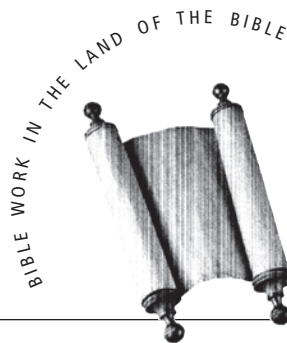


First “Organized” Bible-work in 19th Century Jerusalem

Part VIII: Bible-men in Jerusalem from the summer of 1824 to the spring of 1827

by Kai Kjær-Hansen



At the turn of the year 1823–1824, a Bible Society Room had been set up in Jerusalem. The American missionary Pliny Fisk, though based in Beirut, had been appointed its leader. In the first months of 1824, he and other Bible-men had met with a great deal of opposition in Jerusalem, and a few of them had even been arrested due to their distribution of Bibles. They had, nonetheless, managed to distribute quite a few Scriptures and Scripture portions to both Christians and Jews in Jerusalem.

This article will address the period from the summer of 1824 to the spring of 1827. It will be shown that very little was done in the way of Bible distribution in this almost three-year period.

But first, a few words about the bans and bulls issued against the missionaries in the first half of 1824.

During the almost three months the prosperous Lewis Way, a member of the leadership of London Jews Society (LJS), spent in Lebanon in the summer of 1823, he had rented a building in Antoura, in the mountains of Lebanon. The building had been abandoned by the Jesuits, and the purpose of the lease was to set up a “college” for Protestant missionaries.¹

The Vatican is informed about this, and reacts against the lease in letters dated January 31, 1824, sent to the highest ecclesiastical authorities in the Roman Catholic and Maronite churches in Lebanon.² The Protestant Bible-men allegedly work “under the mask of an affected zeal,” but “are public criers of error and corruption.” And it is made clear that they should not be allowed to have “an asylum on Mount Lebanon, from whence they may diffuse their poison with impunity. . . .”³ After this the lease is given up.

But as early as 1823, the Maronite Church in Lebanon had prepared an “Anathema” against the Protestant missionaries’ activities. This

1 Cf. *Mishkan* 55 (2008): 60.

2 These letters are available in English translation in *Jewish Expositor* (1825): 101–02, and *Missionary Herald* (1825): 108–09.

3 *Jewish Expositor* (1825): 101.

“Anathema” is read out in the Maronite Church on January 6, 1824.⁴ The charge is not just that the Old Testament Apocrypha has been left out of some of the editions distributed by the Bible-men; it is a problem altogether that the Scriptures are read, even if the Bible editions agree with “the vulgate of Rome.” As it is said:

. . . and we enjoin, in the name of God, that henceforth none shall either keep in possession any of the above-named books, or shall sell, buy, or give them away to others; and moreover, shall not read them on any consideration, even though they be correct copies, according to the vulgate of Rome.

People are furthermore forbidden to have “communication with them in spiritual matters” – they are “heretics.” The missionaries’ books are to be burnt or handed over to the ecclesiastical authorities. If a church man does not do it, “he shall be, *ipso facto*, prohibited the exercise of his degree or calling; and if he be of the laity, he shall be put under excommunication, reserving his absolution to ourselves.”⁵

This “Anathema” impeded the Bible-men’s work in Lebanon, but there are still numerous examples of Scriptures being distributed there.

The situation seems to get worse in mid-June 1824, when a *firman* is issued by the Grand Signor, i.e. the Sultan of Constantinople, prohibiting the distribution of Christian Scriptures.⁶ This *firman* decrees that if Christian Scriptures enter the Sultan’s empire, they are to be returned to Europe. No Muslim may own them, and the buying and selling of them is prohibited. If such Scriptures are found in the possession of Muslims, they will be confiscated and burnt.⁷

It is understandable that the Bible-men felt that this *firman* threatened their project. But things did not go quite as badly as the *firman* intended. The Muslim authorities did not enforce it strictly; on the other hand it was occasionally used by representatives of the Catholic Church in their struggle against Protestant missionaries’ distribution of Bibles.

In the April 1825 issue of the *Missionary Herald*, the editor writes:

The prevailing belief of the missionaries is, that it will not long operate as a material hindrance to their operations. At Aleppo, although the people who had received copies of the Scriptures were threatened with hanging, if they refused to give them up, it was not ascertained that a single copy was given up, or that a single individual

4 Translated into English in *ibid.*, 102–04; cf. the translation in *Missionary Herald* (1827): 297–99, which is followed on pp. 299–301 by the missionaries’ response to the charges, under the date of January 1, 1825.

