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Christians in the Zionist Camp : Blackstone and Hechler

Part ii

This concluding part of Dr. Brodeur's paper tells in the main of the unremitting efforts of W. E. Blackstone (WEB) on behalf of Zionism despite opposition from Gentile and Jew alike. It finishes with a comparison of Blackstone and Hechler both of whom lived to see the beginnings of the exodus of Jews to Palestine as a result of Hitler's persecution.

The year 1891 proved to be one of great shaking and awakening for the fledgling Zionist Movement. In February the *Shave Zion* ("Colonizers of Zion") was inaugurated in New York City, a society patterned after the *Dorshe Zion* founded a short time before in Russia to effect land acquisition and colonization in Palestine. In March came the presentation to President Harrison of the 'Blackstone Memorial', called "Palestine for the Jews", and signed by over 400 prominent American Jewish and Christian leaders, high Federal officials and office holders. In April came the expulsion of Jewish tradesmen and merchants from Moscow, precipitating a new wave of Jewish emigration to Palestine, Poland and the US.

In Chicago, where William Blackstone (WEB) resided, his Memorial received considerable support from Jewish leaders, inspiring also a mass meeting of the local *Chevre Choveve Zion*

("Lovers of Zion") to form an auxiliary. On May 1st the parent society declared that its object "was to aid in the restoration of Palestine by assisting refugees who got to that country."¹

By August of 1891, it had become widely known that Baron Maurice de Hirsch's bold agricultural colonization project in Argentina had failed. The crisis prompted the Hungarian Baron to close ranks with the Parisian Palestinian colonizer, Baron Edmond de Rothschild. The two barons, in a September conference, agreed to work for the establishment in either Syria or Palestine of a colony of Russian Jews with a farmer's bank to finance them. According to Zionist historian Marnin Feinstein the real achievement of this conference was to concentrate Jewish colonization activities in a "united management to be directed by an international central committee" (Feinstein). Thus did Zionism take its first steps toward the pooling of the resources of its diverse groups — in 1891.

When after several years of negotiations the Baron finally succeeded in acquiring (in 1893) title to some 10,000 acres of arable land on the Hauran Plateau east of Lake Galilee he was prevented from carrying out a planned colonization by the enforcement of the Turkish edict of 1888 banning Jews in groups from settling in new lands. Recently discovered Blackstone correspondence reveals that on March 15th, 1893, Adam Rosenberg, a New York lawyer, Secretary of the N.Y. *Choveve Zion* society and representative of the Baron, wrote to Blackstone urging him to postpone the 'international side' of his slated Hebrew-Christian friendship conference, calling this aspect of the conference 'premature', and asking WEB to *continue* his efforts to help Rothschild acquire land in Syria and Palestine for Russian Jews to settle as 'Turkish subjects'. A later letter from Rosenberg repeats the request for help in acquiring the trans-Jordan tract which the lawyer states Turkish and local Roman Catholic interests ("for some unholy reason") were opposing. He then bluntly asks WEB to use his rapport with Secretary of State W. Q. Gresham (the Chicago judge with whom Blackstone had been corresponding since the days of the 1891 Memorial) to influence the Turkish Government to cease from its harassment of Rothschild.

In the fall of 1894, Blackstone attempted to interest the Cleveland Administration in reviving the 1891 Memorial. His efforts failed due in no small part to his own failure in 1891 to secure from Grover Cleveland his signature on the Memorial at the latter's New York law office. On December 31st, 1894, Blackstone wrote to President Cleveland in the White House urging him to search for the Memorial which failed to turn up either in White House or State Department files despite repeated searches in the following months. In the same letter Blackstone invoked a poignant plea which he had used with President Harrison and which he was to invoke again with President Wilson, in 1916. He offered that he believed that there had "not been such an opportune time to show kindness to Israel since the days of Cyrus King of Persia." In March, 1895, the President's secretary returned to him his correspondence with former President Harrison and the current Secretary of State, stating that an additional search of both White House and State Department files had not revealed the 1891 Memorial. Therefore, President Cleveland considered the matter closed !

In 1895 Bernard Horwich, a Chicago lawyer, organised the Chicago Zion Society which in October, 1897, became the *Knights of Zion*, described by Max Schulman, a former official of the Zionist Organisation of America, as "the first interstate Zionist organisation in America." Writing in 1929, Schulman also claimed that Chicago was the first American city to respond to Herzl's First Zionist Congress at Basle (August, 1897), the Chicago Zion Society sending as delegate to the Congress Leon Zolotkoff.² Among the Society's principal organizers were Wolf Schur and Bernard Felsenthal, both Blackstone Memorial supporters. However, Chicago's rabbis, both Reform and Orthodox, expressed very strong opposition to Herzl and his London co-worker Max Nordau because of their agnosticism.

Back in October of 1891 Blackstone had published a lengthy article which summoned several rather novel legal arguments to justify an American support of a Jewish state in Palestine. WEB attempted to demonstrate also that such a support would not be violation of the Monroe Doctrine. He insisted also that Jewish

autonomy in Palestine under international protection would be supported especially by Christian nations. With keen insight he added that "Protection for private and corporate property, the adjustment of claims, and possession of Christian holy places, can as well be arranged under Jewish as under Turkish rule. Indeed, so small a state . . . would of necessity realize the importance of justice, righteousness, and moderation."³ The prognostication reads like a synopsis of Israel's compassionate policies since the birth of the State in 1948.

Blackstone climaxed his appeal with a plea that the US should for "entirely unselfish and purely philanthropic" reasons lead the "peaceable movement to give exiled Israel a settled permanent home." In light of this it is indeed fitting that America was the first nation to recognize the State of Israel. The article signalled the birth of Blackstone the international 'jurist', as Hechler's biographer, Duvernoy, has called him. Blackstone's researches into international law to support his claims on behalf of Zionism led him in 1893 to circulate at the Columbia World Exposition a petition calling for the peaceful arbitration of international disputes. Although only a private citizen in retirement, the persuasive Blackstone managed to secure the signatures of the heads or representatives of some 36 nations attending the Exposition. While it is difficult to assess with any accuracy the effect of this action, it most likely helped to advance the cause of international arbitration which in 1900 saw the establishment of the first International or Permanent Court of Arbitration at the Hague, Holland.

