

*Shalom Goldman*



**THE REV. HERBERT DANBY (1889–1953):  
HEBREW SCHOLAR, ZIONIST, CHRISTIAN  
MISSIONARY**

JERUSALEM, 1919

The Balfour Declaration of 1917 presented a challenge to both the hierarchy and laity of the Anglican Church. Some Anglicans were supportive of Jewish aspirations for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people;” others were troubled by them. The Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, the Rt. Rev. Rennie Miles MacInnes, charged with revitalizing Anglican life in the Holy City, was an opponent of Zionism. His sympathies lay with the Arabs of Palestine, and more particularly with the Christians among them.

For the Zionist movement, the Balfour Declaration, and General Allenby’s entry into Jerusalem later in the same year, were momentous occasions. These events revitalized the worldwide Zionist movement and allowed the renewed growth of the Yishuv. British victory affirmed the view articulated in 1914 by Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann that the future of Zionism was entwined with the fortunes of the British Empire. Both the empire and Jewish nationalism would benefit from the relationship. Weizmann wrote that “England which would be instrumental in the redemption of Israel would derive an enormous benefit from it . . .”<sup>1</sup>

During the first years of the British occupation of Palestine Bishop MacInnes, of St. Georges Cathedral, the Anglican seat in Jerusalem, often expressed his opposition to Zionism. This opposition was noted in the Jewish newspapers of Palestine and was the cause of considerable tension between the Zionist rank and file and the clergy and laity of the Anglican Church. In 1919, faced with the complexities of inter-communal relations in the Holy City, MacInnes sought to employ an Anglican cleric who was familiar with the Jewish tradition and who could serve as a much-needed interlocutor with the city’s various Jewish communities.

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The Bishop was in dire need of a consultant on Jewish matters. This was made clear by his meeting with Chaim Weizmann in December of 1919. The meeting was an uneasy one. Bishop MacInnes was disturbed by Jewish protests against the Anglican schools in Palestine—which some Jews saw as “mission schools.” The city’s Jewish communities, both religious and secular, boycotted Anglican institutions. In keeping with precedents dating as early as 1830s encounters between the Old Yishuv and Protestant missionaries, some of the city’s Rabbis threatened the families of Jewish children at the schools, and the patients in Anglican hospitals, with *herem*—excommunication. In 1919, Jewish newspapers in Palestine embarked on a press campaign against the mission schools. In his response to the Bishop, Weizmann explained the Jewish communities’ opposition in the context of the legacy of Christian persecution of Jews, of which missionizing was understood to be a form. Bishop MacInnes was confused and disturbed by this reaction.<sup>2</sup>

On consulting with colleagues in England Bishop MacInnes found a candidate who seemed ideal for the job. The young man, Herbert Danby, quickly accepted the position of church librarian and consultant to the Bishop and arrived in Jerusalem in 1919. He was thirty years old, and had served in the Anglican Ministry for the previous six years, having been ordained an Anglican priest while at Oxford. As an historian of St. George’s Cathedral noted, “Bishop MacInnes planned to have a consultant in matters relating to Jews and Judaism... Reverend Danby accepted to work under the Bishop.”<sup>3</sup>

Danby would soon become a supporter of Zionism; MacInnes opposition to the movement would grow even more forceful and strident. In a 1921 letter to clergy and laity of the Anglican Church MacInnes wrote that: “At a time when Palestine is so unhappily disturbed by the unjust and intolerable demands of the Zionists, it is good to see the missionary schools contributing something of great worth to the Holy Land in the leveling and uniting influence they bring to bear on all these young and opening minds.”<sup>4</sup>

Herbert Danby’s attitude toward Zionism was diametrically opposed to that of Bishop MacInnes. In Danby’s case the relationship between Christian Hebraism, philo-Semitism and support of Zionism was unusually direct. Danby’s intellectual interest in Jewish texts began when he was as an undergraduate at Keble College, Oxford, where he excelled in the study of Hebrew. At Oxford, Hebrew was an esteemed topic of study, though few undergraduates undertook the study of the language. The Regius Professorship of Hebrew, established by order of Henry VIII, was among the oldest and most prestigious of

the university's professorships, though its prestige was considerably diminished by the beginning of the twentieth century. Danby studied Hebrew comparatively, in the context of other Semitic languages, and was awarded both the Houghton Syriac Prize and the Junior Septuagint Prize. While a student he took an interest in the revival of the Hebrew language and began reading contemporary Hebrew literature. From philology he moved to textual study; in 1914, he was awarded his M.A. for translations of sections of Mishnah Berachot into English.

Unlike some of his English Hebraist predecessors, whose scholarly endeavors were joined to hostility toward Jews and Judaism, Danby's study of Hebrew and Judaica led him to a sympathetic attitude toward the object of his study. Danby was well aware that in previous centuries Christian scholars at Oxford and Cambridge had studied Rabbinic texts for polemical anti-Jewish purposes. Reasons for Christian interest in Hebrew varied, of course, but often such study it was the result of a wish to engage in polemics with Jewish scholars or to use the texts in missionary efforts. Hence the Christian Hebraist concentration on Biblical Hebrew and aversion to the study of Rabbinic Hebrew. In the late 1920s Danby wrote that "of living Gentile Hebraists...perhaps a dozen or more have ventured the uncomfortable passage from the comparatively easy and well-charted Biblical language and literature to the superficially repellent and turbid post-Biblical depths...Nevertheless is it very evident that, among non-Jews, rabbinic studies lack today both the appeal and the prestige which was theirs from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century."<sup>5</sup> From the beginning of his career, Danby endeavored to restore the prestige of Rabbinic studies. After he was awarded his M.A., Danby continued to work on the translation and explication of Rabbinic texts. Four years after he settled in Jerusalem, Oxford awarded him a Doctor of Divinity degree on the strength of his translation of Mishnah Sanhedrin.

Danby, who had spent the First World War years as a church librarian and priest in England, was the ideal candidate for the job of consultant on Jewish affairs. He had excelled in the study of Semitics at Oxford, where he was awarded series of academic prizes, culminating in a first in Oriental languages. He was deeply interested in Christian–Jewish relations and had embarked on an independent study of Rabbinic texts. Jerusalem 'the city of three faiths' now under British rule, seemed an ideal place for him. He was to remain there—and flourish there—for seventeen years. By the time he left the Holy City and returned to Oxford he had a positive effect on Jewish–Christian relations in England and Palestine—and he would continue and expand upon that interfaith work when he returned to Oxford in

the mid-1930s. In 1936, Danby was appointed Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, and there he achieved great eminence as an expert on the Hebrew language and Rabbinic texts.

For many twentieth century scholars of Judaica Danby served as an invaluable and reliable guide to scholarly developments in what we would now call Jewish Studies. In 1933 Oxford University Press published Danby's translation of the Mishnah, a translation still in use today. In a series of scholarly translations, reviews and articles published before and after that translation, Danby apprised readers of the landmark Jewish scholarship projects of the period. And, by introducing, explaining, and contextualizing these new works of Jewish scholarship to Christian colleagues he helped establish those works' academic reputations.