5 *Jewish Expositor* (1825): 103.

6 This *firman* is dated “in the middle of the honoured Shoual, 1239,” which according to the Christian calendar is mid-June 1824; cf. Peter Kawerau, *Amerika und die Orientalischen Kirchen* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1958), 505.

7 *Jewish Expositor* (1825): 107.

suffered injury on that account. In the Custom-House, indeed, a few cases were sequestered and sent to Europe, and at Jaffa a sample of the books was committed to the flames. One of the missionaries compares this decree of the Sultan against the Bible to the bursting of thunder in the air, which excites attention, but does no harm.⁸

That the Bible-men's situation did not turn out as badly as intended by the Sultan's *firman* is confirmed by William Bucknor Lewis in a letter dated October 1, 1824, to LJS in London. Here Lewis reflects on the situation in this way:

The present prohibitory, if left to take its course, like many other proclamations issued by the Grand Signor, would soon, perhaps, be forgotten; but it is much to be feared, that the same unfair means which could obtain a royal decree prohibiting the introduction of Bible-books into these countries, may be able also at some future day to procure from the Porte another firman, prohibiting the residence and travelling of Bible-men in the Ottoman empire. Here the matter most surely is to be regarded in a very serious point of view.

In the same letter, Lewis gives expression to the hope that "the British influence will obtain for us the same privileges at least, which are enjoyed by the subjects of other foreign nations."⁹ It should be noted that the Protestant Bible-men, even after the issue of this *firman*, are able to continue their work.

In April 1825, the situation relating to the Sultan's *firman* is summed up in this way in the *Missionary Herald*:

Last of all came a Firman from the Grand Signore at Constantinople, forbidding the sale of Bibles, &c. in his dominions. The missionaries are quite sure, that this was obtained wholly through Catholic influence. At first, it alarmed them very much. They were fearful that it would put a stop, for some time, to the distribution of the Scriptures. But, since they have seen how the local authorities seem to understand it, and especially since they have remarked with what apathy the Turks regard it, their hopes have revived, and they have strong expectations of soon proceeding in their work as usual.¹⁰

Exactly when the Sultan's *firman* reached Syria – and was enforced – is

8 *Missionary Herald* (1825): 109. In the middle of October 1826, Consul John Barker, Aleppo, told the missionaries that some of the cases of Scriptures which two years before had been detained in the custom house at Aleppo remained there, and it is added: "But as a change is about taking place in the government, he hopes to succeed in obtaining their release." Cf. *Missionary Herald* (1827): 302.

9 *Jewish Expositor* (1825): 100.

10 *Missionary Herald* (1825): 92.



hard to say.¹¹ But we know that in the summer of 1824, Benjamin Barker distributes Bibles in Syria – unimpeded. On his journey as a Bible-man, he also travels to Jerusalem.

Barker in Jerusalem, Summer 1824

Benjamin Barker, salaried agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) in Smyrna¹² – and brother to British consul John Barker in Aleppo – visited Jerusalem in 1824.¹³ Going from Aleppo to Jerusalem, Barker writes in a letter sent from Beirut, dated June 24, 1824, that he has established a Bible depot there and that, from Beirut, he has sent “Holy Scriptures” to various towns, among them Jerusalem.¹⁴

Barker’s visit to Jerusalem took place during the period of time from the beginning of August (earliest date for arrival) to the middle of September (latest date for departure) 1824.¹⁵ From extracts from Barker’s trip from Aleppo to Jerusalem, the following may be noted:¹⁶

In Jerusalem Barker naturally finds lodgings in the Greek convent Mar Michael, which houses the Bible Society Room,¹⁷ and he is well received there: “every day, during my stay at Jerusalem, the proxy of the Greek Patriarch sent me fresh bread, and inquired after my health. In short, I could not be more kindly received than I was by these Greek prelates.”

Barker has come to Jerusalem expecting to distribute Scriptures. But the Armenian Patriarch “made the same observation as the Greek proxy, that my good intentions would meet with no encouragement at this season of the year, for other Englishmen had supplied the Armenians residing here; but that if I came in the winter I should find the opportunity to dispose of a great many to the Armenian pilgrims.” Barker promises that “no books should be wanting in the winter” and says straight out: “I had no occasion to sell any books.”