The month President Harrison delivered his message to the Congress (December, 1891) acknowledging the plight of the Russian Jews, an exhausted Blackstone, suffering from a recurring chest condition, moved temporarily to California where, after a domestic tragedy, he undertook in 1892 a complete revision and expansion of his popular *Jesus is Coming* which contained a description of the Jewish expansions in Jerusalem.

During the winter of 1899, burdened by respiratory problems and an ailing but devoted wife, Blackstone took up permanent

residence in California, first in San Diego, later in Los Angeles and Pasadena.

In 1899, referring to a pamphlet that he had written several years before that had been hailed by Orthodox Jews the world over, he wrote: "Numerous requests have come for the leaflet *Jerusalem from Jews in Hungary and Roumania . . .* This had led to many most interesting conversations . . . I have not hesitated to tell them that I believe serious consequences will follow Zionism's success, because there is no humiliation or prayer to seek the help and guidance of Israel's God . . ." ⁴

Even as WEB was writing these words, Orthodox rabbis in many countries of the Diaspora were expressing misgivings over the direction of Zionism, calling attention to the agnosticism of its leaders Theodor Herzl and Max Nordau. In those early years of the Herzlian Movement the Zionists were wracked by all kinds of factional and doctrinal differences. There were at least three major philosophies — and many minor ones. There were those who wanted *only* Palestine; those who would settle for Palestine or any other suitable land, and those who felt that the first priority, if not the primary purpose of Zionism, should be for the relief of the persecuted and impoverished in Russia, Rumania, Palestine (or wherever) and the fostering of national pride or community amongst the Diaspora Jews.

Apathy and Alarm

Many American Jews — and even many American Zionists — were apathetic to Herzl's cause before the pogroms of 1903. Many of these were Reform group assimilationists who were not united but whose outstanding spokesman was Rabbi Emil Hirsch ⁵ of Chicago, the man who had publically expressed misgivings about Blackstone's Zionism.

Many of the Reform rabbis and others opposed to a sovereign Jewish state in Palestine did not reckon with the moral suasion that sheer numbers of people can have on molding public opinion

in America. Between 1880 and 1905 "A Jewish population numbering less than a quarter of a million . . . and comprising a high percentage of Jews of German extraction, increased to close to a million and a half . . . Mostly through the arrival of thousands of Jews from *Eastern Europe*." ⁶

At the very time the Russian delegates to the Basle Conferences were annually vetoing a national home in Palestine because of their well justified fears that the Czar would interpret any other stand as a sign of disloyalty to Mother Russia, thousands of Russian-born Jews in New York and other cities of the US were becoming more and sympathetic to a Palestinian Zionism because of what they had seen or endured in Russia and continued to learn from letters they received.

But something was to happen that would at once undermine the rationale of the Russian delegates and jolt awake American Jews still apathetic to a Jewish state in Palestine.

The place was Kishinev (the foreign papers had at least a dozen ways of spelling its name), a city of Bessarabia in southwest Russia, today the capital of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldavia, situated somewhat northwest of Odessa the scene of the 1881 - 82 pogroms. When the news of the Kishinev outrages reached New York on April 20th, 1903, they ". . . aroused the direct interest of American Jews more than any previous foreign event in which Jews were involved", according to historian Feinstein who adds that "Beyond question Kishinev marked the turning point in American Zionism. It brought home the realization that anti-semitism was an ever-present menace, stalking Jews everywhere and making the existence of a Jewish State in Palestine a very urgent necessity."⁷ As in the days of Moses, a stubborn, protracted gentile persecution had served God's purpose and the God of Israel proved willing once more to turn a curse into a blessing. The Zionist Congress deadlock weakened and began to dissolve.

April, 1903, found WEB preaching and lecturing on 25 occasions in Santa Barbara on subjects that ranged from "Israel the

Center of God's Plan" and "Our Lord the Center of Israel" to "The Kingdom" and "Satan his kingdom and its Overthrow".⁸ The last topic was a favorite of WEB. When he learned of the Kishinev disaster, he must have indeed been convinced that Satan was again up to his worst. Finishing his lectures, he decided that the time had come to re-issue his Memorial to the Jews. This was done on June 15th, 1903, a resolution adopted by the Chicago Methodist Preacher's Meeting being attached to the original 1891 document with all its signatures. Neither Christian nor Jewish sources appear to have had anything to say about the second presentation which was apparently made with none of the publicity of the first.

Virtually the only comments to be found are by Blackstone himself, writing in the July 15th *Jewish Era*, the journal he founded in 1892.

"It has also been my privilege to revive the memorial in behalf of the Russian Jews, which was some years ago presented to President Harrison, and with the endorsement of the Methodist Preachers Meeting of Chicago, secured its presentation to President Roosevelt. . . . All will recognize that it is futile for any nation to protest against or interfere with the internal affairs of Russia. But it is possible that the Czar, as in the case of the peace congress, might take the initiative in calling an International Conference to consider the worldwide Jewish question."⁹

As in 1891, nothing specific was done by the US Government in response to the Memorial. A possible key to the apathy may have stemmed from the effects of an unpopular decision that Secretary of State John Hay had taken in 1899 when he upheld a seven year old Turkish Government ruling which limited visas stamped upon the passports of US Jews visiting Palestine to just 90 days. The ruling was deemed a serious setback by the Zionists to the plans of American Jews desiring to settle in the Holy Land. In 1900 the storm it had aroused led to the resignation of the US Minister to Turkey, Oscar Straus. Having succeeded unexpectedly to the Presidency in 1901 on the assassination of William McKinley (an 1891 Blackstone Petition signer), Teddy Roosevelt

may have been reluctant to open up again the Pandora's Box of Palestine, particularly in view of the fact that he had as his Secretary of State the same John Hay who had issued the 1899 ruling upholding the Turkish restriction.

