the proper seat’ of a Mediterranean bishopric had ‘been all but determined upon by the erection of a splendid church at Malta, at the expense of an illustrious lady ... who was not more exalted in her rank and station than respected for her virtue and piety’, but that ‘[t]he object was not proselytism’.<sup>45</sup> In one respect, however, Adelaide and Howley’s wishes were not fulfilled: to avoid offending the Catholic Bishop of Malta, the new Anglican bishop assumed the title of Bishop of Gibraltar and St Paul’s was not made a cathedral. But, in effect, the plan was realised: the Bishop of Gibraltar’s main residence was in Valletta, and St Paul’s functioned as a cathedral in all but name.<sup>46</sup>

In 1842, George Tomlinson was consecrated the first Bishop of Gibraltar. A High Church former chaplain to Howley, Tomlinson was a secretary of the SPCK, and had been heavily involved, alongside Schlienzy and Nott, in furthering the efforts of its Foreign Translation Committee.<sup>47</sup> In his first charge to his clergy, delivered in St Paul’s the month after its consecration, Bishop Tomlinson echoed Howley’s denial of a proselytising urge:

---

<sup>45</sup> *The Morning Post*, 28 April 1841, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Henry J. C. Knight, *The Diocese of Gibraltar: A Sketch of its History, Work and Tasks* (London, 1917), 41-2, 54-6. May Tomlinson, daughter of the first Bishop of Gibraltar, referred to him as ‘1<sup>st</sup>. Bishop of Gibraltar & Malta’: Cambridge, St John’s College Biographical Archive, entry for George Tomlinson, May Tomlinson to Robert Forsyth-Scott, 25 November 1925. Cited by permission of the Master and Fellows of St John’s College, Cambridge.

<sup>47</sup> On Tomlinson, see Peter Allen, *The Cambridge Apostles: The Early Years* (Cambridge, 1978), 22-4. His role in the SPCK is recorded in George Tomlinson, *Report of a Journey to the Levant, addressed to His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, President of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (London, 1841) and throughout the SPCK Foreign Translation Committee minutes, CUL, SPCK.MS A16/1-2. See also George Tomlinson, *A Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury on the Approaching Tercentenary of the English Prayer Book, and of the Establishment of the Reformation in England* (London, 1848).

I am desirous that you should act in the very reverse of that spirit which has shewn itself here and in other places, in making proselytes from us to the Church of Rome [...] We have not the least wish or desire to practice the arts of “that cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”<sup>48</sup>

Yet, while eschewing overt proselytisation, Tomlinson did take some steps that accorded with Nott’s vision of Malta as a centre of Anglican missionary activity. Upon his arrival in Malta, he purchased the Valletta printing press of the CMS, who had recently abandoned their Maltese missionary post, for the SPCK’s use.<sup>49</sup> In 1844, he admitted to Anglican orders Michael Angelo Camilleri, a Maltese Roman Catholic priest who had converted to Anglicanism.<sup>50</sup> Camilleri was a controversial figure among the Maltese, not least because he had eloped with a widow to Gibraltar and had been imprisoned for assaulting two legal officials in Valletta.<sup>51</sup> Tomlinson nonetheless championed him, commissioning him to translate the New Testament and the *Book of Common Prayer* into Maltese under the auspices of the SPCK, which printed these at its newly-acquired Valletta press.<sup>52</sup> In 1847, when the translations were complete, Tomlinson stated with evident satisfaction that portions of the Bible were ‘now, for the first time, presented to the people in their own language.’<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, Tomlinson lent his support as Visitor to a Protestant College established in

---

<sup>48</sup> George Tomlinson, *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese and Jurisdiction of Gibraltar, at the Visitation, held in the English Collegiate Church of St. Paul, Malta, December 28, 1844* (London, 1845), 33.

<sup>49</sup> CUL, SPCK.MS A16/1, p. 220, SPCK Foreign Translation Committee minutes, 24 October 1842.

<sup>50</sup> *The Morning Post*, 13 February 1845, 5.

<sup>51</sup> David Dandria, ‘A 19th-century apostate priest and cause célèbre’, *The Times of Malta*, 11 October 2015.

<sup>52</sup> CUL, SPCK.MS A16/1, pp. 299-300, SPCK Foreign Translation Committee minutes, 11 March 1844; CUL, SPCK.MS A16/1, pp. 318-9, *ibid.*, 28 June 1844.

<sup>53</sup> CUL, SPCK.MS A16/2, p. 152, *ibid.*, 3 July 1847. Tomlinson overlooked the earlier efforts of the Maltese professor Mikiel Anton Vassalli, who translated parts of the New Testament into Maltese for the CMS during the 1820s. See Ciappara, *M.A. Vassalli*, 122-34.