Even more important is perhaps what Barker’s published extracts

11 It must have been before October 1, 1824, when Lewis mentions it in a letter to LJS. Cf. *Jewish Expositor* (1825): 84.

12 Barker left Smyrna on January 30, 1824; during his stay in Syria his base was in Aleppo, which he left on December 5, 1824; cf. BFBS *Twenty-First Report* (1825): 64; and *Twenty-Second Report* (1826): 103.

13 The visit is briefly described by Kelvin Crombie in *Mishkan* 41 (2004): 8–9, without indication of when it took place.

14 BFBS *Twenty-First Report* (1825): 66–67.

15 This dating is based on the following: On his journey to Jerusalem he meets Fisk and King in Damascus, but no date is mentioned; cf. BFBS *Twenty-Second Report* (1826): 109. From King’s journal it emerges that Barker came to Damascus on July 8 and is still there on July 12; cf. *Missionary Herald* (1825): 344. Before getting to Jerusalem he reports about a good deal of activity in the regions south of Damascus. And after his visit to Jerusalem he writes in a letter dated Aleppo, November 24, 1824: “A week after my arrival at Aleppo, it pleased God to afflict me with a dangerous fever, of which I was ill upwards of two months. I am now, by the Almighty’s goodness, gradually recovering, although still weak, and really unfit to write”; BFBS *Twenty-First Report* (1825): 67.

16 Published in BFBS *Twenty-Second Report* (1826): 108–12; the quotations below are from pp. 111–12.

17 See *Mishkan* 55 (2008): 57–60.

disclose about the distribution of Scriptures in the periods when the Protestant Bible-men are *not* in Jerusalem. He mentions that when the missionaries "quit Jerusalem, after Easter, they leave with the Superior of the convent [of Mar Michael] a certain number to dispose of during their absence." About the situation in Rama Arimathea west of Jerusalem, he notes: "Besides the Sacred Scriptures distributed by the English, the Greek convent of Jerusalem has sent 200 Psalters, for the use of the children at Rama and its vicinity."

On his conversation with the Armenian Archbishop, Barker writes: "I told him that my principal view was to obtain his consent to distribute the Sacred Scriptures amongst his nation, and that no books should be wanting in the winter [1824–1825], for I intended to see that this was the case." Barker gets more than the Armenian Archbishop's "consent" to this. "He kindly answered," Barker continues, "that not only I had his full consent, but that he himself would co-operate and dispose of the books to the pilgrims, as he did once before when he bought many copies from an Englishman."

Barker claims that "the Christians of Jerusalem were amply supplied with the Sacred Scriptures by the Missionaries, and others who have visited this city." This should be taken with a grain of salt – it can hardly include the Catholics.¹⁸

In other words, even when the Protestant Bible-men are not in Jerusalem, distribution of Bibles sometimes takes place. They are channeled through the Greeks and the Armenians, on whose cooperation the Bible-men can continue to count. The Christians of Jerusalem have been amply supplied with Scriptures. And from Zion, Scriptures are spread throughout the world by Christian pilgrims. But distribution of Scriptures in Jerusalem, to the Jews of Jerusalem, is *not* undertaken by the Christians of Jerusalem. And the Protestant missionaries coming from abroad do *not* really succeed in spreading Bibles among the Jews of Jerusalem.

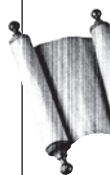
We must assume that Barker, on his departure, left some Bible portions in a depot, for there was no shortage of Bibles in the depot when the next Bible-men arrived about six months later.

Fisk, King, Lewis, and Dalton, Spring 1825

The Americans Pliny Fisk and Jonas King, and also William Bucknor Lewis, LJS's envoy, arrive together in Jerusalem on March 29, 1825. They have all been here before. At Mar Michael they are received "with open arms." On April 2, King writes: "Our hearts were gladdened by the unexpected arrival of Dr. Dalton from Beyroot [*sic*]." Dalton came to sound out the situation with a view to settling down in Jerusalem as a doctor.¹⁹ As such

¹⁸ I am in doubt as to what, precisely, Barker means by "others who had visited this city."

