

village. New transcendent certainties do exist, however, if we look for them: the fantasy of a perfect life on the box, (which corresponds roughly to what used to be thought of as the life of the soul) and the fantasy of a perfect life on the box hereafter, called History (which corresponds to what used to be thought of as immortality). History, having wholly ceased to refer to the past, and referring now only to this future fantasy, may truly be said to have ended.

To be concluded

Prophecy and Myth in *Daniel Deronda*

George Every

Daniel Deronda is the last of George Eliot's novels, and the one that describes her contemporaries. Mary Anne Evans, who became Marian, Polly to her intimates, and concealed her feminine identity under the pseudonym of George Eliot, was a schoolgirl at the time represented in *Middlemarch*. The religion described in *Scenes of Clerical Life* and in *Adam Bede* was in substance hers until 1841. When in 1856 she began to tell tales about it she had already translated *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* by D.F. Strauss and *The Essence of Christianity* by Feuerbach. But she could write of 'the real drama of Evangelicalism'¹ as one who had experienced it from within when the Evangelical revival stood for serious religion, for the conviction of sin.

In *Daniel Deronda* 'hurrying march of crowded Time towards the world-changing battle of Sadowa'² where Prussia defeated Austria in July 1866, dates Daniel's wait in Genoa for his unknown mother, who will tell him that her father and his were both Jews, like Mirah who in the July of the year before stepped into his boat opposite Kew Gardens with the cloak that she had soaked in the river to hasten her drowning. Something has been told beforehand of his background at home with Sir Hugo Mallinger at Topping Abbey, at Eton and at Cambridge and a German university, and of his suspicion of his illegitimacy; but his meetings with Mirah, with

her brother Mordecai, and with Gwendolen Harleth, who became the wife and then the widow of Grandcourt, Sir Hugo's nephew and the heir-apparent to his baronetcy, all belong to 1865 and 1866.

The novel was published in eight parts ten years later, from February to September 1876. The germ of the idea was conceived at Homburg in 1872, when Marian watched a young lady gambling who turned into Gwendolen, but much of the writing was done in 1874 and 1875, the conclusion not until publication had begun. These dates are important for Daniel's declaration of intention, made to Gwendolen after his engagement but before his marriage to Mirah: 'The idea that I am possessed with is that of restoring a political existence to my people, making them a nation again, giving them a national centre, such as the English have, though they too are scattered over the face of the globe. That is the task that presents itself to me as a duty: I am resolved to begin it, however feebly. I am resolved to devote my life to it. At the least, I may awaken a movement in other minds, such as has been awakened in my own'.³

The last sentence in fact gives precision to the prophecy. Theodore Herzl was sixteen when *Daniel Deronda* was published, but those who gathered round him twenty years later to found Zionism at Basle in 1897 included many who had read the novel in English, French, German or Hebrew. The sources of the theme in the novel itself were partly in Mordecai's conversation, partly in doubt in the box of papers which Daniel's grandfather, David Charisi, left for his grandson, eventually entrusted to Joseph Kalonymos, who kept it in his office at Mainz until Daniel called for it on his way back from Genoa to London. The sources in the mind of George Eliot are partly in conversation and correspondence with Emanuel Deutsch, a Silesian Jew who worked on the catalogue of the British museum from 1855 to 1872,⁴ and died of cancer at Alexandria on his second visit to the East in 1873. Some of his ideas and his frustrated condition as the hidden cancer laid hold of him are certainly reflected in Mordecai, in his consumption as well as in his conversation, but the impact of Deutsch on George Eliot must be seen in the wider context of the political situation in 1874-5, and of her spiritual biography.

Deutsch had sent to George Eliot a proof of his article on the Talmud which appeared in *The Quarterly Review* for October 1867. In this he called attention to parallels in the New Testament. He was invited to accompany the British mission to Ethiopia in 1868. He could not go, but no doubt he discussed the relevance of Jewish and Christian manuscripts found there with George Eliot before and after his visit to Palestine in 1869. By that time it was clear that the Ottoman empire was passing away. Gladstone, a High Churchman and a Homeric scholar, who had been High Commissioner for the Ionian islands while they were still under

British protection, knew how the Turks had depended on the administrative abilities of their Christian subjects, who served them as long as they continued to be conquerors. The decline of the empire was due to their hopes of freedom, and to the panic of Turkish resistance to these. Gladstone had no objection to the revival of the Byzantine empire in alliance with Russia and other Eastern Orthodox nations, the Romanians, the Bulgarians and the Serbs. But Disraeli feared the advance of Russia through Armenia to the Suez canal.