Malta in 1846, declaring it to be ‘a Church of England institution’ and ‘a seminary of SOUND PROTESTANT INSTRUCTION ... where the *true* principles of our Reformers are understood and taught’.<sup>54</sup>

In such a context, the building of ‘Queen Adelaide’s Church’ had unavoidable missionary overtones. Apparently undeterred by its High Church origins, Evangelicals claimed Adelaide’s enterprise as their own. In a book dedication, S. S. Wilson of the CMS congratulated Adelaide for building ‘a sacred fabric, which, in such a locality, may truly be styled a missionary church.’<sup>55</sup> The Evangelical poet Harriet Burton presented Adelaide’s gift as a powerful antidote to Roman ritual and Marian devotion. Recalling King William IV’s deathbed prayer for the Church of England, she wrote:

And well by thee, Queen Adelaide, his prayer has been fulfill’d,  
And laid the sole foundation stone, on which man may build,  
In Malta’s rocky island, where at Error’s gilded shrine  
Bright robes, sweet incense, idol-pomps, and glimmering tapers shine;  
Where holy saints are worshipp’d, – and the Virgin-mother paid,  
Co-equal honours with her son, “by whom all things were made.”  
But blessed be the God of Truth, and blest that royal hand,  
The instrument ordain’d by Him, to bless a Papal land!<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> *The Malta Times*, 6 April 1852, quoted in Salv. Mallia, ‘The Malta Protestant College’, *Melita Historica*, 10 (1990), 257-82, at 260. Despite this episcopal sanction, the college was initially viewed with suspicion on account of its Evangelical founders’ failure to inform Tomlinson of their plans. See the letters from Bishop Blomfield to Tomlinson from August 1844 in LPL, FP Blomfield 41, ff. 134-6, 156-8.

<sup>55</sup> S. S. Wilson, *A Narrative of the Greek Mission, or, Sixteen Years in Malta and Greece* (London, 1839), ii.

<sup>56</sup> H. E. Burton, ‘Lines presented to Her Majesty the Queen Dowager on her return from Malta, May, 1839’ in *Linda, or, the Festival: A Metrical Romance of Ancient Scinde, with Minor Poems* (London, 1845), 51-2. This collection was dedicated with permission to Queen Adelaide. Cf. Anon., ‘Sonnet. On founding the first Protestant Church in the Island of Malta,

Such sentiments were repeated in Evangelical periodicals. The *Harlequin*, printed in Valletta, welcomed the establishment of ‘a Christian Protestant Church against a system of religion the most detestable the world ever saw!’<sup>57</sup> The *Church of England Magazine* exclaimed, ‘who can say ... how many souls may have been saved from the awfully false doctrines of popery, by the preaching of the truth of God in the protestant church thus given to the people of Malta by a protestant queen!’<sup>58</sup> The High Church *Colonial Church Chronicle* took a more moderate line. Endorsing Bishop Tomlinson’s avoidance of explicit missionary efforts, it expressed a hope that there would be a ‘gradual awakening of the Maltese to a sense of the superstitions and absurdities which now disfigure their religious system ... leading them gently to such a self-reformation, as ... might make their church “a praise in the earth.”’<sup>59</sup>

However, Roman Catholics in Malta displayed little appetite for such ‘self-reformation’. During her visit to the island, Adelaide had exhibited a cordial tolerance of Roman Catholicism, receiving and visiting Catholic clergy.<sup>60</sup> When her barge passed a procession carrying a statue of the Virgin Mary in the harbour of Bormla, it is recorded that, as a compliment to Adelaide, the image ‘was brought to face Her Majesty ... and she stopped to acknowledge this spontaneous expression by the waving of her hand’.<sup>61</sup> Yet Adelaide’s plans for an Anglican church were highly concerning to the Catholic clergy. In February 1839, the Papal Secretary of State Cardinal Lambruschini told Archbishop Caruana of Malta that he could not be indifferent to the project, and advised him to take all necessary steps to impede

---

by the Dowager Queen, Adelaide’ in *The Churchman*, June 1839, 200. On William IV’s deathbed prayer, see [John Ryle Wood], *Some Recollections of the Last Days of His Late Majesty King William the Fourth* (London, 1837).

<sup>57</sup> *The Harlequin*, 21 March 1839, quoted in G. P. Badger, *Trial of J. Richardson, for an Alleged Libel against the Roman Catholic Religion* (Valletta, 1839), 8.

<sup>58</sup> *The Church of England Magazine*, 3 January 1852, 6.