The Memorial was to lie dormant for another 13 years. Although an ex-President of the United States, Grover Cleveland, was the principal speaker at one of the many indignation rallies held to protest the Kishinev massacres, it must be sadly admitted that Presidents out of office have little political force in America. However, William Blackstone, the man of faith, was not to be permanently rebuffed. He would try yet a fourth time.

The Dispensationalist view of the prophecies of the Old Testament could at times display remarkable prescience with respect to happenings to Israel. A good example were the "Notes on Prophecy and the Jews" which appeared in the July, 1903, (Vol. 10, p. 40) issue of *Our Hope*, a Christian monthly edited by Arno C. Gaebelain. A brief commentary began with a quotation from Zechariah 2: 6 ("Ho! ho! Flee from the land of the north, says the Lord; for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heavens, says the Lord."). The piece then offered: "This word is spoken in connection with the vision of restoration. Surely the land of the North which contains so many Jews is Russia.¹⁰ There will be a great exodus of Jews from Poland and southern Russia. Even now thousands are preparing for it. Zionism holds out the solution of the difficulties for many orthodox Jews . . . Zionism has profited wonderfully by these outbreaks of persecution in Russia, and will here [the US] show a great advance on account of it." The piece went on to note that the Jews of the Russian ghettos, in particular those of Kiev, had organized armed defence leagues for instant mobilization to combat future outbreaks of violence.

Following the Kishinev program Plehve, the Russian Foreign Minister, sent an extraordinary letter to Herzl which urged Zionism to "return to its programme of action", meaning Palestine, and in effect accused the Movement of stirring up nationalist or separatist feeling among the Russian Jews. The intimidating missive

closed with mention of recent measures that his government had taken to "enlarge the rights of [Jewish] residence", asserting that they "will serve to ameliorate the condition of Russian Jews, especially if emigration diminishes their number".¹¹

Plehve's equation was preposterous and cruel because the Turks had long since placed strict limits on the number of Jews who could settle in Palestine. A few weeks after the Sixth Zionist Congress (August 23rd, 1903) Plehve issued an order prohibiting public meetings by Jews, the collecting of money for the Jewish National Fund and in general forbidding all Zionist activity, even compelling its leaders to pledge to transfer existing funds to the "Odessa Society for helping the Jews in Syria and Palestine".¹²

That Christians who believed the *whole* Bible unfettered by ecclesiastical interpretations continued to adhere undauntedly to the Jewish promises of the Scripture and the nation Israel was poignantly revealed by a portion of a letter printed in *Our Hope* at that time. The writer was Alexander Milowidow, a monk, of the Mackrischza Monastery. He was protesting to the Russian journal *Novosti* against what editorials of the Pan-Slavic *Swjet* and other Russian papers had alleged about the nature of Zionism. The monk asserted:

The *Swjet* forgets the word of God which He spoke through the prophet Amos. There it is plainly written that God will unite all dispersed Jews and will bring back again the nation of Israel to her country, where the devastated cities shall be built up again, etc. We should not only believe this prophecy, but also pray and work for its realization. The adversaries of Zionism do not know what they are doing.¹²

So wrote the obscure but spiritually enlightened monk, a voice crying out in a political wilderness. His plea went unheeded if not unnoticed.

The fall of 1903 found Blackstone resuming again his grueling speaking tours, ranging up and down the east coast from Old Orchard, Maine, to Salem, Virginia. At a Chautauqua assembly,

he became acquainted with the incomparable hymn writer Fanny J. Crosby and no doubt told her of his humble Adams, New York, origins which he shared with Charles Finney.¹³ He spoke again and again in defence of the Jewish State, supporting his arguments with painstaking Scriptural documentation. At the beginning of 1904 his wife's health failed and between lecture tours he spent three trying years faithfully looking after her until a final illness took her away from him in July, 1908.

In June of the following year William Blackstone sailed to China as a representative of the Distribution Fund, an affiliate of the Bible House of Los Angeles. It was a case of a father following in the footsteps of a son. For "after years of rebellion" Harry Blackstone had sailed from San Francisco to China, some three and a half years prior to the departure of his father, settling first in Kuling, Nanchang, and ultimately Nanking. The father settled in Nanking, engaging in both missionary and relief activities. But he would not neglect Israel; his letterhead had imprinted *Object: Distribution of the Scriptures to Israel and the Chinese*. Until his return to the States in July, 1914, the elder Blackstone would travel incessantly over vast reaches of China, Manchuria, India and Korea co-ordinating the various works of the Fund.

Some months before Sarajevo, Blackstone foresaw that a great conflagration was imminent. While Hechler was making a bee-line from Athens to Berlin, Blackstone was steaming back to the States, via Europe, his Asiatic missionary days over at the age of 73. But in spite of frequent bouts with his weak lungs, he was bursting with energy and anxiety for the western nations opposing Germany and the Central Powers. Like Hechler he saw the danger of the Jews being caught between the upper and nether grindstones; he was even more convinced, however, that the War would also effect the final disintegration of the Ottoman Empire thus fulfilling the long cherished Zionist objectives in Palestine — provided the United States act on behalf of the Jews. Indeed, had not Prime Minister Asquith told the House of Commons on November 9th, 1914, "It is the Ottoman Empire and not we who have rung the death-knell of Ottoman Dominion, not only in Europe but in Asia" in reference to the Turks siding with the Central Powers

instead of their old protectors ?

When the War broke out Blackstone began a four year correspondence with President Wilson and members of his staff. The earliest known of these letters is dated November 4th, 1914. In it WEB expresses concern for the survival of the British Empire whose failure to suppress more completely the opium trade in Hong Kong disturbed him. But in the letter he also refers to "the coming redemption of Israel" to its land. He asks Wilson "Is it not remarkable to see how the benign activity of our Department of State, since the incumbency of Secretary Blaine, in behalf of the Jews of the world, trends toward the possible accomplishment of this great event, so prominent in the Word of God?" Attached to the letter was a copy of *Jesus is Coming* which he begged the President, the son of a Presbyterian clergyman and a known believer in the Bible, to read for information concerning Israel's prophesied Redemption. On November 10th, the President thanked Blackstone for his book through his personal secretary, Mr. Tumulty.