Since its publication in 1933 Danby's Mishnah translation has achieved near canonical status, and one would be hard-pressed to find in the translation evidence that the translator was anything but a Rabbinic Jewish scholar. To this day many Jewish readers of the Mishnah translation are surprised to learn that Danby was an Anglican priest. Danby's motivations and personal religious views are even more surprising. Despite his immersion in the world of Rabbinic texts, his commitment to the Church of England never wavered, and his interest in Judaism remained, naturally, subservient to that commitment. This essay will examine Danby's view of Judaism in the context of his commitment to the church, and it will investigate his support of political Zionism in the context of both his religious and intellectual projects.<sup>6</sup>

St. George's Cathedral, the church Danby was summoned to in Jerusalem, was established in 1892.<sup>7</sup> Throughout its history most of church hierarchy was anti-Zionist. This anti-Zionism drew on a tradition of Anglican missionary views of Jews and Judaism, a view especially strong at St. George's Cathedral Church. In an 1893 clergy meeting at the residence of Bishop George Blyth, the assembled heard a report on the "Difficulties of Mission-work in Palestine." Most of the report concerned Jerusalem's Eastern Christian Churches and the city's Muslims. A brief paragraph on Jerusalem's Jews is a veritable litany of anti-Judaism. "In preaching the Gospel to the Jews there must be special difficulties caused by their upholding the Talmud, misunderstanding the nature of Sin, deeming things of other people as lawful to them, being accustomed from fear to deceit, lying and slyness, and by their belief that they are Abraham's children and heirs of Israel's blessing and the first born son of God, etc., which subject I shall not enter upon, but leave to someone of you who know by experience a great deal more than I do." (Church records, Monday, September 4, 1893)

Against the background of this anti-Judaic, and specifically anti-Talmudic statement, Danby's interest in Rabbinics and his willingness to engage Jewish scholars of Judaica is all the more extraordinary.

Subsequent to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War the Cathedral was in Jordanian Jerusalem. During Jordanian rule, and then under Israeli rule after the 1967 War, St. George's became a center of Palestinian nationalism and opposition to Israel. The great irony here is that it was in this church that Danby developed his strong identification with the Zionist cause. By the end of the twentieth century, St. George's was a center of Palestinian nationalism. The church hierarchy, including the Bishop of Jerusalem, was now Palestinian Arab. In 2002, Mordechai Vanunu, freed after eighteen years in an Israel jail for disclosing Israel's nuclear secrets, took up residence in the Cathedral's guest house. This further exacerbated relations between church officials and the Israeli authorities.

A half-century before St. George's was built, another Anglican church was consecrated in Jerusalem. Built within the city walls, (unlike St. George's which was built outside of the city walls east of the Damascus Gate) Christ Church, established in 1842, was the home of the Anglo-Prussian Bishopric, a rare example of Anglican-Lutheran cooperation. St. George's Cathedral and Christ Church are thus a study in contrasts. St. George's was High Church; Christ Church was Low Church. Long before the establishment of Israel they differed widely about Zionism. Christ Church was the home of the Hebrew Christian Mission founded by the London Jews Society. Its first Bishop was Michael Solomon Alexander, an English Rabbi who converted to the Church of England in the 1840s. To this day, one hundred and fifty years after its founding, Christ Church maintains its missionary function and is assertively Zionist. It hosts a weekly prayer service in Hebrew, a tradition it initiated in the mid-nineteenth century. St. George's Cathedral, in contrast, is assertively anti-Zionist, and directs its evangelizing efforts toward Jerusalem's Christian Arab population. It has little contact with Jerusalem's Jewish communities.

During the British Mandate (1920–1948), the clergy of these two Anglican churches gave radically different advice to the British and international committees that came to Jerusalem to investigate the contending claims of Palestine's Arabs and Jews. Bishop Rennie MacInnes spoke up often against Zionism; this must have troubled Danby. In contrast, in 1930, Christ Church called for the establishment of a Jewish state: "We can take comfort in the knowledge that the return of the Jews to the Holy Land is assured as in the purposes of Almighty God for the World."<sup>8</sup> The British Peel Commission of 1936 heard testimony from MacInnes's successor Bishop Graham-Brown who issued a statement negating any biblical connection with the Jews

in modern Palestine. "As to any 'Biblical' claim for the establishment of a Jewish state, the claim was based on a false premise." And in 1945 Graham-Brown's successor Bishop W. H. Stewart of St. George's told the Anglo-American Commission on Palestine that: "There is an uncommon tendency today both in England and in America, to base large Zionist claims on the Old Testament history and prophecies, and thereby to win support from many Christians whose respect for the Bible is perhaps greater than their understanding of it... The Christian doctrine of the New Testament is that the new spiritual Israel of the Christian Church, with its descent by the spiritual birth of baptism, is the sole heir to the promises themselves also spiritualized, which had been fortified by the Old Israel after the flesh, with its descent by human generations."<sup>9</sup> In this formulation, Zionism is in direct odds with Christian doctrine.

#### AT WORK IN JERUSALEM

Danby arrived in Jerusalem at a remarkable historical moment. The British had taken the city from the Ottoman Turks in 1917. Before the Mandate Government was established in 1920 the British administration of Jerusalem was under the authority of Ronald Storrs, the Military Governor. Storrs had a powerful political and cultural interest in smoothing relations between Muslims, Christians, and Jews, and it was under his auspices that the Palestine Oriental Society was formed in March of 1920. Herbert Danby was appointed secretary of the group and editor of its scholarly publication, "The Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society."<sup>10</sup> The Society's purpose was "the cultivation and publication of researches on the Ancient East." But the journal's mandate was much wider than the study of "the Ancient East." It soon was to publish articles on modern Middle Eastern cultural developments, among them the study of local Palestinian folklore and the revival of the Hebrew language. Among the contributors were Christian, Muslim and Jewish scholars. Most of the articles appeared in English. Some were published in French or German.

The editorship of the JPOS was one of many editorial and reporting assignments that Danby assumed during his sojourn in Palestine. He also wrote for the *Times of London*. "Until 1945 *The Times* employed British residents to report on events in Palestine—from 1921 to 1936, the Rev. Doctor Herbert Danby, Librarian of St. Georges Cathedral in Jerusalem."<sup>11</sup> His many articles were favorable to the Zionist cause.

Controversy broke out when JPOS published an article in Hebrew. Danby advocated for the publication of the article. He served as the journal's editor until he left Palestine in 1936. For a number of years in the early 1930s, Danby was to share the editorial duties with the American archaeologist William Foxwell Albright. Albright, of Johns Hopkins University, would later be acknowledged as "the Dean of Near Eastern Archaeologists." In 1946 he was among the founders of The American Christian Palestine Committee, a group that advocated for the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine.

Controversy broke out when, on the occasion of Eliezer ben Yehuda's death in 1922, the JSOP published a tribute to "the reviver of the Hebrew language" by his colleague David Yellin. The article appeared in Hebrew with a facing English translation, done, it seems, by Danby.<sup>12</sup> The publication of this and other articles on Hebrew and Jewish subjects, and the presence of Jewish scholars on the editorial board, led to accusations that Jews and Jewish subjects were favored by the editor, while Christian and Muslim subjects and authors neglected. In a later article in JPOS, William Foxwell Albright addressed this issue obliquely. He praised Danby for "his faithful and competent editorships and whose general popularity in all circles the society owes a great debt. I shall naturally not speak of my own modest services, which consisted mostly in assisting Danby and in helping to pacify certain groups which were bent on dragging the Society into politics... we have succeeded in avoiding the pitfalls of politics, and our Society is known to all who are really *au courant* with its activities, as strictly neutral."<sup>13</sup> The "pitfalls of politics" was a reference to the growing Arab-Jewish tension in 1930s Palestine. Albright was addressing and refuting Christian and Muslim claims that the Journal favored Jewish topics and authors.

When, in June of 1920, Sir Herbert Samuel was appointed the first British High Commissioner for Palestine, Zionists within Palestine and without were thrilled by the British government's decision to appoint an English Jew to that office. The Arab leadership understood Samuel's appointment in much the same way, and saw it as a move against Arab interests. Jerusalem's Muslim leadership complained that the appointment of Herbert Samuel signaled a British turn toward the Zionists. The growing tension between Christians, Muslim, and Jews made Danby's work all the more difficult.