<sup>59</sup> *The Colonial Church Chronicle and Missionary Journal*, October 1847, 126.

<sup>60</sup> Smith, *Britain in Malta*, 1: 86-7.

<sup>61</sup> Joseph Galea, ‘An Unpublished Diary of Queen Adelaide’s Visit to Malta in 1838’, *Scientia*, 29 (1963), 99-116, at 107-8.

its execution.<sup>62</sup> Maltese workmen had to receive papal dispensations to work on the building of St Paul's, and one local Catholic priest reportedly warned that an earthquake would result from the project.<sup>63</sup> Louisiana Gibson, visiting Malta in 1842, recorded that when a comet appeared over Valletta, '[t]he Maltese declared that it hung over' St Paul's and 'foretold a judgement upon them for having allowed a Protestant Cathedral to be built.'<sup>64</sup>

After the completion of the church, the building was viewed with suspicion and occasional hostility by the local population. In 1846, the square outside the church was the scene of disturbances after a Sabbatarian Governor, Sir Patrick Stuart, prohibited traditional carnival festivities from taking place on a Sunday. Some in the crowd masqueraded in the dress of Protestant clergy; others were heard to shout, 'To the Protestant church! let us pull it down!' Meanwhile, a service was in progress inside the church. The congregants, hearing an uproar, feared that the crowd would enter and attack them, but, in the event, the crowd moved on to the Governor's Palace.<sup>65</sup> However, manifestations of ill-feeling continued to be evident. Two years later, John Cleugh and the churchwardens of St Paul's informed the Government that 'the walls and the premises of that Church are constantly defiled and defaced by evil disposed persons' and suggested that erecting iron railings would be the only possible solution.<sup>66</sup> State assistance in the face of such provocations was, however, not forthcoming, as Stuart's Roman Catholic successor as Governor, Richard O'Ferrall, refused to use government revenues for this purpose.<sup>67</sup> O'Ferrall's decision was overturned by a later Governor, Sir John Le

---

<sup>62</sup> Floriana, Archdiocese of Malta Archives, Corrispondenza 1838/40, f. 842, Cardinal Lambruschini to Archbishop Caruana, 12 February 1839. I am grateful to Fr Nicholas Doublet for supplying me with a copy of this letter.

<sup>63</sup> Emma Roberts, *Notes of an Overland Journey through France and Egypt to Bombay* (London, 1841), 65; *The Harlequin*, 27 June 1839, quoted in *The Era*, 21 July 1839, 513.

<sup>64</sup> Winchester, Hampshire Record Office, DC/M5/5/1, part 2, p. 18, 'Recollections of Louisiana Gibson, 1817-1899'.

<sup>65</sup> Henry Seddall, *Malta: Past and Present* (London, 1870), 240-4.

<sup>66</sup> Rabat, National Archives of Malta, CSG03/1068, Cleugh et al to William Sim, 19 October 1848.

<sup>67</sup> A. V. Laferla, *British Malta*, 2 vols (Malta, 1938-47), 1: 211.

Marchant, who in 1861 agreed to finance the placing of railings around the church.<sup>68</sup> Thus fenced off, the church reinforced its detachment from the Maltese population.

The subsequent history of ‘Queen Adelaide’s Church’, in which it has served almost exclusively the English-speaking community in Malta, has concealed the circumstances attending its construction. St Paul’s was intended by Adelaide, Nott and Tomlinson among others to be a focal point for the dissemination of Protestantism in Malta and across the Mediterranean. Disclaiming the overt proselytisation practised by Evangelical missionary societies, they nevertheless attempted subtly to influence the Maltese towards a greater sympathy for the Anglican tradition. This was manifested in the grandiose architecture of St Paul’s, the concomitant establishment of the bishopric of Gibraltar and the translation of the Bible and Prayer Book into Maltese. Their effort reveals much about the nature of Anglicanism within an imperial context during the mid-nineteenth century. Firstly, it underlines the centrality of missionary impulses within the upper echelons of the Church, and demonstrates that their implementation was not restricted to non-Christian colonies. Furthermore, it demonstrates the ways in which High Church missionary activity, assisted by episcopal structures, could rival Evangelical missions such as the CMS from the 1830s onwards. Queen Adelaide’s involvement also shows the degree to which royal patronage continued to exercise a strong influence over ecclesiastical affairs, one that could overcome the conflicting imperatives of a pragmatically irenic governmental policy. That her wider ambitions for the advancement of Anglicanism in a Roman Catholic land were not fulfilled should not blind us to that intriguing moment in 1844 when Anglican hopes were fixed upon Valletta.

---

<sup>68</sup> Keighley, *Queen Adelaide’s Church*, 37-8.