

PROTESTANT MALTESE BIBLE TRANSLATION
THE GOSPEL OF ST MARK

1914-1915

by C. SANT

Protestants showed interest in Maltese Bible Translation since 1816. The *Church Missionary Society* (CMS) published in 1822, the *Gospel of St John* (G. Canolo), in 1829 the *Four Gospels and Acts of the Apostles* (M.A. Vassalli); the *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (SPCK) published the *Book of Common Prayer* with the *Psalms* in 1845 and the whole New Testament (M.A. Camilleri) in 1847.¹ The *British and Foreign Bible Society* (BFBS) published in 1870-1872 the *Gospels of St Matthew and St John* and *'Acts of the Apostles* based on the 1847 New Testament under the direction of M.A. Camilleri.²

The success of these efforts was meagre, first because few could read³ and secondly because the Catholic Church authorities never accepted to disseminate the Bible or parts of the Bible without explanatory notes.⁴

¹ K. Sant, *It-Traduzzjoni tal-Bibbja u l-Ilsien Malti*, Malta: Royal University of Malta, 1975.

² C. Sant, 'Protestant Maltese Bible Translation 1870-72', *Journal of Maltese Studies* 11 (1977) 118-144.

³ These are literacy statistics according to the relative censuses:

YEAR	POPULATION	LITERATE		ILLITERATE		MALTESE			
		TOTAL	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	WRITE	%	READ ONLY
1871	141,755	15,713	11.08	126,042	88.9				
1881	149,782	24,287	16.5	125,495	83.5	184	.001	811	.005
1891	165,037	31,261	18.9	133,776	81.1	18,460	11.1	26,089	15.8
1901	184,742	42,776	23.1	141,966	76.9	26,706	14.4	37,474	20.2
1911	211,564	39,641	18.7	142,113	81.3	10,175	4.8	10,175*	4.8

* Able to write and read in at least one language, Maltese included.

⁴ This disposition has been repealed, AAS 58 (1966) 1186.

During this period Catholic activity in this field was very limited: Richard Taylor published his Psalms and extracts from the Gospels and other biblical portions (1845-48) and G. Muscat Azzopardi started his work on the New Testament in 1895.⁵

The BFBS took the initiative again in 1912 on the suggestion of Mr H.M. Gooch, Secretary General of the *World Evangelical Alliance* (WEA) and Rev. G. Wisely, minister of the Church of Scotland in Malta since 1854.⁶ They published the translation of the Gospel of St Mark and printed again the gospels of St Matthew and St John and the *Acts of the Apostles*, which they had published in 1870-1895.⁷ In this paper I intend to trace the history of this new translation and see what value one can attach to it.

I THE FIRST ABORTIVE ATTEMPT: 1912

In February 1912 there was passing through Malta Mr H.M. Gooch, the General Secretary of the WEA, who met Rev. G.A. Sim, the minister of the Church of Scotland in succession to Rev. G. Wisely, still in Malta.

On the 1st of March 1912 Gooch wrote to Rev. Robert Kilgour, the Editor Superintendant of the BFBS, insisting on the need for the publication of a Maltese Translation of the Gospels of St Matthew and St John, and the *Acts of the Apostles*, or even the whole Bible: '... that your committee intend supplying the deficiency of the Gospels, and as soon as possible to arrange for the translation of the whole Bible in Maltese'.⁸ In the meantime Rev. Sim

⁵ K. Sant, 'Gużè Muscat Azzopardi: Traduttur tal-Vangeli u l-Atti ta' l-Apostoli 1895-1924', *Il-Malti* 54 (1978) 4-55.

⁶ Rev. G. Wisely was the minister for the Church of Scotland in Malta from 1854 to 1896. He was responsible for the building of St Andrew's Church in Valletta. When he retired he remained in Malta up to the outbreak of the War in 1914. He died in Scotland in 1917. Because of his age — he was 87 in 1912 — and long stay in Malta he was the natural leader of Protestants in Malta; he seems to have had a large group of Maltese friends. Rev. H.M. Gooch was the Secretary General of the *World Evangelical Alliance*. He visited Malta in 1912 and 1914; he died in 1919 in Scotland. His last visit to Malta provoked a strong reaction, because of the WEA attempt to establish an agency in Malta with the help of a certain Mr John Falzon, an ex-Catholic priest turned Protestant. Bishop Giuseppe Pace issued a pastoral letter condemning such an initiative and prohibited Maltese to cooperate.

⁷ K. Sant, 'Il-Bibbja bil-Malti: 1822-1973', *Sijon* 6: (1973) 28-31.

⁸ BFBS — Arch[ives] — Cor[respondence] 1912 — Letter 1/3/1912.

wrote to Rev. Kilgour on behalf of Rev. Wisely offering him their cooperation for a possible second edition of Jh, Mt and Acts and a new translation of Lk and Mk, or the whole New Testament: 'This is the time because of increased reading of Maltese in Government Schools'.⁹ Kilgour asked for a specific information from Wisely as to the number of potential readers in Maltese only,¹⁰ at what stage was their translation in hand, and what was his view with respect to a future translation of the whole New Testament.¹¹

Wisely answered in a highly polemical tone describing Malta as '... the most bigoted R.C. spot on earth'. He recalled also that he was counseled by the Governor not to meddle with the religion of the Maltese.¹² Wisely was drawing on his memory; he had distorted recollections about the history of the Maltese Bible, and he was a victim of strong prejudices against the Catholic Church in Malta.

Wisely states that Vassalli had translated the *Book of Common Prayer* and the whole New Testament; in fact he translated only the *Gospels* and *Acts*; that the son of Vassalli – his name is not mentioned – was stoned and had to emigrate to the United States, and that he (Wisely) paid his passage for him; no evidence is produced for this statement.¹³ He continues in stating that the New Testament prepared by Camilleri and published in 1847 was destroyed, and hence only a few copies were extant. This translation of 'Vassalli' contains many archaic words and is written in the old orthography, yet, says Wisely, 'on the whole it is quite a classic as much as Tyndale's was'.¹⁴

Wisely goes on to mention the publications of 1870-72 which were edited by 'a singularly able man M.A. Camilleri'. These translations also contain old words and orthography. Their circulation

⁹ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 15/3/1912.

¹⁰ Cfr. Note 3.

¹¹ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 15/3/1912.

¹² BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 25/3/1912.

¹³ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 25/3/1912.

Cremona did not succeed to find anything substantial as to the career of Vassalli's sons after the death of their father. The eldest, Gabriel, died in Malta in 1863; Mikiel Anton published in Malta a pamphlet on the emigration of the Maltese to North Africa in 1867. Nothing is known about the youngest Saverio. A. Cremona: *Vassalli and His Time* trs. by M. Butcher, Malta, 1940, pp. 117-126. This information of Wisely may shed some light, but, in view of his weak memory at this time it should not be taken at its face value.

¹⁴ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 25/3/1912.

was obstructed by the Archbishop, but copies reached as far as Tunis and Alexandria.¹⁵

In these last twenty-five years, goes on Wisely, Maltese has asserted itself as against Italian (sic); before this time the children did not learn anything and 'the priests loved it so ... were afraid that their property be taxed'. Only 10% of the Maltese understood anything else but Maltese. In actual fact however according to the 1911 census, 18.7% were able to read; 4.8% only Maltese.¹⁶

Wisely used to disseminate the Italian translation of the *Società di San Gerolamo* (Rome),¹⁷ but the Bishop, according to him, did not allow him to distribute the Maltese translation of the same and no printer dared to print it. He was prepared, therefore, to offer to the BFBS the MS of the Gospel of St Luke in Maltese prepared by an Italian priest conversant with Maltese and a sum of money for the expenses within two days.¹⁸

The MS of St Luke was 'a well executed translation as the man who did it, our local colporteur, was an educated man conversant with Greek, Latin and Maltese, which last he spoke fluently'. This translator was Mr Angelo Mastrotto, employed with the Church of the Waldensians of Calabria, Italy.¹⁹

Kilgour accepted to present the MS of Luke to the Editorial Board; he corrected the erroneous views of Wisely about the work of Vassalli and Camilleri's respectively, and he made reference to the translation of St Mark published by G. Muscat Azzopardi and asked for a copy of the same.²⁰

Wisely replied on the 26th April. He stated that he was waiting for a copy of Muscat Azzopardi's translation from the printer. This translation, however, made from Martini's Italian translation, should not be published by the BFBS, because of its obvious deficiency.

¹⁵ BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1912 — Letter 25/3/1912.

This may be a reference to the circular letter dated 6th February, 1892.
¹⁶ Cfr. Note 3.

¹⁷ This society was established in Rome for the distribution of the Gospels in Italian.

¹⁸ BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1912 — Letter 25/3/1912.

¹⁹ BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1912 — Letter 26/3/1912.

²⁰ BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1912 — Letter 2/4/1912.

G. Muscat Azzopardi had began to publish the four Gospels in weekly parts in 1895 (St Mark) and then in 1914.

K. Sant, 'Għażżeġ Muscat Azzopardi Traduttur tal-Vangeli u l-Atti ta' l-Apostoli 1895-1924', *Il-Malti*, 54 (1978) 4-55.

cies, both in the text and worse still in its accompanying notes and comments. Little did Wisely know that the BFBS distributed Martini's translation at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Malta and in Italy.²¹

Wisely confessed that he did not know of Vassalli's edition of the Gospels and Acts in 1829; but he still insisted that the *Book of Common Prayer* and the New Testament of 1847 were his work.²² He further states that Camilleri had left the Island when Wisely himself arrived in Malta in 1854. Certainly Camilleri prepared the editions of John, Matthew and Acts in 1870-72.²³ The translator was E.L. Bevir, an officer in the British Army, expert in linguistics, a biblical scholar and quite familiar with Maltese. Paul Bonavia was just a 'hireling' to help with Maltese.²⁴

On the same date Kilgour wrote to Wisely and on the 27th, the day following, to Rev. Sim asking them for an assurance as to the correctness of the translation. He asked them whether the translation was from the Greek, and from what text; and whether it would not be advisable to print the older editions, rather than embarking on a new one. The BFBS were prepared to publish the four Gospels, and if need be even the whole New Testament.²⁵

In answer to this letter Wisely admitted that his memory was failing him, and, therefore, he suggested that Kilgour would carry on his correspondence with Sim, his successor in the ministry. He told him that A. Mastrotto was the translator, but that it would be advisable to print the old editions without any change. Mr P. Bonavia helped in the translation, which was then revised wholly by M.A. Camilleri. He added that G. Muscat, the printer, would not print, because 'his business would suffer'.²⁶

Sim answered just four days later on the 7th of May. His letter is more enlightening. The translation of St Luke – the MS of which

²¹ K. Sant, *It-Traduzzjoni tal-Bibbja u l-Isien Malti; 1810-1850*, Malta: Royal University of Malta, 1975, p. 9.