In Syria and Mesopotamia the Muslims had been the ruling class since the Arab conquests of the seventh century. The other 'peoples of the book', the Jews and Christians, had autonomy in the management of their religious and family affairs, including the inheritance of estates, but (with exceptions in particular places) they were disarmed and their religious authorities were accounted responsible for their good behaviour. By the sixteenth century, when the Ottoman empire extended to Syria and Egypt, the cultivators of the soil in most places had become Muslims. The Christians and Jews were minorities, under a diversity of recognised religious authorities. The Muslims thought of themselves as the ruling class, who would remain in power after Turkey had fallen, but they realised that European influence would favour the Christians, whose rights in the Holy Places in Jerusalem and Bethlehem had been a matter of dispute in the crisis that led to the Crimean war, and might be again.

In Palestine the Orthodox Christians in their parish churches worshipped in Arabic, and shared an Arab identity with the Muslims. They had been pioneers in education, and could provide leaders in cultural revival. The Arabs had therefore no particular fear of Russia, who might be expected to support them against the Greeks who held key positions in the institutions of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. France in the Crimean war had supported the Catholics against the Orthodox, but the Third Republic was not on the best of terms with the papacy. Some French politicians on the left were interested in Jewish agricultural settlements. The idea of a Jewish commonwealth under French protection, first mooted at the time of Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798, was cautiously revived by Moses Hess, an associate of Karl Marx, in a book published in German at Leipzig in 1862.⁵ But at this time the emancipation of the Jews was proceeding everywhere in western Europe and expected in Russia. Jewish financiers with opportunities for investment were reluctant to take risks on the troubled soil of Palestine. The problem was rather to arouse British interest in the Eastern question.

Communication with India was not a popular issue. Many thought that British intervention in the Crimean war had been a costly mistake. The purchase of shares by the government in the Suez canal was widely

criticised. But in Britain and America as well as in Protestant Germany the exploration of sites in Palestine was a popular interest. Biblical history was matter of debate for those who wanted to know what really happened in the first century A.D., before and after the revolt of the Jews against Rome and the ruin of the Temple at Jerusalem. To Christian believers this was important, and in 1870 to all who wanted to undermine Christian dogma, but in varying degrees. To Catholics and Orthodox, including the lesser Eastern Churches, the Scriptures were starting-points in a tradition that included the Fathers, the lives of the saints, and mediaeval and modern miracles. To Protestants they were the final authorities. If they were not literally true, the miracles recorded in them were those believed on the testimony of God's word. Protestant pilgrims, including some who went to Palestine in expectation of the second coming, had alternative sites for the crucifixion and the resurrection at 'Gordon's Calvary' and 'the garden tomb'. To Jews the same period was a crisis in their history. Their presence in Palestine in competition or collaboration with Christians and their critics was desirable, and for those foundations engaged in scientific research financially profitable, but emancipated Jews, both orthodox and liberal, were shy of personal involvement with discoveries that might embarrass relations between their own religious authorities and those of other communities who had a like responsibility for the behaviour of their subjects.

George Eliot's role in this relates to her translations of Strauss and Feuerbach. She had never agreed with everything in *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*. Deutsch had no doubt pointed out to her gaps in her knowledge of Jewish customs. But she certainly believed that there were myths in both the Old and New Testament. In her translation of Strauss she called them *mythi*, the plural of *mythus*. She agreed with him that 'the pure historic idea was never developed among the Hebrews . . . their latest historical works, such as the books of the Maccabees, and even the works of Josephus, are not free from marvellous and extravagant tales.' His idea that 'no just notion of history is possible, without a perception of the inviolability of the chain of finite causes, and of the impossibility of miracles',⁶ would be impressive in Coventry in the course of the industrial revolution, if miracle is strictly defined as 'a breach of the known order of nature.' Strauss could allow that a 'fiction, although not undesigned, may still be without any evil design'. He contended that 'the case is not the same with the supposed authors of many fictions in the Bible, as with poets properly so called, since the latter write without any expectation that their work will be received as history, but still it is to be considered that in ancient times . . . the line between history and fiction, prose and poetry, was not drawn so firmly as with us.'⁷