¹⁹ *Missionary Herald* (1827): 35. George E. Dalton arrived with his wife, Jane, and their newborn son in Beirut on January 6, 1825, as an envoy for LJS; see *Jewish Expositor* (1825): 309.



he could expect to be granted a residence permit in Jerusalem. But there is not much cause for rejoicing for these four missionaries. There is no shortage of Bibles for sale and distribution in Jerusalem this Easter. There is, however, a shortage of pilgrims, and an abundance of political unrest. Lewis comments:

Thousand of devoted pilgrims were formerly in the habit of going up to Jerusalem to attend the ceremonies, but, owing to the Greek war, the number at present is greatly diminished. Great opportunities were then consequently afforded for the distributions of the Scriptures of truth, and channels were opened, by means of which living waters might flow into distant lands. But, alas! this year nothing could be done in the Holy City in the way of circulating copies of the Word of God, as on former occasions. I need not say how much this was calculated to distress those who had it in their power, but could not give away a single copy, except privately, and with the greatest caution. This was the effect of our fears, and the fears of the people, and of our weakness in opposition to the Goliaths of the Terra Sancta convent. We were well persuaded that these monks had too much to do in the issuing of the prohibitory Firman against the Scriptures, not to be particularly on the alert to make use of it in Jerusalem, as the mischievous instrument of attack whenever the opportunity permitted."²⁰

Besides this, there was political unrest when Mustafa, Pasha of Damascus – and a couple of thousand soldiers – “pitched his tent without the city, near the gate of Jaffa” on April 1, to collect tribute from the inhabitants of Jerusalem.²¹ This was done in a brutal way, and enormous sums of money were exacted from the Christian convents, the Jews, and others. In Dalton’s words, under April 8: “Every day, nay, almost every hour, brings us intelligence of crime – Christians, Jews, and even Turks, seized and put in chains, and large sums demanded of them.”²²

Two matters are particularly important for the story of the Bible-men in Jerusalem and their relations with Christians and Jews there.

First, the relations with the Greeks: King writes, on April 4: “Last night, the Pasha took the Superior of the convent of Mar Elias, (a Greek,) and gave him five hundred blows on his feet, in order to make him confess, that he had concealed in his convent the treasures of the people of Bethlehem, who have all fled to Hebron.” From April 6, Dr. Dalton takes care of the Superior and treats him.²³ Later in the year, when Dalton is back in Jerusalem, he resumes contact with him (see below). Such an act

20 *Jewish Expositor* (1825): 427. “Terra Sancta” was the headquarters of the Roman Catholics in Jerusalem.

21 The Pasha of Damascus possessed supremacy over Jerusalem on behalf of the Sultan.

22 *Jewish Expositor* (1826): 137.

23 *Missionary Herald* (1827): 35–36; cf. *Jewish Expositor* (1826): 136.

of kindness consolidates the good relations between the Greeks and the Protestant Bible-men.

Second, the relations with the Ashkenazi Jews: Rabbi Menahem Mendel and some other Jews are taken, in chains, to the camp of the Pasha outside Jerusalem. Lewis intervenes through the Spanish Consul in Aleppo, Signor Durogello, who is celebrating Easter in Jerusalem, and these Jews are set free. Subsequently, Rabbi Mendel and other Jews come to thank them for their help.²⁴

Dr. Dalton does what is expected of a doctor – regardless of where he is and why he is there. Actually he is not in Jerusalem in order to begin his work as a doctor, but to make some practical arrangements so that he and his family can move there. He visits, and is visited by, a number of Jews who consult him as a doctor. Both the LJS missionaries and the Americans keep up the contact with Jewish leaders, for example Rabbi Mendel, which earlier missionaries had established. Dalton mentions that he once had a conversation with a Jew to whom a New Testament was given.²⁵

These matters, however, cannot conceal the fact that Jews in Jerusalem are not open to the gospel. They are open to Protestant missionaries who, through their contacts abroad, help improve their social situation in Jerusalem. Dalton agrees with Lewis when he recommends that the LJS committee in London work to bring a British consul to Jerusalem.²⁶

After the Pasha and his troops have left Jerusalem in the middle of April 1825, troubles escalate. King writes, on April 22: "The country about Jerusalem is in a very tumultuous state." A rebellion breaks out in the wake of the Pasha's visit and the increased taxes he has imposed on the population. And on April 27: "Heard of several men being killed at Bethlehem. Robberies and murders in the vicinity of Jerusalem, are now frequent."²⁷