²² Vassalli died on the 12th of January 1829.

²³ C. Sant, 'Protestant Maltese Bible Translation, 1870-1872': *Journal of Maltese Studies* 11 (1977) 118-144.

²⁴ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 26/4/1912.

²⁵ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 27/4/1912.

²⁶ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 3/5/1912.

Wisely is not consistent here: in a previous letter he stated that Bevir was the translator; here he says that Camilleri was the man. The latter statement is the correct one.

had been sent 'secretly to London' – was the work of Mr V. Busuttil, A/Inspector of Schools. He worked on the text of the *Società di San Gerolamo*, acting on the instructions of G. Wisely; it was then checked and revised by Mastrotto, who consulted the *Textus Receptus*, the Latin vulgate and Vassalli's translation of 1847. A better man than Mastrotto could not be found. Busuttil had also ready the Gospels of St Matthew, St Mark and St John, for revision. The portions published in 1870-72 are quite satisfactory as they are; if the BFBS had not St Luke, they could take Busuttil's translation, to be revised in proof by Mastrotto.

Sim, on the insistence of 'our present colporteur (a Maltese)' recommended the publication of the whole New Testament, especially of the Letters of St Paul, for whom the Maltese have a special devotion. Wisely was ready to donate £50 for each portion. The name of the Society should not appear on any publication.²⁷

Kilgour replied on the 13th of May; he asked Sim to send him the MS of Busuttil's Mark, which he duly sent on the 20th of the same month. He suggested that there should not be the imprint *BFBS – London*.²⁸ Kilgour did not accept such a suggestion, and he suggested instead to print: *London, 146 Queen Victoria Street 1912 or Port Said*. He passed the offer of Mastrotto to correct the proofs to the Editorial Board.²⁹

Sim suggested to print: *Londra 1912* only.³⁰ He asked whether the BFBS would be ready to permit the National Bible Society of Scotland to print an illustrated edition. With the same letter Sim included Mastrotto's comments on the translation of G. Muscat Azzopardi, which he found to be 'an exact translation, but its comments are full of Roman Catholic errors'.³¹

Kilgour refused to grant the petition of the National Bible Society of Scotland. He asked Sim whether the Ms of Luke and Mark, which he had sent to London, agreed with the texts already published, especially in parallel texts. He further wanted to know what were the qualifications of Mr Busuttil and whether he worked from the Greek text or any other language and whether other Maltese scholars were consulted: 'We are only anxious', writes Kilgour, 'first of all to make sure that what we are asked to publish

²⁷ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 7/5/1912.

²⁸ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 13/5/1912.

²⁹ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 13/5/1912.

³⁰ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 24/5/1912.

³¹ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 30/5/1912.

is in accordance with our rules for translation'.³²

Sim answered on the 10th of June; as to the MS of St Luke he could not say anything except that the orthography is different from that of 1870 and that it is the one used in the schools.³³ Mr V. Busuttil, the translator of St Mark, is an A/Inspector of Schools, author of school text books; but he is unfamiliar with the Greek language, hence he worked on the Italian text of the *Società di San Gerolamo*. Mastrotto is going to revise it. Sim suggested, however, on the advice of Wisely, to consult Miss E.I. Morrell, who was born and brought up in Malta, member of the Church of Scotland, at present resident in England.³⁴

Kilgour wrote back on the 19th June stating that he would be satisfied if Mastrotto would tell them whether the translation of St Luke agreed with the old publications. He sent back the MS of St Mark to be revised by Mastrotto against payment.³⁵

Sim sent Mastrotto's report to London: 'My translation and revisions are fundamentally always Vassalli's [i.e. the edition of 1847] ,... in a more modern dress and with some terms exact (sic.) for our times'. Mastrotto, however, had applied for a new post with the Baptist Church,³⁶ and in fact five days later he was in New York; he promised to continue to help them. But, however, Sim stated that it was not advisable to go ahead before having the report of Miss Morrell.³⁷

Miss Morrell's advice was rather negative: 'I have only a spoken knowledge of the language. It would be better for some revising' she said.³⁸ And on the 26th August she confirmed this view in a letter to Wisely: 'The people make little, if any, use of what there is in print already. One cannot help feeling if a freer distribution of the Word already in hand were made and if it were read by the people, the demand for the Scriptures would be evident, and with the demand, those able and willing to translate.'³⁹ This was the turning point in the planning of this translation.

³² BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1912 — Letter 6/6/1912.

³³ The Alphabet and orthography of the *Società Filologica Maltese*.

³⁴ BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1912 — Letter 10/6/1912.

³⁵ BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1912 — Letter 19/6/1912.

³⁶ BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1912 — Letter 9/7/1912.

³⁷ BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1912 — Letter 14/8/1912 from St Anne-on-Sea, Lancashire.

³⁸ BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1912 — Letter 5/8/1912.

³⁹ BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1912 — Letter 26/8/1912.

On the 8th of October 1912 Wisely, while in London, had an interview with Mr Moule of the BFBS — Kilgour was absent at the time. They agreed that: it would be inadvisable to print Busuttil's translation as revised by Mastrotto, who was not conversant with Maltese spoken in Malta, but in Tripoli; Mastrotto should be thanked and paid for his work; a second edition of Mt, Jh, Acts 1870-72 would be enough; the BFBS should take in hand the translation of the whole New Testament based on Vassalli's, a change in the orthography and of a few words would be enough. 'The difficulty is to find a Maltese scholar capable of carrying out this important revision.'⁴⁰

Sim reported to Kilgour that Mr Mastrotto had moved to Albania (USA), but he was ready to correct the proofs. He reminded him that he, Kilgour, was satisfied with Miss Morrell's opinion and then added: 'It would be a pity if a text went out of the Society, which was markedly awkward in its phraseology here and there.'⁴¹

Five weeks later Kilgour informed Sim of his concern about Miss Morrell's last opinion in contrast to her first one; he was writing to her again. Hence Sim should not drop Mastrotto until further instructions; in the meantime he had to keep his MS and pay for it. Then he concluded the letter: 'If therefore you all think that Mastrotto's work is unworthy of being published by us, the matter must just drop'.⁴²

On the 20th of November Wisely wrote to E.L. Bevir, who was resident in France; he asked him to come over to Malta to prepare a Maltese translation of the whole of the New Testament. Bevir, an old man of 65 years, told him that he could not take charge of this work, before finishing with the printing of the Italian translation. He stated that the 1847 translation contains a lot of Arabic no more in use today, since many latin words have found themselves into modern Maltese. Yet Bevir suggested a reprint of this edition: '... to my mind more classical than the modern form in the popular books you sent me (Galea's writings etc.) ... I doubt if you could beat Vassalli'. He suggested that a Maltese printer would be preferable and added that: 'any attempt to circulate a Maltese version of N.T. would require wisdom, tact, etc. etc.'⁴³

⁴⁰ BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1912 — Letter 12/10/1912 with note dated 8/10/1912 attached to it.

⁴¹ BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1912 — Letter 30/10/1912.

⁴² BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1912 — Letter 25/11/1912.

⁴³ BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1912 — Letter 25/11/1912.

On November 25 Kilgour wrote to Miss Morrell asking her on what grounds did she change her first opinion.⁴⁴ He wrote also to Wisely asking him for his final decision before proceeding further.⁴⁵

Wisely, without further ado, advised Kilgour that the best course would be to publish the whole of the New Testament 'translated homogeneous throughout'. This was the opinion of E.L. Bevir. The basis for such an edition would be the 1847 translation with a modernized orthography and language; the work would be entrusted to Bevir, who would come to Malta. Wisely reports also that Miss Morrell was not enthusiastic with the work of Mastrotto; in fact she suggested the publication of the whole of the N.T. He told him also that Sim had found a young English lady who was ready to revise St Mark of Vassalli with the help of 'a friend'; a printer from the one of the villages would take care of the printing. Wisely was quite ready to subsidise the whole venture.⁴⁶

Miss Morrell confirmed her views against Mastrotto's in a letter to Dr Kilgour.⁴⁷ Wisely at the same time wrote to London: 'I hoped the translation of a book [i.e. the Italian translation of the Society of St Jerome] sanctioned by the Pope would be more likely to be read by the Maltese Roman Catholics, than a N.T. issued by Protestants. The Bishop of Malta will have none of it. We are now free to take the course we have decided upon. Of course I hope to help financially'.⁴⁸

The final decision was to print the former editions of Mt, Jh and Acts as they stood, and then proceed with a new translation of the New Testament. In fact, however, only these three portions and St Mark were printed. Perhaps the war had a say in it.

II THE PUBLICATION OF ST MARK

On the 30th of November 1912 Wisely was of the opinion to publish the whole New Testament. Sim took it upon himself to prepare a revision of St Mark with the help of a young English lady born and brought up in Malta, to be printed at the expense of Dr Wisely.⁴⁹

Eleven months later Sim reported that the Ms of St Mark was ready; the translation was based on a revision of the 1847 edition

⁴⁴ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 25/11/1912.

⁴⁵ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 25/11/1912.

⁴⁶ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 30/11/1912.

⁴⁷ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 2/12/1912.

⁴⁸ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 30/11/1912.

