

*Introduction:*  
*On the Road to Heaven*

Konzentrationslager Auschwitz, German  
occupied Poland, July 1944

THEY lied about her death. The death certificate said she had died in hospital, but the sketchy details were suspicious. The cause of death was said to be ‘cachexia, following intestinal catarrh’ or, to put it in layman’s terms, she had suffered a chronic infection of the bowel resulting in a fatal and irreversible loss of weight, muscle wastage, fatigue and death. Had she been deliberately starved to death? It is quite possible. Many were. In fact, a short time before her death she had written to a friend about craving apples, fresh fruit, and bread. But she probably did not die of starvation. It is likely that on 17th July, 1944, prisoner 79467 found herself among a group of Hungarian Jewish women herded into the gas chamber in Auschwitz. They were not the first and they would not be the last. The tally of Jews liquidated with heartless industrial efficiency at Auschwitz-Birkenau is estimated to have exceeded a million, perhaps almost a million and a half, of whom it was said five hundred and sixty-five thousand, one in three, was a Hungarian.

Though despised as worthless sub-humans by the Nazis, all who died in that and other fearful extermination camps, were special. All bore the image of God. Each had their own dignity. Everyone was someone’s father or mother, husband or wife, uncle or aunt, brother or sister, lover or friend. United in their human dignity, they were individual in their sufferings. Forty-seven-year-old prisoner 79467 certainly did not look very different to those who died along with her. Her soft dark hair framed a warm, sympathetic, bespectacled

face, not unlike other Jewish women of her age. A few weeks earlier you might have passed her in a Budapest street and, except for her piercing blue eyes and her different accent, thought she was Jewish herself. But she wasn't. She was a Scot. So what was it that brought middle-aged Jane Haining from the security of Scotland first to Hungary, and then to this place of death in Poland?

The short answer is that the Germans had sentenced her to death as a spy. Whilst working as matron of the girl's school of the Church of Scotland Mission on Vörösmarty utca, in Budapest, Jane had been anonymously denounced to the Gestapo, who raided the mission and arrested her.<sup>1</sup>

As they searched her office and bedroom, Jane was given fifteen minutes to get ready before being driven off, the car's siren blaring. She was charged on eight separate counts, including listening to the BBC, which the Nazi's had made a criminal offence punishable by jail, hard labour, or death. And just as Jesus had refused to defend Himself before Pilate, so Jane did not deny their charges, apart from the political accusations, as it was undeniable that she had worked with Jews, and, of course, the heartless indictment that she had wept when sewing the compulsory yellow star on the girls' clothes was perfectly true. It was also true she had dismissed from her employment her Aryan housekeeper. From the Gestapo's grim jail at Fő utca in Budapest she was transported to a holding camp east of the city and from there to the notorious extermination camp of Auschwitz, but death did not come easily. 'Even here on the road to Heaven', she wrote in one of her last letters, 'there is a mountain range to climb.' On Saturday 26th August, 1944, on page five, the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* carried a brief death notice:

HAINING. – On 17th July, 1944, died in hospital in Germany, Jane Mathieson Haining, third daughter of the late Thomas John and Jane Haining, of Lochenhead, Dunscore, aged 47 years.

A fuller answer to the question of why Jane Haining died in Auschwitz requires us to start at the beginning: Jane was born in 1897, to Thomas and Jane Haining, at Lochenhead in Dumfriesshire, in southern Scotland. When Jane was only five years old, her mother died giving birth to a fourth baby, a daughter, who did not survive

infancy. It was said that the experience of helping care for the ailing infant left its mark on Jane and gave her a capacity for mothering, an instinct that would not find its fulfilment in marriage and motherhood, but in a girls' school.

Jane attended the village school at Dunscore where early on it became clear that she possessed an outstanding mind. When twelve years old, she won a bursary to Dumfries Academy, where she was so academically successful that she carried away the astonishing number of forty-one prizes during her school career, becoming 'dux' (Scottish: top pupil) of the school in 1915. Rather than attend university, Jane preferred to enter the world of business, taking up employment with the well-established and highly successful thread manufacturers, J&P Coats Ltd., of Paisley. Here too her ability was readily recognised by the company secretary, who invited her to become his private secretary, a job which she held for the next fifteen years.