Some years after her translation of Strauss was completed and

published, George Eliot 'attributed the first unsettlement of her orthodox views⁹ to Sir Walter Scott, whose writings were certainly a large part of her reading as a schoolgirl and while she was still an Evangelical. I am sure that as she began to write historical novels she saw resemblances, not only between hers and Scott's, but between all historical novels, lives of the saints and the four gospels. As Scott wrote with sympathy of the ideas and manners of the Middle Ages, and she presented the drama of the Evangelical revival to the Victorians, so the evangelists interpreted to Gentile Christians a Jewish background remote from many, if not from all of them.

Daniel Deronda, however, is not an historical novel. The author's concern here is not with the past but with the present and future. Yet at critical points in the novel an element appears to some of the characters as literally miraculous, and to many readers as miracle in the sense in which the word is used of answers to prayer. These were often cited as miracles in causes for the canonisation until in the age of reason the Roman curia came to agree with the Enlightenment in awareness of regularity in the normal order of nature.

The first of these miracles we have already encountered in the meeting of Daniel with Mirah as she was about to drown herself in the Thames. 'Her eyes fixed on him with a question as she said: "You look good. Perhaps it is God's command,"'⁹ The second miracle arises out of Daniel's search for her brother Ezra, while he is still inclined to identify him with Ezra Cohen, a jeweller and pawnbroker with a growing family, a mother and a lost sister whose disappearance is a mystery. He has given shelter to Mordecai, who discovers in Daniel the transmitter of his own half-formed ideas, of whom he has been waiting in an intensity of expectation that grows as he knows that he cannot live much longer. Daniel accepts the task and then discovers that Mordecai's other name is Ezra, and that his sickness is due to exposure on his way back to his mother after his father had taken his sister away. This miracle makes Daniel able to tell Mordecai that his prayers and those of his dying mother have been answered, that 'Your sister is worthy of the mother you honoured'.¹⁰ Mordecai and Mirah are then able to live together in lodgings provided by Daniel, who comes to them on his return from Genoa to tell them of his Jewish grandfather, and to leave with Mordecai the box of papers that he has collected at Mainz.

Another group of coincidences relates to meetings between Daniel and Gwendolen. In the first chapter his 'dreadful expression' breaks her run of luck at roulette. She is in flight to escape a proposal of marriage by Grandcourt, but accepts it to save her mother from ruin and herself from becoming governess to the daughters of an Evangelical bishop with a masterful wife, in spite of her promise not to stand in the way of the

mother of Grandcourt's illegitimate children, Later meetings arise out of relationships between Grandcourt, Deronda and Sir Hugo Mallinger. Grandcourt takes it for granted that Daniel is Sir Hugo's son, and Mirah a Jewish singer who has become his mistress. He brings Gwendolen in a yacht to the hotel in Genoa where Daniel is meeting his mother, and takes her out in a boat that capsizes in the harbour. She is rescued but he is drowned. Daniel has to hear her confession of the hate that stopped her from throwing a rope at the critical moment. His telegrams bring her mother and Sir Hugo, who arrives in time to hear from him of his mother's revelation of his Jewish identity.

Of this he says to Gwendolen until after his engagement to Mirah. She feels deserted and he feels that he is cruel to her, but her wedding message is one of gratitude: 'Do not think of me sorrowfully on your wedding day . . . I only thought of myself and I made you grieve. You must not grieve any more for me. It is better - it shall be better for me because I have known you.'¹¹ Gwendolen is an interesting character, for many readers of the novel more real than Daniel or Mirah, who are saints in the making. So they appear to the Meyrick family, who give Mirah a home. Mab Meyrick says to her of Daniel: 'Kate burns a pastille before his portrait every day . . . And I carry his signature in a little black-silk bag round my neck to keep off the cramp. And Amy says the multiplication table in his name. We must all do something extra in honour of him, now that he has brought you to us.'¹² This is comedy, but it helps to put the pilgrimage of Daniel and Mirah to one another and to Jerusalem into a context of hagiography, of myth, miracle and mystery.