⁴⁹ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1912 – Letter 30/11/1912.

with the help of Professor T. Zammit 'a most competent Maltese scholar in the Island and did work *cum amore*: it can be thoroughly relied upon. It is a first rate text of St Mark'.⁵⁰ The revision consisted in the substitution of archaic words and the change of Camilleri's orthography into that used in the schools then, that is, the one of the *Società Filologica Maltese*.⁵¹ Wisely was so much happy with this 'first rate text of St Mark'⁵² that he decided to print 1000 copies, not just a few on an experimental basis, in London, and with them the other Gospels and Acts at his own expense. Wisely sent a donation of £30 on March of the year following.⁵³

The Editorial Board of the BFBS approved the publication of Mk on the 8th of January 1913.⁵⁴ The work started immediately. The only difficulty that the printers (Billing & Sons, London) found was the printing of g, c, z because of the diacritical points. Sim insisted on g, c, z, but as to b he said that it was not important, and therefore it could be omitted, as in fact it was.⁵⁵

The printing was finished in July.⁵⁶ Kilgour sent a signed copy to Professor Zammit who was already working on Lk, but not to Miss Jenkins, 'the young lady who transcribed a copy of St Mark and is a little disappointed not to have received one. But I am not sure if her assistance were mentioned to you ... Miss Jenkin's address is Via Birchircara, St Julian's'.⁵⁷

Within seven months the printing was ready; but all in all this translation of Mark took them one year and eight months.

CRITICISM

Just three months after the publication, Mr Gooch, the Secretary of the *World's Evangelical Alliance* wrote to Kilgour stating that the Gospel of St Mark was 'badly translated' and 'not faithful'.

⁵⁰ BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1913 — Letter 21/10/1913.

⁵¹ BFBS — Arch. Minutes of the Editorial Standing Committee — 5th November 1913.

⁵² BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1913 — Letter 21/10/1913.

⁵³ BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1913 — Letter 21/10/1913.

⁵⁴ BFBS — Arch. Minutes of the Editorial Standing Committee — 8th November 1913.

⁵⁵ BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1913 — Letter 23/12/1913 and Letter 13/1/1914.

⁵⁶ BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1914 — Letter 9/7/1914.

G. Muscat Azzopardi issued the first appeal for subscribers on the 14th July 1914.

⁵⁷ BFBS — Arch. Cor. 1914 — Letter 9/7/1914.

This criticism was coming from Mr John Falzon⁵⁸ their agent in North Africa. As an example he quoted the translation of James into *Gomu* rather than *Gakbu*. Sim answered that Bevir was pleased with the translation, and, after consulting Professor Zammit, he said that the translators did nothing else but 'put Vassalli's version into modern orthography and to change any obsolete word into a modern equivalent.' Jenkins on her part took responsibility for *Gomu* instead of the correct one *Gakbu*; she thought that *Gomu* was the popular form; Zammit apologized for the oversight. Sim concluded his letter by stating that he was to ask Mr Falzon for a list of 'errors'.⁵⁹

In April 1915 Gooch informed Kilgour that Mr Falzon, who was in Malta, had given a list of errors to Sim, but the latter did not accept it. Falzon declared: 'I will not distribute that edition among the Maltese because it is full of mistakes'. Gooch insisted: '... which [Falzon's comments] as he is a Maltese ought to be correct'.⁶⁰ Kilgour retorted: 'I do not think that too much stress ought to be laid upon the opinion of Mr Falzon ... We are assured that the book is already proving of great use. I hope you will be able to induce Mr Falzon to join the other workers who are helping us in the circulation'. He also described to him how the work was carried out.⁶¹

Kilgour passed the letter to Sim, who, 'exceedingly pressed for

⁵⁸ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1914 – Letter 27/10/1914.

Mr John Falzon was a Maltese priest, who passed over to Protestantism. The WEA took him under its wings with the purpose of sending him to work amongst the 12,000 Maltese resident in Tunis, and then to return to Malta to take charge of Maltese Protestants in the Island. He was sent for training in the Waldensian Teacher's School in Florence (*Life and Faith* 8/4/1914). Falzon and Father Joseph Maurin, both of them members of a religious order, were denounced by Bishop Giuseppe Pace through a Pastoral Letter dated 15th April 1913. In another Pastoral Letter dated 22nd April 1914 the Bishop denounced the activities of the WEA in Malta; three months later Fr Maurin returned to the fold (Pastoral Letter 31st December 1913). Falzon translated the Book of Psalms issued by the BFBS in 1926. Fr Maurin returned back to his protestant friends; he was encouraged or asked to translate the Gospels. His efforts were to no avail. Back in Malta during the war he died in Gozo, reconciled to the Catholic Church.

⁵⁹ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1914 – Letter 5/11/1914.

⁶⁰ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1915 – Letter 21/4/1915.

⁶¹ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1915 – Letter 23/4/1915.

time',⁶² answered in May. He insisted on the fact that the translation is a revision of 'Vassalli's' a 'Protestant himself',⁶³ 'a splendid piece of work and the inevitable basis of all later recensions' with the modern orthography and without any obsolete word; still one might possibly improve upon it in later editions. Falzon followed Diodati, Luzzi and the Vulgate, without consulting the Greek text, because of his ignorance of the language. Thus he translated *de* by *iżda*, which would correspond to the Greek *alla*. That Falzon is a Maltese does not necessarily mean that he is superior or better than Miss Jenkins or Professor Zammit. The style of 'Vassalli' 'is really beautiful'.⁶⁴ Even the translation of Muscat Azzopardi is based on Vassalli's.⁶⁵ With regard to spirituality mentioned by Gooch, Sim answered: 'Vassalli was not only a learned Maltese scholar but an evangelist devout convert (in other words true christian man) who, with his family suffered for his faith'.⁶⁶

The following July Gooch sent to Kilgour a note from Mr Falzon, who still insisted that he had a right to criticize the translation because of his Maltese origins and familiarity with Maltese literature from his early years, and in this Mr Maggi was in agreement with him.⁶⁷ Kilgour, diplomatically, suggested to him a meeting together to discuss the whole matter, if Mr Gooch 'wishes to do anything further'. Thus a ten-months correspondence came to a sudden end.⁶⁸ In the meantime the translations of Muscat Azzopardi were produced and widely distributed.⁶⁹

The list of Mr Falzon contained no less than 31 *corrigena* within the 41 verses of the first chapter only. One may classify them under three headings: vocabulary, grammar, structure.

VOCABULARY AND PHRASEOLOGY

Falzon objected to these words: *Ara*, because it does not mean *behold* but *see*; *Ekku* is the correct equivalent (v. 3); *xandar* should

⁶² BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1915 – Letter 10/5/1915.

⁶³ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1915 – Letter 10/5/1915.

⁶⁴ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1915 – Letter 10/5/1915.

⁶⁵ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1915 – Letter 10/5/1915.

⁶⁶ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1915 – Letter 10/5/1915.

⁶⁷ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1915 – Letter 3/7/1915.

⁶⁸ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1915 – Letter 6/7/1915.

⁶⁹ K. Sant, 'Guże Muscat Azzopardi: Traduttur tal-Vangeli u l-Attu ta' l-Apostoli 1895-1924', *Il-Malti* 54 (1978) 4-55.

be substituted by *priedka* (v. 4); other substitutions: *selvaġġ* for *tax-xagħri*; *deżert* for *xagħra*; *Ġakbu* for *Ġomu* (v. 19); *omm il-mara* for *ħmiet* as in English; *kun nadif* for *indaf* (v. 41); *tkellem* for *qal*.

Falzon criticized the translation of v. 21: ... *u kif daħal fis-sinagoga nhar ta' Sibt, kien iġħalleml*; or v. 24: *x'għandna nagħħmlu miegħek*, a literal translation from the English text; and v. 31: *u malli dana d-deni ġalliba u kienet iddur bibom*; v. 34 is translated thus: ... *u ġareġ bosta xjaten*. Falzon did not admit that *ġareġ* could be used in the transitive voice (cp. v. 39).

Falzon wanted to use more popular terms, which is good in itself, but he did not always grasp the correct meaning of a term. Thus he mixed up *min* with *minn*, and failed to recognize the morphological and semantic value of *ndaf*, an imperative or perfect tense of the seventh form.

GRAMMAR

Falzon misunderstood the construct case of the expression: *leħen minn iġħajjat* (v. 3) *u Kien hemma fix-xagħri erbghin jum* (v. 13). *Erbghin jum* is not a subject, but an adverbial phrase. Nor did he notice the presence of the pronomial suffix with the particle *koll*, in *kollhom* (v. 27) and *u kollhom stagħġibbu*.

STRUCTURE

Falzon described a number of constructions as *bad construction* or '*awkward in Maltese*'. These are five examples from the 14 ones cited by Falzon:

'Kien ġwanni fid-deżert iġħammed, u jxandar il-magħmudija ta' l-indiema għall-maħfra tad-dnubiet' (v. 4);

'U ġara f'dawk il-ġranet illi ġie Gesu minn Nażaret fil-Galilija, u tgħammed minn għand ġwanni fil-Ġordan' (v. 9);

'U qallhom ġesu: ...' (v. 17);

'U daħlu f'Kafarnahum; u kif daħal fis-sinagoga nhar ta' Sibt, kien iġħalleml' (v. 21);

'U kollhom stagħġibbu, hekk illi kienu jistaqsu bejniethom u jgħidu ...' (v. 27).

It seemed to Falzon that these structures are not those current in spoken Maltese, hence strange and awkward. He was not at fault in all cases. In spoken Maltese the verb is no more at the beginning of the sentence, although this may be a more beautiful structure in written language at least in certain cases. We cannot say today how our forefathers used to speak in 1915 but certainly Falzon at the time had been only three or four years only away

from Malta; still he was technically unqualified for the job.

EVALUATION OF THIS TRANSLATION

Sim always insisted that the translators just removed obsolete words and modernized the spelling.⁷⁰ To what extent this revision went? Vassalli's translation of the Gospels was published in 1829 revised by Camilleri in 1847, and the latter translation revised again in 1870-72 by the same Camilleri.⁷¹

The only substantial work in the edition of 1915 was to change Camilleri's orthography of 1870 into that of the *Società Filologica Maltese*, which was used in the schools at the time⁷² and a word here and there. The structure of the sentence was left untouched. Camilleri himself in 1870 stated that when he revised Vassalli's translation in 1847 he left obsolete words or structures in the text.⁷³

This list of changes goes to prove what we have just said:

Chapter 6:

Verse	1847	1914
3	Ġakbu	Ġomu
4	bassar	profeta
	qrabatu	niesu
7	rwieħ l-imniġġsin	spiriti moqżieża
14	Għammiedi	Battista
15	bassar	profeta
	bassarin	profeti
24	Ġwan il-Għammiedi	Ġwan il-Battista
25	għandet	bil-ġiri
46	ġebel	muntanja
48	jisboqhom	ighaddihom
50	jiena jien	jiena hu

⁷⁰ Cfr. Note 64.