Jane's parents were evangelicals, attending the Craig Free Church of Scotland in Dunscore, where she was baptised. When she was three years old, the congregation entered the union of the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church to become Craig United Free Church. Situated in the heart of Covenanter country, the Craig's roots lay in a much earlier congregation. Old Dunscore Kirk had been established as a congregation of the Church of Scotland in the mid-seventeenth century and their first minister was Robert Archibald. Shortly after, in 1663, when the Scottish Parliament was supporting King Charles II's anti-Presbyterian policies, Archibald was, on account of his evangelical and covenanting sympathies, denied the use of the church building and forced to leave his comfortable manse. Rather than assent to the imposition of Episcopal government and liturgy, he, with the support of many of his people, and like many another Lowland Presbyterian minister, took to the hills to preach the gospel freely in the open air. These gatherings were fraught with the dangers of persecution which reached its culmination in what became known as 'the Killing Times', when, between 1680 and 1688, Presbyterians who had signed the Solemn League and Covenant were regarded as insurgents and subversives and liable to summary execution.

Dunscore lay within the jurisdiction of the notorious Sir Robert Grierson, laird of Lag, ‘Cruel Lag’, as he was known. Grierson was a dyed-in-the-wool Stuart loyalist and hater of Covenanters, and is said to have been guilty of many atrocities against local Presbyterians. He was a byword for evil among Dumfriesshire folk, who said his spittle scorched the earth where it fell. Another tradition had it that on the night he died a chariot surrounded by thunder clouds swept him away to hell. A further story alleges that the horses pulling his hearse to Dunscore’s old Kirkyard died of exhaustion on the way and a black raven flew down and settled on the coffin, only flying off at the moment of burial. Such accounts, whilst not the stuff of scholarly history, nevertheless vividly illustrate the loathing and fear in which this man was held.<sup>2</sup>

With the Glorious Revolution of William of Orange in 1689, the majority of the members of the Craig, like many stricter Covenanters, found themselves unable to come to terms with the Revolution Settlement or the Church of Scotland and chose rather to associate with the Reformed Presbyterian Church. By the time of the *New Statistical Account* of 1835 the congregation at the Craig numbered about four-hundred and fifty communicants. In 1876, the Craig joined the Free Church of Scotland and their first Free Church minister, Rev. William Barrowman, was ordained and inducted in 1898. Two years later Barrowman took the congregation into the union with the United Presbyterians to form the United Free Church. It was Barrowman whom the young Jane knew as her minister. He died in 1928, having paved the way for the congregation to come full circle by going back with the United Free majority into the Church of Scotland.

Jane lived in the south-side Glasgow suburb of Pollockshields, and during her time with Coats in Paisley was a member of Queen’s Park West United Free Church, which, like her home congregation in Dunscore, re-united with the Church of Scotland in 1929. Here she taught in the Sunday School, becoming its secretary, whilst simultaneously working enthusiastically with the Band of Hope, a temperance organisation for working-class children referred to in broad Glaswegian as the ‘Bandyhope.’

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Aware of the city's infamous reputation for hard drinking, Jane sought not only to keep her children from the bottle, but to win them for Christ. Following *The Band of Hope Manual*, Jane held a Saturday afternoon meeting, commonly called 'the service', at which strict order was maintained.<sup>3</sup> As the children came in they were segregated: the girls to the left of the aisle and the boys on the right. The meeting commenced with the children reciting in unison *The Pledge*. Sometimes a temperance catechism was used as a teaching aid, and an American-produced monthly paper called *Youth's Temperance Banner* was from time to time distributed. We can imagine the room being dimmed for Jane to operate an acetylene-powered 'magic lantern', illustrating Bible stories and Christian teaching with coloured 3¼ inch square slides. These meetings were famous for the hearty singing of songs and hymns characteristic of the movement, including *Father Guide Us*, sung to the simple and stirring tune Vesper Hymn. By today's standards its sentiments may seem quaint and outdated, yet it was an earnest prayer asking God to keep vulnerable young people safe from dangerous habits:

Fallen is our favoured nation,  
Sunk in sorrow and in shame;  
Speed the Temperance reformation,  
Ev'ry drunkard now reclaim.