Edward Dowden, the professor of English literature at Trinity College, Dublin, writing on '*Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*' in *The Contemporary Review* for February 1877, saw Daniel as a sage or saint, who 'even in childhood is sensible of the existence of . . . centres of self outside himself, and can transfer his own consciousness into theirs . . . From the very fact that such persons are free from an absorbing egoism it becomes difficult to determine the precise outline of their personality.' Others saw Daniel appearing as 'a wreath of moral mist, a mere tentative, or rather group of relatives, in character-conceiving.'¹³ But Dowden read 'the religious conception of *Daniel Deronda* as . . . that of a life of mankind over, above and around the life of the individual man and woman, and to which the individual owes . . . the passion of his heart and the utmost labour of his hand'. He saw this 'ethnic religion' not only in Israel, a 'race whose leaders and prophets looked longingly for no personal immortality, but lived through faith in the larger life to come of their nation'. Living himself on the margin of the Irish Protestant ascendancy, he compared Mordecai to Coleridge and Goethe. There is

some evidence that he himself communicated his interest in occult experience of an unseen world to W.B. Yeats and A.E. (George Russell).¹⁴

George Eliot had no time for such practices. In *The Lifted Veil*, a short story of 1859, she treated them as symptoms of disease. Her own perspective is illuminated in 'A College Breakfast-Party', a symposium published in *Macmillan's Magazine* for July 1878, and there dated April 1874. This is related in her biography to 'talks with the young Trinity men on her first visit to Cambridge in May 1873',¹⁵ when she held forth to Frederick Myers on God as inconceivable, immortality as unbelievable, and duty as absolute. In this the college chaplain, one of the new school of High Churchmen influenced by Hort and F.D. Maurice, and by Kant through Coleridge, replies to sceptical questions from characters in *Hamlet* with the categorical imperative of the practical reason. His speeches in Shakespearean blank verse are not impressive. George Eliot was on the side of positivism against metaphysics, scholastic or Coleridgean, but she could envisage the possibility that Catholics and Anglican High Churchmen might follow Coleridge into their own forms of Biblical criticism, and concur in some of their conclusions with Liberal Protestants and rational Jews.

In 1873 she has been to the synagogue in Frankfurt, where Daniel in 1865 'gave himself up to the strongest effect of chanted liturgies, which is independent of detailed verbal meaning'.¹⁶ No doubt she remembered this as he did listening to Mirah singing their mother's hymn, in Hebrew words that neither he nor she understood. Much of the liturgy of the synagogue was familiar to him through psalms and lessons in *The Book of Common Prayer*. So it was to George Eliot, who could identify herself with 'devout women of high standing' in the *Acts of the Apostles* (5: 30), afraid that St Paul would make trouble for Jews and their Gentile friends by preaching his new religion. But her problems and his were not the same.

She hoped that a scientific solution of the complex relationships between Judaism and early Christianity would come through Biblical archaeology, confirming and correcting assured results of historical criticism. A secular Jewish state would provide space for this. She knew that the Jewish religious leaders would not welcome the idea, but expected that political developments would force their hands. She did not realise that in Palestine any and every historical investigation is involved with historical loyalties, celebrated year by year and week by week in processions and ceremonies. These no emancipated Jew would wish to defy or deflect, however lax his observance of some points of the law might be. The Jewish response to *Daniel Deronda* shows appreciation of the portraits of Jews and of Jewish communities, and interest in the idea of a Jewish national home, but also anxiety lest the political aspect of this

should expose Jews in Palestine 'to the crossfire of Christian and Mahometan fanaticism'.¹⁷

At the end of the novel Mordecai dies in the arms of Daniel and Mirah, who leave with a 'complete equipment for Eastern travel'¹⁸ soon after. George Eliot did not follow them to the East or into their difficulties with Jewish religious authorities over Daniel's 'Christian sympathies in which my mind was reared'. He had told his mother that these 'will never die out of me'.¹⁹ He would meet at the synagogues some who favoured a national home, if they had doubts about an independent state. Many of these in agricultural settlements would be Russian subjects, and some would have friends among Russian Orthodox pilgrims. In 1839 a Jew was appointed by the Russian consul in Beirut, himself a Greek, to represent Russia in Jerusalem.²⁰ Orthodox friends, Arab and Russian, would introduce Daniel to links between Jewish and Christian worship in the liturgy of St John Chrysostom, celebrated in Greek and Arabic by the Orthodox and by Melkites in communion with Rome.