⁷¹ C. Sant, 'Protestant Bible Translation 1870-1872', *Journal of Maltese Studies* 11 (1977).

⁷² David Marshall, *History of the Maltese Language in Local Education*, Malta University Press, 1971, p. 66.

⁷³ C. Sant, 'Protestant Bible Translation 1870-1872', *Journal of Maltese Studies* 11 (1977) 120.

Chapter 7:

Verse	1847	1914
2	b'idejhom imniġġsin	b'idejhom maħmuġin
4	inħas	ram
6	Bassar	Ipprofetizza
9	tbatlu	thassru
11	lil missier jew il omm għotि	missieru jew 'il ommu rigal ikun meħllus (addition)
22	il-ħill	is-serq
	tiżmil	il-ghajn hażina
24	Sur	Tur
25	ruħ imniġġsa	spiritu moqžież
31	Sur nofs it-trufijiet	Tur it-truf

One finds therefore 25 changes, that is 25 words out of 1400, 1.7% only. No change in structures but only some words here and there. The only substantial change was in the orthography. The revision by Bonavia in 1870 under the control of Camilleri was more extensive.⁷⁴ Professor Zammit was very cautious in his approach to 'Vassalli's' text; not to say also that the style of Zammit's original writings was completely different from this translation.⁷⁵

This does not mean that it was not a readable and enjoyable translation; what I contend is that it went not far enough to render its reading attractive to the general public, especially the uninitiated. In this respect Falzon was justified in his criticism. There were no substantial mistakes as Falzon insisted,⁷⁶ but just 'imperfections' in style and form which could be removed in a second edition, as the translators themselves admitted.⁷⁷

CONCLUSION

The result of all this activity consisted of the publication of the revised edition of St Mark of 1847; then a second reprint of the translations (Mt 1912 u 1918; Jh 1912, Acts 1912) of 1870-72. The BFBS was moved to act under the aegis of the *World Evangelical*

⁷⁴ C. Sant, *ibid.*, pp. 124-126.

⁷⁵ T. Zammit, *Gabra ta' Kitba Malitja*, Malta 1937.

⁷⁶ BFBS - Arch. Cor. 1915 - Letter 21/4/1915.

⁷⁷ BFBS - Arch. Cor. 1915 - Letter 10/5/1915.

Alliance, very active in Malta in those years, and Rev. G. Wisely, a dynamic and an influential person in Malta.

At this time also Muscat Azzopardi was proceeding very well with his own translation. Sim interpreted this initiative as a reaction to their own work: 'Reference is made, he writes to Kilgour, in the notes to the free scattering of "Protestants" Gospels here, and thus it is intended as a counter action! But one is glad that they feel compelled to issue such a thing at all in the local vernacular'.⁷⁸

And he was not wholly wrong!

DOCUMENTS⁷⁹

(A Selection)

(1)

Extract from a letter from Mr H.M. Gooch, Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance, London, March 1, 1912

In any case, there is an urgent and immediate call for more Maltese Gospels, especially the Gospel of St John, and while I am writing to urge that your Committee will reprint St Matthew's Gospel, and perhaps bind up the copies of the Acts of the Apostles which you still have, (I believe in quires), and place them at the disposal of my Council, I would urge the translation and printing at once of St John's Gospel.

I have also been asked in my report to the Bible Society to very specially urge its undertaking the translation and printing of the entire Bible in the Maltese language.

There are about 215,000 natives on the Islands of Malta and Gozo who speak Maltese. Only about one fourth of the total population can speak either Italian or English in addition. There are 15,000 Maltese in North Africa, who of course can obtain and read the Holy Scriptures in a language other than Maltese, and I am told that the knowledge on the part of many in Malta, who can only speak Maltese, that there is such a book as the Bible in other

⁷⁸ BFBS – Arch. Cor. 1915 – Letter 10/5/1915.

⁷⁹ These documents are found in the Archives of the British and Foreign Bible Society (now just the Bible Society) in London. Many thanks go to Miss K. Cann, the Archivist who put these documents at my disposal and Miss Christiane Denaro and Miss M. Borg for the transcription and typing from the photocopies.

languages, and that their friends who can read these languages have possession of the book, leads many to long to obtain it in the Maltese language, despite the prejudice and enmity of the Priests.

Will you give this question your careful consideration, and I hope I may have the great privilege of reporting to my Council first, and to our friends in Malta later, that your Committee intend supplying the deficiency in Gospels, and as soon as possible to arrange for the translation of the Bible in Maltese.

(2)

Letter from Rev. Dr G. Wisely to Rev. Dr R. Kilgour, March 25, 1912

Dear Dr Kilgour,

I should have replied sooner to your letter of the 15th, but I was too ill when it came, and I am now only slowly recovering from an attack of influenza.

I am deeply interested in the matter of which you write. At present I wish to let you know how things stand. Malta, as you likely know, is the most bigoted R.C. spot on earth. I arrived here in May 1854, and soon after I was told by the Governor not to interfere with the religion of the Maltese. I may mention that before coming here I was some time in Italy as *locum tenens* to the late Rev. Dr Steward of Leghorn and although I could not be called a good Italian scholar I soon was able to make myself understood and I did what I could in the way of circulating Scriptures among Italians and telling them of Christ and His Gospel. To my regret I never acquired the Maltese language.

There were several attempts before my day of getting something done for the Maltese, but nothing came of it. The S.P.C.K. did a great work. They got the New Testament translated into Maltese (and also the Church of England Prayer Book). It was an admirable translation — quite classic — by a scholar and a good Christian man of the name of Vassalli. I never saw him — he was dead before I came, but his son was a member of my congregation, a worthy Christian man — greatly persecuted — stoned out of the Island. I got up a little subscription on his behalf and sent him to America where he died about 40 years ago.

The Maltese New Testaments were mostly destroyed and are not to be had for love or money. I got the late Bishop of Gibraltar (Dr Collins) to write to the S.P.C.K. and they told him they had not a copy! I am glad to say that Mr Sim has a copy. He knows Maltese a little. I know a few words, but I cannot read a word.

I may mention that since Government began to teach the children Maltese in the Government schools there has been a considerable change in the spelling. I believe there are more than a dozen ways of writing the alphabet. Vassalli's translation is more archaic than the present modern Maltese in the Government schools – and one or two words might be modernised but on the whole it is quite a classic – as much as Tyndale's English was.

You know what your B. & F. Bible Society did some 40 years ago. We had some earnest Christian men in the Army then and they got your Society to print some of the Gospels and the Acts. They sent home translations from here but they were revised at home by a singularly able man, the Rev. M.A. Camilleri. He was a R.C. priest here but he had left the Island before I came. He was greatly restricted and the people here had not a word to say against him before he left – all they said afterwards was that he wanted to marry. Anyhow, he became an English clergyman, and died only a few years ago. We have no such man at present. His booklets were very good. They were a little archaic in the spelling, but still they could be easily read. And for some days they were read, but soon afterwards a proclamation came out from the Bishop of Malta who was a shrewd clergyman to this effect: 'Certain booklets have lately come out from the British Society however harmless they may be in themselves, as they have not been issued by the ecclesiastical authority, the faithful are forbidden to read them.' This was read in every parish Church throughout the Island, and it practically put a stop to the circulation of these scriptures in Malta. A good many, however, were circulated among the Maltese out of Malta as in Alexandria, Tunis, etc. There are about as many Maltese out of Malta as in it.

For about a quarter of a century the Maltese language has been taught in the Government schools. Before that Italian was practically the only language. The few children that were sent to school were set to learn not their own language but Italian – quite a foreign language to them. The result was that practically they learned nothing. And the priests loved to have it so. It would take too long to tell how the change was brought about. Some of the natives who had been in England cried out for Commissioners to set things right. There had been Commissioners long before but they had not gone into such matters. The first Commissioner in my time was Mr Rowsell who came to enquire into the incidence of taxation. When it was discovered, after he returned to Malta when his report was published, that he wanted to take off the tax on imported corn

and give the people cheap bread the people rose up and stoned him! The priests were afraid that their property would be taxed.

The second Commissioner was Mr (afterwards Sir Joseph) Keenan (an Irish but liberal R.C.) said to me: 'Rowseil deserved to be stoned for coming back to Malta after his report was published and so should he (Keenan) if he came back!' Keenan recommended Maltese taught to children who knew Maltese. There is no compulsory education in Malta but vast numbers of children are now attending the Government schools. They first learn to read their own language (Maltese) and then they are allowed (or their parents are allowed) to choose either English or Italian or both. The majority prefer English.

I may mention that the native inhabitants among themselves *all* speak Maltese. *Nine tenths of the Population understand no language but Maltese.* It is most desirable that the whole New Testament should be published in Maltese.

But now I must speak about the St Jerome Society's booklet: 'The Four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.'

Ten years ago I was staying with my brother-in-law (Rev. Dr Donald Miller) in Genoa, and he told me that the Pope had recently sanctioned a society of learned R.C.s called after St Jerome, to publish the four Gospels and Acts in good modern Italian with notes, and he suggested that I should get some copies to take with me to Malta as he was afraid the Pope might withdraw the sanction as he had done with the French version by Laserire(?) lately.

Dr Miller and I searched all over Genoa but could not find a copy, but Meille then B.F.B.S. Agent told us that if we applied to their Depositor Mr John Thomas, 63, Due Macelli, Rome, he would get copies for us. I wrote to Mr Thomas and he at once sent me some copies. Subsequently I got intimately acquainted with Mr Thomas and through him I got hundreds of copies and distributed them both in Italy and in Malta. I am under great obligations to Mr Thomas and especially for enabling me to make the acquaintance of Father Genocchi, the writer of the notes in the St Jerome Society's booklet. When my wife and I were in Rome in 1903 he tried to do so then. He asked if we would take tea with him and he would ask Father Genocchi to meet us but he had to go to Naples and was not to return till Monday after we left Rome. I enclose Father Genocchi's note to Mr Thomas. I made his acquaintance through Mr Thomas in 1906. I was greatly impressed with Genocchi as a truly enlightened spiritually minded man. He is very

learned, and my impression is that the Church of Rome is proud of him. Cardinal Rampolla, I saw in some paper was on a Commission with him, but I believe Cardinal del Val hates him, and has managed to suppress the St Jerome Society. After our Thomas left Rome (to my great regret) I had no one to supply me with the St Jerome Society's booklets so I wrote to Father Genocchi and he managed to get me a good supply but I believe they are the last that will be printed. I send you a couple of copies.