Each a pilgrim and a stranger,  
Keep us Lord, from evil ways,  
Lead us through this world of danger,  
Guide us in our early days.

The Band of Hope was renowned for its annual summer outings when Jane and her helpers took the children on a steamer day trip from Glasgow's Broomielaw 'doon the water' to a Clyde coast seaside town, perhaps Largs, Millport, Rothesay, or Dunoon. The organisers saw these outings not only as pleasure trips but as opportunities for an evangelistic foray. Often accompanied by a band, the children would stand on a street corner, or take up a prominent position on the promenade, vigorously singing songs and hymns and handing out pamphlets as a witness to other day-trippers.

Though successful and well settled in her work at Coats, and busy in her Christian service at church, Jane hardly regarded these as her true vocation, but in 1932 she heard an address by Dr George Mackenzie on the Church of Scotland's Jewish mission that changed all that. She was so moved by his account of the work in Hungary that she became entirely convinced that it was to this cause that God wanted her to commit her energies. She shortly afterwards commented to a friend, 'I have found my life's work'.

Resigning from her comfortable and remunerative job at J&P Coats, she returned to college to take a diploma in domestic science. Then, to gain further experience, she travelled to Manchester to work as matron at the newly opened Holt Radium Institute at Withington, a hospital at the forefront of the application of radiotherapy to the treatment of cancer. An offer of service was accepted by the Jewish committee of the Church of Scotland and thirty-five-year-old Jane found herself matron at the Scottish Mission School on Vörösmarty utca, in Budapest, with the care of fifty, mainly Jewish, boarders.

The Magyar language of Hungary is considered a difficult language to learn and so it may be taken as a measure of Jane's character and commitment that she readily accepted the discipline necessary to master it and, not long after, was able to converse fluently in the language. She also had fluent German. Further evidence of her dedication was her reluctance to leave the girls even for holidays in Scotland. She returned only twice, once in 1935 and again in the summer of 1939.

It was during this second home leave, whilst holidaying in Cornwall with the school's Hungarian headmistress that, following Hitler's invasion of Poland, Britain's Prime Minister – Neville Chamberlain – declared war on Germany. Aware that German ambitions might bring Hungary into the war, but without any thoughts of her own safety, Jane immediately made plans to return to Budapest. The following year, the Jewish committee pleaded with her to return home, but Jane, trusting in God and the 'true-hearted, honourable and chivalrous' Hungarians, politely but adamantly refused, and although other colleagues did heed the summons and returned home to safety, Jane never saw Scotland again.

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In 1941, as Europe descended deeper and deeper into the Nazi maelstrom, David McDougall, the General Secretary of the Jewish committee, was putting the finishing touches to his book, *In Search of Israel*, published later that year in Edinburgh by Thomas Nelson. Towards the end he movingly remarked that, 'Miss Haining, the matron of the girls' home, stayed on after the others, and she is there still. By roundabout ways we hear from her sometimes.'

In March 1944, as Hungary was invaded. McDougall, on behalf of the whole Church, which was deeply concerned for Jane's safety, once more pled with her to hasten home, but once again she quietly but emphatically refused. In May she was arrested by the Gestapo, charged with espionage and imprisoned in the Fő utca jail. Then, with hundreds of Jewish people from the Budapest ghetto, she was sent to the transit camp for political prisoners at Kistarcsa just outside Budapest, before a final rail journey by cattle wagon to Auschwitz, five hundred kilometres away in Poland. From this dread place she sent a final postcard home, dated 15th July, it was posted just two days before her death.

It may be taken as a measure of the fanatical intensity of Nazi hatred for the Jewish people that in the last year of the war, when the tide had turned against Germany, it nevertheless dedicated its transport resources not to reinforcing its battling troops, but to clearing the Budapest ghetto and the extermination of its occupants. In the inscrutable yet all-wise and all-loving purposes of God, gentle Jane Haining was caught up in these terrible events, murdered for her love of the Jewish people and martyred for her faith in the Messiah of Israel. On the day of her arrest, one of her former charges had been visiting the Scottish mission and witnessed the event. She later shared her recollection:

I still feel the tears in my eyes and hear in my ears the siren of the Gestapo motor car. I see the smile on her face while she bade me farewell. I never saw Miss Haining again, and when I went to the Scottish Mission to ask the minister about her, I was told she had died. I did not want to believe it, nor to understand, but a long time later I realised that she had died for me, and for others ... her smile, voice and face are still in my heart.