Blackstone and Balfour

On April 5th, 1916, Blackstone sent a note to the President enclosing his brochure *The Times of the Gentiles and the War in the Light of Prophecy* which predicted a return of the Jews to Palestine in 1917 or 1918. While no sample of the Wilson brochure survives it is believed to have been of similar structure to an article that WEB wrote for the *Sunday School Times* some years later.¹⁴ The calculations espoused in the paper reflect the unmistakable influence of H. Grattan Guinness, the English expositor whose calculations were seen to have influenced William Henry Hechler.

During the first months of 1916 Nathan Straus, a younger brother of Oscar Straus, 1891 Memorial signator and US Ambassador to Turkey, became deeply interested in Blackstone's work on behalf of the Jews. It was at the instigation of Nathan Straus, probably Blackstone's most uncompromisingly ardent admirer, that the Memorial was revived in May, 1916, for the final time, a

revival that included at least two private presentations by Zionist representatives to President Wilson and its adoption by several denominational and ministerial conferences. But for reasons not yet completely understood, all through 1916 and 1917, and even to the end of the War, the planned public presentation to the President was repeatedly postponed by Blackstone at the suggestion of the Zionists whose chief spokesman was Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis, chairman of the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs. Among the many and complex factors that robbed Blackstone of the White House reception he enjoyed in 1891 were the intricacies of Zionist negotiations in England for rights in Palestine, the hesitancy of the President burdened by pressures to get the United States into the war, and Blackstone's delicate health which worsened during the latter half of 1916.

The Memorial to President Wilson, dated May 5th, 1916, attached the original 1891 Memorial with its 413 signatures. Like the earlier one it commenced with a statement respecting the sanctity of Russia following the opening "Whereas the civilized world seeks some feasible method of relieving the persecuted Jews . . ." but goes on to aver, after three more paragraphs, that:

Whereas the environment of the Jews is so fraught with alarming danger in many quarters of the world that humanity and the Golden Rule demand speedy action, and

Whereas the Jews, when expelled from Spain, were given an asylum in Turkey and have, since then, until the breaking out of the present unprecedented war, received such comparatively kind treatment in the Sultan's Dominions as to give assurance that some satisfactory arrangement can now be made for their permanent resettlement in Palestine . . .

Now Therefore, we the undersigned, representative individuals, societies, organizations and public officers in the United States, most respectfully commend the Memorial aforesaid . . . to the Honorable Woodrow

Wilson, President of the United States, and the Officers of our Government for consideration of the action therein prayed and such measures as may be deemed wise and best for the permanent relief of the Jews.

The list of signatories attached to the 1916 Memorial was only a fraction of the number attached to the 1891 original,¹⁵ a mystery that was not solved until discovery of additional Blackstone correspondence on the period in 1973. Among the new letters found is one by Nathan Straus who, on May 16th, 1916, advised Blackstone:

I think it would be a good thing to send the Memorial as you propose to President . . . It would be most unwise to draw Mr. Brandeis into the matter now that his appointment to the Supreme Court is pending . . . He read the pamphlet,¹⁶ and I never heard any man praise another's work more than he did yours. In any case, I would not care to have my name connected with the work. Being such an ardent Zionist myself, it would not be helpful to the cause, or to you. The fewer Jewish names appear in the Memorial the more it will appeal to the prominent gentiles.

In March, 1973, the original of another letter by Straus, dated May 8th, 1916, and originally published together with Oscar Straus's letter of March 6th, 1891 (also recently discovered) in the June 23rd, 1916, issue of the *American Hebrew*, came to light in California. It reads:

I am just in receipt of your esteemed favor of May 1st. I need not tell you that I am always glad to hear from you, and the work you have undertaken has my heartiest appreciation and approval.

Mr. Brandeis is perfectly infatuated with the work that you have done along the lines of Zionism. It would have done your heart good to have heard him assert what a valuable contribution to the cause your document is. *In fact he agrees with me that you are the father of Zionism, as your work antedates Herzl* [italics added].

I want to assure you again most heartily that the work you have done and are doing is highly appreciated by

people everywhere who believe in fair play.

May, 1916, was hardly the most propitious month in which to attempt to capture the undivided attention of the public and the President for the Blackstone Memorial. For in that month the ferocious battle of Verdun, which had been raging since late February, piling up casualties unprecedented in warfare, was reaching its climax. The May 22nd *New York Times* reported 300,000 Germans lost; before the five month battle died away it was estimated that the French and Germans together suffered some 600,000 casualties.

Still the Zionists not only made the news that month, but managed to provoke a controversy that would have caused a man of more acute perception than Woodrow Wilson *acute* embarrassment. On May 20th, the then recently resigned US Ambassador to Turkey, financier Henry Morgenthau, Jr., made a speech in Cincinnati in which he hinted that Turkey should consider the sale of Palestine — he did not say specifically to whom — as a means of paying off its huge international debt. The idea was one that went back at least to the 1870's and enjoyed at one time or another the support of such Christian Zionists as Edward Cazalet, Sir Laurence Oliphant, William Hechler and even Blackstone himself who wrote in 1891 that the Jews might be willing and certainly were able to purchase the whole Palestine region.