I heard that Mr Thomas had been on a visit to Rome last winter, and I wrote to our Presbyterian Minister there if he could give me his address but he told me he had not left his address. If you could see him he could tell you all about Father Genocchi. He may not know that in July last year he was sent on an Apostolic Delegation to Lima, Peru. I have not heard from him or of him since. I hope no evil has befallen him.

I must not weary you but I must say a few words in answer to your letter. Your Society does not publish Scripture with notes. As the St Jerome Society's booklet had the Pope's authority I was anxious to have it translated into Maltese in order that the Maltese might be allowed to read it. But the Bishop refuses to sanction it. And I cannot get a printer in Malta to print it. I have got it translated at considerable expense by a good translator (a Roman Catholic of course) but the translation is lying on my hands. Last summer Dr Sim and I thought it would be well to get a single Gospel (St Luke) published separately. We had at the time a converted Italian priest on the Island who knows several languages - Maltese among them. We got him to revise the one I had made by the R.C. translator. Mr Sim got a Maltese printer to print a thousand copies - at least to promise to print it, but when it came to be done, he refused. In the course of a day or two I may send it to you, but unless you have someone who knows Maltese it will be of no use. If there were someone like Mr Camilleri it would be an easy matter.

Mr Gooch (sec. Evangelical Alliance) was here lately but it was at the time when I was so ill I could see no one. So I did not see him. But Mr Sim is set on having the things done - but how to do it I know not! You can count on me for a little financial help.

You will understand of course that there is much in what I have written now that would not do to be published and is to be considered private.

Yours sincerely,
(signed) George Wisely

(3)

*Letter from Rev. Dr G. Wisely to Rev. Dr R. Kilgour, April 26,
1912*

Dear Dr Kilgour,

I have been somewhat of an invalid and was unable to enquire till yesterday about the Roman Catholic edition of St Matthew's Gospel translated by Muscat Azzopardi and printed at Malta in 1895-7. Some years ago I heard that the Bishop of Malta had given this man permission to publish a translation from Martini with Martini's notes which are very polemical but even it was not smiled on, and I had a friend who knows Maltese and who went recently to every bookseller's shop in the Island and could not get a copy. Some years ago I had an interview with the Marchesa Mattei, and she seemed to approve of the St Jerome Society's booklet being translated into the Maltese language (the only language understood by nine tenths of the Maltese people). A day or two afterwards, the Marchesa told me that the Bishop (His Grace the Lord Archbishop Bishop of Malta) had told Monsignor Stonor and her that I was mistaken for there was this translation by Muscat Azzopardi and he would send her a copy. She promised to send it on to me. This was years ago, and it has never come!

There is a Roman Catholic bookseller who publishes Roman Catholic literature and he told me that Muscat Azzopardi's translation was published in parts. I gathered from him that in a day or two he could collect them and let me have a copy. When I get it I will send it to you. You can compare it with the copy in the British Museum Library. It is not what the British & Foreign Bible Society would publish. Nor would I, much as I should like to see the Maltese people have even a portion of Scripture in their own tongue. Martini's translation is bad and his notes are worse. This is all I have to say on that subject. There are one or two other points I should like to notice.

According to your Historical Catalogue you say it was the version of the Gospels and Acts published by the C.M.S. at London in 1829 with the Latin text which was prepared by M. Vassalli. This of course was before my day. I never heard of it, but it is quite impossible that it was prepared by Vassalli (sic). I know for certain that Vassalli prepared the New Testament in 1845 and 1847. It was not M.A. Camilleri. I am almost certain that Vassalli translated the Prayer Book but I was not so much interested in it as in the New Testament. I may mention that a year or two ago I asked Dr Collins the late Bishop of Gibraltar to write to the S.P.C.K. to

see if they had a copy of Vassalli's N.T. They replied that they had not a single copy remaining. They added that they had a copy of the Prayer Book but it was mere gibberish! I know from good authority that both N.T. and Prayer Book are excellent. The notation is somewhat antique.

I came to Malta in 1854. Camilleri left Malta shortly before I came but up to the last he was considered as a model R. Catholic. He was a clergyman of the Church of England for about half a century. No doubt he prepared an edition of St John's Gospel but he also revised other portions (St Matthew and the Acts) published by the Bible Society in 1870 and 1871. You say they were prepared by Paul Bonavia, and in a sense that is true but he was a mere hireling called in to assist in the Maltese language. The men whose heart was in the work were several earnest Christian officers — the chief one was Mr E.L. Bevir, then a young Artillery Officer.

Bevir was a linguist — a first class Greek Scholar. He translated from the Greek N.T. and he knew a little Maltese so that he was able to see that Bonavia was rendering the text properly. I was told at the time that Mr Camilleri revised the whole. Bevir left the Army and has published religious books in many languages — Italian, French and other European languages but also Arabic. Had he remained in Malta, he would have been able to translate the N.T. in Maltese. About 20 years ago he published the N.T. in Italian (*Nuovo Testamento — versione nuova*) at Milan. He was poorly at the time and not able to correct the proofs so there were a good many misprints but he writes me that he is soon to publish a new edition. He lives at Valence in France. You likely know of a new translation of the N.T. in Italian — '*Il Nuovo Testamento Annotato*, Roma Società Fides et Amor. Dr Lazzi a professor in the Waldensian College Florence is the chief of the 'Società Fides et Amor'.

Excuse this long letter. I will send you the R.C. edition of St Matthew when I get it which I hope to do next week.

Yours very sincerely,
(signed) George Wisely

(4)

Letter from Rev. Dr George Wisely to Rev. Dr R. Kilgour May 3, 1912

Dear Dr Kilgour,
Thanks for your letter of the 26th April. I am under the impres-

sion that I wrote to you a day or two before receiving it. I know I wrote in answer to yours of the 2nd April, but I think I wrote again. My memory, however, which was once good, is now failing, and owing to this and the state of my health (I am in my 87th year) I am glad that Mr Sim has undertaken to write to you in my stead. He succeeded me as Minister in the Scotch Church here when I retired in 1896 and he had been my Assistant for three years before. We are in constant communication and hold similar views.

My immediate object in writing to you at present is to let you know that we had a visit yesterday from Signor Angelo Mastrotto, who prepared the translation of St Luke, of which Mr Sim sent you the M.S. You speak of him as former Colporteur. He may have acted here partially as a Colporteur, but he is an Evangelist and at present is acting as an Evangelist at Falerna, Calabria, under the Waldensian Mission of which Mr Muston (now in England) is the Head. I may mention that we have here a Colporteur — not under Mr Muston but supported otherwise. He is not an educated man like Sigr. Mastrotto but good in his way as a Colporteur, and I may remark that he has been selling portions of your Maltese Gospels and Acts. And in this connection I would strongly recommend that you should reprint *all* the portions you have. *Print them just as they are.* Curiously enough neither Mr Sim nor I remember what portions you have. St Matthew and St John and the Acts of the Apostles — I have a few copies of all these — especially the Acts. I have the impression that St Mark was *not* translated and we are not aware of St Luke having been. You do not mention any but St Matthew and the Acts as published by the Bible Society in 1870-71 said to be translated by Bonavia (who was merely engaged by earnest Christian Officers to help them in the language). These were revised by Mr Camilleri. I have an impression that there were more at the time. The then Bishop of Malta issued a pastoral which was read in all the parish churches saying: 'Certain booklets have recently been sent from a foreign Society, *however innocent in themselves*, as they have not been issued with ecclesiastical authority, the faithful are forbidden to read them.'

When I asked Mr Muscat the printer and proprietor of the Malta Herald, who is a friend of mine, whether he would print the translation of the St Jerome Society's booklet, he said that without ecclesiastical authority, it would be denounced by ecclesiastical authority, and the people would be afraid to read it — and besides that his business would suffer. I have got from him another copy of Muscat Azzopardi's translation of Martini — more like a book than

the one I sent you. I had to wait some days as he had to get the leaves bound together. It looks as if it were old — any how I send it as it is. Mastrotto read a little of it to me. The preface is a curiosity.

I cannot write more at present but with kind regards and praying God to bless you in your great work, I am, dear Mr Kilgour,

Yours faithfully,

(signed) George Wisely

(5)

Letter from Rev. G. A. Sim to Rev. R. Kilgour, May 7, 1912

Dear Dr Kilgour,

I duly received your letter of the 27th April and have been in consultation with Dr Wisely on the subject of it. Fortunately, our late colporteur (who is now employed in Italy) was passing through here the other day, and I was able to get some definite information from him as to the exact basis of the MS of St Luke's Gospel in Maltese, executed by him and secretly forwarded to you by us. He tells me it is a *revision* by him of a previous translation — not an original translation of his own. This previous translation was done by Mr V. Busuttil, Assistant Inspector of the Government Schools in Malta, who was employed by Dr Wisely to do it. As far as the colporteur can judge, this translation by Mr Busuttil follows closely the Italian text of St Luke published by the Pia Società di San Gerolamo which Dr Wisely had requested Mr Busuttil to translate into Maltese.

The colporteur took this translation of Mr Busuttil and revised it carefully, using the Greek text (Textus Receptus I think), the Vulgate and Vassalli's Maltese text for purposes of comparison, so as to bring it as near to the original as possible. From my knowledge of Sig. Mastrotto, (the colporteur), his ability and carefulness, I think it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find a better translator or reviser of Maltese Scriptures than he.

Next, regarding the MSS of the other Gospels. Dr Wisely has placed them in my charge and asks me to tell you about them. They contain St Matthew, St Mark, and St John's Gospels, done into Maltese by Mr Busuttil on similar lines to that of St Luke. But, whereas the MS of St Luke which I sent you, has been revised by Sig. Mastrotto, the MSS of the other three Gospels are Mr Busuttil's work *unrevised*.