It goes without saying that these circumstances have a negative impact on the Protestant missionaries and their work. In Lewis' words: "Truly we have had a very miserable time of it during the six weeks we spent at Jerusalem. . . . As to our party, we kept ourselves prisoners in the convent nearly three weeks."²⁸ And Dalton similarly: "From the time we entered Jerusalem until we left it, there has been nothing but trouble, oppression, and confusion: Jews, Christians, and even Turks, have had their share, and were almost daily the bearers of some doleful tidings to our ears."²⁹

Under such circumstances it is understandable that the Bible-men are very concerned about getting away from Jerusalem, which is not easy.

24 *Missionary Herald* (1827): 36; *Jewish Expositor* (1826): 138.

25 *Jewish Expositor* (1826): 133–40.

26 *Ibid.*, 76. Not until 1839 was this hope realized with Vice-Consul W. T. Young's arrival in Jerusalem; see, e.g. Kelvin Crombie, *For the Love of Zion* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), 25–27.

27 *Missionary Herald* (1827): 37.

28 *Jewish Expositor* (1825): 428.

29 *Jewish Expositor* (1826): 183.



They have all ordered mules for Saturday, May 7, but these are brought to them so late in the day that they cannot leave before Monday, May 9. For God-fearing Bible-men do not travel on the "Sabbath," i.e. Sunday, even if they find themselves in a dangerous situation. On Sunday, May 8, Fisk preaches for the first time in Jerusalem in Greek. "Eighteen Greeks were present, of whom *ten* were *priests*. This was one of the most interesting Sabbaths which we have had at Jerusalem," King writes.³⁰

Although there were a few encouraging incidents for the Bible-men, this does not change the fact that hardly any Scriptures were distributed during this Easter visit to Jerusalem in 1825 – neither to Christian pilgrims nor to Jews.

Last Visit to Jerusalem for Fisk, King, and Lewis

For Lewis, King, and Fisk, this was to be the last visit to Jerusalem. Lewis takes leave of the other missionaries in Beirut at the end of June 1825, and goes back to England.³¹ LJS wanted him to return to Palestine, but he resists this.

King has honored his three-year contract with his American Board.³² On September 26, 1825, he says goodbye to his colleagues in Beirut – "less than a month before the death of Mr. Fisk" – and leaves for the USA.³³

Fisk is ready to return to Jerusalem and work on the distribution of Bibles from the Bible Society Room. But he suffers the same fate as his friend Levi Parson, who died in Alexandria on February 10, 1822, before he turned 30.³⁴ Fisk dies in Beirut on October 23, 1825 – not yet 33 years old.³⁵ After this, the Bible depot in Jerusalem is without a leader.

Only Dalton, whose job is to be a doctor and not really a Bible distributor, returns to Jerusalem – where he is buried soon after, as we shall now see.

Dalton and Nicolayson, the Turn of the Year 1825–1826

George E. Dalton's second visit to Jerusalem begins on December 24, 1825 (as to his first visit, see above). Like other Protestant missionaries before him, he takes lodgings at the Mar Michael convent, where he received a "warm reception" from his Greek "friends," among them Papas Ysa (Isa), the learned Greek Orthodox priest who, in various ways, had helped Protestant Bible-men. Together they commemorate Pliny Fisk, who had

30 The previous Sunday, May 1, Fisk had preached in Italian to 18–20 persons, "among whom were six Greek priests, one Jew, and one Catholic"; *Missionary Herald* (1827): 37–38. It would be a mistake to conclude from the relatively massive attendance of Greek priests at the services that these priests were about to convert to Protestantism.

31 *Jewish Expositor* (1825): 426.

32 Cf. *Mishkan* 54 (2007): 64.

33 *Missionary Herald* (1827): 345.

34 See *Mishkan* 48 (2006): 73–85; and 52 (2007): 11–16.

35 About his disease and death, see *Mishkan* 52 (2007): 19–23.

died two months earlier in Beirut.³⁶ Dalton writes: "My recollections of him were much revived, as I occupied the vacant place in his rooms, and looked on all where the year before I had enjoyed sweet communion with him. I burst into tears, and was joined by those with me; we felt a common loss."³⁷

The purpose of Dalton's second visit to Jerusalem is to make arrangements for his and his family's transfer from Lebanon to Jerusalem. He negotiates with the Greeks, presents his *firman* to the governor, and makes contact with several Jews – including Rabbi Menahem Mendel, who asks, among other things, "if I came empowered by the Consul to protect them."³⁸ "I answered," Dalton writes, "that this was impossible, but that I should feel happy in serving the Jews in any way I could."