But the Morgenthau speech, coming as it did when both England and the United States were casting about for diplomatic means to entice Turkey to retire from the conflict, aroused the Turk's antipathy¹⁷ and made Zionism more suspect than ever to them. However, assimilationist Jews and others also voiced criticism of the speech and on May 22nd, in Chicago, Morgenthau had to improvise a rather ingenious (but not too convincing) explanation of what he had intended by his remarks of the previous eve. "What I said was that Christians and Jews jointly should unite in the purchase of this sacred land . . . once purchased Palestine should be turned back into a small free Republic or an international park; in whose government the Christian nations of the world would participate."¹⁸ In June, 1917, following the entry

of the United States into the war, President Wilson sent Morgenthau upon a secret mission to Turkey, the purpose of which was apparently to sound out the Ottomans on their price for retiring from the War. But it seems that Morgenthau had only the haziest idea of the feasibility of such a scheme. An alarmed Weizmann (learning of his mission through the Zionist apparatus) headed Morgenthau off during his stop at Gibraltar and talked him out of proceeding any further. Instead Morgenthau detoured to France to await the arrival of the first American military advisors. It is obvious that Weizmann, on behalf of the British Zionists, feared that such a scheme as Morgenthau's could only upset their delicate negotiations with the British Government. What the British also knew was that Palestine could only be wrested away from the Ottomans by force of arms; indeed, it took the forceful General Allenby and a large Allied army more than a year to effect Palestine's liberation, the Turks capitulating only on October 31st, 1918, just twelve days before the Armistice on the Western Front.

In late June, 1916, WEB received a personal invitation from Justice Brandeis¹⁹ to address the Zionist Congress to be held at Philadelphia, July 2nd - 5th, 1916. There, according to one source, Blackstone was acclaimed amidst the assembly the 'Father of Zionism'.²⁰ Later in July, Blackstone wrote to Nathan Straus, a faithful correspondent, acceding to the latter's recent request that he postpone for "a few weeks" arranging the public presentation of his Memorial at the White House.

This was to be the first of many such postponements.

Although disappointed, Blackstone worked through the summer months attempting to convince leaders both in and outside the church that they should sign the Memorial. He found initial support from the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ of America in Washington, DC. For several months it appeared that the Council might even form a special committee which would sponsor the White House presentation. However, on November 24th, the Council's Associate Secretary, H. K. Carroll, informed Blackstone that certain of the Washington office's Advisory Council objected to the Memorial's second goal, restoring the Jews to

Palestine. Three days later he wrote that the presentation had been rejected, citing the fact that Dr. Roberts had already sent the petition, as adopted by the General Presbyterian Assembly, to the President. This is somewhat strange reasoning, for Carroll had signed the Memorial as Secretary of the Washington headquarters and the New York branch of the Federal Council had also been a signatory. Therefore, the real motive for the ultimate rejection of a public presentation by the Federal Council appears to have been *interdenominational jealousy and anti-Zionism*. Blackstone tried until December to persuade the Council to change its mind — to no avail. It was a bitter blow for him. As late as November 17th, finding that the President had returned to Washington from the rest following his re-election triumph over Hughes, Blackstone had written to Wilson apologizing that his illness would prevent him from making the long train trip from California to be at the forthcoming White House presentation by the Federal Council.

In February, 1917, Blackstone expressed his confidence in the work of the Zionists by way of making a no strings attached \$5,000 donation to their Emergency Fund for the relief of Jewish refugees. In his reply of February 21st, which warmly acknowledged the contribution, Justice Brandeis closed by saying that Dr. Wise and his associates were “merely holding back its [the Memorial’s] presentation until such time as they believe he will be free to give his mind to this special issue.”

Stephen S. Wise, the well known and eloquent Rabbi of the Free Synagogue in New York, had been one of the original committee that formed the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs (the Brandeis committee) and the Rabbi served also as the Committee vice-chairman. In the following months, Rabbi Wise would write frequently to Blackstone in the capacity of co-ordinator for Brandeis, faithfully corresponding with WEB on a number of Jewish related matters as well.

While, as earlier stated, the exact motives for the US Zionist Committee’s repeated postponement of the public presentation of the Blackstone Memorial, month by month, may never be

completely unravelled, there is little doubt that the vagaries of the Zionist situation in England had considerable influence on their decision. For in early 1917 the British Zionists received a serious (but fortunately only temporary) setback in the form of powerful opposition from various Jewish quarters. An open letter from the Jewish spokesmen, carried in the May 24th, 1917, London *Times*, vigorously attacked the whole scheme of a Palestinian Jewish settlement, the anti-Zionist sentiment suddenly finding a powerful ally in the Jewish Secretary of State for India, Edwin Samuel Montagu.²¹

The sudden, but long awaited, collapse of the Romanov Dynasty in Russia on March 15th constituted a severe blow to the Allied cause and introduced another element of doubt into the Zionist negotiations and their outcome. Although Russia continued to fight on sporadically against Germany another year, before the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk removed the new Soviet regime from the conflict, both Turkey and the Central Powers no longer had anything to fear from Russian arms following the Czar's abdication, so successful was Soviet infiltration and agitation among the officers and soldiers at the fighting fronts.

The Russian crisis proved to be the key to President Wilson's agonizing decision to bring the United States into the conflict in April. It was obviously no time for the Zionists to signal Blackstone to push for the long postponed public presentation of the Memorial. Moreover, on May 23rd, 1917, Robert Speer of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the USA informed WEB that "Justice Brandeis had seen President Wilson with regard to the Memorial, and that the desirability of making some changes in it had been suggested." On June 1st, Bishop Bashford, Methodist Bishop to China, wrote to Blackstone from New York confirming that Wilson wanted "slight changes". Specifically, Bashford related, Wilson wanted the Memorial to drop the request to place Palestine (or the New Zion Commonwealth) under "international control and leave the control undisputed." Then, he averred, the President would "consent to give us an open hearing and make a reply for presentation which probably will be favorable . . . in late June or July."

This letter reveals the remarkable extent of the influence that Brandeis had on the President; for the request for a change to “undisputed control” undoubtedly reflected progress in the constant stream of communications that Brandeis received by cable from Chaim Weizmann.²²

Several times in 1916 Blackstone had made clear in letters to Jacob de Haas and Louis Brandeis that he was willing to defer to their judgment on the timing of the public presentation of the Memorial. Still, he must have been surprised to receive from Rabbi Wise a letter, dated June 30th, 1917, which began:

I had the honor of presenting in *informal fashion* [italics added] to the President at the White House yesterday, a copy of your petition. The President accepted it, *but he felt in agreement with Justice Brandeis that this was not the best time for the public or even the private presentation thereof* [italics added]. I think I have the right to say that the President is prepared to leave to Justice Brandeis the decision with respect to the most opportune time in which formally to present the petition to him. *We must therefore wait on events* [italics added], and you will agree with me in permitting our friend and leader, Justice Brandeis, to decide what is the most favorable hour in which to offer to the President the notable petition which you have made possible.