## TIME FOR FAVOUR

Even this account, however, is far from the whole story. So many questions still remain unanswered: how was it that a Scot should take an interest in the Jewish children of Hungary and be so dedicated to them that she counted her life cheap if their lives might be saved? How was it that the Church of Scotland came to have missionary work in Budapest? Why was it that for centuries Scottish Christians had a special place in their hearts and prayers for the Jewish people? It will take the rest of this book to unfold the fascinating story that provides answers to these questions.

## *Entering into the Jewish Heritage*

Scotland, c.1290–1843

THE grace of gratitude is deeply embedded in the Old Testament and its importance is dramatically emphasised through the thanksgiving rituals of the tabernacle and temple. It is therefore unsurprising that that most Jewish of the Apostles, Saul of Tarsus – rabbinically trained at the feet of Rabban Gamaliel I and steeped in the Hebrew Scriptures – sought to instil in his converts such a spirit, making even the youngest in the faith aware of their utter indebtedness to God, both for eternal salvation and innumerable blessings daily received. Along with a perpetual need to confess our sins, our prayers are never complete without an expression of gratitude. Thankfulness, as a spiritual grace, develops in proportion to our growing awareness of God, His goodness and generosity, and our complete dependence upon Him. In his 1633 poem, *Gratefulnesse*, George Herbert wisely prayed:

Thou that hast giv'n so much to me,  
Give one thing more, a gratefull heart.

A special focus for Christian gratitude is those persons who, under God, have been the channel of our greatest blessings. So it was then, that, as the centuries passed, the Scottish Church grew to appreciate more and more the part played by Israel in God's plan of redemption, and marvelled that it should include gentiles such as themselves. Gratitude, growing in relation to faith and knowledge, led first to fervent prayer for Israel's salvation and later to actively sharing the Good News of Jesus the Messiah with the Jewish people.

It is possible, though we cannot be entirely sure, that Jews first arrived in Scotland during the time of the Romans.<sup>1</sup> Certainly Scottish contact with Jewish people grew after the expulsion of the English Jewish community in 1290 led to a northwards emigration. Over the previous seventy years English Jews had suffered prejudice and persecution because their forefathers were seen by English Christians as the Christ-killers. Ludicrous and sensational blood-libel allegations circulated of the ritual murder of English children and the mingling of their blood with flour to bake the unleavened bread of Passover. And, just as in Hitler's Europe, English Jews were forced to wear a badge marking them out from others before being financially penalised in 1270, and expelled in 1290 by royal edict of Edward I.

There is scant evidence of Jews in Scotland in the period up to 1290 and whilst it is plausible that refugees from Edward I's expulsion found sanctuary north of the English border and maybe left their DNA behind, the records are unclear and insufficient to infer, as some have done, that some Scottish clans had a Jewish progenitor.<sup>2</sup> As international travellers, Scots probably encountered Jewish people through trade or when on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Swept off course by a storm, Arculf, bishop and pilgrim, arrived in Columba's Iona around 680 enthusiastically recounting to Abbot Adomnán and the brothers his experiences of the Holy Land with sufficient detail to allow Adomnán to compile his *De Locis Sanctis* (Concerning Sacred Places), complete with one of the earliest maps of Jerusalem. In this work Adomnán says little about the Jewish people of the Holy Land, except to record an implausible dispute between the Jewish Christians and traditional Jews of Jerusalem over the supposed shroud of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

Almost nine hundred years later, John Knox, in his *History of the Reformation in Scotland* tells with greater authority how George Wishart, his mentor and one of Scotland's Reformation martyrs, testified at his trial before Cardinal Beaton how he had met a Jew when he was travelling down the Rhine to Switzerland and how this man had rejected the claim that Jesus was the Messiah because Christian 'temples' were 'full of idols to whom ye pray and ye even adore a piece of bread, calling it God.' Identifying himself with this excoriating Jewish critique of Roman Catholic practices sealed