Dalton receives instruction in modern Greek and Arabic from Papas Ysa, and in return he teaches Papas Ysa Italian. He also arranges for a Sephardic Jew to give him lessons in Hebrew. He meets the Superior of Mar Elias, "whose foot I healed last year," and accepts an invitation from him to visit the Mar Elias convent between Jerusalem and Bethlehem.³⁹

Dalton's journal ends on January 3, 1826, the very day the new and young missionary John Nicolayson comes to Jerusalem, sent by the London Jews Society. The idea is that he should assist Dalton and work as a missionary with particular reference to the Ashkenazi Jews in Jerusalem. On January 4, they travel together to visit Bethlehem after having received refreshments at the Mar Elias convent.

But on January 5, Dalton, after a visit to Solomon's pools, is seized with fever – "perhaps in consequence of having drunk more than he ought of the springs we found on the road," Nicolayson writes.⁴⁰ Dalton dies in Jerusalem on January 25, 1826, and the following day he is buried in the Greeks' churchyard on Mount Zion.⁴¹

Nicolayson has to take care of a number of practical matters in connection with Dalton's death, but he also has time to make contact with some Jews, among others Rabbi Mendel, with whom he rather unsuccessfully tries to start a conversation on the subject of the Messiahship of Jesus. Nonetheless, Mendel invites him to call again.⁴²

On February 11, Nicolayson is ready to leave Jerusalem, but due to bad weather he does not leave until February 17, 1826.⁴³ Where can he go? As he cannot expect to get a residence permit in Jerusalem, he only has one option, namely to settle in Beirut together with the American missionaries, which he does.

As things developed, not many Bibles were handed out by Dalton and

36 Ibid.

37 *Jewish Expositor* (1827): 70.

38 A matter which Rabbi Mendel and William Bucknor Lewis had discussed; see *Mishkan* 55 (2007): 62.

39 *Jewish Expositor* (1827): 72.

40 Ibid., 141.

41 As to Dalton's disease and death, see *Mishkan* 52 (2006): 24–28.

42 *Jewish Expositor* (1827): 145.

43 Ibid., 146.



Nicolayson during this visit. And there is no real optimism on the question of what was achieved and whether the Jews of Jerusalem are open to the gospel. In Dalton's words on his deathbed, quoted by Nicolayson:

I asked him whether he had any particulars to mention respecting the mission in this country, or the cause in general? To which he replied, "Tell the Committee that the friends of the cause in England have too high an opinion of what has been done here, for as to the establishing of a mission in Jerusalem, or any other places in the country, nothing has been done as yet."⁴⁴

Gobat, Kugler, Müller, and Nicolayson, Spring 1827

In the spring of 1827, John Nicolayson accompanies three missionaries attached to the Church Missionary Society (CMS) to Jerusalem. This is his second visit to Jerusalem (about the first, see above).⁴⁵ They arrive on March 31, 1827.⁴⁶

On February 18, 1827, the three missionaries Samuel Gobat, Christian Kugler, and Theodor Müller had come to Beirut from Egypt, where they had studied languages with a view to their future work as missionaries. They wanted to continue their language studies in Jerusalem for some time; Gobat and Kugler intended to study Amharic in preparation for their future work in Abyssinia, and Müller Arabic for his work in Egypt. So they do not come to Jerusalem as Bible-men proper. The Armenian Dionysius Carabet (see below) accompanied them on the journey to Jerusalem and served as interpreter.

They take lodgings at the Greek Convent St. Michael – in the rented rooms made available to them by the Protestant missionaries. The relationship between the Greeks and Nicolayson is still cordial.

For Gobat and Kugler, the stay in Jerusalem lasted less than three months; on June 23, they leave Jerusalem and go back to Cairo.⁴⁷ During their stay they make the acquaintance of the 25 Abyssinians who live in the convent at Jerusalem, and they recommend Bethlehem as a possible mission station for CMS.⁴⁸ For them, missionary activities are secondary to language studies. Gobat writes, however, that he and Kugler tried to preach to "Jews and nominal Christians" – but without success, and

44 Ibid., 143.

45 A planned visit to Jerusalem with Rev. Donald MacPherson, "a Missionary in the Wesleyan connexion, stationed at Alexandria," who was then on a visit to Palestine, did not take place due to information about unrest in Jerusalem at the time. Cf. *Jewish Expositor* (1828): 234, 273.