From Sig. Mastrotto's opinion and from my own knowledge of Maltese, I consider that the existing translations already published by your Society are good enough to reprint, pretty much as they stand. But if you have not already a translation of St Luke's Gospel, I would recommend the use of Sig. Mastrotto's revised version of Mr Busuttil's translation of that Gospel. And if you have not already a version of St Mark's Gospel I would recommend your Society to take Mr Busuttil's translation of that Gospel, print proof-sheets of it with wide margins and send the proof-sheets to Sig. Mastrotto for correction and revision. Sig. Mastrotto is willing to undertake this task, and Dr Wisely is prepared to contribute to the cost of it. Should your Society decide on this, please inform me and I shall forward the MS of St Mark to you.

Lastly, our present colporteur, (a Maltese) is urging upon us the importance of having the whole New Testament in Maltese, and especially the Pauline Epistles. The Maltese revere St Paul greatly, but his writings are totally inaccessible to them at present. I agree with the colporteur in this. The Epistles could be translated one by one and issued separately till the whole N.T. was completed.

Should your Society decide on this, Sig. Mastrotto is willing to execute the successive Epistles, on the basis of Vassalli's version of them.

Vassalli's N.T. in Maltese is very good, but antiquated in phraseology and in spelling; it contains obsolete words not understood by modern Maltese. It is to all successive versions what Tyndale's version is to the A.V. and R.V. in England.

I have a copy of it, but it is a rare book now, most difficult to obtain. Sig. Mastrotto could revise and modernise it, in words and spelling, most competently. Dr Wisely is prepared to assist in the cost, to the extent of £50, on each work if necessary, he says.

I ought to add that Sig. Mastrotto, though employed as colporteur while here, is really an evangelist — a good preacher and a literate of considerable talent. He is now pastor of the Waldensian Church at Falerno, province of Catanzaro, Calabria, S. Italy.

With thanks for the kind interest you and the B. & F. Bible Society are taking in this subject,

I am,
yours sincerely,

(signed) G. A. Sim
Pres. Chaplain

P.S. I forgot to say that if the B. & F. Bible Society reissues their existing publications in Maltese, or any new ones, it would be advisable not to put either the name of the Society or the place of publication on the title page, as either of these would be adverse to the sale and use of the books in Malta.

G.A.S.

(6)

Letter from Rev. G. A. Sim to Rev. Dr R. Kilgour, June 10, 1912

Dear Dr Kilgour,

I am in receipt of your favour of the 6th and have shown it to Dr Wisely.

With regard to what you ask about Sig. Mastrotto's translation of St Luke being in line with your already existing translations of other Gospels – not having Sig. Mastrotto's mss here, I cannot give you an authoritative opinion on this point. I shall, however, write and ask him. But, it should be noted that, as he has not the mss now in his possession, it may be difficult, if not impossible, for him to compare the parallel passages, unless you send him the mss. Otherwise he can only reply from memory. One feature of difference there will certainly be: the older system of Maltese spelling of words (in which your versions are written), has been now changed as regard certain letters (e.g. the guttural h). In Maltese schools here now this newer system is in use. Sig. Mastrotto's translation is spelled in the newer mode (which is correcter).

As regards the mss of St Mark which I sent you, I took particular care in my accompanying letter, the one before that of May 30, to give you information on all the points you now ask about.

I mentioned (1) that Mr Busuttil was Assistant Inspector of Government Schools in Malta (since then he has been promoted to be Inspector). I may now add that he has published several school-books in Maltese which are in use in the local schools. I mentioned (2) that his translation was made at Dr Wisely's request from the Italian version of the Pia Società di San Gerolamo – not from the Greek. As far as I am aware, Mr B. does not know Greek.

I mentioned (3) that Mr B's translation of St Mark has *not* been revised nor corrected by Sig. Mastrotto. Nor has it been so by any other scholar, and therefore suggested that it might be printed in proofs and the proofs sent to Sig. Mastrotto for revision and correction, which work Sig. Mastrotto is willing to undertake.

There is a lady now resident in London – Miss Morrell – born

and brought up in Malta and able to read Maltese, a good and intelligent member of the Scots Church here. Dr Wisely is, I think, suggesting to her that she might call at your office and read enough of Sig. Mastrotto's St Mark from the mss to satisfy us all that his translation is such as can be read easily by an ordinary Maltese. Personally, I have no doubt about it. But, as Mr Busuttil's translation is from the Italian version above mentioned, I think it would be advisable to have it revised by Sig. Mastrotto to be a similar text to your versions.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

(signed) G.A. Sim

(7)

Letter from Miss E.I. Morrell to Rev. Dr G. Wisely, August 26, 1912

The Limes,
Odd Down,
Bath.

Dear Dr Wisely,

Your note, with Mr Sim's to you, enclosed, has just reached me. I am so sorry to have been away from Brockley while you were at Orpington, as it would have been easy for me to come and talk upon the subject uppermost (MS of St Luke). I return to Brockley tomorrow, and as I have sent my trunk in advance, the two or three notes I made about the MS are not to hand. The MS I returned to Dr Kilgour at his request, the early part of this month with the same remarks I made you. He wrote and thanked me on receipt of same.

I can only repeat what I have already said — that if Mastrotto is familiar with the Maltese language, better still, if he is a Maltese and a scholar — then it will be well to abide by his MS. I have little knowledge of the written language. The chapters I read, I read audibly, allowing the familiar sound to help me in judging, with the result that I felt here and there sentences might have been put in a simpler way. But you will rightly conclude this is no scholar's method of testing, and therefore I certainly think it wise to abide by Mastrotto's MS if you must print.

'All the years I lived in Malta, never did I know of one Maltese possessing a single Gospel, nor did a copy ever come my way. Of

course, I could have asked you for one, but that is not the point. The fact remains that the people *make little if any use of what there is in print already*. And one cannot help feeling that if a freer distribution of the Word *already in hand* were made and *if it were read by the people*, the demand for the Scriptures would be evident, and with the demand, those *able and willing* to translate.

Yours etc.,

(signed) Emily I. Morrell

(8)

Letter from Mr E.L. Bevir to Rev. Dr G. Wisely, November 25, 1912

Valence

Mr dear Dr Wisely,

I send at once a few lines to acknowledge yours of the 20th. But kindly notice that this is not a full answer but a few preliminary remarks to a letter that shall follow D.V.

It is Monday morning and I had two heavy 'services' yesterday and I am feeling very tired.

But I wish to notice your letter, which crossed one of mine in reply to a previous one of yours.

I must give my attention first to the Italian Testament but all the great work of this is done, and the correction of the proofs would not prevent me from attempting other work at the same time — such work as you suggest. But I do not think that I could come to Malta, at least until the Italian is finished. Possibly (if I find after some study, that I could succeed in such an enterprise) I could get the proofs sent to Italy, while I was at work on the Italian proofs.

But now a few preliminary remarks. The Maltese language has changed considerably since 1847 (date of my birth and of Vassalli's edition!) — and many Latin (Italian) words have crept since.

Ex: Vassalli St John XV. 1

Yena hu id dielya sewa, u Missieri hu il jennien. In Maltese of the present day (see in 'Mogħdija taż-Żmien') it would go more like: jena hua id dielia vera, dielia vera 'the true Vine' *vera* instead of the semitic sewa, u Missieri hua el gennien.

This is only one example, but I could give you hundreds.

I think I once remarked to you that Vassalli's version is thoroughly good — the language (as you say) is antiquated i.e. it comes

much nearer to pure Arabic than the present Maltese – to my mind a thousand pities that it is not in Arabic character.

E.G. St John XIV.4 (Vassalli)

U feyn yena seyer tafu, u tafu it trick.

وَفِينَ يَنَا سَيْرٌ تَفْعَلُ وَتَفْعَلُ الظَّرْبُلُ

In the Bible Society's version (the one I had a hand in at Malta) they add ucol (also) كـل – (but Vassalli keeps quite close to the Greek).

I should think seriously – and consult my learned Maltese – as to bringing out Vassalli; but I suppose that it would be quite comprehensible – the language rather antiquated – like our Authorized Version – but to my mind more classical (in a semitic sense) than the more modern form in the popular books such as you sent to me (Galea's writings, etc.)

I doubt if you could beat Vassalli: then as to the mere question of *notation* (which has changed) I see no difficulty at all.

One would have to change, for example, Vassalli's א (Hebrew י) from à into gh: and several other letters, but no difficulty that I can see.

I learned the Hebrew παραδείγματα at Malta and greatly blame myself for not having learned Arabic then. Nicol & Browne taught me Hebrew; and I was employed in 1879 and 80 on a French translation of the Old Testament. Then I acquired Arabic much later in life (with enough Syriac to refer to the Peshito i.e. the ~~بـلـهـوـج~~). I had some little work on Maltese in 1900-01. I think I sent you some sheets. It would be better, I suppose, if the attempt be made to have a Maltese printer. I do not see any insuperable obstacle to such a work.

Then as to the end of your letter: Soyez tranquille! If a reasonable printer can be found, any other work done upon such a Book shall be very reasonable also; supposing always that the work appears to be possible (see below*). I send a few verses merely to notice how speedily (in everything) the answer comes to a real cry to Jehovah.

Ever yours affectionately,

(signed) Ed. L. Bevir

*This letter is of course only to suggest care and reflection. I recollect Capt. Pepper's rash action, and the fatal consequences. Any attempt to circulate a Maltese version of N.T. would require

wisdom, tact, etc. etc. Pepper was eminently pious, but not wise.
Captain Witless!

I have just found a Gospel of St John published in London 1822
(Maltese and Italian). The printer leaves the *E* in the Arabic form,
the rest of the type roman.

E.L.B.

(9)

Letter from Rev. Dr G. Wisely to Rev. Dr R. Kilgour, November 30, 1912

Dear Dr Kilgour,

Mr Sim and I received your letters this morning and have talked matters over together. He is very busy and I fear will not be able to write to you by this mail. We are both of the same opinion in the matter we have so much at heart, and you may regard this as coming from us both.

We have both come to the conclusion that the thing we should aim at is to have the *whole* New Testament translated and that it should be homogeneous throughout. There are many ways of writing Maltese. I was told there are thirteen different ways of writing the letters. Anyhow, it would not do to have some parts written in one way and other parts in another. We have come to the conclusion that the best plan would be like Vassalli's translation published by the S.P.C.K. in 1847. It is extremely difficult to get a copy. The late Bishop of Gibraltar (Dr Collins) wrote to the Society to see if they had a copy, but they had not any — not even one, and they did not know where to get one.