While at St. George's Danby founded "Bible Lands," a scholarly journal aimed at a wide readership. It reported on Biblical textual research and archaeological excavation. These articles were often supplemented by photographs. Danby wrote many of the articles and through his contacts in England and the U.S. he made sure that the journal had a wide readership. "Bible Lands," published until the late

1950s, was widely read by Protestant clergy and laymen throughout the English-speaking world.

#### DANBY ON JUDAISM

Danby's intensive and comprehensive study of Rabbinic texts led him to surprising conclusions about the nature of Judaism, conclusions that were at odds with the then dominant Protestant understandings of the Jewish faith. In a 1937 review of the first volumes of Salo Baron's *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Danby, praising Baron's presentation of Judaism, criticized the tendency of many Christian scholars to view Judaism through a "Bible-centered" lens. Judaism, Danby pointed out to his Christian readers, had a life and literature that was referenced to the Biblical text—but extended far beyond the confines of that text.<sup>14</sup> If they were to understand Judaism as a living tradition, Christian scholars had to move beyond the Hebrew Bible and study Rabbinic texts. This was a viewpoint that Danby has been promoting among Christian scholars since the early 1920s. For those unable to read Rabbinic texts in the Hebrew and Aramaic originals, Danby's fluid translations would open up that world to them. His essays and lectures on Jewish subjects challenged earlier conceptions of Judaism and did much to counter antisemitic tendencies in the English-speaking world. The long-term effect of Danby's translations, essays, was quite remarkable. Because of his work Christians now had access to accurately translated Jewish texts, and these translations were often accompanied by essays sympathetic to the Rabbinic tradition and to contemporary Jewish causes, foremost among them Zionism.

Danby warned his readers that... "If we identify Judaism with formalism, legalism and stereotyped practices, we see it in the wrong perspective; Judaism is not only pure mind applied to ancient revelation; there certainly does exist much of this legalism and formalism, and sometimes excessive emphasis placed on the intellect as opposed to the feelings... (but) such was not the essence of Judaism as a living faith; still less was it the dominant note in the bulk of the Jewish people." He warned his readers that "Judaism is wrongly envisaged if it is looked upon solely as a process of restricting its content to code and rule and law; on the contrary, the truer view is to see it in repeated revolt against such limitations."<sup>15</sup> Danby made these points explicit in his essays; these same points about the continuing intellectual validity of Judaism were implicit in his masterly translations.



DANBY AND KLAUSNER'S *JESUS OF NAZARETH*

During his seventeen years in Jerusalem Danby cultivated the friendship of Jewish scholars, many of whom had arrived in Jerusalem to teach at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, established in 1925. Among the most fruitful of these associations was his friendship with Professor Joseph Klausner. Klausner and Danby had arrived in Palestine in the same year, 1919. Klausner and his wife arrived from Odessa, Danby from Oxford. Klausner's academic specialty was the late Second Temple Period, and in the years before he left Russia, he was engaged in a study of Jesus in the context of Second Temple Judaism. He did this within a scholarly tradition established in the late nineteenth century, a scholarly tradition in which Jewish researchers focused their study of Christianity on its earliest period—the relationship of Jesus and his disciples. This approach required a further set of enquiries: “In order to clarify the relationship of early Christianity to the Judaism of its time, researchers had to perform additional work. They had to delineate the nature of Judaism in the Land of Israel at the end of the Second Temple Period.”<sup>16</sup>

Klausner, a powerful cultural force in Jewish Palestine, was a prolific historian and literary scholar. Ideologically, he was a supporter of Vladimir Jabotinsky, the founder of Revisionist Zionism. This placed him on the political right of the Zionist spectrum. Revisionists advocated a militant approach to the establishment of a Jewish state, and defined that state's future borders in the widest possible way; theirs was a maximalist stance. Culturally, Klausner was a humanist and ecumenist who called for Jewish re-evaluation of Jesus and early Christianity. As editor of the Hebrew journal “Ha-Shiloah,” the journal founded by Ahad Ha'am, Klausner wielded great influence and authority in the Hebrew-speaking literary world. Klausner opened up the journal to a very diverse set of writers and subjects—Christianity among them.

When the Hebrew University opened in 1925 Klausner hoped to be appointed Professor of Second Temple History in the History Department. But as his political orientation was Revisionist he was denied the position and was instead appointed Professor of Modern Hebrew Literature, a field in which Klausner also excelled. He taught and wrote on Hebrew literature for eighteen years (1925–1944). In 1944, a fund was created that gave Klausner an additional appointment in his chosen field of endeavor. (See Klausner, *Darki*, Vol. 1, 90–92) Of the opposition to his appointment as an historian Klausner wrote that they were “the enemies of my true and complete Zionism... which was the complete opposite of the half-Zionism of the socialists.”

In 1921 Klausner published his epochal Hebrew-language work *Jesus of Nazareth*. In it he placed Jesus' life and teachings within the context late Second Temple times and the development of Rabbinic Judaism. Klausner's audience was the "new Jew" of Palestine who, Klausner anticipated, would be free of anti-Christian feelings resulting from centuries of Christian persecution. This fresh portrayal of Christianity and Jesus would, Klausner hoped, speak to the educated readership of the *Yishuv*.<sup>17</sup> He also hoped that its message would appeal to Jews in the English-speaking world.

Underlying Klausner's publication of his reconsideration of Christianity was a startling assumption: that Jews living in an independent Jewish state would be able to free themselves of their fear of, and aversion to, the central figure of the Christian faith. Klausner felt that this re-evaluation would both strengthen the Jewish claim to Palestine and free Jews of their fear of Christianity.

In re-evaluating and valorizing Jesus in a Jewish context, Klausner was breaking with his mentor Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginzberg.) In a long article in his journal "HaShiloah" (Vol. 23, 97-111) Ginzberg had argued against Claude Montefiore and other Jewish scholars who wrote sympathetically of Jesus. Danby wrote of Ahad Ha'am that he "insisted that while Christianity was all very well for Christians, Jews could have nothing to do with it short of denying the most fundamental characteristics of Judaism."<sup>18</sup> In contrast, Klausner, Ahad Ha'am's successor as editor, opened up "HaShiloah" to discussions of Christianity.

According to Danby, his own conversations with Klausner influenced the final shape of Klausner's Jesus book. As Klausner knew little spoken English and Danby had no Russian or German, the conversations were carried on in Hebrew. This was a remarkable moment, as both men would later help shape the content and structure of Modern Hebrew usage then emerging. Klausner was among the founders of the Hebrew Language Academy. Danby, working with Hebrew University Professor M. Z. Segal, produced some of the first modern Hebrew dictionaries. Soon after its Hebrew publication in 1921, Herbert Danby took on the considerable task of translating Klausner's three-hundred and fifty page book into English. Klausner wrote that he and Danby "went over each and every line of the translation and Dr. Danby praised my knowledge of literary English, though I never learned to speak English and we conducted our conversations in Hebrew." (Klausner, *Darki Likrat Hitkhiyah Vehageula*, Vol. 2, 83)

The project held different meanings for writer and translator. Klausner called for a Jewish re-evaluation of Christianity; Danby sought a Christian re-evaluation of Judaism. Both Klausner and Danby

supported the modernization of Hebrew and its adoption as the language of everyday speech by the Jews of Palestine. Klausner, in an introductory note to the English translation, expressed the hope that the appearance of his book on Jesus would convince English and American Jews of the significance of Modern Hebrew. Considering the heightened sensitivity of American Jewish individuals and organizations to books about Jesus, which they linked to Christian missionary efforts, it is remarkable that Klausner could get it so wrong. A Hebrew book about Jesus was the last thing American Jewish leaders wanted. It reminded them of missionary tracts. And perhaps, under Klausner's influence, Danby too got it wrong. For he too expected a wide Jewish readership for Klausner's book. Perhaps, he overestimated Klausner's influence among American Jews.