46 This according to Nicolayson in his handwritten journal; in the published version in the *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 151, it is, erroneously, given as March 26; March 31 is stated by Gobat, cf. Samuel Gobat, *Samuel Gobat – Evangelischer Bischof in Jerusalem. Sein Leben und Wirken* (Basel: Verlag von C.S. Spittler, 1884), 105. The American sources have April 1; cf. *Missionary Herald* (1828): 285.

47 Cf. Gobat, 112.

48 There is a description of their visit in *Missionary Herald* (1828): 285–87.

no one dared receive a Bible from them "for fear of the rabbis and the priests."⁴⁹

So far the Armenians in Jerusalem had been favorably disposed to the Protestant Bible-men's distribution of Scriptures, but now a certain tension arose due to the presence of the above-mentioned Dionysius Carabet among the Bible-men.⁵⁰ Carabet was in Jerusalem for 18 days, and then returned to Beirut.⁵¹ He had been Archbishop of the Armenian Church in Jerusalem for a number of years, but had left the church, married, and was now working for the American missionaries in Beirut. When he had left the church, it had refused to pay the relatively large amount of money belonging to him, and during his visit his former church gave him the cold shoulder. The 800 Armenian pilgrims were forbidden to have anything whatsoever to do with him.⁵² Without going into detail about this matter, it is evident that there were tensions between the Protestant Bible-men and the local churches when individuals from the latter joined the Protestant mission. All were in agreement about the importance of Bibles being distributed, but not about the competition for souls.⁵³

Nicolayson does not seem to have been in contact with any *esteemed* Jerusalem Jews during his barely three-week stay. And he has no Hebrew Scriptures in his luggage. When a young German Jew wants to buy Hebrew Bibles, he writes: "But my hope of finding some here was disappointed, and therefore I was not able to supply him with any." The Bible Society Room thus appears to have been without *Hebrew* Scriptures at this time. Yet one day he converses with "several Jews," and another day with an aged German Jew: "He had read the Gospel, but it should seem with but little attention."⁵⁴

An important result of Nicolayson's second stay in Jerusalem is of a personal nature: through talks with the missionaries, he becomes convinced that for the time being Jerusalem is not the place he should settle.

Considering all that we had been able to learn of the internal state of this city, and its various classes of inhabitants, we jointly came to the conclusion, that it was better for me not to attempt a residence here alone at present.⁵⁵

49 Gobat, 111. From 1846 to his death in 1879, Gobat was Protestant Bishop in Jerusalem.

50 "The name of the *archbishop* is *Dionysius*. He is familiarly called *Garabet* or *Carabet*, an Armenian word signifying *forerunner*, which was given him, at his own request, by Mr. Goodell in the hope that he might prove – as he seems likely to do – the *forerunner of great good to his nation*." Cf. *Missionary Herald* (1827): 343.

51 *Ibid.*, 105, 342.

52 *Ibid.*

53 Similar tensions arose in 1829 between the Greeks and Joseph Wolff, which will be shown in the next article in this series.

54 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 151–52.

55 *Ibid.*, 152.



Nicolayson and Müller leave Jerusalem on April 20, 1827.⁵⁶ Müller realizes that his Arabic studies need not be done in Jerusalem. So Nicolayson's second visit to Jerusalem includes no distribution of Scriptures to Jews to speak of.

Concluding Remarks

In the almost three-year period covered by this article, very little is done by the Protestant Bible-men in the way of distributing Scriptures in Jerusalem. Some attempts are made, but they are largely in vain. Neither Pliny Fisk's death, King's and Lewis' departure from the region, nor the various bans and bulls are the main reasons for this poor result; the single most important factor is the turbulent political situation. Very few Scriptures are handed out to Jews in this period. It may be said that the record of this three-year period of Bible distribution in Jerusalem, historically speaking, is a history of what did *not* succeed.

In 1829, Joseph Wolff comes to Jerusalem on his third visit, which we shall cover in the next article in this series.

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⁵⁶ Ibid.