Wise’s frank communication left no doubt then that Brandeis was in control of the situation and that the ‘events’ that he was waiting upon were the negotiations in England for the Balfour Declaration favoring a Jewish national home in Palestine. If Blackstone was then yet aware of the fact that he was being gently manipulated he does not show a trace of it in any of his voluminous correspondence from the period. Indeed he might have learned also of the informal presentation some days sooner had his health enabled him to take up Jacob de Haas’s invitation to attend the June 27th – 28th Zionist Convention at Baltimore.

A mystery that remains from the revelation of Rabbi Wise is precisely why Wilson (or Brandeis) would object even to a private presentation by Blackstone of his Memorial in view of the

fact that the President had already received in private the same document from various church groups a full year before. A little light is thrown on the matter from a note that WEB sent to Bishop Bashford on July 2nd, acknowledging the latter's recent card informing him that Brandeis would present the Memorial to the Secretary of State, instead of making a public presentation to President Wilson.

In his July 2nd reply, Blackstone informed the Bishop that he approved of this strategy, "presuming that Judge Brandeis has good reason for this". Another ray of light is thrown over the paradox from another Bashford communication to Blackstone (July 2nd). Referring to Wilson's predilection for hesitation and vacillation he states "at times he seems to want the public hearing and at other times he requests it to be postponed."

On July 9th, a weary and most probably completely bewildered Blackstone confessed to Bashford, "From all of this it seems to be God's providence that the time for the presentation of the Memorial, at least in the public manner, should be decided by Justice Brandeis . . . and hence, we will await Justice Brandeis' action in the matter."

As it was to turn out, Blackstone was to wait on and on until the Allied Armies had swept Palestine clean of the Turks, which did not occur until ten months after the public announcement of the Balfour Declaration, and still the American Zionists were advising him to postpone the public presentation.²³

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On less information on Blackstone's dealings with the Zionists than is now available, in 1971 the *Encyclopedia Judaica* (vol. 4, p. 1,969) offered that the 1916 Blackstone Memorial ". . . may have influenced his (Wilson's) attitude to the Balfour Declaration" which was announced to the world on November 2nd, 1917; and historian Kobler mentions that "in the last stages of the campaign,

help came from non-Jewish quarters. Letters of sympathy and support were received from President Wilson in the USA and from Monsieur J. Cambon of the French Foreign Office. Indeed, in those days, men in many lands were stirred by the spirit of Cyrus.”²⁴

Balfour Declaration

Five weeks after publication of the Balfour Declaration, General Allenby made a penetration of the Turkish defence line that hinged on Beersheva-Gaza and entered a Jerusalem freshly evacuated by the Turks. In Allenby's army of 160 nationalities there fought bravely a Jewish brigade attached to a Royal Scottish regiment, the Jewish soldiers distinguishable by the Star of David sewn on their tunics. With Allenby's formal entry into Jerusalem on December 9th, 1917, 400 years of Turkish occupation of the Holy City officially terminated. Some forty years prior, strange to say, H. Grattan Guinness had published the year 1917 as the termination date of Turkish rule (which continued in northern Palestine until September, 1918).

The Balfour Declaration, though watered down by compromise, was still an astonishing document. It read as follows:

His Majesty's Government, after considering the aims of the Zionist Organization, accept the principle of recognizing Palestine as the National Home of the Jewish people and the right of the Jewish people to build up its national life in Palestine under a protection to be established at the conclusion of the peace . . .

His Majesty's Government regard as essential for the realization of this principle the grant of internal autonomy to the Jewish nationality in Palestine, freedom of immigration for Jews, and the establishment of a Jewish National Colonizing Corporation for the *re-establishment* and economic development of the country.

The conditions and forms of the internal autonomy and a Charter for the Jewish National Colonizing Corporation should, in the view of His Majesty's Government, be

elaborated in detail and determined with the representatives of the Zionist Organization.

Key phrases of the document generated much discussion among parties that were pro-Arab or simply anti-Zionist. Ironically, few seemed concerned with the inclusion of the word "re-establishment". However, the recognition of the prior Jewish history in *Eretz Yisrael* constituted in many eyes a most powerful moral claim, one which Blackstone in his writings of a quarter of a century before insisted even gave the Zionists a legal claim to the land.

The elation of the American Zionists was every bit as keen as that of their British counterparts. Blackstone was invited to address the Zionist mass meeting held in Los Angeles (January 27th, 1918) where he asked the audience of Jews and Christians: "Why am I an advocate of Zionism . . . for over thirty years?" answering, ". . . because I believe that true Zionism is founded on the plan, purpose and fiat of the ever-living and omnipotent God, as prophetically recorded in his Holy Word, the Bible."²⁵ After quoting several Old Testament verses he added: "Numerous other prophetic passages . . . confirm the divine promise that Israel shall yet inhabit their home in Palestine in perfect peace and security. How then can I, as a true Christian, be anything else than a true Zionist?"

As the World War was still more than nine months from its conclusion Blackstone lamented:

. . . it seems as though sorrow had reached its greatest depths today, as we see hundreds of thousands of Jews fighting each other in the ghastly trenches of Europe and Asia. But this is only the beginning and there would be no hope except for those last words of prophecy, "But he shall be delivered out of it."²⁶

This was a reference to the awesome Jewish Tribulation long known to expositors as the 'Time of Jacob's Trouble' (Jeremiah 30: 6-8), a time that most interpreters of the Bible believe is yet to come in the affairs of Israel.