Danby, it seems, had an inflated view of Klausner's prestige, and of the potential of Klausner's Jesus book to effect a change in Jewish attitudes towards the figure of Jesus. Danby dubbed Klausner "a writer with a most responsible position in the world of Jewish thought, even a leading figure in the concentrated, intensified atmosphere of the very centre of that world of Jewish thought in Palestine—such a man had thought it worth the trouble, and even his duty as a Hebrew of the Hebrews, to write in Hebrew for the benefit of his fellow-Hebrews, a weighty learned treatise: . . . That treatise is a most unexpected by-product of the rise of the Jewish nationalist instinct and the revival of Hebrew culture."<sup>19</sup>

But as reviews of *Jesus of Nazareth* began to appear in both English and Hebrew language journals Danby became aware that Jewish opposition to Klausner's project and thesis was considerable—and often enraged and virulent. What was at issue here were two radically different modern Jewish responses to Christianity. To some extent these responses were shaped by the circumstances of the Jewish communities from which they emerged. In general, European and American Jewish readers were more hostile than their co-religionists in Palestine to Klausner's book and Danby's translation. By the 1920s, American Jews were again responding forcefully to renewed missionary efforts directed toward them by Christian groups. This reaction had been forming since the mid-nineteenth century. With the large influx of Eastern European Jews arriving in the U.S. after 1881 Christian missionary efforts grew considerably. The organized Jewish response, as in the mid-nineteenth century, was to form organizations that would counter missionaries, to publish Jewish newspapers in response to missionary activity, and strengthen self-help organizations, foremost among them B'nai Brith.

Klausner's book on Jesus was the direct source and inspiration for Rabbi Stephen Wise's famous "Jesus Speech" on Christmas Day

of 1925. This speech generated considerable controversy, with many Jews denouncing Wise's call for a re-evaluation of Jesus' Jewishness and many liberal Protestants hailing his speech. Among Wise's most quoted observations was "Jesus was Jew, Hebrew of Hebrews. Whatever I believe with respect to the imputed miracle of his birth, his mother, Mary, was a Jewish woman. He was reared and taught as a Jew. He worshipped in the synagogue."<sup>20</sup>

In term of reactions to Jewish discussions of Jesus, the secular elites of the Yishuv in Palestine were in a radically different cultural and political situation. Engaged in creating an autonomous Jewish society, a society whose 'other' was Muslim, not Christian, the 'new Jews' of Palestine no longer had to fear Christian doctrine and teachings. For the most part they were as disinterested in Christianity as they were in Jewish religious doctrine. All religious teachings seemed to them outmoded. To secular members of the Yishuv, Christian missions did not seem a direct threat, though many secularists viewed Christian missionary efforts as an attack on Jewish identity. By the 1920s Protestant missionary activities in Palestine were not aimed at Jews; rather they were directed primarily toward Eastern Christians and Catholics.

This left open a space and an opportunity for Palestinian Jewish investigations of Christian origins, particularly in the figure of Jesus. The roots of this endeavor were in the work of Abraham Geiger and other European Jewish scholars of the mid-nineteenth century. Klausner's Hebrew language study of Jesus was the first of a series of Hebrew language books by Jewish scholars who re-examined Jesus in a Jewish context. It was followed in the 1950s by Kabak's *On the Narrow Path*, a Hebrew novel which sets Jesus story squarely with the Rabbinic tradition. In the early 1960s, Hebrew University professor David Flusser published his landmark Hebrew-language study of Jesus.<sup>21</sup> This interest in Jesus was limited to the Jews of Mandate Palestine and later, of the State of Israel. Jews living in the U.S. and Europe, at least those Jews who were affiliated with Jewish cultural or religious organizations, demonstrated little to no interest in Christian doctrines. In American Jewry a writer demonstrating such interest was suspected of apostasy. The case of Sholem Asch is a prime example.<sup>22</sup>

The harshness of responses to Jewish interest in Jesus was reflected in American Jewish publications both scholarly and popular. In the American Hebrew-language journal "Hadoar" of November 19, 1926 the Hebrew critic Gershon Schoffman condemned Danby's translation of Klausner's book—and along with it the tendency of Hebrew writers to use Christological terms and Christian themes in their writings: "It seems that some of our young writers take great

pleasure in using the words ‘crucifixion’, ‘golgotha’, and other terms of this sort—words that they seem to find elevating. “Jesus” especially makes them want to set pen to paper . . . how they love that name . . . It would be best if that name never came to our minds again.”<sup>23</sup>

The most sustained and lengthy attack on Klausner’s *Jesus* and Danby’s translation of it was in the American scholar Ephraim Deinard’s *Herev LaHashem Uleyisrael*, of 1924. The book’s subtitle is: “against the book *Jesus of Nazareth* by Dr. Joseph Klausner, in which he strives to bring us under the canopy of the new Shekhinah, as he is so inspired by the spirit of the son of Miriam.” Two more anti-Klausner broadsides by Deinard followed. In his autobiography Klausner, writing thirty years after the publication of his *Jesus* book, was still smarting from Deinard’s attacks. “Deinard, that crazy old man who only knew how to attack and curse, printed three filthy books attacking my *Jesus of Nazareth*. In these books he accused me of accepting money from Christian missionaries. The truth was that those very missionaries in Jerusalem cursed my book, calling it ‘full of lies and a blasphemy against our Lord Jesus Christ.’” (Klausner, *Darki*, 53)

In an essay published in 1930 Danby quotes Deinard’s blistering attacks on both the author and the translator. It seems that Danby derived an odd satisfaction from Deinard’s pronouncement on his translation of Klausner’s book: “from heaven above to hell below, nowhere can you show me a single Christian scholar in the whole world capable of understanding the Hebrew language of your book . . . Not even twenty priests, let alone one, could translate a book written in Talmudic Hebrew or in the modern Hebrew literary style, difficult enough for a learned Jew to understand, still more for a Christian who learns his Hebrew from the Bible.”<sup>24</sup> Danby was the obvious target of this slur. He was an Anglican priest who did understand Rabbinic Hebrew, and this rankled Deinard. Danby took pleasure in being the priest who could translate Rabbinic and modern Hebrew texts, and who could also read and respond to his Hebrew critics in Modern Hebrew.

Danby’s translation of Klausner’s *Jesus* was an attempt to bridge the Christian–Jewish divide by altering Jewish perceptions of Christianity. Or was it more than that? Was it an attempt to bring Jews closer to Christianity? Deinard and other conservative Jewish critics claimed that Klausner and his translator Danby were serving the interests of Christian missionaries. Klausner stated that he wanted to change Jewish perceptions of Jesus. Danby stated that he wanted to change Christian perceptions of Judaism.

In a remarkable series of lectures delivered at St. George’s Cathedral in January of 1922, Danby addressed Christian

misperceptions of Judaism and sought to correct them. The lecture titles are: I. "Mind Versus Emotion in Judaism." II. "Hasidism: Present Day Jewish Mysticism." In these lectures Danby main points are that (a) The conventional Christian view of Judaism as "a religion of unrelieved legalism" (in the words of the German historian Schurer) is mistaken. Danby points out that "for many Christians, legalism has become both the definition and also the condemnation of Judaism." (b) "Spirit", as well as "mind" animate Jewish thought. (c) Hasidism exemplifies the current dynamism of Jewish thought and life. This is a conclusion that Danby arrived at after a period of intensive study of Hasidic texts—and, it seems, limited study of Hasidim in Jerusalem.

Danby's second lecture opens with a startling confession: "First of all I have to make the confession that until some two and a half years ago I had never heard of this movement of Hasidism."<sup>25</sup> It was his move to Jerusalem that brought him into contact with the city's insular communities of Hasidim. Danby's residence at St. Georges Cathedral was only a few minutes walk from Meah Shearim, the Ultra Orthodox stronghold. Unlike most of his Jewish and Christian colleagues he sought to understand both the ideas and practices of these Hasidic communities. This was in sharp contrast to the attitude toward Ultra-Orthodox Jews displayed by Bishop MacInnes, Danby's superior.

