

MEMORIALS

A Staid Angel – Bishop Tomline’s memorial

In the Cathedral’s south nave aisle, closer to the western end than the altar, a ‘staid’ white marble angel stands with head downward holding a shepherd’s crook and a book, looking at a stone coat of arms.¹ This is the memorial to Bishop George Tomline (1820-27) who came almost briefly between two long-serving bishops, Brownlow North (1781-1820) and Charles Sumner (1827-1869). It is only when inspecting the stepped stone beneath the angel that his name is revealed as:

GEORGII TOMLINE
EPISCOPI WINTONIENSIS

The memorial, designed by Richard Westmacott, was installed in 1830. Westmacott, knighted in 1837, was a neo-classical sculptor and a pupil of the great Italian sculptor Canova. It is one of Westmacott’s minor works as he was renowned for his statuary including two full scale-statues of William Pitt the Younger at Westminster Abbey (1808) and Pembroke College, Cambridge (1819). It is not without coincidence that Pitt the Younger’s sculptor also created Bishop Tomline’s memorial as the careers of both men were interlinked until the very moment of Pitt’s premature death in 1806.

The bishop was born as George Pretyman at Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk on 9 October 1750. He was educated locally and at Pembroke College, Cambridge. He was ordained deacon in the diocese of Norwich in 1774 and priest at the Peterborough diocese two years later. While Pretyman was a fellow at Pembroke, he became tutor to the precocious fourteen-year-old William Pitt the Younger who had been sent as an undergraduate. ‘Pretyman became his tutor,



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¹ G. H. Blore, *The Monuments of Winchester Cathedral*, Winchester, 1949, p. 21.

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confidant, and friend' and thus established a personal connection which aided his advancement in the church and provided Pitt with a lifetime of political advice and support.²

When the twenty-four-year-old Pitt became Prime Minister in December 1783, Pretyman effectively became his private secretary and close counselor. In 1786, through Pitt's influence on George III, Pretyman was appointed as Bishop of Lincoln and, almost simultaneously, the Dean of St Paul's. Although Pretyman moved to the bishop's residence in Huntingdonshire, he remained 'on the terms of closest friendship with Pitt, who frequently wrote to "my dear bishop" to solicit his counsel about senior ecclesiastical appointments'.³ Despite disagreeing with Pitt on Catholic emancipation, they remained close. Tomline attended the 46-year-old's deathbed in 1806 and later wrote Pitt's biography, which was published in three volumes in 1822-23.

Pretyman married in 1784 and had three sons with his wife, Elizabeth. His change of family name from Pretyman to Tomline came in 1803 when he unexpectedly inherited a mansion house and a large estate in Lincolnshire from Marmaduke Tomline. Although he reckoned to have met Tomline not more than five or six occasions, he took the generous donor's surname. In 1823, he claimed succession to a long-dormant Nova Scotia baronetcy of his family and for the rest of his life was styled Sir George Pretyman Tomline.

The bishop was a prolific writer on theology. His two-volume *Elements of Christian Theology* (1799), dedicated to Pitt and Anglican ordinands, was very popular. By 1818, it had been published in twelve editions. In speeches and books, Tomline advocated a distinctly protestant form of Anglicanism. This was summarised in *A Refutation of Calvinism* (1811) in which he concluded: 'Our Church is not Lutheran – not Calvinist – it is not Arminian – It is Scriptural: it is built upon the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone'.⁴

In 1805, despite Pitt's strong support with George III, Tomline was passed over as Archbishop of Canterbury in favour of Charles Manners-Sutton. It was a bitter disappointment to Tomline and his wife.⁵ He declined the bishopric of London in 1813 but accepted

² G. M. Ditchfield, "Tomline, Sir George Pretyman, fifth baronet (1750-1827)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), online, p. 2.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ G. Pretyman, *A Refutation of Calvinism*, 3rd edn., London 1811, p. 590.

⁵ Ditchfield, *Tomline*, p. 3.

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Winchester in 1820. He was the last bishop of Winchester to be enthroned by proxy.⁶ His time as bishop of Winchester is little recorded but he brought with him a reputation, unlike his predecessor Brownlow North, of being a 'conscientious diocesan' who conducted regular visitations and knew many of his clergy.⁷ George Pretyman Tomline died at Kingston Hall, near Wimborne, Dorset on 14 November 1827 and was buried in the Cathedral on 28 November that year. He was succeeded by Charles Richard Sumner, who had only been appointed as Bishop of Llandaff in the previous year.

The position of his memorial in the Cathedral's south aisle appears to have been a new one. Blore noted that, early in the nineteenth century, a new South Door was opened into the nave and, as a result, two medieval doors were closed which had opened on to the two arms of the (long-demolished) priory cloister. One of these provided room for Tomline's memorial; with the other, further east, being the tomb of Sir George Prevost (d. 1816).⁸

TOM WATSON

Photograph: Simon Newman

⁶ A. W. Goodman, "The Bishop's Enthronement", *Winchester Cathedral Record*, 1, (1932), p. 13.

⁷ Ditchfield, *Tomline*, p. 4.

⁸ G. H. Blore, "Bishop and Dean – An Old Link Snapped", *Winchester Cathedral Record*, 5 (1936), p. 18.