Fortunately, we have got one, and my friend Mr Bevir, has one. It was he that was the leading man in getting the B. & F. Bible Society's booklets translated over 40 years ago. He was then a young Artillery Officer, but he left the army and devoted his life to evangelistic work. Some twenty years ago, he translated the New Testament into Italian. When it was passing through the press, he fell ill and in consequence there were many Printer's errors which made it somewhat of a failure, but he is busy now in preparing a new edition, and he is taking great care to see that it shall be well done. I have not seen him for over 40 years but we have kept up our acquaintance by correspondence. I have been consulting him about this matter of ours and I received a letter from him yesterday which I showed to Mr Sim, and I now enclose it for you to read.

Kindly return it to me. You can just put it in an envelope to my address even if you do not write a letter with it. By the way, I may mention that letters from England to Malta require only a penny an oz postage.

You will see what he says of Vassalli's translation. It confirms what we know from other reliable sources. Vassalli was a wonderful scholar. And those able to judge say that his Maltese New Testament is very like what Tyndale's was to the English Authorized Version. Its notation is not quite the same as what is usual now — some archaic words might be better changed into everyday ones — modern. But that is really all that is required. It may take some time. I suggested to Mr Bevir that he might come to Malta to help us. Mr Bevir is a linguist. I am not. I have been over 58 years in Malta and I do not know the letters — I cannot read a single word word of it. I was in Italy for a year before I came to Malta, and I had not been above a month in Italy, before I could make my way in Italian. Mr Bevir is a linguist. He knew no Italian when he came here but he is quite at home with it now. And he can read a little Maltese. He is not so good at it as he is with Gaelic. He did not know a word of Gaelic till he was 15 years of age, and now he can preach in Gaelic, as he did some time ago to a Highland Regiment passing through Egypt.

Now about Miss Morrell. She certainly was not enthusiastic about the translation of St Luke when I saw her, but the advice she gave I thought most sensible. She said that we should use your Maltese booklets till the whole New Testament came out. That is what we are doing. And I was glad to hear from Mr Gooch that the Evangelical Alliance is coming to our help in the matter.

I may mention that Mr Sim is getting a young lady to try her hand at turning Vassalli's St Mark into present day Maltese, and he is getting a Maltese friend to help. Mr Sim knows a printer in one of the villages, who is not afraid of the Bishop's anathemas, and Mr Sim thinks he will print it. Mr Sim's idea is not to print many copies but just a few. He would send a copy to you and then if you like Mr Bevir — (not that there are many like Mr Bevir). I am willing to be financially responsible for this. It will be merely a temporary experiment, it will not interfere with the final Maltese translation of the whole New Testament.

Great care must be taken as Mr Bevir suggests. When we first got the B. & F. Bible Society Gospel 40 years ago (or more) things went well apparently but a good man (a Capt. Pepper) thought he would do good by sending copies to all the Parish Priests. The

consequence was that the Bishop (who was clever) immediately issued a Pastoral (which was read in all the Churches) to this effect: 'Certain Booklets have recently come out from a foreign Society, however innocent in themselves, as they have not been issued by ecclesiastical authorities, the faithful are forbidden to read them.' And the faithful did not read them!

I was very sorry to miss you. I was delighted, however to meet Mr Mould. Please remember me very kindly to him. And believe, dear Dr Kilgour,

Your most cordially,

(signed) George Wisely

We had a Dr Kilgour in my younger days — a most eminent physician. My brother (who has been dead for more than 60 years) was one of his students and looked up to him with reverence.

(10)

Letter from Rev. Dr G. Wisely to Rev. Dr R. Kilgour, Malta, December 16, 1912

Dear Dr Kilgour,

I received the enclosed letter from my friend Mr Bevir today with Mr Carruthers' letter to him. I showed them to Mr Sim and he thinks like myself that it might be well for me to let you have a read(?) of them. I may remark that they are not so much about the translation of the New Testament into Maltese or into Italian. I think I told you that Mr Bevir issued an Italian translation of the N.T. 22 years ago. He was not in good health when he was passing it through the Press and he had little or no assistance and so there were a good many printer's errors in it but on the whole it was well done. I liked it better than any other and I read it through from beginning to end two if not three times. I did not read it for the purpose of correcting the mistakes although I pointed out a few, but for my own edification. I did the same with St Jerome Society's booklet (Four Gospels and Acts of the Apostles). I knew Italian well enough to read both with ease — and with pleasure. I happened to be some time in Italy before coming to Malta and I had not been a month or two in Italy before I could make my way in Italian. I have been over 58 years in Malta and I cannot read a word of Maltese!

Allow me to explain what Mr Bevir says about £50 I sent him towards helping on his revision of the Italian New Testament. I

had difficulty in getting him to take it. When I assured him it wasn't a present to himself, but for the work he accepted it and sent me a formal receipt lest he should die before his revised version was issued from the Press. It will be several months yet.

One reason (among many) why I regret not having had the pleasure of seeing you personally is that I should have liked to talk about this new version of Mr Bevir's 'Nuovo Testamento'. I feel pretty sure that it will be worthy of your support. Dr Luzzi is a personal friend of mine. Mrs Luzzi is a cousin of my wife's. He is in America (lecturing in various Universities at present) so I did not see him in passing through Florence the other day. But Mrs Luzzi agreed with me that his Italian N.T. is too bulky — too heavy. Professor Luzzi is a first class Italian scholar. But you will see what Bevir and Carruthers say. So I need not write more at present. I may say, however, I have already spent more money in getting the St Jerome's booklet translated into Maltese than I have done towards Mr Bevir's new revision of his Italian N.T. I hoped the translation of a book sanctioned by the Pope would be more likely to be read by the Maltese Roman Catholics than a N.T. issued by Protestants. The Bishop of Malta will have none of it. We are now free to take the course we have decided on. Of course, I hope to help financially.

Please kindly return to me the enclosed. You are a busy man and you need not write a letter in reply. With kind regards and all good wishes — for Christmas and New Year.

Yours most sincerely,

(signed) George Wisely

(11)

Letter from Rev. G. A. Sim to Rev. Dr R. Kilgour, October 21, 1913

Dear Dr Kilgour,

We have had no correspondence for some time back about the *Maltese Gospels*.

I now write to say that the MS translation of St Mark's Gospel in Maltese is now ready.

It is not an entirely new translation *ab initio*, but a revision of the Maltese text of St Mark in Vassalli's version of 1847 (S.P.C.K.), which is to the Maltese N.T. what Tyndale's version is to us in English.

Vassalli's text of St Mark has now been written out in Modern

Maltese orthography, according to the standard used in the Maltese schools today. Then it has been carefully revised by Prof. T. Zammit, with some assistance from me, Vassalli's obsolete words being replaced by words in use today. The result is what is, in my opinion, a first rate text of St Mark. Prof. Zammit is the most competent Maltese scholar in the island and did the work *cum amore*: it can be thoroughly relied on.

Dr Wisely has, I think, already indicated his willingness to assist in the cost of publication.

With kind regards,
Yours very sincerely,
(signed) G.A. Sim

(12)

Letter from Rev. Dr R. Kilgour to Rev. G. A. Sim, October 27, 1914

The Rev. G. A. Sim
Malta

Dear Mr Sim,

Mr Gooch, the Secretary of the World's Evangelical Alliance, writes to me saying that he has received from his agent in North Africa, the Rev. John Falzon, the following comment upon the version of St Mark:

'I was very glad to receive from Mr Liley the Maltese Gospels, but I am sorry to say that Mark's is very badly translated, and many times it is not faithful to the text. Yesterday before preaching, I read the last chapter of St Mark, but I am obliged to correct about thirty mistakes. It will be sufficient to tell you that *James* in the first verse is called *Jerome*. I am sorry for that because I am told that the priests in Malta are translating into Maltese the New Testament so that they can accuse us of infidelity. I think it my duty to inform you about this matter.'

In acknowledging Mr Gooch's communication I pointed out to him that there has evidently been some mistake somewhere as Mark 16, 1 in the edition recently published by us contains no such name for James (Sic). I shall be glad if you will give me further hints for reply.

With kind regards,
Yours sincerely,
(signed) Kilgour
Edit. Supt.

(13)

Letter from Rev. G.A. Sim to Rev. Dr R. Kilgour, November 5, 1914

Dear Dr Kilgour,

In answer to your letter of the 27th October, I have consulted Prof. Zammit and Miss Jenkin re the translation of 'James' in the Maltese St Mark.

The former states that 'Gomu', the word used in our translation, is used for 'James' in popular Maltese parlance, but that it is also used for 'Gerolamo' and that 'Jacbu' would have been the more formal and correct word to have used. He regrets that this escaped his attention when revising the translation.

In Vassalli's version, it is 'Jakbu', and Miss Jenkin, who translated Vassalli's version of St Mark into modern Maltese orthography is responsible for writing 'Gomu'.

She thought this was right, as 'Gomu' is used for 'James' in popular speech.

I am at a loss to understand how Sig. Falzon can have found as many as twenty errors in one chapter, and especially astonished at the announcement that the text has not been faithfully adhered to.

Vassalli's version is, I know, most faithful to the *Textus Receptus*, and all that we did was to put Vassalli's version into modern equivalent.

I think Sig. F. is hyper-critical. I am writing to ask him for a list of the errors complained of, and shall, if they are of any real importance, communicate with you. But Mr Bevir – a good English Gentleman – a scholar in Maltese and Arabic generally – a friend of Dr Wisely's to whom Dr W. send a copy of our St Mark – thinks it very good.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

(signed) G.A. Sim

P.S. I should be thankful for a grant of 200 German N.T. for prisoners of war here.

(14)

Letter from Mr H.M. Gooch to Rev. Dr R. Kilgour, April 21, 1915

Dear Dr Kilgour,

Maltese Gospels

Some time ago we were in correspondence concerning your new translation of St Mark's Gospel in Maltese. I reported to you what one of Agents (Sic), Mr Falzon, had said concerning parts of the translation. Mr Falzon has just been to Malta and on his return to Tunis has written to me a full report. In his letter he states as follows:

'To the Rev. Sim I brought the corrections of the Gospel of St Mark but he has not approved them all. I think that as a Maltese I am more competent than him to judge the matter, but we could not persuade him, although Mr Maggi and our friends have been unanimous in disproving that translation. At any rate, I will not distribute that edition among the Maltese because it is full of mistakes.'