In *The Living Church* 26 November 1929, MacInnes writes:

The first objective of the Anglican Church in Palestine was the Jew, and the Jewish problem was never more insistent than it is today. There are large numbers in Jerusalem itself of the old Orthodox Jews. You can see them in the streets on a Sabbath, a New Year, or a Feast of Tabernacles, when these lines are written... Shylocks in purple velvet coats, fur cap, long ringlet, and praying shawl - a devout pathetic people, still wailing every Friday at the ruined wall of the Temple Area, still hoping and seeing for Him to whom Christendom, for very lack of His spirit in dealing with them, has failed to open their eyes.

In contrast to the hostile reviews in the Anglo-Jewish and Hebrew press, Christian scholarly reception of Danby's translation of Klausner's *Jesus* was quite positive. In a review in the prestigious *Journal of Religion*, Professor E. F. Scott of Union Theological Seminary wrote that "We are reminded by this book that a Jewish state has not only come into being, but has begun to make its own contribution to the world's culture. The book was written in Hebrew—once more a living language—and was published three years ago in Jerusalem.... Klausner writes for Jews, and his own sympathies are those of a fervidly patriotic view.... Though he cannot adopt the

Christian estimate of Jesus, his tone is one of generous appreciation...that such a book should be the first fruits of a new Zionist culture may be taken as a happy augury."<sup>26</sup>

We would be mistaken to read Danby on Judaism as completely irenic, understanding, and conciliatory. Persuading Danby's translations and explications of the Mishnah, Maimonides, and modern Jewish literature, one might think that Danby had accepted Judaism's own understandings of its historical role. On the face of it Danby seemed to view Jewish legalism as viable and intellectually vibrant for Jews and students of Judaism, whether these scholars be Jewish or Christian. But what was his view of the church's responsibility toward the Jewish people?

A very different view of Danby's translation of Klausner's *Jesus*, and a very different understanding of Danby's greater project, emerges from a reading of the transcript of the 1935 "Budapest and Warsaw Conference on the presentation of the Christian Message to the Jews." This paragraph is from "the Report submitted by Dr. Danby to the Bishop":

The consequence of the Klausner translation: whether it was a good thing or a bad thing? There was never a word of doubt but that the translation (the original would have remained in comparative obscurity but for the English version) has done good that it gives the missionary a long-wanted "jumping-off place" and especially, an insight into the strength or weakness of the present educated Jewish opinion, and some knowledge of the point of Jewish sympathy or of Jewish antipathies as to the subject in general. The most subtle and accurate comment (by Dr Zwemer) was that the book was another and strong factor which made for the ploughing up of the soil of the Jewish mentality, hitherto trampled down hard by mutual prejudices and ignorances; and that now that the soil was well and thoroughly ploughed and broken up was the time to sow and irrigate. The soil was fruitful; it only remained to see what seed would be sown—whether Christian influences or non-Christian.<sup>27</sup>

This report, which I found in typescript in the archives of Jerusalem's St. George's Cathedral, tells us that in the mid 1930s Danby's loyalty to a conversionist agenda was unwavering. He saw no possibility that a Jewish religious ideal would influence the young generation of Zionists. Either they would adopt a political ideology (whether of the Right or the Left) or they would see the light of the Christian message. Now that "the soil of the Jewish mentality" had been ploughed up by Klausner's book Christians could plant the seeds of belief in Jesus. Danby's hope was that the seed would sprout and Jews would accept Christianity. Secular Jewish rejection of Rabbinic law encouraged Danby's expectation that Christianity would prove a viable religious alternative to traditional Judaism.

We can assume that Danby kept this report from coming to the attention of his friend Joseph Klausner. Klausner was sure of the purity of Danby's intentions. In a tribute written after Danby's death in 1953, Klausner recalled that "when Danby offered to translate *Jesus of Nazareth* it was only natural that I would think his intentions were Christian... But in Danby's act of translation there was no missionary intent. As a man of science Danby wanted Christians to have a clear and correct idea what a nationalist Jewish scholar conversant with the ancient Hebrew literature has to say of the origins of Jesus and his teachings."<sup>28</sup>

Danby, resident in Palestine from 1919 to 1936, during which time he immersed himself in the emerging culture of the *Yishuv*, was acutely aware of tensions between the Orthodox and Secular Jewish sectors and of secularizing Jewish antipathy to the Talmud "...the super-Jews of Eretz-Yisrael may toss it aside as a potsherd fit only for Jews to scratch themselves with." It was this antipathy that convinced him that the members of the New Yishuv would continue to reject Rabbinic Judaism and search elsewhere for a religious ideology with which to sustain themselves. It was his hope, and the hope of Christian missionaries generally, that Jews would choose Christianity.

#### DANBY ON JEWISH ATTITUDES TOWARD CHRISTIANITY

In a series of lectures titled *The Jew and Christianity: Some Phases, Ancient and Modern, of the Jewish Attitude Towards Christianity* (1927)—delivered at London's Sion College under the auspices of The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, Danby devoted the concluding lecture to Jewish reactions to Klausner's book. He noted that: "By some Jews the book has been looked upon as a startling and dangerous monstrosity; by others as a welcome novelty. Contextualizing interest in the book among the secular elites of the Yishuv, Danby compares that interest to the "extraordinary excitement and interest... shown by the Jews in Palestine in the (1926) performance of a Hebrew play called *Ha-Dibbuk*." Just as Hasidism as folklore was appealing as the subject of artistic treatment, so might the story of Jesus be told in Jewish context. At this point Danby cautions his audience that they would be wrong to read this as a Jewish interest in Christian dogmas and institutions. "...the Jew is as much repelled by these as ever he was; to him they are symbols of bitterness, cruelty, savage, senseless and fanatical persecution and wholesale murder. No, it is not a sign of Jewish approach to Christianity; but it is an attempt to rescue from the hands of



Christendom a figure whom the Jews can claim to be, historically and humanly, their own.”<sup>29</sup>

Here Danby returns to the central theme of these five London lectures and to one of the recurring themes in his life’s work, that Christians, by their “un-Christian” behavior, have made Christianity an anathema to Jews, and that the persistence of Judaism in a parallel but often persecuted track to Christianity offers Christians “a systematic, consistent, independent, external criterion of the various forms of Christianity at various stages of its history. . . . the results of this search are, on the whole, far from flattering to us Christians.” Thus for Danby, as for James Parkes in the 1950s, and the Catholic writers Robert Drinan in the nineteen seventies and James Carroll in the 1990s, Christian mistreatment of Jews is a betrayal of Christian ideals. European Jewish history offers these Christian critics a yardstick with which to measure Christian aspirations and find them wanting. Their philo-Semitism constituted a critique of the established churches, and in a sense that critique was the primary focus of their writing and research.

#### DANBY AND H. N. BIALIK

Danby’s fascination with the Hebrew language and Rabbinic texts expressed itself in his friendship with the “Hebrew national poet” Hayyim Nahman Bialik. Bialik, a towering figure in the revival of Hebrew literary culture, emigrated to Palestine in 1923. Bialik and a group of fellow litterateurs in Odessa, Berlin, and Warsaw had shaped the canon and diction of modern Hebrew poetry and prose. In the early 1920s, in the years immediately after the Russian Revolution, Bialik and a group of his colleagues were living in the Crimean port of Odessa. The intervention of Maxim Gorky enabled Bialik and four other Hebrew writers to leave Soviet Russia and emigrate to Palestine. There he was welcomed in the *Yishuv* as a great hero. In Palestine, Bialik focused on teaching, lecturing, collecting, and editing Jewish texts for a new Hebrew-speaking audience. Inexplicably, for his literary audience—he stopped writing poetry. His poems had made him famous—but he would write none in Palestine (with the exception of some poems for children).