Wishart's fate. He was condemned to be strangled the next day, and his body burnt.<sup>4</sup>

In 1656, when Oliver Cromwell gave verbal permission for Jews to re-establish a community in England, they still could not study at or teach in any English university unless they first swore a Christian oath. In Scotland, however, there was no such discrimination. Students training for the ministry of the Church of Scotland learned Hebrew from Jewish lecturers such as Julius Conradus Otto, formerly known as Naphtali Margoloth, who taught at Edinburgh from 1642 to 1656, or Paul Shaletti, who lectured at King's College, Aberdeen, from 1669 to 1672.<sup>5</sup>

The minutes of the Edinburgh town council reflect this goodwill in the realm of trade. In 1691 David Brown, a Jewish merchant, applied for permission to live and trade in the city. His request was opposed by some of the city fathers on the grounds that 'no person whatsoever that denies the basis or fundamentals of our Christian religion can have any privilege within the city of Edinburgh or suburbs.' The majority, however, were of a different opinion and granted him the permission he sought. Hugh Blair, the City Treasurer, denounced the opposition as being at variance with Reformed practice elsewhere. Jews, Blair declared, were not to be considered the same as other non-Christians because, firstly, they were the ancient people of God and were, therefore, loved for the sake of their forefathers and, secondly, it was customary, wherever the Reformed religion was professed, to allow Jews freedom to trade.<sup>6</sup>

Blair's attitude was echoed a hundred years later when Sir Walter Scott's medieval novel, *Ivanhoe*, was greeted in the land of its origin with dismay. Sir Walter's Scottish readers felt that the Jewish Rebecca, in their eyes the true heroine, had not been treated fairly when Scott had allowed Ivanhoe to marry Lady Rowena, and Rebecca was left to Wilfred. Indeed, so strong was the clamour for Scott to rewrite the story in Rebecca's favour, that he felt constrained to make a public explanation, justifying his plot in terms of the balance of historical probabilities.

Scott's sympathetic representation of a Jewish woman stands in marked contrast to antisemitic attitudes not uncommon in English literary circles. Indeed, in its address to the Jewish people,

the 1841 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland felt justified in lamenting with the Jewish people that ‘in England itself you have at times suffered so much from bitter animosity.’ Evidence is not hard to find. Two of Scott’s contemporaries, William Cobbett and Charles Dickens, to say nothing of England’s greatest literary figure, William Shakespeare in his *The Merchant of Venice*, stereotyped Jewish people in strongly negative terms.

Despite Shakespeare’s protestation of Shylock’s humanity (the ‘I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions’ speech) his portrayal of Jews as venial, ruthless, and calculating has long been considered a perpetuation of antisemitic tropes, at once repulsive and fascinating.<sup>7</sup>

Cobbett, with an almost medieval aggressiveness denounced Jews as parasites, murderers of Christ and blasphemous opponents of the Christian gospel.<sup>8</sup> In *Oliver Twist* (1838) the usually socially sensitive Dickens used a form of caricature, even then out of date, to infamously set a Jew as a master criminal, more of a creature than a man, possessed of immense greed and dressed in ‘a greasy flannel gown’ with ‘a villainous-looking and repulsive face.’ Dickens later attempted to justify himself – ‘I have no feeling towards the Jews but a friendly one’ – but his more kindly representations of Jews failed to make amends for the offensiveness of Fagin. Inspired by George Cruikshank’s antisemitic 1838 caricatures, and not far from depictions of Jews in Julius Streicher’s Nazi paper, *Der Stürmer*, the English movie director, David Lean, outrageously perpetuated the cliché in his 1948 film adaptation by having Alec Guinness play Fagin wearing an absurdly exaggerated false nose. Lean’s clumsy insensitivity, if not deliberate offensiveness, is compounded by the fact that the film came out in 1948, only three years after the world discovered the extent of the Holocaust and in the same year as the establishment of the State of Israel.