Daniel was interested in the Arabs before he knew that he was a Jew.²¹ In Eastern Orthodox eyes he would be an Anglican of Jewish ancestry, married to a Jewess, interested in continuity between the Old and the New Testaments, and in the holy places of both. His disposition and history made him a pilgrim rather than an enquirer into authenticities. 'He dreaded, as if it were a dwelling-place of lost souls, that dead anatomy of culture which makes the universe into a mere ceaseless answer to queries, and knows not everything, but everything else about everything.'²² Daniel and Mirah had been brought together and to Mordecai by miracles, and would expect more in their babies and in fresh friends. But many who came to Jerusalem to study the Biblical period were anxious to establish the original and literal sense of the Scriptures, discounting prophetic and mystical meanings, and stories about miracles.

The consequent emphasis on Judaism in Christianity, especially in the theological schools of Protestant Germany, provoked hostility to Jews, including baptised Christians of Jewish descent, and to Biblical theology. The underlying objection, common to world empires and world revolutions, arose from the desire to make good and evil what the heirs of progress want them to be. George Eliot certainly shared this, but she helped to put Palestine back in the centre of the map by raising the hopes of the Jews and the fears of others.

1 *Westminster Review* for July 1856, p. 457 in a review of novels.

2 Penguin edition, Harmondsworth 1967, p. 684.

3 *Daniel Deronda* as 2, p. 875.

4 *The Literary Remains of the late Emmanuel Deutsch, with a memoir* (by Lady Strangford), London and New York 1874, contains articles on the Talmud and Islam.

5 *Rüm und Jerusalem*. A summary is in Neville Barbour, *Nisi Dominus, a survey of the*

- Palestine question*, Beirut 1969, pp. 35–8.
- 6 *The Life of Jesus* by D.F. Strauss, London 1848, 6th ed. 1913, pp. 73–5.
 - 7 *Ibid.* p. 85.
 - 8 J.W. Cross, *George Eliot's Life as told in her letters and journals* 2nd ed. London and Edinburgh 1886, p. 395, G.S. Haight; *George Eliot, a biography*, Oxford 1968, p. 39.
 - 9 *Daniel Deronda*, p. 231.
 - 10 *Ibid.* p. 632.
 - 11 *Ibid.* pp. 881–2.
 - 12 *Ibid.* p. 266.
 - 13 R.H. Hutton in *The Spectator*, 10 June 1876. On 29 July he was more positive.
 - 14 See R.F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr. Punch*, Harmondsworth 1993, p. 226 and ref.
 - 15 G.S. Haight, *op. cit.*, pp. 463–5 and 507.
 - 16 *Daniel Deronda*, p. 416, remembered on p. 424.
 - 17 *The Jewish Chronicle*, London, 15 Dec. 1876. See also R. Levitt, *George Eliot and the Jewish Connection*, Jerusalem 1975 and S. Werses in *Daniel Deronda, a centenary symposium*, ed. Alice Shalvi, Jerusalem, 1976.
 - 18 *Daniel Deronda*, p. 881.
 - 19 *Ibid.* p. 724.
 - 20 A.L. Tibawi, *Russian cultural penetration of Syria-Palestine in the nineteenth century*, reprinted from *The Royal Central Asia Journal* 52, 1966, p. 3.
 - 21 *Daniel Deronda*, p. 584.
 - 22 *Ibid.* p. 413

On New Testament Scholarship and the Integrity of Faith

Hugo Meynell

*Hermes and Athena*¹ consists of the proceedings of a conference of philosophers and New Testament scholars. I think the sponsors of the conference are to be congratulated on bringing members of the two groups together; the interaction was salutary, for all that one of the most significant exchanges is very angry, and makes painful reading. The issues raised appear to me to be of quite fundamental importance.

I

As Michael Dummett sees it, the most influential New Testament scholars of the present day operate with two axioms, that the Gospels are not a reliable witness to Jesus' words and deeds, and that Jesus had no powers and no source of knowledge that were not available to other human beings.² In so doing, they not only offend and bewilder ordinary believers, but effectively deprive Christianity of any rational basis.³