In Europe, Bialik and Joseph Klausner moved in the same literary and social circles. As editor of the influential Hebrew journal “HaShiloah,” Klausner published a great deal of Bialik’s poetry. In response to the Kishinev Pogrom of 1903 Bialik wrote his great poem “On the Slaughter.” Klausner decided to publish the poem in

“HaShiloah,” despite fears that the Russian government censor would not permit the rousing, revolutionary poem to be published. (See Klausner, *Darki*, 154) When both Klausner and Bialik were living in British Mandate Palestine, political differences bedeviled their friendship. Klausner was a cultural figure on the political right; Bialik an icon of the political left.

In his translation of Klausner’s *A History of Hebrew Literature, 1785–1930* (London, 1932), Danby elaborated upon Klausner’s praise of Bialik’s work. Klausner’s study was originally written and published in Russian, then expanded and translated by the author into Hebrew—and then translated from the Hebrew into English by Danby. Danby had been reading Bialik’s prose and poetry long before ‘the national poet’ moved to Palestine in 1923—and Danby was thrilled to meet and befriend the great writer. Danby had brought Klausner’s work to English-speaking readers; later he did the same for Bialik’s prose work.<sup>30</sup>

Both Bialik and Danby toiled in the twin realms of the Rabbinic tradition, the legal and the narrative, the *halachic* and the *aggadic*. Danby’s 1933 translation of the complete text of the Mishnah was his great contribution to Western study of *Halacha*, Jewish law. His 1938 translation of Bialik’s *And it Came to Pass* was his parallel contribution to the study of *Aggadah*.<sup>31</sup>

Danby was familiar with Bialik’s influential essay “On Halakhah and Aggadah.” His close friendship with Bialik committed him to a series of English translations of Bialik’s books. In 1938, four years after Bialik’s death, Danby produced a vivid English translation of Bialik’s “Vayehi Hayom”—*And it Came to Pass: Legends and Stories About King David and King Solomon*. This anthology was first published in Hebrew soon after Bialik’s death in 1934. It consisted of thirty-five stories of these two founding kings of Ancient Israel. Bialik had published these tales in literary journals during the last seven years of life.<sup>32</sup>

*And it Came to Pass* is a kind of younger sibling to Bialik’s grand project, *The Book of Legends*, an anthology compiled with the help of Y.H. Ravnitzky.<sup>33</sup> In both of these projects Bialik’s technique was to mold the Talmudic legends into accessible and entertaining folktales that would appeal to both adults and children. To the ancient legends Bialik added material from later elaborations and retellings, including retellings of his own construction. Both books were readily accepted by the emergent Hebrew readership of the *Yishuv*. Part of Bialik’s contribution was the translation of Talmudic legends from Aramaic into modern Hebrew. For young secular Palestinian Jews of the 1930s and 1940s, Aramaic was a dead language, and therefore the vast compendium of lore and law in the Talmud was for them a

closed book. The translation of this Aramaic material into modern Hebrew opened a new world of the imagination to readers young and old. As critic Mordechai ben Yehezkel noted: “It seems to me that no other book in its generation appeared in so many copies as this volume. The light of Torah and life suffuse it; and even though the translation from Aramaic to Hebrew causes some changes in the legends, this is something that only those with a classical Talmudic education will notice . . . The influence of this book is so great, in both the moral and literary spheres, that it is hard to estimate its overall value.”<sup>34</sup>

*The Book of Legends* enriched the vocabulary of modern Hebrew and provided a rich source of motifs for Hebrew poets, novelists, and short story writers. Bialik had written of the importance of *the Jewish bookshelf*, a literary canon in which secular Jews could find both enrichment and entertainment. *It Came to Pass*, and its elder sibling *The Book of Legends*, were to become central texts of that new Jewish bookshelf. From mid-1930s to the mid-1970s the book was read by generations of Israelis and copies could be found in many Israeli Jewish homes.

A year after the publication of his English translation of *And It Came to Pass*, Danby produced another translation of a work by Bialik—his *Knight of Onions and Garlic*. This is a delightful Hebrew poem that reflects Yiddish culture and humor. Danby’s short introductory note describes the poem as “an elaboration of an anecdote current among the Jews of Eastern Europe.” Published by New York’s Hebrew Publishing Company, the volume is beautifully illustrated by Emanuel Romano. In both its Hebrew original and English translation *Knights of Onions and Garlic* delighted generations of readers. It was a folkloric piece of “wisdom literature” on the perils of greed and ambition.<sup>35</sup>

After devoting time to translating Bialik’s renditions of Jewish legends, Danby returned to his first scholarly love, the translation of Rabbinic legal texts. He was mindful that legends were but “handmaidens of the law,” and delighted in citing Maimonides injunction to memorize and analyze the rules of purity, for “If the greatest sages of the Mishnah found difficulties, how much more so must we? Do you not see how Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah says to Rabbi Akiva, “Akiva, why are you trifling with Aggadah. Let it be, and turn to (more serious problems like) leprosy signs and corpse uncleanness” (Hagigah 14a).<sup>36</sup>

Danby’s most useful and widely-used contribution to the study of Jewish texts was his Mishnah translation. This translation quickly became a standard text in the English-speaking world and it remains in print seventy years after its publication. When, in 1988,

Yale University Press published a new translation of the Mishnah, its editor, Jacob Neusner, made it clear that “publishing this fresh translation of the Mishnah constitutes no criticism of the great and pioneering translation by Herbert Danby. His translation has one fundamental flaw...He does not make the effort to translate the Hebrew into English words following the syntax of Mishnaic Hebrew...that is what the present translation, into American English, provides.”<sup>37</sup> While Neusner’s translation takes us closer to the syntactical structure of the Hebrew of the Mishnah, Danby’s translation renders that text more immediately accessible and for that reason it remains the translation of record.

#### DANBY AS REGIUS PROFESSOR OF HEBREW AT OXFORD

In 1936, after seventeen years in Jerusalem, Herbert Danby left St. George’s and returned to Oxford University, where he was appointed Regius Professor of Hebrew and Canon of Christ Church. While at Oxford Danby continued to make contributions to the development of Modern Hebrew. Working with Professor M. Z. Segal of the Hebrew University, Danby produced a series of Hebrew–English and English–Hebrew dictionaries that had a considerable effect on the development of modern Hebrew usage.<sup>38</sup> To his students at Oxford Danby taught classical and modern Hebrew. In a course titled “From Kohelet to Klausner,” Danby provided a year-long survey of Hebrew from its Biblical beginnings to its renewal as a written and spoken language in British Mandate Palestine.

Danby’s return to the university in which he had been educated was the occasion for extended reflection on his career. In “*Bible Lands*,” the quarterly review that Danby founded in the 1920s, the new editors bid him farewell and provided a note on the church’s understanding of why Bishop MacInnes had invited Danby to Jerusalem in 1919: “The Bishop felt that the British Mandate for Palestine with promise of a Natural Home for the Jews would mean that the Church must rethink its way of approach to the Jews. He sought a man who could not only present Christianity to the Jews, but also one who from his knowledge and understanding of Jewish aspirations, could explain the Jewish mind to Christians. He found this man in Dr. Danby... While Dr. Danby’s work with and for the Jews had a first claim upon his time, his advice was constantly sought and used on all matters connected with the Christian schools in the Bishopric.”<sup>39</sup> This “*Bible Lands*” article glosses over the sharp contrast between Danby’s positive view of Zionism and the Anglican Church’s

emerging negative view of it. By the end of the 1930s the dichotomy had sharpened. The various Palestine partition plans bandied about in the late 1930s were greeted by the Anglican Church with dismay. “In 1938 the Church of England’s Council for Foreign Relations condemned the proposed partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states as against Christian interests, deplored political Zionism, and recommended that Britain retain Palestine indefinitely and put an end to Jewish immigration. Canon Danby was the only member of the Council to dissociate himself completely from the document.”<sup>40</sup>

After he left Jerusalem for Oxford Danby became more explicit about his work with Christians and Jews in Palestine. In a 1941 survey of the history of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem he presented his understanding of Zionism and of the young Jews who had come “to *live* in Palestine and there create a system of life, which while distinctively Jewish should rid itself of the deformities which had made Jews hateful to themselves and to others.” In this survey Danby makes clear that his, and the church’s, ultimate goal is to “bring the Jewish people into closer sympathy with the Christian faith... may it be in our power to bring them still closer—into allegiance to the one Saviour.”<sup>41</sup> We saw this conversionist agenda made explicit earlier in Danby’s report to the Bishop at the Budapest and Warsaw Conferences of 1935.