It would take one hundred and seventy years to attempt to rescue Fagin’s reputation and that by someone who also had a name for depravity. In Roman Polanski’s 2005 film version of *Oliver Twist*, Fagin utters a seemingly throw-away line. ‘You know what I consider the greatest sin in the world, my dear?’ he says. ‘Ingratitude.’ But the point is made when at the end Oliver visits Fagin in Newgate prison

where he is under sentence of death. Instead of following Dickens' implausible storyline by inviting Fagin to pray for pardon, which Dickens predictably makes the old reprobate reject, Oliver simply thanks the old man, 'You were kind to me'. The truth is that neither Dickens nor Polanski really get the point, which is, of course, that no one is beyond redemption and may be led there by kindness; self-righteousness always repels.<sup>9</sup>

Dickens' disparaging description of Jews as 'greasy' stuck. Anthony Trollope used it of the Jewish Lopez in *The Prime Minister* (1876), and said much the same of his preposterously named Mohomet Moss in his unfinished novel *The Landleaguers* (1883). Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton kept alive offensive anti-Jewish portrayals until well into the twentieth century.

By contrast, sympathetic Scots played a key role in the struggle for Jewish political emancipation. In 1830, Lord Macaulay's maiden speech as a Member of Parliament was on 'The civil disabilities affecting Jews in England' in which, amongst other matters, he took Corbett to task for his intolerance. And where was the speech first published but in *The Edinburgh Review*. Macaulay was the son of Zachary Macaulay, a Scottish Highlander, and the son's support for the amelioration of Jewish grievances mirrored the father's support for the abolition of African slavery as the great injustice of his day. A year later, almost to the day, on Saturday, 5th April, 1834, both *The Scotsman* and *The Evening Courant* ran lengthy articles approving the decision taken at a meeting held in Edinburgh the previous Thursday, 'to take measures to petition both Houses of Parliament to remove all the disabilities under which the Jews of His Majesty's dominions now labour.'

This generous attitude was sustained until recent times, giving Scotland the enviable reputation of having no history of persecuting Jews. Mistreated and harassed elsewhere in Europe, the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, published in the early 1970s, was able to record that 'relations between Jews and non-Jews in Scotland have always been harmonious.' But, as the influence of Christianity has waned in Scottish society, so the situation has deteriorated. Among others, two recent studies have shone light on antisemitism in Scotland. In 2016 the Scottish Parliament officially took note of a

study by the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities highlighting antisemitism, and in 2022 the Scottish government was forced to investigate antisemitism in higher education.

What was it then that formed the Scots' generosity of attitude towards a people despised and rejected elsewhere? To go back to the nineteenth century, Dr Alexander Moody Stuart, one of the first generation of ministers of the Free Church of Scotland, argued that it could be explained by a certain similarity between the two peoples, which included a love of the Hebrew Bible, patriotism, the simplicity of worship, and devotion to the moral law of God, particularly that of the Sabbath, and adding, tongue in cheek, an 'adaptability in settling in all lands and making money in them'. Robert Murray M'Cheyne agreed. With just a hint of chauvinism, he wrote, 'In many respects, Scotland may be called God's second Israel. No other land has its Sabbath as Scotland has; no other land has the Bible as Scotland has; no other land has the gospel preached, free as the air we breathe, fresh as the stream from the everlasting hills.'

Remarkably, Scottish Jewish opinion largely concurs. Writing of the religious foundation of Edinburgh's Jewish community, Abel Philips maintained that Edinburgh's Christians were free of intolerance because they had learned to respect the teaching and moral principles of the Old Testament. Chaim Bermant, a twentieth-century Jewish writer and commentator, who as small boy from Eastern Europe grew up in Glasgow, argued that the good relations between Scottish Presbyterians and Jews could be attributed to their common devotion to the Hebrew Bible. He doubted if there was a country anywhere in the world where Jews had been more readily accepted and more happily integrated than Scotland, where 'the Jew is regarded as a sort of aboriginal Presbyterian.'<sup>10</sup>

This opinion was shared by Scottish Jewish scholar, Professor David Daiches (1912–2005), who saw post World War II Scotland, 'with its immersion in biblical lore, as a new Jerusalem in which Jews could contribute to the cultural, social, and commercial life of the society around them without impairing their Jewish loyalties.' A further Jewish writer, Stefan C. Reif, added his voice to this consensus, arguing that 'If any nation may justly claim to be fully