I merely send you Mr Falzon's comments, which as he is a Maltese, ought to be correct. No doubt you will be glad to have the criticism and will deal with it? I enclose the current issue of 'Evangelical Christendom' in which you will find I have referred to the Bible Society and to the Maltese translation (Page 47).

With kind regards,

I am,

Yours very truly,

(signed) H.M. Gooch

(General Secretary/*World Evangelical Alliance*)

P.S. Was this translation effected by a Maltese?

(15)

Extract from letter of Mr Falzon to Mr Gooch, June 1915

'As regards the translation of Mark's Gospel, I cannot understand why you do not agree with my criticism. The fact that I am Maltese, that the Maltese language is my language and the only language that I speak perfectly from childhood, as Englishmen speak English, I think it is the best reason I may present to you to make you agree with my criticism.

Moreover, I have also the honour to say that from my youth I have cultivated the Maltese literature, being for a long time collaborator of several Maltese newspapers, being also committed to me the leading article.

Now, let you, please also know that when I was in Malta Mr Maggi and some of our friends talked with me about the numerous mistakes contained in the translation of Mark's Gospel; that Mr Maggi had also presented to Mr Sim the same remarks, which has been presented by me to you, without knowing nothing what I have written to you. In one word, while I was presenting to you my remarks, Mr Maggi was also presenting to Rev. Sim the same remarks; while I was criticising the translation of the Gospel of St Mark from Tunis Mr Maggi was doing the same criticism from Malta, without knowing nothing about the criticism of each other. Rev. Sim blamed Mr Maggi (as I have been informed by the same Mr Maggi when in Malta) saying to him that Mark's translation is well done, and that there is no place for remarks.

Well, now I enclose within the same the *first Chapter of Mark's Gospel**, containing my remarks, which you find also explained in a separate paper. I do it just to give you an essay of my criticism.'

*not forwarded to you or I presume you have seen it.

(16)

J. Falzon's remarks upon the First Chapter of the Gospel of St Mark, June 26, 1915

v. 2 The word 'Behold' is translated by the word 'Ara' which is indeed a Maltese word, but never used in the sense of *Behold*.

It means *See* but only when the attention of some person is called to look at some object which is present.

It is possible, perhaps, that in the old old times the word *Ara* was used to mean *Behold*. But now the Maltese language has been in great part so corrupted, that if any body tries to speak it as it was spoken by our fathers, he cannot be understood. To-day many Italianisms, and also English words, took place instead of the pure Maltese words.

I think that we spread H.S. to be read and understood. Therefore, I am of opinion that we must use in translating H.S. those words which are commonly spoken and understood. The word 'Behold' I have translated by the word *Eccu*, which is an italianism; but it is the only word which we Maltese of the

present age use to mean the word *Behold*.

I remember when one of my brothers asked me: What is the meaning of the word *Ara*?

I note also that the same word is used in the translations of St Matthews' and John's.

v. 3 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness' – It is translated: Voice from one ...

'Prepare the way of the Lord.' Translated – Prepare way the Lord.

v. 4 Badly constructed. I have numbered the words into their right place.

The word 'preach' is translated by the word *ixandar* which means *to publish*. To-day we use the italianism *jipprietca*.

v. 6 'Wild honey' – Translated by the disused and now incomprehensible word *tax-xgħari*. To-day we use the italianism *salvagg*.

v. 7 See v. 4.

v. 9 Bad construction.

v. 11 Idem.

v. 12 'Wilderness.' Very few understand the word *fix-xgħara*. All understand the italianism *fid-desert*.

v. 13 'And he was there in the wilderness forty days' – Translated – And there was in the wilderness forty days. Forty days is used as the subject of the proposition.

v. 14 'Now after that John was put in prison.' Translated – After that John was taken. Note also bad construction.

v. 15 Badly constructed.

v. 17 Idem.

v. 19 Idem. Moreover, James is called Jeromè, which mistake occurs several times.

v. 21 'And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the Sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught – Translated – And they entered into Capernaum; and when entered into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, taught.

v. 24 'What have we to do with thee?' It is literally translated: but the Maltese phrase sounds according to my correction.

v. 27 'And they were all amazed.' The pronoun *they* is affixed with the adjective *all*. That is a grammar's mistake. Note also bad construction in the same verse.

v. 29 See v. 19.

v. 30 The word *ħmiet* may only be understood by some Maltese countrymen. Generally we use the circumlocution, same as it

- is in English.
- v. 31 'And immediately the fever left her.' — Translated — When this fever left her.
'And she ministered unto them' — Translated — And was ministering unto them. (It seems the same thing but for Maltese ears it sounds very roughly.)
- v. 32 'And them that were possessed with devils.' — Translated — And them with devils. (It sounds very bad in Maltese language.)
- v. 34 'And cast out many devils' — Translated — And went out many devils.
- v. 38 and 39 See v. 4 and 34.
- v. 41 'And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean' — Translated — And Jesus, moved with compassion, and put forth his hand, and *when* he touched him saith, I will ... 'Be thou clean'. It is badly translated by the word *indaf*, which is the 3rd sing. pers. of the past tense. Here, instead, we have the Imperative Mood. Therefore, we say: *Cun nadif*, and not *indaf*. Such grammar's mistakes occur very often in the other chapters.
- v. 42 *Kal* and *tchellem* are synonymous; but we cannot use them indifferently. In this case the word *tchellem* not only is preferred, but obliged.
- v. 43 'And he straightly charged him; and forthwith sent him away.' — Translated — And when he charged him ... The rest of the verse is badly constructed.

(signed) John Falzon

(17)

Letter from Rev. G. A. Sim to Rev. Dr R. Kilgour, May 10, 1915

Dear Dr Kilgour,

We are very busy here, and I am exceedingly pressed for time, but I must first thank you for the interesting pamphlet (historical) in Maltese which you kindly sent me, and, second, say a few words about the St Mark's Gospel.

1. The text used in the edition of St Mark lately published by the B.&F.B.S. is that of M.A. Vassalli, himself a Maltese, a distinguished scholar, a Protestant himself. He lived here in the earlier half of last century. He translated the *whole* of the N.T. into Maltese, and it was published *with the imprimatur of the (London)*

Society for Propagating Christian knowledge, in 1847. Whatever later revision follows, or may follow in future, Vassalli's revision is to all successive versions what Tyndale's version is to our A.V. and R.V. of today — a splendid piece of work and the inevitable basis of all later recensions.

2. But Vassalli used some words which appear to have dropped out of use now. In order, therefore, that there might not be unintelligible archaisms in the text now published by your Society, Vassalli's St Mark has been carefully gone over, word for word, (a) by Miss Jenkin a member of my church, born and brought up in Malta, and speaking Maltese perfectly, (b) by Prof. T. Zammit, M.D., C.M.G., the most eminent scholar in Malta today and in sympathy with our desire to produce a fully intelligible and accurate text of St Mark, (c) by Miss Jenkin and myself anew, verse by verse, incorporating Prof. Zammit's corrections as regards archaisms in Vassalli's version.

3. As Vassalli's spelling of Maltese was antiquated, we revised the spelling according to the modern standard in use here today.

4. Further consultation between Prof. Z., Miss J., and myself has revealed some things which may be improved in the edition of St Mark now published. These will be furnished to you later.

5. But on going over some chapters of it with Mr Falzon, I was quite unable to accept the host of needless changes and emendations which he proposed in them. Many of them were not accurate to the original and some were not improvements. I found that the only texts he had been using were Diodati's Italian version, Lazzi's ditto, and the Vulgate. As far as I can gather, Mr F. does not know Greek at all, or very little.

I found that Mr F. substituted 'izda' i.e. 'but' where the original has the simple continuous δε. Now 'izda' = ἀλλα. I found him inserting 'imbaghad', i.e. 'afterwards', where there is not word warranting that in the original Greek. Other suggestions of his were, I am assured by Miss J. and Prof. Z., quite superfluous. I was not impressed by his powers of judgement. I have no bias in the matter and honestly am willing to accept any competent criticism, but feel compelled to rely upon knowledge, like that of Prof. Z. and Miss J. and their painstaking exertions in the work. It does not follow that, because of Mr F. is a Maltese, his knowledge is to be preferred to Prof. Z.'s and to Miss J.'s, who speaks Maltese as well as any native.

To say that the edition now published is 'full of mistakes', is

really too bad. Vassalli, the original Maltese translator, knew his own native language quite well as well as Mr Falzon, and it is practically Vassalli's text, with a few modern words substituted for obsolete ones, that you have published. From the linguistic point of view, Prof. Z. is enthusiastic over Vassalli and says that *qua* Maltese, his version is 'beautiful reading'.

The local R.C. Church here has licensed a version of the Four Gospels and Acts in Maltese with (R.C.) notes. Only the first half of St Matthew has been issued as yet, but I note that it also is largely based on Vassalli's version. Reference is made in the notes to the free scattering of 'Protestant' Gospels here, and thus is intended as a counteraction! But one is glad that they feel compelled to issue such a thing at all in the local vernacular.

I am sorry you have had so much criticism of the St Mark. I do not say it is perfect, but I am quite convinced I took the best possible means in using Vassalli as our basis and am satisfied with Miss J. and Prof. Z.'s ability as revisers. As you rightly say, my own part was that of general supervision and going through the whole, verse by verse for the final revision.

At the same time, when the present imprint is exhausted there are some changes which should be made before issuing the second edition. They are chiefly in the way of further substitution of modern words for obsolescent archaisms.

I have had a letter from Mr Gooch on the subject in which he says 'it seems to me that the greatest care should be exercised, so that only those undertake the translation who are spiritually enlightened and qualified for their onerous task.'

Well, Dr Wisely has told me that Vassalli was not only a very learned Maltese scholar, but an evangelical devout convert (in other words a true Christian man), who, with his family, suffered persecution for his faith.

With this information, and what I have given regarding the local revisers and helpers in the new issue of St Mark, I leave you to judge.

I have no time to write a separate letter to Mr Gooch. Malta is full of hospitals and wounded in them. Could you kindly send Mr Gooch this letter or a copy of it, to relieve his mind?

With kind regards,
Always yours very sincerely,
(signed) G. A. Sim