A less charitable view of the secular Jews of Palestine may be found in the memoirs of another Anglican cleric at St. George’s, C. H. Gill. Gill, like Danby, highlighted the differences between “Jews who had come to Palestine to die and those who had come there to live.” Unlike Danby, he finds the “new Jews” even more objectionable than the “old”. “These new Jewish immigrants were of a type widely different from that of their Jewish predecessors. They were highly cultured, yet a very large proportion of them were without any effective religious faith.”<sup>42</sup> The distinction between “Old” and “New” Jews was a constant theme in Christian reflections on the Jews of British Mandate Palestine: The Rev. G. L. B. Sloan, Anglican missionary in Tiberias wrote of the *chalutzim* of the neighboring *Kibbutzim* that (c. 1935): “These are not the old, stooping, decrepit type, relics of the Ghetto, with whom one so often comes in contact in Eastern Europe. They are fresh in their veins. With right they call themselves *Halutzim*—Pioneers.”<sup>43</sup>

Advocacy of missions to the Jews of Palestine did not mean a lessening of Danby’s protective attitude toward Jews in general. In 1937, Danby, responding to an antisemitic tract by Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, penned a spirited defense of the Jewish tradition and the Jewish people, “Danby severely criticized Rosenberg, the

Nazi scholar and the head of the German Foreign Affairs Section, who had just published his book *The Immorality of the Talmud*. Danby said that the book, was full of malice, malignity and misquotations."<sup>44</sup> An anti-Nazi group in London, Friends of Europe, published selections of Rosenberg's *Unmoral im Talmud* as part of their program "to provide accurate information about Nazi Germany for use... wherever the English tongue is known." Danby's foreword and notes to that translation present Rosenberg's attack on the Talmud within the context of German historical antisemitism: "Utilisation of selected extracts from ancient Jewish writings to bring discredit and ridicule on the Jews of more than a thousand years later... is a practice with a long history in Germany."<sup>45</sup>

Danby was acutely aware that his own lineage of Christian Hebraist teacher of Rabbinic literature had a legacy of antisemitic endeavors. He connects Rosenberg's twentieth century antisemitic tract to the seventeenth century anti-Jewish anthologies of Wagenseil and Eisenmenger. "Herr Rosenberg's pamphlet is but a puny imitation of Eisenmenger's colossal volume; yet the spirit is the same, and it as true to type as it is, like Eisenmenger, loose in its canons of accuracy."<sup>46</sup> Descrying the "malice and malignity" with which Rosenberg selects and presents quotations from the Talmud that put Jews and Judaism in a bad light, Danby directs his readers to a familiar source. "It would be merely tiresome to deal with each quotation in turn.... Much is made in Rosenberg's Chapter 5 of the alleged scurrilous references to Jesus in the Talmud. The reader can find these objectively treated in Klausner's *Jesus of Nazareth*."<sup>47</sup>

#### DANBY AFTER WORLD WAR TWO

The aftermath of the murder of European Jewry during the Second World War had a profound effect on Christian relationships to Jews and Judaism. Danby too was affected by this shift in attitudes. Before the war he had warned against anti-Semitism. He had condemned Nazi policies and ideology, as we saw in his polemic against Alfred Rosenberg. At the same time he promoted missions to the Jews. After the war he gave up his conversionist agenda, or at least he never spoke of them publicly.

In England, Danby developed a close friendship with the eminent Orthodox Jewish scholar Rabbi Isadore Epstein. Another Jewish scholar with whom Danby developed both a personal friendship and working scholarly relationship was the American Talmudist

Saul Leiberman of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Working with Leiberman, Danby translated sections of Maimonides Laws of Purity for the Yale Judaica series.<sup>48</sup>

At Oxford, Danby served in a prestigious professorship that had been established by Henry VIII. Among his illustrious predecessors was Hebraist Edward Pusey. Like Danby, these Oxford dons were Anglican clergymen, and their scholarly projects and conversations were conducted with other Christian Hebraist colleagues. Rarely did Jewish Hebraism and Christian Hebraism meet. Danby, in contrast, brought the disciplines, and their practitioners, together. He was the first holder of the Regius Professorship in Hebrew who was in direct scholarly and religious conversation with Jewish scholars of Judaica.

At the time of his death in 1953, Herbert Danby was engaged in an ambitious and taxing project, the translation of Maimonides “Code of Cleanliness,” a manual on the laws of purity and impurity. This translation was undertaken for the Yale Judaica series. Danby completed the translation part of the project—over 600 pages of English text in its final version. He did not live to complete an analytical introduction to this section of Maimonides Code; some of Danby’s observations were summed up in Julian Obermann’s editor’s foreword. Obermann wrote of Danby’s work on the Maimonides translation. “. . . our esteem for his vast learning and scholarship became inseparable from our appreciation of his great wisdom and his glowing humanity.”<sup>49</sup>

Danby, a philo-Semitic Christian Hebraist, was aware that criticism of the Talmud was also a theme in modern Jewish discourse. “Liberal Jews may rise superior to the Talmud,” he wrote. But he emphasized that a Christian would benefit from studying it “to scrutinize his specifically Jewish historical and religious origins.” Such scrutiny, adds Danby, might preserve Christians “from many vagaries”—including the heresy of Marcion (which rejects the Hebrew Bible) and the antisemitic trends of the 1930s.<sup>50</sup> For, “if the Jew did, in truth, become the deepest hater of Christianity, it was most certainly the Christian who had the largest share in making him so.”<sup>51</sup>

It would be productive to compare Danby’s work and life to those of another pro-Zionist Anglican clergyman, James Parkes (1896–1981). Parkes, Danby’s slightly younger contemporary, attended Oxford University’s Hertford College. It was at Oxford that Parkes learned of Modern British Jewry and the antisemitism it often encountered. While in his last year at Oxford he joined the staff of the Student Christian Movement (SCM), and during his post-graduate years as an SCM representative to European student organizations he learned of the worsening situation of Jewish students at European universities.<sup>52</sup>

Though he was an excellent Greek and Latin student, Parkes did not embark on the study of Hebrew—a striking decision, as he was soon to make advocacy for Jewish rights and the call for Christian-Jewish understanding his life's work.

Danby in contrast, embarked on the study of Biblical and post-Biblical Hebrew while an undergraduate and made his language skills the key to his grand scholarly project—complete and accurate translations of Rabbinic classics. Danby worked within institutions: the Anglican Church and Oxford University. Parkes attempted to establish his own institutions for Jewish-Christian understanding, and did not work directly for church institutions or serve a regular parish. Most often Parkes' work was supported by Jewish organizations.