Final Labours

The Balfour Declaration and the establishment of the Weizmann Commission did not end Blackstone's usefulness to the Zionist Movement. On December 19th, 1919, he received a telegram from Jacob de Haas which read: "Please mail by return or direct us to New Yorker holding your list of signatories to your nineteen seventeen petition we need to raise ten million dollars for Palestinian work." Formerly Secretary of Brandeis' Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs, de Haas was then Secretary of the Palestine Development Council. Like Nathan Straus, he was to maintain an appreciative correspondence with Blackstone until well into the 1920's.

In the years immediately following the end of the World War, Blackstone took up the cudgels once again for Jewry and Zionism, combatting in vigorous letters Henry Ford and his associate the editor of *The Independent*, a newspaper of Dearborn, Michigan, that parroted Henry Ford's fantastic anti-semitic theories which included the thoroughly discredited "Protocols of the Elders of Zion". Ever vigilant to warn pastors of unscriptural views of the Jews, Blackstone also wrote (April 19th, 1921) a letter to Rev. Samuel W. Purvis of Philadelphia, taking exception to Purvis's article in *Pipp's Weekly*, "The Romance of the Jews", in which he stated "America is the Jew's Palestine and Washington, D.C., his Zion."

Blackstone was then 80 years old. He lived long enough to see Adolf Hitler consolidate power and initiate massive discriminations and persecutions of the Jews. When the great millenarian Zionist died, on November 7th, 1935, at the age of 94, he had also lived long enough to witness the rapid build-up of the Jewish community in Palestine which came about after 1930 from the refugees fleeing the insane German policies.

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Postscript

There is no evidence that William Blackstone ever met William Hechler. Yet quite remarkable are the similarities in their respective careers of advocacy of the return of Israel to Palestine. Early in their ministerial work each had performed services of one kind or another to Black Africa. Each was profoundly influenced by the Biblical prophecies applying to the Final Return of the Jews and in particular by the prophetic numbers of Daniel and Revelation which pointed to the years 1897-98 and 1917 as significant benchmarks in the re-establishment of the State of Israel.

Both men believed in the sponsorship by Great Powers of the Jewish acquisition and settlement of Palestine. But they hoped that such a sponsorship would be inspired by Christian compassion — the doctrine of the Sermon on the Mount — and not by purely political motives. Each man dedicated the last half of his life — forty to forty-five years — in the pursuit of demonstrating a Christian heart's love for the advancement of Israel. Finally, each demonstrated the genuine humility that can only spring and sustain itself from a spirit of genuine sacrifice:

In October, 1920, Blackstone wrote: "Yes, I would be willing to perish this minute and be ground to powder if thereby I could help Israel to see and believe the truth as it is recorded in their own prophetic word."²⁷ And the eulogy that Hechler wrote on behalf of Herzl, in 1929, began with: "It was God's will that I should help my dear friend Dr. Theodor Herzl" and ended with "God bless you all. The eighty-three-year-old pilgrim from the earthly to the heavenly."²⁸

While Hechler's indefatigable efforts in Germany on behalf of Herzl bore limited fruit, the prior publicity and prestige that the Zionist Movement gained by his introductions and audiences proved to be invaluable when Zionist hopes eventually became focused upon England.

Of particular significance today is the recognition and emphasis given by Israel to the Biblical motivations of Hechler and the

latter's reception by statesmen whose interest was spurred on by their own Biblical prophetic interest and convictions.

Alexander Bein, Herzl biographer and chief State Archivist of Israel, wrote in 1961 concerning the Hechler-inspired correspondence and actions of the German princes: "The intermingling here, of Christian calculations of the end of days, the second advent, and the return of Israel to the Holy Land, is to our minds astonishing . . . From the letters we see that it was this religious approach . . . that appealed most to the Duke. It was upon this basis that there developed between the Grand Duke and Herzl a relationship, which ascended into the lofty spheres of universal benevolence, to which it returned after every political setback. Because of his status as a quasi-prophetic messenger Hechler could intervene again and again even when Herzl, because of his pride and his desire not to be regarded as a troublesome Jew, hesitated to do so."²⁹

A tribute to Blackstone's historic contribution to the Zionist Movement was the acceptance by the Jewish National Fund of a subscription raised by American Jews and Christians for the planting of the Blackstone Forest, dedicated in Israel in 1961, the year Bein wrote his eloquent appraisal of Hechler's contribution. However, perhaps the greatest tribute accorded to Blackstone's influence comes from the pen of the historian Oscar Handlin: "The ten years after 1890 were not only free of anti-semitism, they were actually marked by distinct philo-semitism."³⁰ Thus in that last decade of the nineteenth century did the tree of world political Zionism, liberally watered by Christian compassion and constructive action, take firm root until eventually it became as unshakable as a cedar of Lebanon. Blackstone and Hechler died firmly convinced in their minds that one day ". . . the Lord will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem" (Zechariah 2: 12) and that all nations would one day honor the God of Israel and find peace administered in perfect justice from the Holy City (Zechariah 14: 16).

REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. Meites, *History of the Jews of Chicago*, p. 167. In England the Choveve Zion societies were the platform for the first public discussions between Jewish and Christian Restorationists, according to Franz Kobler (*The Vision was There*) (London, 1956, p. 103-04).
2. Weisgal, Meyer, edit. *Theodor Herzl: A Memorial*, 1929, p. 223. Feinstein (American Zionism 1884-1904) claims that the Baltimore Zionists dispatched Shepsel Schaeffer to Basle where he was recognised as "America's sole delegate" which appears to contradict Schulman's claim for Zolotkoff.
3. WEB, "May the United States Intercede for the Jews" (*Our Day*, v. 8, October, 1891, p. 242-43). At the suggestion of Nathan Straus, who personally bore the cost, this article was reproduced together with the 1891 Memorial in a special booklet which Straus distributed via the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs throughout 1916 at the time that the Balfour Declaration principles were being discussed in England.
4. Beth Lindberg, *A God-Filled Life, The Story of William Eugene Blackstone*, Chicago (pamphlet, n.d.).
5. Rabbi Hirsch did not endear himself to the Zionists. As early as October 19th, 1892, Adam Rosenberg, the New York Choveve Zion society official, could write to Blackstone that "Dr. Hirsch is known to me as an ultra radical Jewish minister. A pamphlet of his on the heathenish origin of the Sabbath was published . . . by the way of a plagiarism from some German scholar."
6. *Feinstein*, p. 277.
7. *Feinstein*, pp. 242, 286.
8. Unpublished research paper by Sandra Keck, Chicago, December, 1972.
9. All of his personal papers left in 1914 at Nanking with his missionary son were burned along with his house by Chang Kai-shek's nationalists in 1927 as they swept north. Novelist Pearl Buck was forced, with her family, to hide from the soldiers who found and burned the manuscript of one of her earliest novels. For 24 hours the soldiers were ordered to search diligently for all foreigners in the city. Miss Buck never attempted to reconstruct the novel. ("The Mission of Pearl S. Buck, *Chicago Daily News*, March 7th, 1973).
10. Perhaps even truer today than in 1903. There are estimated to be 3 million Jews in Russia, slightly more than in the State of Israel in 1973, though Russian Jewry is diminishing now through migration, mostly to Israel.
11. *Our Hope* (Vol. X, No. 4, October, 1903), p. 276-77.
12. *Our Hope* (Vol. X, No. 1, January, 1904), p. 460.
13. The Federal Census of 1850 shows that WEB was the son of a 'tinner' or tinsmith. He was a direct descendant of William Blackstone the long immortalized first resident of Boston (1629) and Sir William Blackstone (1723-1780), the English jurist.
14. *Jews Past Present and Future*. The brochure, following Guinness's rationale, measures the so-called 'times of the gentiles' employing a cypher of 7 x 360 (lunisolar) years based upon the verses, Numbers 14: 34, Leviticus 26: 18 and Daniel 4: 16. Assuming a beginning date of 604 or 603 B.C. the addition of 2520 years produced (p. 46) an end date of 1917 or 1918, allowing for the omission of a year to correct the B.C.-A.D. fiction of "0" B.C. Whether this was the intention of the Scripture or only a coincidence cannot be proven. But 1917 witnessed the fall of Jerusalem and the Balfour Declaration on behalf of the Jews; while 1918 witnessed the complete evacuation

- of Palestine by the Ottomans and the start of the British and Jewish co-operative administration until the League Mandate was ratified at San Remo in 1922. The influence the Guinness calculations may have had on high governmental officials both in England and the United States cannot be completely ignored or overlooked.
15. Among the prominent signers of the 1916 Memorial were Andrew D. White, President of Cornell University, Newton W. Thompson, Acting Governor of California, John Wanamaker, and Judah L. Magnes, Chairman of the *Kehillah* (Jewish Community) of New York. It was also signed by several bishops and the rabbi Solomon Hecht and Isadore Myers of Los Angeles. Dr. Magnes later became the first president of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.
 16. Straus persuaded Blackstone to produce a special booklet (*Palestine for the Jews*) which contained the 1891 and 1916 Memorials together with WEB's 1891 article from *Our Day*. On May 23rd, 1916, Straus remitted to WEB payment for 1,000 of these booklets for his own distribution.
 17. May 21st, 1916, *New York Times*.
 18. Adler, Joseph, "The Morgenthau Mission of 1917" in the *Herzl Yearbook*, vol. 5, p. 258.
 19. Letter of June 23rd, 1916. Louis D. Brandeis (1856-1941), chairman of the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs from its inception in August, 1914, was a Boston lawyer converted to Zionism by Jacob de Haas in 1911 or 1912. Brandeis was Chaim Weizmann's principal American contact and apparently had, along with fellow Justice Felix Frankfurter, also a Zionist, considerable influence with President Wilson.
 20. Beth Lindberg, *A God-Filled Life, the Story of William Eugene Blackstone*, Chicago, n.d.
 21. Kobler, *The Vision was There . . .* p. 122. Kobler relates that pro-Zionist forces within and without the Cabinet then rallied and "some 250 Jewish institutions, communities and organizations all over the country rallied in favor of a National Home for the Jewish People."
 22. In June, Weizmann received from Brandeis a cable informing him about the U.S. (Morgenthau) mission to the Near East whose aim was to detach Turkey from the Central Powers (Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, v. 1, 1949, p. 195. See also pp. 203-208).
 23. On June 15th, 1918, we find WEB writing to Brandeis and asking if it is yet the "auspicious time" to present the Memorial to Wilson. And on September 17th, 1918, Rabbi Wise wrote to WEB informing him of Wilson's public expression of sympathy of the work of the Weizmann Committee on Palestine, adding "The petition which you prepared was in my hands when I saw the President and I spoke of it to him." The patient Blackstone replied (October 25th, 1918) noting that he was still waiting for the signal to present the petition publicly to Wilson.
 24. Kobler, *The Vision was There . . .* p. 123. President Wilson's message to Rabbi Wise, encouraging the Zionists, was published in the *Sentinel*, September 6th, 1918.
 25. W. E. Blackstone, *Address at the Zionist Mass Meeting, Clune's Auditorium, January 27th, 1918*. (pamphlet).
 26. Jeremiah 30: 6. Earlier in the War, Hechler told a gathering of Jews: ". . . as you have bitterly realized the folly of European politics obliges you to fight each other. This is one more sign pointing to the Promised Land where no one can force the children of Israel to fight each other." (Duvernoy, *Le Prince et Le Prophet*), p. 131.
 27. Lindberg, *A God-Filled Life*, p. 20.

28. Weisgal, edit., *Theodor Herzl, A Memorial*, pp. 51 - 52.
29. *Herzl, Hechler, the Grand Duke of Baden, etc.* (ix, Introduction).
30. Handlin, Oscar., *American Views of the Jews at the Opening of the Twentieth Century*. (Pub. Amer. Jewish Historical Soc., vol. 40, June, 1951), p. 325.