Parkes sought a reconciliation between Judaism and Christianity. Long before World War Two, he objected to Christian missions to the Jews. Parkes, not knowing Hebrew, relied on translations, Danby's among them. Parkes' many books on Jewish history, Jewish-Christian relations, and the Land of Israel were informed by these translations. Parkes's books called for Christian support of Jews and Zionism. In *Judaism and Christianity* (1948), *The Story of Jerusalem* (1949), *A History of the Jewish People* (1962), and *Whose Land? A History of the Peoples of Palestine* (1970), he made the case for the Jewish state.

In a 1970 event that would have gladdened the heart of Herbert Danby (who died seventeen years earlier), James Parkes was invited to preach at Jerusalem's St. George Cathedral, an institution well-known for its anti-Israeli stance. In his sermon he called on Christians to re-evaluate Judaism. "It is the greatest tragedy of the first two millennia of Christian history that the apostolic age convinced itself that it had replaced Judaism."<sup>53</sup>

Unlike James Parkes, an outsider who was invited back on occasion to preach. Herbert Danby, in contrast, stayed within the institutions of the church. His life's work was in the translation and explication of Rabbinic texts and his support of Jews and Zionism was implicit within his work. Danby's decision as an Oxford student to study Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrews was pivotal in his life. But that decision did not undercut his commitment to the welfare of the Anglican Church and the furtherment of its missionary aims. Though Klausner and other Jewish associates of Danby overlooked (or were not aware of) his deep commitment to the church, they were correct in assessing his commitment to Zionism and the revival of the Hebrew language. In his eulogy of Danby, Klausner wrote that "even among the English, who produced George Eliot and Lord Balfour, there



weren't many like him . . . His pure memory will live among his people and his land, as it will live in our people and land—as a great person and an exemplary English Christian.”<sup>54</sup>

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NOTES

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1. Jehuda. Reinhartz, *Chaim Weizmann: The Making of a Statesman* (New York, 1993), p. 18.

2. Rafiq A. Farah, *In Troubled Waters: A History of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem, 1841–1998* (Dorset, 2020), p. 73; Naomi Shepherd, *Ploughing Sand: British Rule in Palestine, 1917–1948* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 2000), p. 44.

3. *Ibid.*, and Judith M. Lidberg, *A Hundred Years: A Cathedral Presence in Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, 1998).

4. N. Shepherd, p. 44, quoting, MEC, Jerusalem and East Mission Papers, Box IV, file 7.

5. Herbert Danby, *Gentile Interest in Post Biblical Hebrew Literature* (Jerusalem, 1930), pp. 1–2

6. Biographical materials on Danby are limited. I have relied on the afore mentioned histories of St. George's Cathedral and on histories of Mandate Palestine.

7. Daniel. Cohn-Sherbok, *The Politics of Apocalypse* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 87, 127–128.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 127–128.

9. Bishop W. H. Stewart, Jerusalem, 1945, quoted in Cohn-Sherbok, pp. 142.

10. The JPOS was published from 1920 to 1948.

11. Nick Mays, “The Times in Palestine,” *Times on Line* (October 25, 2000).

12. JPOS 3, 1923, pp. 93–107.

13. JPOS 15, 1935, p. 194.

14. ‘The *Journal of Biblical Literature*,’ Vol. 56, No. 4, pp. 395–398.

15. H. Danby, *Studies in Judaism*, (Jerusalem, 1922), pp. 12, 30.

16. Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times, and Teaching* (New York, 1925). See also Serve Ruzer, “David Flusser: Between the Study of Christianity and the Study of Judaism,” *Mahanaim: A Review for Jewish Thought and Culture*, Vol. 15, No. 126 (Hebrew).

17. See Herbert Danby, *Studies in Judaism* (London, 1927), pp. 28–29.
18. Herbert Danby, *The Jew and Christianity: Some Phases, Ancient and Modern, of the Jewish Attitude Toward Christianity* (London, 1927), p. 82.
19. *The Jew and Christianity*, p. 100.
20. Stephen Wise, *Challenging Years: The Autobiography of Stephen Wise* (New York, 1949) p. 281.
21. A. Kabak, *The Narrow Path: The Man of Nazareth* (Tel Aviv, 1968); and D. Flusser, *Jesus* (New York, 1969).
22. Ben Siegel, *The Controversial Sholem Asch* (Bowling Green, 1976).
23. G. Schoffman, “Herbert Danby,” *Hadoar*, (November 19, 1926).
24. E. Deinard, *Herev La Hashem Uleyisrael*, (New Orleans, 1924); and H. Danby, *Gentile Interest in Post Biblical Hebrew Literature*, (Jerusalem, 1930), p. 2.
25. H. Danby, *Studies in Judaism*, p. 31.
26. The Living Church quote is from Maria Sonaberg, *Ambivalent Friendship*, p. 69. E. F. Scott, “A Jewish Interpretation of Jesus,” *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1926, pp. 91, 92–95.
27. Transcript of “The Budapest and Warsaw Conferences on the Presentation of the Christian Message to the Jews,” St. George’s Cathedral Archives, A.C.J. Box No. 131.
28. Joseph Klausner, “Herbert Danby”—*Davar Annual* 1953 (Hebrew)
29. Hebert Danby, *The Jew and Christianity*, pp. 89, 101.
30. Josheph Klausner, *A History of Hebrew Literature, 1785–1930* (London, 1932).
31. Hayyim Nahman Bialik, *And it Came to Pass: Legends and Stories About King David and King Solomon* (New York, 1938).
32. For a Hebrew essay on “Vayehi Hayom” see Mordechai ben Yehezkel Bialik: *Critical Essays on his Works*, (ed.) Gershom Shaked (Tel Aviv, 1974), pp. 337–372 (Hebrew).
33. See Pinhas Lahover, *Bialik, His Life and Works*, Bialik Institute (Tel Aviv, 1944) Vol. 2, pp. 690–706 (Hebrew).
34. M. Ben Yehezkel, “Vayehi Hayom,” in *Bialik: Critical Essays on His Works*, G. Shaked (ed.) (Jerusalem, 1974), p. 340 (Hebrew).
35. H. N. Bialik, *Knights of Onion and Garlic* (New York, 1939).
36. Maimonides, *Commentary on the Mishnah, Toharot*, cited in *The Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah), Book Ten: The Book of Cleanliness*. (New Haven, 1954), p. XXXIX.
37. Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven, 1988), p. X.
38. See the *Hebrew Encyclopedia* (Ha-Intziklopedia ha-Ivrit-) “Danby, Herbert” which credits Danby for contributions to Modern Hebrew lexicography.
39. *Bible Lands*, Vol. IX, No. 19, (July, 1936), pp. 749–750.
40. N. Shepherd, *Ploughing Sand*, pp. 46–47.
41. *Bible Lands*, Vol. X, No. 170 (October, 1941), pp. 1248–1255.

42. Ibid, p. 1255.
43. St. George's Cathedral Archives: "Problems and Prospects of the Jewish Mission Work in Present Day Palestine," by Rev. G. L. B. Sloan, Tiberias. An Address delivered at Tallin, Estonia, on Tuesday, July 23, 1935, before a United Conference of the Churches of Estonia and Finland.
44. Alfred Rosenberg, "The Palestine Post," (August 30, 1937).
45. *Immorality in the Talmud* by Dr. Alfred Rosenberg, with a Foreword by The Rev. Herbert Danby D.D. (London, 1937), p. 6.
46. Ibid, p. 6.
47. Ibid, p. 8.
48. The Code of Maimonides, Book 10 (Yale Judaica Series).
49. Julian Obermann (ed.) *The Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah), Book Ten: The Book of Cleanliness*. Translated from the Hebrew by Herbert Danby (New Haven, 1954).
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51. *The Jew and Christianity*, p. 17.
52. See Haim Chertok, *He Also Spoke as a Jew: The Life of James Parkes* (London, 2006), p. 185.
53. Ibid, 452.
54. J. Klausner, *Davar Annual*, 1953.